

AMERICA IS IN THE HEART



by Carlos Bulosan

Introduction by Carey McWilliams

America Is in the Heart: A Personal History

Carlos Bulosan, Carey McWilliams (Introduction)

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AMERICA IS IN THE HEART. First published in 1946, this autobiography of the well known Filipino poet describes his boyhood in the Philippines, his voyage to America, and his years of hardship and despair as an itinerant laborer following the harvest trail in the rural West. Bulosan does not spare the reader any of the horrors that accompanied the migrant's life; but his quiet, stoic voice is the most convincing witness to the terrible events he witnessed.

America Is in the Heart: A Personal History Details

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Ayban Gabriyel says

America is in the Heart, in pursuit of his “American Dream”

America is in the Heart was an autobiography of Carlos Bulosan(1913-1956) a native of Binalonan, Pangasinan who went to California for greener pastures during the great depression in the US. The book was first published in 1946 in the US and was only given an attention in the country during the First Quarter Storm (1972), its great relevance during those times gave this biography the attention it needs.

In the book he gave his 3 brothers fictive names and the book was divided into 4 parts, the first part was about his childhood memory, his family in Pangasinan at the flight of his brothers. The first part was my favorite, its rural setting and his poignant writing gripped me. This was the most emotional part for me, sharing your family stories and tragedies while growing up, unable to fully understand things that are happening around you, accepting blows hoping to understand it someday, in time.

The second part was about his flight, his adventures in foreign land and realizing his American Dream and illusions of it. He went to America when he was just 17 years old, sold as slave and worked from one plantation to another. He later found his brother or rather his brother found him. This part was about his hardships and realizations. Hardship of being a Filipino worker in America in those dark times, when there was no available jobs and being a Filipino is like being a dog; discrimination of other races filled the American air.

The two latter parts was about his involvement in the labor unions and the movement. He organized labor movements for better working conditions. And it is also the part where he writes his poems and short stories and got published. He was bedridden for 2 years and this was his productive years. The book ends during the first year of WWII when one of his brothers volunteered to fight for his motherland. Allos(Carlos), also intends to come back to the Philippine but it didn't happen, he died in 1956.

On halfway reading this book, I can't help but to think if this is really a biography or a work of fiction, asking myself was it really possible, is he being truthful to me? Did he manage to take all the blows? I think not. He may not experience it all but I believed he wrote for those Filipinos who do. But none the less this book was a great work, Bulosan's magnum opus.

I first read him way back in high school, his short story “The Tree of my father” was included in our Philippine Literature class, again in college with his story “My Father goes to Court”. Carlos Bulosan was one our great writers that I believe to be underrated, this book still rings its relevance today, this book showed me tragedies and hardships of the past that we need not to ignore. I recommend this book to every Filipino, especially to those who have family members who left in search of a greener pasture working to support us, let us not forget their hardships.

I'm planning to read his novel “All the Conspirators” this month.

Kate says

3/5stars

I find memoirs and autobiographies very difficult to rate because how does one rate someones life?

But, I'm basing this off what i believe the author wanted the reader to get out of his story. And I think, in some areas, he didn't succeed. I think this story could have been INFINITELY better if he had decided to focus on JUST certain parts of his life - rather than trying to put literally every single person, place and thing he ever did from childhood to adulthood.

The beginning, focusing on his childhood in the Philippines was very strong and had a LOT of information and a lot of beautiful, horrifying passages. And then the end was also very powerful from his story as a aspiring writer and adult person.

But that middle, holy crap, it was SO BORING. Like I said in my update for this book, the middle of this book became "and then i went here... and then i met this person... and then i went here... oh and then i went HERE... and then i met this other person.. and then that person died... and now i met up with this person... and then i went over there... and then they died too... and then i went here... and then.." and it was SO POINTLESS and so difficult to keep up with.

There was a lot of incredible commentary on racism in America especially toward Filipinos and Asian Americans. But definitely not something that I ENJOYED reading.

