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“WITH THE BUTTERFLY SLEEVES NAKA FILIPINIANA”:
CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF FILIPINX AMERICAN WOMEN IN POPULAR MUSIC

by

Georgette Luluquisin Patricio

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Music

at

The University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee

May 2023

ABSTRACT

"WITH THE BUTTERFLY SLEEVES NAKA FILIPINIANA":
CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF FILIPINX AMERICAN WOMEN IN POPULAR MUSIC

by

Georgette Luluquisin Patricio

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 2023
Under the Supervision of Professor Gillian Rodger

This thesis examines contemporary Filipinx-American women artists and the ways in which they use their music to construct their identity against Western portrayals of the Filipinx/a woman. Unlike other Asian Americans, Filipinx Americans try to attain the status of the "model minority" because they were at one point in history considered US nationals with American training, but they also do not adhere to it in the same way that Japanese and Indian Americans do. The model minority myth is the notion that Asian Americans have to overcome a certain struggle or challenge in order to achieve the American Dream. Of all the Asian American ethnic groups, Filipinxs have historically had an easier time assimilating to American culture, but because of colorism, sexism, multi-colonial histories, intergenerational trauma, and classism, Filipinxs are not held to the same levels of "expectations" as East and South Asian Americans. These experiences and struggles are examined through three case studies: Lea Salonga within musical theater, Charmaine Clamor within jazz, and Rocky Rivera within hip-hop. By considering all of these Filipinx/a American women and efforts to represent themselves through their artistry and performance, I will seek to identify how these women's self construction is at odds with the objectifying stereotypes associated with their racialized identities.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABC - American Broadcasting Channel
- B-Boys/Girls - Break (Dancing)-Boys/Girls
- CGI - Computer Generated Imagery
- DJs - Disc Jockeys
- FilAms - Filipino/a/x Americans
- H.E.R. - Having Everything Revealed (the stage name for Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson)
- HHNL - Hip Hop Nation Language
- ICE - US Immigration & Customs Enforcement
- KDP - Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino
- LA - Los Angeles
- R&B - Rhythm & Blues (genre)
- MC (“emcee”) - Master of Ceremonies
- NPR - National Public Radio
- OFW - Overseas Filipino/a/x Worker
- POC - People of Color

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On December 22, 2022, the American Broadcasting Channel (ABC) aired Beauty *and the Beast: A 30th Celebration*, which starred not a French, white woman, but a Black, Filipina woman. Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson, also known famously as H.E.R., a notable R&B singer, starred as Belle, the leading female character of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). The one-hour-and-a-half television special shared notable scenes and musical numbers that came from both the original animated movie and the 2017 live-action movie, as well as behind-the-scenes clips of the animators utilizing both hand-drawn and CGI animation for certain scenes, as well as Alan Menken and Howard Ashman working on the musical score. However, the most notable scene in this special, in this author's opinion, was when H.E.R. comes out playing on her glass-stained rose electric guitar and the iconic yellow ball gown during the titular song, "Beauty and the Beast." Coming out with an electric guitar solo in the middle of this song did not happen in the original animation (perhaps it was a deleted scene), but the significance of this scene provides a modern spin to this classic tale as old as time.

Casting H.E.R. as Belle in this special was not intentional on Jon M. Chu's part. The executive producer states his decision, "It didn't hit me until we announced it really. And then everybody (said) how much they were appreciative of that or brought that to light and I was like 'Oh yeah, that is really cool.' But honestly that wasn't what led it,"[1] What led Chu to cast H.E.R. as Belle is his admiration for the singer's love of the original film, as well as her talent to play multiple musical instruments on top of singing. It may not have clicked in Chu's mind immediately the big impact of having a Black Filipina cast as Belle, but it did for H.E.R. In her

[1] Terry Tang and Karena Phan, "'Beauty and the Beast' TV Special Fetes 30th Anniversary," *Associated Press*, December 14, 2022, sec. Entertainment, https://apnews.com/article/beauty-and-the-beast-tv-special-0fb20b14d39ea276e02fc3aad8300abf.

opening scene, H.E.R. is seen wearing a blue dress with a white apron. On that apron as a decorative border is the Baybayin script for "Belle," which she asked the costume designer if she could have included.[2]

Figure 1. H.E.R. performing in *Beauty and the Beast: A 30th Celebration* (2022). © Stereogum.

Recasting a notable Euro-white princess to a person of color is nothing new on ABC or The Walt Disney Company's part as they have done it before with the 1997 *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* when they cast Brandy, a Black R&B singer, as Cinderella and Paola Montalban, a Filipino American musical actor, as Prince Charming. However, progressive casting back did not drive much change in Hollywood casting traditions for another few decades. It also did not provide much opportunity to do further Hollywood projects for either Brandy, as she went back to singing, or Montalban, as he went back to doing theater work.[3]

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[2] Nika Roque, "H.E.R. Features Baybayin on Her Belle Costume for 'Beauty and the Beast' Special," *GMA*, December 14, 2022, https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/artandculture/854437/h-e-r-features-baybayin-on-her-belle-costume-for-beauty-and-the-beast-special/story/.

[3] They did, however, recently reprise their roles as Cinderella and King Charming in the upcoming film, *Descendants: The Rise of Red*.

Figure 2. H.E.R. performing in *Beauty and the Beast: A 30th Celebration* (2022). © Rolling Stone.

Until recently (± five years), American popular genres have not considered the works of Filipinx Americans (let alone Asian Americans) as being part of the mainstream. However, these communities have produced artists active in popular genres as early as the late-nineteenth century. While there are now Filipinx Americans or racially mixed Filipinx Americans within mainstream popular musical genres, they either have not been forthcoming about their identity or do not have a strong association with their heritage.[4] There are a few exceptions to this, but these individuals are treated as tokens or exceptions within the industry. In other words, the industry did not encourage other artists of a similar ethnic background and talent to pursue the industry in the same way as those already successful in it.

[4] Elizabeth H. Pisares, "Do You Mis(Recognize) Me: Filipina Americans in Popular Music and the Problem of Invisibility," in *Positively No Filipinos Allowed* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 172–98; Leilani Nishime, *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2014).

Unlike other Asian Americans, Filipinx Americans try to attain the status of the "model minority." The model minority myth is the notion that Asian Americans have to overcome a certain struggle or challenge in order to achieve the American Dream, which is the ultimate goal for any immigrant to the US.[5] According to E. San Juan, when it comes to this myth, Filipinx Americans have not "made it" in comparison to other Asian American groups, such as the Japanese or Indian Americans. However, remnants of the assimilationist colonial mindset have made Filipinx Americans yearn to achieve this status.[6] Out of all the Asian American ethnic groups, Filipinxs have historically had an easier time assimilating to American culture because they were at one point considered US nationals with American training, but because of colorism, sexism, multi-colonial histories, intergenerational trauma, and classism, Filipinxs are not held to the same levels of "expectations" as East and South Asian Americans.[7]

Brief History

The Philippines has had a complicated history of being colonized twice.[8] For 333 years, the Philippines was subjected to Spanish colonialism, under which indigenous tribes from all parts of the archipelago were assimilated into a society of church and state. Mistreatment by the Spanish, as highlighted by the famous Filipino writer Jose Rizal, and his wrongful execution in the late-nineteenth century sparked revolutions across most of the islands against the Spanish. These revolutions of the 1890s were encouraged by the United States, which was also fighting the Spanish-American war. The Treaty of Paris ended this conflict in 1898 and gave the US

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[5] Serene Tseng, "Resistance, Consciousness, and Filipina Hip Hop Identity: A Phonological Analysis," *Coyote Papers* 22 (2019): 70.
[6] E. San Juan, "The Filipino Diaspora," *Philippine Studies* 49, no. 2 (2001): 262.
[7] Stephen Alan Bischoff, "Expression of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington State University, 2012), 163.
[8] Three times, if counting the Japanese invasion of WWII.

possession of Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines for $20 million.[9] Leny Strobel reasons that the US-initiated war with Spain and its acquisition of these territories were a result of the "undesirable consequences of industrialization" that occurred in the United States, and in order to avoid those domestic issues (i.e. increasing labor struggles, pollution, economic decline, and governmental corruption), the US focused on its philosophy to expand their "boundaries" that "justified" its imperial acquisition.[10]

The Philippine-American War of 1899 was a brutal war with more casualties felt by the Filipinos than the Americans, and it resulted in another 48 years of colonization. Occupation of the Philippines meant US presence in Asia, but it also meant that the US employed Filipinx labor. This led to what is known as the "benevolent assimilation," including an expansion of general public education based on the English language that would follow national standards and US training in bureaucracy and public health.[11] The reasons for this "benevolent assimilation" given by US President William McKinley include (1) that it would be dishonorable to hand the Philippines back over to Spain, (2) they would not allow France or Germany the opportunity to seize the country, (3) the Filipinos were unfit to be independent, and (4) by "God's grace," it was their duty to "educate" and Christianize them.[12]

Through American imperialism, the Philippines became a US territory and its citizens became US nationals. This allowed Filipinos the ease to enter the US without having to worry about the immigration quota or the exclusionary acts placed against other Asian immigrants,

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[9] E. J. R. David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino - American Postcolonial Psychology* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2013), 22.
[10] Leny Mendoza Strobel, *Coming Full Circle: The Process of Decolonization Among Post-1965 Filipino Americans*, 2nd ed. (Santa Rosa: Center for Babaylan Studies, 2015), 49.
[11] Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, "Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration," in *Filipino Studies*, ed. Martin F. Manalansan and Augusto F. Espiritu, Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18040v1.6.
[12] David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino - American Postcolonial Psychology*, 26.

which opened up many labor jobs for Filipinos.[13] The strong education system put in place by the Americans meant that the Filipinxs not only benefited the needs of the US but also benefited the Filipino culture, public service, and healthcare.[14] It created a desire for urbanity and cosmopolitanism.[15] Many Filipinxs went to the US to study at university or to find work, especially since labor demands were high as a result of exclusionary acts against the Chinese and Japanese migrants.[16] However, the anti-Asian sentiments that caused the exclusionary acts fell on the Filipinos that took the place of these East Asian labor workers. Riots ensued against the Filipinos, fueling a sense of nationalism at the same time that Filipino officials were trying to negotiate independence from the US.[17] Robyn Magalit Rodriguez described this migration, which occurred between 1902 and 1934, as the first wave of immigration for Filipinos to the US. This wave ended in 1934 due to the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which granted independence to the Philippines but limited their annual immigration quota to fifty and considered them "aliens."[18]

This period from 1934 to the beginning of World War II is known as the Commonwealth era for the Philippines. Although short-lived, the Philippine and US governments negotiated the transition of power and military presence through their bases on the islands. Philippine nationalism was at an all-time high and there was great hope for independence. However, that was halted by the Japanese invasion of the islands during World War II. Philippine independence was not official until July 4th, 1946. Immediately after World War II, the second wave of immigration to the US occurred. This included Filipinxs who served in the US military and "war

[13] Erika Lee, "The 'Yellow Peril' and Asian Exclusion in the Americas," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (2007): 538, https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2007.76.4.537.
[14] Chester L. Hunt, "Education and Economic Development in the Early American Period in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 36, no. 3 (1988): 355.
[15] Resil B. Mojares, "The Formation of Filipino Nationality Under US Colonial Rule," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 20.
[16] Rodriguez, "Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration," 35.
[17] Taihei Okada, "Underside of Independence Politics Filipino Reactions to Anti-Filipino Riots in the United States," *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 60, no. 3 (2012): 321.
[18] Okada, 316.

brides," women who married US men stationed in the Philippines during the war.[19] After World War II, the Philippines finally received independence from the US, but the relationship with the former colonizer was still strong as many US naval bases remained on the islands.

The third prominent wave of Filipino immigration started in 1965 as a result of the US Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the doors for immigration from many countries, especially those from Asian countries previously affected by the exclusionary acts passed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The initial purpose of the 1965 Act was to reunite families, but also to allow any immigrants who were in highly skilled occupations.[20] This allowed 667,000 Filipinx immigrants to settle in the US. Many of these migrants were escaping the political tensions from the Philippines Marcos regime.[21] Since then, Filipinx Americans have established their place in the US as citizens and have built multi-generational families. Because so many Filipinxs immigrated to the US, they are considered a special type of diaspora that has strong transnational ties back to their home country, which can be seen through *balikbayan* [lit. return to the home country] visits and the act of sending American consumer goods and remittances back to their relatives in the Philippines.[22]

Thesis Statement

However, a majority of the Filipinx Americans that came to the US after 1965 did not achieve the same success as other Asian Americans. Even though most have high school diplomas or are highly skilled professionals, race-biased licensing and hiring practices have

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[19] Rodriguez, "Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration," 36.
[20] John M. Liu, Paul M. Ong, and Carolyn Rosenstein, "Dual Chain Migration: Post-1965 Filipino Immigration to the United States," *The International Migration Review* 25, no. 3 (1991): 492, https://doi.org/10.2307/2546757.
[21] E. San Juan, "Filipino Immigrants in the United States," *Philippine Studies* 48, no. 1 (2000): 121–25.
[22] Juan, "The Filipino Diaspora," 257.

forced Filipinx Americans to be underemployed or marginalized. Because of this, they are found to share commonalities with other racialized communities (African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and Arab Americans.[23] In the mid-1960s, the Civil Rights movement reached its peak in its mission to abolish legalized racial segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. This sparked other movements, such as the Black Power movement, to form into the late-1960s and through the 1970s, influencing other racial minorities to become involved in social justice for their communities. For instance, Filipinx American farm workers and students became more aware and articulated the ideologies of Third Worldism through their critiques of capitalism and the American university system. As Filipinx Americans became more politicized through the '70s and '80s, it allowed them to become more unified as a community. This was seen through the creation of the *Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino* (KDP) [Union of Democratic Filipinos] in 1973, which was a nationwide collection of Filipinx Americans and Filipinx immigrants contributing to the activism against social injustices in both the US and the Philippines, emphasizing their transnational ties even as US citizens.[24]

Filipinx Americans are no strangers to American popular music as the culture of the Americans is intertwined with the colonial history of the Philippines. Though short-lived, the Philippines gained independence from Spain in 1898 due to the Treaty of Paris between Spain and the US. This same treaty ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the US. From this colonization and the establishment of US military bases on the islands, American culture came into the islands and interacted with the Filipinx people. Of course, this was met with pushback by those with nationalist ideologies, but it was very much popular amongst all classes. Because of

[23] Juan, "Filipino Immigrants in the United States," 124.
[24] Joy Sales, "Bayan Ko (My Country): The Kdp and a Diasporic Vision of Filipino American Activism, 1972-1981," in *Filipino American Transnational Activism: Diasporic Politics among the Second Generation*, vol. 1, Global Southeast Asian Diasporas (Brill, 2020), 56, https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004414556/BP000003.xml.

this, the knowledge of these popular genres is widespread and admired by many Filipinxs and it carried through when many of them started to work abroad and even immigrated to different countries, such as the US. However, while Filipinxs may have been introduced to these American musical genres and cultures early on through colonization, discrimination in all forms against the Filipinxs and Filipinx Americans has always occurred. Music as an intersection between popular culture and politics has been a neglected topic in scholarly studies of the Philippines. Zeny Sarabia-Panol and Rosario Maxino-Baseleres argue that because popular culture is a way of understanding reality, it also holds perspective within politics, and because music, especially popular music, makes up a lot of popular cultures, it also has a way of providing an understanding or even influence of politics.[25]

This thesis will examine contemporary Filipinx American artists and the ways in which they use their music to construct their identity against Western portrayals of the Filipinx/a woman. The experiences and struggles of the Filipinx American woman are examined through these artists: Lea Salonga within musical theater, Charmaine Clamor within jazz, and Rocky Rivera within hip-hop. By considering all of these Filipinx/a American women and their artistry and performance to create a representation of themselves, I attempt to identify how these women project themselves at odds with the objectifying stereotypes associated with their racialized identities.

