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Magkita Tayo Doon, Let's Meet up There: An Ethnography on "Little Manila Avenue" in Woodside, Queens, New York City

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Abstract

How are ethnic diasporic identities formed in host countries? How does a multiethnic setting impact diasporic identity formation? Through an analysis of "Little Manila Avenue" in Woodside, Queens, this ethnography explores how Filipinos on Little Manila Avenue manifest and enable transnational connections to the Philippines and to other members of the Filipino diaspora. It contextualizes the material culture, intangible culture, and Filipino language use that are specific to the avenue within the practices of the Philippines and the Filipino diaspora by drawing from fieldwork conducted in October 2023 and the author's personal visits to Woodside as a Filipina-American. Guided by studies on Filipino-American communities, elements of material culture on the avenue were identified to explore the intangible Filipino diasporic practices that they index. Contextualizing Filipino products, cuisine, Christmas *parols*, boxes, signages, and public installations within wider Filipino diasporic practices revealed how Little Manila Avenue preserves the Filipino traditions of *balikbayan, bayanihan*, four month Christmas preparations, and ethnic kin networks. At the same time, it notes how those practices are shaped by historical and contemporary multiethnic encounters that occur within Philippine history and the 21st century setting of a multiethnic New York City urban streetscape. This study opens several paths to further research on urban interethnic relations, racial hierarchies, ethnic entrepreneurship, activism, and identity formation, making it a launchpad for further exploring Filipinos in New York City, other nodes of the Filipino diaspora, and urban interethnic interactions. At the same time that it opens opportunities for further research, it contributes to improving representation in Filipino American scholarship that is highly concentrated in Filipino communities on the West Coast.

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Introduction

Standing under the “Little Manila Avenue” street sign in 2023, I was puzzled that I had never noticed it before— until I learned that it did not exist only two years earlier. As a Filipina-American who grew-up shuttling between the Philippines and the United States, I had been to the Woodside neighborhood in Queens several times since the early 2000s. My family would often take me to a Filipino restaurant called “Ihawan” for Filipino food or to the Filipino fast-food chain “Jollibee” for its fried chicken and sweet spaghetti. However, I had never recognized the area as Filipino space; it looked and felt little like the places that I knew in the Philippines. Many of the sights that I associated with the Philippines were missing: street-side stores under corrugated metal, hawkers, motorcycles, *jeepneys*, *tricycles*, handkerchiefs, and flip flops.

Perhaps I did not recognize the signs of a Filipino diaspora in the area because I was not looking for them, or because they were so subtle that they were almost hidden. When I learned that “Little Manila Avenue” existed in New York City, I went back into the area actively searching for the pieces and signs of Manila that I knew, guided by studies on other Filipino diasporas in the United States. That was when I began to recognize Little Manila: the whispers of the language, taste of the food, sight of traditional decor, and access to the homeland through services like *balikbayan* (return trips) and *padalahan* (delivery). Found in posters, restaurants, convenience stores, cargo services, fast food chains, and bank branches (some seemingly transplanted from the Philippines to New York City), connections to the Philippines were interspersed among other ethnic business establishments on a highly multicultural commercial strip in Woodside. Although many of these Filipino businesses began between the 1970s and 2000s, my recognition of them, like the “Little Manila Avenue” street sign, has come many years

later. This experience generated the driving questions for this research: How is ethnic diasporic identity manifested and enabled in a place, particularly one as multiethnic as New York City?

My research on Little Manila Avenue is rooted in *place*: it focuses on what is visible and who occupies it. More specifically, it is an ethnography on a strip of Filipino commercial businesses referred to as "Little Manila Avenue." Located in Woodside, a neighborhood in one of New York City's most ethnically diverse boroughs, Little Manila Avenue is one of several immigrant business agglomerations along Roosevelt Avenue. Each of these ethnic agglomerations could be considered a stop on New York City's number-7 train line, also referred to as "International Express" (Department of City Planning of the City of New York 2013). The 69th-street train stop demarcates the beginning of a portal into Filipino cuisine (Manalansan IV 2010). My fieldwork on Little Manila Avenue was conducted on a Sunday in October of 2023, and it focused on three sites: the Phil-Am Food Mart convenience store, the Ihawan restaurant, and the Macro International Cargo agency. By describing and analyzing the signage, products, services, sounds, and sights of these establishments, I hope to bring into view the ways in which the Filipino diaspora makes meaning in the area.

Two questions drive this research: first, how the Filipino diaspora is manifested in the area; second, how Little Manila Avenue enables Filipinos to maintain connections to the Philippine homeland and other members of the Filipino diaspora. These questions are contextualized by the multiethnic environment of New York City. Spaces like New York City's Roosevelt Avenue are shared by various ethnic groups that must navigate multiple intercultural interactions within everyday spaces.

A study of Little Manila Avenue contributes to scholarship on both ethnic diasporas in general and the Filipino diaspora in particular. First, it illuminates how ethnic diasporas establish

their identity in the highly multicultural spaces of a host country. Second, it adds to scholarly knowledge on what happens to Filipino migrants in America and how they maintain connections to each other and to their homeland, particularly in New York City. The literature on Filipinos in the Northeast is scarce; most scholars trace the history of Filipino diasporas on the American West Coast, such as Filipino communities in San Francisco and Los Angeles. By highlighting an understudied group, this research contributes to a holistic view of the Filipino diaspora in the United States.

In order to explore expressions of the Filipino diaspora in Little Manila Avenue, this thesis overviews who Filipino-Americans are, what has been studied on them, Filipino migration to America, and influences on Filipino culture. Then, it crystallizes the specific Filipino-American experience on Little Manila Avenue by tying together my observations of the Avenue with background information and relevant literature. At the conclusion of my research, I found that Filipino diasporic identity is manifested on Little Manila Avenue through the material culture of the commercial streetscape— specifically the posters, products, and food —and enabled through the intangible diasporic traditions and values that those objects index. Materials on Little Manila Avenue are both objects for consumption and markers of intangible cultural practices, values, and histories that are shared and adapted across the Filipino diaspora such as *balikbayan, bayanihan,* and Filipino Christmas traditions.

Background

The Filipino diaspora refers to Philippine-born people who have emigrated overseas and their descendants. Filipino Americans, in particular, are immigrants to the United States of America from the Philippine archipelago and their American-born descendants. Within the United States, Filipino Americans are classified as Asian Americans for their ancestral ties to Southeast Asia (Domenech-Rodríguez 2003). Several Filipino American communities exist across the West Coast, the Midwest, and the Northeast regions of America, but New York had the third largest Filipino American population among other metropolitan areas in the United States in 2019 (Budiman 2021). Filipino immigrants maintain close ties with the Philippines through several means: *balikbayan* (returnee) visits to the homeland, *balikbayan box* and parcel delivery, remittances to financially support relatives in the Philippines, and consumption of Filipino news and entertainment through Filipino news channels and imported CDs (Okamura 1998). Regardless of their location, members of the Filipino diaspora maintain these ties to the Philippine homeland, its culture, and its history.

The Philippines

Composed of over 7,000 topographically varied islands, the Philippines is a nation and an archipelago that encompasses an ethnically diverse population. Between the resident mountainous, low-lying, and islander peoples, there are dozens of ethnolinguistic groups. Tagalog is the largest ethnolinguistic group: 1 in 4 Filipinos identify as Tagalog and 40% of Filipinos speak the Tagalog dialect (CIA.gov 2023). Most Tagalog-speakers reside in Manila (the country capital) and its surrounding areas (CIA.gov 2023). The two official languages of the Philippines are Filipino, based primarily on Tagalog but designed to incorporate the various dialects of the country, and English. In terms of religion, the Philippines is predominantly

Christian (78.8% Roman Catholic, 2.6% Iglesia ni Cristo, 3.9% other Christian) (CIA.gov 2023). A relatively small Muslim population (6.4%) is concentrated in the Southern region of the country (CIA.gov 2023).

With its high poverty rate, the Philippines is the source of a large emigrant population. Most of these emigres are legal temporary workers known as Overseas Foreign Workers or OFWs who often work in the service industry (typically as caregivers or domestic workers) but also work in skilled trades, construction, professional fields (such as nursing and engineering), and seafaring (CIA.gov 2023). OFWs often choose to work in the Middle East, East Asia, the United States, and Canada (CIA.gov 2023).

Migrants and the remittances that they send have been key elements of the Philippine economy. Since Filipinos began migrating to Hawai'i and the West coast of the US mainland in the early 20th century, the Philippine government has "encouraged and facilitated emigration, regulating recruitment agencies and adopting legislation to protect the rights of migrant workers" (CIA.gov 2023). Emigrants made up 10% of the Philippine population in 2017 (Asis 2017), and the money that they sent back in the form of remittances made up approximately 12% of the Philippines' gross domestic product in 2008 (Ang 2009). Among the overseas Filipino communities, Filipinos in the United States sent the largest portion (40.5%) of total remittances sent to the Philippines in 2022 (Venzon 2022). While remittances reduce poverty and increase living standards for migrant's families, they do not necessarily reduce overall poverty and inequality in the country (Ang 2009). Remittances can have the negative effect of increasing the income inequality of other households that do not receive additional overseas income (Ang 2009). The Philippine government has not been able to offset the benefits of overseas income; a "lack of sustained economic development, political instability, unabated population growth,

persistent unemployment, and low wages" combined with government policy promoting migration as a means of economic improvement has continued to push Filipinos to migrate abroad (Asis 2017).

A (Brief) Overview of the History and Elements Shaping Filipino Culture

Filipino culture has been shaped by a mixture of indigenous, Spanish, American, and nearby Asian cultural traditions. Members of the Filipino diaspora carry this culture, already fused with other ethnic elements, to their host countries and adapt new practices to it.

Spanish Empire

Officially called *Republika ng Pilipinas* (Republic of the Philippines), the Philippines was named after Spanish monarch King Philip II by Spanish explorers who found the islands in 1542 (Kroeger 2003). The indigenous kingdoms and tribal settlements on the islands that make up the Philippines were unified under three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule from 1565, when the first permanent Spanish settlement was successfully established, until 1898 (Kroeger 2003; Domenech-Rodríguez 2003). The Philippine islands were among several Spanish colonies, many located in regions of present-day Latin America (Burkholder 2008). They were also one of the last colonial holdings that Spain relinquished (Burkholder 2008).

Prior to Spanish colonization, indigenous settlements on the Philippine archipelago maintained trading linkages with merchants and sailors from China and Melaka (currently known as Malaysia) (Owen 2006). Spanish rule transformed the focus of trade in the islands by turning the Philippines into a port for exchanging goods between Mexico in the New World and China in Asia (Owen 2006). The success of the trade system in the central, low-lying city of Manila attracted an increasing number of Chinese, who developed long-standing communities in Manila

neighborhoods such as Binondo, influenced Filipino culture through dishes like *pancit* and *lumpia*, and marked the Filipino language through the label *Inchik* (Dolan 1939).

Spanish rule expanded and transformed the Philippines into the only Christian, predominantly Roman Catholic, nation in Asia (Domenech-Rodríguez 2003). The church and the Spanish colonial government were intertwined in governing the Philippines; financed by the Spanish Crown, missionaries both administered and converted rural regions (Dolan 1939). However, the conversion to Christianity was not uniform across the islands. Rather than completely reject indigenous religious beliefs, Filipino converts to Christianity merged their traditional beliefs with imported Christian principles (Dolan 1939, 100). For instance, each village or *barrio* had a patron saint, for whom they held mass followed by a social village feast called a *barrio fiesta* (Dolan 1939, 100). As another example, Filipinos would celebrate Christmas by attending nine nights of *simbang gabi* (evening mass) modeled after the Spanish nine-day *misa de gallo* (mass of the rooster, meaning mass when the rooster crowed before the break of dawn). For the procession towards *simbang gabi*, Filipinos would create and carry decorative lanterns called *parols*, which mimicked the Hispanic tradition of carrying light sources (such as candles) but were patterned after Chinese lanterns using Japanese paper (Dolan 1939, 100). Over time, the material used to make *parols* became more elaborate. Although Filipinos participate in a transnational Christian culture, their practices incorporate indigenous and other cultural traditions.

Lower levels of Spanish colonial administration that were not relegated to the church were performed by co-opted local elites, a strategy that the American colonial administration would later replicate. These elites, primarily from the *Tagalog*-speaking people who lived near the seat of the Spanish colonial government, received privileges from the Spanish colonial

government in exchange for their cooperation (Dolan 1939). Their children received higher education opportunities and sometimes studied abroad in Europe, bringing liberal, democratic, and nationalistic ideals to the Philippine islands. Known as *ilustrados*, these educated members of the privileged class became thought leaders in Philippine national independence and contributed to the development of national democratic values (Dolan 1939). Although less-educated lower and middle classes of the Philippines also generated movements for national independence, they pushed a more radical message than the *ilustrados* (Dolan 1939). As a result, the educated, elite *ilustrados* who were more willing to cooperate with the Spanish (and later American) colonial power would hold more influence in the formation of an independent Philippine nation.

Because of the archipelago's varied topography, the Spanish colonial government and Christian converts who were concentrated in the middle, low-lying region of the Philippines were distant from indigenous, polytheistic populations in other regions (Dolan 1939). This had several implications for religion, language, and migration in different regions of the country. Other religious traditions in the Philippines that predated Spanish colonization, such as those of the *Aetas* in the northern mountains and the Muslim *Moro* or *Bangsamoro* populations in the Southern region, resisted conversion to Christianity despite three centuries of Spanish influence (Domenech-Rodríguez 2003). The influence of the Spanish language was limited to the *tagalog*-speakers of the low-lying regions around Manila, the seat of the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines. Months, days, numbers (*sinquenta*, *kuwarenta*), times (*ala una* and *alas dos*), and some nouns (*trabajo* and *banyo)* became parts of the *Tagalog* dialect, but other dialects preserved indigenous forms of speech. Moreover, government-sponsored elite

migrants were more likely to come from low-lying areas around Manila and Luzon rather than the more isolated regions of the Philippine South.

The Impact of American Imperialism

The Philippine islands were transferred from Spanish to American control during the Spanish American War of 1898. Under American supervision, the Philippines became a self-governing commonwealth in 1935, briefly fell under Japanese occupation in 1942, and eventually emerged an independent republic in 1946.

Spanish rule in the Philippines ended and American control began with the Spanish-American War in 1898. Spanish colonies were revolting against Spain in the 1890s, and Americans were generally sympathetic towards the revolution in Cuba, then a Spanish colony. The Spanish-American War broke out when an American warship along the coast of Cuba exploded and was attributed to Spain in 1898. Inflamed by the explosion, the United States declared war on Spain (Dolan 1939). Part of the American military strategy to defeat Spain was to eject Spanish forces from the Philippine islands, concluding in the transfer of the Philippines to United States rule by the end of 1898. The American military initially partnered with Filipino rebels led by Christian, lower- to middle-class, *Tagalog*-speakers from Manila to defeat Spanish troops (Dolan 1939). However, victorious American treaty negotiations with Spain excluded Filipino rebel input and interest in independence, generating tension between Filipino rebels and American troops (Dolan 1939). Filipino rebels' dissatisfaction with the Spanish to American transfer of power resulted in a two-year war between Filipino and American forces (Dolan 1939). The capture and surrender of the Filipino leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, in 1901 officially concluded the conflict between Filipino and American forces (Dolan 1939).

The ostensible mission of American rule in the Philippines became transforming the country into a developed, independent nation in the image of America. This involved introducing and propagating a representative government system, public education, hygiene and health care reform, urban development, transportation infrastructure (for ports, train rails, and roads), cookbooks and canned foods, and forms of soft culture such as American film and music (Fernandez 1983; Salazar 2012). Much of Filipino fashion, music, and film was modeled after the media imported under American rule (Fernandez 1983). English was introduced as an official language, and emphasis on education was one of the primary ways that Americans introduced Filipinos to American values; whether through public schools established in the Philippines or Filipino students sponsored to study in the United States of America, the picture of an ideal and benevolent America was promoted to the Filipino imagination.

American development policies have had long-term results on Filipino migrants to the United States: Filipino immigrants in the 21st century are more likely to be proficient in English and more likely to hold a college degree than the overall foreign-born population in America (Davis and Batalova 2023).

