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PWR 1 - Academia Unleashed

Spring 2019

# Regaining Control of the Filipino-American Identity through Stanford University's Pilipino-American Student Union (PASU)

## INTRODUCTION: MY PARENTS' JOURNEYS AS FILIPINO AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS

"I don't care if you don't like it, you *must* like it!" my dad declares while teaching me, his 12-year-old daughter, Pre-Algebra. Every week, we would go over my math textbooks from class and do hundreds of practice problems. Every summer, my dad would teach me the upcoming school year's math topic. Every day, I dedicated two hours to completing a problem set in my textbook. While it set me up for academic success, I hated it, but I understood why "I had to do it" (according to my dad, at least). My family has always valued education. As the first in their family to leave their home and settle in another country, my parents immigrated from the Philippines to teach mathematics in Texas. For them, education was an escape. Instead of farming, running a stand of snacks, or taxiing his family's transportation bus, my dad graduated at the top of his high school class and went to college. There, he did his best to fight against math; rather, he was interested in history. But a stable career could not be found in studying history. Instead, there was a high demand for math teachers. So, my dad did the practical thing and became a math teacher. He met my mom, also a math teacher, through a teaching company that outsourced its employees to the United States. Along with six other Filipinos, my parents lived in an apartment complex in Rio Grande Valley, Texas, eventually moving out to get married and raise my siblings and me. After landing a position

as a math professor with Houston Community College and generating enough income, my parents put a down payment on the house in which their children would grow up for 17 years. In their eyes, my parents made it. Through education, they had accomplished what they could not access in the Philippines. This is why I, my parents' respectful child who understands the sacrifices they made to give me my life, toughen up and burn theories into my mind, take on as many advanced classes my school has, and stay up late almost every night to study.

One might say that what my parents went through is the textbook definition of the Immigrant American Dream: go to the U.S. to engage in personal freedoms that will liberate you from the hardships of your past life in your home country. Then, once you get to the U.S., make enough money to support your mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, god-children, and anyone else that relies on your income to go to school, continue the family business, and put food on the table. For Filipino immigrants, the final step of the process is to renounce your allegiance to the Philippine flag and become a naturalized citizen. Stay in the U.S. to raise your kids, because the education and living situation here is better anyway, and make sure your kids study hard because if they don't get good jobs (by the way, the only careers that are legitimately considered are to be engineer, doctor, and lawyer—sorry kids, I don't make the rules), then all your hard work has gone down the drain. Many Filipino American (to be referred to as FA for the remainder of this paper) immigrants will attest that they came to the U.S. in search of a life that goes beyond income that comes from selling candy and encyclopedias to get by. For my parents, and many other Filipino immigrant workers, that meant to become educated and become smart and marketable enough in a certain field to find employment overseas. My parents used education as a one-way ticket from the Philippines to the U.S. This causes a dissonance in higher education—why do Filipino immigrants rely on education to leave the Philippines in search of better job and education opportunities

elsewhere? Why does the Filipino immigrant become so enamored with the U.S., sparkling in the self-sustaining individuality it boasts, that they cut all ties with their past life in the Philippines?

Simply put, the answer is the colonial mentality projected onto Filipinos/FAs by their Spanish and American colonizers since the 1500s. According to the author of "Liberating Filipino Americans through Decolonizing Curriculum", Patricia Halagao describes colonial mentality as the aspiration to be like the colonizer and follow the institutions they construct, normalize, and validate in society. With this way of thinking, the Filipino immigrant sees passage into the U.S. as an escape route from poverty to financial success and a way to ensure stability for offspring. Then, in order to prove that they can and will belong in American society, the immigrant has a strong desire to assimilate to American culture—the effects of this assimilation including (but not limited to) neglecting Filipino history, not teaching their children their native language or cultural heritage, and not congregating with fellow Filipinos (Maramba & Museus, 2013). In higher education, these effects often lead to FA students of different generations lacking knowledge of their ethnic background and can cause a confusion of identity as an FA.