Outlining this thesis, I provide an overview of this entire work within my introductory paragraph, as well as provide brief background information on the colonial history of the Philippines, Filipinx Americans, and the music that they interact with. In the next section, I provide an introduction to my case studies of three artists, as well as a review of the scholarship

[25] Zeny Sarabia-Panol and Rosario Maxino-Baseleres, "Bayan Ko and Other Songs: The Soundtrack of Philippine Political Activism," in *Music as a Platform for Political Communication* (IGI Global, 2017), 150–51, https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-1986-7.ch001.

and literature used to support this thesis. For the core of my thesis, I provide three chapters dedicated to each artist and their musical work, first framing the genre that they interact with, then discussing their selected works at hand. Finally, I end the thesis with a conclusion of my findings, which reveals that there are different approaches taken to form a spectrum of self-identification and individualism of the Filipinx American woman.

To challenge monolithic understandings of cultural groups within the United States, I have chosen these three artists as a way to showcase the range of experiences of Filipinx/a American women, each of whom is active in different musical genres of popular music. Joseph Lam notes that "Asian Americans can express themselves through the styles of the white majority. This is why the understanding of Asian American music entails more than the identification of explicit signs and formulas because as musical expressions of Asian American experiences do not come in one size that fits all, there are no definitive and timeless musical formulae to express Asian ancestry, affiliation with or alienation from mainstream America, subscription to Asian American panethnicity, and other related aesthetic, political, and social experiences."[26] Because of this, I find that various musical genres in which these women work can provide a wider understanding of their experiences.

Introduction of Case Studies

Lea Salonga is a well-known Filipina singer within the musical theater world, who found her big break in the infamous musical, *Miss Saigon* (1988), as the original leading role of Kim in the West End. The musical then went on to open on Broadway, and Salonga was also part of that

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[26] Joseph Sui Ching Lam, "Embracing 'Asian American Music' as an Heuristic Device," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 2, no. 1 (1999): 55, https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.1999.0008.

cast. This allowed her to gain a permanent resident card through the EB-1A visa, which is given to foreign people of exceptional abilities; she uses this to split her time between her home in New York City and her home in the Philippines. Since leaving *Miss Saigon*, Salonga has starred in other roles both on stage and on the screen. Her notable roles include starring as Gail Garcia in *Yellow Rose (2019)*, Kei Kimura in George Takei's musical, *Allegiance* (2015), and singing voices for Princess Jasmine in *Aladdin* (1992), and Fa Mulan in *Mulan* (1998). She has won many accolades and continues to perform worldwide.

Charmaine Clamor is a Filipina American jazz singer, known for developing the genre, *Jazzipino*, which is a combination of jazz with Filipino sensibilities. Before immigrating to the US, Clamor and her family originated from Zambales, Philippines, where her parents worked at the US Naval base. Because American culture and products were being imported to the naval bases, Clamor's parents acquired records and tapes of American music, such as those of jazz, opera, classical music, and pop songs. Her exposure to these songs and to Filipino *kundimans* developed her ear and voice for singing in those genres. She immigrated to the US as a teenager and her family settled around the Los Angeles area. While working at a karaoke bar during college, she was discovered by a record producer for a Filipinx jazz group in Southern California. She joined and toured with the group and eventually ventured out to do solo work in recording albums. Her first album, *Searching for the Soul* (2005), covered standard jazz charts and other songs in the American songbook. Her second album, *Flippin' Out* (2007), made her more widely known on an international level, and this is where she introduced *jazzipino*. Since then, Clamor has released two more albums, *My Harana* (2008) and *Something Good* (2010), and continues to perform and tour when she can.

Rocky Rivera is a Filipinx American rapper based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Having grown up in Oakland, California, Rivera has a deep understanding of West Coast and Bay Area hip-hop and the strong diverse culture that has influenced the Bay Area hip-hop scene. Aside from understanding the Filipinx American community, Rivera has a deep understanding of the Black culture that has influenced hip-hop's growth on the West Coast. Within her role as an MC hip-hop artist, Rocky Rivera raps about social justice, systemic racism, police brutality, sexism, and classism. Her politically-driven lyrical content stems from her recognizing the revolutionary intersectional feminist figures, such as Angela Davis and Roxanne Gay, that can be found in her performances. The influence on her rapping and songs stems from her experiences outside of hip-hop. She is an activist for the causes she raps about, works as a youth mentor and organizer in the Oakland public school system to stop the school-to-prison pipeline, and is a journalist, having written for major magazines and news outlets, such as *Rolling Stone* and *XXL*, and finally, is an author of a memoir she just published in 2021. When it comes to participating in hip-hop culture, Rivera has a deep understanding of the community, the history, and the music that is part of the West Coast rap tradition, which gives her ease in her performance.

Although not explored in depth, there needs to be a historicization of the Filipinx/a-American experience and the cultural continuities between both because it is shaped by gender relations, class, race, and the "persistence of indigenous precepts about the position of Filipino women in pre-colonial times."[27] This thesis attempts to read each of these women as resistant figures, rejecting assimilation, and model-minority myth values through the embrace of their work within popular music genres. Their participation in popular genres reflects a wide range of experiences felt by Filipinx American women, but they all represent aspects of first and second-generation Filipinx American identity, drawing elements of their cultural heritage into

[27] Strobel, *Coming Full Circle: The Process of Decolonization Among Post-1965 Filipino Americans*, 135.

their performances. Building on the work already provided on Filipinx American identity and decolonization, my project will define Lea Salonga, Charmaine Clamor, and Rocky Rivera as empowered agents in the expression of their feminist identities.

Though there are established scholarships on Filipinx and Filipinx American music, it is mostly catered to male musicians and artists. Because of this, I hope to locate the difference within the perspective of the Filipinx American woman as the female performative body is not perceived in the same way the male performative body is presented. Along with this, I hope to find that with the various uses of popular musical genres used by these Filipinx American women, their conscious performances contribute to an identity that goes against traditional stereotypes of the Asian and Filipinx woman. The goal is to paint a clearer picture of the Filipinx American woman as a whole through music performances of popular music genres.

Current Mentality of Filipinx Americans

Steadily, Filipinxs continue to immigrate to the US, where the connected history between the two nations is not readily taught in American history classes within the public school system. Because of this, many second or third-generation Filipinx Americans will remember the Western leader that urbanized and cosmo-politicized the Philippines, but not the three-year war during the turn of the century that forced the Philippines to be a US territory. This one-sided memory is often felt as a modern oppression and silence of the history affected by an entire nation. E.J.R. David, professor of psychology at the University of Alaska - Anchorage, states that this modern oppression is internalized as a colonial mentality, which only most Filipinxs and Filipinxs Americans experience since Filipinxs of the Mindanao islands (South Philippines) and some

unaffected Filipinxs tribes have always been resistant to colonization since the Spanish occupation, unlike their Catholic counterpart in the northern islands.[28] Because of this, there have been efforts to partake in decolonization.

Decolonization efforts provided through the program, Filipino -/ American Decolonization Experience (FADE), aim to improve the lives of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in understanding their self and their world, historically and contemporarily, by conducting intensive dialogues, interviews, and discussions about this history of Filipino and Filipino American history. David's FADE program uses elements of cognitive behavioral therapy with its subjects. These elements include having discussions that aim to get the subject to (1) have an understanding of the past through personal and collective histories, (2) have an understanding of their contemporary experiences, and (3) have an understanding of how the past has shaped the present.[29] Unfortunately, the most surprising thing discovered through these testimonies and observations obtained by David is that many Filipinx-Americans today do not have a clear understanding of the history of the Philippines in relation to the US and its colonized history. There is still a misconception that the US is a savior of the Philippines, which reiterates a false narrative of the actual terrors inflicted by the US and places Filipinos as inferior. It is important to understand this mentality as it frames the mindset and background of the artists I present.

Literature Review

[28] David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino - American Postcolonial Psychology*, 63.
[29] David, 199.

Extensive scholarship has covered the multi-colonial history of the Philippines. For the purpose of this research, the majority of my sources only focused on the history of the US imperial rule of the Philippines and, more so, with the im/migration of Filipinxs to the United States throughout the twentieth century. In the study of the US-colonial Philippines and its Independence period afterward, Alfred W. McCoy was a notable scholar to explore in depth the political and social interactions between the US government and the Philippines.[30] McCoy explores and questions American intervening tactics of developing democracy (i.e. weaponry, surveillance, incriminating information, fear, civil violations, etc.) in the Southeast Asian country is reciprocated back to the people of color and migratory residences back home. While McCoy covers almost all of the twentieth century, other authors turn their attention to specific events. Chester L. Hunt focuses on the education system and economic development of the beginning years of the colonial period.[31] The discussion brought here shows the early controversy of facilitating English as the main language taught in schools as opposed to the local dialect or language. However, eventually, the debate then switches to developing a national language, which eventually becomes Filipino, which is based on the Tagalog language, the language of the southern Luzon region, which includes Manila. In 2006, Resil B. Mojares, a well-known Filipino scholar, provided insight as to how Filipino Nationalism developed under US rule. Mojares takes note of Hunt's observation of the strong education system placed by the American government and ties it to the Filipino upper class seeking to urbanize Filipino society and preserve Filipino culture.[32] This, of course, strengthens nationalistic ideologies, which would lead to negotiations for Independence in the 1930s. I tie this research to that of Ramon P. Santos's book *Tunugan:*

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[30] Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).
[31] Hunt, "Education and Economic Development in the Early American Period in the Philippines."
[32] Mojares, "The Formation of Filipino Nationality Under US Colonial Rule," 24.

Four Essays on Filipino Music. In his third chapter, Santos discusses the development of the University of the Philippines Conservatory of Music as a result of the strong American education the Filipinxs were receiving, as well as the *Pensionado* program that sent the children of the upper class to study in various American universities.[33] Lastly, Gary Hawes presents a look at the latter half of the twentieth century when the US and the Philippines hold special relations. In this particular article, "United States Support for the Marcos Administration and the Pressures That Made for Change," written and edited at the end of Marcoses regime, a look at how the US navigated its relationship with President Ferdinand Marcos in its maintenance of accessing US military bases and its fight against the growing popularity of communism.[34]

The scholarship on Filipinx migration to the states is limited to the third wave of immigration as a result of the US Immigration Act of 1965 and the diaspora after the start of that period. However, an observation of the previous im/migration waves pre-1965 will be mentioned within this thesis. One of the most notable scholars on this topic is E. San Juan, who questions the globalization of labor and migratory patterns in the Filipino diaspora, especially as it developed more steadily from the mid-twentieth century onwards, and how that diaspora functions within the United States compared to other areas in the world.[35] Other scholars, such as John M. Liu et. al, Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, and Joy Sales, also look at the post-1965 migration of Filipinxs and the channels that brought them there, which for the most part is due to labor shortages in the US or family reunification efforts.[36] I did, however, include Taihei Okada's

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[33] Ramon P. Santos, *Tunugan: Four Essays on Filipino Music* (Manila, Philippines: University of Philippines Press, 2005).

[34] Gary Hawes, "United States Support for the Marcos Administration and the Pressures That Made for Change," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (1986): 33.

[35] Juan, "Filipino Immigrants in the United States"; Juan, "The Filipino Diaspora."

[36] Liu, Ong, and Rosenstein, "Dual Chain Migration"; Rodriguez, "Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration"; Sales, "Bayan Ko (My Country): The Kdp and a Diasporic Vision of Filipino American Activism, 1972-1981."

research on the thoughts of the Filipinx in the Philippines on the anti-Filipinx riots of the 1930s in the US as a look at early examples of discrimination against Filipinx people as im/migrants.[37]

Building on the scholarship on the diaspora and colonization, comes scholarship on decolonization. Two scholars, E. J. R. David and Leny Mendoza Strobel, have studied the mindset and experiences of Filipinx Americans with conflicting struggles of intergenerational trauma stemming from a multi-colonial history.[38] Both scholars focus on Filipinx Americans post-1965 and provide cognitive behavioral therapy techniques that attribute to decolonization. Though Strobel's book, *Coming Full Circle: The Process of Decolonization Among Post-1965 Filipino Americans*, does not dive deep into the experience of Filipina/x American women, the testimonials provided by David's Filipino -/ American Decolonization Experience (FADE) program written in his book, *Broken Skin, White Minds*, are mostly from Filipina/x Americans.

Early research on Asian Americans in media or popular genres is extensive but most discuss it as pan-ethnically whole though not monolithic. Deborah Wong examines the racialization of Asian Americans as they stand in solidarity with certain mainstream music genres based on how they align themselves between Black culture and white culture.[39] This only speaks to the Asian American as an audience, but Wong and Elizabeth H. Pisares look into the performative body of the Asian American, though both of these writers talk about the same subject, Jocelyn Enriquez, a Filipina American singer.[40] Arguments provided here center on how the Asian American image has been far from being marketable in mainstream media. Leilani

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[37] Okada, "Underside of Independence Politics Filipino Reactions to Anti-Filipino Riots in the United States."
[38] David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino - American Postcolonial Psychology*; Strobel, *Coming Full Circle: The Process of Decolonization Among Post-1965 Filipino Americans*.
[39] Deborah Wong, "Finding an Asian American Audience: The Problem of Listening," *American Music* 19, no. 4 (2001): 365–84, https://doi.org/10.2307/3052417.
[40] Pisares, "Do You Mis(Recognize) Me: Filipina Americans in Popular Music and the Problem of Invisibility"; Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (London: Routledge, 2004), 233–56.

Nishime[41] has brought up the discussion of performative bodies of Asian Americans in regard to multi-racial identities. Framing multi-racial/ethnic identity against historicization and imagination adds to a complicated understanding of one's self, especially in connection to the music they produce and the image they are putting with their performance. Continuing in this discussion of identity, Ricardo D. Timillos does discuss several strategies that Filipinx Americans do interact with in connecting their ethnic identity with music.[42] However, Joseph Sui Ching Lam argues that Asian American music as a heuristic device for understanding one's identity and culture does not need to be explicit.[43] He argues against authenticity as musical expression and experiences of Asian Americans are not definitive and do not have to be explicit.

