

MultiCultural Review

September 2001

Boñus, Rick. *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2000. 218 pp. ISBN 1-56639-778-2, \$59.50 (cl); 1-56639-779-0, \$19.95 (pb).

Over the past several decades a number of studies have attempted to chronicle and analyze Filipino America. This has not been an easy task, given the low visibility of Filipinos, especially those living outside the West Coast. A new work undertakes to describe the Filipino group in terms of "space"—an intersection of commercial establishments, community centers, and newspapers. Southern California during the mid-1990s is the focus of the study. The author's goal is to document how this group of immigrants articulates its identity in the face of racism. The author states that he tries "to unravel what it means to be Filipino and American at the same time." The book is the result of fieldwork; Over 80 individuals were interviewed, and these were divided between recent immigrants and first- and second-generation Americans.

After an introduction discussing concepts of ethnic identity and a following chapter on the history of Filipinos in America, the work approaches the notion of "space" in three separate analytical engines. The first is with the "Oriental" store, where a sense of identity is created through the differences attached to ethnic goods and the nostalgia that shopping there produces. The second is through the political events and beauty pageants held in community centers and social halls. The third is by means of the Filipino-American media, which propagates and sometimes reconstructs ethnic identity, particularly through advertisements.

A concluding chapter discusses the various nuances and consequences of Filipino "space." The book is a delightful read, blending a wealth of research with personal insight; indeed, the study is often a self-analysis of the writer's