Growing Up Filipino on an American Plantation[1]

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I was born in the sugar plantation town of Waipahu on June 27, 1928, the elder of two daughters, to Dionicio Reyes Nagtalon, originally from Vintar, Ilokos Norte, Philippines. I received my education at public institutions: August Ahrens School (grades 1-6), Waipahu Intermediate and High School (grades 7-12), University of Hawai'i (B.Ed., Fifth-Year Diploma and M.A.), and Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio (Ph.D.).

My educational and travel experiences abroad include a year's visit to the Philippines when I was eight years old (where I attended third grade), a year's sabbatical to France attending the Sorbonne on scholarship and earning a Diplôme in French language and civilization, and travel to eleven countries in Europe and Canada. In 1979 I revisited the Philippines.

I have been a strong advocate for the women's movement (supporting the liberation of men as well), bilingual-bicultural and multicultural education, the strengthening of foreign language programs in our schools, affirmative action, alternative programs to help ethnic minorities and other groups that have little or no power to improve their situations or alleviate their problems, human rights, democracy for the Philippines, the delivery of bilingual-bicultural health and mental health services to limited and non-English-speaking constituencies, and consideration of ethnic and

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cultural perspectives in the fields of health and mental health. Few of these causes are strongly supported privately or publicly by members of the power structure of our society or by a great majority of my ethnic group, in spite of the fact that these causes are consistent with the beliefs of a democratic society.

Reactions to my ideas and behaviors indicate that people have different perceptions of me. On the one hand, I have been told by a Hawai'i-born person, who was not of Filipino ancestry, that I am fortunate for not being at all like the educated Filipino immigrants who have been arriving in Hawai'i since the mid-sixties. This person went on to say that since I was born and educated here and, therefore, have been acculturated to the American and local Hawaiian systems, I do not spend my time criticizing and pointing out the failure of our social, economic, and political systems in serving the needs of immigrants. These remarks were definitely meant to be complimentary. Since the person who made these remarks had not heard me in panel discussions nor had she asked me about my ideas on these matters, she assumed that I had taken a position that criticizing social structures was not an appropriate behavior. Because my actual beliefs were to the contrary, I did not consider this person's supposedly complimentary remarks about me for quite a while, afraid perhaps that I had fallen down on the job.

On the other hand, I have been told by a highly-educated Filipino, who originally came from the Philippines, that I have the ideas and points of view of immigrants. This is because of my support of programs that help the disenfranchised and the unempowered, my interest in providing people with an opportunity to retain

their native languages and become educated about their own cultures as a means of learning about and understanding the American culture, and finally, my belief that being Filipino is not incompatible with being American. It was the feeling of the person making these remarks that it is rare for American-born Filipinos, particularly those who have attained a high level of education, to hold these views and actually participate in activities that help to bring about desired changes.

The persons who made these observations seemed to have made some descriptive statements without intending either to compliment or to criticize. However, since these remarks described my sentiments accurately, and I consider being an immigrant flattering – my maternal grandparents, three of their children and a number of their relatives, my father, and a number of his relatives were also immigrants – I took them to be complimentary.

When I am asked what I think influenced the directions which my life has taken, I respond with the different circumstances under which my maternal grandparents, mother, and father came to Hawai'i, the educational background of my parents, my own response to my parents' nurturing and guidance, the dynamics of the plantation community and the society at large, and my own interests and inclinations. My plans to pursue graduate studies after my first year of teaching were not abandoned or postponed after my marriage; thus, I consider marriage and the person who I married to be crucial influences on my life.

FAMILY AND FAMILY ALLIANCES

What I remember about growing up in the plantation town of Waipahu between the thirties and the late forties were (1) my strong feeling of attachment to my nuclear and extended family and the interdependence among the members of my family, (2) a feeling of estrangement from the culture of my peers, who seemed more concerned about being accepted as part of the crowd than being concerned about their relationship with their families and their own identities, (3) an awareness of my own ethnic identity, my family's social class identity, and our minority status, (4) an awareness of the existence of social, economic, and political inequality based on race and ethnicity, i.e., an awareness that there was a working class made up largely of Asians and a managerial class composed largely of Whites, (5) my interest in languages as keys which unlock the cultural secrets of various racial, ethnic, or nationality groups, and (6) an awareness that as members of the Waipahu Evangelical Church, a Congregational church serving primarily Filipinos, my family was not Catholic and therefore not in the religious mainstream of the Filipino community.

This sixth impression is an important one because it made my family a minority within a minority group, a fact which helps to explain, in part, my perceptions of the plantation experience. Among my Filipino schoolmates and neighbors I felt like a minority because I didn't attend the same church which they did, could not relate to their religious experiences and activities which were discussed with a different set of vocabulary and meanings from that with which I was familiar, and didn't observe many of the religious holidays or practices which they did. This awareness that my

family could belong to a smaller group whose ideas differed significantly from the larger group was to have a strong effect on my intellectual development. I grew up not feeling compelled to believe in what others believed in or what others were doing simply because they were the prevailing thoughts or practices. In fact, my father always told me that I would have to come to grips with the question of religious, ethical and moral beliefs myself and in my own way, advice which I took to heart.

The family and plantation environment into which I was born provided me with the opportunity to hear various languages spoken. I was struck by the power of languages to bring me into the universes and confidences of other people when, as a child accompanying my mother to the store or in her visits to the neighborhood, I discovered I could understand the plantation gossip, jokes, and adult talk which were in Ilokano or Tagalog. Since pidgin English was the lingua franca on the plantations and standard English that of our Japanese and Chinese classmates and grocery store proprietors, thus enabling me to also establish a rapport with them, there developed in me a love and respect for languages. All of these recollections of my impressions of my childhood, adolescent, and early adult years are not surprising, considering my background.

In 1923 Gumersindo Rosendo Rosete, age forty, and his wife, Macaria Dumbrique Rosete, age thirty-eight, my maternal grandparents, sailed to Hawai'i to settle at the Oahu Sugar Company at Waipahu, O'ahu. They brought with them their twenty year-old daughter, Fausta (my mother), who tried in vain to persuade her father that she remain in the Philippines to pursue her studies in nursing, their five-year old

son, Abraham, and nineteen-month old Herninigildo (Herman). A year after their arrival, a son, Irineo, was born. The fact that my grandfather had an education, had brought his family with him, and was already forty years-old at the time of his arrival in Hawai'i set him apart from the great majority of Filipinos who were in their late teens and twenties, were without their families, and had little or no education when they made the decision to come to Hawai'i.

My father, Dionicio Reyes Nagtalon, twenty-three years of age, a former school teacher, unmarried and alone, arrived on Kauai in 1922, a year before my maternal grandparents arrived on O'ahu. After a year of working in the fields on a plantation on Kauai he transferred to Oahu Sugar Company in Waipahu. He worked as a clerk for the Filipino Club House, a plantation-supported social, recreation, and dining facility, where my grandfather worked as the chief cook. My father's close association and friendship with my grandfather gave him the opportunity to be noticed and positively assessed as a potential suitor for my mother, to whom he was attracted. Having left the Philippines, his parents, farmlands, two sisters, and a brother (only one of his sisters survived long enough for me to meet one day) without telling anybody, an act which he always regretted but for which he felt he shouldn't have great remorse, my father assured my grandparents before his marriage to my mother that he would be devoted to his wife's family as well as to his own.

After their marriage in Waipahu my parents moved in with my mother's parents. When my parents were given a home of their own by the plantation, both families continued to function as one family since their house was less than two blocks

away from the home of my grandparents. According to my mother all the members of the family depended on each other for material needs and spiritual comfort. The personal, social, and economic well-being of each member of the family become the concern of the whole family, a belief which members of my family still uphold. My parents provided financial support for the education of my mother's brothers and the settlement of matters relating to the farmlands of my father's family.

Like my grandfather, my father's circumstances differed from those of the majority of Filipinos who worked on the plantations. He had been a teacher who had liberal tendencies, a strong sense of social justice, and a good sense of balance between reason and emotions. My father's most remarkable characteristic was that as an adult he still had the eyes, heart, and mind of a child, a quality which the French writer, Saint-Exupéry, in his book, *Le Petit Prince* ('The Little Prince'), points out is often lacking in adults because they take themselves too seriously.

Among his peers he was seen not only as a capable and responsible person, but also as a kind, gentle, loving human being with a good sense of humor. My father's ability to combine the sense of the ridiculous with the impossible and to find something funny in tragic or serious situations not only made him an effective story teller for me, my sister, and our close friends but a strong influence on my present tendencies to look at life in a more irreverent, i.e., less traditional, less rigid way. This tendency in me is especially strong when the pervasive traditions limit freedom of choice and lifestyle, and prevent people who lack the necessary resources with which to survive in our society from transcending their situations.