Although American colonial rule introduced a representative government system to the Philippines, it also cemented elite power in the new government by co-opting the educated, wealthy, and conservative *ilustrado* elite who had collaborated with the Spanish colonial administration. *Ilustrados* secured positions at national-level legislative and judicial branches as well as at provincial level governorships. Filipino politicians sponsored by the American government established the first political parties in the Philippines, which were maintained and operated through kin networks and repayments of debts to power holders, such as landowners and politicians (Dolan 1939). Even after the United States recognized Filipino independence, it

continued to back former President Fernando Marcos and maintained strategic military partnerships with the Philippine government.

The United States officially recognized the Philippines as an independent nation in 1946 following World War II but has maintained a strategic military presence in the Philippines. The collaboration between Filipino and American troops during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in 1942 contributed to the establishment of close military ties between the Philippines and the United States in the form of base agreements: the United States could keep military troops on the base and exercise legal jurisdiction over the area and its inhabitants, including Filipinos into the 1990s. While American jurisdiction over the bases has been limited from the 1990s into the 21st century, the American and Philippine governments maintain military relations to protect sea-based commercial trade routes in Southeast Asia (U.S. Department of State 2022).

The Philippines and the United States of America have maintained close military, political, and economic relations into the 21st century. The two countries hold joint military training exercises annually and have the world's longest continuously running Fulbright program. Moreover, the US is one of the Philippines' top three trading partners and largest foreign investors (U.S. Department of State 2022). Each country has a sizable population living in the other country, and their country-to-country and people-to-people relationship without any major barriers is highly conducive to migration.

Filipino Migration to America

Filipino migration to America, which became the foundation for Philippine government policies promoting emigration to various countries abroad, can be divided into seven periods (Nadal 2022). The very first period of Filipino migrants to the United States began under Spanish

colonization in the 16th century, when enslaved ship workers escaped from Spanish galleon ships to the American continent between the 15th and 19th centuries. The second wave of Filipinos who migrated at the turn of the twentieth century, as the Philippines was transferred from Spanish to American colonial rule, were mainly sponsored educated elite called *pensionados,* many studying in the American northeast (Nadal 2022). The American colonial administration sought to quell Filipino opposition following the Philippine-American war by exposing Filipinos to American values. They sponsored Filipinos from elite families (usually already involved in the government) to study in some of America's top universities (such as Columbia, Cornell, MIT) in order to return to the Philippines to share what they had learned (Nadal 2015). Given that the Philippines was an American colony, Filipino migration to the United States was considered "internal migration." During the third period of Filipino migration from the 1900s to the 1930s, Filipino migrants held the legal status of American "nationals," able to enter the country without the restrictions applied to other Asians in the 1920s in order to fill the labor vacuum in the American West Coast (Nadal 2022). Filipino migrants were often farmworkers (*sakadas*) found in a migratory labor circuit along Hawai'i plantations, US farms, and Alaskan salmon canaries (Mabalon 2013). More *pensionados* also arrived, inspired by the first group from elite families, but this batch did not come from the same wealthy background as the first batch of *pensionados* (Nadal 2022). These migrants mainly settled in West Coast cities like Stockton, San Francisco, LA, Salinas, Watsonville, and Seattle (Nadal 2022).

Although Filipino migration was restricted in the fourth period (1930s to 40s), it grew in the fifth (1940s to 60s) and sixth (1960s to 80s) periods through subsequent reforms in migration policy. The largest wave of Filipino migrants to America was facilitated primarily through the 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished racial preferences in immigration legislation and

promoted the entrance of migrants based on skill (Nadal 2022). Many of these immigrants established urban and suburban communities in California, Chicago, and East Coast areas such as Philadelphia, New York City, Jersey City, and Hampton Roads (Nadal 2022).

The seventh period of Filipino migration to the US extends from the late 1980s to the early 21st century. While skilled Filipino laborers such as health care workers continued to migrate to the US, migration policy reform in this period primarily impacted undocumented Filipino migrants by granting amnesty to undocumented migrants in the USA (Nadal 2022). Filipino Americans in this period of migration are characterized by higher per capita incomes than other Asian Americans, higher education rates than both the native- and overall foreign-born populations, occupational downgrading, as well as growing cultural renaissance and activism (Nadal 2022).

The Beginnings of Woodside's "Little Manila Avenue" in New York City

The wave of Filipino migration to New York City, particularly to Woodside, began in the 1970s as a product of national migration policy reform and dire financial circumstances in New York City. By the 1970s, Woodside was dominated by white Irish, Italian, and German populations (Allison 2020). The 1965 Immigration Act changed the basis for migration from a quota system that favored European immigrants to standards that facilitated a new wave of immigrants from Asia and Latin America through skilled labor and family reunification (Allison 2020). Not long after the migration reform, New York City underwent a financial crisis in the 1970s. The housing market crashed and the value of housing stock in Woodside declined as middle-class white residents fled the neighborhood, rendering houses affordable for new migrants (Allison 2020). As a result, new waves of migrants from Asia and Latin America, such

as groups from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Mexico, who arrived post-1965 were able to secure homes in neighborhoods like Woodside.

Like the Filipino communities on the West Coast that emerged decades earlier in the 1920s, the Filipino community in New York City's Woodside that emerged in the 1970s was driven by labor migration. As areas like Hawaii, California, and the West coast of the US mainland experienced agricultural labor shortages in the 1920s, Filipino labor migrants arrived, worked as farmers, and developed communities like "Little Manila" in Stockton (Mabalon 2013). Early Filipino agricultural labor migrants were facilitated by the colonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines, which remained an American colonial holding for several decades from the 1890s until the 1940s. Even as an independent republic, Filipino labor migrant flows from the Philippines to the United States remained entrenched. The colonial legacy between the United States and the Philippines in the early 20th century "normalized labor migration as a means of social and economic mobility," and neoliberal globalization that accelerated in the late 20th-century led the Philippines to develop "a sophisticated state apparatus that facilitates migration and encourages OFW remittances" (Castro-Palaganas 2017). In the 2010s, the Philippines was the world's second largest exporter of human labor, particularly exporting a large amount of health care workers (Castro-Palaganas 2017).

The post-1965 wave of Filipino labor migrants to Woodside and to New York City was primarily made-up of nurses. At the same time as the housing-market declined in the 1970s, New York City's hospitals underwent a nursing shortage (Treaster 1978; Allison 2020). Filipino nurses were recruited to work at these hospitals; by the 1990s, 72% of Filipino immigrants to New York City were registered nurses (CUNY 2022). Rising numbers of Filipino healthcare workers migrated to the US since the 1990s:

> Annually, 17,000 to 22,000 health professionals leave the Philippines to work abroad, most of them nurses who represented 29% of the total number of migrant HRH [human resources for health] from 1993 to 2010. In 1998, almost 85% of all nurses were employed overseas compared to only 15% employed in the country. (Castro-Palaganas 2017, 4)

Pushed by the high levels of poverty in the Philippines— where almost one third (26.5%) of the population live below the poverty line (Castro-Palaganas 2017, 2) —and an underfunded public healthcare system, Filipino nurses were pulled to the United States by better salaries, professional advancement opportunities, and higher quality of practice (Castro-Palaganas 2017). The benefits of the large-scale out-migration of Filipino healthcare workers, such as nurses, are debated: while some say that their emigration drains the Philippines of the human resources necessary to address the health needs of the Philippine population, others say that the return of Filipino emigres facilitates a transfer of medical knowledge and practices (Castro-Palaganas 2017).

One of the clear consequences (or benefits) of the large-scale emigration of Filipino healthcare workers— and laborers in general —is remittances. Remittances boost the Philippine economy and enable the Philippine government to repay its foreign debt by injecting overseas money into the country (Castro-Palaganas 2017). Remittances also directly impact labor migrant's families in the Philippines; in the 2010s, between "one third and one half of the Philippine population is dependent on remittances to sustain themselves" (Castro-Palaganas 2017). While remittances serve as a significant source of financial support in the Philippines, they also contribute to dependence on overseas workers and an increase in Filipino diasporic communities such as those in Woodside.

Review Of Literature

Mapping the field: What has been studied on Filipino Americans?

Scholarly work on Filipino Americans is scattered across different disciplines. Scholars have written about Filipino Americans from within the fields of history (Mabalon 2013; Punzalan 2006), ethnicity (Espiritu 2003, 1995, 1994), race (Ocampo 2016, 2014), gender and sexuality (Ocampo 2014; Espiritu 2016, 2001; Nititham 2016), psychology (Nadal 2020), and religious organization (Manalang 2018). Many of these scholars spill into more than one field. Ethnographers of specific Filipino American communities include Okamura (1998), who studied migrants in Kalihi, Hawaii, and Manalang (2018), who studied a Philippine-American ecumenical Church in Detroit, Michigan. Historian Dawn Mabalon's book, *Little Manila Is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* traces its subjects from the 1980s to the 2010s, and it seems to be the most cited study of a specific Filipino American community. Another other widely cited work about a specific Filipino American community comes from historian Linda España-Maram (2006), who wrote the book *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s*. Yen Le Espiritu, a prominent scholar who authored two books on Filipino Americans in 2003 and 1995, built her work on interviews that she conducted with Filipino Americans from the city of San Diego, California. After surveying the literature, I found that some of the most prominent scholars of Filipino Americans have centered their work on communities in California and the West Coast. Although recent work has been done, studies on Filipino Americans in New York, the Northeast, and the Midwest are relatively scarce.

Filipino American studies set in the East Coast have primarily been sourced from donated community documents and have taken the form of documentary history. In 2016, the Filipino

American National Historical Society Metropolitan New York Chapter released a book called *Filipinos in New York City*, which was edited by psychologist Dr. Kevin Nadal. Documenting the history and lives of Filipino Americans in New York City through a collection of photographs and captions, the book is part of a wider series of documentary histories by Arcadia Publishing called *Images of America*. The series includes books on Filipino Americans in Greater Boston (Talusan 2023), Greater Philadelphia (Silva 2012), and Washington D.C. (Cacas and Lott 2009). Books on Filipino Americans in the midwest region are included in the Arcadia series as well, but research on Filipino Americans (and Asian Americans more broadly) in the Midwest is even more scarce than research on Filipinos on the East Coast. Monica Trieu's *Fighting Invisibility* (2023) seems to be the only book that focuses solely on Asian Americans in the Midwest. The Arcadia series highlights specific Filipino American communities, like those in the East and Midwest, that are underrepresented in the wider literature on Filipino Americans.

Filipino Americans in Asian American studies

Within the broader, interdisciplinary field of Asian American studies, Filipino American scholarship is scarce relative to work on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans (Okihiro 2005). In *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (2005), Gary Okihiro identifies Asian American studies as a branch of American studies "focusing, like all of ethnic studies, on the racialized peoples of the United States" (xiv). Okihiro also asserts that the field of Asian American studies itself replicates the "hierarchies of ethnic groups, especially the dominance of East Asians (particularly the Chinese and Japanese over Koreans and South and Southeast Asians); of geographies in California's centrality over places to its east, north, and west; and of the racial formation that excludes or adds on gender and sexual formations" (xvi) by privileging certain subjects, locations, and methods of study.

In *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (2005), Okihiro not only attempts to clarify and define the boundaries of Asian American studies but acknowledges its limitations. He underlines that because the discipline's center of gravity is the United States of America, it does not conceptualize Asian Americans from global frames such as *transnationalism* and *diaspora*. Rather, Asian Americans are studied as racialized people within the United States of America.

Filipino Americans as racialized people

The role of racialization in shaping Filipino American identity is particularly highlighted by historians such as Paul Kramer and Dawn Mabalon. In *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (2006), Kramer emphasizes the role of race in the formation of the Filipino state and American empire. Throughout his work, Kramer traces race as a flexible concept that was redefined and utilized by both Americans and Filipinos as a political tool for demarcating and negotiating power between Americans and Filipinos, Filipino Christians and non-Christians, and elites and indigenous populations.

In her book, *Little Manila Is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (2013), Mabalon illuminates the "historical processes of racialization and the cultural transformations that turned provincial Filipino immigrants into Filipino Americans" (6). She argues that while Filipino immigrants arriving in Stockton were racialized as "despised brown others" by their host society, they also brought their own ideas about race and ethnicity emerging from American colonization of the Philippines and ties to their class, region, province, and town in the Philippines.

Mabalon explicitly states that her arguments rest on Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theory of *racial formation*, which she summarizes as the idea that "Racial categories are 'created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed'" (7). Another scholar of Filipino Americans who engaged

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theory of *racial formation*, particularly the idea that race is a social formation, is Allan Punzalan Isaac. In *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (2006), Isaac frames the wider historical phenomenon of US cultural and economic imperialism as an influential, racializing force forming Filipino American identity.

According to Mabalon (2013), Filipino immigrants in Stockton, California were racialized throughout the 1980s and 2010s through antimiscegenation laws, labor market segregation that confined them to agriculture and domestic work, and their unique status as both non-citizen colonial wards and US "nationals" unfit to be naturalized. At the same time, Mabalon asserts that Filipino immigrants brought their own fluctuating ideas about race and ethnicity. She recounts how, under the American colonial regime, Filipinos were divided into politically-competent, state-building Christians and politically-incompetent non-Christians. Mabalon asserts that, given this fact, Filipinos preferred associations with people similar to them from their hometowns. One of the overall arguments of Mabalon's book is that Filipino-Americans developed their own community and thrived in Little Manila, Stockton, by coping and reconciling these racial and ethnic fluxes and tying their concepts of race to space and place, which are also emerging themes in the wider field of Asian American Studies (Okihiro 2005).

Filipino American and Asian American spaces

According to Okihiro's survey of Asian American studies in *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (2005), the California-centric, urban, East Asian spaces such as Japantown which dominate scholarship in the area are not representative of all Asian American spaces. He underscores that Asian American space is shaped by "both social and historical"

forces (135), where social forces could refer to racialization or ethnic affiliation and historical forces could refer to unique circumstances and histories.

Defining "Community"

Defining Asian American space as a *community* immediately raises debates about how to define a community. In the *Handbook of Ethnography* (2001), an anthropological guide to one of the key research methods in anthropology and sociology, Lodewijk Brunt examines the changing concept of community, the kinds of community studies that can be identified, and the contributions they bring to sociology and anthropology. According to Brunt, many early 20th century scholars of community studies emphasized the role of place and assumed the formation of a social group based on a bounded location, such as an isolated rural village. They defined the "pure" community, which is an autonomous and isolated group of people living "as nearly as possible on the same social and financial plane," (West (1945) qtd. in Brunt) as the paradigm of community studies. According to Brunt, 20th-century scholar Park argues that even in an urban setting, the neighborhood— as the smallest unit of the city —is a bounded location inhabited by people who live similarly. Brunt points to Park's work as the basis for the Chicago School of Sociology and their theory of the *ethnic enclave.*

Daniel Hiebert (2015) summarizes the Chicago School's concept of the *ethnic enclave* in his research institute report, which considers Canadian government policy on migrant settlement through statistical analysis of Canada's three most highly immigrant-populated cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver from 1996 to 2011. According to Hiebert, Chicago Sociologists argued that newly arrived immigrants gravitate towards *enclaves,* which they defined as places (such as urban neighborhoods) where immigrants can adjust to their new society in the company of other immigrants. Chicago Sociologists, according to Hiebert, noted that within the enclave,

institutions such as religious communities, mutual aid societies, and ethno-religious schools and markets for ethno-specific goods, local services that are typically labour intensive, and job opportunities for immigrants excluded from the mainstream market emerge (Hiebert 2015). Hiebert (2015) states:

> The Chicago School believed firmly in the process of assimilation, asserting that newcomers needed enclaves when they arrived but would leave them when they became fluent in the host language and improved their employment situation. (4)

According to Hiebert, the Chicago Sociologists believed that assimilated migrants would leave the *enclave* to move into better and more mixed residential areas; the *enclave* would serve as a transit point towards assimilation. Heibert points out that the Chicago school's concept of the *ethnic enclave* fails to account for circumstances where immigrants stay in the *enclave*, and highlights the Chicago School's underlying assumption that "there is a connection between the spatial arrangement of society and social relations within it" (3).

