

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2022 | Sonia Velasco

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**KILPATRICK
TOWNSEND**

AAPI
Asian American and Pacific Islander
HERITAGE MONTH



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Q: To what Asian or Pacific Island country(s)/region are you connected?

A: Philippines

Q: When you think of the Philippines, what feeling does it evoke?

A: It reminds me of tropical weather, lots of sun and feelings of friendliness and welcoming environment; warm and hospitable people.

Q: What are some of the Philippines cultural traditions? Which of any of these does your family celebrate?

A: Filipinos love to celebrate life events with a feast, from christening, first to 99th birthdays (and everything in between), graduation, weddings, anniversaries, new homes, and many others. We always celebrate with friends and family oftentimes lasting an entire day. The festivities also feature singing and dancing - interesting fact: nearly 90% of Filipino households own at least one karaoke machine.

Q: What is the Philippines known for?

A: We are known for our food, friendly people, singers, dancers, people in the medical field.

Q: Is there a particular food dish that reminds you of the Philippines?

A: The most popular traditional food found in many special events are pancit (rice noodles), lumpia (fried egg rolls) and my favorite lechon (roast whole pig). There are a lot of variations and fusions of pancit and lumpia with each family personalizing it to their tastes.

Q: What is one major misconception of the Philippines?

A: Many think that the country is poor because it is a third-world country. There are still a lot of poor families in the rural areas but the metropolitan areas are full of upscale or modern homes/condos and businesses stay open until the wee hours of the morning.

Many also think that Filipinos do not know how to speak English but we are taught the language since kindergarten. Nowadays, the younger generation speak more English than the national language, Tagalog. In fact there are several customer service call centers in the Philippines and tech help calls could in fact be someone based in Manila.

People also think that Filipinos eat bizarre foods – we call them delicacies.

Q: What major holiday is celebrated in the Philippines?

A: Filipinos start to celebrate Christmas (Pasko) starting in September until January. Radio stations start to play Christmas music on September 1. There is a Christmas tradition that is still celebrated to this day: dawn masses (Simbang Gabi or Misa de Gallo) are traditionally held before dawn for nine consecutive days and culminates with the Christmas Eve Mass (Misa de Aguinaldo). Growing up, I remember going to the Simbang Gabi because my elders shared that our Christmas wish will be granted if we complete the nine days. After the Simbang Gabi mass, the streets outside the churches are lined with vendors selling delicious and seasonal treats. I'm fortunate to live in an area where I can continue to celebrate this tradition. Not all Catholic churches will hold 9-day masses however, most of the churches with Filipino parishioners will celebrate at least one mass. The Filipino community bring potluck food to share with the rest of the congregation after mass – like a feast.

Another important celebrated holiday is Philippine Independence Day held on June 12. In Seattle, the Filipino community celebrates this holiday at a popular park with concerts, dancing, and lots of Filipino food (so many variations of the popular dishes).

Q: Is there anything else about the Philippines that you would like to share?

A: Aside from being known for being friendly and hospitable, Filipinos have been in the medical field for a long time. We have doctors and nurses in my family all of whom I am very proud.