My father transmitted his values to my sister and me through his bedtime stories, which carried strong moral lessons. The disdain of many young people who would grow up during the sixties for stories which had a moral ending surprised me because it was through such stories that I came to know what my father believed in and how strongly he felt about his beliefs. But then, the thought that ran through my mind was, *What if what my father had taught me was not for the good of all people, in general?* Perhaps these people had a point.

On the other hand, when the hippies taught that people over the age of thirty should not be trusted, that parents should not be looked up to as models since they represent the values of the establishment – which signified conformity to the status quo – and that the traditional family was no longer a viable institution, although I understood their point of view and was sympathetic to their demands for social changes, I couldn't identify with their family experiences. While most of the young people of the sixties who were in the Hippie Movement came from affluent families that could afford more than just the basics in life without having to scrimp and scrape, I came from a plantation family with a farming background in the Philippines whose members learned to manage on less and placed a great importance on interdependency and concern for the well being of all its members.

The main character of my father's stories was Kuchinanggo, whose name I have never had occasion to write until now. Whether Kuchinanggo was a character drawn from Filipino legends or invented by my father is something I have not yet been able to determine. My father's Kuchinanggo was a mischievous character who didn't always

follow social conventions but always did what he thought was right for people. His irreverence for people in authority and in prestigious positions was as real for me as it must have been for Kuchinanggo and my father – his inventor.

My father's ability to chose words well and to invent appropriate words made him such superb story teller that my friend, Priscilla, and her younger brothers wanted to spend the night at our place just to hear him tell stories. At times, my mother expressed an apprehension that my father was outstepping the bounds of social propriety by some of the deeds of Kuchinanggo.

I learned to respect my relatives and family alliances because my grandparents and parents, who were my primary models, showed me how to do so through their attitudes and actions. Even when my parents moved into their own home they continued to treat my grandparents with great respect and made them feel welcome in their own home. My grandparents and three uncles, who spoke Ilokano most of the time, were my constant companions, playmates, and baby-sitters until I was four years old, when they returned to the Philippines. Other relatives, family friends, and ninong – the term used to refer to one's godfather – who later became baby-sitters for me and my sister when we were in the elementary grades, also spoke Ilokano.

My grandparents' concern for the well-being of a woman relative who had no family and home to go to when she arrived in Hawai'i made it possible for my mother to have a sister and, for me, to have an aunt. Matilde Ruiz, my mother's distant cousin, who I called Auntie Tilde, had difficulty finding suitable housing when she arrived with her brother, Esmeraldo. At that time most of the plantation quarters were

barracks-like and designed for men without wives and children. Concerned about Auntie Tilde's safety in a new country, where the ratio of women to men was one to ten, my grandparents took her into their home and treated her as their daughter. My mother told me that when I was between ages of three and six I followed her wherever she went, and whenever she left the house without telling me I cried a lot and couldn't be consoled.

Auntie Tilde's suitors, knowing of my great fondness and affection for her and her love and devotion to me, treated me with great respect and showered me with gifts in an effort to win me over to their side. Being aware of my predisposition to scrutinize, describe, imitate, and evaluate all the visitors of my family, my aunt never failed to ask me what I thought about each of her suitors. I was elated when my aunt announced her decision to marry the suitor who I liked very much. Years later, when she and her husband were experiencing difficulties with their marriage, I secretly suffered a strong feeling of guilt for the torn feelings of my aunt's son and daughter and that I was somehow responsible for her choice of a husband. I must have thought then, as an adolescent, that we as individuals, are responsible for what happens to people who we love and with whom we share our feelings and opinions. My life experiences would erase my feelings of guilt as I grasped the complexity of human relationships.

An event which will have a permanent effect on my attitude towards family was the arrival of my mother's cousin, Concepcion Pascua. Auntie Conching came to Hawai'i at the age of nineteen to join her mother, Timoteo Fernandez, who was in the Army and stationed at Schofield. Although she lived with her parents, she spent a great

deal of her time with my family in Waipahu. Possessing a beautiful, natural singing voice and a warm, friendly manner, she had an effervescent personality which endeared her to young and old alike. I remember her putting my little sister to sleep by singing lullabies and going through her whole repertoire of songs.

When my grandparents and two of my uncles returned to the Philippines the two most important people in my life (after my parents) were Auntie Tilde and Auntie Conching. Besides being my companions and baby-sitters, they functioned as examples of how Filipino women, who found themselves in a new culture making new demands on them, drew strengths from their own ethnic background and experiences to make the most of their situation.

The untimely death of my Auntie Conching after undergoing an operation for a goiter condition was my family's first personal tragedy in Hawai'i. I remember the incident very well because my parents always gave an account of it whenever relatives asked about my aunt's early demise. The night before my aunt died I had kept my parents up until the wee hours of the morning because of an extremely high fever which had kept me in a delirious state. I reported seeing beautiful, bright colors flashing alternately before me, and each time a new color flashed I admired the spectacle and spoke about it to my parents as though they, too, could see it. The next morning, when my parents were awakened abruptly by a relative who came to break the news of my aunt's death, my mother mentioned my delirium and my vision of flashing bright colors. Our relatives interpreted it to be a message from my aunt to me that she was leaving me and this world and entering another one.

It was about twenty-five years later (six years after my sister and I were married) when Auntie Conching's sister, Pacita, who we call Auntie Paz, arrived in Hawai'i to make her home with my parents. She married Leon Bartolome (now deceased), Auntie Tilde's relative. Having made Waipahu her home, Auntie Paz and her only child, Geralyn, provide my sister's family and mine with a link to our birthplace and our parents' friends. A few years later, a cousin of Auntie Paz and my mother, Rizal Asuncion, his wife, Mena, and their son, Joel, arrived from the Philippines to make their home in Waipahu.

In the early forties my mother's fraternal cousins, Clemente Rosete (from a plantation on Kauai) and David Ancheta (from a plantation on the Big Island of Hawai'i) moved to Oahu to live with us. Being illiterate, their employment was limited to working in the pineapple fields, being bus boys at the cafeteria and restaurants, and doing janitorial and yard work for private businesses and homes. In the late sixties Tata Clem ('tata' is a word of respect for fathers and uncles) moved to California to work as a fruit and vegetable picker. Tata David remained here and has been under my guardianship since the death of my mother in 1966. They have been our link to the culture which they represent – the curious fusing of peasant Ilokano culture with the local American and Hawaiian cultures.

I had at least four godfathers, three of whom were godfathers through a regular church baptism, and one referred to as a ninong iti sirok ti latok (literally, 'godfather under the wooden bowl'). A relative explained that Filipinos believe that a child is given a new godparent and a new name in order to ward off evil spirits. Of the four

godfathers, only one remained in Hawai'i (a godfather through a church baptism). My parents were very close to my godfather and often arranged for our family to visit him regularly and to invite him to our home for visits and dinners. My parents taught me to respect and love him the way I respected and loved my grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Since my parents regarded my godfather as an honorary relative who would help to advise and guide me in my educational, moral, and spiritual growth and development, they always told him how I was progressing in my studies in school and in my piano lessons, and whether or not I was respectful of them. Whenever I did well or was recognized for a certain accomplishment my godfather was also very proud of me and pleased to tell his friends that I was his godchild. I used to receive presents and monetary gifts from him on my birthdays, graduation from high school and college, and at Christmas. My parents also told me that he gave them some money to help pay for my college tuition and books during my undergraduate years in college.

Unfortunately for my godfather, he had an unsuccessful late marriage. When his only child, a daughter, was experiencing difficulties with her schooling and her relationship with her mother, my parents offered to take care of her. She lived with my parents for about three years.

My grandmother did not have the opportunity to go to school; therefore, she learned everything she knew through her own family and her own efforts and experiences. My mother described her as observant, sensitive, soft-spoken, calm, and one who thought things through carefully before stating an opinion or acting. She was the person to whom the family turned for help and solace. It was due to her love,

loyalty to her husband and family, courage, and optimism that she was able to endure the hardship of raising a daughter by herself when her husband (my grandfather) served in the Philippine Scouts and regular army for over ten years without his ever contacting his family.

My grandfather, on the other hand, received a rigid Spanish-type of schooling which stressed the basics, religious moral training, discipline, obedience, and loyalty to the Church. My mother recalled that my grandfather often talked about the rigors of his training, his ability to endure and survive, and his feeling of satisfaction for having succeeded in order to impress upon his children the importance of hard work, patience, perseverance, and the attainment of one's goals. His admonitions must have had an effect on his children: his daughter (my mother) completed nine years of schooling in the Philippines before coming to Hawai'i, his eldest son completed ten years of schooling, his second son became a civil engineer, and his youngest son received specialized training in several areas during his twenty-year career in the United States Army and earned a bachelor's degree at Georgetown University. My grandfather was literate in Spanish, Ilokano, Tagalog, and English. He was confident, outspoken, and not afraid to act. For a person who was born in Laoag, Ilokos Norte of the Philippines in 1883, my grandfather was well-educated.

