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Practitioners Essay

Fighting for Our Existence: Talanoas of Survival and Resistance at San Francisco State

Arlene Daus-Magbual and Levalasi Loi-On

ABSTRACT

Although Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AA&PI) represent 29 percent of San Francisco State University's (SF State, 2021d) student body and have one of the nation's largest Asian American Studies Departments, we continue to fight for our existence within higher education. This essay focuses on the development of AA&PI Student Services' response and praxis to COVID-19, anti-Asian racism, and anti-Blackness in the AA&PI community. As we faced enormous challenges of a global pandemic, we began to see the connection of what was happening in the world within our own lives. Grounded with the legacy of Ethnic Studies and Community Responsive Pedagogy, we employ the critical race methodology of counterstorytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and Talanoa Research Method (Tecun et al., 2018; Vaoleti, 2013) to center our experiences.

INTRODUCTION

We acknowledge that we live, work, learn, and teach on the land that is ancestral and unceded territory of the Indigenous Ramaytush Ohlone people. We call in our ancestors of the past, present, and future, those we have lost in war, state-sanctioned violence, a global pandemic, racism, xenophobia, white supremacy, and antiterrorism laws. We acknowledge and uplift the stories and experiences of communities that are constantly pushed to the margins and erased by the dominant

narrative. We are community-engaged motherscholars, descendants of the Third World, voyagers, farmers, war brides, Alaska cannery workers, chefs, blue-collar poor righteous artists, and teachers. Because of their sacrifices, struggles, and survival, we are afforded opportunities of higher education, and vocations our ancestors never imagined. We are the inaugural team of San Francisco State University's Asian American & Pacific Islander Student Services upon the receipt of the Department of Education Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) Title III, Part F Funding in 2016. It is with this acknowledgment, that we continue to serve and organize our AA&PI communities personally, locally, and globally as we stand on the shoulders of those who have fought for our existence. Today, we continue that legacy.

Although AA&PI's represent 29 percent of San Francisco State University's (SF State, 2021d) student body and have one of the nation's largest Asian American Studies departments, we continue to fight for our existence within higher education. Falling within the traps of the model minority myth or labeled as the "other," AA&PIs continue to be overlooked. It is within this vein, we use the term *AA&PI* to acknowledge "two very different pan-national and pan-ethnic entities": "Asian American" and "Pacific Islander" (Hall, 2015, 729). Among the goals of Ethnic Studies are self-determination for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color often invisible to and within the academy. Self-determination, or "the ability for dispossessed people to center one's experiences in shaping one's material reality[,] was an impetus for the formation of the AA&PI Student Services" (Daus-Magbual, 2020, 27). At the receipt of our first AANAPISI Part F Grant, SF State made a commitment to the institutionalization of this department along with the fully funded positions of director, educational psychologist, and a student success coordinator. For the past five years, AA&PI Student Services and our Asian American and Pacific Islander Retention and Education (ASPIRE) program has engaged the SF State community in ways that the institution can continue its commitment to our AA&PI community. Transformative change is needed to address the current climate we are facing so we can continue to serve our community with a critical lens and responsive action. Building on this *AAPI Nexus* issue's theme, "Models of Change: AANAPISIs in Action," we will demonstrate how Community Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) (Tintiango-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade, 2021) and praxis can be conducted collaboratively across the silos of higher education.

We begin by describing our approaches including the use of Talanoa (Tecun et al., 2018; Vairoletti, 2013), Critical Race Storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and CRP as they serve as a foundation for the creation of AA&PI Student Services' response in serving the needs of our community. Then, we center our Talanoas by sharing our experiences in how we cope with COVID-19 and reckon with racism.

Our Community, Our Foundations

The development of AA&PI Student Services “centers student identities, narratives and experience that may have been invisible and or sidelined in the traditional work of student services” (Daus-Magbual, 2020, 27). Advocating and creating opportunities for access and visibility is a priority for our students especially when institutions of higher education continue to marginalize and silence their existence. The use of CRP helps students develop critical thinking, action-oriented goals, and leadership skills that can help with their aspirations for themselves, families, and communities. AA&PI Student Services draws from philosophies, approaches, and practices of Indigenous and contemporary Ethnic Studies understandings and scholarship (Meyer, 2003; Strobel, 2001) CRP is:

[A]n equity-centered approach to education that is responsive to the material conditions that are particular to a student's lived experience in a community and the histories that created that experience. (Tintiangco-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade, 2021, 8–9).

