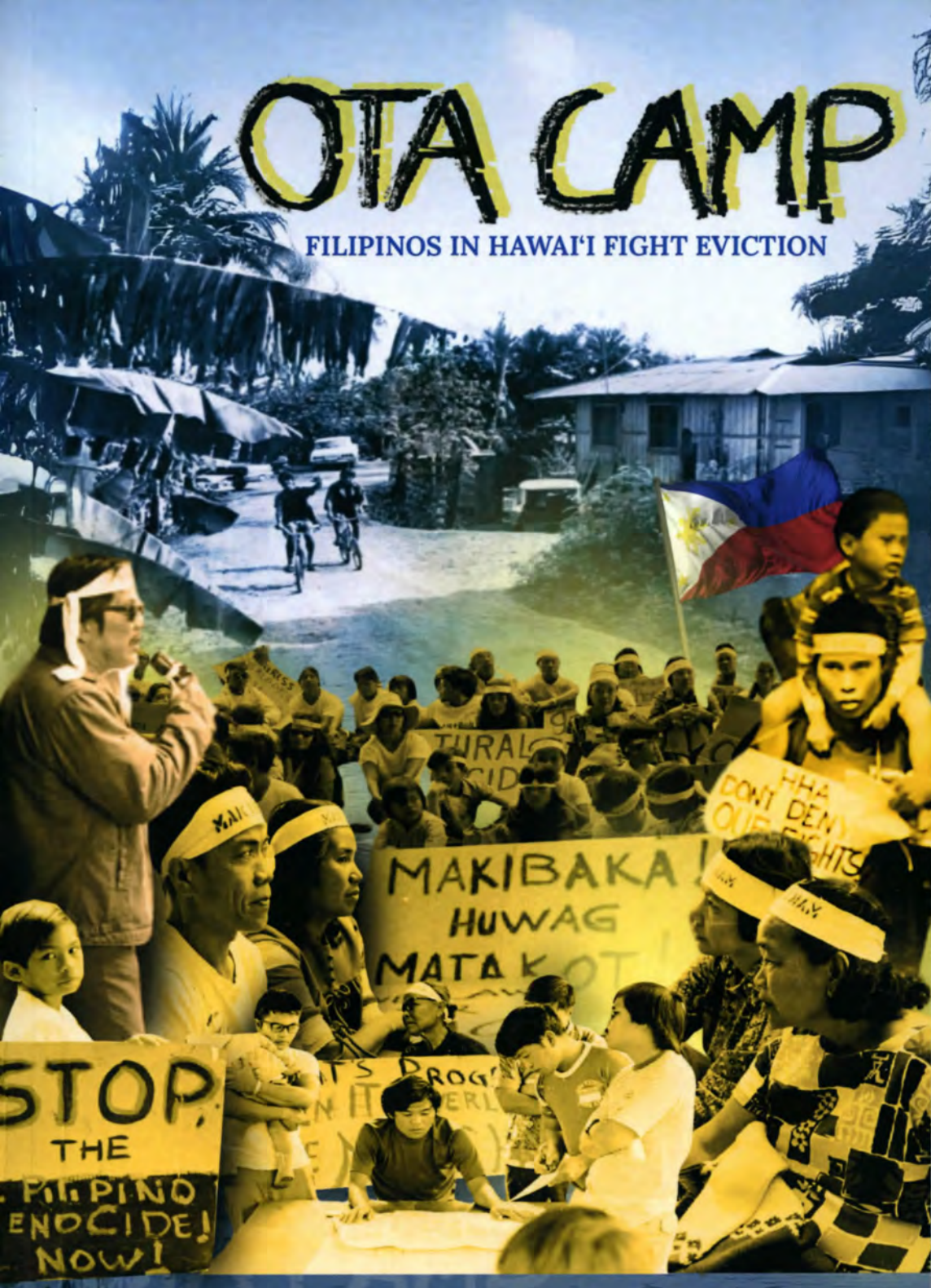
OTA CAMP

FILIPINOS IN HAWAIʻI FIGHT EVICTION



MELINDA TRIA KERKVLIET

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Melinda Tria Kerkvliet

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By Melinda Tria Kerkvliet

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I cannot list down and describe how others helped me in this research. It will require many pages. Many of them are mentioned in the narrative, footnotes and bibliography

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FOREWORD

by Rose Cruz Churma

The history of Hawai'i is incomplete without adequate representation of its largest Asian ethnic group, the Filipinos of Hawai'i. Their stories need to be told from the perspective of those who lived it—those who struggled, persisted and eventually prevailed.

This book serves as an impetus to enhance the understanding of the Filipino experience in Hawai'i and its contributions to our State. It provides glimpses of how Filipinos' core values, and their immigration experience have strengthened their resilience and gave then the courage to resist—in this instance, the eviction from their homes.

Pete Tagalog, the acknowledged leader of the group chose the Filipino word "makibaka" which means "struggle" for the name of the village that the displaced families would eventually call home. "The reason why I came up with that name is so people would never forget," he was quoted as saying when interviewed for a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article in April 15, 2001.

The documentation of this struggle is important for the younger generations who may be exploring their identity and the history of their families. This assessment of the past as it impacts contemporary issues is relevant, not just for the Filipinos of Hawai'i, but for other groups who left their homes for other lands, or those who have been dispossessed of their own.

The Ota Camp struggle was once featured in a local Japanese American journal—the *Hawai'i Hochi*—and translated into Japanese. Ota Camp was one of many local communities statewide whose residents were being evicted and dispossessed of their homes by developers during the early 1970s, the boom years following statehood. But Ota Camp residents prevailed—enduring Hawai'i's longest running community struggle.

This small group of 31 Filipino families resisted eviction by organizing and articulating the importance of keeping their close bonds, shared values and of preserving their culture and way of life, familiar themes also shared by Japanese and other local ethnic communities.

The struggle for affordable housing by Hawai'i's working class is depicted in the Ota Camp eviction story by allowing the main protagonists to tell their story, simply, and in their own voice. It is not only a victory for these Filipinos, but also for other local people and native Hawaiians struggling to preserve their culture and way of life, living close to the land that once belonged to them.

Lack of affordable housing and homelessness continue to plague the State. Perhaps the retelling of the Ota Camp struggle will serve as an inspiration. There is value in being true to our core beliefs that are intrinsic to our Filipino heritage—of *kapwa*, our core value of shared humanity, interdependence and shared identity of seeing the self in the other, of focusing on the collective rather than the individual.

The essence of *kapwa* seeps through as the main characters of this eviction struggle share their thoughts and inner conflicts, but in adhering to their heritage, they succeeded.



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INTRODUCTION

Ota Camp, a working-class neighborhood in Waipahu several miles away from Honolulu, Hawai'i, was home to some 130 Filipino Americans who lived a rural lifestyle. They planted and exchanged malunggay, bananas, and vegetables with their neighbors; they raised chickens and pigs. The children played on dusty but safe roads. After Christmas in 1971, their lives changed when a developer proposed to evict them. They protested, organized, and got support from community activists, students, lawyers and government officials. The City & County of Honolulu provided a relocation site and the State loaned money to another developer who built the homes and agreed that after ten years he would let the residents assume the loan. But this developer later tried to block the ten-year option. He raised the rent and, because the residents refused to pay the new rates, he sued them. Once more the residents protested. Their fight against their eviction in 1972-1975 and 1984-1987 is the focus of this book.

What I tell is a part of the longer story of the residents' housing struggle. Indeed in 1987, the residents won the right to buy their homes and homesites. It will be a decade or so later when the residents would get titles for their individual homes. They would do this by an internal struggle among themselves and the emergence of a new leadership.

I migrated to Hawai'i in August 1971 to meet my future husband. I came with almost zero knowledge of life in Hawai'i; I had no idea that many Filipinos had worked and lived in Hawai'i for decades. Soon I began to learn new things. I was hired to teach a Filipino American course

in the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I also helped set up Operation Manong, a federally funded program which paid college students to be elder brothers and sisters to new immigrant students at the public schools. Outside the campus, I joined protests against the American war in Vietnam and against martial law in the Philippines. Urged by a friend, I attended meetings of a group in downtown Honolulu which advocated suitable housing for the elderly. I also became aware of and supported the Ota Camp residents' fight against eviction. A few times I attended the get-togethers at Ota Camp where I enjoyed the food and dancing. One time I went there to be one of the several godparents of a resident's son. On another occasion, we---Operation Manong staff and tutors---organized a fund-raising event for the Ota Camp residents.

When the residents moved to their relocated site in 1975, which my husband and I visited once or twice, we assumed, as the residents did, that things would be fine from thereon. But their eviction loomed again. I could not give much support to the residents when they resumed the fight. One excuse was that around that time, I was fighting my cancer disease. Another excuse was that I became director of Operation Manong, which had survived budget cut threats, and had to focus on my job. In 1992 my husband and I moved to Australia. One day I received a clipping from my friend Lina Agbayani saying that the Ota Camp residents had won the right to keep their homes and house lots.

My husband and I returned to Hawai'i in 2007. Soon after a graduate student who was doing research on the elderly in Ota Camp told me that the residents had told her that many people did not know about the Ota Camp eviction protest. I thought that I should do something. I interviewed two well-known leaders among the residents for the Filipino American Historical Society of Hawai'i. I read microfilmed local newspapers and photocopied articles on the Ota Camp struggle for myself and the residents. Amy Agbayani gave me copies of a video tape featuring Pete Tagalog, the spokesperson of the struggle. Then I became more curious. I wanted more details. Who were the actors? What did they do? How did the protest start? How did it end? What was the full story?

I decided to get more details. I renewed contacts with the residents. On many mornings I took an express bus (often AC cold) parked in front of Sinclair Library, University of Hawai'i- Mānoa campus to Waipahu. I got off in front of Don Quijote store on Farrington Highway, then walked several blocks of industrial offices to the new Ota Camp. Returning to Honolulu in the afternoons on the express bus, I scribbled

notes of stories the residents shared with me. The residents who talked to me were frank and, much later, they showed me documents they had in their homes. Many times, I felt guilty for intruding into their lives and preventing them from doing their daily tasks. Fortunately, the interview sessions over several years turned out to be easy, informal, and even fun. These took place in different places: residents' homes, restaurants, Mililani cemetery, and waiting rooms of state and federal offices that issued IDs and information on retirement. I had long phone conversations with several residents. Once I joined a resident who wanted to go fishing at Kaena Point. At another time several of us drove to Kailua for an outing.

Outside supporters and sympathizers lent me written materials and photographs and sent me e-mail messages to answer my questions. During interviews, many of them gladly recounted what their roles were in the struggle and how they interacted with the residents.

The bibliography section of this book shows that I read documents, including those at the Hawai'i State Archives and the First Circuit Court. Regular accounts from the local newspapers were very useful. The court records on the second phase of the struggle, when a developer sued the residents and the residents, in turn, sued the developer, also contained materials on the first phase of the struggle. As mentioned earlier, I read microfilmed newspapers which printed accounts of the struggle in the 70s and 80s. These became an indispensable source of information for me.

Writing is often more difficult--it is for me--than collecting data. Apart from a tendency to procrastinate, I worry about the approach. What is the best way to tell a story? Of course, there is no single way to write history. Also, it is impossible to tell a full story of a protest that lasted almost 30 years. And how to tell a story without boring the reader? For the Ota Camp story, I've decided to tell the story from the perspective of the residents and their supporters. Who are they? How did they view and remember the struggle? What did they do? How did they feel?

In the first chapter, I present the life stories of three residents before they joined the anti-eviction struggle. The first two were born in the Philippines and migrated to Hawai'i in the 1970s while the third one, who became the community leader, was born in Hawai'i. I believe that their early life experiences influenced their feelings, character, and actions in the 1970s and 1980s. I try to show these in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

To see the events from the point of view of the residents highlights two points. First, even those who live quietly and are considered ordinary can also be heroic. They can be activists in many ways, sometimes acting alone or with a group, sometimes in private or in public. Second, by shedding light on the struggle, I hope that the story of Ota Camp's activism can be rescued from being just a footnote in history, deserving more than a mere mention in mainstream accounts of Filipino American history and social movements in Hawai'i.

There are two backdrops for the Ota Camp's story. One is the history of Filipinos recruited to work at Hawai'i's sugar plantations that began in 1906, a migration process that continues even today but for different reasons, and how they lived and worked. I do not discuss this backdrop separately but instead I try to weave in some background details into the life stories in Chapter 1. I use as a model the book by Ruben R. Alcantara who let the Filipino workers in a plantation town "speak" while inserting and providing a general picture of the times.[1]

The second backdrop is the social movements in Hawai'i when organized groups opposed developers and government authorities whose actions dislocated the local residents and disrupted their lifestyle. Contemporaneously, sectors in the Filipino community began to talk about Filipino ethnic identity, new immigrants' problems, low Filipino socio-economic status, and martial law in the Philippines. I do not tackle the second backdrop separately but include some details into my account of the supporters in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5. I refer the reader to books that give a big picture of the times.[2]

Chapters 4 and 5 narrate the two phases of the protest. Chapter 6, summing up, reviews the Ota Camp struggle and identifies the reasons for the success of the residents in their fight. I also point out the significance of the resistance for the Ota Camp residents, Filipino Americans, and Hawai'i.

I would like to repeat that there is no formula, no one way to write history. Here I've opted to develop the characters as much as to pursue the plot of the Ota Camp story. I also let the characters speak by quoting them.

Chapter 1
LIFE STORIES

That ordinary people would unite and fight for a cause is demonstrated by the Ota Camp residents. Details on ordinary people, however, are often unknown and forgotten. Here I present three residents who joined and led their neighbors in protests to stop developers from evicting them. They are Eufrocina Dela Cruz Domrique (Precing) , Leonora Gozon Baclaan Tagalog (Nora), and Simplicio Juamuan Tagalog (Pete). Precing, usually quiet in public, influenced people behind the scenes. Nora blossomed from a timid immigrant to an activist. Pete, a laid-back person, became the leader of the struggle. I will focus on their life-stories before 1972, when the anti-eviction struggle began, to understand why they joined the protest. All three had not participated in any protest action before then. Precing and Nora are first-generation immigrants from the Philippines to Hawai'i while Pete was a Hawai'i - born Filipino. Precing and Nora's grandparents and Pete's parents worked for Hawai'i's sugar cane plantations. Precing and Nora still (in 2024) live at the new Ota Camp where the residents had relocated; Pete passed away in 2012.

Eufrocina Dela Cruz Domrique (Precing)

Precing was born 17 October 1939, the second child of eight children, to small farmers Teotimo Dela Cruz and Genera Gaoiran Dela Cruz in barrio Cabungaan, near Laoag, the capital of Ilocos Norte in the northern Philippines. Her parents planted rice, sugar cane, and tobacco. As a child she helped at home and worked in the fields with her father and

older brother, including distilling wine from sugar cane. Although the family toiled hard, there was never enough money for food, health emergencies, and education of the children. But she considers her family fortunate because they ate three times a day, mainly vegetables from their farms, whereas their neighbor ate only twice a day. Precing is like many poor people probably everywhere who measure well-being by how many meals they eat daily or what kind of food they can afford to eat.[1]

She finished elementary schooling at age 12 and was eager to continue into high school, like her older brother, but her parents dissuaded her from going. They believed, like many others, that it was a waste of money to send girls to school because they would just marry and stay home. But Precing persisted. She snitched some money from her mother's savings and enrolled herself in a public high school. She truly believed that she had the same right as her older brother to continue her studies. She was able to study for the first full year but when her mother became very ill, she and her brother had to drop out of school. Whatever money the family had was spent on her mother's medical treatment.

As a teenager, she became her father's full-time main helper in the farm. Her older brother was often away with cousins who hired themselves out as field workers and rice harvesters in other provinces such as Tarlac and Isabela. "*Para akong lalaki, ang mga binata takot sa akin.*" ("I was a tomboy; the guys were scared of me.").[2] At home, her mother who got well and gave birth to more children, depended on her to do household work and take care of her six younger siblings. "*Ako ang pinakamatanda, nag-asikaso, kasi panganay na babae.*" ("I was the eldest, looked after my siblings, that's because I was the eldest daughter.")[3] Precing thought of other ways to help her family and decided that one way was to leave the barrio. Other relatives who saw how hard Precing was working had already suggested to her father that he should give her a break from hard work.

Leaving home was something many Ilokanos did. For decades many Ilokano farmers whose small fields, an average of an acre and a half that yielded one rice-crop annually, sought better opportunities by migrating to other places like nearby Cagayan valley or faraway Mindanao to the south. Others crossed the Pacific Ocean as recruits to work at the sugar plantations in Hawai'i.[4] In fact, Precing's own grandparents Tirso Dela Cruz and Antonia Valdez Dela Cruz worked in Hawai'i's Waialua Sugar Plantation in the 1920s. They migrated to Hawai'i as a family, bringing with them Precing's father and three other children. Precing's

father (Teotimo) studied at Leilehua High School until 1932 when the family decided to return to the Philippines. Tirso Dela Cruz's family had no plans to return to Hawai'i for they were expected to take care of their elderly parents. The Depression and World War II sealed their decision not to return to Hawai'i.

Precing was not thinking of going to Hawai'i. Her plan was to leave for Manila to join her cousins who were working there as house helpers for well-to-do Ilokano families in the city. She lied to her parents; she told them that she was going to Manila to visit her cousins, but her plan was to find a job and stay. She lied because, as mentioned, she wanted badly to help her family financially and she felt responsible for her younger siblings. Her first job was with a family originally from Pampanga. She took care of their newborn baby, earning P20 pesos a month, a portion of which she sent to her parents. She found this job through a cousin who was already employed there. After five years as a nanny, she was a cook for a Tagalog-Ilokano family. Her employers encouraged her to take up a vocation, so she enrolled at an adult sewing class at Torres High School in Tondo, Manila.

After learning this trade, she returned to her barrio and set up a sewing shop at their family home. Her sewing shop flourished but soon customers who wanted new dresses for special occasions like Christmas, birthdays, weddings, and graduations overwhelmed and exhausted her. She decided she needed a rest from success. For peace and quiet, she returned to Manila and found a job as a house helper. Apparently, this was her idea of taking a break. She was 25 years old that April 1965.

To her surprise, her family soon told her to come back home. She was baffled and worried—was her mother ill again? But her mother was well. Precing learned that she was called home to meet someone who had just arrived from Hawai'i, someone who was looking for a wife, and whom her family and other relatives thought could be, should be, her future husband. That someone was Juan (Johnny) Domrique. Johnny's family lived in a barrio adjacent to Precing's barrio, and his brother was married to Precing's father's sister. (More details on Johnny Domrique are in Chapter 2.) It became obvious to her that several relatives had conspired on matching her and Johnny. "*Sila-sila ang nag-usap, mga matatanda.*" ("They, the elders, were the ones talking behind my back.")[5] Precing was furious. She refused to marry him. It was not because Johnny was one year older than her own father nor was it because she did not know anything about Hawai'i. Her grandparents, as mentioned, had lived there. What troubled her was that she simply did not know Johnny from a bar of

soap; she did not know if she would be marrying a bum, drunkard or wife-beater or all of these. But her relatives persisted. Precing relented and accepted her fate especially after her mother's doctor, who was trained in the USA, told her that in Hawai'i she could run to the police if Johnny turned out to be a wife-beater. Reassured, Precing dried her tears.

I ask Precing: "Why did your parents push you to such a marriage?"

Precing: "*Dahil sa kahirapan. Hindi sinabi sa akin ito ang dahilan, pero alam ko ako ang inaasahang tumulong sa aming pamilya. Kung hindi ako tutulong hindi kami kakain ng tatlong bases isang araw. May sakit ang nanay, nakaratay. Bunsong kapatid nasa elementarya pa.*" ("Due to hardships. They did not spell this out to me, but I knew that they depended on me to help the family. If I did not help, the family won't eat three meals a day. My mother was sick, bedridden. My youngest brother was still in the elementary school.")[6]

Precing did not meet Johnny until they applied for a marriage license. He, however, had seen her when she harvested beans in a farm located in Johnny's barrio. Johnny did not say much the first time they met but he whispered to her: "*Huwag kang mag-alala. Mag-petition ako sa iyo, tapos mag-petition ka sa iyong mga kapatid. Tutulungan kita.*" ("Don't you worry. I will petition for you to come to Hawai'i and then later you can petition for your family to come also. I will help you.")[7]

They got married on 25 April 1965 at the Philippine Independent Church in Laoag City. A photograph of their wedding shows an unsmiling Precing beside Johnny. Ten days later Johnny flew back to Hawai'i. His plan was to arrange for petition papers and then return to the Philippines to fetch Precing. But the plan was derailed because Precing's auntie (the one married to Johnny's brother) had requested that Johnny should also file a petition for his younger brother Antonino and his family. Johnny then instructed Precing to just come to Hawai'i by herself. He sent her an airplane ticket through the Philippine Airlines office. To Precing's surprise, several of her relatives who had earlier pushed her to marry Johnny now discouraged her from leaving for many reasons, including that the airplane could crash. "*Anong magagawa ko? Marami kaming mamatay.*" ("What can I do? Lots of us will die.")[8]



Precing Dela Cruz and Johnny Domrique wedding, 25 April 1965, Laoag, Philippines. (Courtesy of Precing Domrique.)



Precing Dela Cruz and Johnny Domrique, New Ota Camp, Makibaka Village, 1975. (Courtesy of Precing Domrique.)

I ask Precing: "Were you not afraid?"

Precing: "*Hindi, sanay ako sa hirap. Walang kamag-anak sa Hawai'i; kapit-bahay ang kapatid ko.*" ("No, I am used to hardships. I have no relatives in Hawai'i; the neighbors will be my sisters and brothers.")[9]

On 25 March 1967 Precing arrived in Honolulu. Johnny and a friend met her at the airport, holding a photo of Precing just to make sure they did not miss her when she came out of the customs gates. Precing recalls that she was wearing a dress, pencil-cut style, that she sewed herself. She does not remember the color of her dress. Johnny and his friend, who had a car, and Precing headed towards Ota Camp in Waipahu.

Ota Camp got its name from the owner of the land, Tatsuichi Ota who immigrated from Japan to Hawai'i in 1901 and became a storeowner in Waipahu. He bought land and rice paddies around his store, eventually accumulating 17 acres of land that he rented out cheaply to people who built their own homes. Later he leased his property to a developer who then evicted most of the residents there except for a few families. The term "camp" evokes "ethnic camps" of Hawai'i's plantation days when ethnic groups lived in separate zones or "camps," like the Japanese camp,

Portuguese camp, Filipino camp, etc. Ota Camp in this account simply means that it was Ota because Mr. Ota owned the land.[10]

Ota Camp was Precing's first home in Hawai'i. Upon arrival at Ota Camp, she noticed that the place had "dimples," referring to the mudholes. She was not belittling the place; she was just being light-hearted, making small talk to lighten the tension of the moment. Johnny was quiet. The next few days, she began to appreciate her new home because, unlike her barrio home, it had water supply and electricity. She also met her neighbors, including a group of single elderly Filipino men who, when they saw Johnny's attractive and young wife, gossiped behind Johnny's back. "*Patay*. Once she knows the south, east, west and north of Honolulu, she will leave Johnny." But Precing proved them wrong, and later she became good friends (*karantso*) with them.[11]

The large number of elderly, single Filipino males in Hawai'i was a result of the immigration pattern from the Philippines. The Filipinos were the last major group--after the Chinese, Portuguese, Korean and Japanese--recruited to work at the sugar plantations. Primarily recruited were young Filipino single males who had intended to work and save, and then return to the Philippines to start their own families. These intentions, for many reasons, were generally unrealized. They could not save enough money to return to the Philippines. In Hawai'i, there were only a few Filipino women to woo; women from other ethnic groups generally avoided, if not feared them. There was an "extreme disproportion of males to females," according to Andrew Lind, and from 1924 to 1930 the disproportion was nineteen to one. As a result, bachelors, or single Filipino men became a feature in many plantation camps. They became godfathers, often models and mentors, to Filipino youngsters in the camp.[12]

Back to our story, in 1968 Precing's first cousin from the Philippines arrived in Hawai'i to marry an elderly man (Enrique Dela Cruz or manong Roque to Precing; he was not related to Precing). Precing had matched these two. Precing's cousin had wanted to marry someone from Hawai'i, so Precing matched her with Enrique who was past 70 years old; her cousin was 27 years old. Precing and Johnny cemented their ties with other elderly men by asking them to be godfathers of their sons. They asked an elderly neighbor (Patricio Nibre) to be the godfather of their first-born son. Three years later, they asked Dela Cruz to be the godfather, along with several others including this author, of their second son. Precing was very happy in her new home and her neighbors. "*Parang magkakapatid.* Visayan at Ilokano, local at immigrant, *walang problema.*

We got along." ("We were like brothers and sisters. Visayan and Ilokano, local and immigrant, no problems.")[13]

In 1970 Precing applied for and became a naturalized United States citizen and urged by Johnny, she started petitioning for her family to immigrate to Hawai'i. First, her father, a sister and a brother came. Then her mother and the rest of her siblings. A first cousin and her family also came. Precing also petitioned for Johnny's relatives. Johnny's brother and his youngest son came; two other brothers would come later. This fast and easy immigration was made possible by the Immigration Law of 1965 which allowed US citizens to petition their families and relatives to immigrate to the United States.

The Dela Cruz and Domrique families expanded. As relatives arrived, Johnny and his brothers built extra rooms with kitchen and bathrooms at the Domrique lot, a big area where they also planted vegetables, tended bananas, and raised pigs. A big aluminum roof arched over the main Domrique home and the new rooms, which gave the impression of a "basketball court." There was a big table where the families shared their meals: "*Parang picnic araw-araw.*" ("It felt like having a picnic every day.")[14]

Twenty-year-old Emma Domingo Dumbrique arrived in Ota Camp in early 1970 to join her husband, a nephew of Johnny Domrique. She recalls that her uncle Johnny and his friends built for them a room and place to cook. She was a part of the Domrique clan eating together under that "basketball court." Though initially "shocked" by the condition of most Ota Camp dwellings, she was grateful for having a place to stay. Moreover, she was fortunate to have the clan by her side when she delivered a daughter in 1972 and two sons in 1973 and 1974.[15]

In short, Precing and Johnny's home became a haven for their newly arrived relatives. Their house rent remained $26.00 a month despite the additional tenants and structures built on the lot. Johnny's monthly salary, almost $1,000 as a building maintenance man at Hickam Airfield, brought food to the table. Precing's relatives who worked as janitors, gardeners, and parking attendants chipped in. They had a vegetable garden; they raised chickens and pigs. In short, in 1971, Ota Camp was home for Precing, Johnny and their numerous relatives. She, from the northern province of the Philippines, would meet Nora who came to Hawai'i from the southern part of the Philippines.

Leonora Gozon Baclaan Tagalog (Nora)

Nora was born on 31 August 1951 in Barrio Kamorosan, Panabo, Davao del Norte province in Mindanao, southern Philippines, the eldest of five children to swidden farmers Enocencia Gozon and Rafael Baclaan. She was the "right hand" of her father, planting rice and corn, tending hemp, breeding and training carabaos. "I already learn from young time [how to train water buffalos/carabaos]. I go with my father in the farm. You have to plow and make *kaingin.*"[16] Her mother made sure that a part of their farm was uncleared for the wild pigs to keep them away from the planted crops.

Nora completed her elementary education at the barrio school located miles away; it took her and her younger sister two to three hours each way to reach the school. "So, we [with younger sister] have to leave home before the sun go up, and then we go run, walk, run, up and down." She was thankful to have been allowed to go to school because her father was against it since he wanted Nora to spend most of her time helping him in the farm. "You do your chore, the hell with your homework."[17] Her father would yell at her.

Nora's world suddenly changed in 1964 when she was twelve years old. First, in February, her father left for Hawai'i Why? He left at the suggestion of his father (Pantaleon Baclaan) who had worked there many years before WWII. Pantaleon arrived in Hawai'i in 1919 as a recruited plantation worker. He worked at the sugar plantations in Aiea and Waipahu, sponsored his younger brother to come to Hawai'i, got married, then returned to the Philippines in 1932 with his wife and seven children, including Nora's father who was then only five years old. Nora's grandmother was eager to return to the Philippines because she was concerned about her two children from her first husband whom she had left when she came to Hawai'i.

Precing's grandparents, like Nora's grandparents, also returned to the Philippines in 1932. Hawai'i's sugar plantation owners had intensified the recruitment of Filipino laborers in the decade 1920-1930 but by 1932, because of the Depression and enough labor supply, they stopped recruitment and even sent workers back to the Philippines. "In 1932, the HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] repatriated 7,300 Filipinos because of lack of work."[18] Apparently, the grandparents of Precing and Nora took advantage of the repatriation program.

Pantaleon Baclaan settled his family in Cebu. But a few years after, and during the Japanese regime in the country, he moved his family from Cebu to Davao believing that the new place would improve the Baclaan family's economic situation. He acquired a farm but in 1964, convinced again that grass was greener someplace else, he sent his son (Nora's father) to Hawai'i. The plan was once Nora's father got settled in Hawai'i, he would petition for his family to join him there.

The second life-changing event for Nora was her mother's passing in June, barely four months after her father left for Hawai'i. This was tragic and traumatic for young Nora. Her mother was a gentle person compared to her father who expected Nora to work hard in the field and gave her a physical "licking" for being slow.[19] Her mother also advised her to work hard but she also told Nora to try to be independent from anyone.

Her father did not return for the funeral.

Nora and her younger brothers and sisters, now basically orphans, at first lived with relatives on her mother side. Then her grandparents (father side) took them to live with them and put them to work at his farm. Immediately Nora's younger brother and younger sister ran away to live with other relatives. Nora was tempted to do the same, but she stayed for the sake of her two younger siblings. "I do everything they [grandparents] told me because I'm obligated. I am the oldest. The main thing is my youngest [brother] can eat three times a day."

She planted corn, raised chickens, tended, trained, and bred water buffalos. She did not mind the hard work. What she minded were "words" from her grandparents and an aunt. "My father did not send money... they talk harsh just like we are eating free. My chest is very heavy because I've been treated badly. *Wala kaming kuwenta* [we did not matter] because we don't have anybody. We were orphans."[20] Her sister, for example, needed her vision checked but her grandparents ignored that.

A dream also prevented Nora from running away. In this dream, her youngest brother was bitten by a snake. "The vision is that I saw my brother bitten by the snake. And I don't know what to do. So how could I run away. He gonna be bitten."[21]

Nora spent her nights crying and praying until one night she had another dream. "I pray, pray, pray. She [Virgin Mary] appeared to me, she fly me over, make me see my father... She pick me up, she pick me

up. I don't know, believe me or not but I stay awake and all of a sudden, the bright light, you know, the golden light came, and I stand up. She stood right in front of me."

I ask Nora: "Virgin Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help?"

Nora: "With Infant Jesus. We fly, I only hold the toe [of Infant Jesus]. And then she showed me my father. My father was turning, looking, because he's working, and she showed me where my father go. After my father pau [finish] work, he go cabaret and stuff like that and then she showed me my father activity, yah, that's what she showed me, and then she showed me Hilo, Big Island, Lanai and everything like that. She made me travel the whole island. And then just like that, she bring me where I am, between my brother and sister. And she ask me questions before she leave me. She said, 'Why are you going to see your father? Now you see your father, you know your father now, why you still want to go to Hawai'i?' Only one answer, I said, 'I really need my father.'"[22]

What happened after the vision was, to Nora, a miracle. Her father sent airplane tickets for her, her brothers and sisters and grandpa Pantaleon (her grandma had passed away). The task of assembling the family and preparing the papers for migration to Hawai'i fell on Nora's shoulders. Finally, they arrived in Honolulu in April 1970. Nora was 18 years old.

