

DECISION USA

FIL-AM COMMUNITY TURNS OUT TO VOTE

I came, I saw, I voted!

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL
AJPress

LOS ANGELES—Filipino-Americans got up early to vote in one of the most anticipated presidential elections in history. The presidential race between Senator John Mc-

Cain (R-AZ) and Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) brought a large number of FilAms out to the voting precinct.

By 8:30 a.m. more than a dozen Fil-Ams waited in a long line that snaked through the narrow hallway to outside the front stairway of the Manila Terrace in Historic Filipinotown, which served as a voting precinct.

Fil-Ams have historically had low voter turnout numbers. However, this election is different.

"There's a sense of excitement," said Susan Dilkes, the executive director of the Filipino American Service Group Inc. (FASGI), whose many staff and volunteers arrived early to work Tuesday, November 4, to remind Fil-Ams to vote. "I could hear it in their voice when we did the phone banking. They are happy."

The long lines and early morning rain did not deter many from participating in this election.

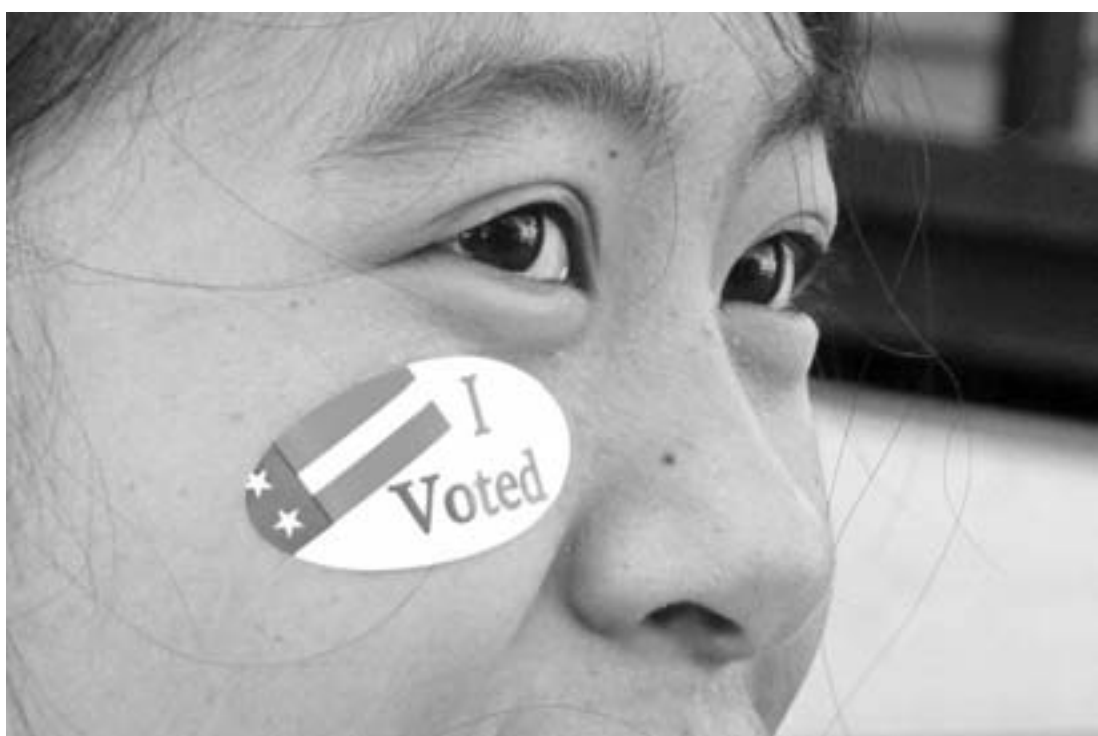
"It's important because it's our obligation," said Rodelio Ortonio, originally from Ilocos Sur, Philippines.

The average wait time was 30 minutes to vote at the Manila Terrace, according to this reporter who timed some of the people coming in and out of the precinct.

But in some places around LA County, many voters had to wait nearly an hour to cast their ballots.

Even Mayor Antonio Villarraigosa, who had filled his ballot Saturday, November 1, waited an hour to turn it in.

"Yes, I could have turned my ballot in early but I wanted to send a message," said the Mayor outside a voting precinct in Hancock Park. "If the Mayor could stand in lines so can you. We're going to be in lines today, all of us and it's well worth the wait because America is a great place



Twenty year old Noelene Gacis proudly displays her "I Voted" sticker. Noelene, a first time voter, along with her family lined up early Tuesday morning to cast their vote in the 2008 US General Elections.



WWII Veteran Peping Bacig along with FASGI volunteers man the phones as they made last minute calls to fellow Fil-Ams to go out and vote.

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