



Filipino Americans: An Enviably but Imperfect Image

by Johnny Noble

The Rise of Asian Americans, published by the Washington DC-based think tank, the Pew Research Group, offers a largely glowing portrayal of this increasingly visible minority which now accounts for 5.6% of the US population. Based on survey results and US government statistics, Pew profiled Asian Americans according to attributes of the group's six largest nationalities. In a 2010 US population of 308.7 million, Asian Americans accounted for 17.3 million, 3.4 million of them Filipinos.

The Pew study covered each of the top six Asian American ethnic groups. We cannot touch on all aspects of the study here but we have taken a look at some of the factors that influence the economic wellbeing of Filipino Americans relative to the general population and other Asian groups.

At first glance, Pew's statistical profile of Filipino Americans shows much to take pride in. Clearly we are more highly educated and affluent, as measured, respectively, by the percentage of Filipinos with college degrees and our incomes. But this all might be only a matter of degree. Filipino Americans' average annual household income of \$75,000 trails only that of Indian Americans and surpasses all others by a wide margin. But that advantage diminishes on other income measurements. Poverty levels can perhaps be an indirect indicator of economic standing.

Only 2% of Filipino Americans were living in poverty in 2010, a miniscule rate compared to that seen in other Asian American groups, where poverty rates ranged from 8% for the Japanese to roughly 15% for the Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese. Poverty lines as defined by the US Census Bureau range

from annual incomes below \$11,700 for an individual under 65, to households of four persons (two of whom are minor children) earning less than \$22,800 a year.

While language proficiency is not as high as the national norm, more Filipinos possess a better command of English than all other Asian American groups other than the Japanese, of which 68% were born in the US vs. only 31% of Filipino Americans.

A less flattering statistic with potentially longer term adverse consequences is the percentage of unmarried Filipino American women bearing children out of wedlock in the 12 months prior to the Pew survey. Almost 27% of children born to Filipinas during this period were born out of wedlock, lower than the national norm of 37% but a far higher rate than that experienced by all of the other major Asian American groups.

Out of wedlock birth rates ranged from 2% among Indians to 12% for the Vietnamese. Only the Japanese rate of 20% approached that of Filipinos. In light of the relatively high proportion of US born Japanese, this statistic could reflect downward assimilation among Japanese Americans. But among Filipinas in the US, the high rate of out of wedlock births very likely stems from the same factors that are driving that rate in the Philippines. In 2008, it stood at 37%, a curious finding in the only Catholic-majority country in Asia.

Filipino Americans are better educated than the general population but slightly less so than the Asian American group. By this measure, Indian Americans are much more highly educated (70% are

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FABP Calendar

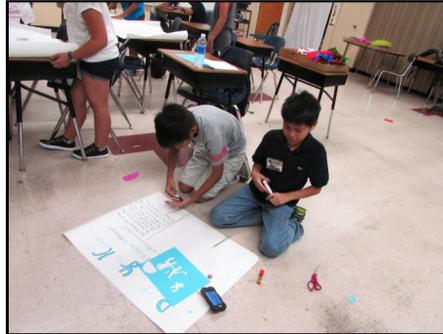
- FABP Meeting — every last Friday of the month at the Ministry Center. Beattitudes of Our Lord Church, 7 p.m.
- San Lorenzo Ruiz—Sept. 29
- Simbang Gabi

FABP's Many Activities in Pictures

The Cultural Summer Camp, held Aug. 6-10, 2013, has always been a major event for FABP. Fifty-five children, from Grades 1-8, learned about our Filipino heritage via songs, dances, Pilipino language, cooking, crafts, and history classes. We would like to thank all those who helped make this year's camp another success: to the hard-working and talented volunteers, to Fr. Page and Mrs. Watson, the school principal, for graciously offering us the school facilities, to our lunch and snack sponsors, and to the parents and students who continue to be excited about our cultural camp.



Our volunteers generously shared their time and talents with the students.



Group Luzon read 'The Colors of Us', and learned that though we are of many skin colors, we are all Americans.

Group Palawan learned about the experiences of Filipino immigrants in the United States.

Group Visayas and Mindanao learned about their own immigration story.



We are the United States of America.

Learning Pilipino.

Afternoon snack with ice cream.



Students learned traditional dances like maglalatik, tinikling and La Jota and Filipino songs like Lubilubi, Bahay Kubo, and Pipit.



Students learned weaving and making parol.



Parents and guests brought lots and lots of food for our Saturday fiesta.



Almost 400 devotees attended the Divine Mercy Day of Recollection on July 27 at the Beatitudes of Our Lord Church with Father Michael Gaitley as the guest speaker. Free lunch was served to all the guests.