In reviewing the definition of *community* over time, Brunt (2001) finds that the consensus within community scholars on a paradigmatic pure, untouched community rooted in place was uprooted by changes in the late 20th century. During this period of change in the 1970s, the concept of the *imagined community* emerged. Brunt recounts how anthropologists' informants moved from the countryside to the city as part of larger processes of migration and urbanization, leaving the geographical bounds of their hometowns yet retaining a strong feeling of belonging and loyalty to the local community that they were physically separated from. In studying this phenomenon, scholar Benedict Anderson (1991) found that the foundations of these communities are often invented or *'imagined*.' Brunt quotes Anderson: "In the minds of all people you will find images of the communities -especially nations – they feel they belong to although they 'will

never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them'" (83). This belonging, premised on the idea of a community rather than a physical proximity to a community, contributed to the conceptualization of ethnic diasporas.

Conceptualizing Filipino-Americans

Jonathan Okamura (1998) built on Anderson's concept of *imagined community* as a group of people unbounded by physical space in order to model and apply the concept of *diaspora* to Filipino Americans. Okamura argues that as a *diaspora*, Filipino Americans imagine or even materialize connections not only to the Philippines but to other Filipinos across the globe through "various circulations of people, money, goods, and information" (11). Connecting to Anderson's *imagined communities*, Okamura also notes that Filipino Americans who identify as Filipino compatriots, also called *kababayans,* 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them'" (11). Thus, Filipino Americans imagine connections to a broader Filipino diaspora.

Okamura's *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora: Transnational Relations, Identities, and Communities* (1998) is one of the first major works to study its subjects from a transnational perspective. Although Okamura acknowledges attempts within Asian American studies to encompass these realities, the editor of the *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, Gary Okihiro (2005), emphasizes that Asian American studies does not conceptualize Asian Americans from a global frame. Rather, it documents the evolution of knowledge production on Asian Americans within the United States. However, Okihiro acknowledges the importance of a global frame, stating that Asian migration to the United States cannot be disentangled from "[t]ransnationalism's realities in world history, including expansionism, economic and cultural exchanges" (xiv). Erica Lee's *The Making of Asian America* (2015) is an

example of one scholarly work that attempts to tell Asian American history, and Filipino American history within it, from a transnational perspective. Rather than focusing solely on how immigrants are received and impacted by American society, Lee also attempts to write from the perspective of immigrant Asian ethnic groups. Another example of a transnational history that traces one particular type of Filipino immigrants to the United States— healthcare workers —is Catherine Ceniza Choy's *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003). Choy's work ties the 21st-century labor hierarchies navigated by Filipino nurses in the United States to the legacies left by American imperialism in Philippine history, such as American health training and English proficiency. The Asian American immigrant experience is about more than the events that occur upon arrival in the host country; it is tied to the meaning and histories of their homelands and Asian immigrants in other countries. Lee and Choy's works exhibit the economic and cultural exchanges that occur across space and time between America and the Philippines.

While presenting the Filipino American *diaspora*, Okamura (1998) identifies two major analytical lenses with which to think about Filipino Americans: first, as an *ethnic minority* subordinate to the host society, specifically American society; second, as a *diaspora* that actively maintains linkages to the Philippine homeland. These two lenses pinpoint the interstitial space between global and local American forces. The first analytical lens that Okamura identifies for studying Filipino Americans is as an *ethnic minority*; this is a lens that is only possible when Filipino Americans are viewed as an ethnic group that is marginalized from the perspective of American society. In other words, this lens is synonymous with the field of Asian American studies that Okihiro defines. Okamura critiques this lens, arguing that it inherently subordinates Filipino Americans to an American framework that often marginalizes and fails to acknowledge

the breadth and depth of the Filipino American experience as a continual, transnational linkage. At the same time, he pushes forward the second analytical lens: Filipino Americans as a *diaspora* that maintains connections across national borders. Lee (2015) and Choy (2003) keep this perspective in focus in their work on Asian American history. Whether conceptualized as diaspora or ethnic minority, Okamura emphasizes that Filipino Americans create and maintain relationships across space, time, and ethnicity that raise questions about how Filipino American communities are constructed and expressed.

While conducting fieldwork on Filipinos in Kalihi, Hawaii in 1979, Okamura (1998) found that Filipino immigrants continued to maintain close ties with their relatives in the Philippines through several means: *balikbayan* (returnee) visits to the Philippines, *balikbayan box* and parcel delivery, and remittances for financial support. At the same time, they continued to consume news and entertainment through Filipino news channels and imported CDs of Filipino films. Businesses that capitalized on these means emerged, importing Filipino goods and specializing in services like *balikbayan box* delivery and remittances (Okamura 1998). These businesses reflected the traditions of the Filipino diaspora and enabled the Filipino diaspora to maintain connections with the Philippines.

Methods

The case study for this paper is an ethnographic study of a strip of Roosevelt Avenue known as "Little Manila Avenue." Roosevelt Avenue is a 5-mile throughway located in the upper west section of New York City's Queens borough, an urbanized and densely constructed section of New York City. The strip known as Little Manila Avenue extends from 70th street to 58th street and consists of the Filipino establishments located within this section. The Woodside neighborhood within which Little Manila Avenue is located also has a significant Filipino residential population. This case study focuses on the commercial streetscape of Little Manila Avenue in order to explore how the Filpinos manifest, enable, and maintain connections to the Filipino diaspora and the Philippines in the area.

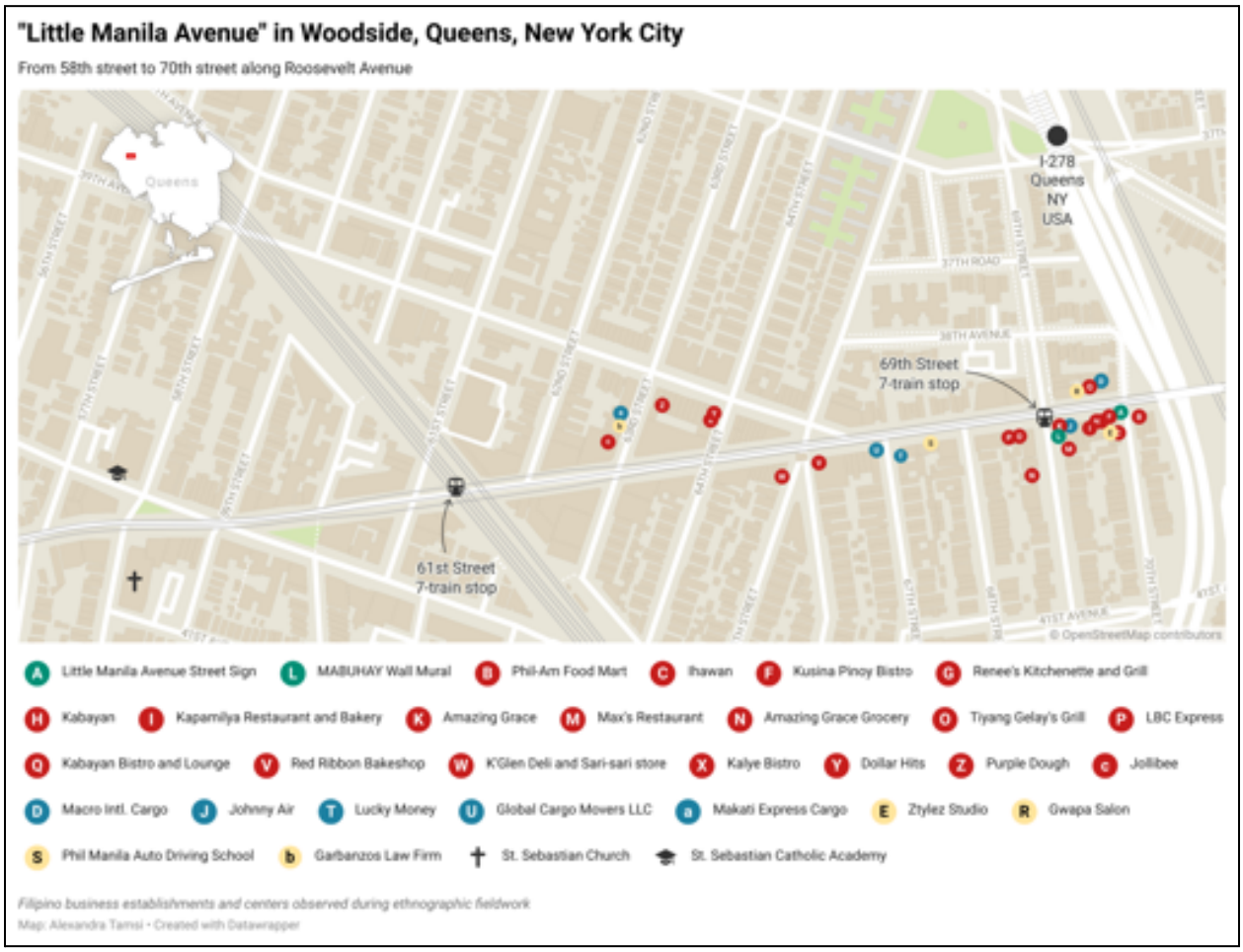
The ethnographic data for the case study comes from fieldwork that I conducted on a Sunday in October, 2023. During fieldwork, I walked from 70th street to 58th street and focused on observing three Filipino business establishments: the Phil-Am Food Mart convenience store, the Ihawan restaurant, and the Macro International Cargo agency. All three business establishments are located between 70th and 69th streets on the block known to have the highest concentration of Filipino business establishments in New York City ("Little Manila" 2022). They also represent three different types of Filipino business establishments that are present on Little Manila Avenue: a restaurant, a convenience store, and a shipping agency.

My prior, personal experiences as a Filipina-American also supplement the fieldwork that I conducted in order to illuminate Little Manila Avenue as a Filipino diasporic space. Guided by other scholarly works on Filipino diasporic communities, particularly Jonathan Okamura's (1998) study on Filipino diasporic practices in Kalihi, Hawai'i, I draw on past visits to Little

Manila Avenue to contextualize my personal experiences and fieldwork observations on Little Manila Avenue within the wider Filipino diasporic experience.

Figure 1.

Filipino Establishments of Little Manila Avenue from 58th street to 70th street identified by the author. Map by Alexandra Tamsi. Made using DataWrapper (https://www.datawrapper.de/_/W9T2a/).



Case Study

Part I."Little Manila Avenue" in Woodside, Queens, New York City

Attached to a post below the overhead 7-train railings on the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street is a street sign with the label "Little Manila Avenue." It marks one end of a strip of Filipino restaurants, shipping services, and convenience stores extending along Roosevelt Avenue. The other end is marked by the Saint Sebastian Church on 58th street, where some Filipinos in the area attend Catholic mass. The signpost itself is pockmarked with stickers and paper advertisements written in English and Spanish, hinting at the variety and density of ethnic establishments found along Roosevelt Avenue: a cluster of Filipino, Latino, Chinese, Himalayan, and Nepalese restaurants, bars, delis, tax services, legal services, salons, driving schools, groceries, and convenience stores packed into adjacent one to three storey mixed-use buildings. Store awnings, tarpaulins hanging above awnings, posters in glass display windows, and small sheets of paper glued to building walls advertise services in the roman alphabet, Nepalese script, and Tibetan script. Cars, buses, and bikes continuously move up and down the

Figure 2. "Little Manila Avenue" street sign.

Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

two-lane street, adding to the sensory volume of the strip while the number-7 train rumbles overhead. As one moves farther away from the "Little Manila Avenue" street sign and closer to the St. Sebastian Church, Filipino establishments give way to other businesses, reappearing every now and then on the main avenue or side streets to remind the pedestrian of their presence.

On an autumn weekend in 2023, I went to "Little Manila Avenue" to conduct fieldwork. Accompanying me was my father, a Filipino in his late forties who migrated to the United States in the early 2000s. Both of us had been to this area of Queens several times, sometimes with family friends from cities in Connecticut like Stamford and Norwalk, to grab a Filipino meal that we would not have to cook ourselves. The car we often drove from Connecticut to Woodside was parallel parked on 69th street, beside three Latino men chatting by a bent bike stand. Across the street seemed to be a Latino church called "Jesucristo Es El Senor." On the corner of 69th street and Roosevelt Avenue stood the Nepalese-fusion restaurant "Momo Crave," a salon, a deli, and a collection of Latino shops— the "El Trono Cafe," "Notaria Hispana & Multiservices," and "Marion's Bakery and Coffee." Turning the corner from 69th street onto Roosevelt Avenue, Little Manila came into view: the tarpaulins, posters, glass display windows, and store awnings. All of these mediums that indicated a Filipino presence were crammed into the adjacent two-to three-storey mixed-use buildings that lined Roosevelt Avenue (so crammed that I did not notice most of them during visits prior to conducting this research). Across the street on the southeast corner of 69th and Roosevelt, a wall-mural welcomes people descending from the 7-train overpass and stepping off the New York City bus to Little Manila Avenue with the word "*Mabuhay*," a Filipino greeting that both welcomes and advises guests to be well.

That Sunday afternoon, temporary tents selling Filipino goods shared sidewalk space with the Latino food truck selling Cuban sandwiches on the block. They sold traditional sweets

like *biko, cassava cake, suman, puto, sapin-sapin, banana que,* and *buko pandan*, street food like pork barbeque and *isaw* are also on sale, and beverages such as *kalamansi* juice, *sago't gulaman.*[1] Snippets of Filipino conversation were audible as people bought and sold on the sidewalk or exited stores:

Bili po kayo! (Please come and buy!)

Pabili ng… (Could I buy…)

The people passing by are dressed in American clothing that is casual for 2020: sweatshirts, jogging pants, jeans hoodies, sneakers, and caps. The Filipino passerby are not distinguished by appearance but by other markers: the stores they visit, what they purchase, and their use of the traditional language.

A large, middle-aged looking man comes up behind my father while we look at a stall called "Purpleicious Sweets." He begs for money or food in Filipino. He has a loud voice but speaks quickly and kind of fumbles over the words. This was not the first time; he had come up to my father when we were in the area before. Panhandling is common in the Philippines, where a person on the street might approach a car stuck in traffic, knock on the window, peek through and jingle a plastic cup with coins to indicate their purpose. I had never seen a panhandler in the Philippines come up so close to another person as this man had come to my father. Moreover, I had never seen a Filipino panhandler in America besides this particular man. He eventually gives up and leaves.

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[1] *Biko* is a rich, chewy rice cake made with coconut milk, brown sugar, and sticky rice. *Cassava cake* is a creamy cake made of grated cassava, coconut milk, and condensed milk with a custard layer. *Suman* is a rice roll made from glutinous rice cooked in coconut milk, often wrapped in banana leaves, coconut leaves, or palm leaves for steaming. It is usually eaten topped with sugar or browned and concentrated coconut milk. *Puto* is a bite-sized muffin made from rice powder. *Sapin-sapin* is a three-layered sticky, glutinous cake made from rice flour. *Banana que* refers to caramelized native-bananas served on a skewer. *Buko pandan* is a green, pandan-flavored dessert made from coconut milk, gelatin, pearls, and shredded coconut flesh. *Isaw,* which is grilled pork intestines served on a skewer, is a common street-food in the Philippines. *Calamansi* is a native Philippine citrus fruit similar to an orange. *Sago't gulaman* is a sweet, sugary drink mixed with *sago at gulaman* (pearls and gelatin).

I strike up a conversation with a Filipina selling traditional desserts at the stall called "Purpleicious Sweets." She asks me, "Are you Filipino?" I respond with "*Opo,*" a Filipino word equivalent to "yes" in response to an elder or respected figure.[2] She smiles and rests a hand on my arm as if to say *Ah, thank goodness I recognized you.* She tells me that she didn't want to assume because, in her eyes, I "looked a little Spanish." (Many of the Filipinos I meet often refer to Latinos as "Spanish.")

I ask her, "*Saan po yung restaurant ninyo*?" (Where is your restaurant located?) She tells me that they do not have a restaurant, but that they do orders and deliveries.

"*Taga saan kayo*?" (Where are you from?), she asks us.

"Connecticut," my dad replies.