To her dismay, her father was exactly like what was depicted in her dream--irresponsible--for he did not have a place for them to live. Instead, he "dumped us on his brother's home in Waipahu. He had many children so six people had to sleep in one bedroom. There were many of us, of course, there were personal conflicts." Then Nora and her group moved out to live with another uncle on Pua Lane, near downtown Honolulu. This uncle was living alone in a two-bedroom apartment but to Nora it was living "just like a prisoner," even though it was close to Dole's canning factory where Nora and her brother and sister had found work.[23]

A lucky break came one day at a chicken fight area. Nora's grandfather met Fortunata Manzano, an old acquaintance of his from the sugarcane plantation days of the 1930s. She mentioned that there was an opening at Ota Camp, a house for rent but its roof had *"puka puka"* [holes]." This was not a problem at all, he thought. In September 1970 Nora, her grandfather, and four siblings moved to Ota Camp.

Nora immediately liked her new home for it reminded her of her barrio home in the Philippines. The new home had two big bedrooms, a

sala and a kitchen. "You put the stove there and then you put the utensils, you call that "banggera." And get [it had] 'puka-puka' [holes] and you can see the road. In Ota Camp we got place to stay, and we can play in the road, we can grow things. We get up [in the morning] we see banana patch."[24] This banana patch belonged to single, elderly man Primo Fontanilla who also owned Nora's new home. Nora paid him a monthly rent of $20.00.

Primo, like the other single and elderly men, about thirteen of them, helped Nora and her siblings for they probably noticed that they were fending on their own. Nora's grandfather often left the camp to go someplace "*holoholo*" [have a good time] and her father, who was living with his girlfriend somewhere rarely came to visit. Another elderly neighbor, Dionisio Tarbala, who loved to cook always gave food to Nora.

"The single men--Siano, Islao, Doroy—they live in one house. They helped each other, more community-kine among themselves. And then because we were new…they look after us. Because these guys are Visayans, they make sure that we are safe. So every time, every day, they come and talk to us, if we need anything, stuff like that because they notice, only us kids around."[25] Nora also observed that the old men would get up in the morning and go somewhere, maybe at Aala Park or Hotel Street in downtown Honolulu for entertainment like pool halls, then returned to Ota Camp in the evening with small packages tucked under their arms.

Unlike Precing Domrique, Nora was alone in keeping the household together. She made sure that the rent was paid, there was food on the table and that her siblings were enrolled in the schools. Nora and her younger brother both went to Waipahu High School where they saw and experienced bullying. "I, new in the country…and then I see in high school. I see how we've been pushed around by different nationality." Bullies from other ethnic groups stole the money allowance of the new students who, to protect themselves, carried baseball bats to school. Nora recalls a strict typing teacher who hit her fingers when she pressed the wrong keys. She had no friends. She admits being a loner and besides she had no time to make friends. Usually, she sat alone under the trees to do her homework.[26]

After school hours, Nora worked two jobs. From 3 p.m. to 2 a.m. she was a dishwasher at Wailani Inn, a restaurant in Waipahu owned by Hideo "Major" Okada and his wife. She earned only $1.25 per hour for an eight-hour shift but she was happy because of the big tips. "I get tips

at the end of the shift. Depends on how busy the restaurant. Because the waitress, when they get tips, they put in the kitchen…I get 10 dollars, you know, that's good for me already. Ten dollars or 20 dollars a night." During weekends, Nora had another work, waitressing at Maruyasu Saimin Stand earning $1.50 an hour plus tips. She would work there from 6 p.m. to 2 p.m., had an hour-break then go to Wailani Inn at 3 p.m. and worked there until dawn.[27]

Despite the hectic schedule, Nora managed to graduate from Waipahu High School in 1972. She was planning on taking up a nursing degree at Leeward Community College (LCC) but a counselor told her that pursuing a nursing degree would require a lot of time and energy. Nora thought it over. She realized that, given her duty to keep the family intact, she needed a less demanding course. She chose accounting. Her neighbor Pete Tagalog, who was already a student at LCC, encouraged and supported her in this choice.

Simplicio Juamuan Tagalog (Pete)

Unlike Precing and Nora, Pete was local, born and raised in Hawai'i. His official name was Simplicio. Aside from Pete, his other nickname was Pisyong. Although his surname is Tagalog, his parents came from the Visayan region in central Philippines. There is a family story that his ancestors went by the surname of "Lapulapu" but because the Spaniards knew Lapulapu had killed the explorer Ferdinand Magellan, Pete's ancestors changed their name to "Tagalog," just to be safe.[28]

Pete's parents Juanita Juamuan and Marcos Tagalog grew up on the island of Cebu but, due to poverty, they migrated, separately, to Hawai'i in the early 1920s. They did not talk much about their past life in the Philippines and if they talked, it was only to emphasize that life there was hard. Pete's mother could not read and write. She attended school for a while bringing rice and "*ginamos*" [fermented fish)] for lunch but she quit because her teachers were very strict. Also, she felt awkward for she was much older than her classmates.

She came to Hawai'i as the fake wife of a recruit bound for a sugarcane plantation (Oahu Sugar Co.) in Waipahu, Hawai'i. This practice of "*pareha-pareha*" (pairing) was common. Juanita, eventually, became the wife of this worker and gave birth to a son. The marriage, however, ended because Juanita, unable to bear a husband who drunk and

gambled, fled to live with Marcos Tagalog, who would become Pete's father. Her decision to leave her husband contrasts with another view that women, who were scarce in the plantations, were usually victims of abduction or "*koboy koboy*" [cowboy]."[29]

Marcos, Pete's father, knew how to read and write perhaps because he was an altar boy for a local priest who probably taught him how to read and write. We have no information on Marcos's life in the Philippines and how as an adult he was recruited to work in Hawai'i.

Pete was born on 2 March 1932, the eldest of five children. As a child he recalls a father who worked hard but found time to take his family to the beach where he also fished. He worked at the Oahu Sugar Plantation mill in the molasses department. He was not a show-off; he disliked people whom he thought faked their social class by putting many pens in their shirt pockets, suggesting that they worked in an office. During WWII he worked as a machinist at Pearl Harbor where he had to live inside the base most days of the week and was allowed only short home visits.

I ask Pete: "So when he is at home, he is telling you what to do?"

Pete: "That's the time I get licking."

M: "Why?"

Pete: "Spanish time, you know. Hang me by my hand. Caught me smoking, anything…"

M: "Drinking?"

Pete: "I never do any chore."

Pete's mother always intervened. She warned her husband not to spank hard lest he broke Pete's bones. Pete was 10 years old in 1942. She also put something underneath Pete's toes, a pillow or something, as he was hanging from the ceiling for an hour. His other siblings did not get disciplined as much as he did. Pete recalls with laughter: "Between me and the three brothers, me the one got the licking. I don't know. I think I'm the hard head."[30]

Pete felt closer to his mother than to his father. Pete's mother was a small but strong woman who could carry a 100-pound bag of rice on top of her head while walking, talking and joking around. It seemed to young Pete that she cooked all the time, especially when she prepared the

"*bacalao*" (salted codfish) that had to be soaked in water and pounded for many hours to make it soft and edible. She did laundry for single plantation workers. She boiled the work pants to get rid of mud and oil using "*palo-palo*" (paddle). After laundry she pressed the clothes, folded them, put them on the top of her head for delivery. Pete not only helped his mother wash clothes he also delivered the clothes to her customers and assisted her when she suffered miscarriages. During WWII, she found another job. "Then after that when the war [WWII] break-out, you know, all the workers come from the US mainland, the war workers, my mother go there and clean up the house."[31]

Pete's parents did not talk much about themselves and their lives before coming to Hawai'i. They just remembered that life there was so difficult, and they had no thoughts of visiting, much less returning there to live. They also did not petition or sponsor any of their relatives to come to Hawai'i. For a while, Pete's father sent money and gifts to his relatives, but he stopped doing that when he learned that these never reached his relatives. He was angry with himself, thinking that instead of sending money and gifts back home, he should have saved some money for his own family in Hawai'i.

As a youngster, Pete did not like going to school. "From Grade 1 to Grade 7, all I know is how to sing Hawaiian songs." He cut classes yet nobody looked for him, so essentially, he did not learn how to read and write in standard English. Fortunately, a Mr. Fraser who was in-charge of a gardening class, taught him how to add and multiply numbers. "I cannot write. I gotta repeat what I see in the paper… that is how bad. And then I notice most of my classmates all dropped out too. I just hang around eighth grade, nothing. Then I go ninth grade, same thing."[6] He dropped out of Waipahu High School.

Sally (Soledad Bunda) and Pete met at a baseball park during a Waipahu and Waialua sports league game. Sally describes Pete as a good-looking "Casanova" and that he enjoyed playing pool ("he was a champion") and was good in fishing and diving. Sally, like Pete, was born and raised in Hawai'i; her father was a sugarcane plantation recruit from the Philippines and her mother came to Hawai'i at eight years of age with her parents and grandmother.

Sally's father worked as a road grader at Waialua sugarcane plantation. She completed her high school education at Waialua High School. Growing up, Sally recalls that she did not socialize a lot with Filipinos, that she did not like "*bagoong*" [shrimp paste] and that she was

"international."[33] Pete recounts that when he met Sally, she was speaking "funny," meaning that she was speaking in grammatically correct, standard English.

Pete and Sally married on 2 September 1950 when both were about 18 years old. Sally gave birth to their eldest son in Waialua. The next five children were born after they had moved to Ota Camp. They found housing there through Pete's parents who knew several retired plantation workers who lived there. One of them was Dionisio Tarbola who, Peter recalls, cooked for his wedding. Their house rent was $20.00 per month. That was a good deal because Pete did not have a steady job. Hoping to be in construction work because he thought there was more money there, he held temporary jobs at Pearl Harbor, Schofield Barracks, State Library and Japanese Milk Company. He never found work in construction. He later joined an apprenticeship program in air conditioning and refrigeration, became a journeyman and started his own business. Then a car accident forced him to rethink his career path. Using rehabilitation funds, he took a GED for a high school certificate, and registered at the Leeward Community College, majoring in marine technology. Pete abandoned his studies when he and his neighbors received eviction notices. "Because of Ota Camp, I dump the school. I got 31 families to worry."[34]

Pete and Sally moved to their Ota Camp home in 1953 after their first son, Darrel Lapulapu, was born. Unlike Nora and Precing who saw Ota Camp as a special place because it reminded them of their Philippine barrio lifestyle, Pete and Sally saw it simply as a place where rent was cheap and their children (five more would be born there) were safe. Sally recalls that water rats predictably appeared from the nearby Kapakahi Stream after the rains. It was unhealthy. Pete recalls that his neighbors minded their own business; they did not relate to him, and he did not relate to them. In fact, he sensed that many of them did not like him. Why? "Because I don't bother nobody. They said I halfshit, and they think I no like Ilokano. But I said I don't understand...I don't understand the Ilokanos, they're always eating, and they're talking Ilokano, I don't understand. And they think I am sassy."[35]

Not all Ilokanos disliked Pete. He was close to his Ilokano-speaking friend Johnny Domrique, the future husband of Precing. Pete and Johnny (before he married Precing) were buddies who partied and drank a lot, often passing out drunk. Pete and Sally usually called on Johnny to do plumbing and electrical repairs on their home, free of charge.

Before the eviction struggle and at forty years old, Pete focused on his family, interacted with his brother (Candido) and his family, and enjoyed drinking sessions with Johnny Domrique. He did not care much about his neighbors who felt the same towards him. He was also busy attending classes on marine biology at Leeward Community College where two years before, student activists walked 11 miles to the State Capitol to protest the American war in Vietnam.[36] When not busy studying, he took his wife and five children to his favorite beach at North Shore for camping and fishing.

Eviction

Precing, Nora and Pete were content at Ota Camp with their families and relatives. The future looked good, even oddly ordinary. But at the end of December 1971, Rex Blackburn, president of Amity Waipahu, Inc., sent an eviction notice to the residents. Earlier, he had acquired lease of Ota Camp. In Blackburn's view, "'It's a slum. The area had to be cleaned up. They are being relocated because we are planning to build some houses there."[37] About the residents, "'You have a mixture of people who are content in living in makeshift dwellings which could not be constructed under the present building codes and health requirements.'"[38]

Health issue, Blackburn claimed, was the reason for the eviction. The City (City & County of Honolulu) he said, had told him that the Ota Camp houses should be hooked to the City sewer system. So, he told the residents: "Since it is not our intention to hook into the sewer lines, it is necessary for us to immediately make arrangements to have this land cleared. Therefore, it is necessary for you to have to vacate the land as soon as possible.'"[39]

Pat de Costa, deputy director of the City's Office and Information and Complaint, disagreed. He clarified that the City sent a routine notice to Blackburn just to inform him that the City had completed a sewer line in the area and that he could, if he liked, hook the houses to the system. It was not mandatory as many houses on Oahu continued to use properly installed cesspools. He suspected that Blackburn was using the City as an excuse to displace the residents: "'The City has nothing to do with any displacement of any persons on the property. The landowner has seized on this opportunity to divert the blame elsewhere.'"[40]

The eviction notice drove the residents to fear and panic. Vicenti Elisna, age 84, had a heart attack because he was worried about finding a place to live; he had lived at Ota Camp for 13 years. Elisna did not survive the heart attack and was buried two months later. Blood pressures rose. Pete saw the residents of Ota Camp collecting boxes so he thought they had a place to go; he then learned that they had no place to go but just wanted to put their belongings in boxes in case bulldozers came and razed their homes. At least two families (Estabillo and Gonzales families) moved out of Ota Camp after receiving the eviction notice.[41]

Nora was worried that she, her younger brothers and sisters and grandpa would be homeless after living at Ota Camp for two years.

Pete was likewise worried:

"'Who is going to find housing for us? Who will help?'"

"'I have six children myself. Even if I could pay $300 a month to rent a house, who will take them?'"

"'Our people here are working with eight or more children. The rest are old men in their 80s who are living on pensions. Where else can they live for $30.'"[42]

Grace recalls how her father Pete Tagalog read the eviction notice with disbelief, anger and dismay. He walked around the neighborhood asking other residents if they had also received the eviction notice. He was gone for a long time, and "when he returned home, he was nursing a big headache."[43]

Precing and Johnny Domrique did not panic. The eviction notice was a surprise to them, but they knew they could find a new house for their clan. In fact, they had already scouted a house to rent. Johnny had a fixed income from his work as a building maintenance supervisor at Hickam Airfield; money was not a problem. But one night Pete dropped by, asked them to stay and help create *"buklod"* (solidarity) and join the struggle against eviction. Feeling sorry for the other residents, particularly the single old men, Precing and Johnny decided to stay. Other residents would follow them.[7]

Chapter 2
THE RESIDENTS ORGANIZE

Before 1972 the Ota Camp residents did not have a community association. But once threatened with eviction, they decided to form one. A leader was chosen. A steering committee was formed. Welfare programs, regular meetings and collective activities promoted interaction and cooperation among the residents. These organized activities made the residents proud of where and how they lived. Outside supporters, discussed more in Chapter 3, also helped bring the residents closer to each other.

Profile of Residents

Adults and children, a total of 131 individuals, lived in Ota Camp in 1972 according to two separate surveys of the community conducted around September-October of that year by an architect hired by the Honolulu City mayor and a Ph.D. graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The surveys had numbers and names of residents but did not show how the residents were linked to each other. Information from my interviews show how vital the links were when the residents organized for collective action.[1]

Ethnically, the residents were of Filipino ancestry but within that broad category there were differences---when they migrated to Hawai'i, where or what regions in the Philippines they came from, and where they were born. These differences, however, were not as clear-cut and divisive as they seemed. There was a mixture of the "old" and "new" immigrants. Several came to Hawai'i in the 1920s and 1930s to work for the sugar

plantations and stayed, never returning to the Philippines. Several returned to the Philippines and then returned to Hawai'i years later. A few older men visited the Philippines and returned to Hawai'i with young wives. A mixture of older and young immigrants came after 1965.

The families of Precing and Nora, described in Chapter 1, are good examples of the complex mixture. Precing's grandfather migrated to Hawai'i, worked at a sugar plantation, married and started a family. He and his family returned to the Philippines in 1932, along with Precing's father who had been a student at Leilehua High School on Oahu. Fast forward decades later, Precing's father returned to Hawai'i to join his daughter Precing who had married an older former plantation worker. The Baclaan family's story reveals the same pattern. Nora's grandfather migrated to Hawai'i, married, started a family, and returned to the Philippines also in 1932. Her grandfather had planned to return and bring his family to Hawai'i, but World War II and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines thwarted him. Fast forward, Nora's father migrated to Hawai'i years later, who then arranged for his father and children, including Nora, to migrate to Hawai'i. These two families are combinations of the old (1920s and 1930s) and the new (1960s and 1970s) immigrants to Hawai'i.

Regionally, the residents mostly traced their origins from the northern Ilocos and central Visayan regions of the Philippines. The surveys showed that there were more Ilokano speakers than Visayan speakers. The graduate student researcher claimed that there existed social distance and even animosity between these two linguistic groups. This is not true.

Pete Tagalog does recall that the Ilokanos and Visayans held stereotypes of each other, like the Ilokanos were dog-eaters and the Visayans were show-offs. In contrast, Precing recalls that she interacted very well with her neighbors, Ilokanos and Visayans alike.

I count at least three cases of inter-regional marriages among the residents; one case, in fact, involves the host family of the researcher who conducted the survey. Nora recalls that her Visayan grandfather did not have problems with other elderly residents who spoke Ilokano and other languages that included Tagalog, pidgin, and a mixture of languages. Precing's Ilokano husband (Johnny) related to and was liked by most residents because he helped residents, regardless of what language they spoke. He did plumbing and electricity repairs at their homes without charge.

Pete, as noted earlier, considered himself Visayan, and Johnny were buddies. In short, even if we accept that there was an Ilokano-Visayan difference, there was an underlying and interlocking kinship and friendship that linked the residents to each other.

Family links were important. Of the 118 family households, three (Baclaan, Domrique and Tagalog) topped in numbers. Nora' family (Baclaan), which included her auntie's family (Cuasito) had 11. Precing's family (Domrique-Dela Cruz) and relatives (Maria and Ricardo Gambon) had around 17 but it was probably more as the names of her newly arrived siblings did not appear on the 1972 survey lists. The Tagalog family (Pete's and his brother Candido's family) totaled 18 and represented the local or Hawai'i -born Filipinos. Fast forward, leadership and support for the long anti-eviction struggle came from these three families of mixed old and new immigrant Ilokanos and Visayans, and Hawai'i-born Visayan families.

I mentioned in Chapter 1 the presence of single, elderly men. They were the ones who became good friends of and traded jokes with Precing, and who helped Nora look after her younger brothers and sisters. I counted 11 from the surveys of whom five lived together in a neat and orderly house where each assumed responsibilities like family members. Many of them were former plantation workers, and the first ones who cleared Mr. Ota's land, said to be a swamp land in the early 1940s, and built their homes paying inexpensive rents to Mr. Ota. Apparently, several built extra homes which they rented out to incoming residents, like the home occupied by the Baclaan family. And as mentioned earlier, several single elderly men also became godfathers to babies born at Ota Camp.

Most of the residents worked outside and inside the community. Several men had jobs in military bases (Hickam Air Force Base and Schofield Barracks) as building maintenance staff, yardmen, and janitors. Others worked for construction companies as heavy operators and laborers. Several women worked as cashiers, waitresses, and trimmers at the Pineapple Dole Cannery. On special occasions, the women also sold cooked food at cockfights held outside.

Inside Ota Camp, men earned money repairing cars, sharpening knives used for cockfights, raising chickens, and selling pork from just-butchered home-raised pigs. Ota Camp was a low-income community with only five household heads earning over $10,000 annually, and the

rest earning less than $5,000, including the single, elderly men who were receiving pensions.

The dump site near Ota Camp, where residents retrieved wood and other building materials, was also a source of income. Francisca Gonzales remembers that she, and her husband collected iron and copper there which they sold to dealers on Sand Island. It was good money. What she and her husband earned from recycling was enough to buy food for the family. They even saved money to buy a home and live outside Ota Camp. But they returned to Ota Camp when her husband got sick, and they could not pay the mortgage on their home anymore. Back at Ota Camp, she found a regular job as "mess attendant" or dishwasher at Hickam Air Force Base.[2]

In short, Ota Camp residents were not socially or geographically isolated as can be seen from the range of occupations they pursued outside of their area. In addition, the impression that the residents were mostly elderly single men was wrong.

The residents lived in a barrio lifestyle. Though they lived in clusters of families and separate households, everyone knew each other and everybody's business. Talking to and about neighbors involved a fair amount of gossiping. They had vegetable gardens; they raised chickens and pigs. A good example of this rural living is to watch someone, as I did, cook chicken *tinola*. She, the cook, had sauteed the chicken pieces in garlic, onions and ginger but she lacked green papayas and malunggay leaves (moringa). She strolled to her neighbor who gave her the leaves for free. The community, Pete recalls, was "nosy" but neighborly; they exchanged vegetables as a matter of routine.

At first, journalists who visited Ota Camp described the homes there as "shacks," sometimes describing them as "make-shift," "jury-rigged," "jerry-built" and "ramshackle."[3] But later after observing how they related to each, they began to praise the village lifestyle. A journalist, for example, who published an article with two photos on life in Ota Camp observed: "The streets are dusty, but the children enjoy the rural life. The homes, although old, are clean and neat."[4]



Ota Camp, 1972. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)



Juanita Tabisola, Ota Camp circa 1972. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)



Donato Domagsac, Ota Camp circa 1972 (Courtesy of Leon Dagdagan)



Patti Nibre, steering committee member, gets a haircut, Ota Camp, 1972. (Courtesy of Leon Dagdagan)



Boy and lechon, Ota Camp circa 1972. (Courtesy of Operation Manong Program)

Community Leader: Pete Tagalog

An analysis of three months, January to March 1972, helps explain how Pete Tagalog became the leader of the Ota Camp anti-eviction struggle. One factor was the role of outsiders who supported and gravitated around Pete. The other two factors were the changed relationship between Pete and the residents, and Pete's personal transformation.

One important outsider was a former neighbor and family friend. "Major Okada helped me, inspired me to organize."[5] Pete was referring to Hideo Okada, also known as "Major" Okada, a name given him by admirers for being an exceptional baseball player (of major-league quality) when he was a student at Mid-Pacific Institute. Okada had been a grassroots organizer for the ILWU and the Democratic Party. In other words, Okada had clout. Pete knew him personally as a former neighbor in Waipahu, before Pete moved to Ota Camp, and owner of a saimin shop where Pete ate regularly, and where Nora also later worked as a waitress. Pete also interacted with him as a fellow student at Leeward Community College where Okada, in his 60s, returned to school.[6]

Pete received support and encouragement from others at Leeward Community College. He and his brother Candido were close to Ernie Libarios who, along with counselor Lucy Gay, directed the Special Student Services office. Ernie taught self-development courses and founded a Filipino organization, Susi ng Filipinas. Pete, says Libarios, was older than his other students and therefore had wisdom but he had fears "to move above what was expected of him...to be a leader was hard."[7]

Pete, who changed his major field from marine technology to community organizing, eventually quit his studies because the anti-eviction struggle consumed his time and energy. Another mentor was Richard Yap who was also "Major" Okada's political science professor. He (Yap) and Libarios guest lectured to each other's classes on topics like Hawaiian politics, civil disobedience and "whatever was happening at that time."[8] He did not have Pete in his class, but he believes Pete knew of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

Activists flocked to Ota Camp. A newsletter written by the support group steering committee reveals how hectic the situation must have been with visits to Ota Camp by local and mainland activists, including Gloria Fontanez of the Young Lords Party and Kalayaan members involved in the anti-eviction struggle at the International Hotel in San Francisco. Local activists from Kabataan Katipunan, Waipahu Youth Project and Leeward Study Group came. Local officials like councilman George Akahane and David Paco from the governor's office met with Pete. Community leaders like Don Miguel from the Waipahu Community Association did the same. The point is that when outsiders and supporters arrived in Ota Camp, they always looked for Pete.[9]

The second factor to explain Pete's emergence as the leader was the changed relationship between Pete and the residents. The residents voted with their feet. When Pete scheduled a first meeting at his garage to talk about the eviction notice, many residents turned out. Before this meeting Pete had sought the assistance of government agencies and attorneys at the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i.

Pete recalled that day: "That day of the meeting, I looked out of my house and saw the people walking down the road to my house to come to the meeting. They all came--old folks, young folks, high school students, parents, working people—all walking down the road to my house. I saw that and I started to cry; I will never forget that ever."[10] An image had flashed into his mind: the Bataan Death March in the

Philippines when the Japanese led their American and Filipino prisoners, many of whom weak and limping, to walk to a concentration camp miles away. At this meeting, Pete did not know how to proceed until Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz grabbed a hammer, gave it to Pete and told him, "'boss you should go to the front and conduct the meeting.'"[11]

How did that happen? Why did the residents come to him? One explanation could be that the residents realized that Pete, a college student at Leeward Community College, must be smart enough to figure out the problem and knew where to find help. During a meeting in mid-January 1972 at a public library with government officials, the residents saw for themselves how Pete spoke clearly and effectively about their looming eviction.[12]

The third factor in explaining Pete's emergence as the leader, in addition to the support of outsiders and the residents' revised assessment of Pete, is that something inside of him changed in the first three months of 1972. While supporters swarmed Ota Camp, Pete somehow managed to visit and talk heart-to-heart with the residents. He listened to the elderly men who told him stories---how they cleared the Ota Camp area with their bare hands and built their make-shift homes. They also recounted their back-breaking work at the sugarcane plantations. He fully empathized with them.

Fortunata Manzano, a sickly, elderly resident who stayed inside her home most of the time, affected Pete. "The old lady, they call her Portun---Manzano [Fortunata Manzano]. Before the struggle, we go her house, she only stay in the house, in the bed, chair, she is sick. And then we talk to her about one, two hours a week and then sometimes we eat lunch at her house and then we back again. Pretty soon, about one month later, she's outside already, she's coming out in the community and talking. She even tell the community that when the bulldozer come, 'I go stay in front.'"[13] Her life story reminded Pete of his own mother's hard life during plantation days.

After listening to the residents, Pete embraced his new role. He felt compassion for the elderly residents. "I don't like the old people before. They look at me and they call me 'stupid.' And then the Ilokano [residents], I not bother too much. I don't know them. I don't understand. So, I don't look at them too much. But all of a sudden, it took me about three, four months before the struggle started, four months, even though I was in charge, I never really took over. Again, after four months, I decide, 'OK I gonna take over.' But then take another three, four months, before

really get that fire inside. All of a sudden, I like the old men. All of a sudden, I fighting for the old men.'"[14] That "fire inside" was Pete's awakening.

"Pete," says Sally Tagalog, "did not want to be a leader. He just wanted to be among the people to fight eviction. But he saw the suffering of old men. One man died after knowing about the eviction."[15] She's referring to Vicenti Elisna, 84 years old, who had a heart attack after receiving an eviction notice. He was buried on 6 March 1972.

"Makibaka," the word Ota Camp residents used as their slogan means "fight" and "struggle." Pete saw this word being used by activists who were fighting against martial law in the Philippines and adopted it. But for Pete, "makibaka" meant much more; it evoked the pains and sufferings that Filipinos endured in the old plantation days.

To summarize, the circumstances, the threat of eviction, created Pete. The circumstances challenged him, and he rose to the occasion. Once a laid-back and easy-going fellow, Pete found a cause. His name is often mentioned when the topic of Ota Camp's struggle comes up, but Pete often says that he relied on a core group: the steering committee.

Steering Committee

Taking control, Pete organized and formed a steering committee soon after his three-month house-to-house visits and long conversations with the residents. Observing that old people were influential and popular among the residents, he asked three seniors (Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz, Johnny Domrique and Patricio "Patti" Nibre), all Ilokanos and who knew the "culture" (Pete's word), to join. Pete also asked two young women, Nora Ribucan Bautista and Nora Gozon Baclaan. The former is a local born Filipina, whom I will refer to as Nora B, while the latter, discussed in Chapter 1, is an immigrant from the Philippines. Finally, Pete asked his younger brother, Candido, to be part of the committee. Dela Cruz, Domrique and Nibre, aside from being good friends with each other, were also ritually linked to each other because Dela Cruz and Nibre were godfathers to Domrique's two sons.

Enrique Dela Cruz (age 73), as mentioned in Chapter 1, married Precing Domrique's cousin (age 40). Pete and others gave Dela Cruz the nickname "judge" because he (Dela Cruz) behaved like a judge; he helped

judge the character of potential steering committee members when Pete was choosing members for the reorganized steering committee. "He get people shamed. That's why I called him the 'judge,'" said Pete.[16] Dela Cruz was known for his outbursts, antics and jokes during meetings with residents and politicians. He also liked to drink liquor and got tipsy so that often his remarks during meetings made people howl and laugh.[17] We recall also that Dela Cruz was the person who ordered Pete to sit behind the table and chair the first residents' meeting.

Dela Cruz was featured in a newspaper article.[18] He was receiving a $200.00 pension but still did maintenance work for extra income at Hickam Air Base Golf Course. Johnny Domrique had recommended him for this job. A photo that accompanied the article shows Dela Cruz smiling, holding a puppy, and watering orchid plants in front of his home. "'We want to stay together. My wife (she is 40) tells me I should stop work, I'm too old. But I feel good, and we need the money. We can't pay high rent, and we want to stay with the community. I lived here since 1949. I don't know why this small community has to get broken.'"[19]

Johnny Domrique, another steering committee member, had been Pete's friend for many years. He was a quiet person for whom the phrase "solid as a rock" could aptly be applied. Working behind the scenes and avoiding the spotlight, like his wife Precing, he kept many residents focused on the eviction issue. Many residents liked and respected him. They thanked him for doing electric and house repairs at no charge. Pete describes Johnny as "workaholic," "quiet," and "respected." But the Johnny he knew before he got married was a different person. He was fun loving and devoted to a son from his first Hawaiian wife. He changed his ways and became a responsible husband and father, and a generous uncle to relatives and in-laws after he married Precing.[20] Johnny's other talents included butchering and roasting pigs.

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that Johnny Domrique returned to the Philippines in 1965 in search of a wife (and found Precing). What was his life like before that? In 1933, 19-years old Johnny left his father and six younger brothers and sisters to work in Hawai'i. Why did he come? "*Hirap sa buhay. Lakas loob lamang*," Precing recalls.[21] He worked first at a Waimanalo sugarcane plantation , "*buhat ng tubo*" (hauling harvested sugar canes) and was paid a dollar a day. Then he moved to an Ewa Beach plantation where he worked for eight years, also "*buhat ng tubo*" until World War II when other job opportunities opened up for many Filipino plantation workers. Like Pete Tagalog's father who found work in the

military during that time, Johnny was hired at Hickam Air Base as a building maintenance man earning $1.55 per hour. Soon he learned many skills such as those of an electrician, plumber, painter, and carpenter. He was later promoted as a building maintenance supervisor. While working at Hickam he enrolled in a GED adult class at Farrington High School where he learned how to read and write. He became a naturalized citizen in 1949. Encouraged by relatives and match makers sixteen years later, he returned to the Philippines, met and married Precing.

To review, when the developer served the eviction notice, Johnny and Precing were not worried because they knew they could afford to rent a home for their family and the relatives temporarily parked at their home. In fact, they had already located one probable place. But one night Pete came to their home and persuaded them to stay and help fight the eviction. Johnny and Precing reconsidered their plans, thought of their neighbors who would not be able to afford rents elsewhere, and decided to stay. An important factor could be that Pete and Johnny had been close friends and drinking buddies long before Johnny got married to Precing.