I felt the influence of my grandparents during my childhood and adolescent years even though they were no longer in Hawai'i. Due to the closeness of the relationship between the members of our family we all corresponded regularly, sent each other gifts consisting of preserved foods, books, magazines, program brochures,

clothing, and objects for the house. We also exchanged information about how we were getting along in our lives, who was ill or dying among our relatives and family friends, and the educational progress of school-aged children in our families. The letters from the Philippines were written, most of the time, in Ilokano (occasionally there were postscripts or attachments written in English) and conveyed great feelings of warmth, love, and concern. My parents wrote letters to my grandparents and uncles in Ilokano but sometimes threw in a few expressions or sentences in English. Although my sister and I received letters in Ilokano we answered in English.

The opening and reading aloud of letters from the Philippines were always done by my mother, who was self-appointed to perform these tasks. Upon opening the letters and not being able to repress her emotions she always began by weeping softly and then ended up sobbing uncontrollably, a behavior which caused us all great alarm because we didn't know whether we had received bad news or whether it was her usual emotion-filled introduction. Later in the day or at other times during the week she would re-read the letters. She would still weep, but was better able to control herself. She would often call my sister and me to go to her so that she could re-read the important bagbaga (Ilokano for 'counsel' or 'advice') from our grandparents or uncles. This contact with our grandparents and uncles through letters helped to solidify our family relationships and made it possible for my sister and me to retain our Ilokano. Having been born after my grandparents and two uncles returned to the Philippines, my sister did not benefit from their close nurturing and companionship the way I did. My sister understands Ilokano well, but can only use isolated words and expressions

when trying to communicate with relatives who speak very little English.

Another benefit of this contact through correspondence was that my sister and I were exposed to the Filipinos' style of communicating through letters, which tends to be what most Americans would consider to be florid or flowery, and which couches direct requests, appeals, and replies in language which aims for affect or sentiments rather than the mere giving of facts in a precise and concise way. My parents always insisted that we pay careful attention to the way we talk to people by considering the level of language, tone, the use of appropriate terms of respect, and the importance of being considerate about people's feelings. Whenever I made fun of the way our relatives and family friends expressed themselves by repeating the jokes and anecdotes which I had heard in school or on the playground I was reprimanded by my parents and told that I was being rude and unfair by expecting Filipinos to express themselves the way Americans do.

I was always fond of my grandparents and was proud to tell my classmates about them. Sometimes I would show my classmates their photos and the things which they sent me, such as Filipino candies and clothing which my grandmother had made. I was sorry that my grandfather made the decision in 1932 to return to the Philippines with my grandmother, their second eldest son, who was ten years old, and his youngest son, the only Hawai'i-born child, who was only eight years old at the time. Their fourteen year old son, not wanting to leave Hawai'i, was left behind in the care of his sister and brother-in-law (my parents) to whom he had become attached. He became so much a part of my family that many of his friends and my classmates thought that we

were siblings.

Three factors that influenced my grandfather's decision to return to the Philippines were (1) his feeling that Hawai'i was only a temporary home for his family, (2) the wide discrepancy between his military life in the Philippines and his plantation life in Hawai'i, and (3) his age. According to my parents my grandfather always talked about his homeland, relatives, and the lifestyle which he missed. In fact, he always told me in his letters that I should go to the Philippines to study so that I would be knowledgeable about my other culture. He also suggested that I marry someone in the Philippines. His wishes indicate that he felt that even for me Hawai'i was just a temporary home.

The difference between his life in the Philippines and Hawai'i was great. He was in the Philippines Scouts from 1902-1910 (when he was between the ages of nineteen and twenty-seven) and in the regular Philippine army from 1910-1917 (when he was between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-four). My grandfather's military service spans the years when the worst armed uprisings against American rule in the Philippines by the Filipino Muslims took place. These were the Hassan Uprising of 1903-1904, the Usap Rebellion of 1905, the Pala Revolt of 1905, the Bud Dajo Uprising of 1906, and the Bud Bagsak battle of 1913. A bit of research into this period of Philippine history and a close scrutiny of copies of my grandfather's personal papers corroborates his statement that he served under General John J. Pershing, who commanded the Bud Bagsak battle of 1913 (my Uncle Irineo remembers seeing my grandfather's discharge papers carrying the signature of General Pershing). From 1917-1920 (when he was

between the ages of thirty-four and thirty-seven) he joined the Army Reserve in the Philippines. When he was in Hawai'i he joined the 298th Infantry, Hawai'i National Guard, and served from 1927-1931 while in the employment of the Oahu Sugar Company of Waipahu as the Chief Cook at the Filipino Club House.

In the Philippines he was a sergeant and therefore felt that he was a leader of a sort. In addition, being Filipino in his own country did not have the same meaning that it did on the plantations of Hawai'i where Filipino meant illiterate, a mere field hand, and uncouth. His military life was far from being a life of ease and comfort, however, he felt that plantation life wasn't what people in the Philippines made it out to be. Wages were quite low and he still did not own his own house. In addition their larger extended families were in the Philippines and would not be able to care for him or my grandmother who, at the ages of forty-nine and forty-seven, respectively, would be more susceptible than their younger counterparts to illness and diseases. Although my grandfather's decision to return to the Philippines was regretted by my parents, uncles, and other relatives later on because of the breaking up of his nuclear family, my mother recalled that her father's obstinacy and inclination towards making decisions alone made it difficult to prevent him from making hasty decisions.

An important event that gave me the opportunity to continue learning Ilokano and to strengthen my ties with my grandparents, uncles, and relatives on my father's side was a year's visit to the Philippines in 1936 when I was eight years old, Juliet (Julie), my sister, was three years old, and my uncle Abraham was eighteen years old. The decision that my mother, sister, uncle, and I go without my father was a difficult

one to make because of the closeness of our family. Hoping that the Philippine climate would help to cure the asthma which my sister had contracted my parents decided that the financial sacrifice and the temporary separation were nothing considering what was at stake.

Our decision was the right one. My sister had only two serious attacks which occurred during the first few months of our stay, and two or three minor attacks in between. She never suffered another attack of asthma since then. Although my mother and I always thought my sister simply outgrew the asthma, most of our relatives were of the opinion that it was because of the effectiveness of a folk healer and folk medicine.

My experience in the Philippines greatly influenced my outlook and attitude towards the country itself, the Filipino people in general, the Ilokos region from where my relatives and a great majority of the plantation workers came, and my assessment of my own country of birth. I consider the culture shock which I experienced as important and occurring at a time in my life when I was not yet completely brainwashed by one culture. The result was that I still had the eyes, heart, and mind of a child which allowed me to marvel at what people in an agrarian society did, how they related to people, and what they thought about. I also saw extreme poverty and never forgot what I saw.

Americans brought up in cities who visit the rural farming areas can also experience what I experienced in the Philippines; however, with the exception of farms in certain depressed areas of the United States, many American farms in 1936 were already very modern (that is, mechanized) compared to the farms in the rural areas of

the Ilokos provinces. Consequently, the American farm experience, although very exciting and educational for an urban American child, still resembled many other operations in the urban areas by the use of modern farm machinery and electrical appliances.

Also, coming from Hawai'i where most of our food, clothing, and building materials were produced and manufactured elsewhere, my experiences of seeing the great majority of people growing and producing their own food, making all the materials needed for clothing, and building and repairing their own homes had a great influence on my attitudes towards the working class from which I came. For the rest of my life I have been reminded that no matter how far removed I am from agriculture and other work requiring manual labor in the production of goods for my consumption there will always be a class of people who carry out those functions and often without decent wages, proper working conditions, and legal protection (the lot of some of the working class citizens in the United States has improved but only because of unions).

The culture shock which I experienced while attending school in the Philippines taught me a lot. When my mother tried to enroll me in the third grade at the elementary school in Laoag she was told that I would have to be put into a second grade class by virtue of the fact that I came from Hawai'i. The principal explained that in their experience they found students from Hawai'i to be behind in certain subject areas and skills. My mother argued that I shouldn't be put in second grade class for two reasons: (1) I was always a good student in Hawai'i and (2) if I was found to be deficient in certain areas and skills it wasn't because I was a poor student or because I had a

learning disability but rather because the schools of Hawai‘i did not teach certain subject areas and skills in the same grades that they were being taught in the Philippines. Fortunately for me the principal's decision was in my favor, and I was enrolled in a third grade class.