AA&PI Student Services is a mechanism to transform SF State's campus climate, culture, and curriculum to prioritize wellness and hope. Students who learn Ethnic Studies not only improve outcomes but also their self-esteem, self-determination, and civic and community engagement.

Liberatory education focuses on the development of critical consciousness, which enables students to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded (Freire, 1972). Cultivating empathy is a key factor to our praxis. Empathy is foundational to building courage, humanization, and healing. Lopez, Desai, and Tintiangco-Cubales further expressed, “In the face of these conditions, to maintain critical hope requires audacity. It insists that we stand boldly in solidarity with our communities, sharing the burden of their undeserved suffering as a humanizing hope In our collective capacity for healing” (Lopez et al., 2020, 76). Our solidarity is beyond performance where we aim to stand

with our students and our campus community. It is crucial to understand the historical oppression students are facing and to contextualize how our mind, body, and souls are affected when we step into work, the classroom, or in the boardroom.

Our Voices

Talanoa Research Method (TRM) is a methodology aligned with Pacific worldviews (Vaiotei, 2013, 191). The concept of *Talanoa* is rooted in oral tradition—*tala* means to inform, tell, relate, command, ask, or apply, and *noa* means of any kind, ordinary, or void—and is recognized in the Pacific nations of Fiji, Sāmoa, the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands, Niue, and Tonga. Talanoa is described as conversations that are a “culturally and emotionally embedded reciprocal exchange between researcher and participants [that] requires a deep, interpersonal relationship and emotional sharing between all parties involved” (Farrelly, 2012). Talanoas are central within this essay because we offer a culturally relevant and community responsive model that narrates our knowledge and advocates for equitable control over the creation process. It is also the reason why the terms *I* and *we* are used interchangeably throughout this essay.

Intersecting Talanoas and Critical Race Theory (CRT) methodology of counterstorytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) centers our experiential knowledge and draws on the strength of the lived experiences of people of color. When the ideologies of white supremacy, racism, and intersections of oppression are examined and named as a collective community, not only does it give us the analysis to frame our oppression but also a language to defend ourselves (ibid.). It is imperative we counter the “master-narrative” that is reproduced and continues to violently oppress, marginalize, and silence Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Telling our stories and counter-narratives is a strategy of survival and a means of resistance. In this next section, we will discuss three significant events that addressed Coping with COVID 19, Reckoning with Racism, and anti-Asian violence while sheltering in place during a worldwide pandemic, while weaving our lived experiences through Talanoas.

COPING WITH COVID-19

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, BIPOC communities had a greater risk of contracting the virus (Harlow and Fricano, 2021). Many of our students, staff, and faculty experienced COVID-19 firsthand

or with family members. At SF State, we conducted a spring 2021 survey of 358 students within the College of Ethnic Studies, Asian American Pacific Islander Retention and Education (ASPIRE) linked courses found significant mental health needs. One of the key findings showed that one in ten students reported a family member or close friend passed away during the pandemic's shelter-in-place period, indicating a need for loss and grief support. Students also repeatedly expressed how the pandemic impacted their intellectual capacity and academic engagement. Students reported experiencing a sense of fatigue because of the instant access that social media provides for news on the pandemic, anti-Asian racism, and anti-Black violence. One student voiced their feelings as, "I had to take some days off just because of feeling burnt out and that was affecting my mental health. It was hard on my physical health too because stress was too much and affected my sleep" (SF State, 2021b). As student services professionals, we center the experience of our students and drive the work that we do to respond to their needs. What we learned through the pandemic was that we needed to tend to our own mental and physical health to address burnout, zoom fatigue, and the need to feel productive. While our students experienced tremendous stress, we as a team also experienced our own difficulties.

Levalasi's Talanoa

I still remember the look on my mom's face as she could barely breathe to tell my siblings and I that she tested positive for COVID-19 from the hospital. A few weeks beforehand, I had surprised her on Mother's Day with the news that I was pregnant with my first child and then immediately I feared that we were talking to her on the phone for the last time. Since it was early June 2020, we were all still learning how to navigate treating the virus, but I could only think of my younger sister, her newborn daughter, and how tragedy has struck my family too many times. In a state of panic, I flew out of state to support them and within a week, my sister and brother-in-law were hospitalized while I took care of my two-month-old niece. I will never forget the feeling of heartbreak as I watched my sister leave her daughter with me, not knowing if she would ever see her again.