L says

It is not surprising that Carlos Bulosan found an early American inspiration in Abraham Lincoln; the U.S. President, like Carlos, was the son of uneducated farmers and was himself poor and educated only very briefly. Lincoln also was associated in his time and ours as being a symbol for the struggle of national unity, a struggle that Bulosan would take up in his own form in the latter part of his life. His novel/autobiography (a composite of his and his compatriot's experiences), *America is in the Heart*, characterizes the author's early experience and the formative years that drove Bulosan towards this cultural and political awakening. It is his childhood experiences as well as his various introductions to American life that stir in him both the brimming ideals and the shattered illusions of equality, and teach him the differences between action and reaction. The idea of America as existing and thriving in the heart is what fuels the constant hope that Carlos holds of unity and acceptance for himself and his fellow countrymen.

Bulosan's initial struggles for survival in the Philippines and his final migration to America create a picture of what early United States immigrants endured against the face of racism, the economy, and the cultural climate that eventually led to Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor. As Carey McWilliams describes in the book's introduction, Bulosan was like many other immigrants "who were attracted to this country by its legendary promises of a better life" (vii). Bulosan's journey towards America was also equally a move to escape the poverty of his life in the Philippines, the hopelessness of the farming that would always be hindered by the government and absentee landlords. His peasant life in the Philippines is mysterious to him, full of questions. In dire conditions, he watches as his brothers leave, and his father struggles against changing conditions to maintain the dignity of his forefathers: "My father was a farmer, not a hired laborer,"

he writes. “It humiliated him to hire himself out to someone. Yet he was willing to swallow his pride and to forget the honor of his ancestors” (29). A later memory of his mother not eating so that Carlos and his brothers would have enough food also haunts this early consciousness of what it meant to be poor and seemingly helpless (280-1). As Carlos and his two brothers struggle to piece together an existence in America, Carlos learns that sometimes more than honor and comfort must be sacrificed when one comes face-to-face with the deception and hardship that accompany American idealism: “Was it possible,” he writes, “that, coming to America with certain illusions of equality, I had slowly succumbed to the hypnotic effects of racial fear?” (164) Bulosan’s rage and cynicism when encountering the constant stigma of being Filipino in America surprises even himself; he soon learns that simply reacting to prejudice with sheer hatred would cause only further discontent and disunity.

It is out of this despair and hunger that Carlos discovers the power of the written word, and the complicated possibilities that can stem from human kindnesses. Through the kinship he shares with his countrymen and adopted brothers, the shared experiences of writers like Thomas Mann and Yone Noguchi, and the unexpected and often confusing kindnesses of white people like John Fante, Marian, and Alice and Eileen Odell, Bulosan finds a chance for hope of which he could be the source: “I could follow the path of these poets... and if, at the end of my career, I could arrive at a positive understanding of America, then I could go back to the Philippines with a torch of enlightenment. And perhaps, if given a chance, I could help liberate the peasantry from ignorance and poverty” (228). Even as his conditions and health worsen, his hope expands to encompass first his family, then his village and, maybe, all of the Philippines (236).

Before saying goodbye to his family to leave for America, Carlos writes, “I was determined to leave that environment and all its crushing forces, and if I were successful in escaping unscathed, I would go back someday to understand what is meant to be born of the peasantry... I would go back to give significance to all that was starved and thwarted in my life” (62). The fact that Bulosan never gets a chance to go back to the Philippines becomes subjects for his later works – and while he may never have attained a reunion with his parents and sisters as he would have liked, the political consciousness that he attains in the latter chapters of the book show a hope for this understanding of poverty and the possibilities it may spark in others. Bulosan, who initially could not find a name for the listlessness and anxiety that he feels when confronted with racism, eventually finds a way to reach the hearts of men through his writings and teachings, and a way to let them into his vision of an ideal America. “I went from town to town,” he writes, “forming workers’ classes and working in the fields. I knew that I was also educating myself. I was learning from the men. I was rediscovering myself in their eyes... I felt my faith extending toward a future that shone with a new hope” (313).

It is this faith and hope that shades Bulosan’s every interpretation of America into one of a country blossoming with possibility, even when it is at its most hateful. Ironically it is in America, and not in his childhood as a farmer’s working son, that Carlos begins to understand his father’s love for “the earth where his parents and their parents before him had lacerated their lives” (76). In the same American pea fields where he toils for his next meal, he finds the reminder of his own home, his father’s land, and “discover[s] with astonishment that the American earth was like a huge heart unfolding warmly to receive me” (326). In his eyes, America becomes a caring and grieving mother – a mother who can be giving and generous if only the right questions are asked. The experiences of some of Bulosan’s comrades leaves them filled with bitterness, hunger driving them to crime and desperation; Carlos manages to overcome the struggle within and finds himself feeling at peace. At a crossroads of social and political awakening, Carlos is able to find a way for the goodness in his heart to most effectively inspire others: “My brother Macario had spoke of *America in the hearts of men*. Now I understood what he meant, for it was this small yet vast heart of mine that had kept me steering towards the stars” (314). It is through Bulosan’s words and actions that he finally is able to understand and express the optimism of his America, the hopes of his heart.