FABP's Many Activities in Pictures

Beatitudes' Luau, an all-ministry affair, was held last August 3, 2013. The event was chaired by past FABP President George del Carmen and Nancy Arbogast. The different ministries that chaired various committees were: Bereavement, FABP, Altar Servers, Couples for Christ, Knights of Columbus, Religious Education, Beatitudes School, and Community Together. Many individuals likewise helped in the festivities.



Flores de Mayo



Filipino Americans (continuation)

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college educated); the percentage of Chinese and Korean college graduates is slightly higher but largely comparable to that of Filipinos. Only the Vietnamese lag well behind the norm for the group.

A high level of educational attainment and proficiency in English would seem to underpin greater economic success but among Filipinos, this is not necessarily the case. Average household income for Filipinos, higher than it is for all other Asian American groups except Indians, is based in large measure on a larger average household size

Median individual annual income for full-time, year-round Filipino workers is barely above the national norm and ranks second from the bottom in the Asian American group, surpassing only that of the Vietnamese. On a per capita basis (vs. Pew's median annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers), Filipino American income as estimated by the American Community Survey for the more distressed 2007-2009 period, fell below the national average and lagged behind per capita income for all other major Asian American groups except for the Vietnamese.

The Filipino American advantage seen in Pew's numbers is undisputed but that advantage may be narrower than it first appears to be due to the educational and professional mix among Filipino workers. Asian Americans show a disproportionately large presence in management and professional occupations (as defined by the US Census Bureau) but are less well represented in other types of civilian occupations. If we infer that management and professional occupations are better paying, this mix could explain the Asian American income advantage.

It might also explain the lower income of Filipinos relative to other Asians. In the time period studied, only 41% of Filipino Americans were employed in management and professional occupations, higher than the national average but much lower than the 64% and 49% rates for Indians and Japanese, respectively. On the other hand, more Filipinos (20%) worked in (lower paying) service occupations than US and Asian American workers. Filipino participation in the other two occupational classes

(construction, extractive, etc. and sales/office) matched that of US workers as a whole. Indian and Japanese (the only other groups profiled separately) participation in all occupational classes other than management and professional were significantly lower. The disparity between Filipinos' educational attainment and their occupational status is unexplained. Is it simply a matter of widespread underemployment?

The small Filipino presence in management and professional occupations relative to Asian Americans could be due to sharp differences in educational background. While a high percentage of Filipino Americans have college degrees, their courses of study may position them poorly for more lucrative work. Results of a 2010 American Community Survey showed that 14% of US Asians (vs. only 5% of the US working population) were employed in science and engineering fields, qualification for which includes specialized and/or advanced degrees. Only 7% of Filipino Americans were employed in these fields, the lowest percentage among all of the larger Asian groups. Twenty eight percent of Indians and 18% of the Chinese were employed in science and engineering fields, implying that many more of them possess the requisite higher-order educational qualifications than other Asian Americans. We may have our share of physicians and lawyers but the ranks of scientists and engineers among us may be rather thin.

Compared to the general US population, Filipino Americans, as the Pew statistics point out, are clearly an economic/financial standout. In some respects, we may suffer by comparison with some of the other national groups within the US Asian American population. But a few unfavorable comparisons should not diminish the pride we have in Filipino Americans' achievements.

The Pew study (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/04/Asian-Americans-new-full-report-04-2013.pdf>), updated in April 2013 to expand coverage of the smaller Asian American groups, is worthwhile reading, as is *Community of Contrast* (http://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/sites/aajc/files/Community_of_Contrast.pdf), a 2011 article with a less sanguine, and arguably more realistic, view than the Pew portrayal of Asian Americans.

For the latest information and pictures on FABP activities and events, visit our website at:

<http://fabp.yolasite.com/>

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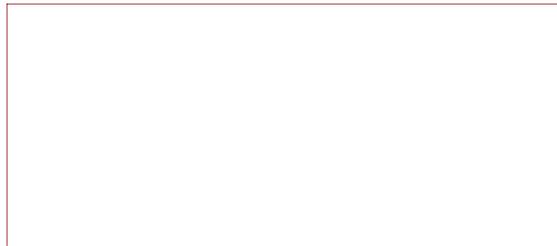
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Balita is published 3 times a year (April, August, December) for the members of FABP.

Mission Statement

To promote and preserve our Catholic Filipino values and tradition by providing a supportive and enjoyable atmosphere AND to encourage members to support and participate in the religious and social activities of the association and the Beatitudes of Our Lord Parish.

FABP wants to know about your business. Advertise with us. Contact the editor.



FABP *Balita* is Going Green

Green to save money. Green to save the environment.

This August issue is the last issue of *Balita* that will be mailed via the US Postal Service. If you are receiving *Balita* via the US Postal Service, and you wish to continue to receive *Balita* via email, and continue to be informed about our plans and activities, please send Melanie an email at mdelcarm@aol.com. *Balita* will also be available at FABP's website at <http://fabp.yolasite.com>.