I returned to San Francisco after a negative COVID-19 test, but my results were false-negative, and I was placed in a city-sanctioned quarantine motel to stop the spread of the virus. My anxiety was at an all-time high due to a list of worries: I feared the worst for my family

members in recovery including my niece that also tested positive, I had a tremendous amount of guilt for putting additional loved ones at risk after my arrival, and I was so nervous that I would not be able to take care of myself in my early stages of pregnancy. All the information that was being circulated about treatment made everything so uncertain, but at that point I really could see that people were affected by the virus differently and there was an aspect of shame that no one was talking about. I feel so fortunate that my family and I were able to survive because there are so many lives that have been and continue to be impacted by this pandemic.

After a month away from work, I wanted to be transparent with my peers and colleagues about what happened, and after multiple conversations about supporting students' basic needs and engagement, I felt that it would be great to offer a student space to address the pandemic specifically, given my own experience. My recovery and conversations with students helped me to recognize that no one was prepared to build and navigate our virtual campus due to a global pandemic, so we needed to lead with patience, understanding, and make space for each other. I hosted my first Student Success Group focused on coping with COVID-19 in the fall of 2020. This was a six-week program focused on centering students' feelings and experiences in relation to COVID-19. We hosted guest speakers from Health Promotion & Wellness, STOP AAPI Hate, and the Aunty Sewing Squad to discuss topics such as identifying stressors, dealing with racism and isolation, and redefining resilience. In a discussion about surviving COVID-19, one of our participants shared how she was hospitalized and comatose, where she had to learn how to walk again and accept that her body would continue to face effects of the virus for the rest of her life. On average, we had about eleven students in attendance that appreciated having a safe and engaging space to share and build community. I learned that my students' challenges with school was that the quality of remote instruction did not feel effective and that it was stressful dealing with Wi-Fi and technological difficulties. Overall, this space helped us collectively name and process how this serious global health threat was impacting our lives, mental health, and participation at SF State.

During this time, I also noticed that many Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students were struggling with COVID-19 and remote courses. In my one-on-one check-ins, my students expressed that their friends, the physical campus, and community helped them to

succeed academically. Whereas being at home forced them to balance taking care of their family members, find an ideal space to complete work and attend Zoom sessions, and stay motivated. It is critical to note that when data is disaggregated, the death rate for Pacific Islanders due to COVID-19 is 182 per 100,000 people—which is the highest of all other racial and ethnic groups and means that NHPs are three times more likely to contract the disease compared to white people and nearly twice as likely to die (Harlow and Fricano, 2021). Some students also disclosed that they had contracted the virus and that they feared the spread among their family members. In response, I worked collaboratively with the NHP faculty on campus to address these issues in monthly Talanoa sessions to discuss students' needs, build community, and hold space for one another as faculty and staff shared how they were struggling as well.

Before the mandated shelter in place in March 2020, our collaborative work as staff, faculty, and students had established the first Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies (CPIOS) minor program in the CSU with the first two Pacific Islander tenure track faculty in the College of Ethnic Studies: Dr. Ponipate Rokolekutu and Dr. Leora Kava. Students in the Pacific Islanders' Club were preparing for their 16th Annual Asian American & Pacific Islander Mural Celebration addressing climate change and in our Talanoa sessions we discussed the loss of momentum and feelings of isolation. However, at the end of the academic year, we were able to host a virtual graduation celebration for ten NHP students with seven graduating as our first cohort of students completing their degree with a CPIOS minor. Our digital certificates quoted Tongan scholar Dr. Epeli Hau'ofa, who reminded us that, "[j]ust as the sea is an open and ever flowing reality, so should our oceanic identity transcend all forms of insularity, to become one that is openly searching, inventive, and welcoming" (Hau'ofa, 2008). Collectively these spaces to address COVID-19 helped me to acknowledge that in the reality of uncertainty, our feelings of shame, anxiety, and frustration were shared and there was hope in not being alone.

