

Captain Suintia Williams was the first Indian American woman to graduate from the Naval Academy and the first to become an astronaut. Indian Americans began enlisting in the Navy in larger numbers in the 1970s.



their shipmates. Among them was Rear Admiral Gordon Chung-Hoon. A graduate from the United States Naval Academy, Chung-Hoon commanded

the destroyer USS *Sigsbee* (DD 502) during the Okinawa Campaign. Although his ship was crippled by a kamikaze plane, Chung-Hoon's leadership ensured that the destroyer was able to safely return to port.

After the Philippines gained independence, the U.S. Navy continued to enlist Filipino nationals, recruiting up to 2,000 Sailors after World War II. The Navy required new recruits to serve at least one enlistment as stewards before seeking additional training in different rates. Over 40,000 Filipinos had participated in the program by the time the Navy ended it in 1991. Many of them became U.S. citizens after their service.

Admiral Harry P. Harris Jr., the first Japanese American to lead the U.S. Pacific Command, stated in 2009 that "When we recognize and capitalize on the strength that diversity brings to the Navy, we are better able to develop new ideas and reach out to partners in the world." For over 200 years, Sailors of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have been and remain a crucial part of the fleet.



Master Chief Petty Officer Josephine Tauoa from American Samoa poses in the engine room of USS Chung-Hoon (DDG 93). Today, over 22,000 Sailors of Asian or Pacific Islander descent serve in the U.S. Navy.



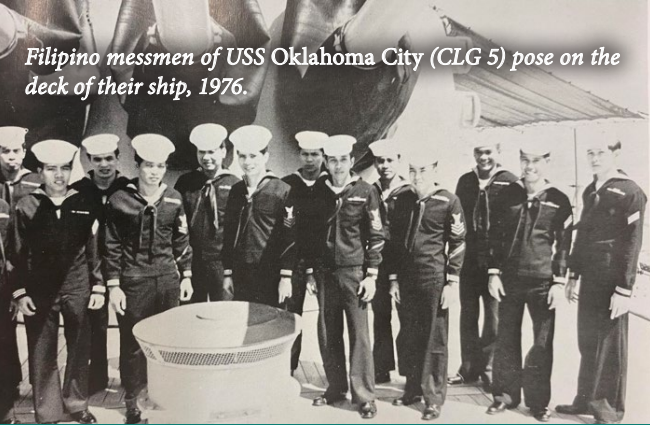
NATIONAL MUSEUM of the
UNITED STATES NAVY

(Cover) 1899-Japanese American stewards of USS Brooklyn (ACR 3) pose for a formal picture, 1899.

U.S. NAVY EXPERIENCE

ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S. NAVY





Filipino messmen of USS Oklahoma City (CLG 5) pose on the deck of their ship, 1976.

Over 22,000 Asian Americans currently serve in the United States Navy with 22 percent holding senior enlisted rates. Asian American Sailors continue a proud tradition of service that began over 200 years ago.

Between 1775 and the 1870s, the number of U.S. Navy Sailors of Asian or Pacific Islander descent was relatively small. William Ah Hang served during this period. Born in Canton, China, Hang immigrated to the United States and enlisted as a steward during the American Civil War. Hang was one of about 175 Asian immigrants who had to enlist under anglicized names like “John Adams” and “Robert Spicer.” After fighting in several combat operations, Hang was awarded U.S. citizenship, but restrictive immigration laws stripped him of his citizenship.

Asian American recruits generally served under several restrictions. The Navy limited many of these Sailors to the stewards rate because of the common belief among Americans that people of Asian descent



and Pacific Islanders were a servile race. Laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act also barred them from U.S. citizenship.

1862-William “John” Ah Hang served in the U.S. Navy during the American Civil War on ships in the North Carolina littorals and during the Battle of Mobile Bay.

Japanese immigrants enlisted under similar restrictions. They served until the world voyage of the 1907 “Great White Fleet.” With the fear of war with Japan looming in the background, the Navy transferred Japanese American stewards to shore duty because of the erroneous belief that they could be acting as spies for the Japanese government.

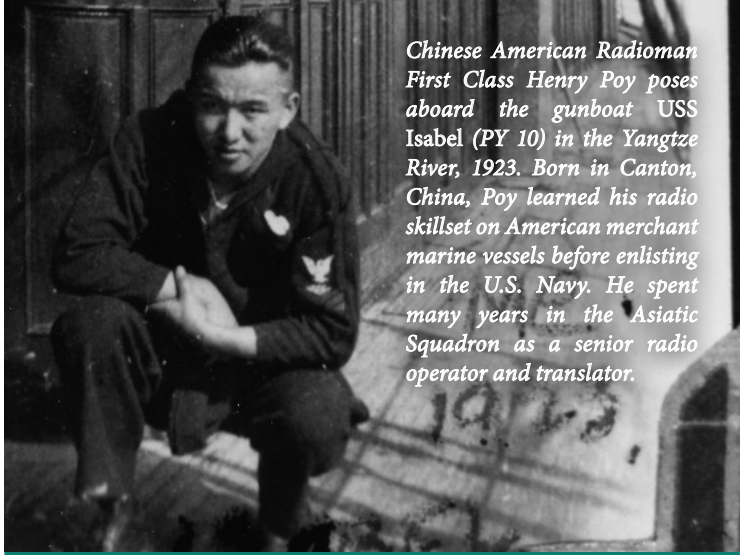
In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, the United States seized several territories in the Pacific, including the Philippine Islands. When the Navy established a permanent base in the Philippines, it began recruiting Filipinos, generally only as stewards though there were some exceptions. For example, the Navy waived steward-only restrictions for Filipino Sailors who had previous training and experience in wireless or engineering technology. One Filipino Sailor, Fireman Second Class Telesforo Trinidad, received the Medal of Honor in 1915 for saving his shipmates during a major explosion aboard USS San Diego (ACR 6).

The Navy continued its policy of recruiting Filipino Sailors into the steward rate until the United States granted home rule to the Philippines



The Navy awarded Filipino American Sailor Telesforo Trinidad for saving his shipmates’ lives during a major accident aboard USS San Diego (ACR 6), 1915.

A member of American Samoa’s Fita Fita Guard and Band color guard. Created by the U.S. Navy, the Fita Fita guards secured the South Pacific Island and received the rights and responsibilities of U.S. Sailors.



Chinese American Radioman First Class Henry Poy poses aboard the gunboat USS Isabel (PY 10) in the Yangtze River, 1923. Born in Canton, China, Poy learned his radio skillset on American merchant marine vessels before enlisting in the U.S. Navy. He spent many years in the Asiatic Squadron as a senior radio operator and translator.

and established a path for total independence. Congress passed laws in the 1930s that granted U.S. citizenship to Filipinos who had served for at least three years in the Navy. As part of its home rule contribution to World War I, the Filipino government paid for and manned the destroyer USS *Rizal* (DD 174).

Other Pacific territories acquired after the Spanish-American War included Guam, Hawaii, and what eventually became known as American Samoa. American Samoa’s first U.S. governor decided that locals would serve as the island’s internal security force. Named the “Fita Fita Guard and Band,” the members had the same rights and responsibilities as U.S. Navy Sailors. The unit lasted until the Navy turned over civil control of the island to limited home rule in 1951.

Thousands of Asian nationals and Asian Americans served in both World Wars and saw combat alongside

Rear Admiral Gordon Chung-Hoon was the first Asian American to graduate from the United States Naval Academy in 1934. Born in Hawaii to Chinese immigrants, he received the Navy Cross for heroically saving his damaged destroyer, USS Sigsbee (DD 502), and safely returning it to port during the Okinawa Campaign.