Though this thesis focuses on contemporary popular genres of Filipina/x Americans, I bring the Filipino *kundiman* genre into the discussion. There is extensive scholarship on this genre by Filipinx scholars, and it has also been examined by Filipinx American scholars. Previously, I mentioned Ramon P. Santos, who has also written extensively on the *kundiman* genre and classical Filipino music. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I choose to ignore his musical analysis in favor of that of Felipe Padilla de Leon and Zeny Sarabia-Panol et. al because their research connects the genre with Filipinx political consciousness.[44] Both see that there is an intersection between popular culture and politics that can be found with several *kundimans*, especially that of "Bayan ko." Other research consulted includes the dissertations of Michelle Nicolasora and Quiliano Nineza Anderson; both of these scholars received their doctorates in

[41] Leilani Nishime, "Mixed Race Matters: What Emma Stone and Bruno Mars Can Tell Us about the Future of Asian American Media," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 3 (2017): 148–52; Nishime, *Undercover Asian*.
[42] Ricardo D. Trimillos, "Music and Ethnic Identity: Strategies among Overseas Filipino Youth," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 18 (1986): 9–20, https://doi.org/10.2307/768515.
[43] Lam, "Embracing 'Asian American Music' as an Heuristic Device."
[44] Felipe Padilla de Leon, "Poetry, Music and Social Consciousness," *Philippine Studies* 17, no. 2 (1969): 266–82; Sarabia-Panol and Maxino-Baseleres, "Bayan Ko and Other Songs."

music by researching the *kundiman* genre through an examination of performance practice (Anderson) and historical context (Nicolasora).[45]

Scholarship on Filipinx Americans and popular music dive into topics of mimicry, exceptionalism, racialization, and sexualization of these Filipina/x Americans performances. On the topic of mimicry, notable scholars include Abigail De Kosnik and Homi Bhabha.[46] Bhabha looks at the mimicry of colonized people and argues that it is a tactic of colonization that psychologically reevaluates the idea of the "other" in those colonized. In relation to Filipinxs, Kosnik discusses the musical performances of Filipinxs to be mimics of Euro-American characteristics as a colonial tactic of assimilation. Kosnik points out that because of America's "neocolonial participation in global economic and cultural flows," there is a specific study of Filipinxs' mimicry in American music.[47] Doreen G. Fernandez, a notable Filipinx scholar overall, taps into the mimicry discussion of the Philippine-American interaction of culture. In her article, American colonization not only expanded the empire and its language but also unconsciously forced its culture throughout the islands.[48] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns explores the topic of exceptionalism within the Filipinx American performer. In her book, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire*, Burns explores the topic of exceptionalism and the performative body. In one of the chapters, "'How in the Light of One Night Did We Come So Far?" Working Miss Saigon," the discussion of exceptionalism is observed through the

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[45] Michelle Nicolasora, "Kundiman: A Musical and Socio-Cultural Exploration on the Development of the Philippine Art Song" (Dissertation, The University of Memphis, 2014); Quiliano Nineza Anderson, "Kundiman Love Songs from the Philippines: Their Development from Folksong to Art Song and an Examination of Representative Repertoire" (Dissertation, Iowa, USA, University of Iowa, 2015).
[46] Abigail De Kosnik, "Perfect Covers: Filipino Musical Mimicry and Transmedia Performance," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 3, no. 1 (2017): 137–61, https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.3.1.0137; Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 125–33, https://doi.org/10.2307/778467.
[47] Kosnik, "Perfect Covers," 141.
[48] Doreen G. Fernandez, "Philippine-American Cultural Interaction," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1983), http://www.jstor.org/stable/40860163.

performances of *Miss Saigon* and its cast, most notably Lea Salonga.[49] By understanding colonialism and globalization through the metaphor of the musical's plot, Burns argues how the exportation of labor and its hierarchies reinforces US-Philippine imperial relations. In her other chapter, "'Splendid Dancing': Of Filipinos and Taxi Dance Halls," the concept of corporeal colonialism is discussed as a tactic of using popular culture to assimilate, which in this case is the exceptional dancing of Filipino men of the 1930s at taxi dance halls. Lastly, the topics of race and sexuality come into play with scholars Christine Bacareza Balance and Christi-Anne Castro.[50] Balance, through examination of YouTube performances of Asian Americans, observes the participatory culture that is present on the video-sharing platform through grassroots efforts. Performances on this platform and how it deals with the artist's race and sexuality can be mostly a positive experience as the audience also shares an emotional connection to the artist. However, this is different with mainstream media as Castro finds that Asian American women are not marketable as artists due to biased stereotypes against them. Castro does point to instances where Asian American artists do not adhere to any normative or marketable practice and are free to weave their art, activism, and identity more intimately and unapologetically, even if they do not reach mainstream fame.

Four jazz scholars were utilized in this research, Susan M. Asai, Tony DelaRosa, Fred Ho, and Loren Kajikawa.[51] All these scholars observe that the Black Arts movement of the 1960s

[49] Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).
[50] Christine Bacareza Balance, *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America (Refiguring American Music)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Christi-Anne Castro, "Voices in the Minority: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and the Asian American in Popular Music," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 19, no. 3 (September 2007): 221–38, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-1598.2007.00124.x.
[51] Susan M. Asai, "Cultural Politics: The African American Connection in Asian American Jazz-Based Music," *Asian Music* 36, no. 1 (2005): 87–108; Tony DelaRosa, "Lessons of 'Radical Imagination': What the Filipinx Community Can Learn from the Black Community," *Asian American Policy Review* 28 (Spring 2018): 83–89; Fred Ho, "An Asian American Tribute to the Black Arts Movement," in *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 161–210, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttsx8p.16; Loren Kajikawa, "The Sound of Struggle:: Black Revolutionary Nationalism and Asian American Jazz," in *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, ed. David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2012), 190–216, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnrks.14.

and 1970s had a strong influence on the Yellow Nationalism movement of the 1980s. Generally, all scholars, but DelaRosa, explore how Asian American jazz musicians of this time sought influence from the Black avant-garde jazz that was explored because of its need for the artist to be introspective and free with their performance, which runs parallel to the ideologies of the Black Arts movement. These scholars look at Asian Americans and their interest in free jazz, but DelaRosa focuses on the radical imagination (i.e. Afrofuturism) of that movement that influences the Filipinx community. Here, DelaRosa provides several ways in which one can use a radical reimagining of their art, writing, or livelihood to restructure their identity against the erasure of their culture and history.

Hip Hop and Filipinx Americans have been studied extensively in the past few decades. The genre of hip hop attracted many Filipinx Americans in the late 1980s and 1990s, which led to producing successful disc jockeys, breakdancers, turntablists, and emcees (MCs). Early discussions of Filipinx Americans and hip hop is seen as early as 2008 with scholars Rachel Devitt[52] and Neferti X. M. Tadiar in their discussion of the Black Eyed Peas's Apl.de.Ap. and his song "The APL song," which provides a "musical lingua franca" amongst the Filipinx Americans in their experience as a diaspora in the US.[53] Devitt observes the complexities of the Filipino diaspora in the US in relation to the socio-political issues of postcolonial consciousness of the diaspora. Tadiar finds that there is a cultural literacy within these songs that is transnational between the US and the Philippines. This is especially important due to the complicated history and relationship these two countries have had with one another. Similar to DelaRosa's discussion on radical imagination, Christine Bacareza Balance provides her

[52] Rachel Devitt, "Lost in Translation: Filipino Diaspora(s), Postcolonial Hip Hop, and the Problems of Keeping It Real for the 'Contentless' Black Eyed Peas," *Asian Music* 39, no. 1 (2008): 108–34.
[53] Neferti X. M. Tadiar, "Popular Laments," *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (2009): 127, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380701702482.

discussion on the topic in relation to hip hop.[54] This is seen with the Filipino turntablist group, Invisbl Skratch Piklz, who use radical imagination within their music as a way of reimagining themselves and their communities in a better reality. Anthony Kwame Harrison and Antonio T. Tiongson Jr. discuss the racialization of hip-hop culture and how it affects identity against post-colonial consciousness.[55] Harrison sees hip-hop as a combination of song and scholarship. It is a genre that was utilized by Filipinx Americans to start the discussion of Filipinx American history, identity, and discrimination on university campuses. Harrison deems this as a form of knowledge-building tradition. Tiongson Jr., on the other hand, observes how Filipinx Americans gravitate to being disc jockeys rather than emcees because they are more likely to be evaluated by skills and talent rather than race, which the identity of the emcee is heavily associated together. Interestingly, Mark Redondo Villegas sees hip-hop in parallel to militarization amongst Filipinx American service people and their children.[56] Villegas observes this through the hip-hop group, Blue Scholar, whose emcee has experienced this militarization and its community. The last two scholars to discuss in this section are Stephen Alan Bischoff and Serene Tseng in their exploration of Filipina/x American hip-hop emcees.[57] Tseng, through a phonological analysis, examines emcees Ruby Ibarra and Rocky Rivera. Through her study, she found that their rapping styles and language are linked to their perceived identities, especially as it relates to mono and multilingualism. Bischoff wrote a very extensive dissertation on Filipinx Americans' use of hip-hop as a tool for resistance. Though he mentions Filipino/x male hip-hop emcees, my focus

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[54] Balance, *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America (Refiguring American Music)*.

[55] Anthony Kwame Harrison, "Post-Colonial Consciousness, Knowledge Production, and Identity Inscription within Filipino American Hip Hop Music," *Perfect Beat* 13, no. 1 (2012): 29–48, https://doi.org/10.1558/prbt.v13i1.29; Antonio T. Tiongson Jr., *Filipinos Represent: DJs, Racial Authenticity, and the Hip-Hop Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[56] Mark Redondo Villegas, "Currents of Militarization, Flows of Hip-Hop: Expanding the Geographies of Filipino American Culture," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 19, no. 1 (February 2016): 25–46, https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2016.0010.

[57] Bischoff, "Expression of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice."; Tseng, "Resistance, Consciousness, and Filipina Hip Hop Identity: A Phonological Analysis."

is on his analysis of the female rapper, Rocky Rivera. His methodology includes interviews with these rappers, which will be utilized for my examination of Rocky Rivera.

CHAPTER 2: Miss Saigon: Lea Salonga - Exceptional Reflection

Through colonialism, Filipinxs are familiar with the popular cultures imposed on them throughout their history. It is this familiarity that has provided Filipinxs the knowledge to provide "exceptional performances" of that popular culture. In other words, Filipinxs are successful in performing American popular genres because that is what was exposed to them during their colonial history. This has allowed Filipinx artists, such as Lea Salonga, to provide their talent and bodies to the world stage. Through her "exceptional performance" as one of the most well-known musical theater stars, Salonga has had to endure the stereotypes associated with Asian women in her role as Kim in *Miss Saigon*. However, Salonga was able to outgrow that stereotype through her recognized talent in the West End and Broadway productions. This allowed her the chance to use her skills in strong, feminist roles that would promote a different aspect of Asian women that did not abide by typical stereotypes.

Filipinxs on the Stages of Empire

Popular culture in the Philippines has mostly been shaped by colonization. Before discussing the influence of American popular culture in the Philippines, there needs to be an understanding of what types of popular culture existed before US intervention, and how it was transformed after American colonization.

Prior to any colonial involvement, the indigenous culture of the different ethnic groups living in the islands was dictated by rituals associated with pre-colonial religions such as *Anitism*

and games.[58] These rituals and games were mostly made up of mimetic action, which also included some aspects of song and dance. Doreen Fernandez argues that these rituals and games could be considered early instances of drama as part of communal life that was meaningful and of high importance.[59] As Spanish colonization began in 1565 and the Spanish sought to assimilate indigenous Filipinos into Spanish culture, Spanish Catholic missionaries and friars sought different ways to communicate with the indigenous people. These included different forms of drama that were both religious (e.g. passions/*sinakulo*) and secular (e.g. *comedia*/*komedya*, *zarzuela/sarsuela*, etc.), which were transformed over time into more sophisticated forms in both styles for urban and rural areas of the Philippines. As a result, the nineteenth century saw many theaters being built, first in Manila and then in other urbanized regions and cities.[60]

Towards the end of Spanish colonization and the rise of Filipinization around the islands, Spanish drama, and entertainment were transformed into the vernacular as reflections of revolutionary ideals against Spanish rule started to spread amongst the aristocratic class; this was especially true in urban areas.[61] Both the sarsuela/sarswela (dramatic genre of spoken and sung dialogue) and kundimans (musical folk song genre) during this transitory time saw an increase in revolutionary themes advocating Filipino independence.

At the very beginning of the American colonial period, sarswuela (in the local vernacular) was still the main form of entertainment staged for urbanized Filipinos during the 1910s and 1920s. However, once the institutionalized efforts of the Americans had begun to show their effects on the new generation of the educated and influential class in the Filipinos, the

[58] Doreen G. Fernandez, "From Ritual to Realism: A Brief Historical Survey of Philippine Theater," *Philippine Studies* 28, no. 4 (1980): 391.
[59] Ibid., 393.
[60] Ibid., 403.
[61] Ibid., 405.

popular culture shifted from the vernacular to the English language thus ending sarswela/sarsuela as popular culture.[62] With English as the dominant language for the urbanized, different forms of American entertainment were able to reach Filipino audiences in different ways.

Bodabil: American Vaudeville Plants Seeds for American Cultural Dominance

Sarswela/sarsuela were no longer being performed in Philippine theaters by the 1930s, and new and current American popular culture took their place. American vaudeville and variety shows came to the Philippines in 1916 to provide live entertainment for American servicemen, but they did not take off in popularity until 1921 when Louis Borromeo's troupe introduced American genres: "chorus girls, jazz, minstrel songs, skits, variety acts, and such showbiz history names as Dimples, Toy Toy, Hanasan, and the Alabama brothers."[63]

These variety acts were received well by the elite and educated class of Filipinos, and it did not take long for Filipinos to start to participate in these vaudeville shows themselves, which included stars such as Katy de la Cruz, who performed songs in the styles of Sophie Tucker; Canuplin, who acted in a similar way as Charlie Chaplin; and Bayani Casimiro, who danced like Fred Astaire. Though Filipino artists were becoming more involved in these American genres of popular culture, they did not feature the Filipino vernacular nor its sensibilities, unlike some of the Spanish popular genres that eventually featured Filipino characteristics during the Spanish colonial era. The influential class of elite and educated Filipinos was so enamored by American popular culture that they demanded more of it, and as technological advancements in the US

[62] Ibid., 410.
[63] Ibid., 411.

made their way to the Philippines, radio and film as American entertainment supplied their demand.[64]

American popular culture was now firmly established as part of Philippine popular culture during the rest of the US colonial period, and even afterward. Multiple generations of Filipinos from the 1920s through the early 2000s have been fluent in the styles of American popular music of their time. American music and styles like the foxtrot, big band jazz, Broadway show tunes, rock n' roll, current pop, folk, and rock are better known than traditional Filipino music genres from the pre-colonial and Spanish-colonial eras. American songs are what is sung at gatherings, on televised performances, at singing competitions, and other similar events, and according to Fernandez, this is what has allowed Filipinos to rapidly assimilate into American culture and continue to try to imitate it even after colonization ended.[65]

Filipinxs and Popular Music: Musical Mimicry

Within this history of colonialism and the multiple impositions of the colonizer's culture, the need to assimilate became a survival technique that promotes imitation of another's culture on an extreme level: the imitation of speech patterns, physical gestures, and even unique timbral qualities of the voice. This is known as mimicry. Early studies on mimicry studies stem from postcolonial and ethnic research as much observation of the colonized has been analyzed to show that there is a significant amount of imitation of the colonizer's culture.[66] In other words, white "masters" (i.e. slave owners, colonizers, employers, etc.) have required their non-white

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[64] Doreen G. Fernandez, "Philippine Popular Culture: Dimensions and Directions: The State of Research in Philippine Popular Culture," *Philippine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1981): 30–34.
[65] Fernandez, "Philippine-American Cultural Interaction," 9–10.
[66] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"; D.R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 142.