RECKONING WITH RACISM

While the COVID-19 pandemic surged, acts of racism and violence continued. In June 2020, we released a statement of solidarity in support of our Black community at SF State to denounce the murders of Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and state-sanctioned violence that targeted Black communities. We stood

in solidarity with our Black students, faculty, and staff at SF State and throughout the nation. We understand the root causes of systemic racism, white supremacy, and all other forms of oppression, which are enacted as dangerous and divisive tools that impact our communities. Our freedom and liberation are tied to one another, and we commit to learning, reflecting, and working on our internalized oppression, how it shows up in our communities and how we continue to take action to dismantle ideological and institutional oppression. Our communities were hurting. We had the responsibility to respond with what was happening with our students, staff, faculty, and administrators. With countless Zoom meetings and dialogue with our community, we grounded our action with CRP (Tintiangco-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade, 2021) and praxis (Freire, 1972).

Anti-Asian racism and violence surged at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to be perpetuated within our communities. According to STOP AAPI Hate, between March 19, 2020, and February 28, 2021, nearly 4,000 hate incidents were reported including verbal harassment, physical assault, civil rights violations, and online harassment (Saw, et al., 2021). SF State students similarly reported increasing anti-Asian racism. A spring 2021 survey of students in the College of Ethnic Studies found that 20 percent experienced race-related discrimination. Students reported feeling sad, angry, overwhelmed, and fearful for their safety and the safety of their family members (SF State Department of Asian American Studies, 2021b). We were faced with a nexus of anti-Blackness within the AA&PI community and anti-Asian Violence running rampant throughout the United States. The next section provides a narrative of how we responded to both.

Arlene's Talanoa

Being an office of two staff our work can feel insurmountable. We knew that this would take a community, so Levalasi and I partnered with our ASPIRE peer mentors, student assistants, faculty, staff, and administrators to respond to COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and Anti-Asian violence. When we shifted to the virtual world, we pivoted from large scale in-person events to large-scale virtual events. There was a need to hold space for our community in times of grief, anger, and sadness as these spaces provided a pathway toward empathy, hope, and healing. We took an approach that included the diversity of voices and experiences from our students, staff, faculty, and administrators along with our communities outside of the university. These events

forced us to reckon with our ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression especially when it came to anti-Blackness in our AA&PI community. As the world watched the murder of George Floyd, our community was outraged and understood that there was much work to do to address anti-Blackness in the AA&PI community. I was approached by leaders in the Filipinx community to codevelop and facilitate an event titled “Tatlong Bagsak for Black Lives: Combating Anti-Blackness in the Filipina/x/o Community” (Tatlongbagsak.org, 2020). This symposium was presented by organizations such as Pin@y Educational Partnerships, Balay Kollektive, Pinayista, Asian Solidarity Collective, Can’t Stop Won’t Stop, and SF State Asian American & Pacific Islander Student Services. The goal of the event was to provide a space and discuss how Filipina/x/o American freedom is tied to Black liberation, how we can be in solidarity for Black Lives, and how we can continue to spread this critical dialogue. I collaborated on the curriculum and leadership training for educators and organizers to bring the dialogue back to our organizations, communities, and families.

This event drew more than 1,000 participants nationwide, including students, staff, and faculty from SF State. The Tatlong Bagsak curriculum and training influenced the planning and facilitation of the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM) leadership retreat and an ASPIRE student event facilitated by peer mentors on anti-Blackness in the AA&PI community. The SAEM Leadership retreat was held in the summer of 2020 and the retreat planning group consisted of members across divisions. The focus was on Black Lives Matter and to address the central question of how Student Affairs professionals can stand in solidarity with Black Lives. The retreat was modeled after the Tatlong Bagsak event where we started with a panel of speakers who shared their experiences with being Black women in higher education. The portion that I facilitated was a workshop focused on ACT: Analyze the Argument; Call in to Converse; Transform the Dialogue. In breakout rooms, administrators discussed and created community commitments to ACT within their respective divisions. At the end of the year, we gathered to discuss ways in which we implemented ACT with our staff and students.

A week later, our ASPIRE peer mentors held a similar event for students and community members. They wanted to create a safe space to dialogue specifically about anti-Blackness in the Asian American community. Before the conversation, the ASPIRE peer mentors

frontloaded the concepts of anti-Blackness, which is the inability to recognize Black humanity, and decentering, which involves understanding that as non-Black People of Color we have been conditioned to be anti-Black and anti-Indigenous and perpetuate anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism due to the white supremacist cisheteropatriarchal system (Tatlongbagsak, 2020). Students and community members created commitments in how they will practice these concepts in their lives and in their communities.