The decision by Precing and Johnny to stay was crucial in the struggle against eviction. Both had an extensive network of relatives and friends who regarded them as trustworthy, decent and compassionate individuals. They also represented a rural lifestyle. Johnny and his relatives, says Pete, showed what was the Filipino culture inside Ota Camp. "The culture came inside Ota Camp when the immigrants came, Johnny Domrique and all that." Filipino traditions and lifestyle at Ota Camp became strong when the immigrants came. The locals, like Pete, were not in touch with the Filipino culture. "They've been in the islands too long already."[22] The Domriques followed a lifestyle that reminded Pete of plantation life neighborliness. They often had large gatherings at their garage where neighbors dropped in and were welcomed. In addition, Johnny's and Precing's relatives who started arriving in 1972 not only brought more "immigrant culture" but also numbers---people ready to resist eviction.

Patricio (Patti) Nibre was another steering committee member who, unlike Johnny, disliked and distrusted Pete for a time. He believed, like Nora's grandfather, that all Filipino organizations were led by crooked leaders. In his mind, Pete was forming an association for his personal advantage. But once Patti realized that Pete was not out to cheat or steal from the residents, he gave Pete his trust and agreed to be part of the steering committee.

I don't have much written information on Patti except stories about him from several residents. Notes by Leon Dagdagan show that Patti came to Hawai'i in 1926 and that he worked as a carpenter and cut cane in a plantation. During World War II, he left the plantation for Honolulu, then in February 1943 he built a home at Ota Camp which was then mostly planted to rice and corn. There were only four houses, including his, standing far apart from each other. He paid Mr. Ota $20.00 per month.[23] Another source on Patti is sketch of sixth graders from Liliuokalani Elementary School who visited Ota Camp and interviewed Patti. In the interview, Patti told the students that Ota Camp was a quiet community where residents built their houses using metal scraps and lumber. The students wrote: "People raise vegetables, animals and fruits. From the outside it may look run down, but the people are friendly and like living there... The residents are being evicted by the owner of the land. The lease owner wants to build middle-class houses on the land. So, the people have decided to protest. They elected a committee and a spokesman to represent their community. "[24]

Pete recalls that both Patti and Judge Dela Cruz initially disliked him. They changed by getting to know Pete better. "But the guys who don't like me, they became my number one. They found out that, you know, I am pushing for the poor."[25] Together with Johnny Domrique, these three formed the main anchor of support around Pete. "These were the key guys, three of them, all Ilokanos...they know the culture, not too much the plantation [lifestyle] one but pretty close though."[26] In numerous conversations with me, Pete stressed the vital role of these three individuals in the residents' fight against eviction.

The other members of the steering committee were two Noras: Nora Baclaan and Nora Bautista. I described Nora Baclaan's life in the Philippines and her migration to Hawai'i in Chapter one. By 1972 she was a student majoring in accounting at Leeward Community College and working part-time jobs when she became a steering committee member. She jokes that in the beginning she was serving coffee and doughnuts during meetings, but then later Pete asked her to be secretary and then treasurer, a position she held until 1987.

In the first phase of the struggle, Nora attended meetings and joined the steering committee over the objections of her grandfather and aunt. Her grandfather told her not to attend the meetings and when she did, he locked her out. Nora had to enter the house by climbing through her bedroom window. Her grandfather said that it was useless to fight

those who owned the land; landlords had rights to evict tenants. Moreover, he believed that Nora's group, besides being communists, were crooks who would steal money from the residents.

But Nora persisted. After pondering on the eviction threat, she concluded that the only option was to resist. She welcomed being part of the resistance group. "For me, gain or lose. If I don't participate, if we win, why should I have something that I never worked for? So might as well I go participate. I will not feel too bad if I have something out of it but yet I worked hard on it."[27]

An article in the local newspaper referred to Nora as "another example of dramatic change as a result of Makibaka Struggle." Her family had tried to stop her from joining the struggle but she "has become one of the most enthusiastic and community-spirited residents."[28]

Nora revealed to me much later that she was torn. She had taken an army test and passed. She had planned to enlist but Pete Tagalog and attorney Herb Takahashi dissuaded her from enlisting. They told her that she was needed in the anti-eviction fight and, on a personal level, that she was needed by her younger siblings. Persuaded, Nora gave up the idea of a military career.[29]

As for the other Nora---Nora Bautista—in the steering committee, I was able to reach her at her new home on the U.S. Mainland. Her parents (Pablo and Gorgonia Ribucan) from San Vicente, Ilocos Sur, were recruited to work at Hawai'i sugar cane fields in 1946. Nora B (to distinguish her from the other Nora in the steering committee), the youngest of 11 children, was born in 1951 on Maui; she grew up in a sugar plantation until she was 10 when the family moved to the city (Kahului).

She recalls her childhood: "Growing up in a small community where everyone knew each other was a happy time for me. There were hardly any cars then and children could play in the streets safely. There were fruit trees all around (mountain apple, mango, guava) so we could play and snack on them. As kids we rode thru the forest and would explore. Our father would join the other men and have cock fights on weekends, and I remember watching and sitting in a tree. The fun part was that when there was a winner, they would call me down to collect my '*barato*' (good luck for their winnings)."[30]

Their lifestyle changed when the family moved to the city. They bought vegetables from the grocery store until her father planted a small

vegetable garden. They had to buy meat and cash was hard. Her mother worked at pineapple fields while her father continued to work at the sugar cane fields. For extra cash, her father worked as a gardener at a nearby church and collected metal at a dump yard.

At 15 years old, Nora B worked at a pineapple cannery every summer and saved her earnings for further education. She learned how to drive, becoming a driver for her parents who never learned how to drive. She thought that her mother was "very strict," so she looked forward to leaving home "to start my own life." After graduating from Baldwin High School, she made her move by going to Oahu and attending a Cosmetology school that fitted her budget.

Nora B lived in Ota Camp where residents lived in a lifestyle reminiscent of her childhood on Maui. Her sister-in-law had originally invited her to come and live with her, after this sister-in-law's brother was killed in Vietnam, but for some reason Nora B ended up living in Ota Camp with Fortunata Manzano, her sister-in-law's mother. Fortunata and her husband, Guillermo, treated her "like I was their own daughter. I felt comfortable there in Ota Camp. It was like living at H'poko camp on Maui again. The lifestyle of easy living with chickens running loose, heating up the heater with logs to prepare for hot shower. Washing clothes and hanging them on the line to dry. Neighbors sharing vegetables and stories."[31]

Nora B finished her cosmetology course, then met and married a neighbor (Richard "Pete" Bautista). "We had our son in 1971 and lived on the first floor of his parents' house. My husband at the time was still going to college after returning from overseas military deployment and working part time at a gym. I was working part time in a salon and raising our baby. Rent was cheap in Ota Camp and even though we didn't have the conveniences of indoor bathrooms, financially it worked for us."[32] The eviction notice devastated her: "Where would we go and how would we afford it?"[33]

Nora B recalls that Pete Tagalog invited her and her husband to be in the steering committee, and that her father-in-law (Eldefonso Bautista) encouraged her to play an active role. She was asked to be the treasurer for the group. "We fought for affordable housing and for our lifestyle. We wanted to have the freedom to raise livestock, farm gardens and our sense of community maintained."[34]

Candido ("Candy") Tagalog, who was Pete's younger brother, was also in the steering committee. He was the younger brother who monitored Pete because he and other residents suspected that there were people intent on hurting and attacking Pete. Both Sally and Nora recall that there were real threats made to Pete's life.[35]

To summarize, by the end of 1972 two things were clear. First, the residents had accepted Pete, as their leader, and the steering committee as his core supporters. Secondly, Pete had fully accepted his role as their leader. "I was shy at the beginning. I only talked pidgin. I was scared, did not know how to talk with professionals."[36]

Being a leader took a toll on Pete's health. Sally recalls that during the hectic times of the struggle, Pete got tired, sick and spat blood. She gave him tea and put her hand on his forehead to comfort him.[37] "Do you know why he wore dark glasses," asks Helen Aro, an outside supporter who became Pete's and Nora's confidant, "Because his eyes—had bags under the eyes—due to loss of sleep, attending meetings, thinking about Ota Camp problems."[38] Even at nighttime, he wore dark glasses.

Sally supported Pete completely. As Pete's time and energy went to the struggle, Sally took care of their six children at home. "A lot of times, Pete cannot help me around the house and with the six children--one boy and five girls. Sometimes, I had to be a father to them. I had to help them do their homework. But I didn't grumble. I just had to be understanding and patient."[39] She worked part-time—as trimmer at a sewing factory, telephone operator, paramedical teacher doing sign language--to add to the family income. She ignored people's warnings that Pete could get killed or go to prison for leading the fight. An early vision that Pete would be a community leader emboldened her, assured her that the Virgin Mary would take care of her family.[40]

Pete discovered a life-long mission

"The Filipinos first came to Hawai'i in 1906. They came more like slaves for the plantation. And we have been suffering ever since. Even today, Filipinos are found in jobs that no other people want to do."

"We don't know what was lost back then through that kind of treatment. But in Ota Camp, we know what is missing. We are fighting for not only our homes, but for regaining whatever honor was lost by being

pushed around. The Filipino has been twisted one way, and now he is being twisted the other way. How much more can we be twisted before we break?"

"We have learned a lot from what happened to Kalama (Valley) and Halawa (stadium) eviction; we stood fast in Ota Camp, now others learn from us. When we say *makibaka*, we mean we are willing to struggle and suffer for equal opportunity."[41]

Uniting the Residents

The steering committee sponsored activities to make residents interact with each other beyond their families and relatives. These activities included welfare and wellness programs, regular meetings with all the residents, and special get-togethers with the residents and supporters from outside.

To promote pride in the neighborhood, the steering committee organized a clean-up of the area, picking up garbage and debris outside private homes and yards, which owners generally kept neat and tidy. Garbage collectors never visited Ota Camp. Residents simply recycled and burned unwanted scraps; left-over foods were fed to their pigs.

The clean-up had another purpose. "The three months we don't go out, we clean up the village. Oh, plenty rubbish. We finally found big truck for 200 dollars, we load that truck, plenty of junk. We clean up the camp, look good. But the cleaning up of Ota Camp is not just to work, clean up but when you're cleaning up, the people watching. They watching. 'Ah Makibaka cleaning up this makibaka means something.' Must be people listening to Makibaka. They all see, I guess their faith grow stronger in Makibaka when they see that, cleaning kine."[42]

The clean-up helped counter Ota Camp's negative image. For many years, Ota Camp was known as a venue for small-time cockfighting games. Newspaper accounts in early 1970s used adjectives like "slum-like," and "make-shift," to describe the homes. Later the tone of reporting changed after journalists began to visit Ota Camp and observe the rural lifestyle there. Outside supporter Gary Kubota recalls (see Chapter 3) that one of his goals was to promote a positive image of Ota Camp.[43]

Johnny Domrique helped with painting and other house repairs. "Plumbing, electricity, every house was fixed, touched the floor,

everything all like all, electricity, some never had electricity before. I think that's why the people trusted the steering committee."[44] Residents could borrow from the group's petty cash for these repairs as well as for base necessities. The steering committee set up a kitty by asking residents to contribute $2.00 monthly. Residents could borrow for gasoline or bus money.

The steering committee helped residents tend gardens, also raise chicken and hogs. "Pigs, big kine of pigs, we raised too. But then since we get pig, we kill the pig. I noticed that the people love pig, so we make fund-raising, every week. We take order. We take order how many pounds they like. And when we get order, we take the pig. Sell them, just like every week. They throw the intestines in the fire. Yah. That's one put the Ilocanos all together, you know. Every week you look forward to cut the 'baboy' [pig]. And the pig head, you know, you just chop them up, all of them work. Oh, I used to eat baboy, at that time I can eat. Oh, I like those days. I'm always in touch with them. Sometimes early in the morning, 'eh boss,' the Ilokano, Dela Cruz, 'c'mon we cut now.'"[45] Johnny Domrique, the resident pig butcher, led the male cooks.

Once a week, on Wednesday evenings, Dr Duke Choy provided free health services to the residents. Sometimes a medical student (Carlos Lam) accompanied him. Dr Choy, a pediatrician by training, also provided free medical services to needy communities in Kalama Valley, Chinatown and Hawaii State Prison.[46]

Nora recalls that she was one of three other residents who assisted Dr Choy; she screened the patients, asking them why they wanted to see the doctor. Dr Choy taught her how to take blood pressure and temperature, and treatment by acupuncture. The residents, however, trusted Dr Choy for acupuncture treatment, but not Nora.

"Why did he (Dr Choy) do it?" I ask Nora.

Nora: "He wanted to give us moral support. Also, he wanted to help poor people. He was not recruited; he offered his services free. Clinic hours were from 7:00 to 10:00 P.M., even later. Many came because they could talk to Dr Choy. The medium of communication was pidgin. The residents felt free and comfortable with him. Also, it was free."[47]

Other special activities brought the women and young residents together. Staff from the Leeward Immigrant Center came in the evenings to teach arts and crafts to women. For young residents, the YMCA,

Operation Manong from UH, Kokua Hawai'i and the Leeward Immigrant Center organized educational and recreational activities. For example, Helen Aro conducted cooking classes while Brian Taniguchi, Gary Kubota and other volunteers took the young people to the beach, fishing and camping.

Pete recalls, "Young kids was not there too much, until the Ota Camp start struggling or just before the struggle then I noticed kids started coming in. Became much bigger because we had a program for the kids, brought the kids together, get the YMCA, another from the office of Immigrant Center." The program involved tutoring and teaching about Hawai'i. On the last day of the program, the children were brought to Mokuleia Beach, "and when they went there, big bucket of fish waiting for them, for them to cook and they enjoy. They get the fire all already, they pick up the fish they like, they clean 'em, they do that." [48]

The weekly Friday night meetings brought all the residents together at one place at the same time. The steering committee members reminded and cajoled the residents to come and participate in discussions on personal problems among residents and political action activities. These meetings were both serious and social with snacks of coffee and doughnuts, and birthday cakes for celebrants. Judge Dela Cruz would come, slightly drunk, with his jokes and antics.

Nora Bautista recalls: "We held meetings every week to keep the tenants informed and supported. At that time, I could understand and speak very little Filipino (Ilocano) and would talk and encourage some tenants who were afraid. Filipinos hate to be confrontational, and we could empathize with them being in the same dilemma, and we had nowhere to go (not affordable for everyone). So, we had to fire them up; other groups sharing their stories and telling them we need to fight for ourselves and family."[49]

The steering committee at special meetings resolved personal conflicts among the residents like rental fees to fellow residents, living arrangements of unmarried couples, alleged dishonesty of neighbors, etc. The main topics in the regular meetings related to the main problem: how to delay and stop eviction and what political action the residents must take. In 1972, for example, the residents organized two big demonstrations, one at the State Capitol and another at the office of the developer who wanted to evict them. The next year, the residents demonstrated before the Honolulu City Council's building. These political actions are discussed in Chapter 4.

After several months of meetings, the residents agreed on four basic demands: (1) they did not want to move out of Waipahu; (2) they did not want to live in apartments; (3) they wanted to stay together, if they are relocated; and (4) they did not want Amity Waipahu Inc. as their landlord.[50]

Not everyone liked Pete as the leader. A few residents argued with him at Friday meetings. One of his critics earned the label "bubble eye" because his eyes got bigger and bigger as he grew agitated and emotional. Nora's grandfather and auntie, as I mentioned earlier, thought that resistance was hopeless, and the leaders were crooks. Nora recalls that one "rich" resident doubted Pete's ability to lead because he regarded Pete as "poor" and had no stable occupation. "When you are poor, anything they accuse you. When the rich man come around, they kiss his butt."[51] But Pete, adds Nora, "did not sell out, did not bow to rich people and powerful people, people in high offices. He was brave. These people, they are not God, why bow to them?"[52]

Pete agrees that he dominated the meetings. That was his leadership style; he does not apologize for it. He and Judge Dela Cruz sometimes shouted down or shamed people who were talking "silly." Pete stopped people from talking rough to the elderly men. He knew he was doing a "Marcos's style" (referring to the former Philippine dictator) of leadership because it was effective. Despite his scoldings, the recalcitrant residents still came to the meetings. Pete justifies his behavior: he wanted the residents to focus on one issue, that of finding housing for everyone. He wanted only one voice for the collective struggle, and that happened to be his voice. He discouraged residents from making public statements on the status or direction of the struggle.

For three years, every Friday, the residents came to the meetings. "And they come in 100 percent. I don't think there's any place like that, for the three years the meeting hall was always packed."[53]

I ask Nora: "So when the struggle started, when you had the Steering Committee, did you notice a change in the community?

Nora: "Oh, yeah, lots of changes?"

M: "Like what?"

Nora: "The people become more close."

M: "Really?"

Nora: "Yeah. The people that they don't' know each other before, now they know better. The people think about one another; they become close."

M: "Why do you think that happened?"

Nora: "I guess because they got more involved and see each other more often, you know. Especially when there's a gathering and stuff like that, and they exercise [celebrate] the birthdays of the residents, they make more closer."[54]

Pete recalls how interactions promoted by regular meetings and collective activities stopped people from putting each other down. "There's one guy from the time of struggle until today, maybe better now, he never liked the Visayan. But the others, the Ilocanos were strong.... Then we let everybody know about the Pangasinan, Ilocano, what the Ilokano felt about the Visayan, how the Visayan felt about the Ilokano. Then we stopped making fun of each other, making fun between the one eat dog, and the lazy one, then pretty, so everyone come together. The Visayans make fun of themselves; Ilokanos, same thing, you know."[55] Humor and laughter demolished stereotyping.

In addition to welfare and wellness programs and regular weekly meetings, the steering committee also organized special social events like pot-luck get-togethers among the residents and outside supporters. The elderly men, led by Johnny, took charge of butchering and roasting pigs; Precing and her women's group chopped the meat and sliced the vegetables. There were singing and dancing. Supporters from outside brought food and sometimes donated [55]pigs to be butchered. These social events boosted the residents' morale as they mixed and talked with their outside supporters.

Chapter 3
THE SUPPORTERS

Many outsiders joined the Ota Camp residents' fight against eviction. They were workers, students, professionals, politicians and community activists who were also involved in other causes like the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i, public access to mountains and beaches, evictions, ethnic awareness among the Filipinos in Hawai'i, the American war in Vietnam, and martial law in the Philippines. In this chapter I focus on four individuals---Gary T. Kubota, Isidro M. Verzon, Jr., Leon Dagdagan and Herbert R. Takahashi--whom Ota Camp residents count among their staunch supporters. In this chapter, we get to know them and through them we see the context of the Ota Camp struggle.

Gary T. Kubota (Gary)

Gary was born in 1949 and raised on Oahu, Hawai'i. His father served with the 442nd Regiment, 100th Battalion in World War II; his mother was a nurse. After returning home to Hawai'i, his father had a mental illness akin to what many soldiers suffer after leaving the war front. The term for this now is post-traumatic stress disorder. The roots of Gary's activism began when he realized that only a few people recognized the sacrifices and sufferings of his father and his fellow soldiers; mainstream history books ignored the contributions of Japanese American soldiers. "I felt because of this kind of institutionalized racism, guys in my generation were going to face the same racist thing again by fighting in Vietnam. I wasn't going to do it."[1] He saw, too, that many minority students were not going to the university but were sent instead to fight in Vietnam.

As a teenager, he was self-reliant, stubborn and independent. Disowned by his family for protesting against the American war in Vietnam, he moved out. Dropping out after two years of college study, he worked for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel while serving as a draft counselor for the American Friends Service Committee. When the United Methodist Church advertised an opening for a printer, he applied even though he lacked skills in printing. Eventually, he learned how to print on the job. While working there, he also learned about the eviction struggle at Kalama Valley. Though politically aware, Kubota had never joined any rally or any political demonstration until that year in 1971 when he joined the group called Kokua Hawai'i who were supporting the Kalama Valley residents' fight against eviction.[2]

Kokua Hawai'i (formerly Kokua Kalama), a multi-ethnic group formed in 1970, was born in the middle of an eviction in Kalama Valley on Oahu. Bishop Estate was evicting the residents--its tenants of whom many were farmers--so the land could be used for upscale residential housing. In April 1971 Kokua Hawai'i members occupied the valley; the following month, the police arrested them. Gary was one of those arrested but he was not charged.[159] Eventually, all Kalama Valley residents lost their homes. Bishop Estate then built homes for people who could afford them. Kokua Hawai'i members later joined and supported other communities threatened with eviction.

What propelled Kokua Hawai'i's activism was Hawai'i's new policy of development based on tourism. Government leaders, mostly Democratic Party members, believed that the tourist-development policy would mean economic growth for Hawai'i. Critics believed that this kind of development meant developers and businesses who are exploiting island resources displace locals and destroy their way of life. The book by Gavan Daws and George Cooper, mentioned earlier, shows how top Democrat officials were supportive and and/or became developers themselves.

In early 1972 Gary joined two Kokua Hawai'i members (Randy Yamaguchi and Jim Young) who were already living inside Ota Camp. Pete Tagalog had met these two members at Leeward Community College and he (Pete), recounts Gary, invited them to come and live at Ota Camp. Gary joined them there, renting a shack from a resident for $35.00 a month. His salary as a parking attendant in a car store in Pearl Harbor supported the three of them.

"I moved in after it became apparent Jim and Randy needed help in assisting Ota Camp with helping Pete with the news media. Like any political campaign, we were fighting image problems---stereotypes---and had to figure out a way to deliver Ota Camp's message to people."[4] TV coverage had projected Ota Camp as a dirty neighborhood with unemployed residents. With Pete's approval, Gary called a news media and supplied the journalists with press releases favorably and accurately portraying the place and its residents. He suggested that to give a good impression to the press, the residents should not sit on porches for that would give the impression that the residents had nothing else to do. Also, no illegal gambling, cockfighting and drinking alcohol. The latter was directed to "Judge" Dela Cruz who liked serving little cups of whiskey to his guests at his porch.

Gary and other Kokua Hawai'i members attended strategy meetings, did research, took photos, and participated in community-building activities. For instance, they helped the residents build an Ota Camp float for a parade commemorating the 75th anniversary of the founding of Waipahu. They took the young residents on excursions as well as camping and field trips. Darrell Tagalog recalls that Kokua Hawai'i members were good role models for them.[5]

In general, Pete and the residents welcomed their help. But there were also minor disagreements. One instance was when Kokua Hawai'i wanted to show to the residents a film on the Kalama Valley struggle. This film included scenes of confrontation between the police and Kalama Valley residents that ended up with arrests. Pete told them to show the film elsewhere where residents could go, if they wanted. He believed that the film would scare the residents and could hamper the steering committee's effort to organize for a peaceful struggle. "We like to avoid that one, get arrested and all that. One thing, the people no can take that. All Filipino, no can take that. But if you exhaust everything else already, and they know, they gonna fight, you know."[6] Another instance of disagreement and criticism was Kokua Hawai'i holding a meeting in a locked room inside Ota Camp without informing Pete first.[7] Still another instance was when a Kokua Hawai'i member paid a lot of attention to a female resident.

Gary once objected to what he believed was Pete's authoritarian leadership style. But Pete recalls, he knew that he was doing something right and that he was effective because, even if he sounded despotic, residents who received tongue-lashing from him still attended the Friday

meetings. They were not put off by Pete's actions at meetings, which he always presided. Even Gary realized later that Pete was right because only one resident, who received a tongue-lashing from Pete, eventually moved out because he believed resisting eviction was a lost cause. On one occasion, Gary did something without consulting Pete first. Upon learning that city officials were coming to visit Ota Camp, he invited media people to come, staging a "media ambush." Gary felt bad about his action and owned up to it. Pete did not mention this incident to me.

Overall, Gary and Pete maintained a warm relationship. After Gary and Kokua Hawai'i moved out of Ota Camp in mid 1972, he invited Pete as a guest speaker in Hikina Lane in Honolulu where residents feared eviction as Honolulu Community College planned to expand its parking lot. "Pete was a great speaker and could hold people's attention, make them laugh, then give them the straight talk as a working man."[8]

Nora remembers the vital support from Kokua Hawai'i and other outside supporters whom, she believed, came to teach the residents how to fight the State and show how "to change the world overnight."[9]

Isidro M. Verzon, Jr. (Johnny)

Johnny grew up miserable as a child in Cato, a small village in Infanta, Pangasinan in Luzon, Philippines. His father was abroad working as a chef in the US Navy; his mother was very strict with him and his younger brother. His father sent money to support the family but his mother, who aimed at buying rice fields and other properties, scrimped on food. "What I remembered growing up was that I was always hungry. Where we lived, you ate what you grew in your garden and if the fishermen were lucky, you have fish. If there is nothing to eat, you boil rice and mixed it with salt and lard to give it taste. That is how we survived. As long as you have rice, you will be all right. We had no running water, no flushing toilets, no electricity, no ice box, and no telephone. I lived in a grass hut for the first ten years of my life."[10]

In 1960, when Johnny was 10 years old, he and his younger brother and mother moved to a naval air station in Millington, Tennessee to join his father. "My father was an enlisted man (low rank) in the US Navy. Back then, Filipinos and blacks were usually assigned to be cooks. My father was the oldest in his family and joined the Navy in the Philippines. He lied about his age. He dropped out of the fourth grade.

With a family to support, he cut hair, painted oil portrait of people, and worked part time as a fry cook. To me, he was a self-made man and not afraid of work."[11] The Verzon family stayed in Tennessee for two years and then in Newport, Rhode Island for one year.

Johnny recalls how badly he and his younger brother were treated by their classmates. "Life in Tennessee had its ups and downs—mostly down." They were teased by their classmates because they dressed differently and did not know a word of English. Classmates thought they were "Chicanos," "Indians" or "niggers." "We did not know that the schools were segregated back then. Whites went to white schools and blacks went to black schools. The white schools had nice buildings and new gyms. The black schools were dilapidated and run-down."[12]

In 1963, the Verzon family moved to Hawai'i when his father was stationed at Pearl Harbor. They lived at two different places in Honolulu and Johnny attended two intermediate schools, before they moved to Halawa Housing. Then officials ordered the Verzons and 80 others to leave Halawa so that the City could build a new stadium (the Aloha Stadium) on the site. There was a demonstration against the eviction, but Johnny does not recall any of that.[13] His parents moved the family to Nanakuli in Waianae. He continued his intermediate schooling there where, for the first time, he felt accepted by his classmates—mostly Hawaiians--and teachers and he learned pidgin. But in Aiea High School, he again felt unhappy, dislocated and unaccepted. He noticed that Hawai'i born Filipino students at the school were ashamed of being Filipinos and they found it strange that he was speaking English with an American southern accent.

What stopped Johnny from quitting school was basketball and a caring counselor. "Kiku Shimabukuro was an Educational Guidance Opportunity Counselor at Aiea High School. She is Claire's mother. She is the one who came to my house in Halawa Housing and talked to me about going back to school since I was not going to class during my junior year. That is how I got to be part of Hawai'i Upward Bound Program."[14] Why was this important? "Remember that I came from a military background (father), poor academic preparation due to part-time work, and nearly dropping out of school. Hawai'i Upward Bound Program provided me the opportunity to go to college. Otherwise, I would probably be in the U.S. Marine Corps or jail."[15] The program's staff identified potential dropouts from low-income families and organized summer school classes for them.

The "part-time work" was a part of Verzon's upbringing by parents who worked all the time. As a youngster, he mowed lawns, sold newspapers, and did a fair share of dishwashing at US naval cafeterias. He knocked on doors at Halawa Housing asking people to buy rice cakes that his mother cooked. Even while already in college, he helped prepare and sell malasadas from his father's lunch wagon—his father had retired-- and on weekends, he helped barbecue chicken to sell at cockfights.

Johnny's activism began at the university. At UH Mānoa he saw demonstrations against American's policies in Vietnam and Cambodia. He learned that student demonstrators were killed at Kent State University. At that time, he did not know why the Americans were in Vietnam nor what communism was. "All I keep hearing was that we were trying to stop communism. I did not even know what that is. I guess that was the beginning when I began to question the establishment."[16] Unlike Gary, Johnny did not get involved in any political activities against the American war in Vietnam.

Johnny met several of the few Filipino students at the university—those who came from the Philippines as East-West Center grantees, and Filipino Americans born on the Mainland and Hawai'i. He played basketball with them and attended annual international nights. He attended the meetings of the Fil-Am Club which had mostly Philippine-born students as members. They were his classmates in Ruben Alcantara's American Studies class and Precy Espiritu's Ilokano class. They met at an Ethnic Studies office, where Virgilio Felipe and Leon Dagdagan co-taught a course on the Filipinos in Hawai'i. They discussed many topics like Karl Marx, Che Guevarra, Mao Tse Tung as well as colonial mentality among Filipinos in Hawaii. We're Filipinos. We're "coconuts" brown outside, white inside? Filipinos and their problems became Johnny's main concern.

He and his friends formed the group Kabataan Katipunan (Youth Together) and registered it as a student organization. They called themselves a steering committee of eight members, no officers or chairperson. "'We need the help of the leaders in the community instead of ego trips. Instead of group work, we need collective action.'"[17] In early January 1972 the fired-up group sponsored Ating Tao conference which consisted of forums at UH Mānoa and Leeward Community College on many issues that included factionalism between the new immigrants and Hawai'i -born Filipinos, and the status of Filipino workers

who would lose their jobs when sugarcane plantations closed. Johnny recalls that they were trying to "unite all Filipinos to solve the problems we face in America—both in Hawai'i and on the US Mainland."[18] Few, however, outside the campuses attended the forums; only about 50 or so, mostly students, on the average attended each session. "'It is a very sensitive area in the Filipino community. There are those who deny there is factionalism,'"[19] said Bienvenido Junasa, director of the State Immigration Service and one of the panel speakers.

Pete Thompson, then teaching Hawaiian courses in the Ethnic Studies program, told Johnny that Filipinos were being evicted at Ota Camp in Waipahu. Thinking that the residents needed translators, Johnny and his group decided to check it out. What Johnny saw there reminded him of low-income groups in the Philippines, like in Tondo, Manila, and he thought the place stunk a bit. At first Johnny did not think of rendering long-term support. But eventually he and his group decided that they should. One reason is he believed in action, not just talking. He saw that the residents' situation demanded action and commitment from supporters, not just sporadic visits. He also felt compassion. "When I looked at them [old men] it touched my heart. I got reminded of my grandparents struggling to survive."[20] He joked around with one of them, "Judge" Dela Cruz, who once said that he would stop bulldozers from destroying their homes. Johnny told him that he would chain himself to him.

A second reason was the presence of non-Filipino supporters bothered him. "Many individuals came to Ota Camp representing groups such as Kokua Hawai'i, Third Arm, and Leeward Study Group. Some of them carried their red book. It is a little book about Mao Tse Tung. We used to call it the red bible. Many of us did not trust the other groups. It was our mind that Ota Camp was a Filipino community, therefore, it was important that Filipinos should be in the forefront and not be in the back."[21] Pete Tagalog, though thankful for outside support, confided in Johnny his fears that Kokua Hawai'i members could scare the residents whenever they talked about police arrests in the Kalama Valley struggle. Johnny had a friendly and frank conversation with Kokua Hawai'i members about respecting what the residents wanted and not pushing any ideology on them. They backed off.

