

# Crosscurrents: Filipinos in Hawaii's Politics

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The chapter on Filipinos in Hawaii's political history is a slim one. Their numbers in elected ranks have been and remain few and, only recently, three Filipinos—Lt. Gov. Ben Cayetano, former Kauai Mayor Eduardo Malapit, and Big Island Mayor Lorraine Rodero Inouye—have won executive offices.

Filipinos were the last of Hawaii's major ethnic groups to come to the Islands. Plantation contract laborers began arriving from the Philippines in 1906 but, longer than most of Hawaii's immigrant workers, Filipinos remained intent on returning to their homeland. Few brought wives with them; fewer still intermarried with non-Filipinos. The result was that, prior to World War II, complete Filipino families committed to staying in Hawaii were rare.<sup>1</sup>

Following World War II, Filipinos began putting their families together. The 1965 liberalization of United States immigration laws accelerated the process—and greatly increased the number of new Filipino immigrants. But the constant refertilization of provincial rivalries, the clash between new, often better educated recent immigrants and the locally born descendants of plantation Filipinos, and the intrusion of the politics of the Philippines into Hawaii have left Hawaii's Filipinos, in the words of Lt. Gov. Cayetano, “a struggling community seeking to find itself.”

Yet at no time in Hawaii's political history have Filipino prospects looked better. Cayetano appears to have an excellent chance at the Democratic Party's nomination for governor in 1994. Attempts to woo the growing Filipino electorate—approximately 11 percent of Hawaii's registered voters (15.2 percent of the state's population)—have resulted in more appointed Filipinos in county and state governments than ever before.<sup>2</sup> Filipino pluralities are the rule in several state legislative districts, and in recent years political analysts have taken to writing frequently of the growing Filipino vote as Hawaii's “sleeping giant” (or “tiger,” choose your metaphor by size or ferocity).<sup>3</sup>

## Patronage Politics: Hawaii's First Filipino Politicians

The early history of the Filipino role in Island politics can best be told through the lives of three men: Peter Aduja, Alfred Laureta and Benjamin Menor. Their personal and political lives often intersected; indeed, they frequently coincided. And they were, along with no more than a half dozen more minor figures, the entire Filipino political presence in the first quarter century following World War II.

Aduja and Menor grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii. Aduja arrived there in 1927 as the seven year old son of immigrant plantation laborers from Ilocos Sur. His father attended one year of elementary school in the Philippines; his mother was illiterate. They were assigned to Hakalau plantation, where Aduja attended Hakalau elementary and intermediate schools, then bussed to Hilo for high school.<sup>4</sup>

At Hilo High School Aduja met Ben Menor. "We were classmates and good friends," Aduja remembers. Menor had come to Hawaii from San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, in 1930 at the age of seven. He grew up in Pahoia, one of seven children of plantation laborers Angelo and Paulina Menor. His father had received a third grade education in the Philippines; he could read and write—which would eventually qualify him for a luna's position.<sup>5</sup>

That Aduja found Menor in high school was unusual. "In those days older males in Filipino families seldom went beyond the 8th grade," Menor remembered. "They quit school and went to work to help the family out financially. But my parents never entertained such an idea; they took pride in all of my achievements."

So too did Alfred Laureta's more extended family. Laureta's parents came from the Philippines in 1922; he was born two years later in Ewa Plantation's Banana Camp. His parents divorced while he was still young. At the age of five he joined his father on Maui, in Makawao's Libby Camp. "The bachelor Filipinos all took responsibility for me," says Laureta. "My report cards became community property. They'd all give me 10-25 cents for a good report card." He got those good report cards at Makawao Elementary School, a three mile walk from Libby Camp.<sup>6</sup>

Following elementary school Laureta attended Lahainaluna High School as a boarder. He fit in well. Laureta played softball and ran track, excelled in oratory and debate, served as freshman class president and, in his senior year, as student body president.

At Hilo High School, Peter Aduja also served as student body president. Indeed, in 1941 two of the predominantly Japanese-American high school's top four student offices were held by Filipinos: Ben Menor served as student body treasurer. Both young men learned a lesson in schoolboy politics that would prove valuable in Hawaii's larger political arena. Says Aduja: "Filipinos at Hilo High School were rare. We were a very small minority. But I mixed well with other ethnic groups. I wasn't afraid to mingle with them"—and develop a multi-ethnic constituency.

By his senior year in high school, Aduja had long since fixed on a political career, but "not necessarily in the United States. I was not yet a citizen, so I thought about going back to the Philippines." For Menor, on the other hand, the lack of American citizenship blighted any youthful political ambitions he might have had: "I never considered a political future because I wasn't a citizen and consequently I wasn't eligible for a political career."