Daeny Pineda says

Bulosan: I-
Me, already crying: nice

Bulosan teaches the best lesson: America may be cruel, but she is also beautiful. His writing is gorgeous. This memoir gave me some On the Road vibes because of the whole constantly moving around thing, but honestly.... this is better than the Beats (sorry Kerouac). Super educational about the Filipino experience in America during the early 1900s, loved it, hard for me to put it down.

Monica says

This is an autobiography about Carlos Bulosan's life in America. Bulosan was born in the central Philippines in Binalonan.

After arriving in America in 1930, at the age of 17, he discovered a new world of violence, racism and oppression.

I personally think this is a GREAT text! It is sad of course because it is about the lives of Filipinos in America and their struggles with racist people and even amongst themselves.

Kristina says

This was a hard read for a lot of reasons.

At times it moved REALLY slow. I found it difficult to set aside time to read when I wasn't very interested in significant parts of the book. It's an auto-biography about Carlos Bulosan, a Filipino immigrant living in California in the 1920's after he fled the Philippines to escape poverty and political corruption. Bulosan, like many, believed in the American Dream but became quickly disenfranchised when he saw "the real America." While I appreciated some of his stories, there were many parts where the "day to day" activities were retold in too much detail.

It was also difficult to read because I felt that it "hit too close to home" in many parts. My husband is the son of two Filipino immigrants. The racial discrimination experienced by Bulosan made me cry, both in the Philippines as well as in the United States: most notably, the vivid retelling of a Filipino man who was beaten to death when he asked a storeowner for a glass of water for his bi-racial infant child. In another passage, Bulosan was tied to a tree, severely beaten and left for dead. I saw my husband's face in these stories and I was overcome with anger and sadness that this was happening to Filipino's as recently as the 1940's.

The history of Filipinos in America is a story of racial discrimination that is not often told in American history but I think it's important that we all have a greater understanding of the discrimination that occurred. In that sense, I think that this is an important story for everyone to read.

???? ???? #BookDiet2019 says

"The old world is dying, but a new world is being born. It generates inspiration from the chaos that beats upon us all. The false grandeur and security, the unfulfilled promises and illusory power, the number of the dead and those about to die, will charge the forces of our courage and determination. The old world will die so that the new world [will have] less sacrifice and agony on the living."

Carlos Bulosan is a Filipino author who is considered both a socialist writer and a labor organizer. His writings have a lot of impact for many Asian immigrants who can relate to his chronicles of hardship, sickness and despair as he tried to make a living in America. This work of non-fiction is semi-autobiographical, depicting his early childhood steeped in poverty back in his hometown Pangasinan, which then carried on to discuss about his misadventures during his immigration to the United States (particularly in Seattle and California). Here in these places is where he encountered several instances and increasingly violent displays and sentiments of racism against Filipinos during the Great Depression. This was a very disconcerting read and something I was not prepared to experience at all as one of the only two books I scheduled to read for this month.

But if I must pick between this harrowing tale of hopelessness and abuse, and the Victorian facebook-ing narrative that was ultimately Jane Austen's *Emma* in a nutshell, then there is no question in my mind that **America is in the Heart** is the more stimulating and emotionally stirring book.

Divided into three meaningful aspects of Bulosan's life, this book is a very satisfying slow burn that was painstakingly delivered with one of the most earnest literary voices I have read in a while. But, then again, being a Filipino I might only be showing certain biases, especially since I have made it to a point since I started reviewing novels to always have a Filipino story included in the schedule because although my taste and sensibilities as a reader have more or less been Westernized, there are tons of amazing works of fiction written by my own fellowmen that must be explored. Carlos Bulosan's autobiography is definitely one of those and I don't think I have any regrets. I say this because there are just so many passages in the later second and third parts of the book that are just so upsetting and depressing since they paint a cruel portrait of discrimination and loneliness as one is stuck in a foreign land that supposedly promises opportunities for equality and autonomy but to a barely educated immigrant like Bulosan, nothing could be farther from the truth.

