

Human Trafficking: Are Nurses Immune?



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Speech delivered for the

Philippine Nurses Association

19 Oct. 2023



Balayan, Batangas (Luzon), Pentax SF1N, Sensia 100

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Filipino American History Month

* 18 October 1578 *

Filipino American History Month is celebrated in October to bring awareness to the role Filipinos have played in American history. The month was chosen as it was in **October 1587** when “**Luzones Indios**” landed at **Morro Bay, California..**

These “Indios” from Luzon were the first **DOCUMENTED** Filipinos (and Asians) to arrive in America.

In 2009, U.S. Congress recognized October as Filipino/a American History Month in the United States.

A Resolution

**OCTOBER IS
FILIPINO AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH**

WHEREAS, the Filipino American National Historical Society had declared the Year 1988 to be the 225th Anniversary of the Permanent Settlement of Filipinos in the Continental United States and had set into motion its year-long, national observance in order to focus on the story of our nation's past from a new perspective by concentrating on the critically economic, cultural, social and other notable contributions Filipino Americans had made in countless ways toward the development of United States History; and

WHEREAS, efforts must continue to promote the study of Filipino American history and culture, so mandated in the mission statement of the Filipino American National Historical Society, because the role of Filipino Americans and those of other People of Color have been overlooked in the writings, teachings and learnings of United States History; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative for Filipino American youths to have positive role models and to instill in them the importance of education, complemented with the richness of their ethnicity and the values of their legacy; and

WHEREAS, the earliest documented proof of Filipino presence in the Continental United States falls on October 1587, more recently published by Lorraine Jacobs Crouchett in her book, *Filipinos in California* (1982), annotating John Walton Caughey in his book, *California* (1953), and that definitive dates of written landings on the shores of California have been recorded with the earliest on October 18, 1587, according to Crouchett, annotating H.R. Wagner's *Unamuno's Voyage to California in 1587* in the Quarterly of the California Historical Society (July 1923), among others;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Trustees of the Filipino American National Historical Society establish **Filipino American History Month** and that it be observed annually and nationally throughout the United States and its Territories during the Month of **October**, commencing in the Year 1992 to mark the 405th Anniversary of the Presence of Filipinos in the Continental United States as a significant time to study the advancement of Filipino Americans in the history of the United States, as a favorable time of celebration, remembrance, reflection and motivation, and as a relevant time to renew more efforts towards research, examination and promulgation of Filipino American history and culture in order to provide an opportunity for all Americans to learn and appreciate more about Filipino Americans and their historic contributions to our nation, these United States of America.###

**Authorized and introduced by Trustee FRED CORDOVA, Founding President.*

**Moved for its adoption by Trustee LOREA ACUSZAAR; and seconded by Trustee STEVE K. OH.*

**Unanimously adopted also by Trustees PETER M. JAMERO, KAREN N. JOHNSTONE, treasurer, Dr. TETSUDEN KASHIMA, NANCY ORDONA KOSLOSKY, and LOURDES CERENO MARKLEY, secretary, in a special meeting of Trustees, presided by President TERESA ROMERO JAMERO and arranged by Executive Director DOROTHY LAIGO CORDOVA, on February 15, 1991, in Seattle.*

**Submitted to the remaining Trustees for ratification on March 16, 1991.*

Celebration

Started in 1992

**Filipino American
National Historical
Society (FANHS)**

**James Sobredo is co-
founder of FANHS,
East Bay Chapter &
former President &
national Trustee**

History & Contributions of Filipino Americans

I. Early History

A. Manila Galleons: 16th-19th Century

B. American Colonialism: 1898 to 1945 (cf. 1991-1992)

II. Labor Migration

A. Hawaii & CA: 1920s-1930s

B. Labor union organizing & activism

III. Post-1965 Immigration & Global Migration

A. Post-World War II: major changes → RNs/MDs

B. Supply & Demand: Labor & economics

C. Changes in immigration & patient care laws

D. US population grows older → healthcare needs

Early Asian American History 16th - early 19th Century

MANILA GALLEON TRADE

“unfree labor”

“Involuntary labor”

Luzones Indios in the Americas



Filipinos in the Americas

“ocho Indios Luzones”