Since these events, we modeled our curriculum and lesson planning by using Pin@y Educational Partnerships' (PEP) C4 Lesson Plan Model (Daus-Magbual et al., 2019, 4) to ground our response in Ethnic Studies and CRP. It was important for us to go beyond a statement of solidarity on an Instagram page. As a senator on SF State's Academic Senate, I coauthored a resolution on prioritizing the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of BIPOC staff, faculty, and administrators. Our subcommittee collaborated across campus with academic affairs, student affairs, Associated Students, and the Division of Equity and Community Inclusion and distributed the resolution throughout campus for feedback and consideration. Although it was not a policy, the resolution created conversations and actions addressing racist hiring, retention, and promotion practices that are reproduced throughout the university. The difference between an Instagram post of solidarity and an unbinding resolution is that the resolution provided concrete examples of how the university can respond to institutional racism (SF State Academic Senate, 2021a). This resolution is the first of its kind to address racism and racist practices in hiring and retention of BIPOC staff, faculty, and administrators and was passed unanimously by the Academic Senate.

When we got back from winter break, anti-Asian racism and violence was relentless. It instilled fear and anger with our students and felt helpless as they sheltered in place. Our ASPIRE Peer Mentors and Associated Students worked together to develop and facilitate two student-only forums in the beginning of March 2021. It was important for the students to have this space for themselves and gather student experiences so they can share them with campus administrators. Although I worked with them throughout the process, I took myself out of the event and asked faculty and staff to not join as well. They wanted to speak freely without the pressure of performing in front of their teachers or supervisors. The first AA&PI Student Forum on anti-Asian violence was focused on bringing students together to have space for

learning, dialogue, and collaboration on responding to anti-Asian violence in our community. Our ASPIRE Peer Mentors and Associated Student leaders facilitated small breakout rooms of eighty-nine students. These small groups reflected on the following questions: How are you feeling? How are we coping? How can we support each other? The feedback from this event was overwhelming because students felt appreciative that ASPIRE provided space to share their grief, rage, and hopelessness. The purpose of the first forum was to hold space and share in the community.

The second forum, held a week later, was a Cross Cultural Student Forum and cosponsored by twelve student organizations that included ASPIRE, ASI, Black Student Union, Asian Student Union, League of Filipino Students, Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor, General Union of Palestine Students, Kappa Psi Epsilon, Nikkei Student Union, Latinx Greek Council, Student Council of Intertribal Nations, and Vietnamese Student Association. The purpose of this forum was to bring different communities together to learn about each organization, what struggles they were experiencing, and actions to support each other's campaigns and movements. The leaders of each organization then facilitated smaller breakout rooms to talk about what solidarity looks like and to respond to the following questions: In what ways can we support you? What can the university do to support us? These forums brought awareness on Anti-Asian violence, dove into critical dialogue, and built cross community solidarity. Students came up with concrete examples of how they will support one another through cross collaborations, attend each other's events, and continue to learn about each other's histories, struggles, and experiences.

Days later, we were heartbroken at the violence that occurred in Georgia on March 16, 2021, where six out of eight people killed were Asian American women. I was receiving emails from students, faculty, staff, and community members to teach workshops on Asian racism and violence and felt that it would be beneficial for us to host another forum specifically for faculty, staff, and administrators. We used the same format from the student forums that brought in 150 participants across campus who included the president, provost, vice presidents, managers, faculty, and staff. It was powerful to hear the experiences of racism from our AA&PI colleagues on campus and ways in which the university can support us. These discussions provided an open and safe space to grieve and find solace in the community.

Through the forum we found allyship among our community to step up and do the work needed to dismantle white supremacy. At the same time, I called on five other Asian American faculty members to help me coauthor another Academic Senate resolution to condemn anti-Asian racism and violence based on the discussions from these three forums. The resolution was passed by the senate and supported by many colleagues throughout the campus. “The purpose of this resolution is to acknowledge the significant rise in Anti-Asian Violence and respond to the needs of our Asian American students, staff, faculty, and administrators. This resolution further supports our wider university efforts towards an anti-racist university” (SF State Academic Senate, 2021b). We invited students who organized the forums to speak at the senate plenary and discuss the outcomes of the events and the need to pass a resolution that responds to our community’s needs.

