

COMFORTABLE NICHE:
COMING TO REGION, COUPLE FOLLOWED GROUP OF EARLIER
IMMIGRANTS

San Jose Mercury News (California)

December 12, 2004 Sunday MORNING FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2004 San Jose Mercury News All Rights Reserved

Section: FRONT; Pg. 20A

Length: 594 words

Byline: TRACEY KAPLAN, Mercury News

Series: ASIAN INFLUENCE: A MERCURY NEWS/KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATIONSPECIAL REPORTFIRST IN A THREE-PART SERIES

Body

Rudy and Flor Nasol moved to Mountain View in 1970 with only \$50 to their name. But the young ***couple*** had good reason to be more optimistic about their future here than in the Philippines, where President Ferdinand Marcos was soon to declare martial law.

More than 600,000 Filipinos immigrated to the United States during the two decades of the Marcos regime, starting in 1965 when the American restrictions on Asian immigration were lifted -- the same year Marcos took power.

Like many who left, the Nasols chose the Bay Area because it had an existing Filipino community, ranging from the descendants of farmworkers to a budding ***group*** of medical professionals. Flor Nasol was a nurse and her husband was a mechanical engineer. Her aunt, a secretary at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Palo Alto, offered them free lodging.

Today, there are more than 321,000 Filipinos in the Bay Area, which does not include 54,000 who report on census forms that they are part Filipino. They make up a quarter of the Bay Area's Asian population, the largest group after Chinese.

Though the Nasols struggled at first, they have achieved the American dream -- and more. Rudy Nasol was recently re-elected to the board of the Berryessa Union School District, a rare political victory that he said he owes in part to his diverse ethnic background. Like many Filipinos, he's part Spanish and part Chinese.

"People think I'm Latino," he said. "It's a plus for me because I get the Filipino, Asian and Latino vote."

Unlike other Asians, Filipinos stand out for their ability to blend in, so much so that sociologists have called them the "Invisible Asians." It's a characteristic born of their diverse multicultural heritage and history of being colonized by the United States and Spain. The Philippines is the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia; the education system is based on the American model; and English is the language of instruction in schools.

All Filipinos in the Mercury News/Kaiser poll said they spoke English well, and seven in 10 described themselves as American, the most in both cases of any Asian subgroup. They are the most likely to say they have a lot or a fair amount in common with Latinos and whites, and to approve of intermarriage.

COMFORTABLE NICHE;COMING TO REGION, COUPLE FOLLOWED GROUP OF EARLIER IMMIGRANTS

The household income of the Bay Area's Filipino community makes it solidly middle class, though families tend to be larger. Filipinos have a smaller percentage of low-income households than Chinese, but they also have a smaller percentage of households earning \$200,000 or more, according to the 2000 census.

Still, more than eight in 10 Filipinos say they are successful, the second-highest of any Asian ethnic **group** after Indians, belying their national image as a disadvantaged minority **group**. Rudy Nasol started out as an elementary school janitor because no one would hire him as an engineer after he arrived. He is now the facilities project manager at the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District. His wife easily found a job in a hospital.

In the Bay Area, and even more so nationally, Filipinos make up a disproportionately large share of health care workers. In San Mateo County, Filipinos make up 8 percent of all workers 16 and older, but 20 percent of health care workers, according to the 2000 census. That may have helped insulate the community from the brunt of the economic downturn.

"Here, we were able to give the kids a better life with lots of choices," Flor Nasol said. "In the Philippines, you don't have the same opportunity to spread your wings."

Notes

RELATED STORIES: Pages 1A, 20-21A

FILIPINOS: 321,000 IN BAY AREA

Graphic

Photo;

PHOTO: PAULINE LUBENS -- MERCURY NEWS

Rudy and Flor Nasol go over voter registration lists while canvassing a San Jose neighborhood in October. Rudy Nasol won re-election to Berryessa Union school board and was later voted president by his peers.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (89%); ETHNIC **GROUPS** (89%); MARRIAGE (78%); VOTERS & VOTING (77%); MINORITY **GROUPS** (77%); RACE & ETHNICITY (76%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (76%); HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS (74%); EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION EMPLOYEES (74%); BOARD CHANGES (73%); MARTIAL LAW (72%); IMMIGRATION (72%); PRIMARY SCHOOLS (72%); DEMOGRAPHIC **GROUPS** (72%); MIDDLE INCOME PERSONS (72%); POOR POPULATION (72%); LOW INCOME PERSONS (72%); HOUSEHOLD NUMBERS (72%); PROFESSIONAL WORKERS (72%); SOCIOLOGY (70%); HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCE (70%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (66%); APPROVALS (65%); SCHOOL DISTRICTS (65%); POLLS & SURVEYS (64%); FAMILY (63%); PERSONAL & FAMILY INCOME (63%); FARM LABOR (56%)

Industry: EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (89%); HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS (74%); ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTERS (74%); PRIMARY SCHOOLS (72%); FARM LABOR (56%)

COMFORTABLE NICHE;COMING TO REGION, COUPLE FOLLOWED GROUP OF EARLIER IMMIGRANTS

Geographic: SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (90%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); PHILIPPINES (96%); UNITED STATES (95%); SPAIN (79%); ASIA (79%)

Load-Date: September 5, 2005

End of Document