"inferiors" (i.e. slaves, colonized, employees, etc.) to imitate their white culture. According to Abigail de Kosnik, professor of performance and new media studies at UC Berkeley, Filipinx mimicry is the imitation of Euro-American characteristics as influenced by the need to assimilate during the colonial periods of both Spain and the US.[67] Studies of Filipinx mimicry have mainly focused on the musical imitation of American culture because of its "neocolonial participation in global economic and cultural flows."[68] This is seen through the training and exportation of labor, such as governmental, medical, and educational American practices but also American culture, especially American popular entertainment.

The cultural flows of musical mimicry can be seen from the mass importation of American culture brought in through US military bases. US military bases on the islands during and after American rule were hubs of American entertainment as popular culture in the US of the time were made available to US servicemen through the establishment of radio stations.[69] This, of course, was made available to Filipinxs as well. It was the need for live entertainment by these servicemen that pushed Filipinxs to enact musical mimicry, and as US military bases were establishing themselves in other East and Southeast Asian port cities, Filipinxs followed for better working opportunities as performers, thus exportation of performers as overseas Filipinx workers (OFWs).[70]

The demand for Filipinx performers, who could perform "perfect covers" does not stem from the idea that mimicry of American culture is an essential trait or national pastime for Filipinxs, as seen with the strong association between Filipinxs and karaoke, but it is rather an economic strategy that was seen as essential for success as an OFW in any job category. The

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[67] Kosnik, "Perfect Covers."

[68] Ibid., 141.

[69] Elizabeth L. Enriquez, "Media as Site of Social Struggle: The Role of Philippine Radio and Television in the EDSA Revolt of 1986," *Plaridel* 3, no. 2 (August 2006): 124.

[70] Kosnik, "Perfect Covers," 142.

promotion of Filipinxs as musical mimics became a marketing tactic for selling the "Filipino brand."[71] In recent decades, the Philippine government has pursued this economic strategy to promote and sell this brand and Filipinx performers have been placed in entertainment venues (e.g. cruise ships, nightclubs, bars, etc.). The most notable placement of Filipinx performers abroad is the original casting for Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's 1988 musical, *Miss Saigon*.

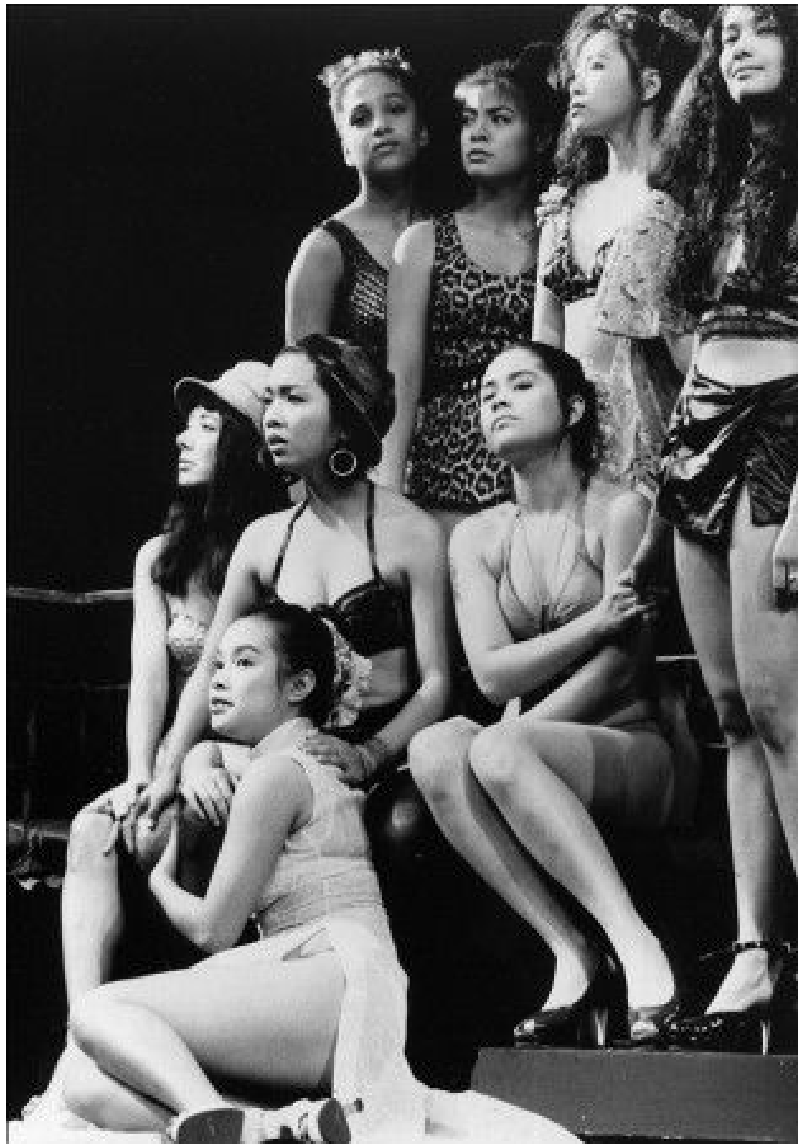

Figure 3. *Miss Saigon* original 1991 Broadway cast (1991). © Playbill 2015.

[71] Kosnik, 149.

However, this marketing tactic perpetuates the stereotype that Filipinxs are good singers. Lee Watkins argues that the "Filipino musician and his repertoire sustain the dominance of the host, but it also reflects on his own standing by way of his relationship with American imperialism. Many Filipinos look upon the United States as the guarantor of their aspirations."[72] Though Filipinx musicians are revered for their musical prowess, they may be regarded as perpetuating aspects of Western cultural imperialism. By performing American popular songs, they promote a hopeful attitude that the Filipinxs may also achieve social mobility and sexual freedom by way of Western culture.

Dragon or Lotus?: Lea Salonga Enters the Empire's Stage

Miss Saigon transposes Giacomo Puccini's 1904 opera, *Madama Butterfly*, into a musical surrounding the end of the Vietnam War in the mid-1970s. The plot of *Miss Saigon* involves a Vietnamese bar girl, Kim, and an American marine, Chris, who fall in love during the days leading up to the Fall of Saigon. After a night of embrace, Chris promises Kim to bring her back to the States for the promise of a better life. Unfortunately, the rapid fall of the city to the communist regimes separates the two lovers with Chris leaving for the US and Kim left behind. Three years later, it is revealed that after their night of embrace, Kim became pregnant and gave birth to Chris's son, Tam, and Chris is married to a white, American woman. Through his marine friend, Chris finds out that Kim is still alive and that they have a son in Bangkok. He goes to Thailand to search for them, along with his friend, John, and his wife, Ellen. Unfortunately, after a confrontation between Kim and Ellen, and the time it takes for John and Chris to find Kim,

[72] Lee Watkins, "Minstrelsy and Mimesis in the South China Sea: Filipino Migrant Musicians, Chinese Hosts, and the Disciplining of Relations in Hong Kong," *Asian Music* 40, no. 2 (2009): 86.

Kim decides that Tam needs to have a better life in America with his father, and if she could not be a part of that, then she would sacrifice herself to make that happen, thus fulfilling her ultimate sacrifice to her son with her self-inflicted death.

Figure 4. *Miss Saigon*, Lea Salonga as Kim (1991). © Playbill 2015.

The casting of *Miss Saigon*'s productions has been the subject of much controversy since its original production in the West End in 1988. Aside from the biggest controversy surrounding the casting of a European/white man to play the role of the Eurasian Engineer and the Vietnamese antagonist, Thuy, in the original production, all Vietnamese female characters have been mostly performed by Filipina actresses. In the original production, producer, Cameron Mackintosh, was adamant in seeking out Asian actresses for these roles in order to respect the

musical's plot, and he found both Lea Salonga as Kim, Monique Wilson as her understudy, and other Filipinx actors and actresses to fill the other roles and ensemble in Manila.[73] Casting Filipinx/a actresses in Vietnamese roles reinforces stereotypes against Asian women as it generalizes their outer appearances. In her article on Asian American women artists, Christie Anne Castro argues that the traditional stereotypes of Asian American women, which include perceptions of submissiveness, hyper feminized, hypersexualized, and occasionally but not often, heroic traits, are normalized in mainstream media.[74] The traits here, minus heroism, are all found within the Vietnamese, female characters in *Miss Saigon.* With the exception of Kim, the Vietnamese bar girls are depicted as "dragon ladies," which perceives Asian women to be strong, domineering, mysterious, and sexually alluring. In the musical, Gigi Van Tranh, one of these "dragon lady" bar girls, wins the title of "Miss Saigon" in the bar pageantry, in which the winner is raffled to one of the servicemen in the bar for the evening. Once winner "number 66" claims Gigi, she begs him to take her to America with him, but it annoys him and he complains to the bar owner, to which he yells at her to get back to work. Kim, on the other hand, is portrayed as a "lotus blossom," which perceives Asian women as submissive, docile, innocent/virginal, but sexually knowledgeable. During this same scene where Gigi wins "Miss Saigon," Kim is seen as being meek and uncomfortable around the servicemen, especially when they grab and rub their hands on her body, as opposed to the other bar girls who pretend to enjoy their interactions with the American men. Aside from being portrayed as a "lotus blossom," Kim's character is centered around the trope of Asian women being selfless, which is shown through the "ultimate sacrifice" given to her child at the very end. Time and again, these tropes that negatively depict Asian and Asian American women through the Western lens have proven to be very problematic. This is

[73] Burns, *Puro Arte*, 128.
[74] Castro, "Voices in the Minority," 228.

true when the "Asian" woman becomes a generic category, as seen with the casting of Filipinx/a actresses are cast in Vietnamese roles. This not only generalizes the trope to multiple ethnic groups, but it is demeaning and perpetuates this fetishization of Asian women.

Although there is a generalization of Asian people, Filipinxs are seen as a separate group from the entire Asian demographic because of their "exceptional" talent. Because Filipinx actors and actresses were highly recognized for their success in this long-running musical, the use of Filipinx actors became an established choice in future productions, tours, and revivals. However, much of the talent and work produced by these Filipinx actors was not entirely a result of their prior musical theater experience or training before *Miss Saigon*. Rather, it was the rigorous training and schooling put on by Mackintosh's production team, which included diction, singing, dancing, and physical coaching, that prepared these actors to withstand the endurance it takes to be part of this musical.[75]

Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, who has written about Filipinx performative bodies, examines how the Filipinx actors of the musical's *Miss Saigon* productions are observed within the context of globalization, colonization, performance bodies, and identity. Burns observes the performing body as labor within the world-class stage of musical theatre or other popular global media channels because it is distinctive from other forms of exported labor that are not as glorified (i.e. nursing, domestic assistance, fieldwork, entertainment, and sex work). The distinction is due to an implied class and moral hierarchy that is revealed in the context of capitalism, in which there is a "system of hierarchy to justify exploitation."[76] Burns references Neferti Tadiar's scholarship on the feminized commodification of the Philippines by the United States, which considers the exploitation and reduction of Filipina labor as being cheap when the

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[75] Burns, *Puro Arte*, 126.
[76] Burns, 137.

historical prostitution of Filipinas as an apt paradigm of US-Philippine relations is the only thing being considered; "it is as if Filipinas can have no meaning outside of their bodies, and no circulation outside the significations of colonialism/globalization.[77]" Along with this, in her analysis of Filipino immigrant dancers in American taxi dance halls, Burns sees the labor of performative bodies and mimesis as exceptionalism and corporeal colonialism. Burns argues that the "splendid dancing" of these dancers is a metaphor for the exceptionalism that is the imperial tactics the US conducted in extending its political empire. Through corporeal colonialism, which is the use of the colonized bodies through ideological manipulation, and cultural implementation, the US found a unique way to colonize the Philippines as one of its territories by placing American culture in dance and performance as superior to established Filipino culture. Interestingly enough, the concept of corporeal colonialism also extends to the Spanish as they used similar cultural implementation tactics in assimilating Filipinos to Spanish customs and rule. The exceptionalism of Filipino performance of Western culture is an effect of and response to "multiple and variegated genealogies of colonialism and performance."[78]

With this understanding in mind, the additional training/schooling for Filipinx actors before going to perform for a production of this caliber, or before even auditioning to be part of the production, is in line with the globalization and colonial tactics that are found within American colonization was when a national system of education was put in place for Filipinxs in the early twentieth century. As Burns has stated, "while brown performing bodies' mimicry of Western performing arts is looked upon as reinforcing their unoriginality, their slow catch-up to modernity, white bodies performing across cultural borders are labeled interculturalist, postmodern, and avant-garde. What would it mean, I want to ask, to recognize mimesis as a

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[77] Burns, 119.
[78] Burns, 63–67.

method, a practice, an act that provides the separation, the distance between the sign and the referent? What would it mean for Filipinas to work Miss Saigon through mimesis?"[79] Mimicry in this understanding separated Filipinxs from being seen on the same level as other actors or actresses auditioning for similar musical theater roles. They were required to undergo additional training that would put them on the same level as those other actors that did not have to go through the same rigorous training that they had to. Though the training itself does not invalidate the already talented and highly qualified Filipinx prior to taking these roles, it does leave them on a level that is not quite the same as their white counterparts in talent.

None. Hero: Lea Salonga as a Fierce Disney Asian Woman

Though there are only two main tropes to the Asian woman in performances, there is, however, a third trope that has only recently been discussed: the hero. When one thinks of Asian women as heroes, the automatic association is with martial arts films, especially those from Hong Kong. However, in Euro-American culture, the typical Asian female tropes were either "lotus blossom" or "dragon lady." An Asian female heroine is one who is complicated, who is outspoken, and who also takes the lead rather than follows. It was not until 1997 that Western audiences would see an Asian woman portray this heroine trope. In *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) Michelle Yeoh portrays a self-sufficient Chinese spy, who helps James Bond take out villains from shooting a missile into Beijing. The following year, the Walt Disney Company continued the Asian heroine trope as they released their retelling of the Chinese folktale, *Mulan* (1998).

Disney's *Mulan* tells the story of a Chinese village girl, who defies society and family expectations by not fulfilling the role as a dutiful wife, and instead cross-dresses as a man and

[79] Burns, 120.

goes out into war to fight the Huns. Later on in the movie, she reveals that she is a woman, continues to fight against the Huns, saves China, and is honored by the Emperor and her family for her courageous efforts. This Americanized version of *Mulan* changes the title character's motivation to be more focused on her own happiness rather than on fighting for the approval of her parents. This Mulan is a self-regarded heroine that seeks to be truly recognized and distinguished for herself rather than through a man.[80] This is explained through her song, "Reflection," after she had failed to make a good impression with the village's matchmaker.

Figure 5. Disney's *Mulan* (1998). © Walt Disney Studios.