Johnny and his group that included Leon Dagdagan and Bernadette Suguitan, agreed to follow what the residents wanted to do: fight eviction. They attended weekly and special meetings inside and

outside the neighborhood, sometimes acting as Ilokano and English translators, and marched with the residents at rallies and demonstrations. At weekly Friday meetings, Johnny and his group listened quietly. Sometimes he would drop by Ota Camp on his way home from Honolulu to Nanakuli. One of the highlights of Johnny's involvements was the demonstration on 30 March 1972, discussed in Chapter 4. Leon Dagdagan, discussed below, participated and took pictures of this first public demonstration of the residents.



Johnny Verzon (in white T-shirt) at a meeting at Ota Camp, circa 1972. Don Miguel, to his left, and to his right and center, Hideo "Major" Okada, center, both outside supporters. (Courtesy of Leon Dagdagan.)

Leon Dagdagan (Leon)

Unlike Johnny Verzon, who had a difficult childhood and adjusting to new surrounding as his parents moved the family around, Leon's childhood was happy as his parents stayed put in Manila where he finished his primary and secondary schooling. He was fortunate to be a recipient of his parents' hard work and struggles. His father, while still in his teens, left the Philippines for the United States where he eventually, after transient jobs like playing in a musical band with his twin brothers and fishing salmon in Alaska, managed to earn a law degree in Washington, DC. His mother, educated by the Thomasites, the pioneer American teachers, eventually graduated in Manila with a degree in

English. His father and mother reconnected--because they knew each other as youngsters in Badoc, Ilocos Norte—in the USA where both were doing post-graduate studies as Philippine government pensionados (scholars). They returned to the Philippines and got married during WW11 when the Japanese occupied the Philippines. His mother married late because she had to support her younger siblings until they finished their schooling. She had Leon in 1943 when she was 40 years old.

When Leon finished his secondary education at the Philippine Union College, his mother had been teaching for years at the Philippine Normal College and his father had long been a lawyer in Manila. Leon investigated how to continue his studies to the United States by reading materials at the United States Information Service in Manila. He applied to several colleges and was fortunate to get a scholarship to the University of Maryland.

Leon took a ship to Maryland with a stopover in Honolulu. He recalls his conversations with two Filipinos while on board a ship bound for Hawai'i; they were returning to Hawai'i after visiting the Philippines. "How are the Filipinos in Hawai'i?" He asked them. "Nothing to be proud of about Filipinos in Hawai'i," they told him.[22] Though baffled by this response, Leon did not ask them to elaborate.

In Honolulu, Leon learned more about the Filipinos in Hawai'i after staying for a month with a first cousin and her husband. She introduced Leon to other distant cousins. "I became aware of job hierarchy. My poor cousins who were custodians lived in plantation homes and they must have regarded this as a lowly state and a cause for embarrassment."[23] These same cousins with "goodness in their heart" took him around the island and arranged to meet his other relatives who gave him money gifts.

Still bothered by the statement, "nothing to be proud of about Filipinos in Hawai'i," that he heard on the ship, Dagdagan asked his cousins: "Why should you be ashamed?" "You come from a better family in the Philippines," they answered. He thought of his own mother who was raised by hard-working farmers in the Ilocos. She was a humble woman who was fortunate to get a scholarship and studied in the United States, returned to the Philippines to teach and became a specialist for the deaf and blind. He recalls a story she once told to him. His mother and her two friends were attending a social event in Hawai'i, and her friends refused to dance with Filipino plantation workers.[24]

Leon graduated with a degree in medical technology from the University of Maryland after which he worked briefly in a hospital in Washington, DC and then in a hospital in Los Angeles. He had to get a permanent resident visa to work and that required him to register with the Selective Service. Soon after, he was drafted and sent to Vietnam where he continued to work as a medical technologist. Unlike Gary Kubota, Leon did not criticize American policies toward Vietnam, nor did he think that minorities were unfairly sent to fight the war there. He recalls matter-of-factly that to get a permanent resident visa (or the green card), he had to register for the selective service "which made me eligible for the draft because at that time the US was involved in Vietnam."[25] After completing his tour of duty, he went to Hawai'i to have good rest. He also wanted to see his younger brother who had migrated to Hawai'i.

One day, as he was strolling by the Kaiser Hospital, then located at Kakaako, Honolulu, he decided on a lark to visit the hospital's laboratory section. He was not looking for a job but when the head of the laboratory section later contacted him and offered him a job, he accepted. He stayed in Hawai'i for a decade, from 1970 to 1980.

Leon's experiences living on the US Mainland contrasted with Johnny Verzon's; he never experienced any discomfort, disorientation or discrimination. He felt welcomed by his classmates, teachers, work colleagues and fellow soldiers when he served in Vietnam.

Now back in Hawai'i, his first impressions on the ship that he took from Manila reappeared and he recalled the statement: "Filipinos, nothing to be proud of." At Kaiser, he learned how Filipinos were stereotyped with such labels as "poke knife," "manong" and "Flip." Leon was not bothered: "No big deal, call me Flip. If you make a joke of yourself, the stereotype does not stick." But he believes that the racial attitude in Hawai'i is hidden, "worse than in the US Mainland."[26]

Leon had that nagging feeling: "Filipinos have nothing to be proud of. What do I do with my skills?" He was not content just doing his laboratory work at the hospital. When he saw posters about community struggles in Hawai'i, he wanted to learn more. He gravitated towards the university area in Mānoa. "I got to know some of the members of KH [Kokua Hawai'i] by my being a passive supporter of the Kalama Valley struggle, and George Santos, the pig farmer, who was being evicted. I also had joined the sit-ins at Bachman Hall when KH was the main group in support of Ethnic Studies. My introduction to various community activists was when I attended a meeting at the Church of the Crossroads where I

first met Virgilio Felipe who then introduced me to people he knew. And from then on, we talked a lot and bounced ideas on each other."[27]

That meeting, called the Youth Congress, at the Church of the Crossroads, was held in June 1970 and coordinated by John Witeck. This congress brought together youths from "a wide spectrum of groups, both liberal and conventional," and "caught the community's attention with their resolution affirming that Hawai'i should be independent from the US and in favor of peace in Vietnam." The delegates also "urged struggle against the blight of overdevelopment in the Islands."[28]

Leon lived in a collective, a house in Mānoa where the residents, 12 of them, met weekly to discuss the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Mao. Using his GI funds, he enrolled as a part-time political science student, and attended a class by a professor who taught Marxism. "Everyone wanted to be a bona fide leftist."[29] Sometimes Johnny Verzon would come and attend the sessions at the Mānoa collective. In one of the sessions, Leon and Johnny were criticized for being less progressive because they spent a good portion of their time partying and dancing.

Leon was hired as a teaching assistant of Virgilio Felipe who was teaching a Filipino American course at the Ethnic Studies Program. He met other Filipino students at the Ethnic Studies office where they had free-wheeling discussions of diverse topics including why Filipino women seemed to favor white males than Filipino males to why many in the Filipino community seemed addicted to terno balls and beauty pageants. There was, they concluded, a need for a broader discussion of issues affecting the community. After forming a student group called Kabataan Katipunan (Youth Together), as mentioned earlier, they organized a series of forums in January 1972 to talk about problems within the Filipino community in Hawai'i. Dagdagan recalls that leaders of mainstream Filipino organizations were not supportive. "They did not think that we must bring out and discuss Filipino problems; it was embarrassing. But we wanted to do something about the problems, about uplifting the Filipinos—very few going to college, kids being ashamed of having plantation workers as parents...."[30]

When Kabataan Katipunan members learned that a Filipino community, Ota Camp, was fighting eviction, they decided to go see for themselves. The first time Leon went there, he could not believe what he saw. He was shocked at the appearance of the houses which he believed looked worse than the houses in a Philippine slum and the plantation homes of his cousins in Hawai'i. But the residents disarmed him. They

were kind and welcoming. Sally Tagalog always asked him if he had eaten lunch, not just to greet him but meant it---indicating that she had food available in case he had not eaten. And the friendly "Judge" Dela Cruz, always offered him a drink (alcoholic drink) which Dagdagan always refused. Leon attended the residents' regular Friday meetings, sometimes translating for the Ilocano speakers whenever Pete Tagalog asked him. Though he did not get personally close to the residents--he was uncomfortable asking personal questions. He concluded that relationships inside Ota Camp must be more important than the appearance of their houses. "'The developer doesn't understand that Filipino lifestyle isn't just shacks. It's really plants, animals, human relationships.'"[31] Dagdagan moved from Honolulu to Waipahu in August 1972 when West Oahu YMCA hired him to organize recreational activities for children in the area. This enabled him to maintain regular contact with the Ota Camp residents.

Leon saw the Ota Camp struggle in a broader context. "'Ota Camp is a clear example of class struggle, where the lower-class people are always given the bad end of the deal. Basically, I believe the main problem in Hawai'i for lower or lower-middle class people is the land problem. They're always the ones that are being shifted from one place to another. To prevent that, people must get together to resist, unless alternatives like available land for the people can be found.'"[32] Leon expressed these views in interviews with journalists. He recalls that, like Johnny, he did not discuss nor persuade the residents to adopt his views on class struggle. "We just wanted to help with whatever OC [Ota Camp] wanted."[33] "Ota Camp residents did not care what outside supporters were telling them about the evils of capitalism. They just needed a place to live. Period."[34]

In Chapter 4, we will see Leon assisting Pete Tagalog and lawyer Herbert Takahashi in meetings with State and City officials, and officers of a Filipino community organization.

Herbert R. Takahashi (Herb)

Unlike supporters Gary Kubota, Johnny Verzon and Leon Dagdagan, lawyer Herbert Takahashi will not be caught talking about himself and his role in the Ota Camp residents' fight against eviction. He believes that the residents were the main actors in that struggle and, therefore, they should be the ones telling the story.[35] I was not able to

interview him. Or perhaps I did not try harder. As a result, in this section, I offer only bits of information I had gathered from people who knew him.

In 1970 Herb graduated from Harvard Law School, returned to Hawai'i and joined Bouslog & Symonds, the law firm noted for defending workers and poor people. One of the lawyers there was Edward H. Nakamura who regarded Takahashi as his protégé.[36] It is safe to conclude that Nakamura was a factor, among others, in Herbert's decision to represent clients from marginalized communities like Ota Camp residents and, later, organized labor in Hawai'i. Nakamura was Herbert's model of a lawyer who did his job without advertising himself. "'He [Nakamura] had no ego. He was a man of culture. He maintained a sense of detachment. He was always centered.'"[37] Nakamura was also a compassionate person who accepted payments in kind (chicken, vegetables) from clients who were short in cash.[38]

Herb, recalls Brian Taniguchi, was team-teaching a course on Japanese Americans in the Ethnic Studies Program at UHM. Brian was Herb's lab assistant for two years. Brian also attended the discussion sessions of Kaimuki Collective, a study-group founded by Herb, in Kaimuki, Honolulu.[39] The group, according to one account, was Maoist, but did not elaborate.[40] At the Kalama Valley struggle where Gary Kubota got involved, Herb was probably behaving like Leon who was concerned but not motivated enough to join the protest and get arrested. But when the activists were arrested and charged, Herb served as one of the lawyers for the defendants.

Pete Tagalog recalls how Herb became the Ota Camp's attorney. Pete thought early on that they would need a lawyer to succeed in their fight against eviction. He also knew that lawyers could be expensive. He could not think of any Filipino lawyer whom they could afford. He succeeded in inviting a lawyer from the Legal Aid Office of Hawai'i to help but it did not work out because Pete and the residents did not like his seemingly patronizing attitude, shown specifically after the resident's demonstration on 30 March 1972, of which more later. Brian stepped in and asked his former mentor (Herb) to consider being the residents' attorney. Takahashi and his wife came to the meetings, sat at the back of the room, just listening and watching everyone. Then Herbert told Pete that he would like to represent Ota Camp. Why? One reason, Brian told Pete, was that Herb had concluded that no outside group was controlling Pete.[41]

Pete Tagalog and Herbert Takahashi had a good working relationship. Where Pete was talkative, Herb was quiet. Herb respected the residents; he boosted Pete's confidence by praising Pete's way of communicating, using pidgin, and how the residents believed in him as their leader.[42]

"I was shy at the beginning. I only talked pidgin. I was scared, did not know how to talk with professionals."[43] Together they would work the best strategy in responding to the eviction notices and dealing with government officials during the first phase of the protest.

Herb explained why he supported the residents in two interviews he gave in September and October 1972. Below are quotes from one interview:

"'Ota Camp stands for a group of people not afraid to say they are going to fight for the right to control their own destiny.'"

"'This is not a new situation to those who are acquainted with labor struggles in Hawai'i. This is a grass-roots effort by people confronted with someone who wants to alienate them from the land--just as some employees alienate workers from the fruits of their labor.'"

"'Nor should Ota Camp mean something unfamiliar to other ethnic groups, who are also being evicted from their land for the purpose of high-cost housing primarily built for Mainlanders.'"[44]



Pete Tagalog, center, with attorneys, Herb Takahashi and Ben Cayetano, to his right. Ota Camp meeting, circa 1973. (Courtesy of Leon Dagdagan.)

Chapter 4
PROTEST, 1972-1975

Lawyer and supporter George Cooper notes that the Ota Camp struggle consisted of two rounds.[1] The first round took place in 1972-1975; the second round in 1984-1987. Of course, at the time the residents did not know that there would be a second round.

In what is now considered the first round, discussed in this chapter, the residents resisted at least five attempts by the developer to evict them. They asked the state and city officials to help. They demonstrated and attended private meetings with the authorities. It took three years before the residents won this first round. In 1975 they relocated to their new homes at West Loch, about a mile away from their Ota Camp homesite.

First Public Demonstration, 30 March 1972

The residents decided that 30 March 1972 was a good day to go public and hold their first demonstration. That day was the birthday of Governor John Burns so they thought that they could greet him and let him know their four demands: they want to live in Waipahu; they want to live in homes, not apartments; they don't want Amity Waipahu, Inc. as their landlords; and they want to keep the community together. This decision to demonstrate was reached after discussions with the residents and supporters.

Several residents believed and told Pete that it was bad to resist landowners. "If you take land, you'll be punished not by Law but by

God."[2] Some older men were fearful, "Oh they're gonna put us in jail?"[3] But others like the Domrique family were not scared.

Precing Domrique's father, who had been a high school student in Hawai'i, knew that a peaceful demonstration was legal. "*Walang naramdamang takot. Naging huwaran kami ng mga nagdemonstrate.*" (We were not afraid. We were good models for the demonstrators.) Precing adds, "*Sa isang bahay kami, sama sa isang bahay. Para sa kabutihan namin lumaban.*"[4] (We lived in one house. We fought for all of us.)

Then there were others who were fence-sitters, like Nora Tagalog's relatives who argued that protesting was a waste of time. Her father also told her that she was in league with communists.

Nora Bautista recalls that because the first rally was a "new unexplored event," the residents were reluctant and apprehensive. Filipinos, in general, did not want to confront "higher authorities." Aside from the steering committee, other elders who spoke Ilokano and Visayan, helped "fire up the residents."[5]

The steering committee also argued with several supporters who opposed the plan to demonstrate. "The rally at the Capitol was at Pete's insistence. I [Brian Taniguchi] and other supporters had doubts about the rally. We wanted more discussion because the goal of the rally was not clear, and the odds for success was also not clear."[6]

But Pete told them it was time for action. "I don't know, we wait how many months already, how many weeks, we're using the same words all the time, so we got to stop, we go to talk to the government...the government is our father, he's the father, we are his kids, now something wrong with the kids, you go to the father. So that's why we got to go to the State."[7]

Other supporters like Johnny Verzon agreed with Pete. It was "time to shut up...the time to show...not talking theories anymore."

The residents felt that their options were running out for they heard rumors that bulldozers would be arriving soon to demolish their homes. "I remember Judge Dela Cruz being an inspirational speaker [who said] that he will be against the bulldozer, and I told him that I will chain myself with him."[8]

"Displaced families to protest," the local daily reported and quoted Pete: "'We at Ota Camp are going to demonstrate on Thursday because we are fed up with all the meetings we've been having with the HHA (Hawai'i Housing Authority) and HRA (Honolulu Redevelopment Agency) the past few months....We want to make a demonstration rally on Thursday to show the State Capitol and City officials that we at Ota Camp are really serious about what we're trying to accomplish.'"[9]

The residents woke up early, around 6:00 a.m., to get ready and pack their lunch. By 7:15 a.m. twenty cars waited to take the residents, 107 men, women and children, to the State Capitol.

They brought with them signs, placards, white headbands painted with "makibaka" (struggle), and bolo knives made of cardboard wrapped in tin foil. The families of Tagalog and Domrique all came. Precing carried her newborn son in a pushcart.

Johnny Verzon, his brother and his friends joined. "I came early in my convertible. My plan was to carry a Philippine flag and to turn it upside down. That means war."[10]

Ethel Ward, a Farrington High School teacher joined the demonstrators. "I believed in their goals for the 'Ota Camp-ers,' mainly because I sympathized with the plight of the Filipinos and Filipino-Americans who were being 'ousted' from their homes. It seemed to be so heartless, considering all the labor they had put in to enrich the landed sugar plantation owners."[11]

Leon Dagdagan came prepared to take photos of the event. Supporters from other areas (Kahaluu, Halawa, Hauula and Chinatown) came; several displayed posters on causes espoused by their respective groups.



First public demonstration of Ota Camp residents at Hawai'i State Capitol, 30 March 1972. Pete Tagalog, speaker; Juanita Tagalog, Charmaine Baisac and Grace Tagalog, front row; Connie Matos, Ponciano Paredero, Jose and Juanita Tabisola, and Richard Bautista, back rows. (Courtesy of eFil: Filipino Digital Archives and History Center of Hawai'i)



Pete Tagalog, spokesperson of the Ota Camp Anti-Eviction Struggle, Hawai'i State Capitol, 30 March 1972. (Photograph by Albert Yamaguchi; courtesy of efil: Filipino Digital Archives and History Center of Hawai'i.)

Pete and his committee members tried to meet with Governor Burns but he was not available. (The Governor would see them a few days

later.) The demonstrators then briefly attended both sessions of the Senate and House. Johnny, who was waving the upside-done Philippine flag was told to stop doing that. To cap the day, the demonstrators assembled at the open courtyard where they unpacked their lunch, heard speeches and enjoyed the entertainment.

Nothing much was accomplished on 30 March 1972, according to Bernie Suguitan, a Kabataan Katipunan member, who wrote that it was a pity nobody wanted to help the Filipinos.[12] Another observer also said: "Burns too busy for meeting." And that the residents, in effect, "accomplished little more than a picnic at the Capitol Rotunda."[13]

Indeed, a private meeting with the governor on April 4 convinced Pete that the governor was not going to help them. When Pete repeated the resident's four demands, the governor countered that satisfied residents at Aala Park public housing used to say that they did not like tall buildings. When Pete stressed that Ota Camp residents wanted a community together, the governor turned a deaf ear. Pete sensed that the governor's solution, if he were to offer one, would be to send the elderly residents to a facility and the younger residents to a public housing. "So, the meeting with the governor did not do anything and solved nothing with Ota Camp."[14]

But all was not lost. Governor Burns may not have shown empathy, but this did not discourage the residents. The demonstration itself was a first political action experienced by the residents, including Pete. From this experience the residents gained confidence and learned first-hand that organized protest was possible and safe. "Everyone was apprehensive about going to the Capitol," Nora Bautista recalls, "but felt elated and confident once it was done. I was never good about speaking in front of large crowds, but this experience has made me more confident."[15]

Furthermore, it showed Pete Tagalog at his best, now known as the leader of the struggle who was not scared to lead and give a speech at the Capitol. "Other residents must have been scared, recalling the power of cops and authorities back in the Philippines. The residents, many of them immigrants, did not mix with locals like Pete."[16]

The demonstration indeed established Pete as the leader. At a meeting to evaluate the March 30 demonstration, the volunteer lawyer-supporter (before Herbert Takahashi) criticized Pete for not following his suggestion to meet with Senator Nadao Yoshinaga. Pete flared up. He had an agenda that day, he explains, also he was nervous, and all fired up

to make his speech, but the lawyer was trying to interfere with his plan. He felt like a person who was ready to smoke a cigarette but could not because another person held back the lighter. So, during the evaluation meeting, he declared that he and the residents no longer needed this lawyer's service. A supporter seconded, pointing out that Pete was the community leader whose views reflected the residents' position and therefore must be respected by all supporters.[17]

Pete's swift action--dismissing the lawyer on the spot—shows that he knew he had by then the full support of the residents. Pete's action was also a signal for supporters to listen and follow his lead. Lawyer Herb Takahashi, as I noted earlier, was said to have offered his services to the residents because he knew that no outside group was controlling Ota Camp.

A likely consequence of the March 30 demonstration is that Hawai'i senators recognized the residents' plight. Senator Nadao Yoshinaga sent Pete a letter dated April 18 enclosing copies of two senate resolutions passed earlier that month: SR #274, asking the City Planning Department and the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency to look into and assist the Ota Camp residents, and SR #326 which said the "people of Ota Camp, Waipahu, should be congratulated for their courage on preserving ethnic communities in Hawaii and thanked for the reminder that this provides to the future dispersal of similar ethnic communities."[18] The latter also mentioned that Act 105 could be used to solve the problem in Ota Camp.

Act 105, passed by the legislature of the State of Hawai'i in 1970, two years before the Ota Camp struggle began, had addressed a "critical shortage of housing units for lower, and middle-income residents." It asked the office of the governor to appoint a special assistant for housing in the governor's office and gave powers to the Hawai'i Housing Authority to develop and construct housing and make such possible to rent, lease or buy "at the lowest possible price to qualified residents of the State of Hawai'i...." The director of finance was authorized to issue state bonds in the amount of $60,000,000 but pending receipt of money from the bonds, financing could be advanced from the general fund of the state. In brief Act 105 encouraged the state to build or help build housing for low-income people like those living in Ota Camp.[19]

Although governor Burns appeared indifferent to the residents' problem, as Pete observed, several officials were concerned. In June 1972 Shoji Kato from the Hawai'i State Department of Planning and Economic

Development, updated Governor Burns. He reported the passage of the two Senate resolutions, mentioned above, which favored the residents. He added that the state was reluctant to get involved because a private corporation, not a government agency, was the evictor. Kato also mentioned that another official, David Paco, an administrative assistant to the Governor, was keen on getting state support for the residents.[20]

David Paco wore several hats. He was a member of a Filipino professionals group interested in helping the residents. Kaisahan (Unity) had just been formed when the Ota Camp eviction became an issue and, a member recalls, the group approached the residents "to see how we could help." He also believes that this involvement "brought attention to our group from then Gov. Burns," who met with them and appointed some of them to state and board commissions. Subsequently, one of them (the future Governor Ben Cayetano), he guesses, may have influenced to run for an elected office years later.[21]

Paco was also the president of the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i (UFCH) which represented 100 Filipino organizations with about 3,200 members. On 29 July 1972 it passed a resolution drafted with Leon Dagdagan's help that urged the organization to find ways to help "the people of Filipino ancestry at Ota Camp, Waipahu, Hawaii."[22] Paco appointed a task force composed of Benjamin Cayetano (attorney), William Cadavona (assistant manager for Parkview Gem), Gil Penaranda (IBM Corporation employee), Franz Boncodin (director of rooms at Ala Moana Hotel) and Paul Paco (Mid-West Life employee) and instructed it to work with Ota Camp residents in finding a solution to the eviction problem.

David Paco clarified his group's position: "We aren't identifying with their resistance to eviction, but we identify with their problem of being dislocated and of wanting to stay together as a community."[23] He added that he and others in the Filipino community would find ways for a "relocation project" for the residents. As far as I can tell, despite Paco's good intentions, he and his group did not follow through on this.[24] And state officials, as I noted earlier, did not rush to help the residents. In contrast, Mayor Frank Fasi and his officials acted promptly, blocked the developer's plan to evict, and pursued relocation as a solution.

Dialogues with City Officials

Writing history is challenging because it involves using and interpreting many sources of information, both oral and written. Some sources like newspaper articles are for public consumption. Some sources are private like archival materials and personal records which can often yield more insight than the public sources, though private sources can also mislead. I will narrate the residents' dialogues with city officials in 1972 by using these two sources of information. The dialogues were interrupted one day in July when the residents demonstrated against the developer.

As described in Chapter 1, the City sided with the residents from the get-go. In January 1972 the City sent a letter to Rex Blackburn, president of Waipahu Amity, Inc. informing him that the City had completed the sewer lines in the area, including Ota Camp, and that he could hook up to it. Upon receipt of this letter, Blackburn asked the residents to leave the area. City official De Costa charged that Blackburn was using the sewer as an excuse to evict the tenants because Blackburn had another reason to evict them, that is, he had plans of building low-density apartments on the site. De Costa added that the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency (HRA) had been alerted about the matter and that the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i was concerned about the legality of eviction notices sent to the residents.

A team from the City's Housing Task Force and Planning Department and the HRA had been working on a Waipahu Housing Study, said Leo Pritchard of the city Housing Task Force and Mayor Fasi's executive assistant. In mid-July 1972, the team was ready to divulge the results of their study. An internal memo shows that the HRA, headed by Ray Fisher, had kept the project under "low profile until it had a chance of being reality" after which he (Fisher) would get input from the Ota Camp residents. A Planning Department staff had earlier voiced his concern "that there should be strong community participation in the planning of the project and good social research." But Pritchard's team decided it was time to go public: "A big publicity announcement, with Mayor (Fasi) and bird's eye rendering, will occur in about two weeks."[307]

On August 1 Mayor Fasi announced the city's plans that, he thought, could be a partial solution: build housing units for 150 single men, to include those from Ota Camp, on city-owned 12 acres of land located near West Loch, Pearl Harbor.[26] That same day, Mayor Fasi sent a letter to Governor Burns describing in detail his plans and intentions. The "village lifestyle" will include communal kitchen, recreation and

gardening. "It is my intention to request the City Council to approve an Auxiliary Housing Project and to lease the subject property, through the Honolulu Redevelopment, to the Project at a lease rental rate of one dollar ($1.00) per year."[27] The estimated cost to build the homes, Fasi added, was $500,000 and he urged that the State provide the money to keep the rents low for the residents.

Mayor Fasi elaborated: "As more and more individuals are displaced by both governmental and private industry action, the need for such developments as I propose becomes more acute. This is true especially in view of the tendency of market developers and even government programs to build, primarily, high rise middle to high income *family* units."[28]

Ota Camp residents promptly rejected Mayor Fasi's proposal because it addressed only the single males in Ota Camp. Most of the Ota Camp residents were families with children; there were only few single men. The residents doubted Fasi's intentions, suspecting that all he wanted was to score a political point against Governor Burns whom Fasi criticized for not using Act 105 of 1970 that granted state powers to "construct low-cost housing and subsidize relocation."[29] But even though the residents, said one editor, suspected that Fasi could be using them for the coming governor's elections in 1974, " they don't mind the politics, as long as it helps solve their problem..."[30]

As if jolted by the residents' rejection of the plan, Fasi's team quickly revised their plan. Now it would include the entire Ota Camp community. This suggests that the team was indeed in a hurry to release the plan without first doing proper social research of the community. Pritchard explained what looked like an oversight. He said that his team had been concerned with displaced single persons, in general, but because of the October 31 eviction notice served to Ota Camp residents, his team decided to act and help the single men at Ota Camp.

On August 3, he announced that he had met with the residents of Chinatown and Kahaluu who were also threatened with evictions and they assured him that they would not complain if all Ota Camp residents were relocated to West Loch.[31] In short, Fasi could now offer the land, pending the City Council's approval, because others also threatened with eviction promised that they would not ask the City to relocate them with the Ota Camp residents. This was very important: getting a relocation site was a crucial first step in the residents' fight against eviction.

The West Loch site had been, according to the City Plan, designated as a dump site and incinerator area but the city's housing task force also knew that it was suitable for residential housing. Besides the city's task force, the residents believed that Hideo "Major" Okada had helped find the site. Nora Tagalog recalls that came by Ota Camp and told Pete Tagalog: "Hey, Pete, let's go look for a place to relocate you folks." At first, Nora adds, city officials were considering a relocation site further away, but Okada said, "No, it's outside Waipahu."[32]

Okada whom I've mentioned in Chapter 3, was known as "Major" Okada for his major-like baseball skills in his youth and later as a grassroots organizer for the ILWU and the Democratic Party. He knew Pete and his parents long before the Ota Camp eviction problem. They were neighbors. Okada and his wife owned Wailana Inn where Nora worked for several years. Okada in 1972 was a 60-year-old student at Leeward Community College taking a course in political science taught by Professor Richard Yap. In the class, Okada shared his experiences as a union activist and organizer for the Democratic Party.[33] This meant that Okada knew Governor Burns and his successor Governor Ariyoshi, and Okada likely influenced them, particularly Governor Ariyoshi, to favor the residents. "Major Okada was influential, big guy in Democratic Party. He called on Ariyoshi to help Ota Camp."[34]

The city's plan to relocate the residents drew comments from many quarters. The City and County of Honolulu had a law mandating the government to assist in relocating those people affected by a government action, but Ota Camp residents lived on a private land leased by a developer who wanted to evict the residents. "The project," said columnist John Knox, "sets a precedent for the City relocating low-income persons displaced by private developers who are aiming at a higher prized market."[35] Nevertheless, Knox, seemed to support Fasi's action.

Should the city get involved? That was the question John Knox pursued in his article, "Ota Camp May Be Setting a Precedent," which summarized what his interviewees told him. There were three views. One view was from developer Rex Blackburn who said that both the public and private sectors were not expected to take care of the Ota Camp problem because the residents caused their own problem. "They have not sought to help themselves, as so many others have done, by their own efforts and hard work." A second view came from Herbert Takahashi (Ota Camp residents' attorney), George Akahine (city councilman from Waipahu) and Pete Tagalog who agreed that the government should help the residents.

A third view was from Leo Pritchard (head of Mayor Fasi's special housing task force) and Yoshio Yanagawa (executive director of the state Hawaii Housing Authority) who both said they had no clear answers and could not comment. Pritchard, however, said that by solving the Ota Camp problem, "we'll know that there are innovative ways to do things in the low-income housing field."[36]

The City hired architect Don Dumlao, who had been nominated by Ota Camp residents, to prepare a housing plan. Dumlao, of the Phillips and Dumlao Architects, Ltd. and president of the American Institute of Architects was the best man for the job, city officials agreed, because the "housing project will involve the sensitive problem of capturing the lifestyle of the Filipino residents at Ota Camp..."[37] August was a busy month for Dumlao who attended meetings with the residents and city and state officials. Dumlao proposed a social survey of Ota Camp, a first step before drafting a plan, and nominated Leon Dagdagan to be his assistant in making the survey.[38] The social survey was finished by the end of September.

Amidst what looked like a happy prospect for the residents, the developer announced his plan to evict on August 31 several tenants who, he claimed, owed him back rents. He was giving them five days to pay or be evicted. On August 23 the residents and lawyer Takahashi met. Takahashi calmed the residents. He informed them that the eviction notice was illegal, and that the developer needed the court to prove that the tenants owed him. He also outlined possible "legal approaches" to block the developer like getting an injunction or suing him for not maintaining the homes and sewage system.[39]

Rally at Developer's Office

The developer Rex Blackburn had twice served eviction notices to the residents. He wanted to evict them on 2 January 1972. This was changed to 31 October 1972. Now, he wanted to evict 19 residents by August 31 should they fail to pay their alleged back rents. The residents balked and organized a rally on August 26 at the developer's office in downtown Honolulu.