Although his family's ambitions for him did not go beyond high school, Menor felt compelled to continue his education. The Hilo High School Class of '41's salutatorian went to Honolulu following graduation, first to Honolulu Business College, then to the University of Hawaii. Aduja also attended the University, and both young men helped support themselves through war-time defense work, Aduja as a timekeeper at Pearl Harbor and Menor in construction.

Aduja completed his bachelor's degree in 1944 and immediately joined the Hawaii First Filipino Regiment. A draft call interrupted Menor's studies; again he found himself in the same outfit with Aduja. Both men shipped to the Philippines in 1945 where they came to know a young officer named William Richardson, later the Chief Justice of the Hawaii State Supreme Court.

Following his graduation from Lahainaluna, Alfred Laureta also matriculated at the University of Hawaii. In his sophomore year he moved into a cooperative students' house whose residents included future Lt. Gov. and Judge Nelson Doi. His Filipino classmates at the University of Hawaii were few; there were only five of them. But they included a future Department of Education District Superintendent, Domingo Los Banos, and Hawaii County Supervisor, Elias Yadao.

Laureta excelled in speech and oratory as an undergraduate. Following graduation, he went on to complete his fifth year teaching credential. The offer of a University graduate assistantship in speech kept him out of the Territorial Department of Education, however.

While teaching at the University, Laureta was approached by a Fr. Osmundo Calip. Calip was on a mission to Hawaii, trying to shore up the slackening religiosity of the Islands' Filipino Catholics. "Fr. Calip urged me to go to law school," Laureta remembered. "He stressed the need for Filipinos in the professions." Laureta was interested, but he admitted he knew nothing about law schools and had no money. Calip promptly found him a law school—New York's Catholic Fordham University—and a scholarship from the Hawaii Memorial Foundation.

Laureta was not the only would be Filipino lawyer on the East Coast in the early 1950s. After his discharge from the Army, Peter Aduja taught school for two years at Naalehu Intermediate School on the Big Island. In the meantime, his former high school classmate, Ben Menor, was completing his bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Hawaii. It was Aduja who made the first move toward law school, at Boston University. "Peter was always talking about going to law school, and so I began thinking about it for myself," Menor remembered. "Peter assured me that Boston University would let me in if I wanted to go."

Upon graduation, Aduja and Menor returned to Hawaii and passed the Territorial bar examination in 1953, thus becoming Hawaii's first Filipino lawyers. Laureta soon followed in 1954. So too did Bernaldo Bicoy and Elias Yadao.

"When I got back to Hawaii in 1953, Aduja and Menor were the only Filipinos practicing law in Hawaii," Laureta remembered. "I went around to all of Hawaii's larger law firms looking for work. None of them would hire me." A University classmate took Laureta to meet Bert Kobayashi and Russell Kono, two young Japanese-American attorneys just getting started. They agreed to take him on at \$100 per month with no responsibilities so that he could study for the bar exam. Soon after Laureta passed the bar in January 1954, he joined his two benefactors and another newly minted lawyer named George Ariyoshi to form the firm of Kobayashi, Kono, Laureta and Ariyoshi.

"Our offices were at the corner of King and Bethel streets in downtown Honolulu," says Laureta. "My clients were mostly Filipinos, and they often couldn't pay their bills. So I took payment in vegetables and poultry, bedspreads and bed sheets.

"On our lunch hour we played pool with other lawyers, and during slack periods I played cards with Donald Ching, Walter Heen and George Holt, all attorneys. It was Ching (later a state senator) who recruited me into the Democratic Party."

Nineteen fifty-four was, of course, a big year for Hawaii's Democrats. They would win control of the Territorial Legislature for the first time in history. Laureta did his part by working in the campaign of law partner Russell Kono for the Territorial House of Representatives. With the Democrats' victory, Laureta garnered his first piece of political patronage—an appointment as House attorney for the 1955 session, along with future U.S. Congresswoman Patsy

Mink, future Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court Herman Lum and George Holt and Donald Ching.

Peter Aduja was a member of the Territorial House class of '54, but not as a Democrat. Aduja won one of three House seats from the Big Island—as a Republican. Why a Republican when most of his countrymen were plantation workers and members of the Democratically inclined International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union? "I always believed that the person himself determines the shape of his life, not government," says Aduja. "I've always believed in *laissez-faire*."

Aduja's decision to run as a Republican proved fatal to his political career for in 1954 the Republican Party began a decline that would leave it almost totally powerless within a quarter century. "My wife reminds me from time to time that it was a big mistake," says Aduja. "If I'd chosen to be a Democrat, I would *still* be in office."