In "Reflection," Mulan is seen walking through her family estate upset that she did not do well to impress the matchmaker, and she sings of looking at her reflection and not recognizing herself while still in her dress and makeup. The song ends with her taking off all of her makeup and undoing her hair with the line, "When will my reflection show who I am inside?" Lea

[80] Ewen Xiao, "Disney's Reconstruction of the Traditional Chinese Heroine: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Mulan Movies," in *Communications in Humanities Research*, vol. 1 (International Conference on Educational Innovation and Philosophical Inquiries, EWA Publishing, 2021), 21–22, https://doi.org/10.54254/chr.iceipi.2021174.

Salonga voiced Princess Jasmine's singing voice prior to being hired to voice Mulan. When asked about her experience as the singing voice for two Disney princesses, she answered:

> "It feels pretty fantastic to have been, to be part of that legacy. The first time it was like representation did not even enter my mind. For me, it was just all about, oh my gosh, I get to play this princess in a Disney film. That was the only thing I would think about. I became a little more aware and cognizant of exactly what representation would mean when it came to Mulan. It really hit me. And I mean, she's an animated, hand drawn character. But when there is someone that you know is from your community, representing you in such a wonderful, wonderful way. It paves the way, number one, for other artists from that community to also throw their hats into the ring. And two, it's, it's [sic] just incredibly inspiring to see one of your people doing something like that. Ming-Na Wen and myself did the very best that we could to breathe as much life into her as we could. And there were a lot of paths never traveled by a Disney heroine before that Mulan was able to and be the first to do. You know, that her, her future was not hinging upon a man. And it was so exciting to realize the impact that a movie like that could have."[81]

When Disney first released *Mulan* in 1998, it was the first animated film to produce a heroine, who is considered a Disney princess, but was not technically a princess. Mulan was also the first Asian heroine (Princess Jasmine can be considered the first Disney Asian princess of Southwest Asian descent). Not only that but the majority of the voice actors hired for this film are also of Asian descent; Ming-Na Wen (Mulan), BD Wong (Captain Li Shang), Gedde Watanabe (Ling), Jerry Tondo (Chien-Po), James Hong (Chi-Fu), Soon-tek Oh (Fa Zhou), Pat Morita (Emperor), George Takei (First Ancestor), Freda Foh Shen (Fa Li), and James Shigeta (General Li). Lea Salonga was the singing voice of Mulan, and was the only person in a singing role of Asian descent; she was the only Filipina in the cast.

[81] *Lea Salonga on "Yellow Rose" and Her Place in Disney History | NowThis* (NowThis News, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CceGa_Qew0k.

Figure 6. *Yellow Rose* (2019). © August Thurmer.

Even with such a fantastic and talented cast of Asian actors and actresses, Hollywood did not do much to increase Asian representation on the screen for another two decades until *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) was released. The 1990s and 2000s were a time in which people of color were tokenized.[82] Tokenism is the symbolic practice that recruits a small group of people from underrepresented backgrounds in order to appear that there is racial or gender equality within an institution.[83] Studios in Hollywood argued that once there was a movie that showed some kind of representation, there was no need to feature Asian characters/stories anymore. However, once *Crazy Rich Asians* came out, other films and television shows with Asian leads began to appear. This increased the diversity of Asian stories that could be told. Asian American activists began to push to showcase stories of their communities rather than portraying only those of the "crazy" and "rich."[84] This resulted in Lea Salonga joining the cast of *Yellow Rose* (2019), the story of an

[82] Faustina M. Ducros et al., "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on TV," *Contexts* 17, no. 4 (2018): 12–17.
[83] Brian X. Chen, "'Mulan' 1998: A Moment of Joy and Anxiety for Asian-American Viewers," *The New York Times*, September 4, 2020, sec. Movies, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/mulan-animated-1998.html.
[84] Alex Abad-Santos, "Crazy Rich Asians Dared to Make Asian Lives Aspirational. Its Success Could Change Hollywood.," Vox, December 21, 2018, https://www.vox.com/2018/12/21/18141213/crazy-rich-asians-success.

undocumented Filipina girl (Eva Noblezada), whose dream is to become a star country singer, but instead has to flee to her aunt (Salonga) in Austin, Texas after her mom is picked up by ICE. Stories like these on the screen allow Filipinx and Asian Americans to normalize and humanize their experiences in the United States and beyond.

CHAPTER 3: My Funny Brown Pinay: Charmaine Clamor - Morena Proud

As jazz artists became more politically conscious with the rise of social justice movements in the latter half of the twentieth century, they used music as a means to respond to the events surrounding their communities. Free jazz, a subgenre of avant-garde jazz, was first utilized by Black jazz musicians as a musical platform for response to injustices as it allows the musician to participate in radical imagination. It did not take long for Asian American jazz artists to utilize Free jazz as well for their purposes of social justice. However, these artists soon realized that free jazz did not have to be the sole platform. For Charmaine Clamor, creating and combining styles was the solution for her role in addressing both social injustices and representing her identity as a Filipina American. Clamor reasserts a different side to the Filipinx American woman with her performance of jazzipino.

Jazz: Conversations Between Blacks and Asians in the US

The discussion of racial inequality amongst jazz artists has always been present in some shape or form. This was definitely more prominent as notable jazz artists were asked to represent the US as cultural ambassadors abroad during the Cold War. The collaboration of Louis Armstrong and Dave and Iola Brubeck created a notable musical, *The Real Ambassadors*, which centered on the dichotomy of using a Black jazz artist to present a racially, peaceful country in contrast to its troubled reality.[85] In the latter half of the twentieth century, the growing tensions of racial inequality were quickly developing. Several social justice movements reached their peak in the 1960s and onward, which include the Civil Rights movement, the Black Arts movement,

[85] Jackson Hatschek, *The Real Ambassadors* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2022).

the Third World Liberation Front, and others. Jazz artists could not ignore these events and responded through their music; what came out of it was free jazz.

Free jazz approaches jazz music as an experimental performance as it may depart at times from tonality, rhythmic structure, form, and standard jazz instrumentation.[86] Its connection to politics and the movements above were not the reasons it began, but the free jazz movement became synonymous with the Black Arts movement and its socio-political concerns for the Black community.[87] The Black Arts movement stemmed from the Black Power movement of the 1960s after Malcolm X was assassinated. It emphasized Black consciousness and liberation through the autonomy of black artists and their work for their community. This movement attracted notable jazz musicians, such as John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, and others, who looked to the ancient past and religion as a source of cultural renewal and political appeal, and what called to them was free jazz.[88] The specific appeal to free jazz, which is a strand of avant-garde jazz, fuels "liberation, challenge cultural dominance and hegemony, and promote rebellion, struggle, dissidence, disturbance, militancy, and opposition to the mainstream and the status quo."[89]

[86] David Borgo, "Free Jazz," in *Grove Music Online*, November 26, 2013, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002256589.
[87] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[88] Monson, 20.
[89] Ho, "An Asian American Tribute to the Black Arts Movement," 194–95.

Figure 7. Models from the Grandassa Models agency, part of the "Black Power!" exhibition at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (1968). © Kwame Brathwaite.

The Black Arts movement had a strong influence on the Asian American community and its musicians; this was especially seen when Asian American jazz musicians started interacting with the free jazz movement.[90] Coincidentally, African American artists also looked to Asian culture and instruments for inspiration in their work.[91] Asian Americans were inspired by what they learned and saw from the political viewpoint and performative practices of the African American community. This inspiration would produce several musician-composers to make a

[90] Ho, 161–62.
[91] Kajikawa, "The Sound of Struggle," 210.

new and established Asian American music that had its own political and cultural consciousness within the Yellow Nationalism movement of the 1970s.[92]

The influences within this movement stems from the Black Power movement of the 1960s because its ideologies on racial equality, social justice, and political empowerment "shaped the goals of Asian Americans who realized that their assimilation into American society would never be complete as long as they continued to face discrimination in education, employment, and housing."[93] Both movements were united because of a shared similar history and experience of discrimination and resistance, which served as a foundation for their monolithic identity and unified voice. For Asian Americans, rather than dividing groups ethnically, uniting as "Asian" Americans increased their chances of making social and political change. Jazz musicians coming out of this movement looked to African Americans experimenting with free jazz, a genre that shared an ideology of social, political, and cultural liberation of Third World countries by breaking away from Eurocentric parameters and harmonic structures and exploring improvisational techniques that allowed the artist to explore oneself.[94]

Fred Ho was one of the musician-composers active in the Asian American jazz genre that emerged from the Yellow Nationalism movement of the 1970s & 1980s. In his book, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice,*[95] Ho argues that the Asian American jazz scene was more radical and free on the West Coast in comparison to the East Coast because of the jazz styles explored there by Asian Americans; these styles included free jazz, jazz fusion, and mainstream jazz.[96] The need of Asian Americans to create their own music was a form of resistance and liberation that

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[92] Susan M. Asai, "Cultural Politics: The African American Connection in Asian American Jazz-Based Music," *Asian Music* 36, no. 1 (2005): 87–108.
[93] Asai, "Cultural Politics," 90.
[94] Asai, 90–95.
[95] On the front cover of his book, Ho is depicted naked whilst holding his baritone saxophone.
[96] Ho, "An Asian American Tribute to the Black Arts Movement," 198.

ran counterculture to “American national culture.”[97] This “American national culture” is what Deborah Wong would consider “white American music.” In her article, “Finding an Asian American Audience.,” Wong finds that her Asian American colleague’s listening tastes drift between African American music and white American music, but the overall preference for this listener was African American music, mainly jazz. Wong finds that the reason for this stems from the Asian American listener’s self-identification with what jazz music stood for, which Wong identifies are political concerns and its traditions.[98] Because of this, Wong further argues that improvisational characteristics of jazz are synonymous with politicized music-making.[99] Black Nationalist ideology inspired Asian Americans to find their source of strength and self-reliance through a shared pan-Asian history that would unify their voices and bring strength to the social and political changes they sought.[100] The need to be strong and self-reliant is what led Asian Americans to use free jazz as their musical model for their own jazz genre. However, as it has been said before, treating Asian Americans as a monolithic group prevents seeing the cultural and socio-political differences that are unique to each ethnic group, which is why I want to examine Filipinx Americans' interactions with jazz.

Swing It Manong: Filipinx Americans & Jazz

With the largest Asian demographic on the West Coast, Filipinx Americans were at the forefront of the Asian American jazz scene.[101] Filipinx American jazz musicians who were

[97] Asai, 104.
[98] Wong, “Finding an Asian American Audience,” 381.
[99] Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*, 63.
[100] Asai, “Cultural Politics,” 91.
[101] Andrew Gilbert, “Where’s the Bay Area Filipino-American Jazz Scene? Hiding in Plain Sight,” *KQED*, October 27, 2016, https://www.kqed.org/arts/12255531/extremely-large-and-incredibly-diverse-the-filipino-american-jazz-scene-is-hiding-in-plain-sight.

prominent during the late-1970s and early-1980s include Bobby Enriquez, Carlos Zialcita, and Gabe Baltazar.[102] Though Filipinx Americans may not have been entirely known for their efforts in this politically-motivated jazz movement, their colleagues definitely paid tribute to it when they could. For instance, Fred Ho has written and arranged many pieces that relate to the history and culture of Filipinxs. His soundtrack to *A Song for Manong*, a musical theater production, Ho calls for collaboration between musicians and artists from the Asian American Art Ensemble and the Filipino American Kulintang Arts, who provide traditional southern Filipino kulintang music.[103] The performances celebrate the epic struggles of Filipinxs, covering the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1522, to the fall of the International Hotel of Manilatown in San Francisco in 1977.

Figure 8. Gabe Baltazar (saxophone) (ca. 1960s). © NPR 2013.

[102] Ho, "An Asian American Tribute to the Black Arts Movement," 198.
[103] Ho, 200.

Though Ho is clearly someone who appreciates Filipinx culture and history, Filipinx American history is not well known, even amongst Filipinx Americans. DelaRosa argues that Filipinx American history has been erased from literature, political leadership, entertainment, and other sectors even for Filipinx people. One example of this is the erasure of Filipinx migrant workers as pioneers for labor rights in California. These efforts were overshadowed by those of Cesar Chavez and the Latinx migrant workers. DelaRosa explores the concept of "Radical Imagination," which is a hopeful concept that reimagines a world different from the one a person is currently living in. Afrofuturism is one concept that falls under radical imagination. DelaRosa provides several practices with radical imagination that artists or activists can use to make an impact for their communities or self: (1) expose oneself to current research on "radical imagination," (2) fight for policies that could potentially provide more equity to people of color, (3) learn about radical movements that cause radical social change, (4) attend a radical imagination convocation, (5) practice radical imagination by attending affinity group meetings as a guest and listener regularly, (6) interview, listen, and survey current social justice leaders who are currently taking radical acts to challenge the status quo, and (7) reinvest funding in national and local arts organizations and within schools that provide space for youth to practice radical imagination through creative youth development.[104] The concept of radical imagination is essential for POCs because it allows the person to restructure their identity against the erasure of their people. This has mostly been used in places of science fiction, but the concept works for any type of artist.

[104] DelaRosa, "Lessons of 'Radical Imagination,'" 83–87.

Flippin' Out: Charmaine Clamor

"Ako ay kayumanggi [I am brown], taas noo [proud], Pilipino." - Charmaine Clamor, *Flippin' Out (2007)*

Jazzipino is the combination of jazz rhythms and styles with Filipino folk traditions, language, and instruments. Charmaine Clamor reimagined jazz to create this hybrid form of sound known as jazzipino to find her identity as a Filipina jazz singer. Unlike some recording companies in the popular music genre, Freeham Records, an independent label specializing in jazz and blues, "capitalized on her exoticism to penetrate the saturated jazz market," which allowed her to use her second album, *Flippin' Out*, as an outlet for this new genre.[105] To produce this album's jazzipino sound, Clamor utilized Filipino instruments, such as the kulintang; Filipinx musicians, such as Julius Tolentino, Abe Lagrimas, Jr., and Richard Ickard; the Tagalog language, Clamor's native tongue; and Filipino musical sensibilities, as found in the *kundiman* genre.[106]

Figure 9. Charmaine Clamor singing at the Kauai Concert Association (2013). © Aze Media.

[105] Olivia J. Quinto, "Seduction, Jazzipino Style," *Filipinas* (San Francisco, United States: Filipinas, January 2009), 31.
[106] John Clark, "Charmaine Clamor - Flippin' Out," *IAJRC Journal* 41, no. 4 (December 2008): 80.

Though Clamor did not receive formal training in singing or in jazz performance, she was exposed to jazz as a child in the Philippines. Her parents worked at the Subic US naval base in the province of Zambales, Philippines. American music was brought into the base and her parents brought it home, where Clamor notes that they played jazz, opera, and *kundimans* every day. As a result, Clamor was exposed to the voices of Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Mario Lanza. In 1988, Clamor and her family immigrated to the United States when she was sixteen. After graduating high school, she started going to school to become a physical therapist and also worked at a karaoke bar as a hostess. The karaoke bar was her outlet for singing, which is where Bobbie Garcia, the director of Crescendo, a Filipino jazz harmony ensemble, heard Clamor sing. In 1996, she joined their group in performing all over Southern California, as well as releasing an album in 2004.[107]

Clamor's second album, *Flippin' Out* (which, if spoken fast, sounds like "Filipino"), is her form of radical imagination through the jazzipino genre that she developed. Clamor's work is not as radical or consciously extreme as Ho's hybrid approach to free jazz. Clamor takes certain jazz standards and reimagines them with Filipino sensibilities that convey her world and her identity. This is evident in the first song of the album, "My Funny Brown Pinay" (*Pinay* is slang for Filipina/x woman). "My Funny Brown Pinay" takes the jazz standard "My Funny Valentine" and reworks it as an ode to Filipina/x's beauty. In the spoken introduction to the song, Clamor states in her sultry, alto voice:

[107] Quinto, "Seduction, Jazzipino Style," 31.