Branching off this colonial mentality are the perpetuated stereotypes from the model minority myth that puts Asian Americans on an all-encompassing pedestal. In "Overcoming the Model Minority Myth: Experiences of Filipino American Graduate Students", Nadal, Pituc, Johnston, and Esparrago show that this model minority myth claims all Asian Americans are smart, hard-working, and STEM career-oriented. However, when disaggregating the FA population from this overarching theme, the statistics tell a different story. Compared to their East Asian counterparts, the FA population has higher rates of dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, and mental health issues, and lower rates of graduation, retention, and college admission (Maramba & Museus, 2013). Tending to history, the Philippines has much Spanish and American influence embedded in its culture that makes it stand out against other Asian countries, making it even harder

for FAs to relate to their Asian counterparts. Thus, many FA students question whether or not they can truly identify as being Asian American, being raised in such culturally different backgrounds influenced by historical oppression. As a direct result of neo-colonialism, this state of confusion often leaves FA students feeling invalidated when they do not see enough representation of their own culture in campus settings. Thus, it is pertinent that they are given an avenue to learn about and express their culture, and in doing so, use a system that is inherently colonial (the system being college) to their advantage and resist that same colonial structure.

While some may argue that gaining admittance into a prestigious institution requires that the FA student had a certain privilege to get in (such as access to mentors/tutors/money), there is still a lack of education and research of the FA undergraduate population. For Stanford FA students, these shortcomings present themselves in the ignorance they have in current events/issues in the Philippines and in the lack of representation in faculty and staff on campus. Currently, out of the total 2,240 members of the professoriate faculty, there is only one tenured Filipino professor and one Filipino visiting lecturer known to actively be a part of the Filipino community at Stanford. While the university allows FA students to congregate in the Pilipino-American Student Union (PASU) and grants funding for their events and performances, it is often left to the student leaders to decide how/when to publicize such events and outreach to incoming students and the public. Being one of the smaller ethnic groups of the larger Asian American community at Stanford, oftentimes, the major events that PASU puts on goes unnoticed as the university prioritizes other, more popular student groups. Hence, PASU members must work hard to let the voices of the FA community be heard and recognized.

In this paper, I will give a brief history of and explain what the lasting effects of Spanish and U.S. colonialism are on the FA identity in higher education and how these effects are especially perpetuated by the model minority myth. With this, I will argue that FA clubs and curriculum are

essential in aiding the FA student to gain exposure and engage in discourse about their culture. To support these arguments, I will describe one of PASU's biggest annual shows, Pilipinx Cultural Night, and explain how it allows FAs to regain control of their narrative and actively withstand the influences of Spain and the U.S. Throughout this essay, I will thread in the testimonies of two current FA students at Stanford (one incoming sophomore and one incoming senior), detailing their personal explorations of their FA identity, and discuss their involvement in PASU. In short, I contend that PASU and Philippine history-oriented education allows FA students to collaborate in fighting against neo-colonialism and resisting stereotypes that negatively affect the FA student as they navigate their way through higher education.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SPANISH AND AMERICAN COLONIZATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

To understand the effects colonialism has on the FA student, the unique history of the Philippines must be explored. In the year 1521, Ferdinand Magellan and the Spanish conquistadors entered the island country, integrating the Spanish influence into Filipino culture through language and religion. Today, much of Tagalog, the main Filipino language, shares the exact same vocabulary words as Spanish—even the last names of many Filipinos include Garcia, Mendoza, and Cruz. Hundreds of years of imperialism in the Philippines affected the country that creates a stark contrast between it and the rest of the countries that make up the Asian continent, resulting in a unique Asian identity that is incomparable to other Asian identities, such as Chinese or Korean. Given the longevity of imperialization (Spanish colonialization: 1521-1898, American colonialization: 1898-1946) and the countries that established their imperial power within the Philippines, the country sticks out like a sore thumb. The similar histories of Spanish and American oppression contribute to why many FAs identify more closely with Latino/Hispanic and Black communities than their Asian counterparts. In their research over FA graduate students in 2010, Nadal et al. showed that the

FA—no matter their level of education—faces the same kind of racism and stereotypes as Hispanic/Latinos in the school setting, which could contribute to the FA being one of the Asian American groups with the lowest graduation and retention rates. Thus, with the model minority myth, the FA student falls victim to deindividuation being grouped with Asian Americans that do not share the same struggles in upbringing, higher education, and greater society.