Pete Tagalog explained why the residents protested. First, the residents did not owe the developer; they paid their rents to the developer's collector who did not issue receipts and came to collect when he was

drunk. Second, the residents had asked the developer to meet with the residents, but he never responded. So, then the steering committee voted to go straight to the developer's office to ask him to show his records and prove that some residents owed him money. They also wanted Blackburn to apologize.[40]

A picture of Pete, Johnny Domrique, Richard Bautista and Leon Dagdagan appeared in the local newspaper showing them talking to the office secretary.[41] The latter said that Blackburn was having a conference and could not talk to them. That was a lie, according to Leon who peeped at Blackburn's office and saw no one there—no Blackburn and no meeting. The secretary explained that Blackburn was probably someplace else in a private conference. Leon and Pete guessed that Blackburn was hiding from them.

The demonstrators crowded around the elevator and corridor. Policemen came probably summoned by the building's security guard. The police finally convinced the demonstrators to leave the building and have the residents' lawyer, Herb Takahashi, contact the developer Blackburn's attorney, Hiroshi Sakai, to resolve the alleged unpaid rents. Pete recalls the scene:

"It was more planned than the State Capitol one [demonstration on March 30, 1972] because I the one go first. From Aloha Tower I walk by myself with one guy, and then when I go inside, I look, nobody around, no more policemen, then I told the guy, 'Ok come, come.' The guy go out the road, nobody in the road. 'Come on.' All showed up, all the kids, all coming from the bushes. Wow! Big! They gonna get scared. That's why they got scared from that one."

"We tell one *wahine* [lady, the secretary], 'we like to talk to Rex Blackburn.'"

"Why?" The secretary asked.

"'Well, how come they accusing we owe them rent?' He [Blackburn] stay in the office, hiding in the office. He don't like come out. And then finally I said, 'we go wait for a little while more. After that we gonna knock his door.' So, we go outside, plug up all the hallway and then all of a sudden I looking, 'who these guys?' They get armored hat, armored...and they walking funny. 'Look at those guys, what they doing?' What do you call that? Riot squad?"[42]

No eviction occurred on August 31. Attorney Takahashi said that Blackburn could not have carried out an eviction anyway as it would take five days to get a court order for an eviction and it would probably require 25 days' eviction notice from the date the court order was given. At any rate, attorney Sakai announced that there would be no evictions, and that Blackburn was having discussions with Pritchard.[43]

Blackburn, however, was losing ground. The City Planning Commission approved the relocation project in principle. City officials met regularly with Pete Tagalog and the residents. Don Dumlao, with Leon Dagdagan's help, carried out a demographic survey of Ota Camp. On September 30 he went to Ota Camp, along with Dagdagan, Pritchard and other city officials, to present his findings. As mentioned earlier, I used the results of this survey in describing Ota Camp's demographic profile in Chapter 2.

Dumlao described the Ota Camp lifestyle. He learned from the social surveys that the residents valued Ota Camp because it gave them a degree of freedom to live, build, plant, raise chickens and animals without interference from the outside. Lifestyle was rural. Ota Camp was convenient and accessible, a place where they had lived long enough and knew everyone. Dumlao also said that his findings should dispel the myths and putdowns by those who judge that a rural lifestyle was equivalent to dilapidated houses, bad sanitation, communal cooking, and isolation.[44]

The second phase of Dumlao's research, including design and cost estimate was completed and submitted to the officials the following October. Dumlao's report did not get coverage in the newspapers, and Dumlao himself moved on to other projects after he submitted the report. Dumlao recommended building 31 homes with one to five bedrooms and estimated $545,000 as the cost of the project.[45]

Meanwhile, Pete Tagalog and lawyer Takahashi felt hopeful. Developer Blackburn, persuaded by city officials, dropped his plan to evict all residents on October 31. Pete began thinking of how to assign a home to each family, how many rooms a family needs, and so on, including separating neighbors who did not get along with each other very well. The residents, noted Takahashi, seemed more relaxed as they looked ahead to their future homes at West Loch.[46]



Rally at developer's office, 26 August 1972. From left: Leon Dagdagan, Richard Bautista, Pete Tagalog and Johnny Domrique. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library)

Dialogues with City Continue

The big news in early January 1973 was Elvis Presley's concert in Honolulu.[47] But for the Ota Camp residents, Elvis Presley's concert was not a big deal for they faced a major problem. Frustrated because they had not heard from city officials for two months, they threatened to demonstrate. They called it off when Pritchard promised that a model house would soon be built for inspection by the residents. Panel House Venture headed by Jo Paul Rognstad, a Honolulu architect, would put together the model house.

That February the residents inspected the prefab model home. Pete was not satisfied with it. The design of proposed houses, he said, suited other people's lifestyle, but not that of Ota Camp residents. He doubted the city could build the houses before the August 31 eviction deadline and at rentals the residents could afford.[48]

Then, without explanation the city officials again stopped meeting with the residents. This prompted Pete to ask lawyer Takahashi to write a letter, signed by the steering committee to Mayor Fasi. "Since March of 1973, our association has been meeting regularly with HRA officials to ensure the joint release of news stories to prevent misunderstandings. Up to a few months ago, we were informed of developments on a weekly basis and we participated where we could be helpful." That the meetings stopped worried the residents, especially because they heard that Pritchard, the city official who had worked with Ota Camp residents on the project, had left the city. The steering committee then asked for a meeting with Mayor Fasi. "We have kept our end of the promise to keep the newspapers out of things to prevent misunderstanding. Let us arrange a meeting by May 30, 1973."[49]

Fasi and his staff had not forgotten them. They had been busy looking for money to finance the building of homes with no success. They had approached bank managers for loans, but they (the bankers) wanted high interest rates, which would mean high rents for the residents. Mayor Fasi or one of his officials probably later assured Pete that indeed the city was serious about the relocation project. The residents learned that Pritchard was still around--he had not left the city--and through him the mayor submitted a relocation plan for approval to the city council.

The plan, prepared by the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency received newspaper coverage. Mayor Fasi asked the city council to approve the lease ($1.00 per year) of the 11.8 acres of the city land bordering Pearl Harbor's West Loch to the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency which in turn could lease it for 35 years to a developer who would build 31 homes and rent them to Ota Camp residents. The City wanted to use Act 108, which exempts the developer from following certain building standards in city codes like gutters or curbs, so as to lower building costs. The plan, one city official said, was for the residents to continue their rural lifestyle while paying rents they could afford. Ota Camp residents reportedly supported the plan.[50]



Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz, speaker, and Candido "Candy" Tagalog. Juanita Tagalog, near Dela Cruz. Rally on 3 July 1973 at Honolulu Municipal Building. (Courtesy of Nora Tagalog; photograph by Ed Greevy.)



Richard Bautista, Nora Bautista, and Nora Baclaan, Rally on 3 July 1973, Honolulu Municipal Building. (Courtesy of Ed Greevy.)

The City Council put the Ota camp project in its agenda and allowed a public hearing on 3 July 1973. The residents organized a rally before the council's scheduled meeting. Many "grass roots groups," wrote one reporter, joined the rally in front of Honolulu Hale.[51] Pete delivered a speech recounting how the residents lived under a constant threat of eviction. "'We've had 10 months of planning, and we have had a lot of bad times--I mean we're tired. I just hope we can get some results today.'"[52] He added though that the plan assigned only half (5.2 acres) of the available land for Ota Camp homes so there would not be enough land for gardens and chickens. Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz also gave a speech. Ed Greeley and Leon Dagdagan took pictures of the rally. At the public hearing before the city council, Dagdagan took notes of testimonies of several people like Pete, Don Miguel (president of the Waipahu Community Association), and steering committee members Nora Baclaan, Enrique Dela Cruz, and Patricio Nibre. Dela Cruz testified in Ilokano so Dagdagan translated for him.[53]

The City Council, though sympathetic, did not reach a final decision. The good result that Pete expected on that day happened a week later when the council conditionally approved both the plan and the lease of the land to the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency.[54] The relocation site was official but where would the money come from to build the homes? Still the residents were glad to see that the City had jump-started the project by sending Army Reserve engineers to start clearing the land for relocation. The City was also fending off state officials' criticism that the plan did not meet proper sewage requirements. City officials assured they would not let the residents down, but they just couldn't come up with funding for the program.[55]

State Provides Money

Sometime in December 1973, the residents decided to approach state officials who, in the past two years, had kept silent while city officials sought relief for them. George Ariyoshi became the acting governor when Governor Burns became critically ill. The residents held meetings with him and other state officials like David Paco and those from the state Hawai'i Housing Authority to discuss funding for the project.

On 21 May 1974 acting Governor Ariyoshi announced at a press conference that the state would lend $460,000 to developer Jack Ujimori who would build low-cost houses and rent these to the residents at $89.09

per month for each of the 24 three-bedroom houses, $105.44 for each of the five four-bedroom house, and $131.80 for each of the two five-bedroom units. Ujimori would pay the city $1 for 35 years for the land leased to him. Included in the agreement signed on 22 May 1974 is a clause giving the resident an option to buy the houses. Ariyoshi took credit for this clause: "Before releasing the funds for this project I insisted on one element---no funds would be spent on the Ota Camp project until and unless I was assured that after 10 years the Ota Camp residents would be able to purchase the homes."[56]

Ota Camp's steering committee members were present at Ariyoshi's press conference. Portions of Pete's speech was quoted in the newspaper:

"'This has made it possible for all our families finally to be relocated by the end of the year. But it goes far beyond that. This is the first victory by a Filipino community in Hawai'i.'"

"'We feel we want to hand down to our children pride, honor and dignity in our identity (as Filipinos) which was taken away from the first generation who came to Hawai'i to work hard because of hard living conditions in the Philippines.'"

"'We have worked hard to help other troubled communities, and we hope this will be a model for other groups facing similar problems.'"[57]

Pete thanked Ariyoshi and other state officials and gave credit to the residents. "For two and a half years we managed to keep the Makibaka alive. Makibaka means 'Struggle, Sacrifice, Stick-Together and Fight.' We developed that word Makibaka and its meaning by many weekly meetings. . . lasting sometimes one o'clock in the morning."

Apparently, the state officials did not inform the city officials of their plans. The city officials were "miffed" and accused Ariyoshi of taking credit in the project that the city had taken on since 1972. The city, they said, had gone out of its way to stop several eviction threats and paved the way for the relocation. It was a "'cheap political shot'" and "'dishonest,'" said city managing director Paul Devens, because the city did all the necessary groundwork towards relocation of the residents, designing the homes, preparing the relocation site, and now the acting governor "'has the unmitigated gall to call a press conference and take credit for the entire project.'"[58]

Ariyoshi said it was "regrettable" Devens was angry over his move to help find homes for the residents. He did acknowledge that the city had been long involved in the project but "'in the latter part of December 1973, the residents of Ota Camp, out of sheer frustration, came to see me for help.'"[59] He also said that credit should be given to the residents who had worked and fought hard against their eviction.[60]

"Whose baby is Ota Camp?" asked the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin.*[61] This political tangle was depicted in the cartoon "That's my boy," showing two adults, the "city" and "state" each holding the hands of a confused boy wearing a shirt with printed words "Ota Camp Housing." On the wall was a calendar "election year" referring to the November Democratic Party's primary elections for governor, a position both Fasi and Ariyoshi desired.[62]

The political rivalry was on display at the ground-breaking ceremony at West Loch on 2 June 1974. Ariyoshi delivered a speech on a general topic and reiterated his praise for the residents. "'You people are the ones who are really responsible for what is happening here today." But Fasi's speech was blunt, delivering a "jab" at the state which he believed took the credit from the city administration. A journalist noted that Ariyoshi was "visibly shaken" by Fasi's remarks. Photos of the event, however, showed Ariyoshi standing tall, unsmiling and poker-faced. The tension was just a sideshow for the residents "whose spirits were as bright as the hot midday sun that baked the flat, treeless site." Pete Tagalog expounded: "This is a special day for us at Ota Camp. It was just not luck. It took two and a half years of long sacrificing and struggling."[63]

The project's transition from city-led to state-led caused problems because egos of well-meaning officials got bruised.[64] This was a sad affair, but the project survived the clash. Bottom line was that the residents would have new homes. The city and county installed water pipes and meters. The residents, though unhappy, accepted the new architect's changes in the house design, like cutting back on the number of windows, to lower construction cost. Ujimori was eager to get the project going and raising the preassembled houses (from Panel House Venture Corporation, Orange County, California) as fast as possible so he could collect rents without delay, which happened when the water lines were not installed as scheduled.[64]

Residents Move to New Ota Camp

Anticipating the move to their new homes in a matter of weeks, the residents held a dedication ceremony, a "grand slam celebration" on 11 January 1975. The day was misty, but the residents were there with bright smiles. It had been raining so the attendees, more than 100 of them, stood on ankle-deep mud. Among them were city officials (though Mayor Fasi could not come). The program included a blessing from Father Matthew, ribbon cutting, musical and dance numbers, presentation of appreciation certificates to several VIPs, including developer Ujimori, and remarks from the newly elected Governor Ariyoshi[66]

Before leading a sing along, Pete delivered a short speech, tracing the history of the struggle and what it meant to him and the residents:

"Today is one of the biggest and the most important celebration that the Makibaka Organization had ever displayed within the past three years since our organization was first formed back in January 5, 1972, because this is a '*Real Filipino Dream Come True*,' and in approximately three to four weeks we'll be occupying these 'new homes,' rent is unbelievably low that poor people can afford especially with today's high cost of living. This project is a subsidy of the State Act 105 of $460,000.00 and the land is leased from the City at $1.00 per year for 35 years. Planning was done by the City and the Ota Camp residents. The redesigning of the homes was done by the residents. The land site work was done by the City. Although this is a government project of both the State and City, it is controlled by the community."

"MAKIBAKA VILLAGE is the first and only one that is *controlled* by the residents. That have a very *strong say* on how we should want to live as human beings and the preservation of our unique lifestyle."

"WE worked very hard for this day to happen, and the 'Victory' seems to be not only 'housing' but now that we are not going to be treated like dogs, as our ancestors in the past. Victory, in the sense of regaining our 'Dignity' as 'Human Beings, Respect, Hope' for our people and most of all, VICTORY in recovering our 'Filipino Honor' which our parents have lost long ago working like slaves in the plantation and were treated less than the animals instead of human beings."[67]

Pete Tagalog and the steering committee decided who would occupy which homes at the new Ota Camp. One criterion used was to assign big families to houses with more rooms. Another criterion used

was to designate available homes—because some residents did not or could not move to the new site—to "outsiders" who had assisted in the struggle or who were related to or knew Pete or were related to other residents. For instance on 13 February 1975 Pete recommended the following five individuals: Linda Sugui (Pete's niece); Paul Canne (Pete's friend who lived in Waimanalo); Emiliano Tungian, Jr. (Fortunata Manzano's son); Alfred Ganigan, Jr. (son of Alfred Ganigan, Sr.) and Richard Totman (friend of Candido and Gloria Tagalog).[68] By the time of relocation, Pete recalls, there were only seven single, old men (out of 15) left.[69]

Just like the Ota Camp residents, their supporters (mentioned in Chapter 3) moved to new homes and careers. Gary Kubota briefly worked for his uncle's car manufacturing company in Los Angeles, then returned to Hawai'i and to his studies at the University of Mānoa. He graduated in 1976 with honors with a bachelor's degree in journalism.[70]

Johnny Verzon graduated from the University of Hawai'i in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in secondary education in social studies. He turned down an offer to teach at Farrington High School because he believed he could do more for the immigrant and local youth outside of classrooms. He worked for agencies in Kalihi-Palama and Maili on the Waianae Coast, organizing basketball and volleyball games for young adults. In 1975 he began his teaching career at several public high schools on Oahu.[71]

Leon Dagdagan worked for the YMCA, directing and coordinating youth and outreach programs in Waipahu, Waianae and North Shore. He did this for 10 years then moved to California to resume his career as a medical technologist.[72]

Herb Takahashi continued his employment with the law firm Bouslog & Symonds until 1979 when he joined his mentor Edward H. Nakamura who had left Bouslog & Symonds to form a new law firm. [73]

CHAPTER 5
PROTEST, 1984-1987

In early 1975 the residents moved to their homes at the new Ota Camp, also called Makibaka Village, at West Loch in Waipahu feeling assured that in ten years they would take over the mortgage from the developer and, in due time, own their homes. But they met two obstacles. First, the State proposed that they pay a higher mortgage rate. Second, the developer sued them for back rents and claimed this as one reason why the court should bar them from taking over the mortgage. The possibility that they could be evicted loomed. So, the residents again organized, a second round, to resist eviction.

At the New Ota Camp

If you had been threatened with eviction for three years and then were able to move to a place that could be your permanent home, you would be ecstatic. And that was exactly how the residents felt. "'Something inside the people changed. When people have been moved around and pushed around from place to place all their lives and suddenly have a place of their own, they have a sense of pride and dignity they never had before,'" said Pete Tagalog to a journalist.[1] This journalist agreed: "Faces that several years ago looked tense and worried by the prospect of eviction from familiar old surroundings are relaxed and smiling."[2] "It feels as if we had climbed out of the darkness and have seen the light for the first time," Pete elaborated.[3] Fortunata Manzano who was 76 years

old and bed-ridden at the old Ota Camp regained her health at the new Ota Camp. She was walking around. "'I am happy because I don't have to worry anymore. And all the people are together again.'"[4]

The residents liked their new homes and their surroundings. Pete and Sally Tagalog, who had six children, furnished their five-bedroom home with second-hand items and donations. "'I'm satisfied, I don't care about fancy furniture anyway. But I cried the day we moved here. I was so happy. And you know what mattered most? Not the fancy kitchen cabinets or any of that but the [two] bathrooms! No more going to the washhouse! I always worried about the sanitary conditions in the old place...'"[5]

The residents quickly resumed their rural lifestyle. Vegetables and fruit trees, banana and malunggay trees were planted. Johnny and Precing Domrique raised pigs and sold pork to their neighbors. A neighbor could buy a chunk of pork, divide it into small pieces and sell to other neighbors. Precing's parents cleared an area for planting vegetables: "*Alam mo na ang matatanda, gusto may ginagawa, ganoon sila sa bukid sa Pilipinas.*"[6] [You know how old folks are, they don't want to just sit around, they want to be busy like when they were farmers in the Philippines.] "'It is very economical. All we do is cook the pork with vegetables from our own gardens" says Sally Tagalog who spent $350 a month to feed her family of eight.[7]

Being economical also eased the burden of increased rentals. At the old Ota Camp, the average monthly rate was $20; at the new Ota Camp the rents were from $105 to $155 depending on the number of bedrooms. "'We thought the big jump in rent will be tough on us, but it didn't turn out so bad. We will continue to raise vegetables and pigs which help cut down our expenses.'"[8]

The community lost two residents who were also steering committee members, Patricio Nibre (Patti) and Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz, soon after the move to the new site. I discussed both in Chapter 2. Patti had been a close friend and drinking partner of Johnny Domrique long before Johnny married his wife Precing. Patti was the godfather of Precing and Johnny's first-born son. He became part of the family, joining them for dinners and picnics.

Barely two months after the residents relocated to Makibaka Village, a young man killed Patti. Residents say that the killer wanted to steal Patti's car and/or steal his money. At the time of his death, Patti was

doing community service, guarding the used lumber and other recyclable materials collected from the old Ota Camp. The residents organized the funeral for Patti.[9]

Enrique Dela Cruz was the cheerful drinking "judge" who liked his orchid plants and alcoholic drinks, and who told Pete to preside the first residents' community meeting. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that Precing Domrique matched her first cousin and Dela Cruz. In December 1976, a year after relocating to the new Ota Camp, he and his wife went on a trip to visit the Philippines. Dela Cruz got sick there and never made it back; he passed away there.

Other steering committee members--Johnny Domrique, Nora Tagalog, Nora Bautista and Candido Tagalog continued to help Pete. Johnny, who was Pete's close friend and confidant, worked quietly as always behind the scenes. Together with his wife Precing, they maintained their network of relatives and friends inside the community. Precing did not work outside her home because Johnny did not want her to do that. So, she worked at home, taking care of her four small sons and looking after the needs of her many relatives. But one day she decided to learn how to drive because a son often had fits and had to be rushed to the hospital. Johnny's salary at Hickam as a building maintenance supervisor and the income from Precing's father who did gardening work bought food for the large household and helped pay school tuition fees for Precing's siblings. Johnny retired from Hickam in 1979 when his youngest son was only three years old. But he did not stop working; he joined his father-in-law in the landscaping and gardening work. He retired fully in 2000.

More relatives of the already extended Domrique family arrived from the Philippines, like the families of Johnny's nephew's wife (Domingo family) and Precing's relatives on her mother side (Gaoiran family). Upon arrival they stayed at the Domrique home, the temporary depot for immigrant relatives, and moved out as soon as they found jobs outside to support themselves.

Nora Tagalog, a major actor in this second round of the struggle, tackled many challenges and hardships. Her first months at the new Ota Camp were not as joyful as the other residents'. Coming home from work one afternoon, she found her personal stuff and belongings dumped by the roadside. Her own relatives had evicted her! She was shocked. Her father and his girlfriend, who could not wait for their designated house that was scheduled to be vacated by a family, had taken over Nora's home. Nora cries when she recalls this episode. Fortunately for Nora, help came. The

single old men, and later Pete and Sally Tagalog, consoled her and gave her temporary lodging.

Nora was hurt bad. Why? First, because she felt betrayed by her siblings whom she had nurtured after their mother died while their father was away in Hawai'i. Their father did not maintain contacts with them. As I mentioned in Chapter One, it was Nora who tried hard to keep her siblings together. Secondly, she was angry because she was the only one in the Baclaan family who had joined and supported the anti-eviction fight when it started in 1972. She defied her grandfather and auntie who had ordered her not to attend community meetings. It was because of her that the steering committee, in appreciation of Nora's services, allotted a home for her father, who never lived in Ota Camp. Eventually, the steering committee solved Nora's dispute with her family.

In 1976 Nora applied to be a naturalized citizen of the USA. She took the opportunity to change her name, dropping Baclaan and putting Gozon back. This was a gesture to honor her mother who passed away when Nora was twelve years old. She could not forget how the Baclaan side of her family maltreated her. I described Nora's hardships after her mother's death in Chapter 1. In 1980 after deciding to live with Pete, who had separated from Sally, she became Nora Gozon Tagalog. She gave birth to three children between 1981 and 1985.

While Pete devoted his time being a community leader and stay-home husband, Nora became the breadwinner of the family. She worked full-time as an accounting clerk at Sand Island and held three part-time jobs as a cashier at two stores and at a Zippy's restaurant where she worked from 11 PM to 2 AM. As a result, she barely managed to have time to sleep; she recalls that she "slept one hour" in between these jobs.[10]

Simultaneously, Nora was the Ota Camp association's treasurer from 1975 to 1987. Her main (unpaid) job was to collect monthly rents from the residents which she forwarded to Ujimori, who used part of the money to pay his mortgage to the State. Nora aimed at collecting a total of $3,463.14 every month. Although the residents had agreed to pay Nora in cash, check or money order before the 10th of each month, sometimes they were late in paying. As a result, "I used my own money for back-up to complete the mortgage" recalls Nora.[11] The treasurer's job was thankless and stressful. Luckily, Joan Takano, a supporter helped Nora keep her records and paperwork in order.

The other Nora—Nora Bautista—gave her support as a steering committee member as best as she could. She was now a single mother and raised her two sons by working her way up as a trainer of McDonald's employees. She is grateful for the support from everyone in Ota Camp. "My in-laws lived up the road from our house in new Ota Camp and my high school sister-in-law moved in with me. Presing [Precing Domrique] who lived across us, had sons the same age as my sons and was instrumental in bussing the boys to and from school. Our community was safe, and everyone watched out for one another."[12] Her sister-in-law and the neighbor's teenage daughters (Canne family) helped with babysitting.

Pete Tagalog was now the symbol of the struggle. He was called a grassroots hero, admired by activists for his charisma and grasp of the workings of a capitalist society. "Pete was smart," recalls a supporter, "he could relate general issues to what was happening in Ota Camp and could explain these to the residents."[13] As a result, Pete was invited to speak at rallies and meetings like at Chinatown, Waimanalo and Nukolii on Kauai--places where residents had been threatened with eviction. Pete himself thoroughly enjoyed going to these meetings, giving inspirational speeches, and making people laugh. His jokes and easy style, using his pidgin to the full advantage, charmed and inspired his audiences.

Often Pete brought with him several residents, many of them Ilokano speakers, to back him up and show how collective action was needed for victory. "Yah. We tight. That's why they come with me all over the place. They come with me Waimanalo, they come Chinatown every time. One time, we make dakine, we go demonstrate, protest, sometimes I brought 30 guys, that kine of people in Chinatown. Then we go Waimanalo, we make one show for them. All the Ilokanos came."[14] Pete also brought Nora and their children to these meetings to stress the important role of women in any struggle. "I have big mouth," says Nora.[15]

Other Hawai'i activists encouraged Pete and Nora to visit the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1978. John Witeck, a civil rights activist, helped Nora write an application for funding from the Hawai'i Fight Back Organization.[16] "Major" Ikeda, recalls Pete, gave him $1,000 as pocket money for the trip.[17] Both Pete and Nora were impressed with the PRC's acupuncture treatments and bloodless surgeries, swift punishment of crooks, and delicious food.

With the residents' future looking bright, Pete reflected on what an ideal community could be, a vision he described to videographer Bethany Thompson. For him, the ideal community would look like the

new Ota Camp, a "people's community" where people are happy, healthy and safe.

It would be a "commune living" where people are not competitive but instead share their produce and meat with their neighbors. Furthermore, this ideal community would be open to the "lower class" or those who could not afford or get decent housing.[18]

Eviction Threat

As the saying goes, everything is not what it seems. On 20 August 1980, Ujimori wrote to Barry Chung, director of the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, asking permission to raise the rents by 40 percent "Please note that the rentals have not been increased since May 14,1974 when the rates were set by the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency, although our expenses have risen considerably."[viii] Ujimori did not elaborate on the alleged expenses. Four months later Chung approved a 17.90 percent increase, not 40 percent. This meant an increase of monthly rental income for Ujimori, from $3,463.14 to $4,083.13. Translated to Ujimori's advantage, he would increase his net gain from $534.20 per month to $1,784.19 after paying the state the interest (5.975 percent per year) for the $460,000.00 loan.

Pete opposed both Ujimori and Chung. He sent a letter to Ujimori:[20]

"The tenants of Makibaka New Village met every Sunday for five consecutive weeks. They do not agree with your recent rental increase proposal. The tenants raised several questions which made it impossible to go along with your proposal."

"Some of them are, what are the specific reasons in justifying the rental increase. Secondly, your unwillingness to cooperate with the community housing problems. Thirdly, your involvement with outsiders to form a conspiracy in discrediting our organization, with (one sided) rumors. And lastly, your disrespect of our organization in informing your rental increase proposal individually to the MAI [Makibaka Association, Inc.] residents."

"The residents at this point want all of these questions answered. They felt you are provoking a senseless crisis in our community."[21]

Nora Tagalog recalls that Ujimori never visited the Makibaka-Ota Camp village. The residents relied on each other to maintain and repair what were needed in the homes he had built for them. What angered Pete and Nora were the "rumors" they said Ujimori spread, that Pete and his steering committee were crooks stealing money from the residents. They suspected that Ujimori and city officials had all along plans to stop the residents from assuming the mortgage. Pete recalls:

"So, they all got together and talk that we are doing wrong. So Ujimori wanted us, if something was wrong, if something wrong with me then 'I, Ujimori gonna take over this place.' Wait a minute, now we cannot get the option. If we cannot get the option, the City said, 'I'll give it to you, Ujimori.' Now the City can make more money with developer than us. They want to exchange this place to one place over there. 'That's OK, we'll send you another village but move to one house and you can buy them, but you gotta qualify.' We got house here already, everybody qualify already, why should we move to one place when we don't know if we qualify? What a swap. Funny kine that swap! So, we never bother that one."[22]

I ask Nora: "Was the City behind Ujimori?"

Nora: "Of course, they are powerful people, slander against us, that we are crooks, divide the family, the community."[23]

Ujimori applied pressure. He hired attorney T. Irving Chang who sent a letter to Pete Tagalog on 10 May 1982 reminding Pete that the residents should pay the "approved increased rates," and that an "interest at the rate of twelve per cent (12%) will be charged on all amounts not paid." The residents ignored the letter and continued to pay the original monthly rent, which Ujimori apparently accepted. Yet his attorney, after receiving no response from the residents on the alleged back rents, warned that "my client will be forced to seek a cancellation of the Agreement and an Accounting."[24] This gets to the heart of the agreement signed in 1974--that the residents would have the option to assume the mortgage from Ujimori ten years after the signing of that agreement.

The residents asked a supporter, attorney George Cooper, for help. In April 1984 Cooper, on behalf of Ota Camp residents, sent a "notice of intent" to Ujimori and Paul A. Tom, executive director of the State Hawaii Housing Authority.

He told them that he was representing the residents temporarily and that "my client intends to exercise its option to purchase the lease and improvements covered by the agreement and by related documents."[25]

Ujimori pressed harder; he sued the residents. I will discuss the court case in a separate section. Meantime, the residents and their supporters prepared to confront the State Hawaii Housing Authority on the mortgage issue.



Candido Tagalog and son at new Ota Camp (Makibaka Village), circa 1975. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)



New Ota Camp (Makibaka Village), circa 1975. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)

Residents Organize

The residents received outside support in their second round of struggle and like in the first round of their struggle, mostly University of Hawai'I - Mānoa students composed the new support group. Of this group, Joan H. Takano, stood out. She was a teaching assistant in1978-1983 for Franklin Odo who taught the Japanese American course at the Ethnic Studies Program, University of Hawai'i - Mānoa. She also worked one semester for Roland Kotani who taught the social movements class. She met Pete Tagalog in a rally around the time the residents were relocating to West Loch in 1975 and accepted Pete's invitation to come to Ota Camp.

After graduation in 1985 and while working for a city agency, Joan continued to help the residents. Joan and her husband Tracy, both Punahou School graduates, had been politicized in San Francisco where, as undergraduate students at the University of California-Berkely, they were involved in an anti-eviction struggle in a Japanese community, called CANE (Committee Against Nihonmachi Eviction).[26]

Joan and Tracy became close to Nora, Pete and other residents for many years. Tracy recounts that he only gave moral support and enjoyed his friendship with Pete, and that it was Joan who was very active in the struggle. Joan went to Makibaka Village several times a week, sometimes on weeknights and weekends, to help Nora with her financial records, attend meetings and rallies, and drive Pete to other communities with similar housing problems. Joan also produced a slide show on the Ota Camp resistance and relocation to the new Ota Camp. She believed in "political unity," which Pete also adopted in uniting people for a cause inside and outside Ota Camp. Pete wanted to share with others how Ota Camp residents succeeded in resisting eviction. At strategy meetings, Joan's role "was to stay behind the scenes, support the residents in their decisions, and not to lead or even argue with them."[27]

Malama Hawai'i, a student organization at the University of Hawai'i -Manoa, also supported the residents. These students had been "concerned with issues affecting local people," including Kaho'olave, Sand Island and Queen's Beach to stop hotel construction near Sea Life Park. In 1984 they campaigned against Ronald Reagan; in 1985 they "led the fight against a tuition increase at UH." At UH, they organized programs and distributed leaflets to make the students aware of the housing issue at Makibaka Village.[28] They helped write internal newsletters for the residents, flyers and two *Pagkakaisa* newsletters.