What was singularly engaging about this book is its honesty in chronicling even the smallest moments of cruelty--and compassion. Bulosan would often express the paradox of the white men and women and their treatment of Filipinos. On one hand, they are violent and abusive; on the other they are sympathetic and willing to assist a broken stranger. It's worth noting that this book's setting is majorly in the Depression era so certain economic strains and struggles that American citizens have experienced then seem to only contribute to the way they blame the Asian immigrants for almost every ills the American public then perceives are their doing. But this cycle of racism and hate crime are not only committed against the Filipinos but also on the Chinese with their opium dens and gambling establishments. Still, Bulosan's story made a strong argument that perhaps Filipinos would frequently receive some of the worse maltreatment than other Asian immigrants during that time.

For example: a few of the American police would either beat up, arrest or plain gun down innocent Filipinos who are just there at the wrong place during the wrong time, and they would either do these things for their sick enjoyment or misplaced rage. There was even a legal situation where they want to pass down a law that would prohibit Filipino men to marry Caucasian women by equating Filipinos to Mongolians which they consider a dirty race. When anthropologists stress that Filipinos belong to the Malayan race, they were quick to jump on that and use it to further exercise their ignorance and blatant racism. Racial slurs such as the use of the term 'brown monkeys' to describe Filipinos are also in Bulosan's passages. Filipinos cannot get any kind of stable livelihood considering it's the Depression, but some of them would stick to groups to make it through, until the next raid or hate crime occurs and Bulosan himself had to run away from a few in order to survive. Essentially, this book is not easy to swallow especially now that we belong to a time where racism and discrimination are being slowly abolished in our humane societies. Books like *America is in the Heart* remind each and one of us just how far we have come--and how far we still have to go.

"We in America understand the many imperfections of democracy and the malignant disease corroding its very heart. We must be united in the effort to make an America in which our people can find happiness. It is a great wrong that anyone in America, whether he be brown or white, should be illiterate or hungry or miserable."

The first part of this autobiography was bittersweet, describing the life of poverty that Bulosan experienced when he was just a boy named Allos, the youngest son of a farmer and his wife. He had three older brothers he looked up to; the eldest Luciano was a soldier stationed in America who came home and became a politician, the second eldest Julio has also migrated to the States whom he tragically met up again with later encountered as a reinforcer for pimps and gangsters, and the last one, Macario, is a teacher whom his parents have pinned all their hopes and dreams to, as well as all their savings just to give him a proper education. Even as a boy, Allos wanted to learn and he has a passion for books and eventually for writing. He was close to all his brothers particularly with Luciano who taught him how catch birds and get involved in native politics, and Macario who filled his head with stories and imagination. Equipped by his parents' tenacity and values of hard work and humility, as well as his older brothers' lessons for manhood, Allos ventured on at a tender age of fourteen to America and his multiple struggles and failures to cope and succeed have only made him miss home. But in the end, he never went back to the Philippines.

Instead, he strove to write all the injustices he and his fellow immigrants have experienced. Since realizing he can never be silenced anymore and he can now use words and the printed word as a weapon, Bulosan has became a part of a publication that targets the rampant racism in Seattle. He also joined trade unions to fight for the rights of workers and their wage. As a boy, Bulosan is more than acquainted with the unfair salary and treatment that hard workers like his father had faced--his father who plowed rice fields that never belonged to him but to the corrupt upper class of mestizo family clans in the Philippines, and had therefore died sick and penniless. Bulosan has a lot of fire and righteous rage to spare, and he poured all of these feelings to his writings and social activism.

"Nothing is better than life, even a hard life, a broken-down gambler's life--and I wanted to live!"

America is in the Heart contains Bulosan's life and legacy and his contributions to the good fight for the immigrants in that era of American society. This is an important book and even though Bulosan has clearly lived a life of impoverished state and abuse, he had also learned to rise above that and become greater than

his suffering. Through writing, he had utilized his pain and talents to capture a searing landscape of tolerance, justice and unwavering dreams.

RECOMMENDED: 8/10

DO READ MY REVIEWS AT

Andrew says

At present moment, especially in my own Seattle, Filipinos are a pretty wealthy, pretty widely respected group highly represented in business and political leadership. Hard to believe that a mere 70 years ago they were beaten for sport by shitheel Oregonian cops.