Being a director for AA&PI Student Services at SF State at this time further concretized the importance of bringing the community to work together amidst anger and grief and to find hope and healing through critical praxis. My role and responsibility in antiracist work has evolved to move beyond empowerment and move toward community responsive practices that acknowledges the existence of our struggles, oppression, and survival through the constant erasure of our experiences from white supremacy and racism. In many ways, the work and research I did seventeen years ago for my thesis on hate crimes on college campuses has prepared me to do the work needed to support my students, colleagues, and community in 2021.

CONCLUSION

Culminating a difficult year of COVID-19, anti-Blackness, and anti-Asian racism in our communities led to a final town hall event toward the end of spring 2021 to wrap up our series of forums. AA&PI students, staff, and faculty came together to host an intergenerational town hall entitled “Reckoning with Anti-Asian Violence and Racism” to address what the university can do to support us and what we can do as a community to continue to fight for our existence and heal. We invited three students, one staff member, one faculty lecturer, and two faculty members to participate on a panel to address that question. One student suggested, “Moving forward, I call on faculty, staff, and administrators to listen in order to truly show solidarity, beyond words, listen to the students and provide these spaces for them, allow students to take up space and get involved with issues that directly

affects them” (Gonzales, 2021). Students shared that many of their teachers did not acknowledge anti-Asian violence or ask them how they were feeling about the shootings in Georgia. Another student panelist expressed:

There’s a need to shed light on our narratives because we will not stay in the margins any longer. There was another incident, and we have to process that and sometimes a lot of the time in our communities, it just feels easier to suppress and put our feelings away in a box. To pull ourselves up by the bootstraps because the world told us to do so because the systems of oppression are trying to silence our voices. (Torres, 2021)

Like Ethnic Studies student strikers in 1968, our students continue to fight for their existence at SF State.

Our faculty on the panel called for the need to decolonize from our individual and collective pain and move toward healing. Professor Makhijani (2021) said, “There is one critical reason that our communities must absolutely refuse being pitted against each other, refuse falling into the tired colonial playbook of divide and conquer.” Our communities are hurting, and we need to build self and community love, liberation, and transformative solidarity. We become a force to be reckoned with through this. She expressed, “Let us be in our fullest love and power, instead of calling for increased policing and surveillance in response to the uptick in anti-Asian violence.” We have a responsibility as a campus community to care for each other and develop new ways of living rather than reproducing business as usual.

Our colleague, Dr. Russell Jeung concluded the town hall by speaking about his experiences with the Stop AAPI Hate campaign and the toll it took on one’s mental health and healing process. Jeung (2021) shared, “Drawing attention to our experiences by centering on our pain and grieving by connecting with each other and sharing these stories, that’s how we get healed from racial trauma. This is our moment where we can take the pain and turn it around to offer hope.” The symposiums, forums, and town hall offered a dialogical space, a sense of belonging, acknowledgement, and hope as they provided healing and community through a challenging year.

CRP, Talanoas, and Critical Race Counterstorytelling, informed our approach in addressing COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and anti-Asian violence in our communities. Moving forward, we are living in a time of transition that encompasses the traumas of the pandemic,

racial violence, and the healing work needed to navigate a healthy and hopeful future. Ethnic Studies emerged from Black and Third World students organizing alongside faculty, white students, and community members to address higher education. They were not only hoping to shift our classrooms and curriculum but also to demand that our institutions were accessible for our communities. We need a transformative shift from the reproduction of whiteness within institutions of higher education to collectively work on uplifting and centering the stories and experiences of our BIPOC students, staff, faculty, and communities. As we continue to live with COVID-19 and racism, our stories of survival include sustaining our own wellness to continue to support the communities we represent. We are the legacy of the Ethnic Studies movement to continue to fight against the erasure of our existence and move toward freedom and liberation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We dedicate our work in AA&PI Student Services and ASPIRE to Dr. Gwen Angelica Agustin-Nodora who passed away on September 6, 2021. Dr. Gwen Agustin-Nodora was our ASPIRE Educational Psychologist and an integral part of our AANAPISI initiative and program. She was our friend, colleague, teacher, and coconspirator and we will continue her legacy through our words, work, and praxis. Rest in Power.

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