"*Ang layo!*" she exclaims, then another woman selling desserts at the stall chimes in.

"Greenwich?" she asks. She tells us that her *alagas* (the younger ones she cared for) had grown up in Greenwich and wanted to see her, so she visited the town not too long ago.

"*Magkita tayo doon* (Let's meet up there)," she tells us with a smile. Although ethnic familiarity among friendly Filipinos generally fosters trust, I was still surprised by her willingness to see us again. Perhaps our purchase at their baked goods stall, our physical closeness to her *alagas,* and her relief at correctly distinguishing me as a Filipina in a multiethnic space where physical appearance is not such an easy ethnic marker had all factored into her positive opinion of us. We were ethnic kin, customers, and (probably) tied in her mind to her *alagas* all at once.

[2] Filipino speech practices, such as appending the word "po" to the end of sentences addressed to respected figures and using "opo" as a more formal and respectful form of "yes," call for Filipino-speakers to adjust their speech according to their position relative to their interlocutor.

Figure 3. The two women who sold Filipino baked goods at the "Purpleicious Sweets" stall on Roosevelt Avenue on October 3rd, 2023. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi.

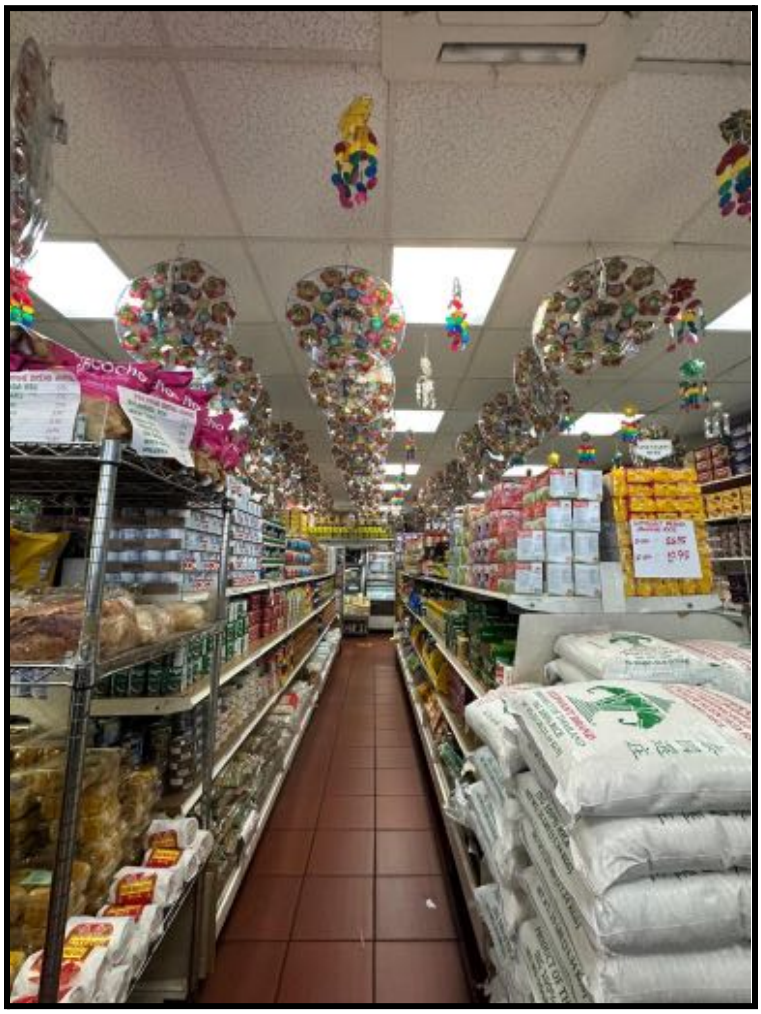
Phil-Am Food Mart

The Phil-Am Food Mart sits across from the "Little Manila Avenue" signpost on the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street. The store sign awning reports its establishment year as 1972. The paint is peeling a little on the outside, and the bottom quarter of the outer wall has paper advertisements that allow people to tear off tabs with phone numbers: "Joey's Van for Hire" and "Lipat-Bahay" rent out vans for pick-up and light furniture moving. The numbers for a "Boiler and Heating Technician" are all torn out. In the display window are posters for a Christmas event at the American Dream Mall in New Jersey and a "*Bahaghari*" (Rainbow) Filipino drag dinner in Brooklyn.

Figure 4. Top left: Poster for a *Pasko* (Christmas*)* event at the American Dream Mall. Top Right: Poster for a *Bahaghari* (Rainbow) Filipino drag dinner. Bottom: Paper advertisements for transport and repair services. All photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Inside the store, rows of colorful *parols*— traditional Christmas decorations in the Philippines —dot the ceiling of the small store. Made of capiz shells and coiled metal forming a circumscribed star, many of them are painted green, red, and blue and feature paintings of Mother Mary holding the baby Jesus at the center of the star, illuminated from within by an LED light. Parols were also visible in some other Filipino businesses along Little Manila Avenue, such as the restaurant "Amazing Grace." They look just like the parols that I saw sold from street vendors in the Philippines, where I lived for 10 years.

Figure 5. A store aisle of the Phil-Am Food Mart with *parols* decorating the ceiling. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.



Products made by Philippine-based manufacturing companies fill the store aisles: Magnolia milk and ice cream from the San Miguel Food and Bar Inc.; canned fish brands like Century Tuna and Ligo sardines from the Century Pacific Food company; *Boy Bawang* chips from KSK food products; and the *Datu-Puti* vinegar brand essential to many Filipino dishes such as *adobo*. Fresh produce native to the Philippines can also be found chilled in the freezer section: *saba*, *dahon ng sili, dahon ng saluyot, dahon ng ampalaya,* and milkfish. A couple of shelves had cooked food for sale packaged in disposable plastic containers. Non-Filipino food was also available for purchase: Thai rice and Chinese mung bean cakes. Middle-aged women who look Filipino scan the items or wait in line to pay for their groceries at the counter. Coincidentally, a Filipina we know from Connecticut, a middle-aged mother, is also at the store. The woman working at the counter asks us:

Handa na po kayo? (Are you ready to pay)?

A box of religious bracelets, indicated by a printed picture of Jesus Christ plastered onto the cashier window, sits waiting to remind customers of their values.

Figure 6. Women wait in line to complete their purchase at the Phil-Am Food Mart. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023 (faces blurred).

Ihawan

Across the street from the Phil-Am Food Mart, Ihawan sits on the second floor of a two-storey commercial building. It shares the floor with Ztylez Studio, an LGBTQ+ Filipina owned salon located down the hallway. Past the restaurant doorway, a collage of prints covers the right wall. It features pictures with Ihawan's customers (some are celebrities), newspaper clippings about Ihawan, and photos and diagrams of Filipino food. Most of the photos show the "Bacani family" with a celebrity. The Bacanis are a Filipino family who established the restaurant in 1994 and have continually owned and operated it.

Two prints stand out in the collage. One is a picture of men sitting for an evening event at a long table. It's labeled "Gov. of Pampanga Delta Pineda w/ Boss Pito and the BGC" with black pentel pen. The other is a letter from former President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Bacani" and dated "2 February 2002." It thanks "Mr. and Mrs. Bacani" for welcoming her to the "Filipino neighborhood in Queens" and closes with a statement in a Philippine dialect, Pampanggan.

A middle-aged waitress, a Filipina, immediately sees us and greets us in English. Snippets of conversation from other tables are audible: three elderly Filipinas catching up in Filipino, a group of young adults of different ethnicities chatting in English. A family with children of different ages and a group of three east-asian-looking friends sit at tables out of earshot. The background music playing is all English love songs from the 1960s: Engelbert Humperdinck's "Release Me," Lobo's "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow," Matt Monro's "Yesterday," and Wayne Newton's "Remember When (We Made These Memories)." Although dish names are written in Filipino, the ingredients are listed in English. The waiters seem to usually speak in English too.

Both Filipinos and Latinos work at Ihawan, though it is difficult for me to distinguish between them. Behavior is a helpful indicator. For instance, I see one of the Filipino waiters speaking to another waiter who looks Latino, and I know he's Filipino because he points by pursing his lips. However, I cannot tell if the waiter who looks Latino is Latino or Filipino. My father suggests that their level of customer interaction and position in the restaurant— waiter or busboy — helps indicate their ethnicity. He tells me that Filipinos tend to be waiters while Latinos tend to work as busboys in Filipino restaurants.

As the waiters moved back and forth, smoke wafted up from chopped meat sizzling on platters, indicating that *sisig* was on the menu. Aside from *sisig*, most other tables had barbecued meat, fried spring rolls, and other savory foods which were staple orders (but typically high in fat and cholesterol). All the tables who had received their orders were covered to the edges with food served on red and yellow plastic plates and bowls and drinks served in semi-transparent plastic cups. Each place at the table was set with a spoon and fork and a single, thin paper napkin. I was struck by how much the cutlery reminded me of eating at a street-side food vendor in the Philippines: simple, non-breakable, and practical; only the essentials, and no frills.

Macro International Cargo

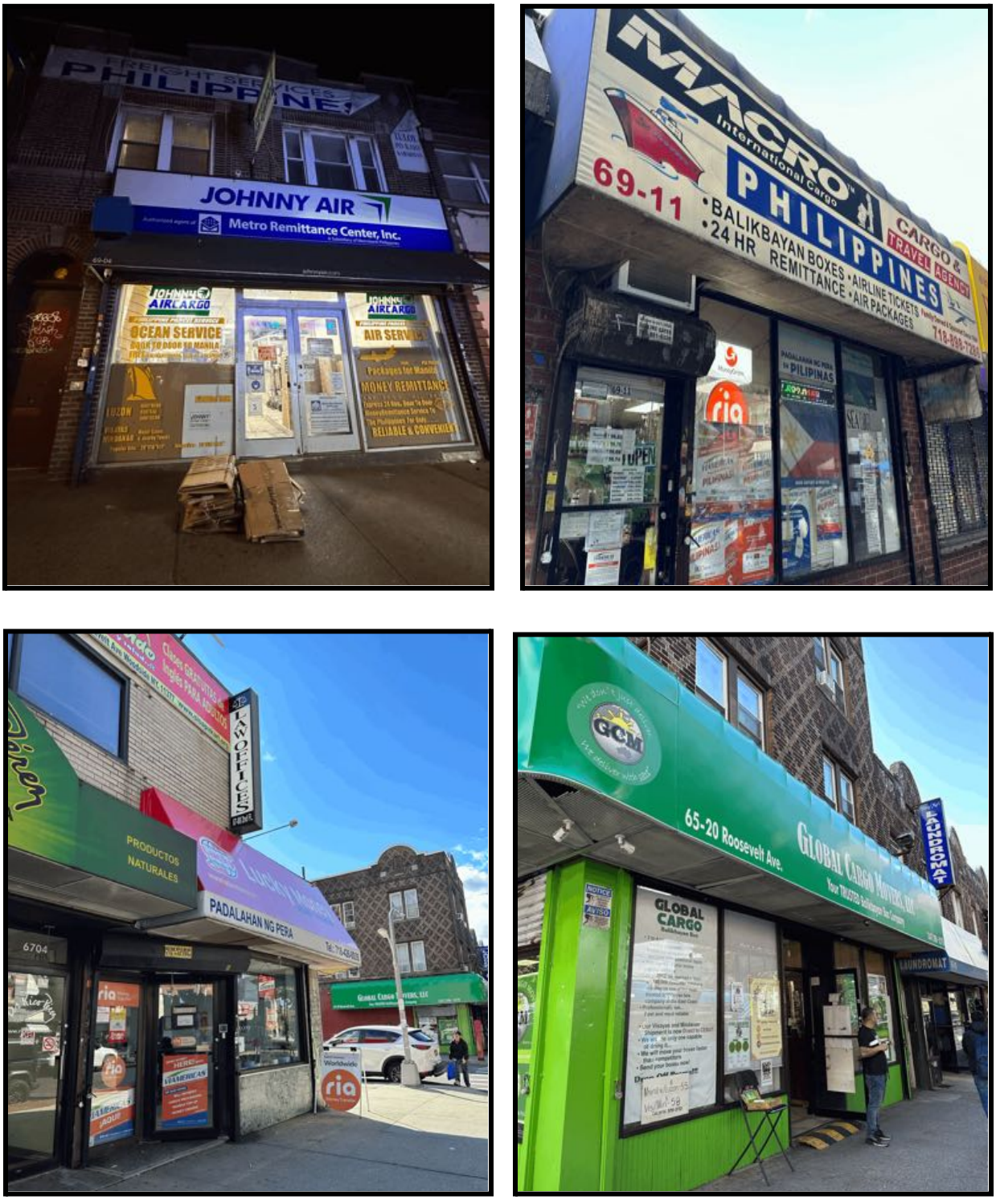
The Macro International Cargo agency sits across the street from the Filipino restaurant Ihawan and the "Little Manila Avenue" street sign, by the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street. The two most eye-catching words on the store's awning are "Macro," part of the store name, and "Philippines," suggesting a specific customer demographic. A small note at the bottom of the awning states that the store was established the same year as Ihawan in 1994. Other words and phrases on its store awning identify it as a "Cargo & Travel Agency" that handles all the key items: "Balikbayan Boxes," "24 hr remittance," "Airline Tickets," and "Air

packages." A *balikbayan box* is a large, cardboard box typically a couple feet in dimension and filled with expensive or highly-valued American goods to be shipped back to the Philippines. Remittances refer to sums of money sent back to a home country. Below the awning, there is a rich collage of Filipino *padalahan* posters in the display window; *padala* means to send or have something delivered, and *padalahan* indicates a business or institution that carries out that service. Cartoon images of a cargo ship and a plane border each side of the store awning, specifying the mediums over which Filipinos and material goods move between Little Manila Avenue and the Philippines. When I passed by Macro International Cargo during my fieldwork in October 2023, no one was entering or exiting the store.

Beyond the Block

Macro International Cargo is one of several cargo agencies along Little Manila Avenue; LBC and Johnny Air, two popular cargo agencies in the Philippines, look like they have been transplanted from the Philippines to New York Cities. Cardboard boxes were visible through the display windows of Johnny Air: flattened and folded ones were strewn on the floor or leaned against the walls, while stacks of assembled boxes covered one wall (presumably filled with goods ready to send to the Philippines). Other Filipino cargo agencies are also present; their small storefronts and sparse customer traffic belie their international reach. For example, the Makati Express Cargo on 63rd street ships between Filipino diaspora members in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hongkong, United Kingdom, India, United States Of America and throughout the Middle East (Makati Express website). The Global Cargo Movers LLC on 67th street connects Filipino diasporas across America in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Washington DC, Illinois, Florida, and Texas (Global Cargo Movers website).

Figure 7. Top Left: Johnny Air cargo storefront. Top Right: Macro International Cargo storefront. Bottom Left: “Lucky Money” money transfer business. Bottom Right: Global Cargo Movers LLC. Photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.



Filipino food-chains have also made their way from the Philippines to Woodside: Red Ribbon, a popular Filipino food chain known for their cakes and Filipino pastries, has the same store theme as in the Philippines, just a little more run-down and a lot less crowded; Jollibee, a fast-food chain known for their fried chicken with over 600-branches in the Philippines, sits on 63rd street. The menu is very similar, but the wallpaper and the feel of the place is not quite the same as in a Jollibee branch in the Philippines.

On Little Manila Avenue, parts of the strip feel like a portal to the Philippines, a way to keep in touch; at the same time, things are not quite the same. Some things rouse nostalgia: the Christmas patrols, Christian bracelets, and the stripped-down tableware that evokes a street-side food stall in the Philippines. Other parts of the Avenue, although small, provide a surprising amount of ways to keep in touch with the Philippines: display windows collate and advertise services for *balikbayan*, *padalahan, lipat-bahay*, and remittances into only a few feet of space. However, the aspect of Little Manila Avenue that looms largest is the way it fits into the wider, multiethnic streetscape of Roosevelt Avenue and New York City— in other words, it is striking for how much it blends in. In the underbelly of the number-7 train line between swiftly moving private cars and public buses, the business establishments of Little Manila Avenue camouflage among the other ethnic businesses lining Roosevelt Avenue. They bleed into the splash of brightly-colored store-awnings, posters, and tarpaulins hanging against red brick buildings yet stand out to the searching eye.