There isn't as much self-criticism and irony in America Is in the Heart as I normally like in my memoirs. But when the surrounding circumstances are so brutal (racism, murder, diseases of poverty, oppression of paisano populations), I don't feel like self-criticism is all that necessary. Bulosan doesn't come off as a martyr, but rather as a human doing his best given the circumstances.

There's this tradition in American writing where members of an oppressed group face their situation with some modicum of hope and a belief that there was some power in the sheer force of love. Richard Wright and James Baldwin are too notable examples, and Carlos Bulosan falls firmly within that tradition.

He's buried here. Maybe I should go visit his grave. I feel that if there is some patron saint of the West Coast, it might be him.

Rufus says

The figure of Carlos Bulosan cuts a distinct outline in the history of Philippine-American relations. His account of the exploitation and violence perpetrated upon Filipino farm workers in the United States during the Great Depression, through the War and until the early 1950s when McCarthyist hysteria started gripping the minds of the mainstream American population, provides an incalculable source of a viewpoint that is not much read in mainstream historical works even today. Reading Bulosan is reading not only the biography of a single Filipino coming to grips with a new world of exploitation, it is the history of the whole uprooted Filipino workers who sought to understand the America that was idealized and the America that was reality. This paper aims to highlight the contradictions in the conception of America in the writings of Bulosan as we will find that the praises he often sings for America, is for an abstract America that is an almost utopian ideal divorced from reality. The paper will attempt to present this seeming contradiction by looking at the works written by Bulosan, works written about Bulosan and of the Asian immigrant in general, and lastly will draw on the author's own interpretation of Bulosan as an artist.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/52901549/Am...>

K.D. Absolutely says

Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956) was the first Pilipino who published a novel in English while in the US. This was in 1946 when he was 33 years old. He was a native of Binalonan, Pangasinan and went to the US at the age of 17 landing in Seattle in 1930.

This book amazed me in many ways but it also raised several questions in my mind.

Reading this brings back John Steinbeck's 1939 magnum opus *The Grapes of Wrath*. The only difference is that the white Joad family – the main characters in Grapes - becomes brown Bulosan brothers. Both novels are set in California during the height of Great Depression in the 30's. It was also the time when building notices like "*Filipinos and Dogs are Not Allowed*" are visibly displayed in the US. But this was before the WWII. The heroism exhibited by Filipino soldiers fighting side-by-side with their American compatriots changed the impression of Americans with regard to their brown brothers in the Far East.

Since one of my favorite novels is Grapes, I thought that all copy-cats will surely fall below my expectations. This did not. Bulosan's first person narration gave a very personal touch and believable. However, Wiki says that one of the characters in the book said in the interview that this book is only: "*30% autobiography, 40% case history of Pinoy (Filipino immigrant) life in America, and 30% fiction.*" Again, Bulosan is entitled to use poetic license but he also had a plagiarism case so everything leaves a questionable after thought when I finally closed this book.

Nevertheless, a remarkable must read that all Filipinos especially those who are planning to migrate to foreign countries. Definitely not to learn about the then extreme racism against Asians in the US but to learn from how Bulosan persevered in his dreams (to become a writer and contribute in making a difference turning America a better place) despite all odds.

Bulosan did not achieve his dream of returning back to the Philippines but he left us this book for generations of Filipinos to learn from and to cherish.

Joey says

In the midst of reading or right after you have read it, you may conclude that Carlos Bulosan 's personal accounts of his childhood experiences as well as his abject misery in America appear to be OVER EXAGERRATED , or far from the reality. I thought so, for I was not aware of the real situations among OFW's. But you may come to the deeper realization that Carlos Bulosan must have had personal reasons: This book could serve as an eye-opener not only to the Filipino immigrants but also to the others elsewhere as well.

It almost pulled at my heartstrings. Poor Allos! If his autobiographies as well as his other works had been published while he was going through the grinding poverty, teeth-gnashing cruelty and stoical discrimination in America, I might have said, " I didn't know." I wish the government of the Philippines had said it herself, or so did America. However, they turned their backs on or deaf to the reality, for I guess they must have been busy preparing for the WWII.