Mark Matsumoto edited the second issue of *Pagkakaisa*. Matsumoto, a core member of Malama Hawai'i, was already aware of local struggles at Waiahole-Waikane and Sand Island as a student at Stevenson Intermediate School. Like Joan and Tracy Takano, he was politicized on the continental US, specifically at the University of California-San Diego where he studied for three years. There he joined groups concerned with redress and reparations for the Japanese interned during World War II and against US interventions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. In 1985 he returned to Hawai'i and enrolled at UH majoring in history. He reconnected with Joan and Tracy Takano and through them got interested in the Ota Camp anti-eviction struggle.[29]

Some support came from Filipino Americans who mainly monitored the political situation in the Philippines.[30] One anti-martial law group, the Union of Democratic Philippines, co-sponsored a fund-raising event for Ota Camp at August Ahrens Elementary School in Waipahu where two films--"The Battle for International Hotel" and "A Dollar A Day, Ten Cents a Dance"—were shown. Both depicted the situation of

the Filipinos on the continental USA. Another group, Operation Manong Program at the University of Hawai'i- Mānoa which I directed, sent tutors to assist Ota Camp youngsters but our attention was focused on celebrating our fifteenth-year anniversary, having survived budget cut threats to the program. Lieutenant Governor Benjamin J. Cayetano's office did research on Ota Camp but "because this case is now in the courts, I [Cayetano] cannot become involved in the dispute as it could prejudice the outcome one way or the other."[31]

As in the first round of the struggle, the residents relied primarily on themselves. Pete Tagalog and the steering committee mobilized them. The committee held special meetings on Saturdays and general meetings on Friday nights usually at the garage of the home of Johnny and Precing Domrique. They also organized dinner rallies, like the one on 17 November 1984 inviting residents and outsiders to come. "New Ota Camp in Trouble," said the event's brochure cover. The slogans inside read: "We will struggle!! We will fight!! We will never move!! We will win again!!" The brochure also included a summary of the struggle since 1972, the political connections between landlords and developers, in general, and Ujimori's connections to developers and politicians, in particular. It noted the dire situation for the residents:

"The possibility of cancelling the option [to buy]is probably the most serious part of the situation, though the potential problem with HHA [Hawaii Housing Authority] is also important. If there is cancellation, or if there isn't but if the residents can't afford the option, that in a sense would put things back to where they were in 1972. Other rent increases and/or evictions could follow. It is for these reasons that the residents—having a hard time believing this is all happening to them again—are starting to mobilize."[32]

Potluck events to reinvigorate close feelings among the residents were held. For example, on 16 February 1985 they organized an "Ota Camp Makibaka 13th Anniversary." Another example was the "Morale Booster Party" on June 1st of the same year, held at the garage of Johnny and Precing Domrique. Linda Rose and Sue Tangjian organized the potluck and Johnny and Jon Castillo made sure a roasted pig (lechon) was on the buffet table.

"The purpose of this kind of *Morale Party* is to get everybody in the community together and make *Happy-Happy* and in this way, we feel good about each other and politically we get stronger and no way HHA [Hawaii Housing Authority] and Ujimori can win over us. We have had

many of this kind of *Morale Party* in the old Ota Camp and that's why we had won on every issue..."[33] Graduations and retirements were good reasons to celebrate and hold parties. Juliana Asuncion announced her retirement so on 6 July 1985 a party was organized in her honor. The residents also organized a Christmas Party that year complete with Santa Claus.[34]

Confronting the State

For five months--from March to July-- the residents confronted officials of the State Hawai'i Housing Authority (HHA) who seemed unfriendly and eager to stop the residents from assuming the mortgage from Ujimori.

In early March, Russel Fukumoto, director of the HHA announced that the mortgage transfer--scheduled for March 19--from Ujimori to the residents was not going to happen. Why? The reason, he said, was a lawsuit that Ujimori had filed against the residents in 1984. Legal Aid attorney Craig Mar-Chun affirmed that the "housing [Hawaii Housing Authority] does not want to transfer the mortgages because of a lawsuit against the families."[35]

The residents protested and demonstrated on March 13 at the office of the HHA on School and Lanakila streets in downtown Honolulu. From 50 to 60 residents showed up though probably the count would be higher if supporters/non-residents were included. A detailed account with pictures of the rally was published by the *Waipahu Sun News*.[36] Teotimo Dela Cruz, Precing's father, held a sign. Artie Dumbrique, nephew of Johnny Domrique, was holding a mini-microphone and using a bullhorn strung on his shoulders and leading the chanting. He, like the demonstrators, including many women and children, wore white headbands with "Makibaka" printed on them. They held umbrellas and signs: "HHA Negotiate Now," "HHA Support Developers Over People," "HHA Don't Deny Our Rights" and "HHA Unfair to Low Income People."

Nora Tagalog held one of the slogans. She had her small son astride on her shoulders; she was at the time pregnant with her youngest to-be-born daughter.[37] Those slogans were expressed in the flyer distributed during the rally. It charged that Ujimori's suit was a "fake" one, that his motive was to keep the property for himself, evict the

residents and build expensive condominiums that only a few could afford. It also charged that HHA Director Russel Fukumoto was using a legal technicality to block the residents' rights to assume the mortgage.



From left, Teotimo Dela Cruz, Ms. Alex Baisac and sons, and Clifford Tanjian. Rally on 13 March 1985 at Hawai'i Housing Authority. Courtesy of of Nora Tagalog.)



Nora Tagalog with son Kimo on her shoulders, residents, and supporters rally on 13 March 1985. Hawai'i Housing Authority. (Courtesy of Pete Tagalog and *Honolulu- Star Bulletin.)*

Fukumoto responded four days after the rally. He removed the lawsuit as a blockage and replaced it with another that included increasing the mortgage interest rate that residents had to assume. The residents, said Fukumoto, should pay a higher rate, up from 5.78 percent to 8.5 percent, and deposit into an escrow account $4,278.46 "to cover delinquent payments" and $1,000 "for maintenance."[38] The increase, he explained, would mean only an average increase of $20.50 in the monthly mortgage payments and even with the added property, tax, insurance and maintenance costs, the residents would be paying substantially lower than those now in public housing who pay $220 or 30 percent of their monthly income.

Ota Camp residents were paying monthly rents ranging from $105.84 and $155.84 for their homes. And more important, unlike those in public housing, the new Ota Camp residents would eventually own their homes. Fukumoto also claimed that the residents' Legal Aid lawyers already accepted his proposal.[39] The residents, he said, should accept his proposal by March 25.

The residents accused Fukumoto of using the mortgage rate increase to help Ujimori deny the resident's option to assume the mortgage. They also claimed that Fukumoto was unfair because during private negotiations, he said the increased rate of mortgage was needed to help the increased management costs of the HHA: "Why is HHA demanding Ota Camp pay 8½ % interest? From the first negotiation meeting, Fukumoto mentioned administration costs for HHA is getting higher and the state needs money. Later on he brought up that HHA's operating budget was cut down by the state from over $100 million to about $94 million. We feel this is unfair and stupid to expect Ota Camp to pay for something the state administration caused by their own management. It is unfair for the state HHA to demand Ota Camp or anybody else for that matter, to pay for what is their own doing."[40]

Residents rejected the larger interest rate and opposed the additional requirement that the residents put into escrow. Pete Tagalog complained: "'Who's going to be responsible for (fixing) the roof, and termites if they're taking all the money out? They're choking us. Ten Years have passed already. Our power of earning money is not the same, but we're working hard.'" [41] As for the claim that Legal Aid lawyers accepted the proposal, Pete declared that "Legal Aid lawyer does not make any decisions for Ota Camp."[42]

Fukumoto then announced that because the residents did not meet the deadline, HHA was no longer interested in negotiating with the residents. Attorney George Cooper, the residents' friend and supporter, announced that the residents would hold meetings: "1 like to look at the situation as an impasse and not the end of the road.'"[43]

Meantime, Senator Patsy Young, chair of the Senate Housing and Community Development Committee, asked Fukumoto to give more time for negotiations. On April 17 about 100 demonstrators held a rally at the offices of the HHA. While the families and supporters marched and chanted, Pete Tagalog, George Cooper and other residents met with Fukumoto and other officials inside the building. As a result, a new deadline--July 19--was set to resolve the dispute.

Susan Manuel, a sympathetic reporter, wrote that after ten years "the residents are on the march again, at odds with the developer and the Hawaii Housing authority.... The impasse has fired fears of eviction of families into a community where even 'low-income' housing units runs several times that at Ota Camp and where their communal lifestyle will disintegrate.... Ota Camp sits at a crossroads in time. The prematurely

aging houses are engulfed by prolific gardens and cars. Children play in the street and neighbors move freely between houses.... A neighborhood in the old-fashioned, endangered sense, Ota Camp residents must attend weekly meetings held in a garage."[44]

Supporter Mark Matsumoto of Malama Hawai'i reminded Fukumoto of his office's goal: "The purpose of the Hawai'i Housing Authority is supposed to be to help provide and administer such low-income housing. It should be the responsibility of the HHA to actively seek ways to allow low-income families to own their homes. However, your actions thus far in regards to Ota Camp have been to block them from assuming the construction."[45]

The residents and the HHA continued their talks, meeting several times with no results. Finally, the residents asked Thomas Matsuda, one of the Legal Aid lawyers, to represent them. On 23 July, the impasse was resolved and a compromise reached after "'heated'" negotiations, said Pete Tagalog with no elaborations.[46]

The residents agreed to a 7.5 percent interest. Pete Tagalog was against any increase in the mortgage. Herb Takahashi, the residents' attorney in the first round of the struggle, had advised Pete to fight for the original mortgage rate because the residents stood on legal ground. But Pete bowed to the wishes of many residents who were fearful of losing the opportunity to own their homes and, more importantly, of facing another eviction. The Legal Aid lawyers must have also persuaded him to accept a compromise.[47]

Why HHA officials relented is hard to answer. Behind-the-scenes discussions are, by definition, unrecorded but an official memorandum provides a clue. Housing officials believed that the court case between the residents and Ujimori would take long to settle. Meantime, they were eager to satisfy part of their intention to let the residents exercise their option to assume the mortgage through an interim agreement.

They were aware that rejection of the residents' option to assume the mortgage would mean that the "Association will *not* assume the mortgage and realize its dream of homeownership."[48] Fukumoto signed the interim agreement on 2 August. Governor Ariyoshi approved it on 17 August. It referred to the change in mortgage rate but did not explain or justify why it was changed.

Given how fast governor Ariyoshi approved the agreement, there must have been private discussions with him, Fukumoto and other housing officials. Ariyoshi must have stressed in these discussions how in 1974 as acting Governor, he had insisted on the ten-year option clause for residents. When I interviewed him years later, he did not recall his role in the residents' eviction protest.[49]

In August 1985 the residents assumed the mortgage for the principal balance of $346,159.79. For 15 years, they would collectively pay $3,228.50 each month. Several residents wanted to pay separately and individually but Pete's proposal of collective ownership prevailed.[50]

Ujimori opposed the interim agreement, but this did not deter the HHA from carrying out the terms of the agreement with the residents. Since Ujimori's suit was still pending and he, technically, still held the lease, the residents as the new mortgagee would create a trust fund for the monthly payments to the HHA.

If the residents won the suit, then the payments would be transferred to the HHA. If they lost, Ujimori would get back the equivalent of the original 5.78 percent and the balance would be returned to the residents. The focus now would be the court case: "the last chapter in the saga has yet to be written," said one journalist.[52]

Court Cases

Ota Camp residents got involved as defendants and plaintiffs in two lawsuits. First, Jack H. Ujimori sued them for breach of contract. Second, they sued the City and County of Honolulu for allowing Ujimori to raise their rent without cause. The first lawsuit lasted three years while the second one lasted a year. Both lawsuits ended in one settlement in favor of the residents.

Ujimori filed his lawsuit against Peter Tagalog, et al. for "breach of contract" on 20 July 1984 (Civil Case No. 83645).[52] Note that "Peter Tagalog" was wrong because Pete's official name was Simplicio Tagalog. The "et al" the other defendants, were identified later: John Domrique [Juan P. Domrique], Candido Tagalog and Leonora Gozon, all members of the steering committee of the Makibaka Association, Inc. (MAI).

Attorneys Irving Chang and Thomas L. Mui, Honolulu downtown lawyers, filed the suit for plaintiff Ujimori. Another colleague, Allan S. Chock, joined the team later. Ujimori wanted the court to decide in his favor on three claims.

First, the court should require Tagalog (unless otherwise indicated, Tagalog refers to Pete Tagalog) to pay $86,044.64 and other sums "as are found and owing the Plaintiff." Ujimori claimed that Tagalog, the director and manager of MAI, did not collect and pay this amount that included unpaid back rents since 1981 when he (Ujimori) raised the rent, fire insurance, liability insurance and real property taxes.

Second, the court should terminate the agreement of 22 May 1974 signed by Tagalog, Ujimori and the Hawai'i Housing Authority Executive Director and Secretary. The main reason for the request was that the Makibaka Association, Inc., represented by its president (Tagalog) ceased to exist when it was dissolved in 1978 by the Hawai'i Director of Regulatory Agencies for failing to submit annual reports.

Finally, the "rights, title and interest of Makibaka Association, Inc." as well as the defendant Tagalog and others with the association should "be cancelled" and they should "be barred in law or equity in and to said Agreement and the property covered thereunder." In other words, the Ota Camp residents should not have the option to assume the mortgage from Ujimori. Simply put, they would lose the chance to buy the homes they had been renting for 10 years.

The Legal Aid of the State of Hawai'i attorneys, Craig Mar-Chun Thomas J. Matsuda, Raymond E. Gurczynski and Allene K. Richardson, represented the Ota Camp residents. They asked the court to focus on the first claim and dismiss the second and third claims.

On the first claim, the defense lawyers argued that the residents did not owe Ujimori any money. The residents did not pay him the alleged back rent because he did not bother to explain why he had raised the rent. But they continued to pay the original rent as agreed upon in the 22 May 1974 agreement. As for the taxes, insurance and other expenses, the lawyers pointed out that those were Ujimori's responsibilities. In fact, the residents counter-claimed that Ujimori possibly owed each household $5,000 because the residents were the ones who maintained the houses.

On the second, defense argued that the residents' organization argued was active. Ujimori had failed to include the Hawai'i Housing

Authority (HHA) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in his lawsuit; both had "contractual interests" in his lawsuit. The HHA, not Ujimori, should determine the status of the MAI. The HHA also had already recognized the status of the resurrected residents' association (now Ota Camp Makibaka Association, Inc.) when it allowed the residents in August 1985 to assume the mortgage. A newly registered organization, the Ota Camp Makibaka Association, Inc., had been officially registered. This association had the same board directors and members as the previous association, MAI, and it was ready and willing to assume the legal rights and obligations of the MAI. The Board of Directors of the new organization consisted of eight officers with Pete Tagalog as president.

Furthermore, the defense lawyers noted that Ujimori had been inconsistent. On the one hand he claimed that the resident's association ceased to exist from 1978, yet he continued to accept the original rent payments (minus the 1981 rent increase that he wanted) after 1978. He collected the rents until 1984. "The Plaintiff's argument about the corporate status of MAI is an opportunistic mechanical device used to deprive these people of their clear right to own their homes."[53]

On the third claim that the residents lost their option to buy the homes (forfeiture), the defense lawyers argued that the 1974 agreement did not mention that possibility at all. More importantly, they argued that Hawaii State law favors compensation over forfeiture

On 27 January 1986 the Ota Camp residents sued the City. They filed a complaint against Alvin Pang and the Department of Housing and City Development for approving Ujimori's request for a rent increase without sufficient explanation. This city department official, said attorney Matsuda, had chosen not to respond to his letters on the matter.[ix] Now defendants Tagalog et al. also became plaintiffs. The logic here is that if the City were wrong in allowing Ujimori to raise the rent, then Ujimori's suit against the residents had no merit.

While the cases were in litigation, lawyers for the three parties (Ota Camp residents, Ujimori and City) also tried to settle out of court. Below is a brief account of the settlement process.

In July 1985, a year after Ujimori sued the residents, he told his lawyer that he was willing to discuss a settlement. But Ota Camp residents voted against giving Ujimori any payment. Defense attorney Matsuda and plaintiff attorney Allan Chock discussed ("off the record") what was

causing the impasse. It was money. Matsuda guessed that Ujimori was probably using the option (for the residents to buy the homes) as a leverage so he could collect more money.

Ujimori was willing to settle the case if the residents would pay him between $50,000 to $80,000, a high figure that was more than the back rents he had claimed the residents owed him. Matsuda thought that Ujimori wanted to be reimbursed for property tax and insurance payments that he had not expected. "In effect, he is asking Makibaka [residents]to pay the extra amounts of above what they legally owe so that they can receive his consent to the exercise of the option."[55]

I tend to agree with Matsuda's speculations. I calculate that, rounding up the figures and assuming that Ujimori had a valid reason to raise the rent, the residents owed him about $19,200 for four years (1981-1984), and not the $50,000 or more that he claimed in his lawsuit.

Matsuda discussed the impasse with the plaintiff's attorney Chock. If a judgment favored Ujimori, the following could happen: the residents would lose the option, Ujimori could stay as the landlord, then he could raise rents or he could evict the residents. There could also be a "violent confrontation." The lawyers agreed that they did not like nor support the latter scenario.

The Presiding Judge Edwin H. Honda urged settlement. But both sides could not agree on the amount for the settlement. At one point the residents were willing to pay Ujimori $25,000 but he rejected the offer. Matsuda explained that the residents were worried about paying a large settlement amount. He and several residents met with Governor George Ariyoshi on 25 October 1985 to discuss the problem and seek assistance. The governor, Matsuda noted, "offered to assist my clients by discussing possible financing arrangements with the Hawai'i Housing Authority."[56] It is not clear, however, if and how the governor helped. No formal offers for settlement were made in 1986.

In early 1987 Ujimori made a verbal offer that he would drop all claims if the residents paid the rent increase in full and the City paid him $20,000 as reimbursement for property taxes payments he had made for the property. The residents rejected the offer because Ujimori ignored the defects in the homes he built and for which the residents now claimed damages amounting to $270,000. Ujimori and his lawyers were irritated enough to conclude that the residents were demanding the impossible. "Settlement negotiations have been substantially impeded by the various

defendants and tenants of the project attempting to exert outside influences on members of the State and County elected officials, including the use of public demonstrations, in an effort to accomplish a transfer of the property at no cost for any sums allegedly owed."[57]

Nevertheless, the settlement attempts between the residents and Ujimori moved along. Defense counsels Matsuda and Mar-Chun submitted a Statement for a Settlement Conference. It outlined again in 34 pages the repairs that Ujimori did not do and for which he owed the residents $270,000. Defense repeated that the rent increase was improper and invalid because Ujimori had requested from and received the City's approval for the increase without providing any reason and evidence for the increase. And this was why the residents sued the City.[58]

The discussions between the residents and the City were behind closed doors. Presumably the residents and their attorneys held numerous meetings with the city officials and their attorneys. Nora Tagalog remembers one contentious meeting called by Pete held in a bank in Waipahu. Attorneys for both parties were present. Many issues were raised. One of them was the "slander" allegedly made by Ujimori and city officials that Pete and Nora were crooks stealing money from the residents.

Pete asked the city officials to make a public apology, but they refused. Another issue was the City's proposal to sell the land or homesite, about six acres, to the residents. There was bargaining. The city officials at first mentioned the figure $1.5 million as the value of the property, then after more bargaining, they lowered it to $600,000 at which point Pete "pounded the table and declared "'that's it.'"[59]

Attorney Matsuda, writing to City's defense counsel Bernadette Franks-Ongoy, confirmed that an agreement was reached because the City wanted to "avoid costly litigation" and give the Ota Camp residents an option to buy the "land on which their homes were built."[60] The cost of the parcel of land was indeed $600,000 and the residents would have the option to buy it until 1 June 2001.

Later provision gave the City the first option to buy the land should the residents decide to sell it within ten years after purchase. "After the tenth year, the Ota Camp would be free to sell the property without the restrictions of the City's first option to purchase."[61] With this provision, the City intended "to preserve the original intent of the sale (affordable housing to the Ota Camp community) while discouraging speculation on the land."[62]

In April the two lawsuits were formally settled. Ujimori wanted $100,000.00 to settle. He was offered $57,500.00 which he accepted. On 23 April 1987 Matsuda, on behalf of the Ota Camp-Makibaka Association, Inc., signed an agreement settling all disputes in the lawsuits of Ujimori against Ota Camp and Ota Camp against the City. Under the terms of the agreement the City had to pay most of the $57, 500.00.[63] "Ota Camp," says Nora Tagalog, "did not give Ujimori a cent."[64]

Persistence by the residents and dedicated work by the defense attorneys won in the end. The residents blocked the developer, and they retained the option to buy their homes. They sued the City and won the right to buy the home lots. Attorney Matsuda thanked Pete and the residents: "Thank you very much for your long hours and dedication to the work we have done. I congratulate each of you for the achievement of this settlement. It has been a pleasure for me to work with you and I look forward to the date we close the settlement and Ota Camp can move forward into the future. Makibaka Forever!"[65] Matsuda also praised Nora Tagalog as a good treasurer and hard-working mother.[66] The last legal settlement was completed in September. The residents celebrated victory the following October.

Victory Celebration

The day-long celebration took place on 24 October 1987. The residents woke up early. The children help put balloons on the fences while the adults, led by the Domrique family, cooked food for the party. The day was bright and sunny reflecting the happy faces of the residents who posed for a picture by a visiting journalist. "People power: Neighborhood to keep homes," the journalist reported and quoted what the residents felt that day:[67]

Pete Tagalog: "'This community is here because of the people. We depended on the people and the people depended on themselves.'"

Candido Tagalog: "'We knew we were right. It's not like the outside, we stuck together.'"

Nora Gozon Tagalog: "'We just wish we could thank every group that helped us in the struggle.'"

Joan Takano, supporter and close friend of Pete and Nora, saw Ota

Camp as a victory for the Filipino residents and an inspiration to other struggles. "It is also a victory for native Hawaiians and other local people struggling to preserve their culture and way of life, living close to the land that once belonged to them."[68]

The supporters who helped the residents afterwards took different pathways. Attorney Thomas Matsuda left Hawai'i for Oregon to join the Legal Aid office there.

The Takanos, who still visit their friends at the new Ota Camp, worked full-time for labor unions in Hawai'i, Tracy for the ILWU (International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 142) and Joan for HGEA (Hawai'i Government Employees Association).

Mark Matsumoto became active in union work and began his career as a Union representative for service workers, electrical workers, and the Hawai'i Laborers' Union, Local 368.

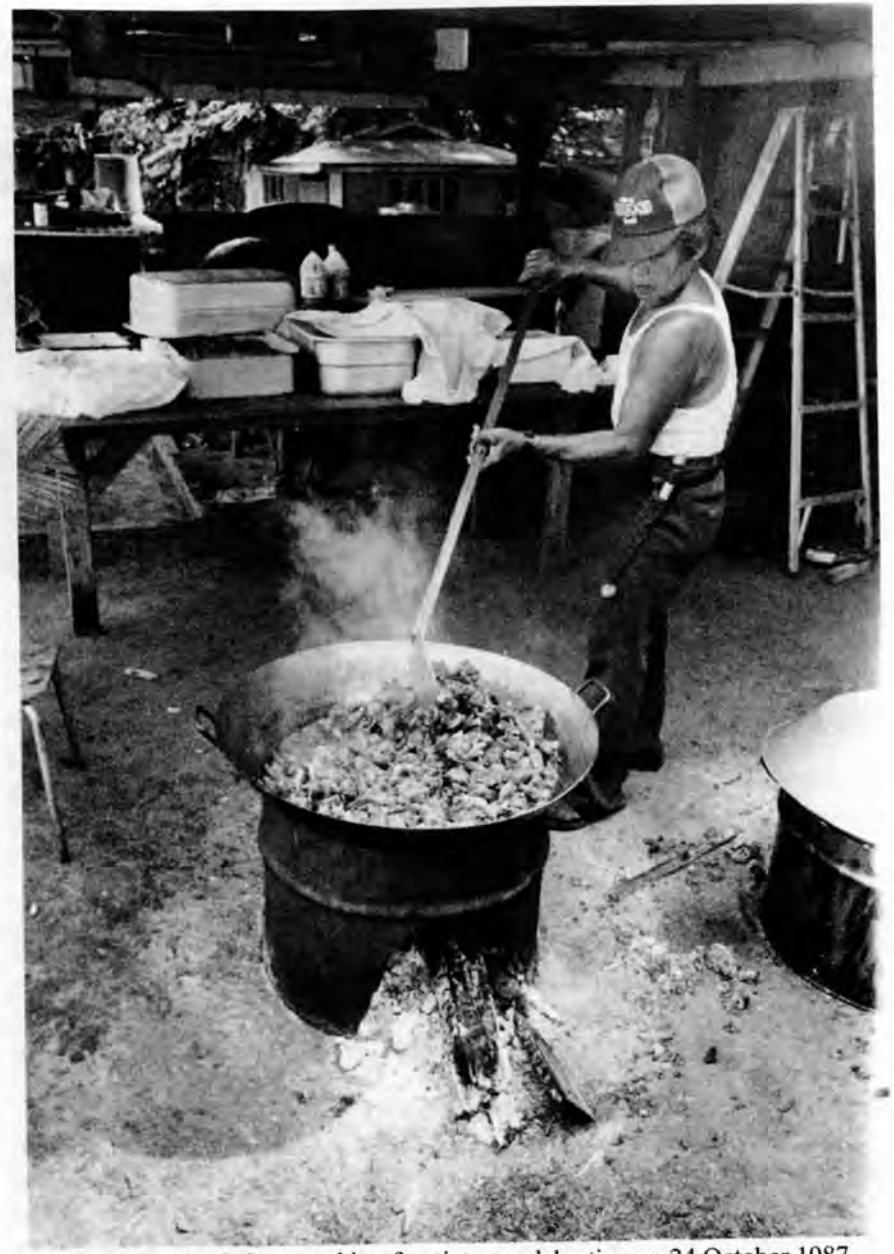
Fast forward, the residents achieved full victory in the 2000s when they completed their payments for the homes and lots and secured individual titles for their property.

This period, the third round of the Ota Camp's anti-eviction struggle, did not involve protesting against developers and bureaucrats. Instead, the residents struggled among themselves on how to proceed.

Should they continue to function as a collective or should they subdivide the land so that each resident with a property title could do as he or she pleased? How can you make the residents pay their back rents to the State and City?

The story---the plot and characters for this period--awaits research. New community leaders stepped forward like Stefan Ibarra, the treasurer who made it his "mission" to finish the fight that his father-in-law, Pete Tagalog, led.[69]

He was an outsider, originally from Hilo, and was not involved in the early phases of the struggle, but he appreciated how the residents had fought to own their home and lots.[70]



Antonino Dumbrique cooking for victory celebration on 24 October 1987. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)



Several residents on Victory Day celebration, 24 October 1987. Soledad Tagalog, center front; to her left, Juliana Asuncion, Gloria Tagalog, Nora Gozon Tagalog, Glen Tagalog, Cindy Ann Tagalog and Vivian Tagalog. Back row, from left: Linda Sugui, Roger Baclaan, Maria Gambon, Francisca Bautista, Arlene Bautista Moore, John Moore and Ildefonso Bautista. (Courtesy of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* Library.)

Chapter 6
SUMMING UP

Recap of Protest: The Plot

In 1972 low-income Filipino residents of a neighborhood, known as Ota Camp, in Waipahu, Hawai'i received an eviction notice from a developer who wanted to build upscale homes on the site. The residents refused to leave because they were happy where they were: they paid cheap rents and liked their rural lifestyle with neighbors and relatives who grew vegetables and raised chickens and pigs. The residents enjoyed their modest homes and dusty roads but from the developer's perspective, they were living in a slum.

The ordinary residents, some 130 of them, did something extraordinary: they protested. They organized, chose a leader, formed a steering committee, met weekly, provided health and social services to everyone in need. They asked for and accepted help from outside supporters and government officials.

From 1972 through 1975, the first round of the struggle, the residents held rallies and talked with City and State officials. Community activists lent their support. An attorney from a private firm offered free legal services. The city's mayor offered a site where the residents could be relocated. The residents agreed to be relocated because the designated site at West Loch was only about a mile away and there, they could continue their rural lifestyle. The governor provided funds for building the homes at that site. Another developer came into the picture. This second developer borrowed money from the State, built new homes, and rented these to the residents. The agreement among the parties was that

after ten years of living in their new homes, the residents would assume the mortgage to the State. They expected the developer to disappear from the scene.

But this did not happen. Instead, the developer raised the rents without the residents' approval. Then he hired a lawyer to help him collect the back rents which he claimed the residents owed him. Finally, he sued the residents. He alleged that the residents had breached signed agreements and they, therefore, should lose their right to assume the mortgage. The residents realized that the developer meant to evict them.

So, the residents protested once more. From 1984 through 1987, the second round of the struggle, they organized rallies and talked with state officials who had proposed raising the mortgage rate. A new batch of supporters arrived. Among them were lawyers from the Legal Aid of State of Hawai'i who litigated for the residents as defendants and then as plaintiffs when they sued the City for allowing the developer to raise the rents without supporting evidence. Finally, the residents won in a settlement out of court that gave them the right to purchase their homes and house lots. Full victory, a topic not covered in this book, came in the 2000s after the residents completed their payments for their homes and lots and obtained individual titles for their property.

Explaining Victory: The Characters

The residents, all of them, contributed to the success of the struggle. Motivated by mixed feelings of fear, doubt, anxiety, anger, hope and solidarity--difficult to pinpoint at any given time---they sustained their activism against two developers who threatened to evict them several times. Their action proves that sustained collective action is a must for any protest to succeed. But although they all deserve praise, several characters deserve special mention.

Pete Tagalog and his core group provided a stable leadership for 15 years from 1972 to 1987. The core group included Enrique "Judge" Dela Cruz, Johnny Domrique, Patti Niebre and Candido Tagalog, Nora Bautista, Precing Domrique, and Nora Tagalog. Together they combined the skills of speaking out in public and quietly working behind the scenes. Husband and wife, Precing and Johnny Domrique, never gave public speeches but kept the social network alive, always in touch with the feelings and needs of the residents. Quiet activists like Precing and Johnny

are often forgotten in stories of people in social movements. Meetings and get-togethers were held at the Domrique family's garage. Johnny was an expert in butchering pigs for get-together meals. The core group built, ties and alliances, inside and outside Ota Camp.[1] This core group were the ones who held the residents together, like a twine that binds broomsticks together.

Pete Tagalog, himself, acknowledged the role of the core group. As early as 1977 when he was interviewed by Bethany Thompson and as late as 2011 when he recorded his thoughts before his passing the next year, he pointed out that the struggle was won because the core committee was behind him at all times. Specifically, the three "old men" (Dela Cruz, Domrique and Niebre), who spoke Ilokano, pidgin and English, were crucial in organizing the residents. I interviewed Pete several times between 2008 and 2012, and he always stressed that the old men in his core group were his main organizers and a major reason for Ota Camp's success.

What is noteworthy is that while actively resisting eviction, Pete and his core group looked after the well-being of their families. The Domriques, for instance, worked as yardmen, maintenance and construction workers. Nora Tagalog provided for her family by losing sleep---she spent hours working at several part-time jobs.

Outside supporters from Leeward Community College and the University of Hawai'i - Mānoa and activists like Gary Kubota, Johnny Verzon, Leon Dagdagan and Herbert Takahashi helped in the first round of the struggle. Hideo "Major Okada" inspired Pete. Joan Takano, Tracy Takano and Mark Matsumoto, among others, aided in the second round. Lawyers Herbert Takahashi, George Cooper, Thomas Matsuda, and others from the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i provided the clout that low-income communities like Ota Camp residents usually do not have. As Cooper notes, lawyers are needed in any social movement because "the people in power are always using law."[2]

Finally, many government and elected officials, such as Mayor Frank Fasi and Governor George Ariyoshi, listened and empathized with the residents. Several gave their support without much prodding; others wavered but came around in the end. Parts of the wider community, especially journalists, understood and regularly reported that Ota Camp residents were fighting for a lifestyle worth preserving in Hawai'i.