Figure 8. View of Filipino establishments and the “Little Manila Avenue” street sign from the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Part II. Drawing out the Filipino Diaspora

The Big World Around Little Manila

Before delving into how Little Manila Avenue manifests and enables Filipino diasporic identity, it helps to contextualize the environment that shapes it. Although it is called "Little Manila Avenue," Filipino businesses are interspersed among other ethnic businesses. They are most concentrated on the block between 69th and 70th street, but even there, space is shared with businesses and institutions of other ethnicities: a Tibetan and Nepali "Lhasa Snack Cafe" serves as the backdrop to the "Little Manila Avenue" signpost; Dunkin Donuts and Latino "Abogado" and "Income Tax" services squeeze between a Filipino bake shop and shipping service; and a Latino sandwich truck is parked right in front of the Filipino restaurant "Amazing Grace." Little Manila Avenue is not a homogenous strip of Filipino business institutions, but has visible signs of a multiethnic community. Located in Woodside, a neighborhood in one of New York City's most ethnically diverse boroughs, "Little Manila Avenue" is one of several immigrant business agglomerations along Roosevelt Avenue. The ethnic make-up of Roosevelt avenue has changed over time with the out-movement of earlier arrived ethnic groups, particularly the European Irish, Italian, and German, and the in-movement of more recently arrived ethnic groups from Asia and Latin America, such as Woodside residents from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Mexico throughout the late 20th and early 21st century (McGovern & Frazier 2015; Department of City Planning of the City of New York 2013). The streetscape of Roosevelt Avenue has evolved to reflect the neighborhood's changing demography: multiple ethnic businesses share the avenue, often clustering but not quite dominating the street space.

The ethnic diversity on Roosevelt Avenue is an example of what scholars in urban studies and geography, such as Sharon Zukin (2016) and Ines Miyares (2004), label as "super diversity"

or “multiethnic” spaces, where no single ethnic group dominates a space but each ethnic group primarily interacts with coethnics. Some neighborhoods in New York City, like Washington Heights, are clearly *ethnic enclaves* as defined by the Chicago School: one ethnic group dominates the residential population and the commercial landscape (Miyares 2004). Other neighborhoods in New York City, such the Little Italies, retain a strongly ethnic-themed commercial streetscape even when that ethnic population no longer lives there and the neighborhood population has changed, becoming an “ethnic theme park” (Zukin, Kasinitz, & Chen 2016). However, Little Manila Avenue is neither an ethnic enclave nor an ethnic theme park; it is an agglomeration of Filipino businesses sprinkled among other ethnic establishments on a super diverse street.

Figure 9. Roosevelt Avenue, corner of 69th street. From left to right: *Oficina de Abogados*, Dunkin Donuts, Johnny Air Cargo, Steven’s Truck, and Amazing Grace. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Like the other Asian and Latino ethnic groups that have settled in Queens post-1965, the agglomeration of Filipino ethnic businesses to form Little Manila Avenue helped generate what Waldinger (1990) calls an *agglomeration economy*, where a spatial cluster of ethnic business no longer relies on locally residing coethnics because it attracts coethnics (and even non-coethnics) from a wider area (113). Part of what makes Roosevelt Avenue so attractive to multiple ethnic groups and ethnic businesses agglomerations is its access to mass transportation. It conveniently runs under the number-7 train line and has several bus stops interspersed throughout for New Yorkers to reach the neighborhood, resulting in the constant, deafening grumble of overhead trains and the perpetual flash of headlights at every corner (Allison 2020, 63). Coethnics and customers from outside New York City and New York State, specifically areas such as Long Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, can also reach the neighborhood by car because it is located right off the 278 interstate highway on 69th street (for map, see figure 1 or appendix A). The interstate highway was the most efficient way for me and my father to reach Woodside from Connecticut for fieldwork. It is also the main route taken by many of the Filipino families that we know from cities like Greenwich, Stamford, and Norwalk in order to reach Little Manila Avenue.

As an ethnic agglomeration economy in Filipino cuisine, services, and products, Little Manila Avenue attracts local and non-local Filipinos. At the same time, it attracts non-Filipinos who want to try Filipino food and products. In the spring and winter of 2023, several Filipino families that I knew from Connecticut drove to Little Manila Avenue to celebrate birthday parties in Filipino restaurants like *Kabayan*. During those visits and my fieldwork in 2023, both Filipinos and non-Filipinos were moving throughout Filipino business establishments. When I

dined at the Ihawan restaurant at lunch time for my fieldwork, the customers came from different ethnic backgrounds. I wrote in my fieldnotes (2023) that the customers included:

> three elderly Filipinas catching up in Filipino, a group of young adults of different ethnicities chatting in English. A family with children of different ages and a group of three east-asian-looking friends [sat] at tables out of earshot.

The multi-ethnic customer base was also evident in other Filipino restaurants on Little Manila Avenue. When I went to the Filipino restaurant *Renee's Kitchenette* for dinner on a Thursday night, not all of the customers were Filipinos. Whether they come to experience Filipino dishes like pork barbeque or to make a convenient purchase and a quick meal, non-Filipinos are often found alongside Filipinos.

The interactions between Filipinos and non-Filipinos on Little Manila Avenue are complicated by the coincidence that some Filipinos physically resemble some people of other ethnicities, specifically Latinos. The interethnic interactions on Little Manila Avenue extend from the customer base to behind the counter: at Ihawan, several of the bus boys and kitchen workers were not Filipino. When I dined there, it was not easy for me to distinguish between the Filipino and non-Filipino— typically Latino —workers because they looked phenotypically similar. When I stopped by a Filipino stall selling-baked goods, the woman who was selling products initially hesitated in her interaction with me because she could not identify, based on my physical appearance, whether I was a person of Filipino or a Latino ethnicity. Navigating these physical impressions raises questions about how members of the Filipino diaspora on Little Manila Avenue identify co-ethnics, distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups in the streetscape, and interact with other ethnic groups.

While Latinos and Filipinos have physical and cultural resemblances, the relationship between the two ethnic groups on Little Manila Avenue is ambiguous. The presence of Filipino and Latino restaurant workers at Ihawan illustrates this point: Filipinos generally work as customer-facing wait staff while Latinos work as busboys. Some may speculate that they work together because of cultural similarities (or familiarity); Filipinos and Latinos have similar physical appearances and shared cultural elements such as "brown" skin, dark hair, family-orientation, Spanish colonial heritage, and Catholic religion that can flow into each other's identities. However, others may also argue that there is an implied labor hierarchy between lower-ranked Latino busboys and higher-ranked Filipino waitstaff; Filipino migrants are more likely to have higher levels of English proficiency, educational attainment, and incomes than the overall immigrant population in the United States (Davis and Batalova 2023). As a result, Filipinos may more likely have higher paying positions than Latinos in a shared work setting. One scholar who has studied Filipino American perceptions of Latinos is the sociologist Anthony Ocampo, who found that second-generation Filipino Americans living in suburban communities of California perceive the legacies of Spanish colonial history to blur the lines between Filipinos and Latinos, enabling a sense of solidarity between the two ethnic groups. While Ocampo's work would support the notion of cultural familiarity between the Filipino and Latino groups in Little Manila Avenue, it does not explain the division of labor between the two groups or account for how first-generation migrants might interact with Latinos in the area. While the two groups clearly interact on Little Manila Avenue, it is difficult to draw conclusive analysis on Filipino-Latino interactions in the area without deeper research that is limited by the scope of this study.

Because identifying co-ethnics on Little Manila Avenue requires navigating these complex spaces of everyday interethnic interaction, material markers of the Filipino diaspora in Filipino business establishments, immaterial Filipino social practices, and utilization of the Filipino language are vital to distinguish and enable connections between members of the Filipino diaspora and Filipino diasporic spaces.

While scholars like Dawn Mabalon argue that the Filipino community in California was shaped by racial marginalization, it is not clear that racial marginalization shaped Little Manila Avenue in Woodside. Filipino establishments share Roosevelt Avenue with a host of diverse ethnic groups who migrated to the Woodside neighborhood during the same time period. The agglomeration of Filipino establishments that form Little Manila Avenue emerged primarily in the period from 1970 to 1990s (Altman 1986) to capitalize on the unique cultural tastes of recently-migrated, locally-residing Filipino nurses and their families, as well as out-of-state Filipinos for whom Little Manila was the closest thing that enabled access to the Philippine homeland (Castillo 2022). There did not seem to be federal or national policies or stakeholders that facilitated these formations. Rather, public installations such as the "Mabuhay" mural and the "Little Manila Avenue" street sign show that government support seemed to follow the collaborations between Filipino establishments in the area and non-profit Filipino organizations. The location and formation of ethnic establishments on Little Manila Avenue primarily followed market opportunities: cheaper housing stock, labor shortages filled by Filipinos, and a regional market of Filipinos from areas like Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Manifestations Of The Filipino Diaspora In Little Manila Avenue

Little Manila Avenue manifests the Filipino diaspora in three ways: through the presence of material culture, preservation of intangible practices, and utilization of the Filipino language.

Consider material culture as the collection of objects produced by a culture which a hand can touch or hold: the printed posters, advertisements, food products, and Johnny Air cardboard boxes ("material culture" 2002). The presence or movement of these objects is "prismatic, refracting other times and places into the here and now through their sensory prompts" (Knott & McLoughlin 2010). Little Manila Avenue's *balikbayan boxes*, Filipino Christmas lanterns, and *lipat-bahay* posters of Little Manila Avenue are examples of objects that tie together and refract Filipino traditions, values, and practices from the Philippines onto a New York City street. The sensation of Filipino diasporic material culture prompts shared memories or notions of the Philippines, helping to "constitute a diasporic home that complicates and enriches senses of residential location" (Knott & McLoughlin 2010). The familiarity of cooked dishes and Filipino food products turns the Filipino business establishments of Little Manila Avenue into more than physical spaces; it turns Little Manila Avenue into a portal to the homeland.

While material culture focuses on touchable objects and what that sensation conjures, *intangible* culture includes the traditions or practices performed by a cultural group which are passed down through generations (Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre 2023). The services offered by Filipino cargo agencies on Little Manila Avenue were essentially commodifications of Filipino diaspora social practices: *padalahan* (sending items or money to the Philippines), *balikbayan* (return trips to the nation), and *bayanihan* (the value of helping other members of one's community or nation). Although business establishments like cargo services capitalize on Filipino social practices, they also serve as means to continue those practices. In order to crystallize the precise material and intangible manifestations of Filipino diasporic identity throughout Little Manila Avenue, it helps to begin with what is immediately visible (material culture) before moving into the intangible, temporal practices that they index.

Percolating throughout Filipino diasporic material and immaterial culture on Little Manila Avenue is the utilization of the Filipino language. In the signages, posters, tarpaulins, and store awnings of Filipino establishments and the small, quotidian conversations of Filipinos on the Avenue, Filipino words invoke knowledge of Filipino language and culture. Words like *balikbayan, padalahan, bayanihan,* and *po* and the names of Filipino dishes like *biko* and *suman* all carry a cultural knowhow that both marks Filipino identity to insiders and conceals those deeper layers of meaning from outsiders.

A. Little Manila Avenue in the Public Eye

One way that Little Manila Avenue concretely manifests the presence of the Filipino diaspora is through public art and installations. The "Mabuhay" mural on the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 69th street, was one of the first objects that caught my attention during my fieldwork because it unambiguously signaled the presence of the Filipino diaspora. With the word "*Mabuhay*" painted in large, curly, gold letters that popped from a bright blue background, the mural linguistically communicates familiarity and stylistically references traditional Filipino art forms. The non-profit organization "Little Manila Queens Bayanihan Arts" that led the mural installation explains:

> The visual vocabulary is rooted in the history and landscape of the Philippines. The typography is based on lettering found on the iconic jeepneys; the illustration style of the plants is based on Malay batik design from Mindanao, Indonesia, and Malaysia; the gold in the linework is an homage to goldsmith artistry of pre colonial Philippines. ("Mabuhay" n.d.)

At the same time as it communicates Filipino traditions, the "Mabuhay" mural indexes the organizations and institutions that represent the Filipino diaspora in Woodside: Filipino

businesses, non-profit Filipino organizations, Filipino artists, and local elected officials. All of these actors collaborated to unveil the mural during the COVID pandemic in 2020, a time when many frontline Filipino health workers were at risk. The mural recognizes the Filipino healthcare workers and businesses in Woodside and nearby neighborhoods like Elmhurst who both catalyzed the Filipino community in the 1970s and continued to work at the front-line of the pandemic in the 2020s to serve the New York City community ("Mabuhay" n.d.).

As indexed by the "Mabuhay" mural, Filipino nurses laid the groundwork for the Filipino community in Woodside. Part of a larger wave of Filipino labor migrants arriving to fill New York City hospital nursing shortages in the 1970s, Filipinos recruited to Elmhurst hospital bought homes in the Elmhurst neighborhood and surrounding areas like adjacent Woodside, which were made affordable by the 1970 financial crisis in New York City. As these Filipino immigrants settled in Woodside, traditional patterns of entry continued to attract more immigrants: ethnic networks, *chain migration*, and the opportunity of *immigrant entrepreneurialism* (Allison 2020, 62). For instance, the founders of the Phil-Am Food Mart chose to establish their shop in Woodside in the 1970s because their Filipino cousins often went bowling in Queens and recognized the abundance of resident Filipinos in the area. Through their cousins, the founders of the Phil-Am Food Mart recognized Filipinos in Woodside as a potential target market for their Filipino shop. Since the Phil-Am Food Mart was established on Roosevelt Avenue in 1976, its owners have noted the growth of more Filipino establishments around the area. By 2013, Filipinos made-up the largest (but not majority) percentage (12.7%) of foreign-born population in Woodside (Department of City Planning of the City of New York 2013). By 2022, over half (54%) of Filipinos in New York City resided in Queens (CUNY 2022). With Filipino labor migrants come remittances, and the persistent practice of sending remittances

to the Philippines is evident in the abundance of money transfer businesses and services along Roosevelt Avenue, from the “Lucky Money” business on 67th street to an LED “MoneyGram” sign inside the Macro International Cargo on 70th street.

The installation of the “Little Manila Avenue” sign, attached to the streetpost on the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street, was a byproduct of the “Mabuhay” mural. Similarly supported by a mixture of profit, non-profit, and public government actors, the sign recognizes and distinguishes the presence of the Filipino diaspora in Woodside from among the other ethnic establishments with which Filipino entrepreneurs share Roosevelt Avenue. Located on opposite sides of the block between 70th and 69th streets, the “Mabuhay” mural and the “Little Manila Avenue” street sign serve as ethnic markers or gateways into a section of Roosevelt Avenue that has been transformed into a place for the Filipino diaspora.

Figure 10.

Little Manila Bayanihan Art’s “Mabuhay” Mural on Roosevelt Avenue and 69th Street. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023 (faces blurred).

B. Commodifying the Filipino Diasporic Identity

Given that Little Manila Avenue is primarily a commercial (and mostly culinary) streetscape, food products are one of the primary ways that it materially manifests the Filipino diaspora. Within a commercial streetscape, it is only natural for consumers to buy products and shop owners to supply them, but the origin of a product and how it was transported matters to an ethnic diaspora.