Carlos Bulosan bears a little resemblance to Richard Wright, one of my favorite authors. Like R. Wright,

Carlos Bulosan also dreamed of freedom from the unjust socio-political system. He also dreamed of being educated by reading omnivorously since his parents bent on sending him to school. He also went through difficulties in surviving the fittest. However, unlike R. Wright who had a chance to be known among the literati, Carlos Bulosan never did. Poor Carlos! If it had not been the poverty, he could have been educated as well as gained a name in the Philippine literature. He could have become a doctor as what he wanted to be when he was still young. He would not have held onto the edge of a knife by leaving the Philippines for the “American dream.” Alas, he ended up as poor and TB-stricken.

Honestly, after having read it, I became more nationalistic and chauvinistic; I love my native land more. When I got into the deeper part of the story, I can't deny the fact that I was furious at Americans, felt like putting the blame on them why my countrymen as well as other Asians suffered a lot, not even before but until now. Well, I can't blame them, for they may be the avatars and archetypes of stereotypes. Their history fashioned their hegemonic attitude. After all, I thought – since I am not much well-read about the world history- that Black Americans were not the only center of cruelty and discrimination. There are such things elsewhere after all.

I remembered two things while I was reading it:

- (a) My childhood. I also lived in a province. I knew how it is like to live in a remote rural place. I have experienced what Carlos Bulosan did: toiling land with a carabao, selling vegetables and fish, walking to a far distance, bar exchange, and so on.
- (b) My parents. My parents both lived in their own provinces; their attitudes are provincial. Although they are not educated, they use their common sense to live with dignity, to sacrifice for our sakes. ^^

I think this book should be highly recommended not only to OFW's, but also to students. This book should never be forgotten, for it reflects in the dark society in the past.

Luisa says

Really, really interesting. It's definitely long and at times hard to sift through and a bit rambling, but important to keep in mind who Bulosan was and when it was written. He's a really interesting guy, and although we know that parts of this book aren't necessarily taken from his own life (he borrowed from the experiences of his friends and family) it's still a really good insight into this time period and the experience of Filipinos in the United States, a group that doesn't always have its story told as many times as others. The narration can be inconsistent, and sometimes things are really hard to keep track of, but knowing the overarching plot line and journey isn't really as important as the experiences and thoughts on being in America. There are a few really wonderful passages. Bulosan's language can be really beautiful and poetic and those sections are the most powerful, especially the sequence which references the title.

sdw says

This is not an autobiography. This is fiction or a composite of many different experiences. For example, Bulosan did not work in the canneries in Alaska. I'm not sure why this book is continually introduced as an autobiography, rather than a piece of literature that falsely presents itself as autobiography. Doing so

contributes to the tendency to read certain forms of literature as historical fact, and also I think downplays the particular literary merits of this piece.

This book tells the journey of Allos from the Philippines to the United States (where he becomes Carlos) where he suffers from violent economic and racial exploitation running in fear from the savagery of the life he faces until he discovers socialism and communism and labor unions and intellectual white women and he becomes Carl the author while recovering from tuberculosis. This is a popular front novel, and in moments as Michael Denning points out, sounds like a “Left wing fourth of july oratory.” How to take this is under debate, but I tend to agree with the idea that we can recognize an intellectual distance between the narrator and the author. (“How could anyone think a Filipino wouldn’t have a chance in America?” um....well you just spent 300 pages telling us how a Filipino doesn’t have a chance in America...)

In real life Bulosan got very popular during WWII and right after the war and then got caught up in the red scare and a plagiarism scandal (which may have been him playing off another story rather than stealing it) and died lonely and miserable at a comparatively young age probably from exposure.

Nikhil says

1.5/5.

This text has value as a document of migrant Filipino (and other Asian) immigrant workers on the West Coast during the early 20th century. It depicts the circumscribed life these migrants had living with the Western States racist laws restricting economic and social activity by Asians, depicts the (often) horrifying working conditions in which these migrants were employed, and describes the nascent labor struggles of these workers to unionize and demand better working conditions. There are limited texts by Asian migrant workers from the time period, and as a psuedo-ethnography this text has value (while the author is criticized for combining events from several Filipinos lives into the life of a single character, this does not detract from the text's ethnographic merit).

However, as a piece of fiction, this text left much to be desired. Most importantly, the text is too long. While I understand that the lists of character's names and their (seemingly) random appearances through the text mirrors the transience of the main character's life, it makes for difficult reading and goes on for at least 50 pages too long. I also dislike when authors, describing the birth of a revolutionary socialist consciousness in the protagonist who emerged from proletarian misery start listing texts they thought were cool; it is lazy writing and completely unnecessary. The same point holds with name-dropping labor organizers and unions.