With the U.S. colonizing the Philippines after the Philippine-American War, Western influences have also infiltrated the FA's syncretic and reinvented identity. Posadas, the author of "Transnationalism and Higher Education: Four Filipino Chicago Case Studies" describes the pensionado program and how the first Filipino students in the U.S. were sent at the end of the Philippine American War in 1902. The pensionado program acted as a way to pacify Filipino opposition against U.S. occupation on the islands. Acting as ambassadors, these students were of the most educated and rich families in the Philippines and studied for professional occupations in the U.S. to return to their home country to practice. This started the desire to pursue higher education in the U.S., as these students had come in direct contact with and assimilated to Western norms and nationalist ways of thinking. According to Posadas, as some of these students came to occupy government positions, what they learned about the U.S. democracy influenced the Philippines' politics, further incorporating the Western influence into the Filipino peoples' lives. To corroborate the idea of the U.S. ingraining its ideals into the FA, Hernandez discusses that in 2011, the Philippines adopted the K-12 education system in order for students to become more marketable abroad, as many professional skills and degrees in the country would not translate at the same capacity in Western countries. Thus, Hernandez insinuates, as the Philippines continues to look to the U.S. as a model in every facet, its students begin to aspire to be more American and lose their own identity in the process. Rather than wanting to improve and garner pride in the Filipino

educational system at home, students leave for the U.S. to earn what they believe to be better educational opportunities, creating a standard of education that debases the Philippines' ideals.

## A BRIEF HISTORY/SUMMARY STANFORD'S PILIPINO-AMERICAN STUDENT UNION (PASU) AND PILIPINX CULTURAL NIGHT

One way FA college students have fought to regain control of their narrative from Spanish and American influence is by creating student-led groups that teach and express the history and culture of the Philippines. Established in 1990 by Rand Quinn (Class of '92) and Julius Paras '91 at Stanford, the Pilipino-American Student Union (PASU) aims to unite students who identify as FA but welcomes all who are interested in learning the Philippines' history and current issues. PASU currently has over 50 active members that take up leadership and intern roles in different subcommittees within the club, including Kayumanggi (PASU's dance committee), Kababayan (focuses on FA activism), and Kapatid (outreach to local high schools where there are prominent FA student populations). While not mandatory to join, each subcommittee allows students to explore the history and present-day status of the Philippines, what it means to be FA, and outreach to communities off-campus.

One sub-committee, Kayumanggi, which translates to "brown skin", is PASU's dance troupe. Every year, Kayu (for short) puts on its biggest event, dubbed "Pilipinx Cultural Night" or PCN for short. PCN serves as an outlet for artistic interpretation and display of the history of the Philippines through dance and theatrics. For example, this year's PCN took on the theme "Ugat" which translates to "roots". The show opened with the


*Fig.1. Malakas at Maganda, a dance displaying the Filipino Creation Story.*

narrator retracing the Filipino's genealogy to the Filipino Creation Story as the dancers personified the way Earth and humanity came about, which, while similar to the Creation Story in the Bible, still held its own unique tribal influences (see fig. 1). The show was speckled with numerous dances, such as Tinikling, a bamboo dance, Bulaklakan, a flower dance, and Idudu, a dance about gender roles in the Filipino household (see fig. 2), from different Suites, highlighting the differences between regional and religious groups in the Philippines. The Rural Suite dances include one that follows the mating story of a hen and a rooster, emphasizing the agricultural lifestyle of many Filipinos. The "Moro" Suite describes the Spanish conquest in the Philippines, as many of the costumes and dance routines share patterns and motifs similar to those found in Spanish dances (see fig. 3). Finally, the "Maria Clara" Suite, named after a Spanish-Filipina mixed female revolutionary heroine in a well-known novel, shows the empowered role of an independent woman in the Philippines. All these Suites and more allow the audience to learn about distinct aspects of Filipino life, showing that there's much to learn about the people.

*Fig. 2. Idudu, a dance about the overlapping Filipino gender roles. Here, the husbands are cradling their children.*

In between dances, the narration of the Philippine genealogy continues, following the timeline of when Filipino communities existed in separate tribes, the arrival of the Spanish, the exploitation of poor Filipinos by corrupt local priests under the guise of Roman Catholicism, and the contemporary struggle of being forced to choose between a career based on interests and a career that is lucrative. The entire lineage is not only supposed to represent the narrator's ancestry, but the ancestry of so many

*Fig. 3. Spanish influences in Filipino culture can be seen in the dance styles and costumes.*

Filipinos across the world. For many of the FA Stanford students, PCN was a way for them to step into the shoes of their ancestors and understand the privilege they gained from their ancestors' struggles.

