Asian Americans in World War II: From Racism to Valor & Honor

Presented at
APISA, UC Office of the President
17 November 2014

James Sobredo, Ph.D.
Associate Professor,
Asian American Studies
Ethnic Studies Department
www.csus.edu/aas/colombia/

Asian American History: Migration, Race, & Exclusion

- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act
  - Labor option = Japanese/Indian immigration
- 1907-1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement
  - Labor option = Filipino immigration
- 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act
  - Labor option = Whites & Mexicans

TOTAL EXCLUSION OF ASIANS

Source: http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/pm/11212cs.jpg

Dorothea Lange, SF

Source: http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/pm/11212cs.jpg

Don’t Let Them Carve THOSE Faces on Our Monuments!

By United States Savings Bonds and Stamps!

Source: http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/pm/11212cs.jpg

1
Japanese Americans returning from an internment center in 2,000 miles away in Rohwer Center, Arkansas to their homes in Sacramento. Source: The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Florin, California

4th Street & Capital Mall

Sacramento, CA. Two days before relocation. Dorothea Lange. Source: UCB, Bancroft.
Japanese Americans

- Hawaii National Guard: 1,432 JAs
- Shipped to Oakland on SS Maui (Matson line)
- 100th Infantry Battalion (12 June '42)
- Training: Camp McCoy (WI) & Camp Shelby (MI)
- Combat in Italy
- 21 received Medals Honor
- Mainland JAs: 3,800
- 442nd Regimental Combat Team
  - Hawaii: 3,000
  - Mainland: 800
- Joined 100th in Italy
- 100/442 RCT
- “Purple Heart Battalion”
- Presidential Unit Citation

1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments

- Dr. Alex Fabros
- Activated in Salinas
- Activated in Ft. Ord
- Camp Roberts
  - Mission San Miguel
  - I-5 & Hwy 101
- Camp Beale
  - 40 miles north of Sacramento,
  - 10 miles near Yuba City/ Marysville
- Photo: Dr. Alex Fabros

Camp Beale

- History California Post
- Beale Air Force Base
- Camp Beale

Photo: Dr. Alex Fabros

442nd Combat Team, Camp Shelby, Mississippi

Dr. Sobredo
Pacita Todtod

- Organized effort to allow FAs to join US Army
- Organized Filipinos & a letter campaign to Secretary of War Henry Stinson
- Revised 1942 Selective Service Act (Signed by FDR)
- FAs can now serve in US Army
- Became FA community leader
- USO singer & film actor: ”They were Expendable” (John Wayne)

1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments

- Unit Battalion formed 1942: Camp San Luis Obispo
- Commander: Lt. Col. Robert H. Offley
  - Served in Philippines, spoke passable Tagalog
- Reached Regimental strength (2,000)
  - Transferred to Salinas & more FAs joined unit
- 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment (Camp Beale)
- 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiment (Camp Cooke)
- Filipino Naturalization rights granted

Demographics & Duties

- Demographics
  - "manongs" from Mainland California
  - Young men from Hawaii
- Reconnaissance (commandos)
  - Dropped behind enemy lines via submarine
  - Monitor and track enemy movement
  - Signal observations back to headquarters
  - Major goal: avoid detection
- Mop up operations
  - Clear areas of enemy combatants

Camp Beale: 1943 Mass Swearing
1,000 Filipinos become US Citizens

Sgt. Leon Giron
PBS "Untold Triumph"
National Broadcast, May 2005
Sgt. Leo Giron, US Army

- Bayambang, Pangasinan
- Arrived in US 1926
- 15-yr old farm worker
- Legionario del Trabajos
- Continued training BNMA in farmlands
- WW2 = 1942 US Army

PBS Film: "Untold Triumph"

- Sgt. Domingo Los Banos (Hawaii)
- National Broadcast: May 2005
- Filmed in Hawaii and California (Stockton, SF, Elk Grove)

Untold Triumph (PBS)
Sac State premier (Nov. 2004)

Salamat Gid
Maraming Salamat
Muchas gracias
Si Yu’us ma’äse
Thank you

csus.edu/aas/sobredo

Dr. Sobredo