Significance of Ota Camp Activism

The impact of the struggle is impressive as we review the trajectories of the lives of Precing Domrique, Nora Tagalog and Pete Tagalog, three individuals I described in Chapter One, and Nora Bautista who deserves more attention than I have given her in this book.

A young, attractive and determined Precing left her home in a Philippine barrio to help her parents and siblings improve economically. In Ota Camp, she joined her husband Johnny Domrique and gave birth to four sons. Together they sponsored their family members--parents, siblings, uncles, cousins and in-laws to migrate to Hawai'i and let them stay at their homes until they finished their studies or found work to support their own families. While at Ota Camp, they joined the protest against eviction, a cause that Precing and Johnny embraced because they were concerned that their neighbors, once evicted, could be homeless. Several of their relatives still live in Ota Camp (in 2024) but many have moved away. Three of Precing's younger sisters and the youngest brother now live and work on the continental USA.

The Domrique clan sends money to their former village school in northern Philippines so the students there have access to computers. Precing sends *balikbayan* boxes containing food items and clothing to relatives because she remembers how hard life was in the barrio. Her connection to her Philippine home remains strong. One of Precing's sons met and married someone from the village. They now live with Precing. Precing's transformation, from a young bride to an activist and mother, and now a matriarch was made possible by her experiences in the old and new Ota Camp.

Pete Tagalog often mentioned that both Johnny and Precing Domrique provided the glue, the "immigrant values" which held the community together. My account shows that both stayed away from the limelight and that the residents respected them for their kindness and compassion. Because they worked behind the scenes, did not deliver speeches, and were never interviewed by journalists, their important role is not well-known nor appreciated.

Nora Tagalog was a few years younger than Precing. Like Precing, she felt she had a responsibility to take care of her family. But unlike Precing, she had to carry the burden of taking care of her younger

siblings. In Ota Camp, she juggled several hats--treasurer of the residents' association, college student, and breadwinner. Later in the 1990s, after recovering from a cancer treatment, she worked at Hawai'i's airport kitchen and enrolled at Kapiolani Community College to learn nursing skills. She realized her dream to be a nurse, then set up a foster homecare. Like Precing, she is a widow (in 2024) and matriarch of her extended family.

In her youth, while still in the Philippines, Nora believed in the power of visions, prayers and the intervention of the Virgin Mary to solve problems. Her visions moved her to take care of her siblings after her mother died and her father left for Hawai'i. She believed that the Virgin Mary answered her prayers when, in a dream, Virgin Mary took her to Hawai'i to see what his father was doing. But as an activist in the Ota Camp anti-eviction struggle, Nora was down-to earth, convinced that she and the residents had to fight to win. Prayers could help but she knew that they, the residents, had to depend on themselves. Not afraid to say what she thinks, Nora lashes out against those who bow to the rich: "When the rich man come around, they kiss his butt." "Anything that come from their mouths—the rich—all lie but honey it looks to others." She says that she learned these ideas from the Ota Camp struggle.[3]

Both Precing and Nora found new opportunities and learned new ideas in their new environments. They are examples of what the scholar Mina Roces calls Filipino migrants who became agents of social change in their host countries.[4] We don't know what their lives would have been had they not left their barrios, but we know that in Hawai'i they flourished and became activists. But we know that their life experiences before they came to Hawai'i, steeped in hardship and persistence, were qualities they brought to Ota Camp and the struggle.

Pete Tagalog, the third person I described in Chapter 1, was also changed by the Ota Camp struggle. The circumstances made him the leader of as he made the struggle his own. A go-with-the-flow, low-key person who liked singing "Sweet Caroline" father of six children, and school dropout, he obtained his GED high school diploma and studied marine technology at Leeward Community College.

He later quit marine technology and inspired by the struggle, took courses on human development and ethnic studies. The stories of the elderly men and women who once worked in Hawai'i sugar cane plantations transformed him. He appreciated even more his mother's hardships. Finally, he reconnected with his Filipino heritage, the rural

lifestyle and values of the old and new immigrants from the Philippines. He found out that regional stereotyping was skin-deep.

Outside supporters called Pete a grassroots hero. To many of them, the Ota Camp struggle was Pete Tagalog. They invited him to speak at meetings and rallies for many causes like access to beaches championed by Save Our Surf, and evictions at Chinatown and other areas like Waimanalo and Waiahole-Waikane.

They asked him to be a board member of the People's Fund which John Witeck and others organized to support community projects. Pete's transformation, from someone who was scared to talk to professionals and politicians to a charismatic activist inside and outside Ota Camp, is remarkable. He believed that it was possible to get government's help and fight developers.

The other Nora--Nora Bautista--who is Hawai'i-born like Pete Tagalog-- also was changed by the Ota Camp struggle. She became self-confident as a member of the steering committee and, with the support of her neighbors, raised her two sons as a single parent. She focused on her work, starting from low level positions and rising to the management level as trainer of employees at MacDonald's new stores. While Pete, Nora and Precing remained at the new Ota Camp, Nora Bautista moved out in 1997.

The anti-eviction struggle, ultimately, made the residents homeowners. Fast forward, new leaders pushed for Condominium Property Regine (CPR). As a result, they were able to divide the lots and secure individual titles, which meant that they now have a choice to borrow money to repair their homes or sell their homes as they wish. The road, from collective to private ownership had been rocky, which is a separate story altogether.[5]

Kimo Tagalog recalls his father Pete telling him that the struggle would have four phases---the residents winning, the developer trying to regain, the residents in conflict among themselves, and the residents adjusting to a fourth phase where newcomers come to live with them.[6] In this book, I have tried to document the first two phases (the two rounds); the third and fourth that Kimo alludes to, await research.

What is the importance of the struggle for the Filipino American history in Hawai'i? One stereotype of the Filipinos in Hawai'i, something told in a well-known ethnic joke, is that they are uneducated, docile and are born to follow orders. The reality is that Filipinos in Hawai'i have

been involved in long protest activities, including those at sugarcane plantations and tourist hotels. Pablo Manlapit and leaders from the other islands led the statewide plantation workers' strike in 1924.[7] Filipino workers at sugar plantations and hotels were and are active members of the ILWU and Unite Here, Local 5. Although many scholars have acknowledged the importance of Filipino workers in labor activism, they (myself included) somehow overlooked the activism of Ota Camp residents in housing.

In 1981 at the 75th anniversary of the Filipino migration to Hawai'i, a publication show-cased successful individuals in their professions and organizations devoted to solving old and new problems, such as conflicts between new immigrants and Hawai'i -born Filipinos.[8]

This publication did not mention the Ota Camp residents' victory and their relocation in 1975 to their new homes in West Loch. Was it a case of middle-class and Filipino professionals not giving importance to the achievements of low-income Filipinos?

Another publication supported by State funds with the title *Out of This Struggle* to mark the anniversary also made no mention of the Ota Camp Struggle.[9] I was one of the contributors of this book. Similarly, the progressive Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP) did not mention Ota Camp.[10]

Dean Alegado mentioned the "Ota Camp/Makibaka Village Association," in his article for a publication to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Filipino migration to Hawai'i.[11] In 2006 when the Filipinos in Hawai'i celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the Filipino migration to Hawai'i, Emme Tomimbang produced a film with a goal "to share the moments and milestones of the Hawai'i Filipino community's legacy..."[12] She briefly described Ota Camp.

The book by Theodore S. Gonzalves and Roderick N. Labrador and the film by Johnny Verzon give more than a passing attention to Ota Camp.[13] Gonzalvez and Labrador have a chapter on "Social Movements" with pictures of Filipino activists from Ota Camp and other areas while Verzon's film features Nora Tagalog and supporters who recounted what happened or what they remembered happened in the anti-eviction struggle.

I ask Johnny: "Why did you devote time and energy doing the video on Ota Camp?"

Johnny: "I thought that it was important to share with the general public that was part of the history of the Filipinos in Hawai'i. With photos from Leon, films that I had and the information from the interviews, it was an opportunity to develop a documentary or a story line that was never mentioned in books or other news articles—a different point of view."[14]

The Ota Camp anti-eviction fight was part of a statewide and broad social movement in Hawai'i in the 1970s and 1980s. Daviana McGregor-Alegado cites the Ota Camp struggle as one of some 13 community struggles in Hawai'i in the 1970s.[15] George Cooper and Gavan Daws documents several anti-development protests. "These were cases where large portions of local communities, or even entire communities, were being told, they had to move out, with nowhere to go, usually to make way for more expensive residential developments."[16] The authors concluded that in certain areas like Ota Camp and Waiaole-Waikane, local protests blocked the developers but in the end there was a "near-absolute dominance of a development ethic" in Hawai'i.[17]

In addition to demonstrations against evictions, groups campaigned for access to beaches and against overdevelopment along Hawai'i's shoreline. Some groups were better known than others. Save Our Surf, a big environmental group, preserved over 140 surfing sites and supported demonstrations against evictions in Kalama Valley, Ota Camp, and Sand Island. [18]

A small group in Kohala on the Big Island forced Castle and Cooke to unlock gates so the residents could freely go to the ocean and mountain where they traditionally hunt for food.[19] There are many examples of political action from the grassroots. Documenting these, how they resisted and organized protests, and the outcomes of these protests, is far from complete.

The Ota Camp activism, though little-known, was and is part of a bigger and universal story, the conflict between the rich and the poor. The Ota Camp residents participated in "contentious politics" in which ordinary people united to confront elites and authorities.[20] They also remind us that housing is both an old and new issue. A reporter on the current housing crisis in the United States observes: "There are countries around the world, and especially in Europe, that have decided that housing is a human right."[21]

Memories fade and for various reasons, certain histories are forgotten, if not ignored. Leaders of the Ota Camp struggle tell me that

many, especially the younger generation, do not know and/or appreciate their protest. To my mind, many Waipahu residents are also not aware of heroes in their midst.[22]

Perhaps readers will realize, after reading this book, that the Ota Camp struggle was significant. The residents were heroes hidden from the mainstream gaze. They were ordinary people who fought for their homes, families, neighbors, lifestyle and dignity. "Ota Camp is just not a place; it has history.[23]

CHRONOLOGY

1971 **December 28:** Residents (131 individuals, including 15 single, elderly men) receive letter/notice from Amity Waipahu, Inc. that they should move out because the company plans to install sewer lines. Eviction is set on Feb. 1st. (Delayed and reset three times in 1972.)

1972 **January 16:** Ota Camp residents attend meeting at Waipahu Library; D. Kihano, Waipahu representative to House, representatives of the Governor and City Mayor also attend.

March: Funeral of resident Vicente Elisna. Ota Camp residents organize their community; Steering Committee is formed composed of Pete Tagalog, head of Steering Committee and members Leonora Bautista, Leonora Baclaan, Enrique Dela Cruz, Johnny Domrique, Patricio Nibre and Candido Tagalog; outside supporters come to help---YWCA, Waipahu Community Association, Leeward Study Group, Waipahu Youth Project, Kabataan Katipunan and Kokua Hawai'i.

March 30: Ota Camp residents hold first rally and demonstration in front of the State Capitol. Support groups, including Kabataan Katipunan and Kokua Hawai'i, and other supporters attend.

April 4: Three Ota Camp residents, led by spokesperson Pete Tagalog, meet Governor Burns.

April 14: Senate Resolution No. 326, "Congratulating the Residents of Ota Camp, Waipahu" introduced by Senator Nadao Yoshinaga and others, congratulates the residents for "their courage on preserving ethnic communities in Hawaii..." Also requests the Governor's office for help in the implementation of "Act 105, Session Laws of Hawai'i, 1970, and other programs that aid in the relocation of the people at Ota Camp, Waipahu."

April 19-20: Ota Camp participates with float at Carnival at the Waipahu Recreation Center.

July 29: United Filipino Council of Hawai'i passes Resolution No. 7 to support and urge the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i to seek ways "to help the people of Filipino ancestry at Ota Camp, Waipahu, Hawai'i."

August 1: Mayor Fasi announces housing plans for Ota Camp residents. West Loch identified as relocation site. Don Dumlao, architect, is hired to help plan the set up at the new site. ILWU asks Waipahu Amity not to evict the residents.

August 23: Second eviction notice.

August 25: Ota Camp residents hold a second big and "surprise" demonstration at the office of Waipahu Amity Inc. to protest the charge that the residents owed a back rent of $1,694. Its president, Rex Blackburn, refuses to meet the residents. Herbert Takahashi, lawyer representing Ota Camp, is contacted to ease confrontation.

August 31: Third eviction notice; reset on Oct. 31.

September 30: Don Dumlao, Leon Dagdagan and city officials meet residents at Ota Camp to discuss results of Dumlao's socio-economic survey of Ota Camp.

1973 **January 27**: City announces plan to build a model house for Ota Camp residents, hires a new architect, Jo Paul Rognstad.

March 22: Pete Tagalog criticizes model house during fund-raising event sponsored by East-West Center and UH students at UH Manoa.

April 1: Honolulu Redevelopment Agency (HRA) presents first detailed plan for the relocation cite (5.2 acres at West Loch), called the "Auxiliary Redevelopment Project."

July 3: Ota Camp residents rally and provide testimonies to Honolulu City Council.

July 17: City Council approves the use of 5.2 acres of West Loch for Ota Camp residents under Act 105 which relaxes zoning restrictions and allows "rural lifestyle."

1974 **January 4**: Acting Governor Ariyoshi announces State will provide funding ($460,000) for construction of homes for Ota Camp residents at the West Loch relocation site.

May 14: HRA Waipahu Sublease agreement signed with Jack H. Ujimori, developer, who will build the homes at West Loch. Ujimori will pay the City $1.00 annually for the lease of the land.

May 22: Agreement signed by developer Jack H. Ujimori, Pete Tagalog for Makibaka Association, Inc. and Hawai'i Housing Authority representative. One provision is an "option," in which residents can take over the lease from Ujimori and buy the homes. The option date will be 10 years after Ujimori shall have completed building the 31 units in the project.

June 1: Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new Ota Camp at West Loch. Speeches by Pete Tagalog, president of the Makibaka Association, Major Frank Fasi and Acting Governor Ariyoshi.

July 22: Jack H. Ujimori signs document for Hawai'i Housing Authority, promises to pay the loan $460,000.00 with 5.875% interest per year. Specifically, he promises to pay $2,928.94 per month (which, in turn, he will collect from the residents).

1975 **January 11**: Dedication ceremony, led by Father Matthew, for the houses at the new Ota Camp (Makibaka Village) West Loch. The residents organize their "Grand Slam Celebration."

March & April: Construction of houses completed; residents move to new Ota Camp at West Loch. Total number of homes: 31 (25 has 3 bedrooms; 4 has 4 bedrooms, and 2 has 5 bedrooms).

May: Funeral for Steering Committee member Patricio Nibre.

1978 **July 26:** Makibaka Association, Inc. is dissolved by the Director of Regulatory Agencies for failure to file an annual exhibit (report) for two years as required by law.

Steering committee member Enrique Dela Cruz dies while visiting the Philippines

1980 **August 20**: Jack Ujimori requests the City for permission to increase rents (by 40 %).

December 11: City approves Ujimori's request to increase rents by 17.90 %.

1981 Residents reject the increase. They claim that Ujimori refuses to

explain reason for the increase; they do not pay the new increased rate.

1984 **April 17**: Lawyer George Cooper serves notice of intent; new Ota Camp residents plan to exercise option, take over lease and buy their homes.

June 27: Jack Ujimori lists debt owed him by residents, a total of $56,044.64.

July 20: Jack Ujimori files a complaint against Peter (sic) Tagalog, et. al. (Civil Case no. 83645) for breach of contract, asks the court to stop the residents from exercising their option to buy the homes.

August 16: Defendants file counterclaim against Ujimori "for latent construction defects." Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i lawyers represent the defendants.

November 17: "New Ota Camp in Trouble." Dinner rally at the new Ota Camp.

1985 **February 16**: Ota Camp Makibaka's 13th Anniversary Celebration.:

March 13: Residents and supporters demonstrate at Hawai'i Housing Authority (HHA) for assumption of lease from Jack Ujimori.

March & April: HHA and Ota Camp discuss mortgage rates; HHA wants an increase, from 5.78% to 8.5%. Senator Patsy Young, chair of the Senate Housing and Community Development Committee urges HHA to give residents more time to discuss mortgage issues.

April 17: Ota Camp residents and supporters demonstrate at Hawai'i Housing Authority (HHA).

April, May & June: Public forums and fund-raising events are held to support Ota Camp.

June 1: Ota Camp-Makibaka Morale Booster Party.

June 23: Tentative compromise is reached on mortgage rate. Residents, collectively, will have the option to assume the lease; they accept the 7.5 % interest on mortgage. (Monthly payment is raised from $2,928.94 to $3,228.50.)

August 2: HHA commissioners approve the interim agreement.

August 17: Governor Ariyoshi approves the interim agreement.

August 21: Special Meeting, Ota Camp. Adopts amendment to articles of incorporation of Ota Camp/Makibaka Association, Inc., that the latter is a "re-incorporation" of the Makibaka Association, Inc. which was dissolved by the director of the Department of Regulatory Services on 20 July 1978. Board of Directors: Pete Tagalog, president; Candido Tagalog, vice-president; Artie Dumbrique, 2nd vice-president; Perpetua Ramos, secretary; Leonora Gozon, treasurer; Leonora Bautista, member; Juan Domrique, member; and Darrell Tagalog, member.

1986 **January 27:** Ota Camp sues, files a Third-Party Complaint against the City for giving developer Jack Ujimori permission to raise rentals without just cause.

February 22: Ota Camp Makibaka 14th Anniversary Celebration

1987 **March 17:** Tentative agreement, Ota Camp residents have the option to buy the lots/land for $600,000.00 from the City.

March 18: City Council approves the tentative agreement.

March 27: General meeting of residents to discuss the 15th anniversary celebration and lawsuit status. Attorneys Tom Matsuda and Craig Mar-Chun answer questions.:

April 23: Settlement agreement signed before Circuit Judge Wendell K. Huddy. This settles all disputes in lawsuit Civil No. 83645.

June 10: Circuit Court of the First Instance approves the settlement. Ota Camp trustees and their association, Jack Ujimori and the City certify the action as class action.

July 23: Ota Camp Makibaka Association, Inc., accepts the settlement presented by the City and dismisses its Third-Party Complaint against the City; the residents have option to buy the land for $600,000.00. This prize is fixed until 2001.

July 24: General meeting of residents to discuss settlement update (Ota Camp-Ujmori-City), mortgage assumption, victory celebration and press conference.

September 25: General meeting of residents. Agenda includes treasurer's report by Nora, update of settlement, victory celebration plans.

September 29: Final agreement, sub-lease addendum, with the City in which the City would have the first option to buy in case Ota Camp decides to sell the parcel within 10 years after this agreement.

October 24: Victory celebration at new Ota Camp, West Loch.

1997 Ota Camp residents pay balance of $320,000 to Hawai'i Housing Authority for their homes.

2001-2007: Ota Camp residents pay the City in full for the land. They subdivide the land; each homeowner receives a title to his/her property.

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Dagdagan Papers. Leon Dagdagan has a rich file that includes photos of demonstrations and hand-written minutes of meetings. Nicki Sahagun has digitized the photos.

Domrique Papers. Eufrocina Domrique shared family photos and a video film of the wake for her husband Johnny Domrique.

Hawai'i State Archives. The papers of governors John Burns and George Ariyoshi yielded one file folder and a document, respectively, related to Ota Camp. Governor Ben Cayetano's papers did not yield materials on Ota Camp.

Hawai'i State Judiciary. Court of the First Circuit. Documents on Civil No. 83645 (Jack H. Ujimori vs Peter Tagalog, et. al.) can be read in microfilm.

Honolulu City and County. Municipal Reference Center has a thick file of clippings on Ota Camp.

Matsumoto Papers. Mark Matsumoto shared letters, photos and clippings.

Tagalog Papers. Nora and Pete have assorted documents from 1972 to 1990s.

Takano Papers. Joan Takano shared government documents, clippings and photos.

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End Notes

INTRODUCTION

[1]Ruben R. Alcantara, *Sakada: Filipino Adaptation in Hawaii* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1981).

[2] Noel J. Kent, *Hawaii Islands Under the Influence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983, 1993); George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Benchmark Books, 1985); and Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

Chapter 1
LIFE STORIES

[1] Information on Precing's life is from my interviews with her in Waipahu, Hawai'i. On poor people's "obsession for food," see Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1943, 1973), Chapter V. The quoted phrase is from this book, p. 36.

[2] Precing Domrique, interview, 24 May 2018.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] For general background, see Ruben R. Alcantara, *Sakada: Filipino Adaptation in Hawaii* (Washington, DC: United Press of America, Inc., 1981).

[5] Precing Domrique, interview, 24 May 2018.

[6] Precing Domrique, interview, 8 August 2013. Precing here accepts her situation matter-of-factly, "it is what it is," but she also knew there should be a way to overcome hardships.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] For background on Waipahu and details on Mr Ota, see Michael T. Yamamoto, Nina Yuriko (Ota) Sylva and Karen N. Yamamoto, *Waipahu...Recollections from a Sugar Plantation Community in Hawaii*, 2005).

[11] Quote translated from Precing Domrique, interview, 16 May 2013. "Patay" literally means "dead" but it can be used idiomatically to mean that something is hopeless or tragic.

[12] For a description of the role of these bachelors in one camp, see the article by Leonard Y. Andaya, "From American-Filipino to Filipino-American" in Jonathan Y. Okamura, guest editor, *Filipino American History, Identity and Community in Hawai'i,* 1996), 99-111. See also, Andrew W. Lind, *Hawaii's People* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1967), 31, 34-35. At a Kona coffee camp, the bachelors taught the young ones how to gamble and cheat, as Ernest Libarios happily recalled in my interview with him on 9 March 2019.

[13] Precing Domrique, interview, 16 March 2013. Precing Dela Cruz Domrique is not related to Enrique Dela Cruz. Precing called him "manong" Roque. "Manong" or elder brother showed respect; "Roque" was his nickname. I will discuss Enrique Dela Cruz and Patricio Nibre in Chapter 2.

[14] Precing Domrique, interview, 28 May 2013.

[15] Emma Dumbrique, interview, 30 September 2023. Note that "Dumbrique" became "Domrique," the surname Johnny adopted in Hawai'i, possibly after immigration officials in Hawai'i misheard and misspelled his name.

[16] Nora Tagalog, interview, 31 August 2009, Waipahu, Hawai'i. Biographical details on Nora are from my interviews with her.

[17] Both quotes from *ibid.*

[18] Ruben Alcantara, "Exodus to the Golden Islands," *The Filipinos in Hawaii...The First 75 years, 1906-1981,* commemorative book (Honolulu: Hawaii Filipino News Specialty Publications, 1981), 46.

[19] Nora Tagalog, interview, 14 January 2017. An example of the punishment was to put her in a sack hung over a fire.

[20] Both quotes from Nora Tagalog, interview, 31 August 2009. Nora cries when recalling this episode in her life.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] All quotes from *ibid.* I did not point out to Nora that when her dream or vision appeared, she could not have known the specific names of places in Hawai'i.

[23] All quotes from *ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*

[26]Nora Tagalog, interview, 2 September 2009. New Filipino students at Hawai'i's public schools especially in the 1970s faced problems not only with other ethnic groups but also with Hawaii-born Filipino students. For more

details, see the article "Education: The Filipino Dream" *The Filipinos in Hawaii...The First 75 Years 1906 – 1981*, 78 – 97.

[27] Nora Tagalog, interview, 2 September 2009.

[28] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 August 2008, Waipahu, Hawai'i. Pete says that research by his son confirmed the family's Lapulapu lineage. Biographical details are mainly from my interviews with Pete.

[29] The view that early Filipina migrants were not necessarily victims of *koboy-koboy* is discussed in Adrian Alarilla, "Koboys and Kumadres: Rethinking Kinship and Agency in Early Filipina Migration Narratives," paper presented at Association for Asian American Studies (2021).

[30] Pete Tagalog, interview, 5 November 2008.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Sally Tagalog, interview, 11 March 2010.

[34] Pete Tagalog, interview, 5 November 2008.

[35] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[36] Raymond Catania describes his political awakening at Leeward Community College in Gary T. Kubota, ed., *Hawaii Stories of Change; Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project* (2018), 33-35.

[37] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 1 August 1972, p. E-8.

[38] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 25 September 1972, p. A-4.

[40] *Honolulu Advertiser,* 14 January 1972, p. A-3.

[41] Diane Estabillo, interview, 26 October 2019. It is not clear what exactly the reason was for their departure from Ota Camp. Dianne and her sister Elaine recall a happy childhood, running around and feeling safe in Ota Camp.

[42] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 14 January 1972, p. B-1.

[43] Grace Tagalog Townsend, interview, 19 October 2019.

Chapter 2
THE RESIDENTS ORGANIZE

[1] Leon Dagdagan, who assisted the architect Don Dumlao, shared with me his copies of the surveys. The graduate student, Evelyn Gomez Hernandez, submitted her dissertation "The Makibaka Movement: A Successful Filipino Protest Movement in Hawaii" to her University of Hawaii doctoral committee in August 1977.

[2] Francisca Gonzales, interview, 28 October 2019, Waipahu, Hawai'i.

[3] *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 3 April 1972 p. D-8; *Honolulu Advertiser*, 31 March 1972, p. A-18.

[4] Kathy Titchen, "New Horizon for People at Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 20 February 1973, p. A-2. Two sisters, Elaine Estabillo and Diane Estabillo, who attended Johnny Verzon's Ota Camp video presentation on 26

October 2019 at the Hawai`i State Library, recall their life in Ota Camp as young girls running around, playing and feeling safe.

[5] Pete Tagalog, self-taped memoir, @2011.

[6] For more biographical details on Major Okada, read or hear Dan Boylan's interview of Hideo "Major Okada," 26 July 1978.

[7] Ernie Libarios, interview, 2 May 2013. In fact, Pete was older than Ernie by seven years.

[8] Dick Yap, interview, 15 August 2013.

[9] "Ota Camp Makibaka! A fact Sheet of the Ota Camp Makibaka!!!," [March 1972.]

[10] Gail Miyasaki, "Ota Camp," in *Ating Tao, Our People,* edited by Bernadette Suguitan Ledesma (General Assistance Center of the Pacific, College of Education, University of Hawaii, 1976), p. 75. The article originally appeared in *The Hawaii Herald*, 20 April 1973, pp. 4-5. Pete recalls this scene again in a video by Bethany Thompson, "Pete Tagalog and the Ota Camp Struggle," Leeward Community College, 1977.

[11] Pete Tagalog, self-taped memoir, @2011.

[12] Evelyn G. Hernandez, "The Makibaka Movement: A Successful Pilipino Protest Movement in Hawaii," Ph.D dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1977, p. 211.

[13] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[14] Bethany Thompson, Video, "Pete Tagalog and the Ota Camp Struggle," Leeward Community College (1977).

[15] Sally Tagalog, interview, 12 October 2013.

[16] Pete Tagalog interview, 15 September 2008.

[17] Interviews with Nora Tagalog, 11 October 2018 and Pete Tagalog, 1 September 2008.

[18] *Honolulu Star Bulletin,* 3 April 1972, p. D-8.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Nieces and nephews spoke at the wake of Johnny Domrique on 3 October 2008. Precing lent me a video recording of the wake.

[21] Precing Domrique, interview, 16 August 2010.

[22] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[23] Notes by Leon Dagdagan taken during a City Council, City and County of Honolulu, Regular Meeting, 3 July 1973.

[24] *Honolulu Advertiser*, Supplement (Living in Hawaii) 26 February 1974, p. 15.

[25] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[26] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[27] Nora Tagalog, interview, 2 September 2009

[28] *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 20 February 1973, p. A-2.

[29] Nora Tagalog, interview, 29 October 2019. The revelation occurred during a conversation with one of Precing's sisters who had joined the military, lived in California, and was visiting Ota Camp at that time.

[30] Nora Bautista, email to author, 11 April 2022.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Nora Bautista, email to author, 8 April 2022.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Nora Bautista, email to author, 11 April 2022.
[35] Candido Tagalog's role in the struggle awaits research. My attempts to interview three members of his family were not successful.
[36] Pete Tagalog, interview, 20 June 2011.
[37] Sally Tagalog, interview, 14 June 2012.
[38] Helen Aro, interview, 29 July 2014, Honolulu, Hawai'i.
[39] Sally Tagalog interview in Gary T. Kubota, ed., *Hawaii Stories of Change; Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project* (Honolulu: Hawai'i Council for the Humanities and Hawai'i People's Fund, 2018), 220.
[40] Sally Tagalog, interview, 11 March 2010.
[41] Gail Miyasaki, "Ota Camp" in *Ating Tao, Our People, The Filipinos in Hawaii*, ed. by Bernadette Suguitan Ledesma (General Assistance Center of the Pacific, College of Education, University of Hawai'i, 1976), 68, 69, and 74. The article was taken from *The Hawaii Herald*, 20 April 1973, pp. 4-5.
[42] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.
[43] Cockfighting fights did occur. Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008. See also the account by Evelyn Hernandez, "The Makibaka Movement: A Successful Filipino Protest Movement in Hawaii" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 1977), 102-108.
[44] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Mary Choy's account in Robert H. Mast and Anne B. Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996) 183.
[47] Nora Tagalog, interview, 21 November 2014. Pat Gee, "'People's doctor' championed underdog causes," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 March 2005 (http:/archives.starbulletin.cpm/2005/03/12/news/index9.html, accessed 1 Nov 2018).
[48] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.
[49] Nora Bautista, email to author, 8 April 2022.
[50] "A Fact Sheet of the Ota Camp Makibaka!!!," March 1972.
[51] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.
[52] Nora Tagalog, interview, 26 September 2013.
[53] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.
[54] Nora Tagalog, interview, 2 September 2009.
[55] Pete Tagalog, interviews, 1 September 2008 and 17 October 2011. Pete, who had a good sense of humor, invited the residents to laugh at the statements that "Visayans are lazy," "Ilokanos eat dog," and "Dogs can smell Ilokanos because Ilokanos eat dogs."

Chapter 3
THE SUPPORTERS

[1] Interview of Gary Kubota by Kawena Kubota in Gary T. Kubota, ed. *Hawaii Stories of Change, Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project* (Honolulu: Hawai'i Council for the Humanities and Hawai'i People's Fund, 2018), 159.
[2] Gary Kubota, interview by author, 19 July 2012, Honolulu, Hawai'i.
[3] See the recollections of former Kalama Valley residents and Kokua Hawaii members and supporters in Gary T. Kubota, ed., *Hawaii Stories of Change, Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project* (2018).
[4] Gary Kubota, email message to author, 3 July 2012.
[5] See account of Darrel Tagalog in Gary T. Kubota, ed., *Hawaii Stories of Change, Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project*, 181-184. Darrel is the eldest son of Sally and Pete Tagalog.
[6] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008
[7] Pete Tagalog, interview, 6 March 2010.
[8] Gary Kubota interview by Kawena Kubota in Gary T. Kubota, ed., *Hawaii Stories of Change, Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project,* 169.
[9] Nora Tagalog, interview, 17 October 2011.
[10] Johnny Verzon, email message to author, 25 April 2020.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*
[13]The stadium, announced in 1966, opened in 1975 after "financial and political turmoil," *Star Advertiser*, 23 November 2014, p. A1.
[14] Johnny Verzon, email message to author, 24 April 2020. The daughter, Claire, was an activist in 1970s Hawai'i.
[15] Johnny Verzon, email message to author, 24 March 2010.
[16] Johnny Verzon, email message to author, 25 March 2020.
[17] Leon Dagdagan in Loretta Robinson, "The Filipinos Get It Together," *Honolulu Star- Bulletin*, 19 January 1972, p. E-1.
[18] "Operation Manong 101," material produced by Johnny Verzon for the Operation Manong reunion on 29 August 2010 at the home of Ethel AlikpalaWard.
[19] Loretta Robinson, "The Filipinos Get It Together," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 19 January, p. E-3.
[20] Johnny Verzon, interview, 17 March 2010, Honolulu, Hawai'i.
[21] Johnny Verzon, email message to author, 25 April 2020
[22] Leon Dagdagan, interview, 23 August 2010, Honolulu, Hawai'i. The cousins were related to Leon's father's side who came to work at Hawai'i plantations. Email message from Leon Dagdagan to author, 20 August 2023.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Leon Dagdagan, email message to author, 19 June 2020.