Aduja's poor choice of party was compounded by his impatience. In 1956, instead of running for a second term in the Territorial House of Representatives, Aduja tried to win a seat on the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors. He lost—and moved to Oahu.

Upon his return from law school, Ben Menor had also sought a place for himself in Hawaii County government, but not an elected place. When Nelson Doi became Hawaii County Attorney in 1953, Menor accepted a position under him as a Deputy County Attorney—a job he would hold until 1959.

In that year Menor threw in his lot with John A. Burns, the Democratic candidate for governor in Hawaii's first statehood election. "I became completely committed to Burns in 1959," Menor remembered.

I worked in every Burns campaign thereafter, usually as campaign coordinator for the Big Island.

Burns encouraged people of every ethnic background—including Filipinos—to participate in politics and government and show what they could do. He solidified and strengthened Hawaii as a multi-racial society. And, most important for Filipinos, he stressed educational opportunity for all.

Burns lost the 1959 gubernatorial election to Republican William Quinn by a scant 4,000 votes. As Burns's Big Island campaign coordinator, the kind and conscientious Menor took Burns's loss hard: "I wanted a 2,000 to 2,500 vote victory margin for Jack on the Big Island to offset Quinn's expected majority on Oahu. But Burns only carried Hawaii County by 250 votes."

Few Democrats blamed Ben Menor for Burns's small Big Island margin over Quinn. The Republican lieutenant governor candidacy of Jimmy Kealoha, a popular Big Island County Supervisor, undoubtedly explains the big Republican vote on Hawaii. In order to make the statewide run, Kealoha had had to resign his position on the County Board of Supervisors.

The Board's Democratic majority chose Filipino labor lawyer Elias Yadao to replace him. The Philippines born Yadao had come to Hawaii while a toddler, the son of the Rev. Emilio Yadao, a Protestant preacher brought over by the sugar companies to impart spiritual uplift to the Filipino community. Most of his youth was spent on Maui, but he graduated from Kauai High School and then went on to the University of Hawaii.<sup>7</sup>

World War II interrupted his undergraduate education. Yadao never made it overseas, but he qualified for the GI bill and that got him through the University and George Washington University Law School. While preparing for the Hawaii bar examination, he clerked in the Honolulu labor law firm of Bouslog and Symond. "My husband was very well trained by Harriet Bouslog," Josephine Yadao DeLuz remembers. "She made him do research on all her cases, and she was a task master—which was good for him."

In 1954 Bouslog and Symond opened three new offices, two on Kauai and one on the Big Island. Yadao got the Hilo assignment and thus took over most of the ILWU's Big Island legal work. In 1958, with the union's endorsement, Yadao made a run for the Territorial House of Representatives. He lost, but his consolation was a staff attorney's job in the Democratic majority's office. Then came Kealoha's resignation and his appointment to the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors.

"Oh, there was an uproar," Josephine Yadao remembers. "The newspaper asked 'Who is this Yadao person?' They claimed the Communists were taking over. And my husband was genuinely concerned about being labeled pink."

Yadao served as a supervisor until 1965 when he died prematurely, at age 40, of asthma. "My husband worked so hard to almost get there," Josephine Yadao remembers. "Between his law practice—the assignments from the ILWU and the UPW—and the Board of Supervisors, he barely had time for his four children. My husband never thought he was successful."

The 4,000 vote Quinn statewide win in 1959 had provided no Republican coattails, and Peter Aduja failed in a bid for a State Senate seat from Oahu. Alfred

Laureta's political career took a new direction, however, as a result of the 1959 election. Soon after the returns were in, newly elected U.S. Congressman Daniel Inouye called to offer him a job as his administrative assistant in Washington.

"As a Speech graduate assistant at the University of Hawaii, one of my peers was Maggie Awamura," Laureta remembered. "Dan Inouye was always coming around the Speech Department to romance her. So I got to know him in college." He had gotten to know him better at the Territorial Legislature and through working with him on John Burns's 1956 and 1958 congressional campaigns. After so much exposure to other men's campaigns, Laureta "had decided that, one of these days, I would also run for office. I saw the congressional AA's job as a preparation for my own future race."

The thinness of Filipino leadership ranks was never more graphically illustrated than during the administration of Gov. William Quinn. Like the Democrats, Republican Quinn sought to build a party of all ethnic talents, and he was willing to use gubernatorial patronage to that end. Quinn appointed a freshly minted University of Chicago lawyer named Carlos Ramelb as his Deputy Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. Tragically, Ramelb came down with colon cancer. He died in 1963 at the age of 29. "Carlos Ramelb's passing was a great loss to the Filipino community," says Laureta.