Morro Bay, California

October 1587

San Augustin, December 1595

Point Reyes, Marin County



Bear Valley Visitor's Center
Point Reyes National Seashore



Photo: Leon Wolff, *Little
Brown Brothers*



1898 Spanish-American War

Battle of Manila Bay: 1 May 1898

- *USS Olympia*: modern naval warship (SF Bay/Vallejo)
- Commodore Dewey becomes a national hero
- Start of American colonialism & *benevolent assimilation*

Large Scale Asian Migration: The Traditional Narrative

19th-20th Century

Chinese, Japanese/Koreans & Filipinos

Contract labor & agricultural work

* America & racism *

HAWAII PLANTATIONS

Filipinos in Pineapple Field



Immigration to California

2 Routes:

Manila to Seattle

Manila to Hawaii and then to SF/LA



**Bacon Island:
Zuckerman Farm
STOCKTON Area**



Photo: ©James Sobredo



Filipinos formed United Farm Workers Union with Mexicans

1965 Delano Grape Strike



Photos:
<https://www.reuther.wayne.edu/>
Wayne State University

(7448) Pete Velasco, Larry Itliong, and Cesar Chavez, 1968

Posted August 8th, 2008 by eciemens

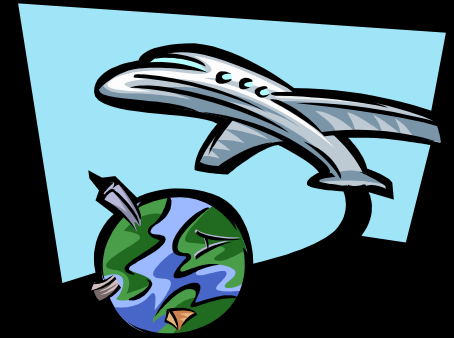
in *UFW, United Farm Workers*

Pete Velasco, Larry Itliong, and Cesar Chavez meet at the Filipino Hall, Delano, California, Christmas, circa 1968.



