

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2022 | Noelle Abastillas

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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: My parents are from the Philippines, and I identify as Filipino-American.

Q: What are some of the Philippines cultural traditions? Which of any of these does your family celebrate?
A: In the Filipino culture, Christmas Eve ("Noche Buena") is an even bigger celebration than Christmas Day. Families gather together over a huge array of delicious food and everyone stays up until midnight (even the children) to go to Mass and then open presents.

Q: Is there a particular food dish that reminds you of the Philippines?
A: Yes, lumpia (crispy fried spring rolls) are a Filipino staple. They're Chinese in origin, but reflective of how Filipino culture is a blend of Chinese, Spanish, Malay, and even American influences.

Q: What is one major misconception about the Philippines?
A: The Philippines has a very complex culture that draws on the influence of neighboring countries like China, Malaysia, and Indonesia and its history as a former colony of Spain and of the United States.

Academics have referred to Filipinos as the "Latinos of Asia" because of their predominantly Spanish last names, the prevalence of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, and the incorporation of Spanish words in the Tagalog language. The Philippines was also located on the Spanish trade routes between Europe, Mexico, and Asia, so there is a history of Filipino expatriates well before the 20th Century settling in North America and in Spain.

That legacy of Filipino expats living in far flung corners of the world continues today due to economic challenges in the Philippines and is facilitated by the fact that many Filipinos speak English fluently, which itself is attributable to the impact of American culture in the Philippines.

Q: What major holiday is celebrated in the Philippines?
A: The Philippines is a very religious country that's centered on the Catholic Church, so Christmas is a big deal. It's not unheard of for people to start decorating for Christmas as early as September. One Filipino Christmas tradition that dates back to Spanish colonial times is the Parol, colorful star-shaped lanterns that are hung outside of people's homes, churches, and other buildings.

Disney did a wonderful three-minute Christmas ad in 2020 ([link](#)) that highlighted the importance of family and shared traditions like the Parol in the Filipino community. Warning: it will make you cry.