It was in large part because the ranks of Filipino leadership were so terribly, terribly thin. Laureta found that out just before Thanksgiving 1962. He could have undoubtedly claimed a prestigious position on U.S. Senator-elect Dan Inouye's staff. But he received a call from Hawaii Governor-elect John Burns, offering him a position in his administration. "I consulted with my wife, and she said that if I wanted to run one day for an elective office from Hawaii, I should take the job."

In January 1963, Burns appointed Laureta Director of the Department of Labor. In doing so, Burns established a Democratic Party tradition, i.e., that labor would be earmarked as a piece of Filipino patronage. His motives were obvious. By the early 1960s the membership of the state's dominant blue collar union, the ILWU, was overwhelmingly Filipino, as were workers in the burgeoning tourist industry. If the Democrats wanted that vote, the Labor Department's directorship was a small price to pay. During the Democratic governorships of Burns, George Ariyoshi and John Waihee, Filipinos would hold the post for over 20 years. They were Laureta, educator Joshua Aagsalud, and attorney Mario Ramil.

Ben Menor helped deliver a much larger margin of victory for Jack Burns on the Big Island in 1962, and he got himself elected to a term in the Hawaii State Senate. One term was enough for him. Says Hideo "Lefty" Kuniyoshi, a fellow Hawaii County Democrat who knew Menor well in that period: "He never told me why he didn't run for reelection, but I think I know. Ben was a sweet and conscientious guy. And I don't think he enjoyed the kind of compromise and deals that the Legislature demanded."<sup>8</sup> Menor's intention was to return to private practice.

Burns had other ideas. In January 1967 he attended the inauguration of the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors. In a conversation following the festivities, Burns offered Menor a Circuit Court judgeship. Menor asked for time to think about it—and ultimately rejected the appointment. Burns was obviously intent on appointing a Filipino to the Circuit Court bench. When Menor demurred, he offered the job to Alfred Laureta, who accepted it.

By 1967 Laureta was ready for the security of a judicial seat. Laureta's dreams of running for office himself had begun to fade. In 1964 he had considered a bid for Hawaii's recently created second congressional seat. "A number of labor people urged me to go for it, and I thought I could have won it in a crowded field," Laureta remembered. But Burns discouraged him, arguing that he thought he was doing a good job at the Labor Department.

While Menor returned to private practice and Laureta ascended to the bench, Peter Aduja found new life in elective politics. On the windward side of Oahu, in a district that included Kailua, Kaneohe, Laie, Kahuku and the North Shore, Aduja found enough Republicans to win a seat in the State Legislature. "I got Haole and Hawaiian votes, and a Filipino vote out of Kahuku," Aduja remembered.

He would hold the seat for four terms, and he never felt any sense of exclusion in the predominantly Japanese-American legislature of that era. "I always felt accepted as an equal by my fellow members," says Aduja. "I never heard any ethnic slights. Not in politics. In the community, yes."

But Aduja knew the frustrations of being a minority Republican member:

There was little that you could do. I introduced a lot of bills, but they were grabbed up by the Democrats. They controlled the committees, so they got credit for all the legislation. It would have been easier had I been a Democrat. But I'd already been elected as a Republican, and I didn't want to change. I could have done a better job in the majority party. I'm afraid the best of me didn't come out.

Aduja lost his reelection bid in 1974. Following his defeat, he moved across the mountains to Kalihi in search of more luxuriant political pastures for a Filipino. There he ran for a House seat three times in the late 1970s and 1980s, ultimately switching parties and running as a Democrat. "I never won an election as a Democrat," he says.

Nor did he ever get a solid Filipino vote. "Just because you are a Filipino does not mean that the Filipinos will come out and vote for you," Aduja argues. "Filipinos tend not to vote in the primary, only in the general. They're lazy. The Japanese are much more solid in their voting. Watch Rep. Dennis Arakaki in upper Kalihi. The Japanese always come out to vote for him in the primary, but the Filipinos aren't there to support Arakaki's Filipino challenger."

In 1968, given a second chance at a Big Island Circuit Court judicial seat by Gov. Burns, Ben Menor accepted. In 1973 State Supreme Court Justice Kazuhisa Abe announced his intention to retire. Menor was in Honolulu on business; he stopped in to see Chief Justice William Richardson. The talk turned to the Supreme Court vacancy, "Bert Kobayashi mentioned Alfred Laureta for the seat, but what about you?" Richardson asked. Menor agreed that if Burns wanted him, he would be happy to serve. In one of his last acts before the pain of his cancer stopped him, Burns went down to the Legislature to lobby for the appointment of Menor as the first State Supreme Court Justice of Filipino ancestry.