Date: circa 1968
Physdesc: Photograph
Photographer: Mike Calamar

Post-1965 Immigration



1965 Immigration Reform Act

Main Goals

Recruit Professionals

Technicians
Scientists
Health Professionals

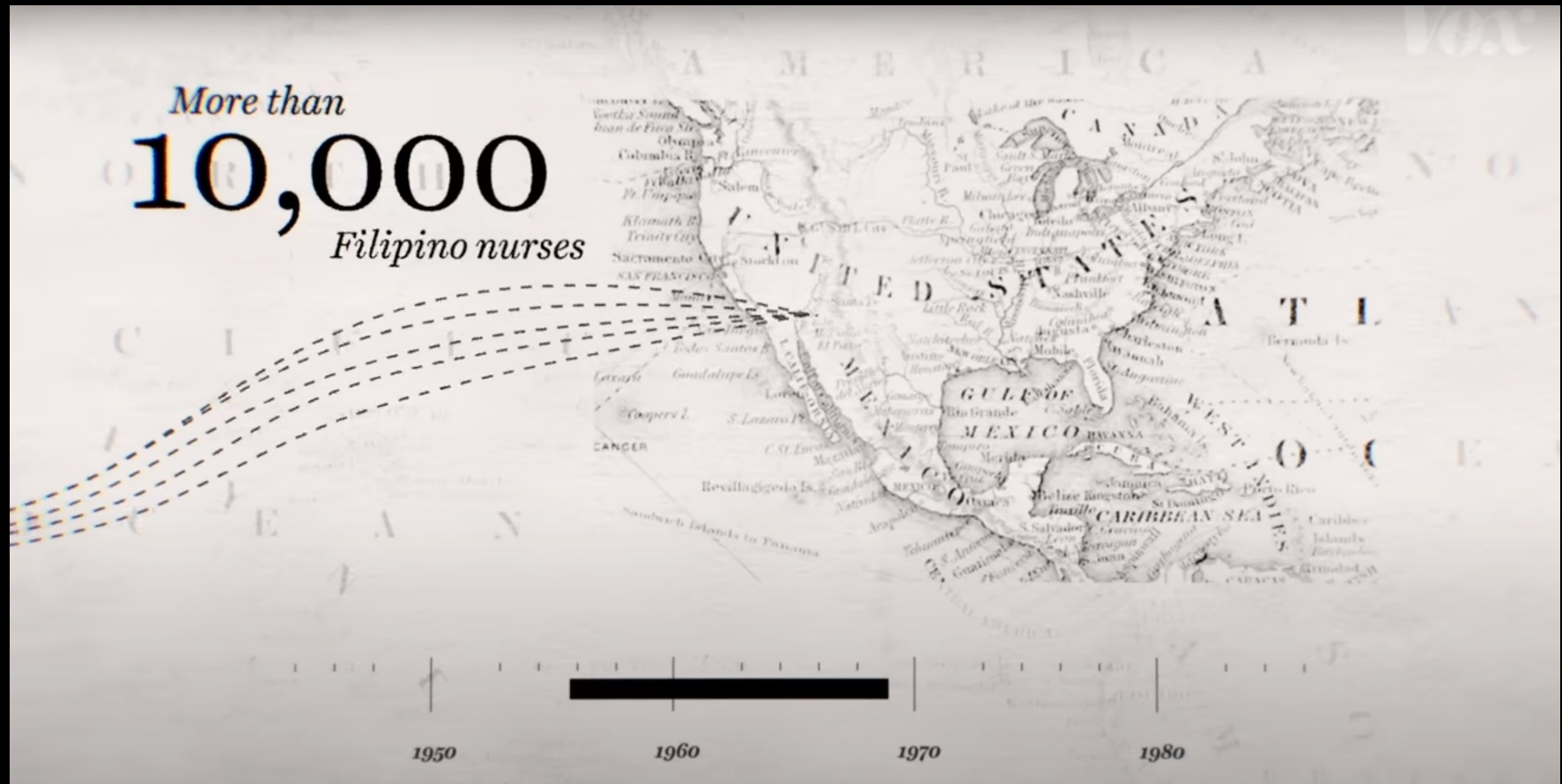
Family Reunification

European Families
Asian Families
Chicanos/Latinos

Refugees

From "Communist" Countries
Vietnam/SE Asia, Cuba
USSR/Russia

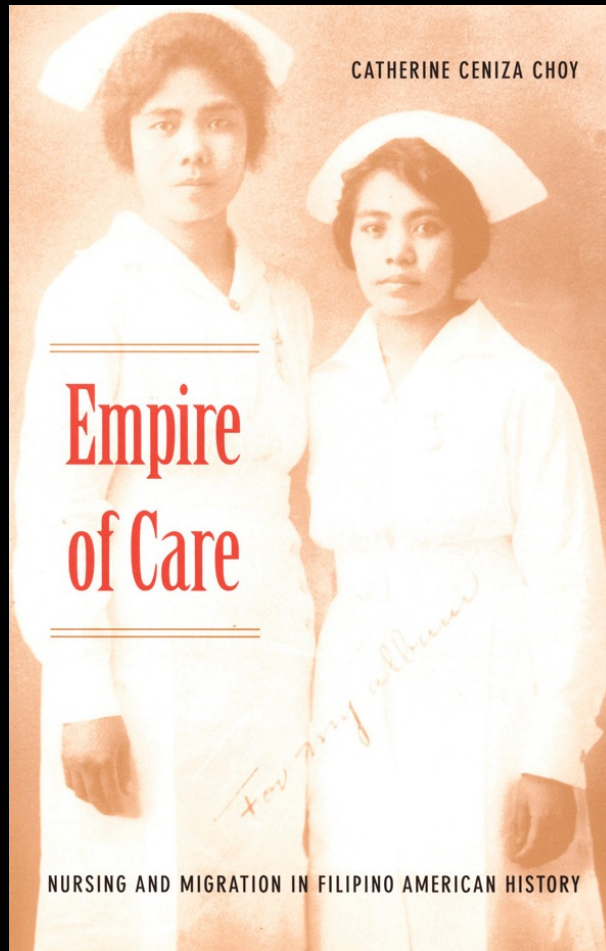
10,000 Filipino Nurses migrated (1960s)



Source: “Why the US has so many Filipino Nurses,” VOX:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yw8a8n7ZAZg>

Empire of Care:

Nursing & Migration in Filipino American History



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The New York Times Magazine

4.22.2007

The New York Times Magazine



Sending It All Back Home

Stephanie Sinclair for The New York Times

Rosalie Comodas Villanueva, a native of Manila, is a nurse at Al Rahba Hospital in Abu Dhabi. She makes \$24,000 a year — compared to the \$1,200 she made while working in her homeland — \$4,800 of which she sends home. Two of her children have lived with her parents in the Philippines for years.