To illustrate this point, it helps to begin with an exploration of one establishment: the Phil-Am Food Mart. Almost all of the products sold by the Phil-Am Food Mart are imported directly from the Philippines and made by Filipino manufacturers such as the San Miguel Food and Bar Inc. and the Century Pacific Food Company. Through access to Filipino manufactured goods and native produce such as cooking leaves, Filipinos who visit Little Manila Avenue can return to Filipino cuisine and maintain the Filipino culinary tradition. This is made possible by the store owner's decision to import these goods from the Philippines. Zenaida Castillo (2022) — one of the original owners of the Phil-Am Food Mart— expressed pride in sourcing products directly from the Philippines in conversation with Rosalind Tordesillas for the Queens Public Library. She recounted how the Phil-Am Food Mart sold more expensive Filipino milkfish even while struggling to compete with lower priced milkfish in other Asian supermarkets:

> We were selling milkfish for a dollar and 29 per pound, and the Chinese are [sic] selling it for 99 cents…but the good thing is, we are selling a fish from the Philippines, and I am very proud of it. I tell them: those fish are from Vietnam, that's why if I am going to get that, probably I could sell it also…I could compete, but I said no… As long as there is a supply, a Phillipines supply, I will never sell this [sic] Vietnamese milkfish (28:00)

(Milkfish is popularly found and used in cuisines from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.) Although other supermarkets, such as the Chinese supermarket that Zenaida references, could supply cheaper milkfish from countries like Vietnam, Zenaida expressed her commitment to making the Phil-Am Food Mart a little piece of the Philippines in New York City. Zenaida only wanted milkfish caught or harvested in her homeland. Through her claim to import products like milkfish directly from the Philippines, Ida exhibited the two essential qualities of Okamura's conception of *diaspora*: first, a transnational connection; second, a connection that is built through the agency of members of the diaspora. As the store owner, Zenaida actively chose to exclusively supply and sell goods from the Philippines, generating a sustained material linkage with the Philippines.

Continuing the theme of Little Manila Avenue as a commercial culinary streetscape, another way that the area manifests the Filipino diaspora is through its restaurant cuisine. At the Filipino restaurant Ihawan, all of the dishes were prepared in the culinary traditions of the various Philippine regions: they served sizzling *sisig* from the Pampanga region, savory *bulalo* from the Batangas and Cavite areas, and bitter *pinakbet* from the Ilocos regions. Based on the taste of the dishes that we have had at *Ihawan*,

> "...[S]moke wafted up from chopped meat sizzling on platters, indicating that sisig was on the menu. Aside from sisig, most other tables had barbecued meat, fried spring rolls, and other savory foods which were staple orders...All the tables who had received their orders were covered to the edges with food served on red and yellow plastic plates and bowls and drinks served in semi-transparent plastic cups. Each place at the table was set with a spoon and fork and a single, thin paper napkin. I was struck by how much the cutlery reminded me of eating at a street-side food vendor in the Philippines: simple, non-breakable, and practical; only the essentials, and no frills." (Excerpt from author's fieldnotes, Alexandra Tamsi, 2023)

the cooking condiments used were also native to the Philippines, from the shrimp paste down to the soy sauce.[3] The key ingredients of Filipino cuisine— garlic, onion, soy sauce, fish sauce, shrimp paste, coconut, and sometimes chili —were also the basis for the dishes at Ihawan. Rather than attempt to fuse or innovate versions of the dishes that would incorporate non-native spices such as thyme, basil, or oregano, the dishes and drinks stuck to Filipino tradition. Even the coffee was served with two common sweetener options in the Philippines: table sugar and powdered milk. Although the Filipino culinary tradition has already incorporated elements from other cuisines, such as Spanish *arroz caldoso*, Chinese *chop suey*, Malay curry, and American hotdogs, no mainstream dishes in America, such as french fries, hotdogs, burgers, or pasta, were served; Ihawan did not adapt its menu to incorporate or present food in the way that would be palatable to the mainstream market.

Moving from the things that Little Manila Avenue sells for consumption in New York City to the things it transports for consumption in the Philippines, *balikbayan boxes* are another material manifestation of the Filipino diaspora on Little Manila Avenue. Members of the Filipino diaspora often maintain connections to their relatives in the Philippines by sending back boxes filled with

> "LBC and Johnny Air, two popular cargo agencies in the Philippines, look like they have been transplanted from the Philippines to New York City. Cardboard boxes were visible through the display windows of Johnny Air: flattened and folded ones were strewn on the floor or leaned against the walls, while stacks of assembled boxes covered one wall (presumably filled with goods ready to send to the Philippines)." (Excerpt from author's fieldnotes, Alexandra Tamsi 2023)

[3] For instance, the Japanese company Kikkoman produces soy sauce that has a distinctly sweeter flavor than the saltier Silver Swan brand soy sauce produced by the Philippine company NutriAsia. Food cooked using Kikkoman soy sauce has a different flavor than food using Silver Swan soy sauce.

highly-valued Western goods. Broken down, to *balik* (“return”) to the *bayan* (“nation,” but originally meaning “town”) means to return to the Philippines. The term *balikbayan* was officially coined in the 1970s by then Philippine President Marcos’s program “Operation Homecoming,” which aimed to attract overseas Filipinos back to the Philippines (Blanc 1996). *Balikbayan* originally referred to people returning to the homeland (and even became a legally defined status), and a *balikbayan box* referred to a cardboard box (or several of them) that a *balikbayan* could fill with their extra personal belongings (Blanc 1996). Eventually *balikbayan boxes* were filled with *pasalubong* (souvenirs) that Filipino migrants could personally bring or send to the Philippines as a sign of success (Blanc 1996). Unlike the legal term *balikbayan*, the term *balikbayan box* emerged from the informal social practices of overseas Filipinos rather than from government policy. Businesses like the Macro International Cargo (see Figure 11) capitalize on this social practice, but they also enable the continuation of the *balikbayan box* tradition on a larger scale.

Figure 11. Macro International Cargo storefront. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Money transfer signs are yet another way that Little Manila Avenue materially manifests the Filipino diaspora. Besides *balikbayan boxes*, one of the services plastered all over the Macro International cargo's display window was remittances, or sending money to the Philippines. Referenced by a lit "MoneyGram" sign and the more explicit "*Magpadala ng pera sa Pilipinas!*" (Send money to the Philippines!) poster containing the Philippine flag on the Macro International Cargo display window, the practice of sending remittances has long been associated with the Filipino diaspora, many of whom are labor migrants pushed out of the Philippines by the poor economy but remaining attached to the Philippines through family kin networks. Remittances not only play an important role in the Philippine economy but directly impact the Filipino diaspora's relatives in the Philippines: between one third and one half of families in the Philippines rely on remittances (Castro-Palaganas 2017).

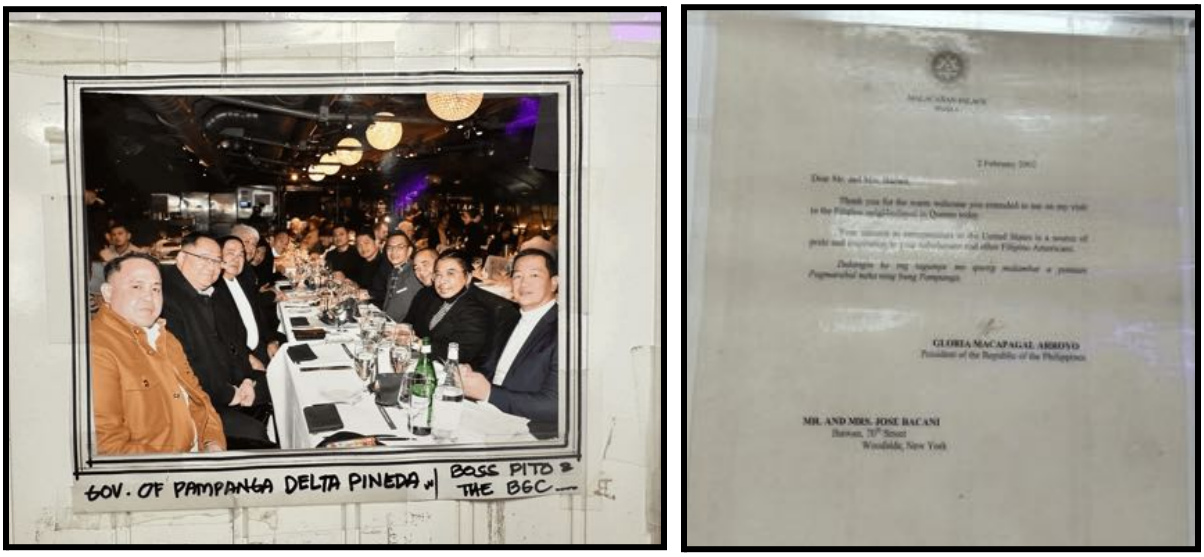
In order to advertise Filipino businesses' products and services on a dense commercial streetscape, print culture abundantly and visibly marks the traces of Filipino diasporic identity. The ones most visible to passersby are store awnings, posters, and tarpaulins, which list their material products and services like *balikbayan box* delivery, currency exchange, remittances, and dishes like *silogs*[4] to quickly moving passersby. Another strategy is to print the word "Philippines" in large, bold, block letters in order to immediately alert the Filipino target market. Inside Filipino establishments, newspaper features, photos of store owners with customers, and letters from public figures help to document items and people that become landmarks in the commercial establishment's reputation and in the wider shared diasporic memory. While print culture helps Filipino commercial establishments increase their profit, it also gives Filipino

[4] Traditional Filipino breakfast dishes that are composed of rice, egg, and some form of meat.

shopkeepers agency over the narrative of their establishment and its connection to the Philippines.

For instance, when I visited the Filipino restaurant Ihawan and saw their photo wall of customers, newspaper clippings featuring the restaurants, and Filipino food diagrams, two prints stood out to me. The first print was a photograph of men sitting for an evening event at a long table and labeled “Gov. of Pampanga Delta Pineda w/ Boss Pito and the BGC” in black marker. The second was a letter from former President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal Arroyo thanking “Mr. and Mrs. Bacani” for welcoming her to the “Filipino neighborhood in Queens” on February 2nd, 2002 (see figure 12).

Figure 12. Two prints from the Ihawan photo wall: (left) Boss Pito w/ the BGC, (right) Letter from former president Gloria Arroyo. Photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.



Who “Boss Pito” is, how he is associated with Ihawan, where he met with the Governor of the Pampanga of the Philippines, and why the meeting happened are all unclear; however, the connection with the local Filipino government politician was clearly important enough to the shopkeepers for it to be on the photo wall. The visit of the other Filipino politician, former

president of the Philippines Gloria Arroyo, is better documented. According to an archived news article from the *Filipino Reporter,* protesters during Arroyo's 2002 visit denounced "the deployment of American troops to the Philippines for military exercises against the Abu Sayyaf, a group of terrorists tied to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network" (Silvestre 2002). The deployment was connected to Arroyo's war against terror (Silvestre 2002). Multiple ideas are at work here: first, the terrorist attack on 9/11 had influenced government policy and military action in the Philippines; second, government actors from the Philippines visited Little Manila Avenue in New York City as a site of the Filipino diaspora; third, protestors converged in Little Manila Avenue knowing that the President of the Philippines would be visiting the area. The connection between the restaurant— and the other business establishments of Little Manila Avenue —and government officials in the Philippines shows that the Filipino diaspora does not simply move and send materials from overseas to the Philippines. The relationship to the homeland is more complex: Filipinos journey from the Philippines to sites of the Philippine diaspora abroad, such as Little Manila Avenue. Besides politicians, popular Filipino actors, such as Sharon Cuneta, Piolo Pascual, and Boyet De Leon also visit Woodside (Castillo 2022). In other words, the relationship between the Filipino diaspora overseas and their kin in the Philippines does not move one-way. Rather, it is a relationship where Filipinos abroad and at the homeland move back and forth, bringing an exchange of materials and ideas.

Material culture not only serves as a material record of the Filipino diaspora; it also functions to index the intangible practices that distinguish the Filipino diaspora. The print culture on Little Manila Avenue helps illustrate this point. When I visited Woodside, much of the posters, tarpaulins, and store awnings that I saw were identifiably Filipino because they used the Filipino language— marking the continual use of the language —and pinpointed products and

services that reference Filipino traditions and values, such as *balikbayan*, *padalahan,* Catholicism, and *bayanihan*. While material objects in themselves tell stories through their physical components, exploring the intangible practices that define their usage adds another layer of meaning. *Balikbayan* and *padalahan* were two practices that were explored through the *balikbayan box,* so the next section will focus on drawing out the themes of Catholicism, the Filipino Christmas timeline, *bayanihan*, and family kin networks by exploring objects in one Filipino business establishment: the Phil-Am Food Mart.

C. Little Manila Avenue as a Portal to the Philippines: The Phil-Am Food Mart

Philippine Christmas in Woodside

When I visited the Phil-Am Food Mart in October to conduct fieldwork, decorative lanterns hung behind the glass storefront and along the ceiling. These lanterns, called *parols*, are a traditional Christmas decoration in the Philippines. Store founder Zenaida Castillo (2022) proudly remarked in her interview that she personally buys hundreds of parols from the Pampanga province for the Christmas season each year, transporting them from the Philippines to be sold in New York City. In fact, Zenaida said that she traveled between the United States and the Philippines about every three months and began selling the parols in September. Even though most Americans begin celebrating Christmas after Thanksgiving in November, Filipinos begin Christmas in September. In the Philippines, churches begin putting up parols introduced under Spanish colonization, while mall chains in the Philippines, such as SM, begin putting up Christmas decor such as Christmas trees introduced during American colonization. The parols hanging in the Filipino storefronts of Woodside's Little Manila Avenue look just like the parols that I saw that adorned churches or were sold by street vendors in the Philippines: colorful, star-shaped, made of capiz (see appendix B, figure 13). On the other hand, I did not notice any

other typical American Christmas decorations, such as wreaths, Christmas trees, or candy canes, in the Christmas-decorated Filipino establishments that I visited in October. Regardless, members of the Filipino diaspora carry a hybrid Christmas tradition that brings together elements of a transnational Christian culture with the Philippines' particular colonial history under Spain and the United States of America.

One way that the *parols* manifest the Filipino diaspora on Little Manila Avenue is as a marker of Catholicism, the predominant religion of the Philippines. Many of the *parols* that I saw in the Phil-Am Food Mart had paintings of Mary holding the baby Jesus, referencing the Catholic ideology and values that persist in Filipino culture. Tied to three hundred years of Spanish colonization in the Philippines, almost 80% of the Filipino population is Roman Catholic (CIA.gov 2023). While speaking to Tordesillas for the oral history project, Zenaida mentioned her recourse to prayer when the Phil-Am Food Mart was struggling due to economic decline in the late 1980s:

> I was praying. I prayed very hard, you know, to guide us what to do next…This is what I believe, and I hold onto that [sic]: as long as you are sincere in what you are doing and you are honest, to the fullest that we can [be]...some things can be taken from you, but as long as you're doing the right thing" (20:22)

Zenaida's response was value- and spiritual-oriented, showing her personal commitment to her faith. Her shop seems to reflect her values: every customer who makes a purchase at the Phil-Am Food Mart sees a box of religious bracelets for sale at the cashier counter, turning a reminder of faith into a part of the monetary transaction.

The presence of parols in the Phil-Am food mart in October also manifests the Filipino diaspora by distinguishing the beat of seasonal Filipino Christmas festivities from the

mainstream timeline. While most of American society begins Christmas in late November or early December by playing Mariah Carey Christmas songs in retail stores and decorating rooms with wreaths and ornaments, the Filipino establishments of Little Manila Avenue preserve the relatively early timing of Filipino Christmas festivities by decorating and selling *parols* as early as September. While much of the Filipino Christmas tradition is similar to that of Western cultures— with the inclusion of the Christian ideology, Christmas Eve dinners, twelve days of Christmas, Santa Claus, and red and green Christmas outfits —the temporal beat of the Filipino Christmas holiday remains its own rhythm, unaltered to match the American holiday season (see figure 13).

Figure 13. Parols hanging in the Amazing Grace restaurant storefront. Little Manila Bayanihan Art's "Mabuhay" mural visible on the right side. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Another way that *parols* manifest the Filipino diaspora is as an index of literal return to the Philippines, or *balikbayan*. First, the *parols* were made in the Philippines and transported directly from the Philippines to the United States of America. In this sense, they are literal pieces of the Philippines in Woodside. Second, they were transported through the Phil-Am Food Mart founder's cyclical return to the Philippine homeland. In this way, the parols symbolize a transnational connection between the United States and the Philippines that is maintained through the agency of a member of the Filipino diaspora. Through Ida's decision to put-up and the sell the parols and import them herself, she actively maintains a material connection to the Philippines and preserves Filipino traditions and values through her cyclical *balikbayan* or return to the nation.

Bayanihan: Filipinos helping Filipinos on Little Manila Avenue.