Menor's political career would run out on the Hawaii State Supreme Court from which he retired in 1981. On the high court Menor gained a reputation for intelligence and industry. "He was very smart. An extremely hard worker, and very committed to being a good Supreme Court Justice," says Abelina Madrid Shaw, a former clerk to Justice Menor. "He drew on his experience and background in plantation Hawaii from among working people. It showed in his writing, which was clear and simple. He didn't condone 'citized' opinions. He wanted them simple and commonsensical. He was a really down to earth man who never, in my experience, played up his position as a Justice."<sup>9</sup>

In 1977, Alfred Laureta's judicial career took another turn, the result of an appointment from his original political patron. In 1977, as his ten year term on the State Circuit Court was coming to an end, U.S. Sen. Dan Inouye called Laureta to ask if he would be interested in a federal judgeship in Guam or the Northern Marianas. Laureta said he would, and in May 1978 he was appointed to the Northern Marianas federal bench located on Saipan. He served there until his retirement a decade later.

### The Politics of Localism

Among the first generation of Hawaii's politicians, the appointive route to political office proved the only dependable one. Legislative districts dominated by Filipinos were few or nonexistent; their formation awaited the large migrations of complete Filipino families from the Philippines, families committed to remaining in Hawaii and becoming American citizens.

And come they did. In 1970, for example, Hawaii claimed 33,175 foreign born Filipinos. A decade later the number stood at 58,510, an increase of almost 100 percent, considerably more than double that of any other group in the population. The trend continued throughout the 1980s. In the last five years of the decade alone, just under 20,000 Filipino immigrants took up residence in Hawaii; that was approximately 55 percent of the total number of immigrants settling in the Islands.<sup>10</sup>

Hawaii's recent immigrants have, to some extent, spread out through the population more than in the plantation past. Many come to the Islands better educated than their agrarian predecessors and thus find work that allows them to buy homes in pricier neighborhoods. But most gravitate to those areas that have historically drawn Hawaii's working class newcomers—places like Kalihi-Kapalama, Upper Kalihi, Waipahu and Ewa-Makakilo.<sup>11</sup>

The political result has been several legislative districts in which the Filipino population constitutes a marked plurality over that of any other ethnic group. They become, in effect, "Filipino districts." Julie Duldulao, the Philippines born lawmaker from Waipahu-Village Park, represents one of them (the 45th). So too does Philippines born Romy Cachola from Kapalama-Foster Village (the 39th).

What these districts promise over the long run is the type of legislative security which eluded Hawaii's first generation of Filipino politicians. Barring scandal (like the voter fraud which did in his predecessor in the 39th, Gene Albano) or impatience (which has shortened the careers of countless politicians of every ethnic background), Cachola can expect to hold his seat for a good long time, as can Duldulao. The result will be increased experience and seniority, precisely the advantages needed to assume more influence and power in state government.

Much as House Speaker Daniel Kihano has done. Waipahu born and bred, Kihano's district has shifted markedly since his initial election. But never has

his Filipino ancestry worked against him in his twenty years of electoral success. Indeed, Kihano is, if you will, the first Filipino politician on the state level to fashion a sustained elective political career (Ben Cayetano is the second). Noted for his kindness and quiet demeanor, Kihano belies the political stereotype, not to mention a whole host of Filipino stereotypes, i.e., the Filipino politician is a florid speaker, flamboyant, proud.

Kihano is, instead, a nice guy in politics. And it is arguable that Kihano's political profile is more representative of the Filipino politician than the more common one. It certainly applies to at least three of the Filipinos' first generation political luminaries: Peter Aduja, Alfred Laureta and Ben Menor. In a state where Hawaiians, famous for their spirit of aloha, have set the political tone since the monarchy, it is a profile that can be very effective. Witness the political careers of U.S. Senators Daniel Akaka and his predecessor, Spark Matsunaga, for example. Longevity in office, his willingness to play the insider's political game, and his good guy reputation have carried Kihano to the highest position the members of the House have to give one of their own.

The new, "safe" Filipino districts may not be able to offer as much—particularly if they become overseas battlefields for the provincial politics of the Philippines. This was precisely the case in the 39th District in 1988. At the last moment, Philippines born Connie Caspe Chun, a former two term Democratic Representative who had been reapportioned out of her district, filed to run in the 39th's primary election against Cachola. Chun is Visayan, Cachola Ilocano, and in the narrow confines of Kalihi the provincial animosities spewed forth. The primary election ended in a tie; in a special election scheduled to coincide with the general, Cachola won.