When writing scenes for the show, directors would contemplate the stories their grandparents would tell them and think about how they ended up living in the U.S. and attending such a prestigious institution. Keoni Rodriguez, one of the directors said, "For me, directing and writing, was in and of itself an intimidating prospect. Having never done it before, I was worried how much [of the FA story] I would leave out or do incorrectly. I think the main reason I stuck with [writing] was my intention of externalizing my desire for representing my culture and ancestors. Instead of thinking about my own cultural growth, I thought about specific people that are part of my community and what I was writing for. I thought a lot about my grandparents and their parents and so on, and how important it was that I keep them alive through the stories I was directing and writing," (T. Litong, personal communication, May 30, 2019). To Keoni, his story-telling was his responsibility. If he didn't choose to take the opportunity to play a part in this year's PCN, it would be like he was "resigning [himself] to saying goodbye [to his community]." Ultimately, Keoni was "really happy with how PCN turned out given the importance it held for [him]." He's very excited to see what next year's PCN holds.

For the actors, it was a challenge to leave their comfort zone and take on the struggles m with reverence. One of the actors, Therese Santiago said that portraying an FA who came out as lesbian to her conservative mother was especially difficult. "During my scene, I wanted to give justice to many FA and other children of immigrants that are afraid to come out to their families, when being openly LGBT+ is not always accepted," (T. Litong, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The dancers practiced for hours upon hours before the performance, making sure each of their movements would grant their oppressed predecessors a voice. Even non-FA students who

participated in PCN were able to find similarities within their own families, such as those whose parents immigrated to the U.S., or those who feel the pressure of pursuing a degree in STEM rather than the humanities. For everyone in the production, PCN meant something on a personal level. This performance is only one of the many events that allow FA students to question, delve into, and reaffirm their identity. Outside of PCN, PASU initiates, facilitates, and celebrates the FA identity in various avenues. In terms of membership, many FA students who are constantly involved in PASU feel they are called to help lead others in education and exploration. To explore the effect PASU has on individual growth, I interviewed two students, Edwin Carlos (Class of '20) and Drew Vallero '22 to see how being part of the club has influenced their identities and decisions to take on leadership positions.

## INTERVIEWS WITH UPCOMING LEADERS IN STANFORD'S PASU: DISCOVERING ONE'S FILIPINO AMERICAN IDENTITY

### INTERVIEW 1: EDWIN CARLOS, INCOMING PASU CO-CHAIR

For this paper, I decided to interview Edwin Carlos, a current rising senior, who is going to be one of the PASU co-chairs in the upcoming academic year. A PASU co-chair's responsibilities include leading weekly meetings, debriefing past events that each sub-committee leads, and reaching out to the Stanford community and public. In order to be elected as a PASU co-chair, this person must have shown a considerable amount of dedication to the club and is recognized by a majority of the membership to be someone who could continue leading future generations of FA Stanford students. As someone that's been in PASU since his first year at Stanford, Edwin has been a Kababayan intern and successive Kababayan committee co-chair. Kababayan translates to "fellow countryman" and the sub-committee focuses on "[empowering] students to take action on the various social, political, economic, and cultural issues affecting today's Filipinx community, here and in the homeland" (PASU SHiP, 2016-2017). Thus, he's been active in workshops, conferences, and

speaker series working in conjunction with local Filipino Activist groups. On top of that, he is simultaneously teaching a 2-unit Comparatives Studies in Race & Ethnicity class, titled "Revolution and the Pilipinx Diaspora: Exploring Global Activism in Local Communities" (which I am also currently enrolled in). With this class, he hopes to address the three basic problems that the Philippine government and society face: 1) Imperialism, 2) Bureaucratic Capitalism, and 3) Feudalism. Along the way, he's explored what it means to be FA while making lasting bonds with other members of PASU. With such an intense history with PASU and Filipino activism, Edwin has a lot to say about what it was like coming to Stanford not really knowing much about what it meant to be FA.

Edwin's origin story begins in Manila, Philippines, where both his parents and older siblings were born. Before he was born, the Carlos family moved to the U.S. where his mom got a nursing job in Florida. Shortly after their arrival, Edwin was the only person in his nuclear family to be born in the U.S., making him a second-generation FA. At times, he admits, this difference in birthplace makes him feel almost less of a Filipino than the rest of his family, adding to the fact that he wasn't taught to speak Tagalog, his parents' native tongue. From Florida, the Carlos family then moved to Hawaii, where there was a large, established Asian/Pacific Islander (API) community. Growing up there until he was 13 years old, Edwin says he didn't have the consciousness to understand what it meant to be in a mostly FA/API community, where most of his neighbors, family friends, and peers looked like him and had similar, if not the same, cultures. As Edwin began blooming into his adolescence, the Carlos family moved again, this time, to Renton, Washington, where they currently reside. Here, Edwin began to notice the stark dichotomy between his previous API-majority community to the now predominantly-White neighborhood in which his new house is located.