[26] Leon Dagdagan, interview, 23 August 2010, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

[27] Leon Dagdagan, email message to author, 25 May 2020.

[28] John J. Witeck, "The Rise of Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai'i: Anti-War, Student and Early Community Struggles," in Ibrahim Aoude, ed., *The Ethnic Studies Story: Politics and Social Movements in Hawai'i* (*Social Process in Hawai'i*, Vol. 39, July 1999) 14.

[29] Leon Dagdagan, interview, 23 August 2010, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 21 August 1972, p. D-1.

[32] *Honolulu Advertiser,* 25 September 1972, p. A-4.

[33] Leon Dagdagan, email message to author, 10 June 2020.

[34] Leon Dagdagan, email message to author, 9 June 2015.

[35] Brief conversation with Herbert Takahashi, 6 March 2010, Wong Kung Restaurant, Waipahu, Hawai'i. The occasion was a birthday celebration for Pete Tagalog which Gary Kubota organized.

[36] Tom Coffman, *I Respectfully Dissent, A Biography of Edward H. Nakamura* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'is Press, 2012), 118.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Tom Coffman's biography of Edward H. Nakamura is an excellent portrayal of a labor lawyer and Hawai'i Supreme Court justice.

[39] Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, interview, 14 May 2013, State Capitol, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Brian's activism began when he was in Roosevelt High School; he was an SDS member and active in anti-war, American war in Vietnam. Brian also joined the Ota Camp residents' fight against eviction as an outside supporter while working for the Waipahu Youth Project.

[40] Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, O'ahu," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 21 (1987), p. 135. Trask's source is Kehau Lee who was a member of the collective.

[41] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[42] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[43] Pete Tagalog, interview, 20 June 2011.

[44] John Knox, "Ota Camp May Be Setting a Precedent," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 25 September 1972, p. A-4. Takahashi expressed the same sentiments the next month, see *Leeward Sun-Press*, October 4 – October 10, 1972, no page.

Chapter 4
PROTEST, 1972-1975

[1] George Cooper, "Ota Camp: Round two," clipping from *Ka Huliau*, October-November 1984, no page.

[2] Bethany Thompsom, "Pete Tagalog and the Ota Camp Struggle," Video, Leeward Community College, 1977.

[3] Pete Tagalog, interviews, 1 and 15 September 2008.

[4] Precing Domrique, interview, 29 July 2013.

[5] Nora Bautista, email to author, 12 May 2022.

[6] Senator Brian Taniguchi, interview, 14 May 2013, Hawai'i State Capitol.

[7] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[8] Johnny Verzon, email to author, 1 April 2015.

[9] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 March 1972, p. A8.

[10] Johnny Verzon, interview, 17 March 2010.

[11] Ethel Ward, email to author, 18 March 2011.

[12] Kapatid Bernie Suguitan, Who Will Help the Filipinos," *Pacific Courier*, April 1972, p, 7.

[13] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 31 March 1972, p. A-18.

[14] Pete Tagalog, "Ota Camp Committee Meeting with the Governor," 4 April 1972.

[15] Nora Bautista, email to author, 12 May 2022.

[16] Senator Brian Taniguchi, interview, 14 May 2013, Hawai'i State Capitol.

[17] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[18] Senator Nadao Yoshinaga to Mr. Tagalog, 18 April 1972.

[19] Hawaii, *Laws, Statutes, etc. Session Laws of Hawaii,* vol. 1970, pp. 190-207.

[20] Shoji Kato to the Honorable John A. Burns, 23 June 1972, Hawai'i State Archives, Governor John A. Burns Papers, Ota Camp, Folders Gov 13-56.

[21] Email message to author from William Cadavona, 18 March 2011. Ben Cayetano writes that David Paco recommended him to Governor Burns as a member of the Hawai'i Housing Authority Commission. Ben Cayetano, *Ben: A Memoir, From Street Kid to Governor* (Honolulu: Watermark Publishing, 2009), p. 119. Cayetano does not mention the Ota Camp housing struggle in his book.

[22] Resolution No. 7, Hawai'i State Archives, Governor John A. Burns Papers, Ota Camp, Folders 13-56.

[23] *Honolulu Star Bulletin,* 31 July 1972, p. D-9.

[24] David Paco knew that majority of the members of the UFCH were lukewarm to the idea even though they had signed a petition to support the Ota Camp residents. See Leon Dagdagan, Minutes of Meeting, 1 August 1972. In another entry in the Minutes, someone said that the residents did not fully trust Paco's group. Details on Paco's intentions to give support to the Ota Camp residents are published in the *Pacific Courier*, 6 September 1972, p. 13. Also, Leon Dagdagan, interview, 29 July 2015.

[25] Stanley Mofjeld, Contact Memorandum, 18 July 1972.

[26] Pierre Bowman, "Housing Plan Announced for Ota Families," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 1 August 1972, p. A-7.

[27] Mayor Fasi to Governor Burns, 1 August 1972, Hawai'i State Archives, Governor John A. Burns Papers, Ota Camp, Folders Gov 13-56.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 August 1972, p. A-10.

[30] Editorial, "housing: talk & action," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 August 1972, p. A-14.

[31] *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 4 August 1972, p. A-5.

[32] Nora Tagalog, interview, 19 March 2013.

[33] Richard Yap, interview, 15 August 2013.

[34] Pete Tagalog, interview, 25 March 2011.

[35] *The Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, 6 August 1972, p. B-5.

[36] All quotes from John Knox's article in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, 25 September 1972, p. A-4. The editor of the *Pacific Courier* (5 October 1972, p. 3), reacting to Knox's article, argued that the City and State should help solve the Ota Camp problem, and even suggested that the government should "condemn" the site and build public housing there.

[37] Jerry Tune, "City Pushing Plans for Ota Housing," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 15 August 1972, p. A-8.

[38] Leon Dagdagan, Minutes of Meeting on 22 August 1972.

39 Leon Dagdagan, Minutes of Meeting on 23 August 1972.

[40] Lin da McCrerey, "Residents Try to Confront Owner," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 26 August 1972, p. A-17.

[41] The picture is in the *Honolulu Star- Bulletin*, 25 August 1972, p. A-2.

[42] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[43] Kathy Titchen, "Ota Camp Awaits City Action," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 31 August 1972, p. A-10.

[44] Leon Dagdagan, Minutes of Meeting on 30 September 1972.

[45] Bay Yee (City's economic consultant) to Ray Fisher (Manager, Honolulu Redevelopment Agency), 26 October 1972. Leon Dagdagan reports that, according to Dumlao's email message to him on 21 July 2017, he (Dumlao) considered himself primarily an urban planner, not a builder.

[46] Kathy Titchen, "Architect to Present New Ota Camp Plans," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 24 October 1972, p. C-11:1.

[47] Presley arrived in Honolulu on 9 January 1973. Leslie Wilcox recalls Presley's visit, and she marks other memorable events for her in 1973, but the Ota Camp eviction was not one of them. Leslie Wilcox, "The Year That Was: 1973," *PBS Hawaii*, August 2013. On its cover was Elvis Presley singing and it advertised "Elvis, Aloha from Hawaii, 40-year anniversary presentation."

[48] *Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, 4 March 1973, p. A-2:3.

[49] Simplicio Tagalog, Candido Tagalog, Patricio Nibre, Enrique Dela Cruz, Juan Domrique, Nora Baclaan, Leonora Bautista and Jose Tabisola to Mayor Frank F. Fasi, 21 May 1973.

[50] Honolulu Redevelopment Agency, "Plan: For an Auxiliary Redevelopment Project Property Located in Waipahu at the End of Leowaena Street Near Waipahu Industrial Park, Waipahu, Oahu, Hawaii," April 1973. See also Richard Borreca, "City Unveils Solution for Ota Camp," *Honolulu-Star*

Bulletin, 1 May 1973, p. C-6 and "Ota Residents Urge Housing OK," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 12 June 1973, p. C-12.

[51] June Watanabe, "Ota Camp Takes Case to City Hall," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 4 July 1973, p. F-5. The groups included Hui Malama Aina O' Koolau, Census Tract 57 (Kalihi-Palama), Old Vineyard Residents Association, Chinatown Third Arm, Waipahu Community Association, Welfare Coalition, Catholic Action Group and Neighborhood Alliance.

[52] Richard Borreca, "New Ota Camp Still Up in Air," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 4 July 1973, p. A2:5.

[53] Leon Dagdagan, hand-written notes, 3 July 1973.

[54] June Watanabe, "Council to Take on Extra Hearings Sessions," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 11 July 1972, p. B-2; "Ota Camp Housing on the Way," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 11 July 1973, p. A-18.

[55] June Watanabe, "Ota Camp Still Waiting," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 20 November 1973, p. A-10; "Ota Camp Plans Go to Council," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 December 1973, p. A12:1.

[56] Kathy Titchen, "Ota Camp Job Funds Released," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 22 May 1974, p. F-6. Clause 2.3 in "Agreement" signed by Ujimori and representatives of the Ota Camp Makibaka Association, Inc. and the state Hawaii Housing Authority, 22 May 1974. Ujimori signed a separate agreement with the city for the lease ("HRA Waipahu Sublease") of the land on 14 May 1972. Both documents are in *Jack H Ujimori vs Peter Tagalog etal*, Civil Case No. 83645 filed by Jack Ujimori in 1984.

[57] *Ibid.* See full text of Pete Tagalog's speech, Evelyn Gomez Hernandez, "The Makibaka Movement: A Successful Pilipino Protest Movement in Hawaii," Ph.D dissertation, University of Hawai'i, August 1977, Appendix 1.

[58] *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 May 1974, p. A-18.

[59] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 23 May 1974, p. A-12:1.

[60] *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 May 1974, p. A-18.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 24 May 1974, p. A-26.

[63] All quotes from Janice Wolf, "Fasi for New Sales Tax; Jab at State Over Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *Honolulu Advertiser*, 2 June 1974, P. A-1:2.

[64] Pete Tagalog alluded to this in Kathy Titchen, "Moving Day Finally Is Near for Residents of Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 19 December 1974, p. C4:4.

[65] "Water Line Work Stalls Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 31 January 1975, p. A-16.*

[66] Janice Wolf, "Filipinos Finally Getting Homes," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, 12 January 1975, p. A-3. "Grand Slam Celebration," programme 11 January 1975.

[67] Pete H. Tagalog, "Food for Your Thoughts," 11 January 1975.

[68] Pete Tagalog to Jack Ujimori, "Re: Filling of Waipahu Auxiliary Redevelopment Project Units," 13 February 1975. Information on these five indivudals was provided by Nora Tagalog on 12 December 2015.

[69] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 February 2012.

[70] "Biography of Gary T. Kubota, author of the play Legend of Ko'olau," email message to author on 19 July 2012.

[71] "Background of Johnny I. M. Verzon" email message to author by Johnny Verzon on 25 April 2020.

[72] Leon Dagdagan, interview, 23 August 2010.

[73] Tom Coffman, *I Respectfully Dissent: A Biography of Edward H. Nakamura* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 86.

Chapter 5
PROTEST, 1984-1987

[1] Kathy Titchen, "Ota Camp to Makibaka Village," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin & Honolulu Advertiser*, 12 October 1975, p. 11:1.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Patsy Matsuura, "A Place in the Sun," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 11 April 1977, p. 1.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Kathy Titchen, "Ota Camp to Makibaka Village," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin & Honolulu* Advertiser, 12 October 1975, p.11:1.

[6] Precing Domrique, interview, 9 May 2022.

[7] Patsy Matsuura, "A Place in the Sun," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 11 April 1977, p. 1.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] "Patti Nibre Prayer Expense," 12 May 1975.

[10] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Nora Bautista, email to author, 11 April 2022. Sometimes Precing had eight youngsters (including her four sons and Nora Bautista's two sons) packed in her station wagon taking them to Waipahu elementary, intermediate and high school. Precing Domrique, interview, 9 May 2022.

[13] Tracy Takano, interview, 8 August 2012, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

[14] Pete Tagalog, interview, 1 September 2008.

[15] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.

[16] Nora Tagalog, interview, 19 March 2013.

[17] Pete Tagalog, interview, 25 March 2011.

[18] Bethany Thompson, "Pete Tagalog and the Ota Camp Struggle," Video, Leeward Community College, 1977.

[19] Document is a court exhibit in Civil No. 83645, Jack H Ujimori vs Peter Tagalog etal.

[20] Pete Tagalog, MAI [Makibaka Association, Inc.] President to Jack Ujimori, 2 May 1981.

[21] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.

[22] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008.

[23] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.

[24] T. Irving Chang to Peter Tagalog, 23 September 1983. Chang sent another letter to Pete Tagalog on 22 February 1984 repeating the warning.

[25] George Cooper to Jack Ujimori and Paul A. Tom, 27 April 1984.

[26] Joan H. Takano, interview, 10 October 2011, Honolulu, Hawai'i; email from Joan H. Takano to author, 4 March 2013; Tracy Takano, interview, 8 August 2012, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

[27] Joan H. Takano, interview, 12 September 2016, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

[28] Description of Malama Hawai'i from *Pagkakaisa*! Standing Together as One, Newsletter of the Ota Camp/Makibaka Association, September 1986, No.2.

[29] Email from Mark Matsumoto to author, 10 May 2017.

[30] See, for example, the articles in the *Pacific Reporter,* a journal for the Filipino community in Hawaii, 1986-1987, which focused on the Philippines after Martial Law. *Kiss* (1986-1991), the "Pulse of the Filipino Community," published several articles and pictures of beauty queens. Both journals did not mention Ota Camp.

[31] Benjamin J. Cayetano to Peter Tagalog, 26 February 1987.

[32] "New Ota Camp in Trouble" brochure on the 17 November 1984 rally, p. 2. Supporters, including George Cooper, probably helped produce the brochure. The points raised in the brochure were also raised in an article he wrote before the rally. See George Cooper, "Ota Camp: Round two," *Ka Huli'au*, October-November,1984.

[33] "Internal newsletter draft, [1985].

[34] The rental for the Santa Claus suits was $20.80. [Report], OC/MAI Christmas Party, 21 December 1985.

[35] *Honolulu Advertiser*, 14 March 1985, p. A-10.

[36] 21 March 1985, p. A-3.

[37] The photograph is in Gordon Y. K. Pang, "Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 15 April 2001. p. A-1, A-9.

[38] The details of the "Conditional Commitment" are in a letter from Russel N. Fukumoto (HHA Executive Director) to George Cooper, Esq. (Attorney-at-Law), Peter Tagalog (President, Ota Camp-Makibaka Association, Inc.) and Wendy Monet (Paralegal for Craig Mar-Chun, Esq., Legal Aid Society of Hawaii), 18 March 1985.

[39] "Ota Camp Dispute Precludes Home Buys," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 9 April 1985, p.A-9.

[40] Flyer (undated) by Pete Tagalog, Johnny Domrique, Candido Tagalog, Nora Bautista, Nora Gozon and Sally Tagalog.

[41] "Ota Camp Families to Discuss HHA Offer," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 20 March 1985, p.A-15.

[42] "Ota Camp People Get More Time to Settle," 18 April 1985, p.A-15.

[43] "Ota Camp Families Will Meet on HHA Decision," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 10 April 1985, p. A-2.

[44] Susan Manuel, "Benefit for Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* 7 June 1985, p. C-3.

[45] Mark D. Matsumoto to Russel Fukumoto, 22 July 1985.

[46] "Ota Camp Families OK 7½ Pct. Mortgage Rate," *Honolulu Star Bulletin,* 3 August 1985, p. A-2.

[47] Pete Tagalog, interview, 15 September 2008. Thomas J. Matsuda's account of the negotiations is in his "Memorandum" to Craig Mar-Chun, Allene K. Richardson, Raymond E. Gurcznski and File, 14 August 1985.

[48] Memorandum to George R. Ariyoshi, Governor, State of Hawai'i from Franklin Y. K. Sunn, Director of State Department of Social Services and Housing, 6 August 1985.

[49] He could not recall details on the Ota Camp struggle, but he was glad to learn that the Ota Camp people were successful. Governor George Ariyoshi, interview, 17 September 2013, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Ariyoshi's autobiography, *With Obligation to All* (Honolulu, Ariyoshi Foundation, 1997) does not mention Ota Camp nor Filipinos, in general, but he documents how he helped save the valleys of Waiahole and Waikane from urban development. See pp. 102-105 of this book.

[50] Two outside supporters recall this conflict between Pete and some residents: John Witeck, interview, 21 February 2017 and Mark Matsumoto, email to author, 10 May 2017.

[51] *Hawai'i Star-Bulletin*, 3 August 1985, p. A-2.

[52] Microfilmed documents for this case (Civil No. 83645) are at the First Circuit Court, Legal Documents Branch. For a listing of the documents online, see Hawai'i State Judiciary Ho'ohiki.

[53] Allene K. Richardson and Thomas J. Matsuda, Attorneys for Defendants, "Memorandum in Opposition to Motion for Summary Judgment," 27 August 1985, p. 6.

[54] Civil No. 83645, Third Party Complaint, 27 January 1986; Affidavit of Thomas J. Matsuda in Support of Motion, 27 January 1986.

[55] Thomas J. Matsuda to Craig Mar-Chun, Allene K. Richardson, Raymond E. Gursznski and File, "Memorandum," 14 August 1985, p. 14.

[56] Affidavit of Thomas J. Matsuda, 29 October 1985.

[57] T. Irving Chang, Allan S. Chock, Thomas L. Mui and Arthur S. K. Fong, "Plaintiff's Settlement Conference Statement," 18 February 1987, p. 8.

[58] Thomas J. Matsuda and Craig M. Mar-Chun, "Defendants/Third-Party Plaintiffs' Settlement Conference Statement," 19 February 1987.

[59] Nora Tagalog, interviews, 28 February 2013 and 22 February 2021.

[60] Thomas J. Matsuda to Franks-Ongoy, 17 March 1987. The City Council approved the proposed settlement on condition that the residents settle with Jack

Ujimori and the City. See Bernadette Franks-Ongoy to Thomas J. Matsuda, 31 March 1987.

[61] Thomas J. Matsuda to Peter Tagalog, 14 September 1987.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Ujimori's attorneys (Chang, Mui, Chang & Chock) confirmed that Ujimori accepted the settlement in T. Irving Chang to Thomas J. Matsuda and Bernadette Franks-Ongoy, 22 April 1987. Matsuda explained it to the residents in Thomas J. Matsuda to Pete Tagalog, et. al., 24 April 1987.

[64] Nora Tagalog, interview, 20 June 2011.

[65] Thomas J. Matsuda to Peter Tagalog, et. al., 24 April 1987.

[66] Thomas J. Matsuda to Peter Tagalog, et. al., 14 October 1987.

[67] Terry Lawhead, "People Power: Neighborhood to Keep Homes," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 25 October 1987, p. A3. The phrase "people power" evokes the people power movement that helped end martial law in the Philippines in 1986.

[68] Joan Takano, "Hawaii's People Fight for Land; Major Victory in 15-Year Struggle at Ota Camp," *Unity Newspaper*, 26 October 1987, accessed 17 May 2021, https://unityarchiveproject.org/article/hawaiis-people-fight-for-land/.

[69] Gordon Y. K. Pang, "Ota Camp," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 15 April 2001, p. A-1, A-9. Pang says: "After 30 years, the community residents in Waipahu will finally own their land." Stefan Ibarra, interviews, 7 March 2015, 14 May 2021 and 13 November 2023.

Chapter 6
SUMMING UP

[1] The concepts civil society and networks are developed fully by Andrew Wells-Dang, *Civil Society Networks in China and Vietnam; Informal Pathbreakers in Health and the Environment* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

[2] "George Cooper," in Robert H. Mast and Anne B. Mast, *Autobiograhy of Protest in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), p. 115.

[3] Nora Tagalog, interview, 28 February 2013.

[4] Mina Roces, *The Filipino Migration Experience; Global Agents of Change* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021).

[5] Stefan Ibarra, interviews, 7 March 2015, 14 May 2021 and 13 November 2023. In 1997, Ibarra assumed his position as treasurer of the Ota Camp association; Richard Bautista was then the association's president. Ibarra says realtor Peter Haines and attorney Anders Nervell helped in securing private ownerships for the residents. A letter (18 March 1998) from Peter Haines to Al Nieves, president, and the Makibaka Association discusses the CPR applications for Ota Camp.

[6] Kimo Tagalog, 15 October 2022, Filipino Community Center, Waipahu Hawai'i. Comments made during the Q and A after the presentation of Johnny Verzon's video on the Ota Camp Struggle.

[7] Melinda Tria Kerkvliet, *Unbending Cane: Pablo Manlapit, a Filipino Leader in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Office of Multicultural Student Services, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2002).

[8] *The Filipinos in Hawai'i...The First 75 Years 1906-1981.* (Honolulu: Hawaii Filipino News Specialty Publications, 1981),

[9] Luis V. Teodoro, Jr. ed., *Out of this Struggle* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1981).

[10] *Ti Progresibo*, Newsletter of the Union of Democratic Filipinos, January 1981.

[11] Dean Alegado, "The Filipino Community in Hawai'i: Development and Change," in *The Filipino American Experience In Commemoration of the 85th Anniversary of Filipino Immigration to Hawai'i,* p.28. Special Issue of *Social Process in Hawai'i,* Volume 33, 1991, edited by Jonathan Y. Okamura, Amefil R. Agbayani, and Melinda Tria Kerkvliet.

[12] "Mabuhay with Aloha, The Hawai'i Filipino Experience, 1906-2006." The quote is from Tomimbang's thank-you message issued with the special 2-disc edition [2006].

[13] Theodore S. Gonzalves and Roderick N. Labrador, *Filipinos in Hawai'i* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2011); Johnny Verzon, "Makibaka: Huwag Matakot" (Struggle: Do Not Be Afraid), Video, 2019.

[14] Johnny Verzon, email to author, 14 October 2023.

[15] Daviana McGregor-Alegado, "Hawaiians: Organizing in the 1970s," *Amerasia Journal,* Vol. 7, No. 2, 1980, pp. 29-56.

[16] George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai'i, The Democratic Years* (Honolulu: Benchmark Books, 1985), p. 291.

[17] Quotes from *ibid.*, p. 450.

[18] "Save Our Surf" display at the University of Hawai'i, Hamilton Library, 27 November 2013.

[19] Lani Eugenio, "O Kakou Ka Po'e – We the People," Video, 2011.

[20] The phrase "contentious politics" is from Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement; Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[21] The reporter, Rukmini Callimachi, was interviewed by Sarah Bahr, "With High Rent, Back Seat Becomes a Bedroom," *The New York Times,* 24 October 2023, p. A2.

[22] For instance, the book by Michael T. Yamamoto, Nina Yuriko (Ota) Sylva and Karen N. Yamamoto on Waipahu as a sugar plantation community, mentions Pete Tagalog only as someone who remembered the antics of Tatsuichi Ota and the chronology does not include important dates in the Ota Camp anti-eviction struggle. See their book *Waipahu...Recollections from a*

Sugar Plantation Community in Hawaii (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Innoventions, 2005).

[23] Leonette Tagalog Ka'auamo, comments, Filipino Community Center, Waipahu, 15 October 2022.

Book Reviews

Ota Camp is another valuable contribution by Melinda Tria Kerkvliet to our knowledge and appreciation of Filipino American history in Hawai'i, which is much understudied, together with *Unbending Cane*, her biography of labor leader Pablo Manlapit. Well beyond primary sources such as newspaper articles, her extensive research includes highly revealing oral history interviews providing new information and insights that resulted from the close personal relationships she developed over time with those involved in the protest. Tria Kerkvliet fully demonstrates that the organized resistance by the Ota Camp villagers and their supporters should be considered one of the major community-based, anti-eviction struggles in Hawai'i during the contentious 1970s along with those at Kalama Valley and Waiahole-Waikane Valleys.

Jonathan Y. Okamura, author of *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora*

This book brings visibility and voice to the Ota Camp protest as part of Hawai'i's history. *Ota Camp* is the story of working-class Filipinos who resisted eviction, organized their community and became homeowners. Readers will appreciate the quotes in English, pidgin, and Tagalog to learn about community members' families, leaders, fears, dreams, friendships, experiences of discrimination, and determination to unite against powerful opponents. Tria Kerkvliet also presents important details of the role of community groups, lawyers, government agencies, the mayor and the governor as well as the historical context of the Ota Camp protest. This book is an important addition to scholarship on Hawai'i history and will be especially appreciated by the Filipino community, whose aspirations, struggles and contributions are generally unknown.

Amy Agbayani, Emeritus Director for Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity (SEED) at UH Mānoa; Founding Chair, Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission

Melinda Tria Kerkvliet highlights Filipino organizing in Waipahu, during the time of the anti-eviction movements that sparked the Hawaiian Renaissance (1960s-1980s). In a clear, easy to read narrative, she takes us for a deep dive into the Ota camp history, and situates it with other social movements like Chinatown, Waiahole-Waikane, Sand Island, and Kalama Valley. Kerkvliet provides a transparent coverage of the challenges that Ota Camp residents faced, organizing among low-income working-class Filipino immigrants during the post-plantation era. She provides a humanist portrayal of the gendered cultural dynamics, community disagreements, and family tensions experienced by members of the core organization. But she also describes the resilience and strength of leaders, like Pete Tagalog, who rose out of conditions that sought to keep him in subservience. Equally important were Nora Tagalog, Precing & Johnny Domrique, Nora Bautista, and other elderly residents who served in the background, keeping their organization afloat to weather the struggles, and to finally serve their community's need for housing.

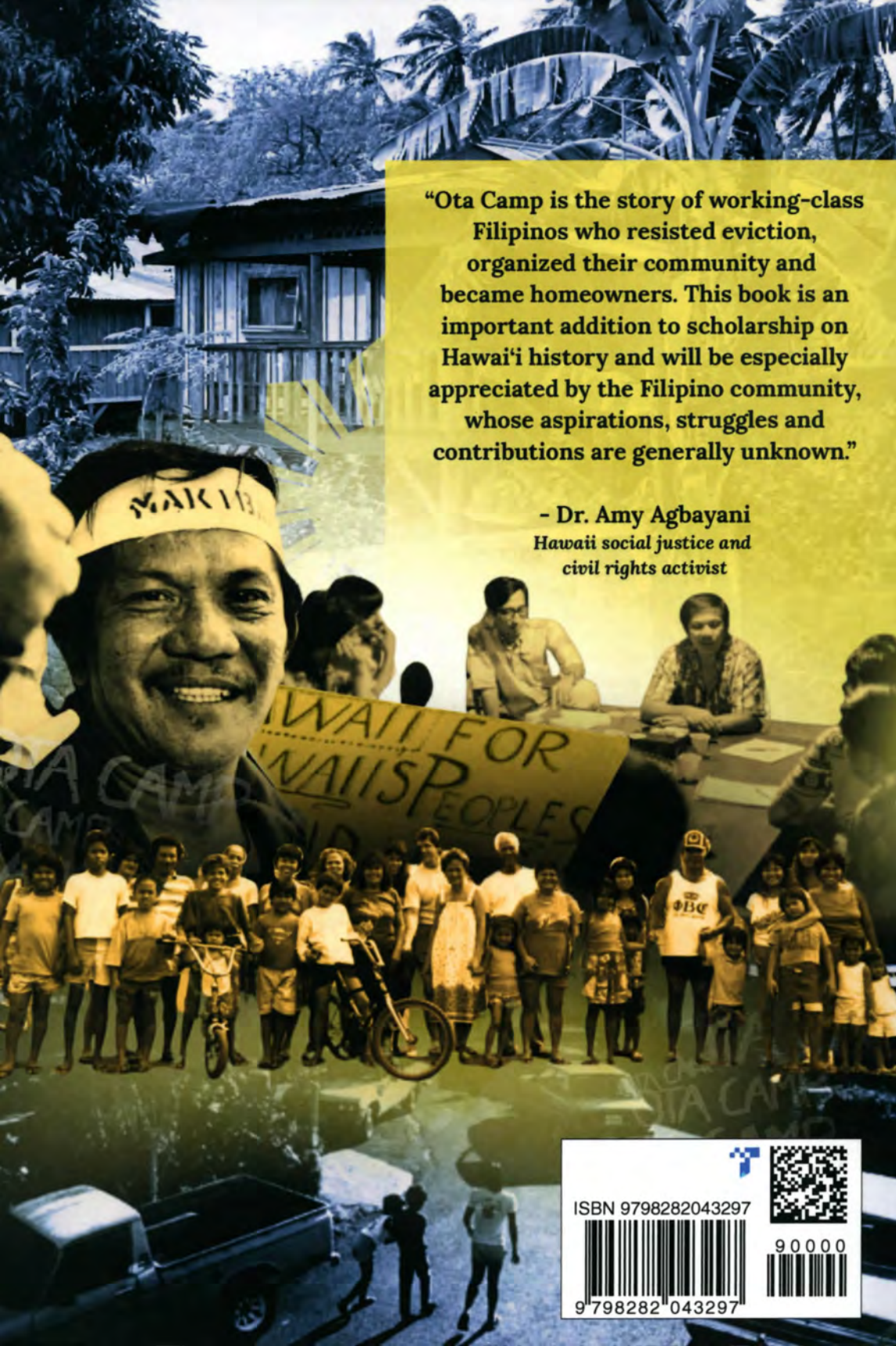
The story awakens pride and gratitude for leaders in Hawai'i's Filipino community who stood by their principles, spoke up, and fought for what they deserved.

Ellen-Rae Cachola, Archivist at the William S. Richardson School of Law and Lecturer at UH Mānoa Ethnic Studies Department

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Melinda Tria Kerkvliet received her doctorate in history from the University of Hawai'i. Her book, *Manila Workers' Unions, 1900-1950,* was published in 1992. She is a former director of Operation Manong (now Office of Multicultural Student Services) at the University of Hawai'i. She was fortunate to meet the children of Pablo Manlapit, a labor leader in Hawai'i before WWII. She then with help from friends researched Manlapit's life and wrote *Unbending Cane: A Filipino Labor Leader in Hawai'i.* As a member of the Filipino American Historical Society of Hawai'i, she conducted oral interviews with Pete Tagalog, Nora Gozon Tagalog, Ernest Libarios and Romel Dela Cruz.



"Ota Camp is the story of working-class Filipinos who resisted eviction, organized their community and became homeowners. This book is an important addition to scholarship on Hawai'i history and will be especially appreciated by the Filipino community, whose aspirations, struggles and contributions are generally unknown."

- Dr. Amy Agbayani
Hawaii social justice and civil rights activist

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