The teacher and some of the bright students in my class kept an eye over me and did their best to help me out. I felt as if I were a retarded student. In the Philippine school system I was behind because I still hadn’t learned to write in script form, the form to which every student in the first grade was introduced. I’ll never forget the snickering of my classmates and teacher when I turned in an assignment written in print form. Another setback was that I had not yet been introduced to the multiplication tables, and when I was called upon to recite one of the tables, I was completely blank. I quickly learned that a great deal of what people in Hawai‘i thought about Philippine schools and what people in the Philippines thought about schools in Hawai‘i was prejudicial and inaccurate because of a failure of both sides to take into account what is involved in making comparisons.

I learned that my classmates had stereotypical expectations of people from Hawai‘i in much the same way that we, in Hawai‘i, have stereotypical expectations of immigrant Filipino students (many American teachers and students assume that if immigrant Filipino students speak little or no English and don’t seem to understand American ways of doing things they are either mentally deficient or slow learners). I was constantly being asked to dance the hula or sing Hawaiian songs, and whenever I replied that I didn't know them, they thought that I was playing hard to get. A great

misunderstanding about my musical abilities occurred when, as a dutiful daughter, I obeyed my mother and showed my grandparents, uncles, and the family boarders that I could do a tap dance and sing a couple of Shirley Temple songs. I was taught to tap to the song entitled "School Days" and to sing "Animal Crackers" and "On the Good Ship Lollipop" with a group of students for a school program in Hawai'i. Wanting very much to please my grandparents I hammed it up and gave it all I had. Somehow word got around that I was an accomplished singer and dancer so I was asked to perform for my class and for a general school assembly. Unable to convince my classmates, teacher, and mother that my ability to perform was highly exaggerated and that I was not the concert material they thought I was (besides, my mother told me that it would be ungracious and impolite to turn them down) I succumbed and became a singer and tap dancer for the family, school, and church programs for the duration of our stay in the Philippines.

Although that was the first and last time in my entire life that I would ever be an entertainer of sorts before people I didn't know very well it was not the first and last time performing for college recitals and for family and clan get-togethers. In my family singing and dancing are important forms of expressing affirmation of our relationships with each other. My mother and father often sang duets in Ilokano at our family gatherings and also at the homes of our close friends, who rarely failed to request that they perform. I listened to the lyrics of their songs carefully and found them intriguing and exciting because they often contained a plot or a narrative. Everyone's favorite duet was the song which began with the lines, Idi naminsan a bigat pinaregaluan ka, Pitang,

iti patupat ken sumanket inwarsi-wesim kan pay ('One morning I sent to you, Pitang, a gift of rice cakes which I'm told you threw out'). Throughout the duet two lovers quarrel in song, criticizing and blaming each other for what had happened between them.

Were it not for my father's strong insistence that our family should remain together I would probably have stayed in the Philippines with my grandparents because I wanted to and was ready to do so. My sister and I left our grandparents in 1937, never to see them again.

An important event in my family, which occurred about a year before the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, taught my sister and me through our parents' example that we should be concerned about other people. I was twelve years old and my sister was seven, when my parents decided to become foster parents to a fourteen-year old girl. Our foster sister, Mary Villanueva, came to live with us after having been placed with several other families, none of which, she thought, made her feel she was to be treated as real sister and member of the family. Being the eldest she was given the honor, which in Filipino families adhered to the culture's value of respecting our elders, of being put in charge of seeing to it that we did our chores and carried out our responsibilities. Reports by her to our parents that we didn't carry out our responsibilities or reports by us that she wasn't fair with us or didn't do her own share of the household chores were listened to carefully, adjudicated, and then settled by our parents with the three of us. A remark that she wasn't our real sister did not get us anywhere with our parents.

She came home periodically for visits when she was employed and out on her own. When she was married and had children she brought her family with her. Sometimes she left her children with my parents for extended visits. To this day we are still in touch with each other. In her recent visit to Hawai'i, when we had the opportunity to recall our adolescence and early adulthood spent in Waipahu, I was touched by her comments that my parents were the only parents she really had and that they exerted a great influence on her life. She, in turn, exerted a great influence on my own growth and development. Coming from an entirely different background (her parents went their separate ways when she was young and the children were doled out to different families) her ideas, experiences, and patterns of behavior contrasted greatly from mine, thereby giving me the opportunity to question my own values and behavior and to re-interpret them in light of other circumstances. The role of this period in my life influencing my attitudes towards people whose backgrounds differ from my own is important and not to be underestimated.

The marriage of my mother to my father was only the beginning of a close merger of the Rosete and Nagtalon families (whether this event presaged the closeness of my sister's family and mine is a question which continues to be asked). My mother's brother, Abraham, married my father's first cousin, Celestina (Epifania's sister); my mother's youngest brother, Irineo, was the only one in the family who, when he married Lilo of Germany, broke the trend.

By virtue of the fact that my sister and I married into the Miller family (our husbands are brothers) the number of in-laws in our family is smaller than the number

in most families. Being accustomed to our parent's extended family philosophy my sister and I did not find it difficult to say “yes” when we were invited to stay with them in their three-bedroom plantation home after our marriages. My sister and her husband stayed with them for a number of months, while my husband and I stayed with them for three years.

During those years we both lived and worked in Waipahu (I taught at Waipahu School and Bob worked for a radio station) and did our shopping at the plantation store and the neighborhood grocery stores. Although we had our own social lives we also took part in my family's social life and were involved in many of their activities involving their friends and neighbors. No matter how well the friends of my parents knew my husband, they to always referred to him as “Mr. Miller,” although they called me by my first name. It took a lot of reminding and insisting to get them to call him “Bob,” and when they finally did, they still felt uncomfortable. It was difficult for any plantation worker in those days to call a White by his first name (or to be mixing with a White person socially) since the Whites with whom they dealt with were always plantation supervisors and administrative staff.

It’s a pity that it took a war (World War II) for the non-White population of Hawai‘i to become acquainted with Whites of various ethnic backgrounds and social classes. The plantation experience being what it was, i.e., management made up of Whites who did not fraternize with non-Whites and labor made up of Asians who were segregated residentially by language and ethnicity, it was virtually impossible for non-Whites to work together and organize a union before 1946. Segregating the workers by

ethnicity made it possible for the plantation to pit one group against the other in times of crisis.

From growing up on the plantation my playmates and I held stereotypical views of Whites as being educated, sophisticated, well-dressed, impeccable in manners, and articulate. Whenever we played Restaurant we used to argue among ourselves about who gets to be the Haole lady customer. Whoever played that role always dressed well, spoke educated English (not pidgin Hawaiian Creole) clearly and with great authority, and made demands on all the non-Whites around them.

Today, many Asians still show the effects of the plantation mentality by believing (although on a sub-conscious level) that good table manners, cleanliness, and niceness are White traits. A few years ago, when I was at a department store looking through the various types of tablecloths and napkins, a salesclerk of Japanese ancestry, who probably recognized me to be of Filipino ancestry, smiled and said, *These matching tablecloths and napkins are a must if you're going to have Haole dinner guests*.

During the war when defense jobs were open to all (with the exception of the Japanese who, because of wartime hysteria, were not allowed to hold defense jobs) my father worked as a cashier at a Defense Store, which catered to civilian defense workers and their families. My mother started out as a kitchen helper in a cafeteria, then worked as a housekeeper at the quarters for civilian defense workers, and finally as a cashier at the same store where my father worked. It was when she worked as a housekeeper that she was shocked to learn that there were Haoles who where illiterate, who spoke a form of non-school English which reflected their ethnic background and place of birth on the

mainland, and who were skilled laborers instead of professionals or administrators. My mother was asked by an illiterate worker, who was in his fifties to write letters to his family for him on a regular basis. The money which he offered as remuneration was thought by my mother to be excessive, and refused to accept anything for merely writing letters. He showed his appreciation in another way by leaving boxes of candy, nuts, and fruits and occasionally gifts of household articles such as towel sets, pot holders, and tablecloths.

Every week-end my parents and Auntie Tilde brought home three or four of their favorite friends, all of them in their twenties, unmarried, and lonely for their families. My parents' best friend was Jordan Danziger, of Jewish background and from Brooklyn, New York. He came on week-ends to visit with the family, cook his favorite foods, savor Filipino cuisine, and meet our relatives, friends, and neighbors. I consider Jordan very important to our family because he has always been a true friend and the first Haole friend we've ever had with whom we have maintained regular contact over the years. My sister and I and our husbands consider him and his wife, Millie, to be relatives with whom we feel very comfortable.

Many years after the war, whenever I came across Whites and non-Whites who were overtly anti-Semitic by their derogatory statements about Jewish people, it wasn't difficult for me to tell them that I did not appreciate their racism. I was dumfounded when two of my college classmates who I considered to be very Americanized (acculturated), returned to Hawai'i after several years on the mainland and abroad with strong anti-Semitic feelings. One was a Japanese-American Protestant who studied and

worked on the mainland for a number of years. The Hawai'i experience had not taught them anything, obviously, and neither had the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentlemen's Agreement, which were measures adopted during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of this century, nor the detention of many Japanese in Relocation Camps in California during World War II.

