

## A Historic Change

For more than 50 years, Japanese have been the largest Asian group in the state of Hawaii. To their credit, they were able to influence politics, education, and other aspects of our island lifestyle. Governor Burns' organizing of Japanese plantation laborers and including Japanese American veterans who fought in World War II led to a 40 year era of Democratic predominance in Hawaii politics which remains today.

Over the decades, more immigrants from throughout Asia/Pacific region have come to Hawaii to settle down. Koreans, Samoans, Vietnamese, and Filipinos made up a large segment of the Asian/Pacific Islanders whose numbers are steadily increasing. Filipinos in particular saw huge increases, and it was predicted that the Filipino population would one day surpass the Japanese population as the largest ethnic group from the Asia/Pacific region. In the latest 2010 census count, this prediction has become a reality. Based on the federal statewide census figures, Filipinos are 14.5% of Hawaii's population compared to Japanese who comprise 13.6%.

On the neighbor islands, Kauai's Filipino population is 18%; Maui is 17.6%; the Big Island 9.8%. On Oahu, Filipinos make up 14.9%.

In 2000, the last time the federal census was taken, there were 170,635 Filipinos in Hawaii. By 2010, this figure increased to 197,497 Filipinos. The Japanese population showed a decrease, from 201,764 down to 185,502.

The largest racial group and largest increase remains Caucasian (42,497 additional persons for a total count of 336,599) who make up 24.7% of the population. The second largest increase was in individuals of Hispanic/Latino heritage, adding 33,143 (from 87,699 in 2000 to 120,842 in 2010). Filipinos showed the third largest increase at 26,862 more persons. Pacific Islanders (other than Native Hawaiian or Samoan) also showed a large increase, up 19,562 (from 17,236 in 2000 to 36,798 in 2011). Other Asians (other than Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese) were up by 9,677 (43,465 in 2000 to 53,142 in 2010). Asians as a group are 42.5% of the population. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are 20% and Hispanics are 9%.

On the other hand, Native Hawaiians held steady, increasing a mere 200 persons – from 80,137 in 2000 to 80,337 in 2010. There were decreases in the Japanese, Chinese (56,600 in 2000 to 54,955 in 2010), and African American (22,003 in 2000 to 21,424 in 2010) populations.

Koreans (23,537 in 2000 to 24,203 in 2010), Vietnamese (7,867 in 2000 to 9,779 in 2010), Samoans (16,166 in 2000 to 18,287 in 2010), and American Indian/Alaska Natives (3,535 in 2000 to 4,164 in 2011) showed modest increases in the size of their ethnic groups.

What these shifts mean remains to be seen as each ethnic group's values and cultural outlook and ways of interacting unfolds in daily life here in Hawaii.

John Burns befriended both the Filipino and Japanese plantation workers who were on his beat as a police officer. The active involvement in politics of Japanese WWII military heroes put this ethnic group in a position of social dominance. If Filipinos can likewise come together as a group, this majority position – however slight – can be a golden opportunity for advancement as well. Change will not come overnight, and the transition to influence will take time. However, it appears Filipinos are positioned to become a significant force in the future and will help shape the political and social landscape of Hawaii. Today we are an important swing vote in local elections. Tomorrow that influence shall grow not only in politics but in the workforce, education, and the business community.

Filipinos are long known for their sacrifice and savings and strong sense of compassion for others. Surely these traits portend well for Hawaii as a whole. Political and social leaders should take this high presence of Filipinos to fine tune and direct these very positive characteristics for the betterment of our state. With Filipinos' strong values of family, education and the professions, and a strong work ethic, there is a vast pool of talent that can be channeled in this 21<sup>st</sup> century to forge a new identity for Hawaii