

Through the AAHN H-31 Pre-doctoral Research Grant, I have been able to continue exploring the history of Filipino nurses in the U.S. prior to 1946 and tracing the historical development of the racialized identity of this group. I revisited primary sources at the National Pinoy Archives (NPA) of the Filipino American History National Society to address the lack of historical scholarship on Filipino nurses during the early twentieth century. More specifically, I wanted to better understand the unlikelihood of Filipino men nurses in the U.S. during this period.

I managed to collect additional biographical information on Filipino women nurses whom I learned about during my last visit. This time, I recovered the oral history of Paula Nonacido, a nurse who first arrived in 1926 and worked at Cleveland City Hospital. Feelings of estrangement led her to move to New York City the following year, as there were job opportunities for nurses and a budding Filipino community. My archival work in the Philippines serendipitously added to my work at the NPA, as I located her among the Filipino Nurses Association of New York and Lillian Hudson and Isabel Stewart (see Image A). She later moved in the 1930s to Seattle and worked as a private duty nurse. According to Paula and other women, the employment of Filipino nurses was limited to private duty or public health nursing sectors. They reasoned that their exclusion from hospital nursing resulted from stronger anti-Asian sentiment out West. These sentiments aligned with fewer hospitals and more strained employment opportunities during the Great Depression. I found other source material on the early Filipino nurse community in Seattle, but the archived oral histories remain quintessential to unveiling the subjective experiences of these nurses.

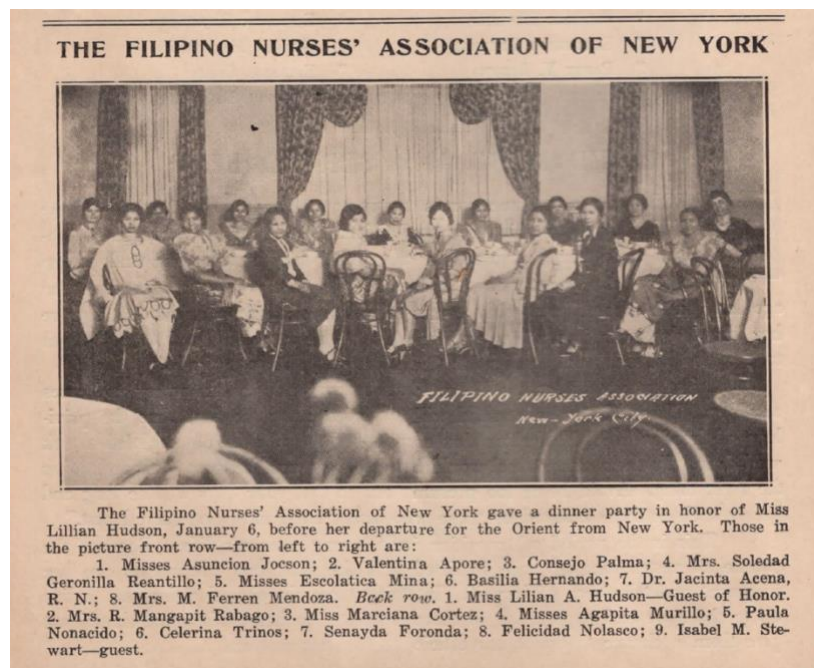


Image A: “The Filipino Nurses’ Association of New York,” *The Filipino Nurse* 5, no. 3 (April 1931), 4.

Through my prior identification of a Filipino male nurse (Eladio ‘Laddy’ Acena, Philippine General Hospital School of Nursing, Class of 1919) in Seattle, I managed to identify several Filipino orderlies in relation to him by scouring 1920, 1930, and 1940 US Censuses. I searched for the names of these orderlies at the NPA, wondering whether they too were graduates from a

hospital training school or unskilled attendants. I found an oral history of Joe Acena, Laddy's cousin, who worked as an orderly, but it merely glanced over his time at Seattle General Hospital. However, I speculate from the material recovered that Laddy's professional standing not only helped him gain employment as an orderly but helped him secure jobs for relatives and friends. Laddy was the first to arrive in Seattle in 1919, with his siblings, Jacinta and Monico, and cousin, Bernardo, following in 1921. All of them at some point worked at Seattle General Hospital. Bernardo worked as an orderly and is the one who referred Joe, his brother, for a position at the hospital when he arrived several years later. Other orderlies identified may or may not have been related to the Acena family, but they shared similar geographic origins as previous inhabitants of Vigan, Philippines. However, I have been unable to determine the education of these men prior to arriving in the U.S., but it seems unlikely they underwent professional training as nurses. The employment of Filipino men—whether professional nurses or unskilled laborers—as orderlies reveal the gendered dynamics of nursing and its intersections with race and dis/ability. The employment of Filipino men as orderlies also raises questions as to their ease of finding positions in the hospital in comparison to their female counterparts during the early 1930 and their experiences in the hospital.