Just to give my college classmates the benefit of the doubt, I suppose my classmates deep down were not anti-Semitic but were merely reflecting the attitudes of their American friends who they were modeling and with whom they were trying to identify. My argument that the concept of being Americanized or acculturated is not a useful concept for educators to deal with if they are concerned about values is a valid one. Questions such as, *How should people be treated?* or *How should I speak, think, behave, dress, and eat in order to be considered an American?* will help students to be more concerned about values. While the former question allows individuals to capitalize on the strengths of their parents' culture and those of the dominant culture, the latter question implies that the culture of one's parents is a disadvantage or a barrier and can't contribute to one's Americanization.

If my Asian-American classmates were not at the beginning anti-Semitic their attempts at emulating their White friends who they regarded as Americans had the tendency to force them into conforming and ignoring the Asian-American experience in Hawai'i (often to the point of denying their racial and ethnic backgrounds) and perpetuating anti-Semitism or other anti-*isms*.

IDENTITY

My recollection of an early childhood experience which made me aware of the concept of race, as it applied to me, had to do with the well-intentioned statement of Filipinos offered as a conversational opener. Often, when accompanying my mother around the neighborhood to sell Filipino cakes or tickets for her club's social activities, or to solicit donations for the church, I would hear people say to my mother, *Sayang, manang. Naala koma ni Helen ti kinapudaw mo. Pugot met nga kasla kanyak.* ('What a pity, manang, your daughter Helen did not inherit your fair complexion. Like me, she's dark.'). The speakers were always careful to use the polite form for calling attention to someone's faults or deficiencies by putting in the phrase "like me" so that the speakers can humble themselves by saying that they, too, have the same imperfection. But, in spite of the fact that they were polite, they were not aware that they were rejecting the skin color of a great majority of Filipinos, including their own.

Embarrassed by the conversational opener of her friends my mother usually replied by saying, *She's kayumanggi, the color of most Filipinos, so there's nothing wrong with her, manong.* Occasionally, I heard the following remark offered as a consolation to the first statement, *Saan nga bale, manang. Uray no pugot nataarid met bassit iti agong na.* ('That's all right. Even though she's dark her nose is somewhat pointed.'). I also observed that the non-Filipino groups on the plantations, such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, were fair-complexioned. I often heard the following statements: *She's so dark. I wonder what he sees in her?* and *I thought Michiko was Filipino; she's dark compared to her brothers.*

I was more concerned, however, with the negativism towards being dark-complexioned that was being expressed by the Filipinos rather than by non-Filipinos because it had to do with self-esteem. When I called my parents' attention to this concern of mine when I was in high school they remarked that racial identity was a problem for many Filipinos, probably as a result of the Spanish domination of the Philippines when a favored class of mestizo (offspring of a Spaniard and a Filipino) developed. This explains, they thought, the tendency of many Filipinos to identify themselves as part-Spanish. And the fact that most Filipinos have Spanish names facilitated their identification with that group. In Hawai'i Filipinos who resembled Chinese by their eye shape and complexion often identified themselves as part-Chinese. My mother, who was often thought to have Spanish or Chinese in her ancestry because of her fair complexion (or to be taken to be Tagalog or Visayan by Filipinos), always answered or wrote the word "Filipino" whenever she was asked for her race and identified herself to fellow Filipinos as being Ilokano.

A male student who I taught at a public intermediate school in the mid-fifties had a puzzled look on his face throughout the entire first day of class (his father was Filipino and his mother was Chinese). After class he asked me what my nationality was (in Hawai'i the term usually refers to race or ethnicity). When I replied with "Filipino" he exclaimed, *I didn't know they allowed Filipinos to teach!* He wasn't trying to be funny or sarcastic, either.

I have always been startled by the fact that many dark-complexioned groups, such as Filipinos and Hawaiians are overtly anti-Black. In Hawai'i it is not uncommon

to hear dark Filipinos and Hawaiians refer to Africans, African-Americans, and all dark-complexioned people (including their own relatives and acquaintances) as popolo ('black' in the Hawaiian language), a term which has assumed a pejorative connotation.

I didn't find it difficult to accept being Filipino because my father always said that I looked the part very well, that is, I was brown-complexioned, short, and had black hair and black eyes. Besides, he said, since my grandparents on both sides of the family, my mother, and he himself identified with being Filipino, he could not think of any other option that would be appropriate for me (American, he thought, was my nationality and my other culture).

The concept of ethnicity for Filipinos who are born and educated in the United States causes some confusion due to the multi-ethnic nature of the communities in which they find themselves and the monolingual and monocultural philosophy of the American school system. The degree to which Filipinos identify with Filipino as their ethnic group differs according to the generation to which they belong and whether there has been a lot of inter-racial and inter-ethnic marriages among the members of their primary and secondary groups.

Being of second generation and having known only one case of inter-racial marriage among my parents' close friends, I considered my myself ethnically Filipino by virtue of the fact that I shared with Filipinos throughout the plantations a common set of traditions that differed from those of other groups with whom we were in contact. Denying my Filipino ethnicity would mean to deny that my family shared the same history, traditions, general outlook on life, religion, foods, and language as the people

who called themselves Filipinos. This is not to deny, however, that I had a feeling of identification with being American, since I was being educated in American schools. Racially and ethnically I consider myself Filipino; culturally I consider myself Filipino and American; my nationality is American.

We ate mostly Filipino foods at home, in the homes of our relatives, and also at large baptismal, birthday, and wedding parties. Today I still prepare Filipino dishes as part of our family's regular fare. My father planted most of the vegetables that Filipinos are very fond of, such as marunggay, saluyot, otong, kamote, tarong, paria, karabasa, and patani. He also planted vegetables which we gradually learned to eat, such as lettuce, carrots, and radishes. As my father's participation in church-related activities increased he left gardening in the hands of my mother's cousin.

My parents and relatives love to tell the story of how my great fondness for bagoong created an inconvenience for people who invited us to their luncheons or dinners. Being fond of bagoong over rice, I never failed to ask for some, even at large dinners which served many different courses. I would asked for ibos-ibos, which was my term for bagoong when I was between the ages of three and six. I gave it that term because my parents, embarrassed by my insistence on it, would wink at the hostess and say, *Awanen. Naibosen* ('They don't have any. It's all gone'). I would continue to put up a fuss after which time one of my parents would instruct the food server, in a whisper, to bring out a little dish containing only one little anchovy so that they would be able to say to me, naibosen, thereby discouraging me from asking for more bagoong. One of my parents would then squeeze the anchovy over the rice and say, *Ne, naibosen* ('There,

it's all gone.').

Although I outgrew the habit of embarrassing my parents at parties by asking for ibos-ibos, I never kicked the bagoong habit. To this day I use it in most of the dishes which I prepare, including American and European dishes. Little did I know when I was between the ages of three and six that I had coined a word (before the advent of TV and its slick commercials) which translates very appropriately into "good to the last drop."

My parents spoke mostly Ilokano at home. Although my sister and I spoke to them in English, they responded in Ilokano. When I was a teenager and began to feel embarrassed that my parents spoke a foreign language. I remember telling my mother just before accompanying her to the store that she shouldn't speak Ilokano too loudly thereby attracting the attention of non-Filipinos. Not only did she berate me for telling her what not to do, an act she considered disrespectful, but also for being ashamed of Ilokano and being Filipino.

Years later when I was pursuing my studies in languages and culture I realized that people in general have the tendency to think that a language other than one's own heard in public seems louder than it actually is. What I was worried about was what non-Filipinos thought about me. My mother was right, understood what was happening to me, and made me realize though her statements that I was being socialized into thinking that speaking English and acting American were to be my only concerns.

Our family was one out of about fourteen families at the Oahu Sugar Company

in Waipahu who were active members of the Congregational church at Camp 9 (later redesignated as Hans L'Orange Camp, named after the plantation manager). The church building was built and maintained by the plantation whose interests were well served by the church in that it was one more stabilizing influence on the plantation community. The others were the Japanese Congregational church, the Catholic church, the Buddhist temples, the ethnic club houses, the baseball park with its gymnasium and grandstand, and the various community organizations.

Our church, and all the others affiliated with the Hawaiian Board of Missions, served several functions: (1) it served as a bridge between the member's native culture and the new culture by providing bilingual ministers, bilingual church services and Bible study classes, and socials which promoted ethnic songs, dances, and foods, (2) it provided its members with a family-like intimacy by its smallness and, therefore, served as an informal natural support system, (3) it gave most of its members, especially the young people, the opportunity to take on responsibilities, which in the city would be carried out by paid professionals, and (4) it brought together members of the various ethnic churches at least once a year at a rally for all Congregational churches at a designated island and church, thus enabling Whites, Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos to work together.