Slowly, Edwin began to feel left out in his new environment. He attended high school where most of the population was White, and most of the Asian community came from East Asia. He held

much resentment at being seen as racially ambiguous to his peers (oftentimes they would ask whether he was Hispanic, Mexican, or Chinese). While they bonded over their love of hip-hop music, Edwin felt disconnected with his mostly Chinese American friend group because, although they were Asian, they couldn't connect on a closer level. He remembers feeling especially left out when they spoke Chinese and with not being able to share his own ethnic background's language. Due to a lack of ethnic communities at school, Edwin was more involved in sports and academics, and outside of school, he began to get involved in activism and peace fellowship through his church. In high school, he recognized that he was different from his White and East Asian peers, but he did not know much about what it was like to fully claim and be proud of his FA identity until he arrived at Stanford.

Going into Stanford, Edwin knew that he wanted to organize activism in some shape or form, and for him, PASU was the perfect way to do that. During his first year at Stanford as a Kababayan intern, Edwin's sub-committee co-chairs persuaded him to participate in the university's Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program that focused on Filipino Activism in the San Francisco Bay Area. With this trip, he got a stronger sense of why his mom decided to become a nurse, why his family decided to move the U.S., and how he didn't question those things before because it felt normal. He learned about Spanish and American imperialization of the U.S. and how Western society continues to influence the Philippines and Filipinos in America. "On the ASB trip, I learned that the American Dream was a lie," he asserts. "It creates this narrative for all immigrants—not only Filipinos—that all it takes to make it in the U.S. is to work hard." He relates the façade of the American dream to his own mom's story. With the pressure from Edwin's grandparents, his mom became a nurse in order to garner income. By Western media's standards, "poor people are poor because they don't work as hard as rich people," (T. Litong, personal communication, May 24, 2019). Since Edwin's mom came from a wealthier background, the impact of media and societal

pressures influenced her career choice. By learning about the struggles in the Filipino community and recognizing how he internalized them throughout his life, Edwin says his identity grew a lot. He became more aware of his privilege as a FA with access to higher education and began to use that privilege to help other FA students understand themselves more, so they can create change and "better the system", such as by donating to those in need in the Philippines and supporting causes that serve the Filipino people, especially the oppressed majority.

Without PASU, Edwin believes he would have never been able to decolonize his mind and fully understood his own identity or the issues that affect Filipinos and FA students across the world. In regard to PCN, he says that, "events like these [allow] us a space to put effort into something that values FA work on FA identity and culture. [These events] invalidate the misconception that our community is irrelevant and not intellectual." He asserts that PCN is like a political statement that says the FA's place in society deserves to be felt. "We are willing to put in the effort to be noticed."

Now, as he looks forward to being one of PASU's future co-chair, Edwin is working on confronting the dynamics that come with different generations of FA students. Looking at PASU's current demographic, most of the members are second-generation because their parents fled from the PH during the Marcos era[1]. Based on his own observations, it appears that usually, first-generation FA students have stronger connections to the PH, as they may know the native language fluently, or have grown up in the country for a significant amount of time. This can lead to second and third-generation FA students feeling like they have less of a connection to their history, hindering them from learning about their identity. Predicting that in a few years, most of the PASU

[1] During the Marcos Era, Ferdinand Marcos rose to power as a kleptocrat—a politician that used his power to steal the resources from the Philippines. Under martial law, Marcos ruled as a dictator for almost an entire decade (1972-1981), his regime being known for its corruption and brutality (The Philippines: U.S. Policy during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986).

members will be third-generation FA students, Edwin hopes to inspire all members of PASU to explore their identity, no matter what experience or knowledge they've encountered prior to joining the club. Despite the fact that members come from all different FA generations, there is still a connection felt between them, and Edwin hopes to build a community that bonds over what it means to be FA.

## INTERVIEW 2: DREW VALLERO, INCOMING SOPHOMORE & KAYUMANGGI CO-CHAIR

With Edwin's interview, I was able to understand the evolution of identity a FA student has over the years. After my interview with him, I started reflecting upon my own experience in PASU this year, and it made me wonder what my own path would look like in the future. While I know now that I want to stay active in PASU for a long time and take on more leadership roles, I started wondering if other first-year students felt the same way. Thus, for my second interview, I wanted to gain outside perspective from someone I had worked side-by-side with in PASU. I thought it would be best to interview Drew Vallero, a fellow rising sophomore who will also take on a leadership role, like Edwin and myself, in this upcoming academic year as a Kayu co-chair. As Kayu co-chair, his responsibilities will include planning, organizing, and choreographing/writing for next year's PCN and putting on performances for other organizations on and off-campus. Having little-to no FA community back home, Drew had a drastic transition into the FA community at Stanford.