> Take a look at my skin
> It's brown.
> Take a look at my nose.
> It's flat.
> This is for all my sisters growing up thinking they don't look right, 'cause
> they ain't white, scrubbing with papaya soap
> to make it light...I think you're out of sight. You are beautiful.

In Filipino culture, Filipinxs are taught that a dark skin complexion is ugly, which has caused many to try to bleach their skin with whitening cream or papaya soap. Colorism, discrimination against someone with darker skin, is a mindset carried from Spanish colonialism as those with dark complexions were closer to their indigenous roots rather than their colonial oppressors. Lighter skin pushes the association that a person is "civilized," that they are not "savage." This mentality of having fairer skin dehumanizes those with darker skin, and it is still a problem today as it is evident amongst those in the entertainment and pageantry industries of the Philippines.[108] Before singing the melody of "My Funny Valentine," which is sung in English, Clamor provides a mantra for the Filipina/x listener:

> Maganda ka [You are beautiful]
> Ikaw ay Indio [You are an Indio]
> Ikaw ay Pilipino [You are Pilipino]

These Tagalog words provide a preview to the listener of what is to come in the B section of the song, which is done mostly in Tagalog:

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[108] Rey E. de la Cruz, Penelope V. Flores, and Delia R. Barcelona, "Why 'White Is Beautiful' Among Filipinos," *Positively Filipino | Online Magazine for Filipinos in the Diaspora*, March 30, 2022, http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/why-white-is-beautiful-among-filipinos.

In 1521 Magellan "claimed" us for the King of Spain.
For 500 years we were "conquered."
Tayo ay kanilang naging pag-aari ng limang daang taon [We were conquered for 500 years]
Ng limang daang taon [for 500 years]
Dito nagsimula ang ating paniniwala na kinakailangan nating maging katulad ng mestiza o mestizo [This started the belief that we needed to look like mestizas or mestizos]
I was once a victim of this illusion.
Naging biktima rin ako [I was once a victim of this illusion]
Nung ako ay maliit pa pilit kong binubura ang aking kayumangging balat ng kung anu-anong krema o sabon [When I was young I tried every cream and soap to erase/lighten my brown skin]
Pango kong ilong, pinagtatawanan [They laugh at my flat nose]
Kinamumuhian [hated it]
Ngunit hindi na ngayon [But not anymore]
Ako kayumanggi [I am brown]
taas noo [proud]
Pilipino

The use of Tagalog is a tool of radical imagination, which provides Clamor with a way of reasserting her identity through her native tongue. “My Funny Brown Pinay” is not the only piece in the album that uses Tagalog. A majority of the album is sung in a Filipino language, including the last song, “Be My Love,” which is an English song that Clamor bases on Mario Lanza’s version as a tribute to her mother. “Be My Love” contains some Tagalog translations that Clamor provides herself. In response to some people fearing that using multiple languages in her album would be “too world” or too foreign that it would deter American listeners, Clamor states that “that’s the way I wanted to present myself.”[109] According to testimonies gathered by Olivia J. Quinto, who wrote an article on Clamor, the *Flippin’ Out* album was received with great reviews.[110]

[109] Quinto, “Seduction, Jazzipino Style,” 31.
[110] Ibid.

Aside from reimagining American songs, Clamor reimagines Filipino songs as well to fit her identity. For instance, she provides a "Filipino Suite" made up of five traditional and well-known kundimans, which are reimagined in jazz styles: "Panahon Na/Hindi Kita Malimot," "Usahay," "Minamahal Kita," "Sa Ugoy Ng Duyan," and "Dahil Sa'yo." The first piece, "Panahon Na/Hindi Kita Malimot," begins with a call and response to those listening—"Panahon Na!" [It's Time!]—with kulintang instruments[111] playing fast-paced rhythms in the background to add to the intense call to action. However, after about a minute, it becomes mellower and the accompaniment switches to a jazz rhythm section supporting Clamor singing the song to the kundiman, "Hindi Kita Malimot" [I cannot forget you]. The next song, "Usahay" [Sometimes], which is sung in Bisaya (the language of the Visayan islands, central Philippines) instead of Tagalog, features the ukulele playing of Abe Lagrimas, Jr., which highlights the hapa-haole songs of the 1920s and 1930s, popularized by Andy Iona.[112] "Minamahal Kita" [I love you] brings back the rhythm section that evokes the nostalgia of 1950s jazz and pop songs, such as that found in Louis Armstrong's recording of "Dream a Little Dream of Me" (1950). Given that this is a traditional Tagalog lullaby, "Sa Ugoy Ng Duyan" [lit. In the Rocking of the Cradle] (official title: The Sway of the Baby Hammock) it is appropriate that it opens with Johannes Brahms's famous German *lied* (song), "Wiegenlied" [cradle song], op.49, and then goes into the familiar melody of the Tagalog kundiman played by Richard Ickard on the guitar.[113]

The last song of this Filipino Suite, "Dahil Sa'yo" [Because of you], is by far one of the most familiar songs to Filipinxs in both the Philippines and the diaspora because of its performative use by President Ferdinand Marcos's wife, Imelda Marcos.[114] In her article, "*Dahil*

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[111] Filipino gong and drum instruments, normally played as an ensemble.
[112] Clark, "Charmaine Clamor - Flippin' Out," 80.
[113] Clark, 80.
[114] Currently, she's the mother of the current President of the Philippines.

Sa Iyo: The Performative Power of Imelda's Song," Christine Bacareza Balance introduces Imelda Marcos as a former performer of politics by analyzing how effective her singing and contribution to the arts was during her husband's presidential reign. Imelda Marcos's ability to use her feminine charms to deceive the Filipinx people was an asset to President Marcos's power in government, which is shown through her *palabas*. *Palabas* is the outpouring of internal emotional expression in order to achieve an equally expressive response. Imelda Marcos's *palabas* was her ability to sing. For instance, the Marcoses' musical repertoire when performing at political events were songs sung in the non-Tagalog vernacular to cater to rural residents in the provinces of the Philippines rather than to those in the urban or metropolitan areas. Another aspect of *palabas* that Balance analyzes is Marcos's use of crying in a public performance. Crying is a culturally acceptable performance technique in the Philippines because it speaks to the melodramatic element of Filipino imagery as evident in some religious functions, folktales, or plays, such as the *sinakulo*/*senakulo* (Christian passions). "Dahil Sa'yo" emphasized Marcos as a "star and slave" to the Filipinos. Although Marcos used "Dahil Sa'yo" to win over the hearts of the Filipinxs at the beginning of her husband's campaign and presidency, this song turned them away later on as her *palabas* were not strong enough to cover years of deceit and lies.[115]

[115] Christine Bacareza Balance, "Dahil Sa Iyo: The Performative Power of Imelda's Song," *Women & Performance* 20, no. 2 (July 2010): 119–40.

Figure 10. Marcos Family (1965). © Getty Images.

For Clamor, who grew up during the martial law era, this song is a reminder of all the misfortunes that occurred under the Marcos regime. The "constitutional authoritarianism" of Marcos's martial law shifted from formal mass arrests to extrajudicial killings within the first five years. All forms of pro-democracy efforts were suppressed, and police and military brutality reigned during this period.[116] Even the US government, which initially supported Marcos's first presidential campaign, stopped supporting him in an effort to protect their military bases.[117] However, Clamor's rendition of this song attempts to provide a positive meaning and association that pays tribute to the time period when this kundiman was written.

[116] McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*, 397–98.
[117] Hawes, "United States Support for the Marcos Administration and the Pressures That Made for Change," 33.

“Dahil Sa’yo” (1938)

Tagalog Lyrics	English Translation
Sa buhay ko’y labis	In my life that exceeds in
Ang hirap at pasakit,	Hardship and pain,
Ng pusong umi-íbig	From a heart that loves,
Mandi’y walâ ng langit	That knows no heaven
At ng lumigaya.	And joy.
Hinango mo sa dusa,	You save me from suffering
Tánging ikaw, Sintá,	Only you, my love,
Ang áking pag-asa.	Are my hope.
Dáhil sa‘yo,	Because of you,
Nais kong mabuhay.	I wish to live.
Dáhil sa‘yo,	Because of you,
Hanggang mamatáy.	Until I die.
Dapat mong tantuin,	You should realize,
Walâ ng ibang giliw,	There is no other love but you,
Puso ko’y tanungin,	Ask my heart,
Ikaw at ikaw rin.	It is you and only you.
Dáhil sa‘yo,	Because of you,
Ako’y lumigaya,	I will be joyful,
Pagmamahál	Love
Ay alayan ka,	Is offered to you,
Kung tunay man ako	If it is true
Ay alipinin mo	Then enslave me
Ang lahat ng ito’y	Everything in my life
Dáhil sa‘yo!	Is because of you!

Miguel Verlade, Jr. composed the kundiman “Dahil Sa’yo” in 1938, during the Commonwealth era of the Philippines. This was a time in which the power of government was transferred from the United States to the Philippines, and there was hope that the country could become truly independent.[118] Traditionally, Filipinx composers during and after the period of revolution composed songs with either active or passive consciousness with politics in mind.[119] Even though the Philippine nation was striving for independence and national identity during this

[118] This was temporarily thwarted by the Japanese invasion during WWII, but they did officially become an independent nation in 1946.
[119] Leon, “Poetry, Music and Social Consciousness,” 274.

transitional period, popular music was still heavily influenced by American culture that was still being imported to US naval bases. Because of this, kundiman music composed during this time period not only became a standard art genre that was pushed by the efforts of Nicanor Abelardor and Francisco Santiago,[120] but some composers, such as Verlarde Jr. composed kundimans to resemble tin pan alley songs, the music that was being imported to the Philippines, which made them broadly popular.

"Dahil Sa'yo" has been performed by many Filipinx singers and even foreigners such as Nat King Cole, who famously sang this as an encore piece at his 1961 concert in the Philippines at the Araneta Coliseum.[121] Clamor's rendition of the song, however, is in direct opposition to Marcos's rendition of the song. In an interview with Liane Hansen on NPR, Clamor states, "so when I redid this song, I'm hoping, if we swing it enough, Liane, that we could rob it from the old ghost of the Marcoses and bring it back to the people where it belongs."[122] By reimagining "Dahil Sa'yo" and other kundimans within jazz styles, Charmaine Clamor asserts her identity by reclaiming her personal history and turning negative associations into positive ones, which represents one aspect of the Filipinx American identity.

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[120] Santos, *Tunugan: Four Essays on Filipino Music*.
[121] Anderson, "Kundiman Love Songs from the Philippines," 102.
[122] Charmaine Clamor, Charmaine Clamor's "Jazzipino" Swing, interview by Liane Hansen, radio, November 11, 2007, https://www.npr.org/2007/11/11/16160313/charmaine-clamors-jazzipino-swing.

CHAPTER 4: Gangster of Love: Rocky Rivera - The Real & Unapologetic

Similar to jazz, hip-hop became a platform for artists to use in response to the everyday problems that plague their community and life. Though the genre initially centered itself within the party scene, hip-hop found that the qualities of its music and spoken word rapping could be used to explicitly convey socio-political messages consciously to the hip-hop artist presenting them. This was especially true for Filipinx Americans on the West Coast as it provided a space for the youth of that community to express their thoughts and ideas in their music. Rocky Rivera is one such artist that grew up in the Oakland hip-hop scene. She uses her skills as an MC to fight misogyny, racism, classicism, and other social injustices with post-colonial consciousness. Compared to the other two artists presented in previous chapters, Rocky Rivera's performance is the most direct and explicit in conveying these kinds of messages, thus representing another aspect of the Filipinx American woman.

Hip-Hop's Connection to Activist Ideologies on the West Coast

Hip-hop as a culture emerged in the South Bronx, New York City, in the early 1970s. Hip-hop included three artistic movements that shared and engaged within the same urban space: disc jockeys, emcees/MCs, and breakin' (break dancers).[123] These artistic movements all stemmed from the Black Arts movement of the mid-1960s but were mostly used by Black and

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[123] Justin Williams, "Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity," *Lied Und Populäre Kultur / Song and Popular Culture* 56 (2011): 137.
Older discussions of scholarship and media on hip-hop may include graffiti as part of the hip-hop culture, such as the case with Williams. However, recent discussions in the past decade have argued otherwise.
Paul Edwards, *The Concise Guide to Hip Hop: A Fresh Look at the Art of Hip-Hop, from Old-School Beats to Freestyle Rap* (New York City: St. Martin's Press), 13 - 17).

Latinx youth in the “localized urban spaces” of the streets within the boroughs.[124] Some of these spaces included block parties, which were centers of this early hip-hop culture, where disc jockeys scratched vinyl records to create a unique rhythmic beat and a mash-up of tunes that hyped the party scene, break dancers took turns showing off their moves, and MCs rapped over music with fast-paced soliloquies. Though hip-hop started as a form of live entertainment within inner-city party culture,[125] the commercialization of it as a musical genre through the form of records and mixtapes has forced it to undergo many transformations. This would develop into notable subgenres that would reflect various social practices. Sugarhill Gang’s song “Rappers Delight,” released in 1979, was the first time hip-hop music reached a national audience outside of New York City.[126]

West Coast hip-hop developed in large metropolitan areas up and down the coast of California and Washington State. From major cities such as San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, West Coast hip-hop developed its own identity as a subgenre of hip-hop and dispersed into other sub-subgenres that reflected the populations with which it interacted. Like hip-hop in the South Bronx, hip-hop on the West Coast developed in localized urban spaces. There may have not been many block parties for hip-hop to thrive in,[127] but one could find DJs and B-Boys in garages, backyards, churches, school gyms, or wherever a party or celebration took place.[128]

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[124] Murray Forman, *The ’Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 41.
[125] Felicia A. Viator, “West Coast Originals: A Case for Reassessing the ‘Bronx West’ Story of Black Youth Culture in 1980s Los Angeles,” *American Studies* 58, no. 3 (2019): 90, https://doi.org/10.1353/ams.2019.0042.
[126] Williams, “Historicizing the Breakbeat,” 142.
[127] Joe Mathews, “Insight: Californians Avoid Block Parties. Here’s What Happened When I Went to Mine.,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 1, 2019, sec. Opinion, https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/article/Insight-Californians-avoid-block-parties-14871629.php.
[128] Oliver Wang, *Legions of Boom: Filipino American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 9, https://www.scribd.com/document/257559634/Legions-of-Boom-by-Oliver-Wang.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, racial tensions and activism for social justice have made huge impacts in all areas of art. Because the West Coast saw many young adults from all backgrounds and ethnicities participate in the Third World Liberation Front movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the Black Panthers, there was a sense of ideology and activism still present on the West Coast, especially in academic institutions and in metropolitan areas. These social justice activist ideologies developed long before the 1970s. As early as the 16th century since the days of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, African and African American slaves and supporting abolitionists have constantly resisted slavery, with 19th-century activists such as Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Henry Highland Garnet, and Sojourner Truth.[129] Before any discussions of the relationship between these ideologies with hip-hop, it is necessary to examine the connection between these revolutionary movements and funk, hip-hop's predecessor and influence as a musical genre.

