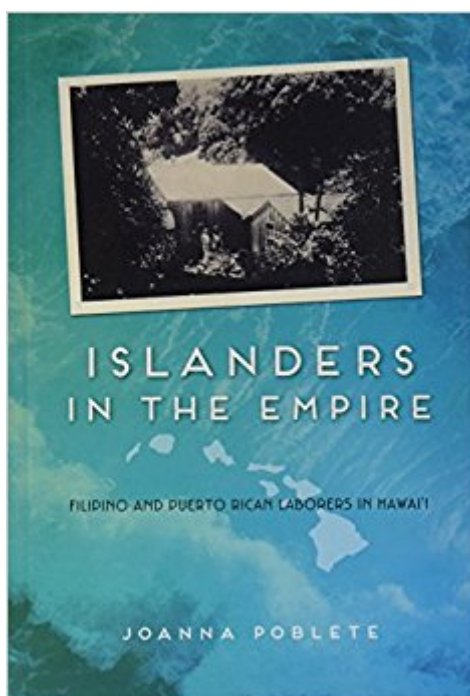


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Islanders In The Empire: Filipino And Puerto Rican Laborers In Hawai'i (Asian American Experience)



Synopsis

In the early 1900s, workers from new U.S. colonies in the Philippines and Puerto Rico held unusual legal status. Denied citizenship, they nonetheless had the right to move freely in and out of U.S. jurisdiction. As a result, Filipinos and Puerto Ricans could seek jobs in the United States and its territories despite the anti-immigration policies in place at the time. JoAnna Poblete's *Islanders in the Empire: Filipino and Puerto Rican Laborers in Hawai'i* takes an in-depth look at how the two groups fared in a third new colony, Hawai'i. Using plantation documents, missionary records, government documents, and oral histories, Poblete analyzes how the workers interacted with Hawaiian government structures and businesses, how U.S. policies for colonial workers differed from those for citizens or foreigners, and how policies aided corporate and imperial interests. A rare tandem study of two groups at work on foreign soil, *Islanders in the Empire* offers a new perspective on American imperialism and labor issues of the era.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I know of no scholar who has tackled the histories of Filipino and Puerto Rican labor in Hawai'i in one cohesive and extensive volume, and with such intensity in its comparative scope. Poblete's skills as a deft historian weave personal everyday stories with historical, structural, and policy analysis in ways that are exceptionally nuanced and deeply illuminating."--Rick Bonus, author of *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of*

Space" Poblete's pathbreaking work is unique for illuminating the logics of empire through the lens of transnational migration and labor history. It should stand out among the growing scholarship on the U.S. empire, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines."--Julian Go, author of *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688-Present* "Deeply rooted in archival sources, oral histories, and written with concise prose, Poblete does a remarkable job situating Hawai'i, Puerto Rico and the Philippines in the context of U.S. empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean. She illustrates how U.S. expansion into these regions was vital for it to produce a global imperial machine that circulated not just soldiers and weapons between colonial outposts, but laborers."--The Hawaiian Journal of History "Unique in its comparative focus on labor migration among U.S. colonies, it is essential reading for those interested in the Filipinos and Puerto Ricans in Hawai'i during the first four decades of the twentieth century."--New West Indian Guide

A unique comparative study of two groups of colonials under U.S. imperialism

This was my first book on the topic of Puerto Rican labor migration to Hawaii. I have been very interested on this subject for some time and have read what can be found on the internet. I am Puerto Rican with an interest in the history of my people and have no ties whatsoever to PR Hawaiians. I was looking forward to this book, especially due to the broader investigation into Filipino laborers (a good point of comparison I thought). Overall, I was a bit disappointed with the book (to be fair, maybe my expectations were high since my interest in this topic). Maybe I expected the high cost of this book to be reflective of its content. The book is very repetitive in the points it tries to make, sometimes even repeating the same sentences (or so it seemed). So repetitive that the conclusion sections at the end of each chapter were really not needed to get the message. Also, there is a strong bias from the author that is very present during the whole book and in the points made. Finally, without the substantial reading on the subject matter I did on the internet, a lot of the book content would have been lost. For example, there is mention of the Lunas and issues between laborers and Lunas yet there is no significant description of the role of a Luna, were the Lunas of the same ethnic background as the laborers (or from other ethnic groups or Anglo-Americans), what was the agenda for the Luna in his daily work (just to make the laborers work harder or were there work quotas to be met by the Luna or was there some pre-disposition to be racist against some ethnic groups)? The beginning could have been expanded some to describe the details of the labor contract offered vs. what was actually done. A comparison of the offers made to Puerto Ricans and Filipinos to those of the Japanese, Korean and Chinese contracts would have been nice. It could

have painted a better picture of whether these laborers (in particular the Puerto Ricans) were better off having gone to Hawaii vs. staying in the island. How did the people who stayed in Adjuntas, for example, fare in comparison to those who left for Hawaii? Basically, did the ends justify the means for those who made the life-changing voyage to Hawaii? It would have also been nice to paint a picture of daily life at the plantation for Puerto Ricans. Maybe some information on how hard was it to adapt to this new place and how they coped. Maybe explain a bit about the cultural issues that they brought with them (explaining the concept of "Respeto" might have helped the reader understand why they were so predisposed to fights in the camps). It would have also helped to describe the situation of the descendants of those Puerto Rican (of Filipino) laborers in Hawaii today. Did they eventually inter-marry or is there still a Puerto Rican Hawaiian subculture in the island? Did they improve the lots of their descendants or did they remain on the low end of the economic spectrum (much like many of the Puerto Rican migrants to places like New York have remained economically challenged in the later generations)? Once again, was it all worth it... did the ends justify the means? Finally, the last chapter trying to bridge current issues with Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and Filipinos in the Philippines seems a bit out of topic and a stretch. For example, the author tries to somehow bridge the current relationship between the US Government and Puerto Ricans/Filipinos with the previous relationship of a US Company/Corporation with Puerto Ricans/Filipinos. How can you compare a corporate relationship in Hawaii (clearly one where the company is taking advantage of the laborer for profit) with current political issues away from Hawaii? Well, to me it seemed off topic. I did enjoy all of the factual information and especially the descriptions of people like Souza and Minvielle.

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