Connie Caspe Chun emerged with a dim view of Filipino politics, Hawaii style. "Everything is provincial, clannish," she says. "Visayans voted for Connie Chun because she was Visayan. Unfortunately, Visayans make up a very small portion of Hawaii's population."<sup>12</sup> To bridge the gap between herself and Hawaii's Filipinos, Chun studied Ilocano at the University for a year.

"Too often Filipinos vote personalities, not issues. They want to know what's in it for me, so he who promises them the most wins," she argues. For many Filipinos, they do not have time to study issues. "They're too busy trying to make a living," says Chun. "Every adult in the household will work two or three jobs. They're never at home. And their latchkey kids turn to gangs for their identity."

Chun also dismisses the “sleeping giant” metaphor as a misnomer for Filipinos as a voting bloc. She sees them as beset by too much factionalism—and apathy. She echoes Peter Aduja in arguing that

local born Filipinos don't vote. They don't care. The only vocal Filipinos are the foreign born—like Amy Agbayani at the University. Second generation local Filipinos are totally into instant gratification. Me. Me. Me. They want a car, a house, but education is unimportant to them. I want it now, now, now. Hawaii's Filipinos will never be a major force until the local born and bred recognize that they have to get involved.

Chun cites the problem of factionalism as perhaps the single biggest obstacle to the political progress of Hawaii's Filipino population. “There are over 200 Filipino clubs and organizations. If someone can't be the president of the club he's in, he forms another club. There's so much envy and jealousy among Hawaii's Filipinos, so much factionalism. It's the crabs in the bucket story: If one goes to the top, someone else tries to pull him down.”<sup>13</sup>

Abelina Madrid Shaw is one of the contemporary Filipino patronage politicians. Born on Kauai of plantation parents, she graduated from Kauai High School and the University of Hawaii. With Gov. John Waihee, she was in the first graduating class of the University of Hawaii Law School, the class of 1976. After clerking for a year with Supreme Court Justice Menor, Shaw accepted a job as a Deputy State Attorney General. Gov. George Ariyoshi made her a special assistant in human resources. Articulate and well spoken, Shaw campaigned long and hard for Ariyoshi in his 1978 and 1982 campaigns. Her last years in the Ariyoshi administration were as a Deputy Director of Health.

Shaw does not share Chun's view that Filipino voters can be promised out of their votes. “Filipinos want to know what a candidate can do for their children,” she says. “Most Filipino adults are resigned to the position they're in—working two jobs, barely making it or only an average life. But they want the promise of the good life for their kids.”

She also thinks that too much is made of the fragmentation in the Filipino community. “Sure we come from different provinces with different languages and different foods and different cultures, but we're all Filipinos and we all share the same goals,” she argues. “We want an education for our kids, a better future, equal access to jobs and housing. So what's the beef?”

Data from voter exit interviews conducted by Ward Research for KGMB and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* tend to confirm Shaw's argument. Forty-three

and one-half percent of the 570 Filipinos interviewed cited “cost of living and housing”—very much “better future” issues—as most important to them as voters. No wonder. According to the exit interview data, 46.9 percent of the Filipino voters in the 1990 election rent their living quarters, the highest of any ethnic group by far. And 12.6 percent of the Filipinos, second only to the Chinese, cited “jobs and the economy” as an important issue.<sup>14</sup> Again, their choice indicates their future orientation.

The numbers do not, however, negate some very real differences between local born and Philippines born Filipinos. Joshua Agsalud, an educator turned Director of the Department of Labor under Gov. Ariyoshi, came to know both parts of the Filipino community during Ariyoshi's gubernatorial campaigns. “Local born Filipinos are no different than any other local group,” says Agsalud.

Local is local, and you cater to that population in a particular way.

Immigrant Filipinos require a lot more flair in campaigning than is required for, say, the local Japanese community. That's why they preferred Mayor Fasi over Gov. Ariyoshi. Fasi had more flair—in dress, in his emotional speeches.<sup>15</sup>

Abelina Madrid Shaw offers another explanation for the creation of a local political bloc as opposed to simply a Filipino one—and of Frank Fasi's appeal to Filipinos. “Local born Filipinos, those whose parents came as immigrants to work on the plantation, know what our parents' life was like on the plantation,” she says.

We know that their struggle was shared by every other ethnic group that lived through the plantation experience. So we're better equipped to work beside other groups. Philippines born Filipinos have a lesser sense of the history of Hawaii than local born. It's easier for them to switch loyalty to a Republican Fasi than it is for Filipinos nurtured in a Democratic union like the ILWU.