The store names and marketing of other Filipino establishments on Little Manila Avenue echo a manifestation of the Filipino diaspora's *bayanihan* spirit. The Filipino word "*Kabayan"* and its different permutations percolate throughout the store awnings and posters of Little Manila Avenue, calling Filipinos to help one another out by purchasing services. *Kabayan, balikbayan,* the spirit of *bayanihan* all derive from the Tagalog root-word *bayan*, meaning town, village, or nation. *Bayanihan* is a "system of mutual help and concern which has become the backbone of family and village life throughout the Philippine archipelago" (Ang 1979). Wherever there is cooperative labor, there is *bayanihan* (Ang 1979). The *bayanihan* spirit was visualized to me in a Filipino middle school as an image of men working together to transport a *bahay-kubo* on their shoulders. A *bahay-kubo*, or a straw hut, was the traditional home among indigenous Filipinos. Working together with others to move (*lipat)* the home (*bahay*) by literally sharing the weight of the home on the back of one's shoulders was presented to me as the epitome of the *bayanihan*

spirit. The house-moving services for sale on the paper advertisements glued to the side of the Phil-Am Food Mart, which advertised *lipat bahay* services, both mimic and complicate the Filipino value of *bayanihan* in the Filipino diaspora. While it echoes the spirit of helping other Filipinos become mobile, it also commodifies it within a market system. The collaboration between Filipinos, framed as essential to family and village life in the Philippines, became a monetary contract.

Figure 14. Left: Men in the Philippines carry a *bahay kubo* (straw hut) on their shoulders to *lipat-bahay* (move house). Right: Posters for a van rental service to *lipat-bahay* outside the Phil-Am Food Mart at Woodside, Queens, New York City.

Note: Left Photograph is a screenshot of a video "Bayanihan" by akamaikimo, 2008, YouTube, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgFYYkW1Ido&pp=ygUUQmF5YW5paGFuIGFrYW1haWtpbW8%3D. Right Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Tracing the history of the Phil-Am Food Mart reveals the continuing manifestation of the *bayanihan* spirit between nodes of the Filipino diaspora within and beyond the United States of America, particularly ones that are linked by family kin networks. According to Phil-Am Food Mart founder Zenaida Castillo (2022), Emmanuel and Zenaida ("Ida") Castillo were a married

Filipino couple who migrated from San Jose, Batanggas, and established the Phil-Am Food Mart in 1976. Ida's family provided the social and fiscal capital to begin the business: Ida's cousins ran the original Phil-Am Food Mart in Jersey City, an area with its own enclave of Filipino Americans, and inspired Ida to establish the Phil-Am Food Mart in the Woodside neighborhood of New York City. Ida's cousins provided a car, which was driven back and forth from Jersey to New York; a line of credit; and help with merchandise. The money used to purchase the space was loaned from Ida's parents, who still lived in the Philippines and owned a grocery store in Ida's hometown, San Jose. By pulling together the resources available from her cousins in New Jersey and her parents in the Philippines, Ida opened shop. This form of raising financial and social capital through family networks in order to establish a business does not apply only to the Phil-Am Food Mart; adjacent Filipino restaurants, such as Ihawan and Renee's Kitchenette, also have Filipino founders who are family relatives (Shin 2023). Rather than seek impersonal resources such as bank loans or car rentals, these Filipino entrepreneurs rely on pulling together extended family resources from nodes across the United States and even from the Philippines.

Just as the capital for establishing the Phil-Am Food Mart relied on pulling together nodes of the Filipino diaspora in New Jersey and New York, the customer base of the Phil-Am Food Mart's customer base relied on the non-local Filipino diaspora that was geographically spread across the Northeast American states. Many of the Filipino families that I know from Connecticut travel to Woodside for the Filipino restaurant scene; in fact, my father and I encountered a Filipina mother we were acquainted with in the Phil-Am Food Mart by chance. Based on Zenaida's interview, Filipinos in other nearby Northeast states travel to Little Manila Avenue as well. According to Zenaida, non-local Filipinos from areas like Long Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia (from which Filipinos could not efficiently reach

Filipino stores in New Jersey) make up the Phil-Am Food Mart's main customer base (Castillo 2022). The Phil-Am Food Mart relies on members of the diaspora coming to Woodside to satisfy their distinct ethnic tastes and needs, illustrating the concept of Little Manila Avenue as an ethnic agglomeration economy that attracts customers because it specializes in goods that cater to distinct ethnic tastes.

The convergence of geographically dispersed nodes of the Filipino diaspora within the United States and the echo of the Filipino *bayanihan* spirit in Little Manila Avenue add a particular dimension and substance to the way that the Filipino diaspora is manifested in Little Manila Avenue. In his work on the Filipino diaspora, Jonathan Okamura identified concrete practices that are shared by the various nodes of the Filipino diaspora in order to maintain connections to the Philippine homeland: *balikbayan,* money transfers, and the preservation of Filipino language and values. However, Okamura did not highlight the interconnectedness of the nodes themselves. Through Little Manila Avenue, the interaction between various Filipino nodes in the Northeast region of America becomes visible. Moreover, the particular family network that drives the establishment of Filipino businesses is illuminated. It shows the preservation of Filipino family kin network traditions that extend back to the Philippines' indigenous tribal tradition.

On Hybridization and Adaptation

While this study emphasizes manifestations of the Filipino diaspora in Little Manila Avenue, this perspective does not imply that Filipinos in the area are not undergoing hybridization and adaptation to American culture. Some elements of Filipino culture that the Filipino diaspora brings to the United States of America already carry adaptations of other cultures as a result of the Philippines' colonial history. For instance, the *parols* at the Phil-Am

Food Mart index how the Filipino Christmas tradition brings together elements of American Christmas culture (Christmas trees and Santa Claus) with a transnational Christian culture that is tied to Spanish colonization. As another example, the Phil-Am Food Mart sells *hamon,* a Filipino version of American Christmas ham, during the Christmas season. A third example is the use of the English language: all of the waiters at Ihawan initially spoke to us in English unless we initiated conversation in Filipino. Because the Philippines was an American colony and had American educational establishments, the English language became the Philippine's official language during the colonial period and continued to be used in official government functions, mass media, and competitive professional settings. As such, most Filipino migrants already know basic English and can easily adapt it as the norm.

The Filipino fast-food chain, Jollibee, shows how Filipino cuisine has historically adapted some American foods into the Filipino palate. While Ihawan's menu is composed of indigenous dishes, one exception that I noticed was the coffee. Powdered milk, which was served with the coffee as a sweetener, was introduced to the Philippines in the 1900s along with canned milk under United States occupation because of American dissatisfaction with the taste of dairy products produced from indigenous water buffalos (Elias 2014). During this period, the American colonial government in the Philippines emphasized cleanliness, hygiene, nutrition, and efficiency, associated with America's calculated canned and preserved goods (Salazar 2012). Canned foods like hotdogs and tomato sauce could only be accessed by Americans and elite Filipinos with connections to the United States; they were relatively expensive for locals (Elias 2014). As a result, dishes like Jollibee's sweet spaghetti historically emerged in Filipino cuisine as an elite dish, incorporating canned tomato sauce and hotdogs, and transformed into a staple Filipino food.

On the other hand, some parts of Little Manila Avenue exhibit more modern 21st century adaptations to American culture. For instance, restaurants like *Kabayan* and *Renee's Kitchenette* have adapted their menus and dishes to the tastes and ingredients of 21st century America. Kabayan's permanent *taho*-stand is packaged like bubble tea. While *taho* in the Philippines would typically be sold on streets by hawkers carrying large, heavy, metal containers connected by a wooden pole, Kabayan's *taho*-stand mechanizes it: a sales person spoons soy pudding into a plastic cup that is then mechanically sealed with a layer of plastic, which can be easily punctured with a wide-diameter straw to be consumed like bubble tea.[5] The traditional pearls are also substituted by the boba used in bubble tea. At Renee's Kitchenette, milkshakes have been added to the menu alongside Filipino sweets like *batirol* and *ube con hielo*.[6] One Filipino shop appends the Filipino name for a convenience store— *sari-sari* — to the iconic New York "Deli" (short for Delicatessen) to create a hybridized business name: K-Glen Deli and Sari-Sari Store (see figure 15). While some Filipino businesses, like the Phil-Am Food Mart, exclusively sell Filipino produce, other Filipino businesses, like the K-Glen Deli and Sari-Sari Store and Renee's Kitchenette sell both Filipino and mainstream American products.

Figure 15. The K-Glen Deli and Sari-sari storefront. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

[5] Bubble tea is a beverage originating from East Asia that spread to the United States of America in the 21st century. Several bubble tea branches, such as Gong Cha, and locally-owned bubble-tea shops have emerged in America.
[6] *Batirol* is a form of hot chocolate, and *con yelo* is a traditional dessert meaning "with ice." *Ube con yelo* is ube served with ice.

Conclusion

Filipinos from Queens as well as areas outside New York City, such as Connecticut and Massachusetts, come to "Little Manila Avenue" to keep in touch with Filipino culture. Filipino convenience stores, such as the Phil-Am Food Mart, bring produce native to the Philippines and products manufactured there to nostalgic Filipino immigrants. Cargo agencies like Johnny Air Cargo put prices for *balikbayan box* delivery to Manila and Cebu and dollar-to-peso conversion rates front and center in display windows for Filipinos in the United States who want to send something back to the Philippines. Filipino restaurants serve to customers dishes that are reminiscent of the Philippines, while the colorful, large print tarpaulins and posters outside the buildings attempt to catch the attention of a rapidly moving passerby. Woodside's Little Manila Avenue reflects the Filipino diaspora through its material make-up: its products, posters, and food. At the same time, these objects enable Filipinos to maintain connections with the homeland and with other nodes of the Filipino diaspora in the American Northeast. By advertising and indexing practices such as *balikbayan*, *bayanihan*, and the offbeat Filipino Christmas tradition, the objects strewn across Little Manila Avenue are breadcrumbs for searching Filipinos to trace back to the Philippines and to one another. In the multicultural setting of New York City's Roosevelt Avenue, finding the breadcrumbs can be tricky. Filipinos must navigate other ethnic groups and establishments to distinguish what is Filipino from what is not.

This ethnography on Filipino diasporic identity contributes to understanding how ethnic groups establish their identity in multiethnic spaces and how the particular Filipino diaspora in New York City manifests itself. Navigating the intercultural terrain of Roosevelt Avenue, particularly in the interactions between Filipino and Latino migrants and their labor hierarchies, raises further questions for researchers of urban studies, race, migration, and ethnicity. While this

ethnography has focused on three business establishments— Ihawan, Macro International Cargo, and most of all, the Phil-Am Food Mart —future research might explore Filipino non-profit organizations, government partnerships, residential groups, and church programs that impact Filipino activism and art in Woodside. Other methods of study that could enrich this picture of the Filipino community in Woodside include interviews with Little Manila Avenue's community leaders and workers, surveys of customers at Roosevelt Avenue, demographic analyses of the population, and a historical comparison with the development of other Filipino communities in the Northeast or the West Coast. One particular Filipino group that could receive more research on Little Manila Avenue and in other Filipino diasporic nodes— with sensitivity and caution —are undocumented Filipino migrants. A pursuit of any of these areas would build a more complete record of the Filipino community on Little Manila Avenue and help explain variations in how the different nodes of the Filipino American diaspora develop. With all of these potential branches of research, this ethnography serves as a launching pad for further exploring the Filipino diaspora in Little Manila Avenue and the surrounding areas.

For members of the Filipino diaspora, Little Manila Avenue serves as a portal to the Philippines and to one other. As a Filipina-American who has been to the area many times (and will probably be there many more), I take this research as an opportunity— an invitation —to re-engage with the Filipino diaspora and to meet them in spaces both different and somehow familiar. The woman at the Filipino bake stall invited me and my father to see her in Greenwich; if I do not see her there, I hope to see her back on Little Manila Avenue selling the Filipino sweets that taste like pieces of home.

Sana magkita tayo doon. I hope we see each other there.

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Appendix A. Maps of "Little Manila Avenue"

Figure 1a. Map of Filipino Establishments of Little Manila Avenue from 58th street to 70th street. Made by Alexandra Tamsi using DataWrapper (https://www.datawrapper.de/_/W9T2a/)

Figure 1b. Map of Little Manila Avenue, zoomed in from 63rd street to 70th street. Made by Alexandra Tamsi using DataWrapper (https://www.datawrapper.de/_/W9T2a/).

Appendix B. Photos

Figure 2. "Little Manila Avenue" street sign, corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 3. The two women who sold Filipino baked goods at the “Purpleicious Sweets” stall on Roosevelt Avenue on October 3rd, 2023. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi.

Figure 4. Top left: Poster for a *Pasko* (Christmas*)* event at the American Dream Mall. Top Right: Poster for a *Bahaghari* (Rainbow) Filipino drag dinner. Bottom: Paper advertisements for transport and repair services. All photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 5. A store aisle of the Phil-Am Food Mart with *parols* decorating the ceiling.

Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

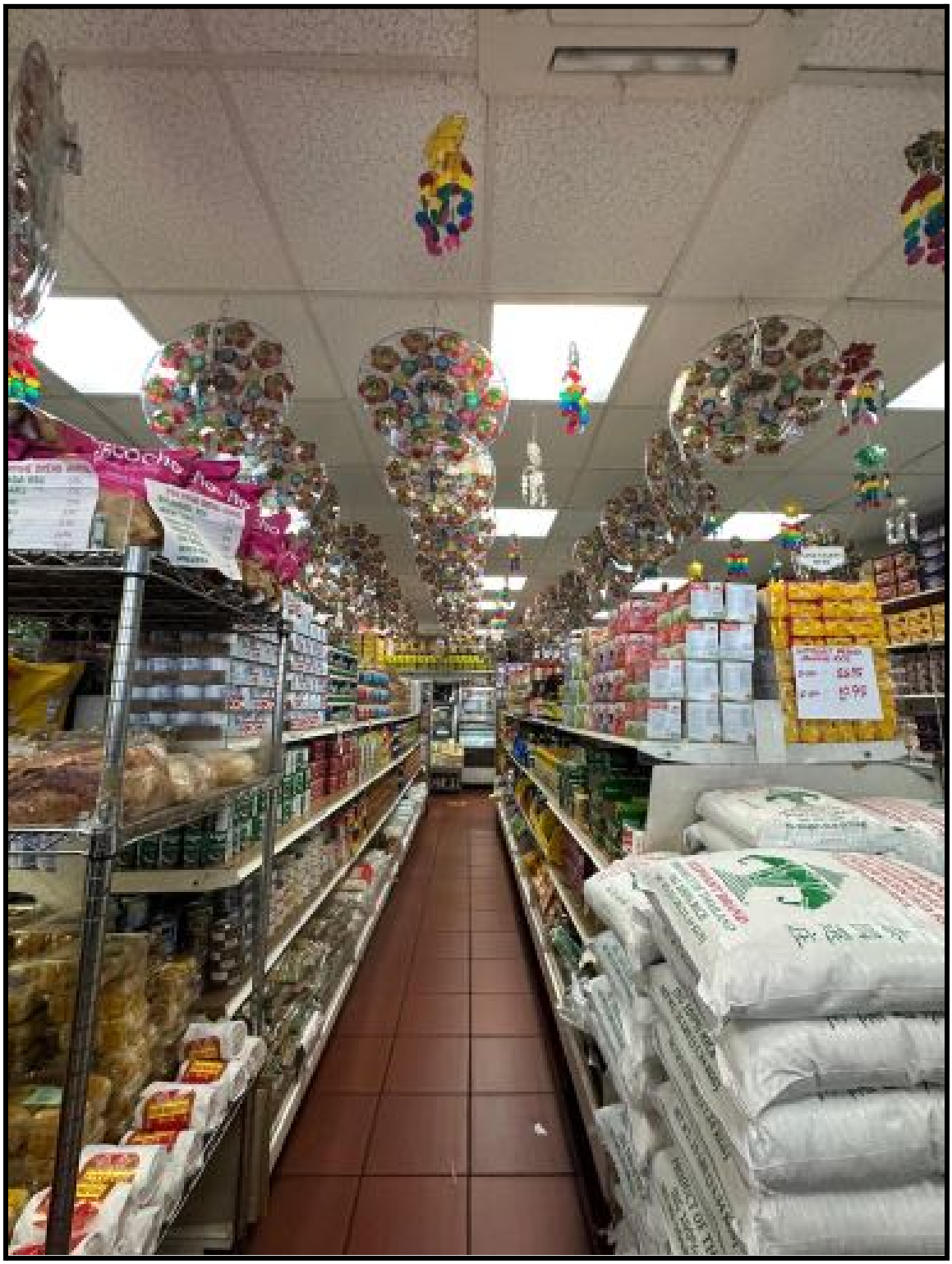

Figure 6. Women wait in line to complete their purchase at the Phil-Am Food Mart. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023 (faces blurred).