A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves

By JASON DePARLE

Migrant workers from the Philippines send billions back to their country. But the Comodas family's multigenerational experience with working abroad shows that the human cost is harder to calculate.



The Way We Live Now

You Are What You Grow

By MICHAEL POLLAN

Will this year's farm bill make us fatter and sicker?

QUESTIONS FOR TERRY EAGLETON

The Believer

Interview By DEBORAH SOLOMON



The Dublin-based Marxist literary critic talks about why the word "happiness" doesn't mean much, what makes love possible and what Catholicism taught him about thinking.

ON LANGUAGE

Varmints!

By WILLIAM SAFIRE

How to win the West.

CONSUMED

Ink Inc.

By ROB WALKER

Why, despite years of trendiness, the old-school tattoo tradition hasn't faded.



DIAGNOSIS

Missed Signals

By LISA SANDERS, M.D.

A doctor skips a simple test — and learns a lesson.



THE ETHICIST

Work Search

By RANDY COHEN

Dilemmas involving examined bags and passengers sought.

Jason DeParle,
NY Times

&

Rosalie Comodas
Villanueva, nurse
from Manila:
Middle East to
USA

“A Good Provider is One Who Leaves,”
Jason DeParle, *NYTimes*, 22 April 2007

Filipino Transnational Families



Stephanie Sinclair for The New York Times

Red-Carpet Treatment O.F.W.'s, or Overseas Filipino Workers, are often treated like heroes upon their return to Manila because of all the money they send home.;

MAGAZINE »



The Human Cost of Migrant Work

Employment Crisis in Philippines (2013)


- **Prevailing economic stagnation & stratification**
 - National: 34.2% live below poverty line
 - RURAL: 47.4% live below poverty line
- **Large supply of RNs**
 - **100,000 under-employed RNS** (cf. Rhacel Parrenas)
- **Large number of unemployed RNs**
 - 10,000 graduates each year (2003) (**35,000 in 2010**)
 - **Only 1,000 nursing jobs available** (2003, Philippines)
- **HK = low UNEMPLOY & low UNDER-employment: 3.3% & 1.5% (2013)** (HK Census)



“100 percent of my students will apply to go abroad,
especially to the United States”

-Dr. Betty Pulido

*Professor of Nursing, Central Philippine University
& Former Dean of Nursing College, 2005



**FILIPINO TRANSNATIONAL
MIGRATION:**
Images and Stories from
the Philippines, Hong Kong and
Barcelona

Dr. James Sobredo, Professor Emeritus
Department of Ethnic Studies



Photography Exhibits in 2019 (Sacramento) & 2020 (Aklan)

Hong Kong: World Class Capitalist City

The “Wall Street” of Asia



Economic Factors & Context

- **HK: higher incomes** (GDP per capita) compared to the Philippines (World Bank 2013 data) (**\$250/\$500 US**)
- **Hiring of Filipino OFWs** began in late-1970s (cf. 1997): shift from manufacturing to service economy
- **Hong Kong & maids** (Filipino/Indonesians)
 - “highest number of maids per capita in Asia” (*South China Morning Post*, 2012)
- **Globalization of economy & labor migration**
 - 1974 Marcos “Manpower” program to now 10% of total Philippine population are OFWs (IMF/2013)





Photo: ©James Sobredo



Photo: ©James Sobredo



Photo: ©James Sobredo



Filipino Transnational Migration:
Images & Stories from Aklan, Manila & Hong Kong
Photography Exhibit by James Sobredo

Human Trafficking: Are Nurses Immune?

