

# Agbayani Village - Delano California



(The following is excerpted from a speech given by the Pilipino History Project at their program at Agbayani Village)

Agbayani Village is home for many Manong farmworkers who came to the US in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Like the Chinese and Japanese before them, Pilipinos first came to America to work the agriculture fields of California. Here, they faced bad living conditions, long hours, and low pay.

In the labor camps, there was no privacy and no recreation. Social life was limited to pool rooms and dance halls which were owned by their employers. As minorities they faced national oppression and exploitation.

Because of these conditions many Pilipinos along with other farmworkers initiated strikes against growers in Stockton, Coachella, Sacramento, and dozens of other places.

In the same spirit of these earlier strikes of the 20's, 30's, and 40's, Pilipino workers struck in Delano on September 10th, 1965. Led by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, they walked off to

demand better wages, better living conditions, and better benefits. Two weeks later, the National Farmworker Association led by Cesar Chavez joined in the strike to form a united front against the growers. From this historic strike, the United Farmworkers Union (UFWU) was formed.

During the strike, many of the Manongs who were already in their sixties were locked out of the labor camps, their belongings thrown out, and were forced to sleep and cook outside. They also expected to be thrown out of the labor camps again, once the strike was over because of old age. They could see clearly that there was a need for housing.

After four years of struggle, the UFWU won its first contract in 1969 and several more in 1970. This paved the way for building a retirement home for the farmworkers. The village was named after Paolo Agbayani who died of a heart attack while picketing against one of the

(Both Agbayani photos  
from Unity newspaper)

growers in 1967. Paolo, who came from Hawaii participated in many strikes and believed in unionization and the struggle for justice.

Plans and construction began in 1972 despite obstacles imposed by the Kern County authorities such as road blocks and code technicalities. Over two thousand volunteers helped to build the Agbayani Village. They came from all parts of the US and the world. Many people from the Asian communities, especially Asian and Pilipino students took part in building Agbayani Village.

Today the villages fifty-nine units stand as monument to the struggles of the Farmworkers, and their supporters.

(Our special thanks to the Pilipino-American Alliance and Asian Student Union of UC Berkeley for their help in producing this pamphlet.)



Hundreds of Asian Pacific students and youth helped to build Agbayani Village between 1973 and 1975.



# WHAT IS APSU?

The Asian Pacific Student Union is a body of Asian Pacific Student organizations on campuses throughout the west coast. The APSU held their founding conference in San Francisco on April 18, 1978. Five main principles of unity were brought forth based on the experience and concerns of Asian Pacific Students:

1. Promote unity among all Asian Pacific students through meeting our social, cultural, political, and educational needs.

2. Fight against the racism and national oppression facing Asian and Pacific Islander peoples.

3. Learn from and support Third World, women's, campus, labor, community and all other progressive struggles.

4. Promote an understanding of Asian Pacific peoples' culture and history.

5. Build friendship among Asian Pacific peoples.

The fall APSU conference decides on the major campaigns for each year. Between conferences, the West Coast Co-ordinating Committee oversees the implementation of the campaigns. The West Coast CC consists of representatives of the four regions of the APSU: the Pacific Northwest, Central Valley (California), the SF-Bay Area, and Southern California.

Representatives from the different campuses make up the regional co-ordinating committees. The regional CCs facilitate inter-campus communications, co-ordinate the campaigns locally, and oversee the inter-campus committees such as the Pilipino History Project.

## PILIPINO HISTORY PROJECT (CONT)

Manongs (elderly Pilipinos) were among the original strikers in 1965. Together we viewed a program featuring a videotape on Pilipino-American history made by Visual Communication in Los Angeles.

To follow-up the trip the Pilipino History Project invited Philip Vera Cruz, a former vice-president of the UFWU to speak at UC Berkeley. At our October program, Philip gave a moving talk on his own experiences as a Pilipino immigrant in the 1930s and pointed out the need to unite with Mexicano and other immigrant workers today. He also linked our struggles here in the US to the Pilipino people's fight against Martial Law.

The Pilipino History Project is currently made up of members from the APSU at Laney College, the APSU at City College of SF, the Pilipino-American Alliance of UC Berkeley, and the Asian Student Union of SFSU.

Some of our future plans include a potluck in Berkeley on November 26. We also want to take up issues facing Pilipinos today. The Pilipino History Project will be endorsing a workshop on the Bataan nuclear reactor in the Philippines, and aiding striking UFWU members in their boycott efforts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE  
PILIPINO HISTORY PROJECT OR  
THE APSU CALL:

San Francisco	567-0130
Oakland	261-2560
Berkeley	642-6728

# Pilipino History Project

ASIAN PACIFIC STUDENT UNION



In June of 1979, members of the Asian Pacific Student Union in the San Francisco - Bay Area formed the Pilipino History Project to promote the concerns and participation of Pilipino students in the APSU.

Our first project was a trip to the Agbayani Village (see inside). Asian Pacific students from Northern and Southern California traveled all the way to Delano to meet the residents of the village. Many of these

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