Although I was considered a minority among the Filipinos, the majority of whom were Catholics, I was a member of a Christian church and therefore shared a common religious background with them. My Catholic friends, school mates, and classmates recognized that in many ways we differed, but we also recognized that we

all shared the label Christian and certain values which Catholics and Protestants believed in.

My membership in the Congregational church strengthened my ties with Filipinos, Philippine languages and culture because its ministers were bilingual in English and at least one Philippine language. Many of my peers probably do not share my experiences in this regard, including my interpretation of the church's influences in strengthening my ties with Philippine languages and culture because of the prevailing idea that the languages of their parents were merely necessary crutches for them to depend on until they learned to speak English or to improve their limited knowledge of English. In other words, my peers probably haven't benefited as much as I did from our exposure to Philippine languages at church because of their being strongly influenced by the English only philosophy of the schools and the pressure of their peers not to be like their immigrant parents.

Since Latin was the official language of the Catholic church when I was growing up on the plantation and the great majority of the priests were of European background and training, my Catholic peers did not hear Philippine languages spoken in church as much as I did. Our minister, the Reverend Flaviano Santa Ana, being multi-lingual, took turns giving the prayers, sermons, scripture readings, announcements, and benedictions in Ilokano, Tagalog, Visayan, and English. Since his daughter, Priscilla, was my close friend I was always at their house or on the church premises where I heard her parents speaking to her or scolding us both in Tagalog, either for not minding them or for creating a nuisance.

I feel that my parents were a stronger influence on my life as a teenager than were my peers. It is important to point out that my parents, who were very active in the church, arranged our lives around the activities of the church. Since my sister and I attended church services and prayer meetings held at various places on the plantation, we heard Ilokano, Tagalog, and Visaya spoken by the people who attended the services and spent more time with people who we met at church-related activities than with non-church-affiliated peers. It was only during my junior and senior years in college that I began to associate more with peers from the college setting.

I was made aware of and reminded often of my family's class and minority status by several things. As to class, I am reminded of my roots by my father's family name, Nagtalon, which translates from the Ilokano language into English as 'farmed' or 'tilled the soil'. My father told me that his family changed names at least twice. The name before Nagtalon was Layos, which translated into 'flood', a word which has great significance for farmers. It was always interesting to me that (1) the family name chosen was Nagtalon, the past tense, instead of Agtalon, the present tense, and (2) both Layos and Nagtalon are Ilokano instead of Spanish names.

Could it be that someone in the Nagtalon family, a long line of farmers in Vintar, Ilokos Norte, thought about not having to be farmers at some future time? Perhaps my father's going into teaching and then coming to Hawai'i, where he began as a sort of field hand and ended up working as a clerk at the Oahu Sugar Company Office, was a fulfillment of that prophecy. And if we were to take the Tagalog translation of Nagtalon, which is 'leaped' or 'jumped', the prophecy would also have to be considered

fulfilled since by leaving his family, homeland, and the teaching profession, he made a bold leap into a new life about which he knew very little.

Because most Filipinos have Spanish names I always wondered why some families, including mine, had Filipino names. Although I was interested in the answer I did not consider the answer to be as important as the fact that I was interested in knowing more about my father's family history and its effect on my father's and my own perspective of who we were. My wondering about why our name was Filipino instead of Spanish led me to more information about my paternal grandparents' religious background.

My father told me that in the Philippines he and his family were members of the Aglipayan Church, also known as the Philippine Independent Church. Not having had the opportunity to study Philippine history in high school or college I was not aware of the significance of the Aglipayan Church as an important symbol of the Philippine Revolution, which took place from about 1896 to 1906, until I read a paper on the Philippine Independent Church. The Aglipayan Church, which was organized as the result of a schism within the Philippine Catholic Church, was a religious nationalist movement which had the strongest following in the Ilokos regions, namely, Ilokos Norte and Zambales. The reason for the church's strength in those areas was the fact that the leaders of the church were natives of the Ilokos regions.

When I asked my father why he became a Congregationalist, his answer was that since there was no Aglipayan following here that would be strong enough to organize (the fact that a great majority of the plantation laborers were without their families was

a factor), he became attracted to the Congregational church because the ministers who were assigned to serve among the Filipinos were themselves Filipinos who were bilingual and could, therefore, work more effectively with plantation Filipinos. The Methodist church also worked among plantation Filipinos and found itself working closely with the Congregational church in proselytizing bilingually and biculturally. For my father and mother, understanding and finding out for one's self were even more important than rituals, a belief which was to have a powerful effect on my own development and directions in my education.

My father became aware that the backbone of the Congregational Church in Hawai'i represented the interests of the sugar planters and management, and he felt uncomfortable about it. This was evident to him especially during elections, when he saw that many of the stronger candidates and incumbents were Republicans and Congregationalists. In addition, he was aware that the church building was donated by the plantation, which had sole jurisdiction over its maintenance, repair, and renovation.

Although I mentioned earlier that the plantation was supportive of the church because it was a stabilizing influence on the workers, my father felt that the church could not and did not play the role of being anti-union because its members were mostly laborers and former laborers who sympathized and identified with the laborers. My father never ceased identifying with the laborers because of his family status in the Philippines, his having worked as a laborer on Kauai when he first arrived from the Philippines, and because he didn't feel that being a clerk in a plantation office was significantly different from being any other type of worker who needed a decent wage

and working conditions.

Many of my Filipino classmates identified me as being closely linked to our church and often described me by saying, *You know who I mean, the girl who goes to Santa Ana's church and plays the piano for many of the church programs.* This description was appropriate because I used to spend a great deal of my after-school or evening hours attending church meetings, choir rehearsals, special events, and socials.

Our church, in its concern for member participation, encouraged me to apply what I had learned in my music lessons by calling on me to play the piano or the pump organ whenever the organist was ill. I developed good sight-reading and sight-singing skills from being asked to play hymns which I had never played before or whose melodies were unfamiliar to me. When our choir director and organist left for the mainland to pursue her college studies, I replaced her. That experience gave me the opportunity to become familiar not only with the literature of church music, but also of what is ordinarily called classical music. I developed confidence in performing before groups, thereby improving my performance in my English and speech classes. I also found that my experiences preparing short talks or commentaries on certain scripture passages and leading group discussions helped me in my college and community work.

Two experiences gave me the feeling that I had little control over our family's life: what my father did, where he lived, and how he lived. The first experience occurred when I was between the ages of eleven and twelve. My friend, Priscilla, and I had accompanied another friend, Ramona, to the Haole Supervisors' Camp. Our purpose was to deliver a lunch pail to the home of the field supervisor in charge of the

work gang to which Ramona's father was assigned. Carrying out his responsibilities of seeing that the work out in the fields was done properly, the supervisor was on horseback throughout most of the day. On our way to carry out this important mission for Ramona's father we saw the big, beautiful homes of the supervisory and managerial staff of the plantation and their well-kept landscaped lawns, a startling contrast to what we had. I realized that we belonged to a different class of people: *Could I ever have the same thing for my own life in the future?* What further emphasized the difference was seeing a Japanese housemaid coming to the door when we rang the doorbell of the supervisor whose possession we were there to deliver. When we explained our mission to the maid she called the mistress of the house, who came to the door and took from us the empty lunch pail which was carried in a denim bag, thanked us, them told us to go the kitchen door, which was in the rear of the house to return the empty lunch pail to the kitchen helpers.

The second experience which made me aware of my different status (at the time in my life I didn't know the term minority) occurred when I was about fifteen or sixteen years old. Having been invited to sing at a large reception, sponsored by the plantation manager and his wife, two of Waipahu's well-known singers asked me to be their piano accompanist. Previous to that time I had been playing at piano recitals and church, school, and community-sponsored programs. When we arrived at the manager's residence we were led through the back door and ushered into the kitchen, where we were told to wait until someone came to fetch us. We waited for at least an hour. The kitchen was extremely hot and noisy, and the kitchen helpers walked in and out

constantly and at a furious pace. By the time we were asked to perform we were not only drenched in perspiration but also lacking in enthusiasm. The singers and I did our very best to perform amidst the loud chattering of people who were engrossed in their own conversations over cocktails.

It was my very first experience attending a cocktail party. The competition between our performance and the loud talking was keen. The singers performed to the best of their abilities and, after receiving generous applause, we were all led back into the kitchen where the kitchen helpers were instructed to serve us food and drinks. I didn't expect to be treated the same way their guests were being treated; however, I couldn't understand why we had to wait in the kitchen.