Figure 7. Top Left: Johnny Air cargo storefront. Top Right: Macro International Cargo storefront. Bottom Left: “Lucky Money” money transfer business. Bottom Right: Global Cargo Movers LLC. Photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

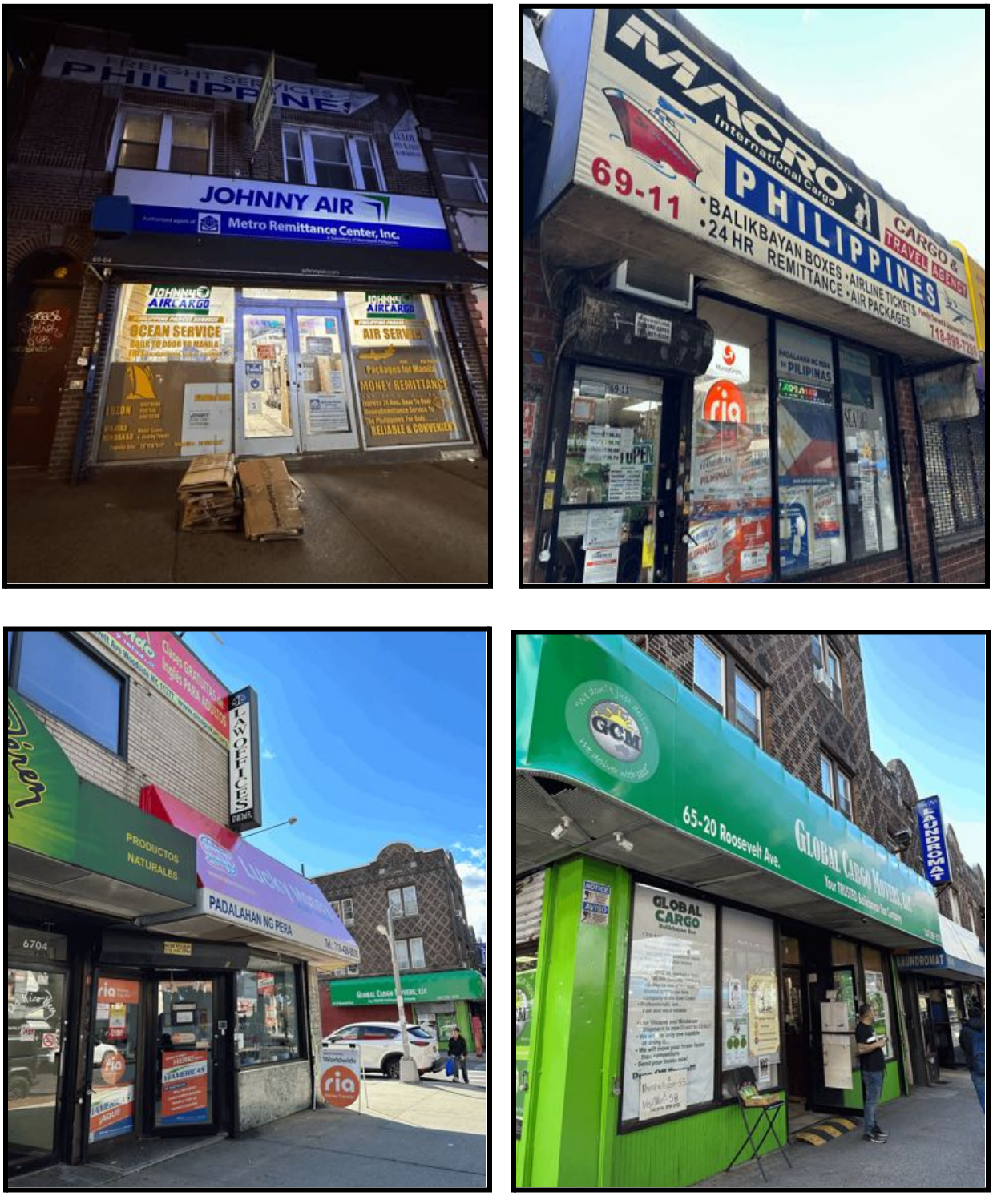

Figure 8. View of Filipino establishments and the “Little Manila Avenue” street sign from the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 70th street. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 9. Roosevelt Avenue, corner of 69th street. From left to right: *Oficina de Abogados*, Dunkin Donuts, Johnny Air Cargo, Steven's Truck, and Amazing Grace. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

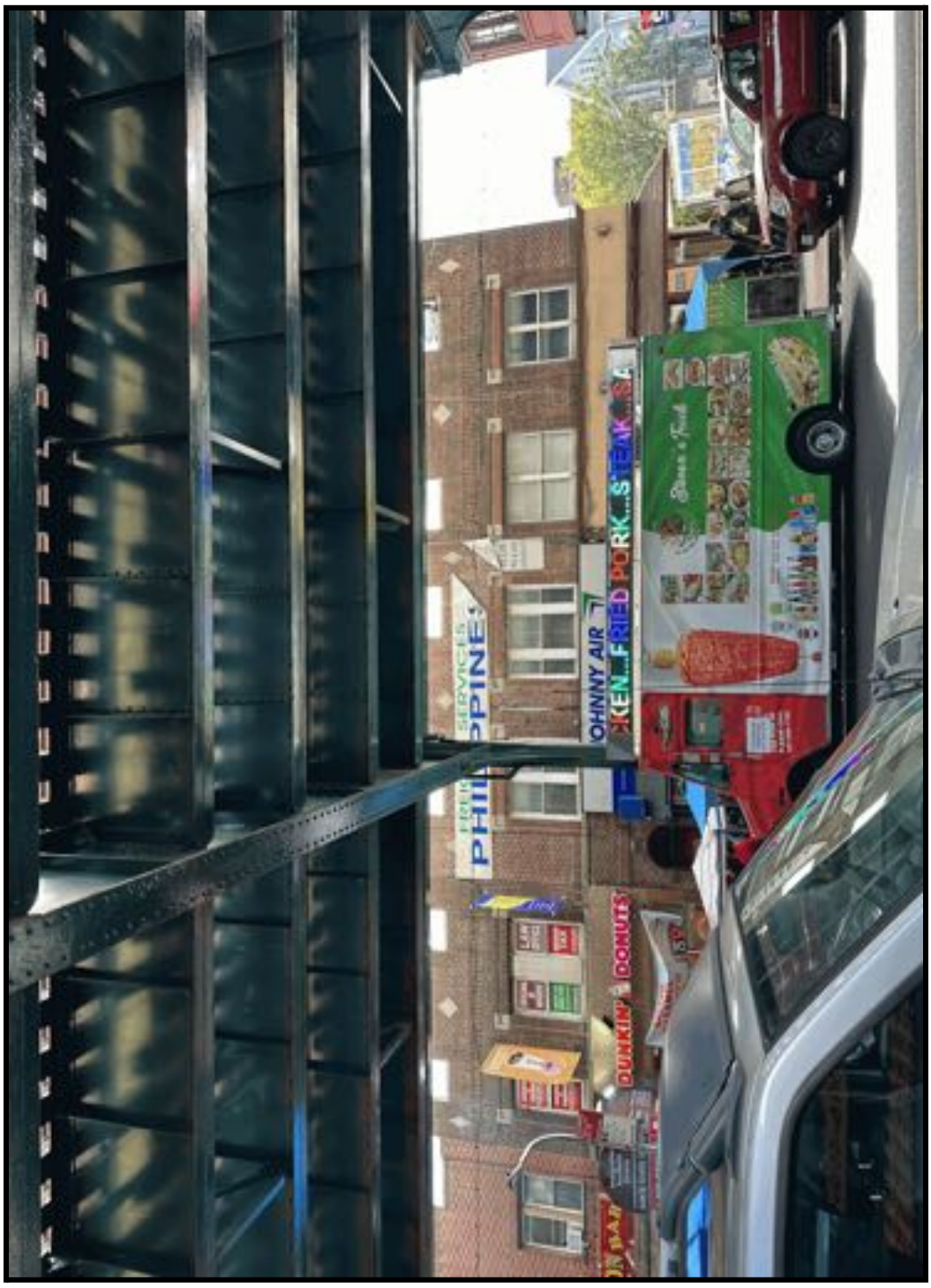

Figure 10.

Little Manila Bayanihan Art's "Mabuhay" Mural on Roosevelt Avenue and 69th Street.

Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023 (faces blurred).

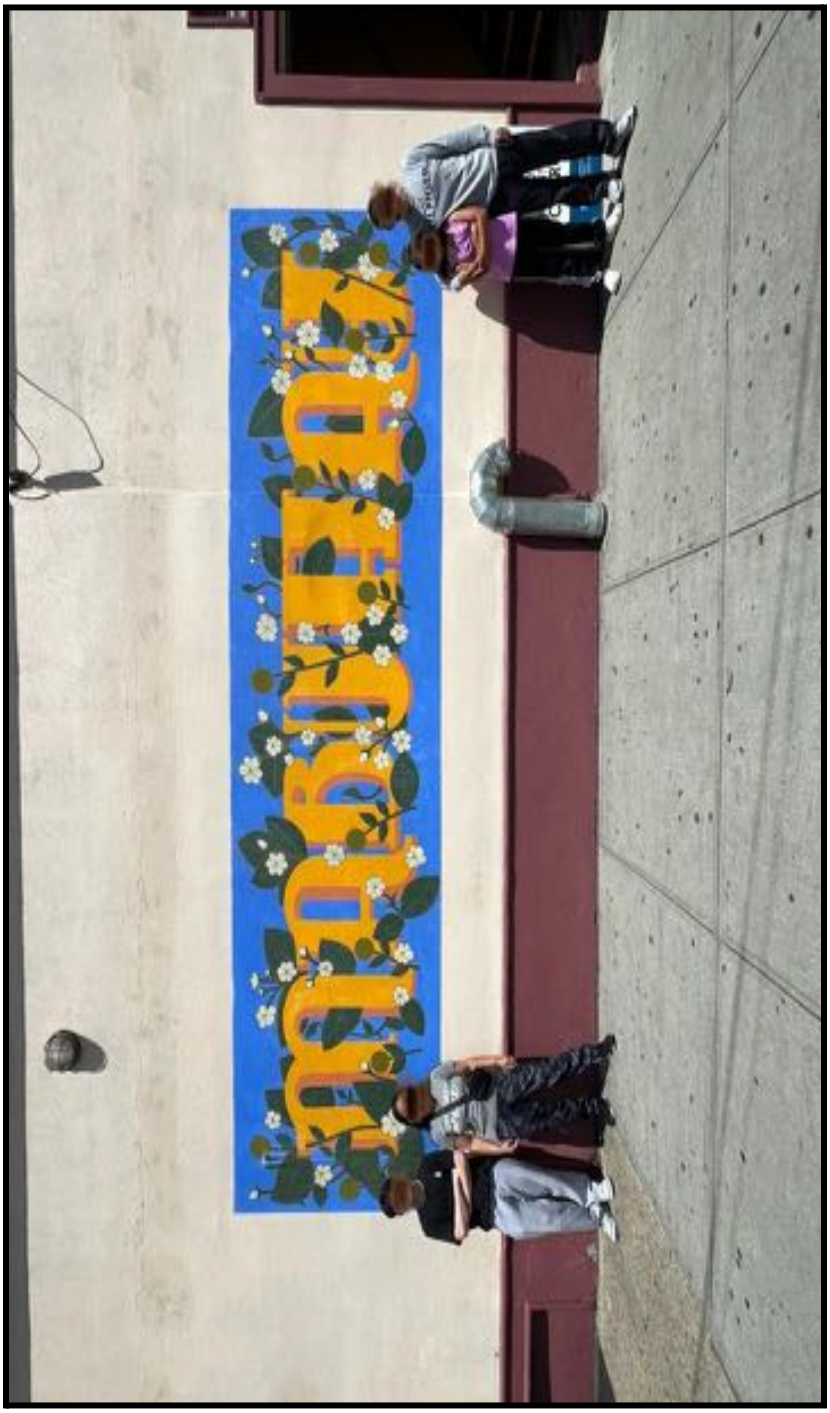

Figure 11. Macro International Cargo storefront. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 12. Two prints from the Ihawan photo wall: (top) Boss Pito w/ the BGC, (bottom) Letter from former president Gloria Arroyo. Photographs by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

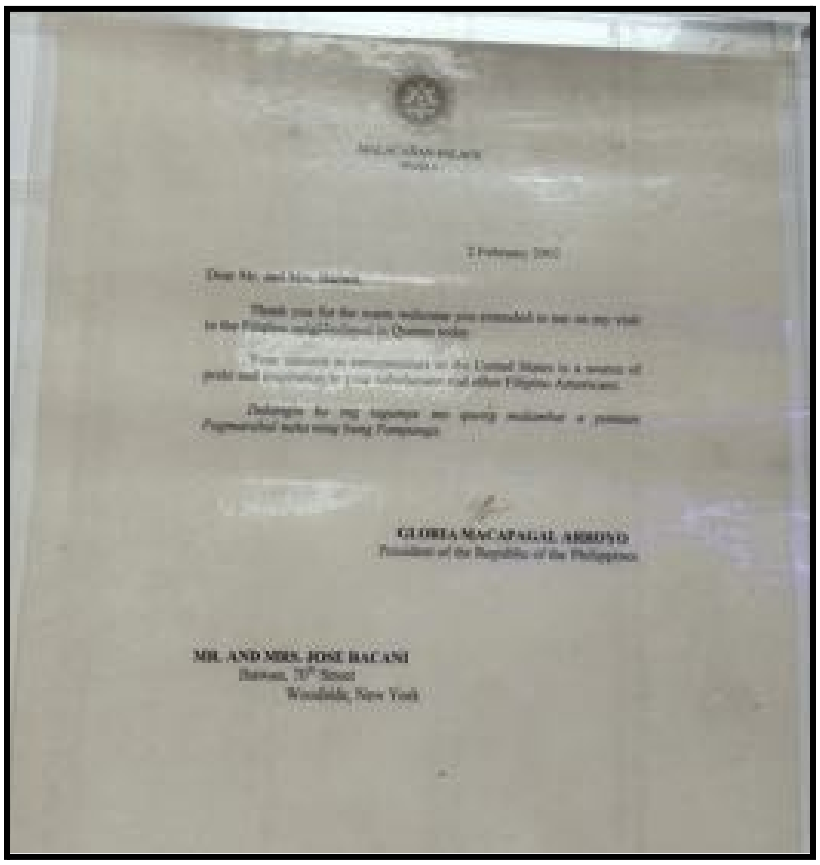

Figure 13. *Parols* hanging in the Amazing Grace restaurant storefront. Little Manila Bayanihan Art's "Mabuhay" mural visible on the right side. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Parols being sold (bottom left) at the Alabang Town Center mall, which is located in Muntinlupa, Philippines and decorated with *parols*, wreaths, and fairy lights in December, 2023. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 14. Top: Men in the Philippines carry a *bahay kubo* (straw hut) on their shoulders to *lipat-bahay* (move house). Bottom: Posters for a van rental service to *lipat-bahay* outside the Phil-Am Food Mart at Woodside, Queens, New York City.

Note: Top Photograph is a screenshot of a video "Bayanihan" by akamaikimo, 2008, YouTube, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgFYYkW1Ido&pp=ygUUQmF5YW5paGFuIGFrYW1haWtpbW8%3D. Bottom Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.

Figure 15. The K-Glen Deli and Sari-sari storefront. Photograph by Alexandra Tamsi, 2023.