The mid-1960s to early-1970s saw soul, disco, and funk as popular music genres in the US. Funk music developed as a new genre of music that was rhythmic and danceable as it emphasized the "groove" in the bassline rather than the melody or chords. This was very popular in the African American community, with James Brown being credited as the innovator of the genre.[130]Amidst racial tensions at the height of the Civil Rights movement, funk became known as a form of protest music for being more confrontational in its explicit and unapologetic nature in comparison to soul. James Brown's "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)" was a call to action that immediately resonated with the Black Community. Because of this, the record

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[129] Margaret Washington, "Going 'Where They Dare Not Follow': Race, Religion, and Sojourner Truth's Early Interracial Reform," *The Journal of African American History* 98, no. 1 (2013): 48–71, https://doi.org/10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.1.0048.
[130] Kesha M. Morant, "Language in Action: Funk Music as the Critical Voice of a Post—Civil Rights Movement Counterculture," *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 1 (2011): 73–74.

industry and white audiences deemed this "consciously ghettoized funk," and expelled it to Black radio and communities, as noted by Brown himself in 1994.[131]

There is a clear connection between funk's protest association and the conscious quality of hip-hop. This connection is evident with the birth of hip-hop, which is famously attributed to DJ Kool Herc. On August 11th, 1973, DJ Kool Herc created a technique that provided a continuous flow of breakbeats, using the middle sections of James Brown's "Give it Up," "Turnit a Loose," and The Incredible Bondo Band's "Apache."[132] Hip-hop's use of funk is what attracted Oakland to be one of the largest hubs of hip-hop on the West Coast because of its association with social justice. According to KQED, a public radio station in San Francisco's Bay Area, the strong, lingering presence of activist ideology in the Bay Area, especially in Oakland, is one of the primary reasons why hip-hop thrived on the West Coast early on.[133] Though funk and hip-hop are strongly associated with the Black community, other minority communities, such as the Latinx and Asian American minorities, felt a connection to these genres as well because of the social rights ideology associated with them.

Filipinx Americans & West Coast Hip-Hop

When hip-hop made its way to the West Coast in the late 1970s, Filipinx American youth found themselves gravitating towards the hip-hop scene through DJing because DJs were an important part of Filipino parties. These parties, which included the DJ, their crew, and their audience were an integral part of the recreational activities of the Filipinx American community

[131] Ibid.Morant, 74.
[132] Williams, "Historicizing the Breakbeat," 137–38.
[133] Eric Arnold, "The Bay Area Was Hip-Hop Before There Was Hip-Hop," *KQED*, February 1, 2023, https://www.kqed.org/arts/13924126/the-bay-area-was-hip-hop-before-there-was-hip-hop.

at the time, and they were widely known as the *Filipino American mobile disc jockey scene.* Though mobile DJing on the West Coast was better associated with the Filipinx American community, it was not exclusive to them. According to Oliver Wang, there were other communities of color that participated in mobile crews, such as Latinx Americans, African Americans, and Chinese Americans, however, the extensive support of family and community is what propelled Filipino hip-hop to thrive.[134]

Figure 11. Filipinx Bay Area DJ scene (ca. 1980s). © Suzie Racho.

The hip-hop culture of the 1970s included DJing, MCing, and breaking (break dancing). Why did Filipinx Americans gravitate towards DJing and not other forms of hip-hop culture? In most aspects of hip-hop, certain performative mediums of the genre are closely linked to notions of identity and authenticity, which is especially true of MCs who not only showcase their talent and skills as rappers, but they project their image and reputation as well. For Filipinx American

[134] Wang, *Legions of Boom: Filipino American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area*, 10.

youth, it was easier to gravitate towards DJing and breaking[135] because they would be evaluated solely on their skills and talent rather than be judged on their race or compared to African Americans.[136] In Antonio T. Tiongson's 2013 book, *Filipinos Represent: DJs, Racial Authenticity, and the Hip-Hop Nation*, the racialization of MCing is caused by the mass commodification of rap as its entry into the mainstream heavily conflated hip-hop with rap, and its intensified association between blackness and MCing. Tiongson, via Racquel Z. Rivera's research on this topic, presents that the linguistic and musical dimensions of hip-hop are reasons for the African Americanization of hip-hop. The Hip-hop Nation Language (HHNL) or hip-hop vernacular features African American Vernacular of English (AAVE) that reflect and expand African American oral traditions.[137] As a result, elements of hip-hop that were not narrowly racialized, such as DJing and break dancing, provided a space for the involvement of non-black youth. This is why Filipinx Americans took to those performative mediums of hip-hop.

"Call to Arms:" Filipinx Americans' Use of Conscious Hip-Hop as Resistance

> *"Load 'em up, Load 'em up. This is the time, Our people rise up. Tired of poverty, Tired of drugs, Tired of building a nation of thugs. How many centuries have to go by? How many of our people should die? We the people is a god damn lie, We the people is a god damn lie." - "Call to Arms," Rocky Rivera.*

The social justice movements of the late-1960s and early-1970s did not entirely relate to the influx of immigrants into the US as a result of the Immigration Act of 1965. However, the Filipinx American youth of the West Coast, where many immigrants settled into developed Filipinx communities, could not avoid the socio-political aspects of hip-hop. Why would they

[135] Paolo Bitanga, "The Filipino Flows of Logistx and Ronnie," Red Bull, March 23, 2022, https://www.redbull.com/us-en/ronnie-logistx-filipino-flows; Villegas, Mark Redondo, "Savage Vernacular: Performing Race, Memory, and Hip Hop in Filipino America" (Dissertation, Irvine, University of California, Irvine, 2015), 2–3.
[136] Tiongson Jr., *Filipinos Represent*, 21.
[137] Tiongson Jr., 19–21.

care about social justice? For most, it was a reality that started from the civil injustices enacted by President Ferdinand Marcos's Martial Law that caused many families to leave the Philippines in hopes of a better life in places such as the US or Canada. This reality carried through with them to the States as discrimination and assimilation became their new reality as immigrants and children of immigrants.

In his work, Oliver Wang presents three eras of Asian American popular music, however, the focus of this research is on the period from 1990 to beyond. In this section of his article on the genre of hip-hop, Wang observes that the identity of Asian Americans as a whole has changed due to the Immigration Act of 1965. Prior to this act, second and third generations of Asian Americans had already settled and largely assimilated into American culture; Wang identifies these as the first and second eras. The generations from these two eras participated, directly and indirectly, in the Asian-American civil liberties movement of the 1960s and 1970s that was influenced by the Black movement of the 1960s. However, because this third era was made up primarily of immigrants, their identity as a group drastically changed. This is evident among the different hip-hop groups formed by Asian Americans. Some groups used hip-hop intentionally to promote political messages of social justice, while others did not actively present their Asian heritage for the purpose of making hip-hop/rapping a career.[138]

Filipinx Americans rappers experiencing post-colonial consciousness intentionally used hip-hop to promote social justice. Anthony Kwame Harrison sees hip-hop as an ideal musical vessel for the Filipinx Americans on the West Coast to present their post-colonial consciousness. He describes it as a movement developed from the circulation of Filipino studies found on university campuses, where discussions of Filipinx American history, identity, and

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[138] Oliver Wang, "Between the Notes: Finding Asian America in Popular Music," *American Music* 19, no. 4 (2001): 455–61, https://doi.org/10.2307/3052420.

discrimination took place amongst students.[139] Harrison argues that because these discussions were taking place outside of the classroom, there was an active need for formal Filipino studies within academia to continue these discussions. Because of this need, Filipinx American students have found that knowledge-building traditions could be found within the performative mediums of hip-hop.

Filipinx Americans, active in hip-hop, saw MCing as a way to explore their post-colonial consciousness more explicitly in the same oral traditions that African Americans used in the 1970s and 1980s. However, Filipinx Americans as MCs did not start appearing until the very late 1990s and/or early 2000s. Instead, earlier accounts of Filipinx Americans using hip-hop to express this consciousness recognize the DJs skilled in turntablism. The concept of radical imagination centers itself within the consciousness of Filipinx American hip-hop. In their 2016 book, *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America (Refiguring American Music*, Balance discusses the inspiration of Afro-futurism that inspires the futuristic reimagined music that is present in the turntablist group, Invisbl Skratch Piklz. From 1989 to 2000, this group of Filipinx American turntablists performed acts of refusal through their scratches and musical techniques that play into a science fiction trope of extraterrestrials, which parallels their experience as foreign immigrants ("aliens") in the US. By playing on the science-fiction trope of aliens within a futuristic space, Invisibl Skratch Piklz created abstract forms of music that disassembled a song's structure and instead created new layers of sonic meanings through "violent yet carefully precise gestures of scratching."[140] The musical style produced by Invisbl Skratch Piklz is not for the entertainment of the audience, but rather its abstract refiguring of multiple sounds represents a reimagined identity that they have created for themselves.

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[139] Harrison, "Post-Colonial Consciousness, Knowledge Production, and Identity Inscription within Filipino American Hip Hop Music," 42.
[140] Balance, *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America (Refiguring American Music)*, 46.

When Filipinx Americans began MCing as a way to express their post-colonial consciousness, they developed conversations that expressed different aspects of their frustrations with the socio-political issues associated with their community, their multi-colonial history, and the hybridity of being Filipinx and American. Some topics that Filipinx American MCs interact with through their rapping express these frustrations. These include the special relationship between the US and the Philippines and its impact on Filipinx being recruited to the military (mainly the Naval branch); the intergenerational trauma stemming from a multi-colonial history; the status of being an immigrant family with a working-class background; the stereotypical and racist attributes associated with their skin color; and so on.

Figure 12. Invisbl Skratch Piklz (ca. 2000). © Invsibl Skratch Piklz.

As an example, Allan Pineda Lindo, also known professionally as apl.de.ap, is one of the founding members of the hip-hop group, the Black Eyed Peas. Lindo is an immigrant having been born in Angeles City in the Philippines to a Filipina mother and an African American father, who abandoned the family shortly after his birth. He later was adopted by an American lawyer, who sponsored his education and career. In 2003, "The APL Song" was released, which describes the rapper's return home to the Philippines.

"The APL Song" (2003)

[Chorus in Tagalog]

Lapit mga kaibigan at makinig kayo
Ako'y may dala-dalang, balita galing sa bayan ko
Nais kong ipamahagi ang mga kwento
Ang mga pangyayaring nagaganap
Sa lupang pinangako

[English Translation]

Come closer my friends and listen
I bring news from my homeland

I want to share with you stories
about the events that are happening
in the promised land.

This song represents the Filipinx diaspora that Lindo connects himself to because of the special connection that the diaspora has with its home country. The Filipinx population in the US is more than just an ethnic minority group; they are a diaspora with significant transnational relations back to their home country, which can be seen through *balikbayan* [to return to the home country] visits and sending goods back home.[141] This connection between diaspora and home is also shown through his Tagalog chorus interwoven with his English verses. In her phonological analysis, Tseng argues that when a rapper utilizes bi- or multilingual styles in their hip-hop language, they are intentionally racializing themselves in order to reassert their identity.[142] Lindo appears to be a Black male on the surface, but internally, he shows he is Filipino through his fluency in Tagalog, his heritage, and his struggles. Though Lindo and a few

141 Juan, "The Filipino Diaspora," 257; Devitt, "Lost in Translation."
142 Tseng, "Resistance, Consciousness, and Filipina Hip Hop Identity: A Phonological Analysis," 60–61.

other Filipinx American rappers have used multiple languages in hip-hop as a way to reassert their racialized identity and express their experiences as one, there are other Filipinx Americans that find other strategies of doing so without rapping in another language aside from English. Rocky Rivera is one such rapper.

Gangster of Love: Rocky Rivera

> *"Don't say Fili, sister. Say Pili. In Tagalog, pili means to choose. Pino means fine. Pilipino equals 'fine choice.'"* - Jessica Hagedorn, *The Gangster of Love* (1996).

Jessica Hagedorn, a known Filipina American author, wrote a book, *Gangster of Love* (1996), that explores the perspective of a young Filipina American immigrant struggling to settle in her new life in the US. The protagonist, Rocky Rivera, arrives on a ship with her mother and brother in 1970s San Francisco as a teenager. She graduates from high school and moves to New York to start a rock band with her boyfriend and best friend. The struggles of maintaining a band and the struggle of being away from family causes Rocky to go back and forth (like a yo-yo)[143] between her identities of being American and Filipina. The book shows the internal struggle through interspersed memories of her life in the Philippines. It ultimately comes full circle when Rocky returns home to the Philippines after her mother's death to be with her dying father.[144]

A decade and a half later, Krishtine De Leon took on the persona of Rocky Rivera as a hip-hop artist, defying the marginalization of Filipinx Americans and women rappers. Before De Leon became known as the rapper, Rocky Rivera, she was mostly known as a journalist, an activist, and an educator in Oakland, California. De Leon studied journalism and took ethnic studies courses at San Francisco State University. Afterward, she became the editor-in-chief of

[143] The yo-yo, an invention attributed to Filipino American immigrant, Pedro Flores, is symbolic in this novel.
[144] Jessica Hagedorn, *Gangster of Love* (New York City: Penguin Books, 1996).

Figure 13. Rocky Rivera and DJ Roza (2017). © Fred Garcia.

the independent hip-hop magazine, *Ruckus*, and later as an editor/writer with *Rolling Stone*,[145] *The Source*, and *XXL* with notable interviews from the Wu-Tang Clan, DMX, and Gnarls Barkley.[146] Her experience as a journalist in the Bay Area hip-hop scene provided her a lot of insight into the hip-hop industry which is steeped in misogynistic portrayals of women and rarely explores the progressive politics that has influenced rap and hip-hop.[147] Though she still writes for several magazine outlets and is a youth mentor around the Bay Area, she is best known as a conscious rapper, Rocky Rivera.

Rocky Rivera's career as a rapper started in 2009 with the release of her mixtape, *Married to the Hustle*, followed by her self-titled 2010 album, *Rocky Rivera*. In a 2012 interview with Anna Sterling published in *Feministing*, Rivera reveals that much of what she raps in this album pays tribute to the Bay Area and West Coast hip-hop music that has influenced her music

[145] *Rolling Stone or Rolling Home*, I'm from Rolling Stone (New York City: MTV, 2006), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HPp6yrysvU.
[146] Rayanne Piaña, "Rocky Rivera on Rapping Her Way into Pinay Warriorhood," *East Bay Express*, October 12, 2016, https://eastbayexpress.com/rocky-rivera-on-rapping-her-way-into-pinay-warriorhood-2-1/.
[147] Rocky Rivera, "How a Small, Mighty Independent Magazine Propelled the Hyphy Movement," *KQED*, February 8, 2023, https://www.kqed.org/arts/13924828/rocky-rivera-ruckus-magazine-hyphy-movement-hip-hop.