Having been born a woman in my family didn't limit my perceptions on the possibilities of women in education, career choices, employment, and lifestyles for the following reasons: (1) my parents didn't believe that having sons or daughters made any differences in their lives, (2) all the members of our nuclear and extended families had respect for the discipline of learning; consequently, they encouraged me in that direction, (3) in my nuclear and extended families the men and women cooked, cleaned the house, washed and dried the dishes, did the laundry, shopped, sewed buttons on their clothes, and helped to dress the children, not because of gender but because of need and circumstances.

My statements above should not be interpreted to mean, however, that I believe that I had complete freedom of choice. There is a difference between saying that there is no limit to one's perceptions on the possibilities of women, and saying that there is no

limit to the choices of women in education, career, employment, and lifestyle. I believe that my choices in life were also affected by the overt and covert biases of the media, textbook writers, educators, counselors, religious literature and sexism in language. What matters is that there were influences in my life that were strong enough to offset the sexist teachings.

My father valued the skills of thinking and reasoning, and enjoyed a good discussion on social issues, politics, and religion. We read each other's papers, pointed out inconsistencies, disagreed, and argued. He always praised me whenever I did well in school. To ensure interest in learning and mastery of language skills he taught me to read his name, my mother's name, and to read and write my own name before I went to kindergarten. My mother told me that sometimes she used to tell my father that, perhaps, he was rushing things too much, to which he used to reply, *I don't want her to be on the plantation for the rest of her life.*

My father worked very hard at indoctrinating me not to be enamored of and to use cosmetics, jewelry, and clothing as a means of getting people to admire, like, or notice me. He also didn't think it was a sensible thing for me to have long and painted fingernails because of the time and money involved in maintaining them. When I began piano lessons at age five (at my insistence) I learned that long nails were impractical and made playing the piano difficult.

My parents' greatest fears were (1) that I would not want to pursue education beyond high school level, (2) that I would marry someone who is not interested in being educated, (3) that I would marry because I felt that women should be married, and (4)

that I would reject them and our relatives and be ashamed of being Filipino.

A problem which worried my parents was early marriage among young Filipino girls. What contributed to this phenomenon was that many parents pushed their teenaged daughters to make their debut through their participation in beauty contests, popularity contests, and the sponsoring of social box affairs in order to inform Filipino bachelors of their availability for marriage. The reason many parents encouraged their daughters marry or to be spoken for (if they were still below the legal age of marriage) was to receive material and financial favors from their son-in-law or intended son-in-law.

In social box affairs, which were usually held at the Filipino Club House of a plantation town, the young girl sponsoring the activity auctioned off to a crowd of bachelors a social box which contained anything imaginable: articles crocheted, embroidered, or sewn by the young girl herself, clothing, Filipino foods, jewelry, or a large framed photo of the young girl. Sometimes the contents were frivolous and merely symbolic. The bachelor who considered the young girl to be a good match for himself tried to outbid all the other bachelors. The final price was often outrageously high, forcing the bachelor to withdraw all of his savings. The reward of the highest bidder was the privilege of sitting next to the young girl during the entertainment portion of the program and dancing most of the dances with her. If the bachelor was lucky he was looked upon with favor by the girl's parents and allowed to court their daughter. Many marriages started at social boxes.

Although I accompanied my parents to a few of these socials (they received

numerous invitations from their friends) I was always told by them that they were not in favor of such activities for their own children. It was for the daughters of members of the Congregational and Methodist churches to participate in beauty contests, popularity contests, and social boxes. This may be due to these churches' aversion to ostentation, vanity, games of chance, and their strong belief in sobriety, frugality, hard work, striving, delayed gratification (beliefs which many of the laborers supported, but perhaps not to the same degree that most Protestants did).

My marriage to Robert Lee Ruley Miller at the end of my first year of teaching began, instead of ended, my educational career. As a supporter of the women's movement and the liberation of men and women he didn't see my role as a mere housewife whose schedule and activities had to revolve around his own schedule and activities.

He encourage me to get a master's and a doctorate degree because he knew that I was interested in teaching at the university level. When I was given a scholarship in 1961 to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, he didn't find it difficult to make the decision to leave his employment in order to accompany me because he felt that a year in France would also be educational for him. In 1969 we made another decision to leave Hawai'i in order for me to pursue my doctoral studies at Ohio State University. We have not had any difficulty pursuing our own careers because of our inclinations not to be slaves to traditions for traditions' sake.

As a woman I have been able to pursue my interests in topics relating to my own ethnic identity, the issues of Hawai'i's ethnic and minority groups, bilingual-bicultural

education, the women's movement, and Asian/Pacific peoples because, like my father, my husband is interested in those topics and shares my concern. I was struck by this remark written to me on a Christmas card by one of our family's close friends in Waipahu when he heard that my husband was putting me through graduate school: *In many ways Bob reminds me of your late father.*

FILIPINO COMMUNITY

"Filipino community," as a geographical term, referred to all the Filipinos who resided in Filipino camps scattered throughout the main town of Waipahu and those who resided in the various isolated camps located several miles away from Waipahu town. The town of Waipahu can easily be identified by the smoke stack of the sugar mill, which is located in its midst. "Filipino community," as a social term, referred to an entity which attempted to bring Filipinos together for the purpose of establishing a formal organization through which they could fulfill their ethno-cultural and social needs. Some of the residents of the outlying areas became involved in the Filipino community in this social sense; however, the great majority of the active participants came from the camps in the main town of Waipahu.

Many of the Filipinos who lived in camps located several miles away from Waipahu town were isolated from everything that was important in their lives: the plantation store, post office, clinic and hospital, dentist, theater, club house, and the baseball park. Only a few of the laborers owned a car so the social life in those isolated camps was confined to card playing, gambling, cock-fighting, gardening, raising

chickens or pigs, swapping stories and jokes, making fish nets, and entertaining women friends (it was when I was in college that I realized that many of the heavily made-up women who I saw were there to provide special services to men).

During a workshop I heard a retired Filipino plantation laborer explain that he gambled (even though as a child he was taught that gambling was bad) because he wanted to take a chance on winning a good sum of money so that he would be able to send a larger amount of money to his family in the Philippines. He saw that his wages were so meager that he didn't have anything left after sending money home to his family. Although the Filipino laborers adjusted to their plantation existence as well as they could, considering their social and economic circumstances, I feel that the plantation did very little to ease their entry into American society by not providing them with higher wages, better working conditions, and educational programs to help prevent serious health and mental problems.

The Filipino Club House, which was built by the plantation, consisted of a large social hall, a pool hall, a kitchen, and a cafeteria. Being the hub of Filipino social life it was there where the formal meetings of the organization were held. The organization that was formed was a formal one, and its members elected officers. Although the great majority of Filipinos were Catholics there was a significant number of officers who were members of our church: the Reverend Flaviano Santa Ana, Frank Barcelona, and my father.

The celebrations around which members of the community rallied were: the commemoration of the birth of Jose Rizal (the Philippines' equivalent to George

Washington), the anniversary of the Philippine Commonwealth, special events (such as honoring visiting Filipino dignitaries), and the annual Christmas party (at which time the manager of the plantation distributed packages containing fruits, candies, and nuts). I remember my father saying at the Filipino Club House, where he and many others were helping to prepare for the Christmas program, that the workers would be better off having better wages than the meager food packages that came once a year. Such remarks must have had an impact on my thinking. During most of my adult life I have been involved in causes that call attention to the plight of the working class and other minorities.

The Filipino community organizations planned festivities to commemorate the anniversary of the Philippine Commonwealth and the birthday of Jose Rizal. Parades featuring colorful floats, sponsored by various clubs, were viewed and enjoyed by all ethnic groups in Waipahu. I tried to get away from having to wear a Filipino costume and being a folk dancer, but my parents always managed to talk me into relenting and cooperating. Dressing up, whether in American or ethnic costume, has never been an interest of mine.

I think ethnic youth often rebel against having to dance or sing at special ethnic programs not necessarily because they reject their ethnic identity but because their parents forget that not everyone in an ethnic group is interested in the same things. I had to remind my mother constantly that as a dancer I had two left feet, whether the dance was Filipino, European, or African. It was at these Filipino ethnic celebrations that I felt the question of my identity to be very troublesome. My parents taught me

through their own example that there was nothing wrong with speaking Philippine languages or having a Filipino perspective in our thoughts and behaviors. However, at school, I was picking up a different message. I wondered how my parents' ideas could be right when we were told to speak American, and other ways of thinking and behaving (although examined and analyzed) always ended up having serious flaws. This form of conscious or sub-conscious intellectual dishonesty on the part of educators, which is found in most cultures, prevents ethnic minority children, as well as Americanized or acculturated children, in developing a healthy sense of their own identities and understanding the concepts of racism, ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination, and pluralism, as they relate to the type of society which we want to develop. Throughout my adolescence and early adult life my ambivalence towards my Filipino and American identities plagued me.