On his return to Honolulu mayoralty in 1984, Mayor Fasi made a determined effort to bring his large personal popularity with Filipinos into the Republican Party, his new political domicile. Fasi appointed an unprecedented number of Filipinos to City jobs, and he looked forward to delivering the Filipino vote to his friend D.G. “Andy” Anderson in his bid for the governorship in 1986.

Fasi's strategy does not appear to have worked. In 1986 the presence of Ben Cayetano, a local born Filipino attorney of Ilocano-Visayan ancestry, on the Democratic ticket obliterated any hope Anderson might have had of garnering a majority of the Filipino vote. In 1990's major election races, Filipinos lent their support to Democrats. In the Second Congressional District election, for

example, Democrat Patsy Mink received 76.9 percent of the Filipino vote; her Republican opponent, Andrew Poepoe, got only 20.6 percent. In the most hotly contested race of Hawaii's 1990 election season, the face-off between Democrat Dan Akaka and Republican Pat Saiki for the U.S. Senate, Filipinos gave Akaka 61.6 percent of their vote; 37.5 percent went to Saiki. Only Hawaiians gave to their favorite son more heavily.

One statistic might offer Republicans some hope. Filipino voters remained uncertain about which way to vote in the year's key race, the Akaka-Saiki contest, until the very last moment. Twenty-five percent of the Filipinos admitted that they did not make their decision between Saiki and Akaka until the last day or two before the election. Another 17 percent said they had not decided until the last two weeks of the campaign. The implication may be that a strong Republican candidate might well carry the Filipino vote.<sup>16</sup>

But for the foreseeable future, it appears Fasi and the Republican Party have not seduced the mass of Filipinos into giving up their Democratic political affiliation. Says Abelina Madrid Shaw: "The Republicans are still too distant and unapproachable. Filipinos do not get the feeling that they'd be welcomed with open arms. If the Republicans get Filipino support, it will be for a specific candidate, not on the basis that the Republican Party is better for the future of their children." Connie Caspe Chun, who made a second run against Romy Cachola in 1990 as a Republican, agrees. She says simply, "The future of the Filipinos is not in the Republican Party."

But it is also not in the Filipino population pockets like Kalihi and Waipahu, like the 39th Representative District in which Chun faced off against Cachola. "Filipinos have to mainstream," says Joshua Aagsalud.

They have to get out of their enclaves. Ron Menor's candidacy for Congress in 1990 is a prime example. Ron was put up as a Filipino candidate. Or at least that was the scenario that was painted for him. The Filipino community grabbed him and made him their candidate. And you can't win in either congressional district without breaking out of the Filipino vote, without mainstreaming.

But then again perhaps Ron was just playing ball in a losing ballpark. The Second Congressional District was more suited to a liberal Patsy Mink than to a more conservative Ron Menor.

The congressional candidacy of Ron Menor (a State Senator and attorney son of Supreme Court Justice Ben Menor) did indeed turn out to be an ethnic candidacy. According to exit interviews, Menor received 61 percent of the Filipino vote cast in the Democratic primary election. Among the other major

ethnic groups, however, he ran no better than third, garnering 17 percent of the Haole vote, 13 percent of the Hawaiian vote, and 12 percent of the Japanese vote. Interestingly, no ethnic group voted for one of their own in the Second Congressional District as overwhelmingly as Filipinos supported Menor.

In all likelihood, Aagsalud is correct: Menor attempted to play in the wrong ballpark against too many other teams. The four person race—Menor, Patsy Mink, Mufi Hanneman and Mike Crozier—almost ensured an ethnic vote. An intelligent, issue oriented politician who has represented a decidedly non-Filipino suburban district, Menor would undoubtedly have done much better in a less crowded field—and he might well have won.

The most mainstream Filipino in Hawaii politics is, of course, Lt. Gov. Ben Cayetano. By now his Horatio Alger story is well known.<sup>17</sup> Brought up in Kalihi by a divorced father, Cayetano graduated from Farrington High School far down in his class. After passing through a succession of entry level jobs, he took his wife and two young children to the mainland where they worked his way through college and law school. Within a few years after his return to Hawaii, Cayetano won election to the State House of Representatives and, soon thereafter, to the State Senate. Neither district was predominantly Filipino.