“Illegal immigration”

“unauthorized entry”

“undocumented immigrants”

Illegal recruitment practices (cf. POEA)

unfair employment practices

65% of “illegal” immigrants
enter the country “legally” (via airports & proper documents) & only
become “undocumented” (47%) afterwards

Data gathering
is difficult

***The Overlooked Undocumented
Immigrants: From India, China,
Brazil***

President Trump has focused on blocking unauthorized crossings on the Southern border. But nearly half of those who are in the country unlawfully actually entered with permission.



Marilyn Omatang (Silicon Valley) came to “visit” Disneyland, arrived legally as a tourist & became undocumented

U.S. | The Overlooked Undocumented Immigrants: From India, China, Brazil



Marilyn Omatang left Manila in 2004 with her eldest child, Dean, then 12, to join her husband, who had arrived in California two years earlier. Talia Herman for The New York Times

Filipina Narciso & Leonora Perez

1975 Ann Arbor, Michigan
VA Hospital: 35 patients

*Racially charged

*Acquitted of murder

The high point of the KDP's civil rights work in the nursing community came in 1977, when it successfully defended two Filipina nurses, Filipina Narciso and Leonora Perez. These Filipino nurses were "accused of murdering thirty-five patients at a Veterans Affairs hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan." A broad-based national campaign led by the KDP widely amplified the nurses' proofs of innocence and helped lead to their acquittal. It also exposed the VA hospital's attempt at blaming scapegoats for its incompetent management. Simpson writes, "This is the first time in Filipino American history that the community held an orchestrated nationwide protest against a domestic injustice."

Ester Hipol Simpson

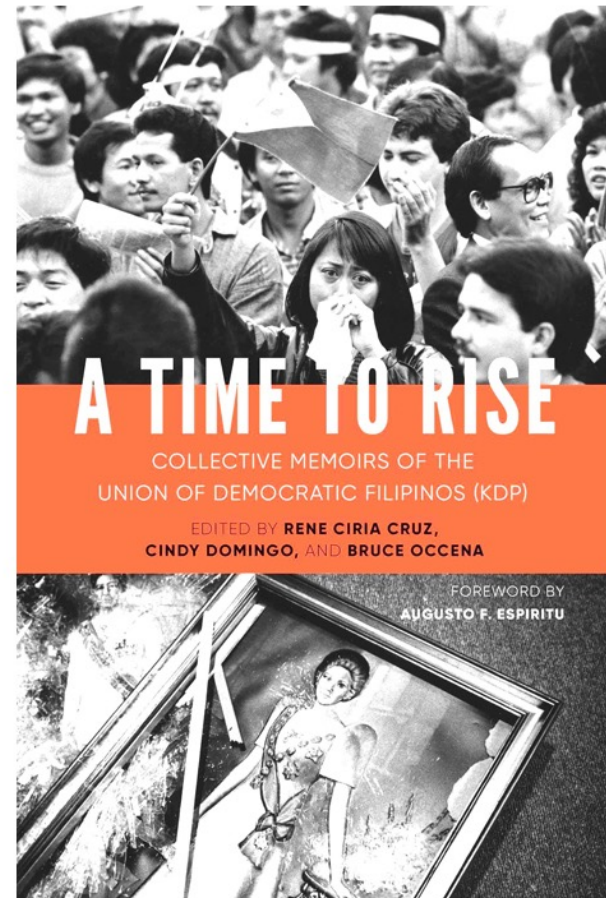
Chicago nurse

RN, St. Paul

MS, UP-Diliman

'A Time To Rise': Filipino American Memoirs Of Revolution

James Sobredo



"A Time to Rise"

570 Nurses Smuggled into US (Texas, 1998)

The New York Times

U.S. Strikes at Smuggling Ring That Exploited Foreign Nurses

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By Katharine Q. Seelye

Jan. 15, 1998

See the article in its original context from January 15, 1998, Section A, Page 14 | Buy Reprints

VIEW ON TIMSMACHINE

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More than 500 nurses were smuggled into the United States from the Philippines and South Korea over the last several years by an illegal ring that capitalized on the nationwide nursing shortage plaguing hospitals and nursing homes earlier in the decade, Federal prosecutors said today.

Federal officials said this was the first time that the law-enforcement authorities had uncovered a smuggling network involving so many people with such high professional skills.