Our church and its members were a part of the Filipino community. To maintain its link with the rest of the Filipino community, our church used to sponsor an annual Christmas program at the Filipino Club House to which the whole Filipino community was invited. Scenes depicting the birth of Christ were enacted with church members pantomiming the various roles; and to make sure that most of the people in the audience understood what was going on, the narration was in two languages: English and Ilokano. My father was always involved in one way or another in planning these programs, and he devoted many hours to the writing of the Ilokano script.

The program that stands out in my mind was the most ambitious one that our church had ever planned. One year, my father decided to try something different. He

came up with the idea of putting on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as a play in Ilokano. It took my father months to prepare the script and to direct and rehearse with the young people of the our church, who had to learn to read their lines in Ilokano. The task was Herculean; the young people did very well. However, that was the last project of its kind that was ever attempted by my father.

Looking back on these episodes in my life I realize that it was the existence and activities of the Filipino community organization which served as a symbol and a reminder for me, as a young girl growing up in a multi-cultural society, that I had a double identity.

Although the community organization succeeded in fulfilling the ethno-cultural and social needs of Filipinos it could not fulfill their economic and political needs. This was because it could only speak to the needs of Filipinos, who were made up of sub-groups divided by language/dialect and organizations established by towns in the Philippines. In times of crisis the Filipino community organization could not count on the other groups, such as the Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Puerto-Ricans, and Koreans to support their demands or withhold services as long as all the workers were separated into ethnic residential camps, thereby making it more difficult for all these groups to merge into one organization – a union.

FROM FILIPINO COMMUNITY TO INTER-ETHNIC ORGANIZATION

Before 1946 the only places where I saw adults of various ethnic backgrounds together were at the lines at the theater, plantation store, waiting room of the plantation

hospital clinic, at the Mom and Pop store operated by Japanese and Chinese, and in the plantation fields where lunas, or bosses, were around to supervise them. It was rare for plantation families to invite people of other ethnic groups to their homes for dinner or for an evening of conversation over dessert and tea or coffee, although fruits, vegetables, and food were exchanged. From grade school to high school I had non-Filipino friends whose last names were Perreira, Miyashiro, Sanchez, Enemoto, Mann, Edamatsu, Lee (Korean), and Wong, yet our parents maintained their distance from each other.

Just prior to the strike in 1946 I noticed changes taking place in the way the various ethnic groups began to treat each other. Japanese and Filipinos were seen in the late afternoon and evening meetings at each other's homes becoming very friendly with each other. During the strike these two groups were drawn even closer together because they were looking after each other and working to achieve common goals. Since our house was situated between the houses of two of our good friends who were strong union leaders and organizers I was very much aware of their activities. At that same time, people were voicing their opinions, dealing with controversy, and engaging in heated discussions over issues affecting their future.

Whereas plantation workers before 1946 seemed more pre-occupied by their own struggles to survive and to make it from day to day, beginning with 1946 they began think in terms of the needs and rights of all workers and their roles in the society at large.

A TASTE OF PLANTATION WORK BEFORE COLLEGE AND CONCLUSION

During the war years school was in session only four days a week. Friday was devoted to working for the war effort, so instead of reporting to school that day we had to choose between reporting to work at the cane fields or the pineapple fields. Only those who had papers signed by a doctor exempting them from working in the fields were allowed to report to the Haole Club House (that's what everybody called it) to roll bandages for the Red Cross.

My first job was with Oahu Sugar Company. I started out as a water girl, then become a weeder. The first job called for fetching water at least four times a day from a source which was at least a mile away from where the workers were. Believing that the grass must be greener at the pineapple fields, my friend, Edith (Mercedes) Correa, and I transferred to one of the pineapple companies where we were assigned to be weeders. We discovered that both jobs were equally back-breaking and monotonous. In the cane fields our hands, faces, and necks were scratched by the cane leaves while in the pineapple fields our whole bodies, with the exception of our necks and faces, were scratched by the thorny crowns of the pineapple plants. The thorny crowns penetrate laborers in Hawai'i.

Working in the fields was an unforgettable experience which was beneficial to me in that it gave me the opportunity to find out what plantation laborers had to undergo for many years of their lives. To this day I still remember the extreme heat of the sun and my constant state of thirst, the continuous rolling of perspiration down my face, fatigue, and the slowness of time which stretched our six-hour day into eternity for

me. In college, when I was studying Greek mythology and read that Sisyphus was punished in the Lower World by having to roll a stone (which constantly rolled back) to the top of a mountain, my plantation experience was the closest thing that I could think of to help me understand the punishment of Sisyphus.

The year before the war ended, Edith and I, upon hearing that at Pearl Harbor students who knew how to type were being hired, took our chances and applied. We must have been lucky because we both only had the equivalent of one year of typing and yet we were hired. I was assigned as a typist in an office that had the responsibility of typing job orders for ships that needed repair. Most of the hand-written job orders were difficult to decipher; in addition, I had never read or heard many of the vocabulary associated with ships and their maintenance and repair.

I found my typing job not unlike that of playing the piano and the pump organ for our church (except the latter offered esthetic fulfillment). The job provided me with actual experience which I needed in order to become an accurate as well as rapid typist (in those days typists didn't have the convenient correction methods of today). The fact that I was the youngest and the most inexperienced employee in my office kept me on my toes.

I was informed by my supervisor just prior to my graduation from high school that if I wanted I could work there and find myself a permanent niche in the government civil service system. When I mentioned it to my parents they reacted in the way I predicted. They said that although typing would give me a secure job with the promise of fringe benefits and a retirement plan, the job was intellectually a dead end.

They wanted me to have more options in my life than they had in theirs, so that I could feel that I was in control over my own life. This type of goal could only be achieved, they thought, if I had a college education that would provide me with a broad general education.

Throughout my college years my parents and I continued to be close. Even when I had lodgings near the university during my sophomore, junior, and senior years my parents, my sister, and I managed to see each other at least once a week, depending on my study schedule, school activities, and dates. I remember looking forward to their coming (they were often late because my father, unaccustomed to driving in Honolulu traffic, always got lost). I knew that they were bringing me my favorite Filipino dishes. I also had the opportunity to tell them about school and my new friends, and they, in turn, would tell me about our family and their activities, the family pets, including my cat.

Compared to my peers I must have been an odd ball, for even with new college friends and college-related activities I never dropped my father and mother from my best friends list. Instead, I got them acquainted with my new friends. I couldn't help being familiar with the music, dances, and the teen-aged idols of my day; however, I wasn't very much attracted to that aspect of the youth culture which tended to separate young people from their elders in an effort to be anti-conformist and then end up conforming to the ethos of one's peers. Ideas should be supported on the basis of reason, logic, and a strong human values base, and not merely on the basis of who supports those ideas.

If I learned anything from my plantation experiences it is that people, no matter from what racial or ethnic background (providing they have the basic necessities of life), have strengths from which to draw in their parents' cultures. Filipinos, like the Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Puerto-Ricans and Koreans, were looked upon by the sugar planters merely as cheap labor and means to their own ends – high profits. Consequently, we could not expect the planters to be interested in instituting cross-cultural orientation, literacy, and health education programs for the workers.

Because most ethnic minorities and other groups that have minority status, such as women and the handicapped, lack the necessary resources and power to change their situations we need to rely on our public educational institutions to provide appropriate educational experiences that will help them to develop their potential. It would be naive to think that because I was able to go as far as I did in education there are no problems or barriers that prevent plantation and recently arrived working class Filipinos from succeeding. To hold such a view is to ignore the important role that family experiences and role models play in a person's life. And to believe that there is no need to be concerned about ethnic, women, and other minorities because there are people who have been either poverty-stricken, brought up in a ghetto, or orphaned and yet were able to make it is to believe in unequal opportunity. The latter viewpoint implies that certain groups in our society (clearly through no fault of their own) are expected to work ten times harder than others who, through no great effort on their part, are born into affluence and proper environments thereby facilitating entry into the better and more prestigious educational institutions of our country.

If ours were an elitist society we could abandon with a clear conscience our support of the concepts equal opportunity and affirmative action, and programs designed to help ethnic minorities, women, and the poor. But because we say that ours is a democratic society we would have to support those concepts and programs in order to make democracy work.

The plantations are no longer places where our immigrants go to seek employment; however, we will need to focus attention on the latter day plantation: the tourist industry, which employs housekeepers, dishwashers, cooks' assistants, launderers, maintenance workers, bell hops, grounds keepers, sales clerks, and other low-paid help. Although this latter day plantation differs from the sugar plantations in that they employ (1) men and women, (2) people of various ages, (3) people who live in various parts instead of one area of the State, and (4) people whose abilities, experiences, and educational training represent a range from low to over-qualified, the social and economic conditions are similar to those that existed in the early plantation days.