The text is also fixated with the idea of (poor, non-white) women as devious whores cheating hard-working migrant men of color out of their money, while educated, white women are bastions of purity that provide spiritual sustenance for the migrants and help their labor movement. No mention is given to the fact that sex workers and other poor women have always been at the vanguard of labor movements in the US (or indeed, Western countries in general). Or of the fact that poor women, who also worked for wages, had more in common with poor male workers than educated white women dabbling in poverty tourism, and were heavily involved in organizing labor movements and striking. The author could benefit from decolonizing his mind.

Finally, the conclusion of his intellectual journey, with an embrace of American patriotism despite being continuously rejected by the US is naive. One of the ways immigrant groups assimilate to the nation-state, including the United States, is through military service. Rather than understanding this as transactional

between the state/society and the migrant group, the author embraces it as part of his deep emotional commitment with the United States. I find it irritating that the author gives no thoughts to the downsides of assimilation via military service, nor thinks of alternate trajectories for immigrants of color than to assimilate to the dominant (white) narrative of the US. It is clear the main character still believes in US exceptionalism at the end of the text. Why, given that the main character/author is repeatedly beaten and vilified by agents of the state, remains a mystery. The main character/author is unable to grasp that the myth of the exceptional US nation-state and white supremacy are interlinked, abolishing one requires abolishing the other.

TL;DR: With a good edit, this text could have been a better though problematic 150-200 page novel/novella instead of the tedious and lengthy problematic mess it is.

Janica Vinas says

America is in the Heart tells the story of Carlos Bulosan, a strongly inspired Filipino peasant who strives to leave his life of poverty behind to fulfill his American dream. The book is set in small towns throughout the Philippines to different states and cities in the United States during the 1920's through the 1940's, a time when being an immigrant in America was harsh. Wanting nothing more than to live a decent life, Bulosan must endure the struggles of being a poor Filipino in America and continue to remain strong to reach his dream. Bulosan does everything to escape his life as being a peasant, leaving his unfortunate family behind, accepting harsh, low-paying jobs, and taking off to America wishing to become more than just a peasant from a small town in the Philippines. The book presents the severity of Bulosan's life in the Philippines and America which makes us realize the racial and class issues that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, encouraging us to treat everyone equally no matter what color, class, or gender they are.

To me, the most memorable moment in my book was when Amado, an older, male sibling of Bulosan's abuses a *carabao* (water buffalo) right in front of his father and brother, beating the poor animal so violently. While beating the *carabao*, his father comes toward him and asks him why he is beating the animal- Amado has no response. All of a sudden, he starts to run away from the farm without coming back. While running away, Amado shouts and says goodbye to Bulosan. Bulosan comes into realization that the reason why Amado had run away was because he was tired of living in poverty. This moment shows how deeply Amado hated their hard, peasant life, so he runs away from his problems as if it would help. Throughout the book, Bulosan never describes Amado's success because he never reached it. Amado rebelled, ignored, and ran away from his problems, making his life become anything but better.

Ultimately, the story of Carlos Bulosan's triumphant life is a story of Filipinos struggling to find decency in their lives, sacrificing themselves for money, facing poverty, and enduring all the discrimination, pain, and brutality caused by people who believed to be more superior than them. It all adds up to a tale of endurance, an example of all ages which encourages us to believe that we must rise above all and to never give up, no matter how much people try to bring us down. *America is in the Heart* tells that story very powerfully, reminding us that life in America will not always be easy, but we must always remember our rights.

America is in the Heart is an honest book that includes every detail of unjust cruelty faced or witnessed by a Filipino. I would recommend this book to readers who are into autobiographical stories that really dig deep into one's real, personal life or to those who want to understand what it was like to be an immigrant, particularly that of a Filipino in America half a century ago. I personally enjoyed reading this book because Bulosan was a Filipino man who grew up in the exact same town in the Philippines where my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents grew up in, so I could feel some sort of connection with the author.

Some of the ideas of the Filipino culture mentioned by Bulosan in this book are some of what my grandparents have told me when I was younger. I'm glad I read this book because I could easily understand the author's story. Bulosan's book was well-written and has become memorable for me.