(i.e. Public Enemy, Snoop Dog, 2Pac, etc.) and to the feminist heroines who have influenced her mindset (Gabriela Silang, Angela Davis, Dolores Huerta, Ella Baker, etc.).[148] When she describes her music, she notes that it is the connection between Lauryn Hill, Public Enemy, and West Coast beats.[149] To Rivera, hip-hop culture is multi-faceted in its uses rather than a reflection of what is happening in the "'hood." It is a culture that allows her and others, especially urban youth, to relate to different things in order to find a voice and an identity.[150]

Though most of her music and albums cover similar topics of post-colonial resistance, feminism, social injustices, and nostalgia, the focus of this section will be on her second album, *Gangster of Love* (2013), and her song "Air Mail." *Gangster of Love* offers an additional tribute to Hagedorn's book, which Rivera has noted is one of her favorite books, and its songs cover subjects such as resisting the post-colonial mindset in "Gangster of Love," defying colonialism in "Call to Arms," countering misogynistic perspectives in "Names," and critiquing police brutality in "No Love."[151] It is not all political, however, as Rivera also pays tribute to other, more positive subjects, such as to her nostalgic Bay Area roots in "Still," and her "potna" [partner], fellow conscious, FilAm rapper, Bambu in "Shine."

As mentioned above, the model minority myth is the notion that Asian Americans have to overcome a certain struggle or challenge in order to achieve the American Dream.[152] In an interview conducted by Bischoff, Rivera notes that Filipinx Americans yearn to embody the stereotypes associated with the model minority because they feel a need to be included.[153] The

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[148] Rocky Rivera, The Feministing Five: Rocky Rivera Pt. II, interview by Anna Sterling, August 11, 2012, https://feministing.com/2012/08/11/the-feministing-five-rocky-rivera-pt-ii/.
[149] Bischoff, "Expression of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice.," 95–96.
[150] Bischoff, 105.
[151] J. John "DJ AFOS" Aquino, "Rocky Rivera — Gangster of Love (Album Review)," *The Word Is Bond*, November 12, 2013, https://www.thewordisbond.com/rocky-rivera-gangster-love-album-review/.
[152] Tseng, "Resistance, Consciousness, and Filipina Hip Hop Identity: A Phonological Analysis," 70.
[153] Bischoff, "Expression of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice.," 163.

low socioeconomic statuses that are experienced by most Filipinx Americans on a daily basis have become normalized due to “backward understandings of meritocracy in the US.” This causes many FilAms to believe that they have to endure these struggles before achieving the imagined “American Dream.” Rivera realizes that “it wasn’t my fault and it wasn’t my parents’ fault and it was something that happened way before me [...] that’s when I was able to resist in the right way.”[154] These ideas are clearly expressed in her song “Air Mail.”

“Air Mail” (2013)

First Verse

Fly Pinay wit the hairdo bouncin’
7000 Islands, still countin’
Peace to Smoky Mountain
And all the children, livin’ in squalor
Prolly why my father wanted more
For his daughters...
I never knew why we left and how we came
Fresh out the motherland, fresh off the plane
5 years old, shit’ll never be the same
For this Philippine-born
Wanna-Be American
She decided right then
Lost her native tongue
So that she could fit in
Found hip hop, damn, where have you been?
Guess I left to find you
Hello, my new friend
I felt I couldn’t be me, whoever that was
Looking real silly to me
So I had look back for some answers
Can’t really know where you’re headed
‘Less you know about ya ancestors

Second Verse

Me and the ghetto are one
One in the same
We speak the same language
Of hardship and pain
No wonder why I struggled with friends
Couldn’t relate when they got a new Benz
At the age of sixteen
I was lucky, I guess
That my Pops stuck around for as long as he did
And my Moms toughed it out
They was holding me down
No choice but stay in school
‘Cause they all dropped out
It’s a family affair
And though we share the same blood
I was never aware
That we suffer from the same
Sickness from where we came
It’s the mind of a colonized
Brown Girl -Thang
You wouldn’t understand
But then, maybe you could
I spent so many years
Being misunderstood but now
Now it’s time to tell my story
Like the words in the hook
It’s time to tell my story
Like the words in the hook

[154] Bischoff, 164.

"Sa bughaw na buhangin..." [In the blue sand...] are the opening words and chorus to the song, which samples directly from Didith Reyes's recording "Bughaw na buhangin" from her 1977 album, *Nananabik* [longing]. After those four words, the song transitions to Rivera's first verse with a simple beat overlaid on the instrumental backing of Reye's song. The verses are rapped in first-person and appear to provide a background as to why Rivera and her family relocated to the United States from the Philippines. Rocky provides here a glimpse of the living conditions in the Philippines due to Martial Law that caused many Filipinx families to leave the country. However, as noted above in the verse, the impulse to assimilate pushed Rivera to stop speaking her native language and adopt English in order to fit in better with her new American peers. Despite this, she never really fits in socially or mentally as the post-colonial mindset and the immigrant struggle continue. The last thirteen lines express the realization of this post-colonial consciousness. After the second verse, the sample of Reyes's recording returns this time with four full lines: *"Sa bughaw na buhangin / Doon ako maghihintay / Abutin man ng takipsilim / Ang langit man ay magdilim..."* [In the blue sand, there I am waiting. If it reaches dusk, only the sky will turn dark...]. Afterward, a sample of President Ferdinand Marcos's speech declaring martial law through Executive Order 1081 was broadcasted on Philippine national television provided in English:

> "My Countrymen, as of the 21st of this month, I signed Proclamation No. 1081 placing the entire Philippines under martial law. [...] I, as your duly elected President of the Republic use this power which may be implemented by the military authorities but still is a power embodied in the Constitution to protect the Republic of the Philippines and our democracy."

The above speech was given on September 23rd, 1972, which meant the public had been unaware of the official proclamation which was signed on September 21st. Martial law began with the arrest of two main opposition leaders, Ninoy Aquino and Jose W. Diokno, as well as

400 other people by the military.[155] Using this and the direct sampling of the recording paints this picture of nostalgia that places the listener back into that time and place. Once that is established, the verses in English are reflective of that era and begin an introspective look at what happened.

This song alone features a lot of layers that describe the experiences of Filipinx American immigrants of the third wave of migrations after 1965. Many Filipinx left as soon as they could after martial law was in place, with many immigrating in the late-1970s and early-1980s. It seems as though the inclusion of Marcos's proclamation sample gives an explanation as to why Rivera and her family immigrated to the States. The inclusion of Reyes's recording is also noteworthy because it was the first time Rivera included something sung in Tagalog. Though Rivera is not the one singing or rapping in Tagalog, the inclusion of this sample recenters her identity and experience in the same way that Lindo and other FilAm rappers utilize multilingual hip-hop. Below, in Figure 14, is a chart that Tseng uses in her analysis of

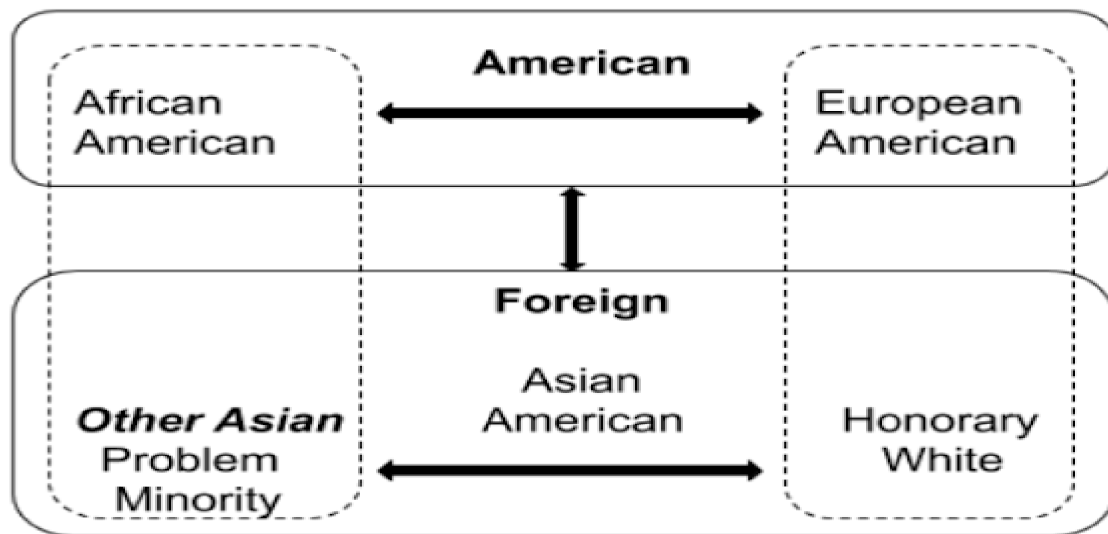

Figure 14. Angela Reyes's Asian Americans in US Race Discourse (2007).

[155] "Declaration of Martial Law | GOVPH," Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, accessed April 9, 2023, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/featured/declaration-of-martial-law/.

place hip-hop artists' identities based on their language use. According to Tseng, who analyzed Rivera's use of language in Ruby Ibarra's "Us" song, Rivera's hip-hop language is mostly monolingual and falls within the phonological features of African American English, which is common in hip-hop language.[156] Because of this, Rivera's identity would be placed on the left column towards the African American corner. However, using this chart in placing her identity, I believe that her use of Tagalog, even if she did not sing/rap it herself, reasserts her identity as "Other Asian." By using Tagalog in this case, it is enough to associate one's identity as Filipinx.

Figure 15. Rocky Rivera's *Snakeskin* (2021). © Rocky Rivera.

In addition, the use of these nostalgic samples that juxtapose the reflection of Rivera's post-colonial consciousness within her rap can categorize this song as a "popular lament," a term coined by Tadiar. In her analyses of these songs, Freddie Aguilar's "Anak," the Philippines's unofficial anthem, "Bayan ko," and Lindo's "The APL Song," Tadiar argues that the Filipino

[156] Tseng, "Resistance, Consciousness, and Filipina Hip Hop Identity: A Phonological Analysis," 60.

struggle, stemming from societal struggles affecting Filipinos in both the islands and in the US diaspora, is reflective of Filipino popular music. Such songs are categorized as "popular laments" that represent internalized issues of the country and its people, and the relationship one has with it. Tadiar's analysis shows that there is a cultural literacy within these songs that is transnational between the US and the Philippines. This is especially important due to the complicated history and relationship between these two countries.[157] As a result, Rivera's "Air Mail" can be considered a popular lament that allows for conversation amongst Filipinx Americans as a "musical lingua franca."[158] From these conversations, FilAms are able to reinsert their experiences back into the American political, cultural, and hip-hop histories.[159]

[157] Tadiar, "Popular Laments," 21–22.
[158] Devitt, "Lost in Translation," 127.
[159] Devitt, 128.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The history of Filipinx Americans is an interesting and unique story unlike that of other ethnic groups within the Asian American community. The colonial relationship between the US and the Philippines left a lasting consciousness amongst Filipinx Americans that juxtapose racism, sexism, and classicism. At times, Filipinx Americans can be considered as exceptional assimilationists of American culture and neo-liberal success. At the same time, however, they are considered inferior aliens, even within the Asian American demographic. In the United States, the dignity of being seen as an individual rather than as a representative of a group is a privilege available for whites rather than POCs.[160] Despite their best attempts to find a place in American society, the individual histories and identities of Filipinx Americans are erased.

This thesis examined the ways in which Lea Salonga, Charmaine Clamor, and Rocky Rivera use their music to construct their identity against Western portrayals of the Filipinx/a woman. By considering these women through their artistry and performance, they create a representation of themselves that challenges monolithic understandings of cultural groups, especially that of the Asian American model minority. I have chosen these three artists as a way to showcase the range of experiences of Filipinx/a American women, each of whom is active in different musical genres of popular music. Understanding the different approaches taken in their music and conscious performance illustrates a form of self-identification and individualism.

Though Lea Salonga had to endure the promotion of the "lotus blossom" trope on the world's stage with *Miss Saigon*, her "exceptional" performance has led her to more diverse roles that go against typical Asian and Filipinx stereotypes. Her singing role as *Mulan* promotes

[160] Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (Temple University Press, 2006).

heroism and the pursuit of one's happiness in Asian women, while her acting role in *Yellow Rose* normalizes and humanizes the experiences that most Filipinx Americans go through as immigrants and children of immigrants. Salonga may not have initially understood her importance as a pioneer Filipina actress with *Miss Saigon*, but it has allowed many Filipinxs and Filipinx Americans to have their chance at the world stage as well.

By combining her love of jazz and her Filipino heritage, Charmaine Clamor created a new style of jazz known as jazzipino. The combination of jazz rhythms and styles with the Filipino language and instruments presented in her album, *Flippin' Out*, is Clamor's use of radical imagination that convey her world and her identity. Her reimagining of "My Funny Valentine" into "My Funny Brown Pinay" is reworked as an ode to the Filipinx brown skin as many Filipinxs believe that having a fairer and whiter skin tone is more attractive. Through her "Filipino Suite," Clamor not only promoted Filipino kundimans to a mass audience, but she provided a positive meaning and association to some of the songs that present a complicated and devastating history for those struggling with their post-colonial identities. Clamor's use of radical imagination in her music allows others to consider hybridizing music in the same way for their own individual purpose.

Lastly, Rocky Rivera's use of spoken word rap as a Bay Area MC is more explicit in her approach to fighting Asian and Filipinx American stereotypes and promoting social justice for her community. Hip-hop music has been used as a platform for urban youth to find connections and relations of different things as a way to find one's identity and voice. Because hip-hop music and culture are multi-faceted in their use, Rivera is able to cover topics on post-colonial resistance, feminism, social injustices, and nostalgia through her music. With "Air Mail," Rivera highlights the struggles Filipinx Americans experience as third-wave immigrants to the US,

especially as a result of Marcos's Martial Law. Rocky Rivera is able to reinsert the Filipinx American experience back into the American political, cultural, and hip-hop histories through her use of sampling, multilingual hip-hop, and conscious rapping. This has allowed Filipinx Americans and other American women rappers to speak their histories and truths.

On a personal note, this research project stems from my desire to consider the role of identity politics within my own artistic practice. My pursuit and education in classical music performance do not represent the connection I have with other genres of music that I have grown up listening to — folk, jazz, pop, rock, and hip-hop. Listening to and performing the genres of music that surround my Filipinx-American community, I felt that investigating my strong attraction towards these genres would be a significant exercise of self-contemplation in my creative and academic life. As a second-generation Filipina American woman, it is profound to realize that various popular musical genres of American culture can be a platform for Filipinx and Asian Americans. It speaks to the spectrum of shared experiences held by those in the US and North America across racial categories. As it has been presented, popular music, jazz and hip-hop have the capacity to serve as platforms for anti-racist and cross-cultural melding that allows for American immigrants and POCs to shed their own individual histories within this Westernized society.

Lastly and most importantly, by participating in popular musical genres, Filipinx and Asian Americans are given a passage for integration into American and Western society without having to adopt the values of systemic oppression. When POCs interact in cultural exchange, it allows for the identification of shared experiences, values, interests, and goals. Filipinx and Asian participation in popular music genres in many ways contrasts the model minority myth as their experiences align more closely to those of African Americans and other minority groups,

rather than position themselves as a minority group that is assimilable and submissive. Through the exchange of cultural knowledge and practices across racial differences, racialized groups in the US are open to the pathway for healing and self-representation in creating a representation of themselves that overcome the oppressive stereotypes prevalent in white supremacist logic of American history.

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