In 1986 Cayetano won the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor, and as John Waihee's running mate became the highest ranking Filipino office holder in the United States. At this writing, he has to be considered the favorite for the Democratic nomination for governor to succeed Waihee in 1994. "I don't think people see me as a Filipino candidate," says Cayetano. "If they do, I won't make it to the governorship. Filipinos make up only 11 percent of the registered voters in the state. I'll only win if I'm acceptable to the population at large, cutting across all ethnic lines."<sup>18</sup>

"Ben Cayetano wins elections because of his positions on issues, not because he's a Filipino," says Joshua Aagsalud, "and he gets knocked down occasionally because of his positions on issues, not because he's a Filipino. I think a Filipino and, more specifically, a Filipino named Ben Cayetano can win the governorship in '94."

It will not be easy for Cayetano can be outspoken and controversial. "I've certainly destroyed the stereotype of the Filipino as a nice guy," he admits. Many Caucasians express an almost visceral reaction to Cayetano. "There's a perception that Ben is prejudiced against Haoles," says Abelina Madrid Shaw. "He's a scrapper for the underdog, and therefore Haoles think 'If he's for them, he's not for us.' I think it's a false impression, but there it is."



Shaw thinks Cayetano presents a problem for many establishment Democrats as well. "Democrats don't know what to do about Ben," she says. "Because of what he represents: the underdog, the fight against discrimination, coming up from the ranks. He's really one of them, and even though they don't always agree with him or like his manner, to reject him goes against their basic principles."

A Cayetano candidacy in 1994 will force both Haoles and establishment Democrats (which means primarily Japanese-Americans) to decide what they will do about the candidacy of a local Filipino-American for the highest office Hawaii's citizens have to offer. Their decisions, in the main, will determine Cayetano's fate. But his candidacy will also bring into sharp relief the crosscurrents that agitate the Filipino community, politically and culturally. A Cayetano victory would mark the culmination of a half-century of struggle for acceptance by Hawaii's Filipinos; his defeat, in Cayetano's words, yet another expression of everyman's "equal opportunity to fall right on his face."

#### Notes

1. The story of the slow development of Hawaii's Filipino community has been told, in whole or in part, in Laurence Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961) and Luis V. Teodoro, Jr., ed., *Out of This Struggle: The Filipinos in Hawaii (1906-1981)* (Honolulu: Filipino 75th Anniversary Commission, 1981). For my knowledge of the subject, I am also indebted to a former colleague in the American Studies Department at the University of Hawaii, Ruben Alcantara.
2. My thanks to Lloyd Nekoba of the Lt. Governor's office for the percentage of Filipino registered voters. The figure is not very solid. It is based on last names which sound Filipino compiled by Voter Contact Services, a local consulting firm which sells lists to politicians. Unfortunately, it's the best information available.
3. For the "tiger," see Jerry Burris's "'86 Could Be the Year of the 'Filipino Vote,'" *Honolulu Advertiser*, A-1, 4, June 13, 1986.
4. My biographical information on Aduja comes from Benjamin B. Domingo's *Hawaii's Eminent Filipinos* (Los Angeles and Honolulu: L. L. dela Cruz Publishing House, 1981), pp. 32-33, and from an author's interview on March 26, 1991 in his law office. Remarks attributed to him come from the interview.
5. Menor's biographical data and quotations come from *Hawaii's Eminent Filipinos*, pp. 187-188, and from an interview by the author December 8, 1981 in Menor's Supreme Court office.
6. Quotations from and biographical data on Laureta are found in a University of Hawaii senior honors thesis by Gilbert C. Doles entitled "An Oral History Biography and Analysis of a Contemporary Political Leader: Judge Alfred Laureta," submitted October 29, 1979. It is, incidentally, an excellent oral history.
7. My knowledge of Elias "Epie" Yadao's career is based on a telephone interview with his widow, Josephine Yadao DeLuz, June 21, 1991. Following Yadao's death, Josephine Yadao was appointed to the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors to fill the vacancy caused by his death. She served 11 years, losing to Republican Joseph Garcia in 1976.
8. Telephone interview with Hideo "Lefty" Kuniyoshi, June 19, 1991.
9. Author's interview with Abelina Madrid Shaw, June 13, 1991.
10. *The State of Hawaii Data Book 1990* (Honolulu: State Department of Business and Economic Development, 1991), pp. 44, 53.
11. *Out of This Struggle*, p. 30.
12. This and the following comments by Chun are from an author's interview with her June 5, 1991.
13. The "crabs in the bucket" analogy was made to me by both Peter Aduja and Ben Menor as well.
14. My thanks to Becky Ward of Ward Research for making this data available to me.
15. Author's interview with Agsalud, March 27, 1991.
16. KGMB and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* voter exit interviews, courtesy of Ward Research.
17. I, for one, have told it in "The Odds Against Ben Cayetano," *Honolulu*, April, 1979, pp. 44-49, 112-117.
18. Author's interview with Cayetano, March 28, 1991.