"We've never found a case of this magnitude," said Paul E. Coggins of Dallas, the United States Attorney for the northern district of Texas, where many of the nurses worked.

A14

THE NEW YORK TIMES NATI

U.S. Strikes at Smuggling Ring That Exploited Foreign Nurses

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14 — More than 500 nurses were smuggled into the United States from the Philippines and South Korea over the last several years by an illegal ring that capitalized on the nationwide nursing shortage plaguing hospitals and nursing homes earlier in the decade, Federal prosecutors said today.

Federal officials said this was the first time that the law-enforcement authorities had uncovered a smuggling network involving so many people with such high professional skills.

"We've never found a case of this magnitude," said Paul E. Coggins of Dallas, the United States Attorney for the northern district of Texas, where many of the nurses worked.

Apart from the numbers involved, the case is extraordinary because

on their own, paid the American operatives \$1,500 to \$7,500 to obtain the special visas fraudulently and to bring them to the United States, where they were often sent to jobs different from those they had been promised, Federal prosecutors said.

Although nursing homes and hospitals were charged \$1,000 for each foreign nurse, Mr. Coggins said they were probably not aware of the scheme. Prosecutors said 570 nurses had been illegally placed in positions, paid substandard wages and lived in crowded, unsanitary conditions. They said they were not aware that any of the nurses had delivered substandard care to patients.

The nurses could be charged with fraud and deported, said Lynn Ligon, a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Dallas.

Officials said sophisticated smuggling rings were becoming increasingly prevalent as more people around the world sought to enter the United States, particularly when the economy is so strong and companies seek cheaper labor.

Such operations are also increasingly complex, officials said. It took officials from several Federal agencies more than 33 months to uncover the nursing ring, and the investigation is still going on.

The first clue was picked up by a consular officer at the United States Embassy in Manila, who detected an unusually high number of petitions for special visas filed by nursing homes in Texas and Oklahoma. They were all signed by the same person, Billy Denver Jewell of Lubbock, Tex., whom officials identified today as the ring leader.

In a two-year period, Mr. Jewell submitted more than 1,100 fraudulent petitions to bring in registered nurses, said Mr. Coggins, the United States Attorney. More than 20,000 visas were issued to foreign nurses from 1993 to 1996.

Complicating Mr. Jewell's operation was the fact that the nursing shortage turned to a glut. This was largely because of shifts in the health care system but also partly because of the influx of foreign nurses, at least in Texas.

Many of the foreign nurses were registered nurses, who in Texas make up to \$14 an hour. But the foreign nurses were employed as nurse's aides and paid as little as \$5 an hour.

The authorities said that in August 1993, Mr. Jewell made an agreement with Jaesook Kim, also known as Clara Kim, owner of International



Billy Denver Jewell, top, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, and Nelsen Alomajin Sin is believed to have fled to the Philippines.

Nurses Exchange of Wayne, N.J., in which Ms. Kim would furnish 10 South Korean nurses to be employed at the Southern Manor Nursing Home in Lubbock. Ms. Kim, who also pleaded guilty today, paid Mr. Jewell \$1,000, for a total of \$19,000, for each nurse who obtained a visa through a petition filed by the nursing home.

The others who pleaded guilty were Holly Arthur Estreler of Los Angeles and Sidney and Veronica Hewitt of San Diego. Officials are still seeking Nelson Alomajin Sin of Sugar Land, Tex., who is believed to have fled to the Philippines.

Each count of visa fraud carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and fines of \$250,000. Sentencing by Judge Sam R. Cummings of Federal District Court in Lubbock is expected in two months.

“Caregivers” (*Filipinas*) in the Middle East (elderly population)



“on call” 24 hours, little employment protection or rights,
unscrupulous “recruitment agencies,” expensive fees/loans

Filipino OFWs on Sunday (no work day) in Hong Kong



Filipinos in Barcelona, Spain



Filipinos in Barcelona, Spain

St. Augustine Church

Filipino Mass





Photo: ©James Sobredo

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B. Supply & Demand: Labor & economics

C. Changes in immigration & patient care laws

D. US population grows older → healthcare needs

Maraming Salamat



“Salinas Lettuce Field, Highway 101”

James Sobredo, Ph.D.

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