When I asked him why he joined PASU, Drew said that back home, he didn't really feel connected to his cultural community. Drew hails from a suburb in Sacramento, California, where he recalls the demographic to look like "50% White, 40% East Asian", with most of the population having high socioeconomic status. Even in his own household, his family emphasized and valued American culture over Filipino culture, with only the stories of Drew's grandma, who speaks a limited amount of English, to be the closest interaction he had with the Philippines. The lack of a FA community in his hometown caused him to not think about it, and so, coming to Stanford, he

"wanted to surround [himself] with people who understood and experience what it's really like to be FA." Coming to Stanford, though, he was surprised to find out that many of his FA peers felt the exact same disconnection to their identity. He found comfort in knowing other people were "in the same boat as [him]" and that he wouldn't be judged for not knowing much about his history. As a first-year student, it was his mission to get back to his roots.

So, Drew did just that. He started as an intern for Kayu and gradually took on responsibilities in the club, such as choreographing one of the dances for PCN, learning the history of and performing multiple cultural dances from various Suites, and taking inventory of and transporting costumes and props. Next year, Drew will be a Kayu co-chair and will have even more responsibilities, such as obtaining funding for performances and costumes, choreographing more dances, and leading the new class of Kayu interns in going through the same process he went through this year. When I asked why he would want to take on these responsibilities, Drew said he had an "awesome time with PASU, making awesome connections, and meeting awesome people" Needless to say, it was an awesome experience. More than that, Drew states that taking on a leadership role means that he must also take his culture more seriously with the increased amount of responsibility he will have. But, with the return on investment he has come to take advantage of, he believes putting in work for PASU is more than worthwhile.

## CONCLUSION: MY OWN EXPERIENCE AND THE CURRENT POLITICAL STATE OF THE PHILIPPINES

In conclusion, the interviews I conducted provide insight into the on-going narratives of FA students developing their identities in higher education. Coming to Stanford, both Edwin and Drew left home communities that lacked FA representation and culture. Growing up, they both felt distant from their ethnic background due to their parents' wishes to assimilate to American culture and abide by the American Dream. However, as they became a part of Stanford's PASU, they were able to explore their identity, garner pride in being FA, and use their knowledge to further improve the

community and educate the public about FA culture. Through events such as PCN, Edwin and Drew were able to collaborate with fellow FA and non-FA students to reclaim the FA narrative that is so deeply affected by Spanish and American colonialization. It is important, then, that FA students continue to put on events that allow them to let their voices be heard after a history riddled with oppression and in a society that still lacks representation of FAs in media and higher education. The stories of FA students must continue to be heard so that a marginalized community can come out of the shadows and shine on its own. As all undergraduate students' backgrounds should be welcomed and celebrated at Stanford, we must listen to FA students and validate their experiences.

Being an active member in PASU since Fall Quarter (2018), I've seen my peers lead rallies for Filipino workers' rights on campus, teach cultural dances, and discuss the ongoing revolution between forcibly displaced farmers and the Philippine government. Like Edwin and Drew, I've revisited my ethnic background and questioned what it means to me to be FA. I've been enlightened on the effects of imperialization and finally noticed how these effects live on in my daily life. I've become more cognizant of what's going on in the Philippines, and why it matters to me. I've prioritized what I want to continue in PASU and the issues I want to help fight against. As one of next year's Kayu co-chairs, I am already brainstorming with the community on what dances we want to put on in 2020 and how to emphasize the histories behind them. In terms of issues to be fought against, the most pressing issue that the greater Filipino community faces is the current political state of the country. In the Philippines' 2019 midterm elections, President Duterte's allies took over the Senate, securing nine of the 12 open positions (Robles, 2019). With this majority, Duterte has the power to revise the Philippine Constitution to his advantage, which could, as many reporters,

political commentators, and the general public predict, revert the Philippine government to a dictatorship similar to or worse than the Marcos dictatorship[2].

Evidently, there's still much to be done. Right now, PASU is leading teach-ins and holding documentary screenings about the on-going, longest revolution in history that's taking place in the Philippines. By raising awareness of the current political state of the Philippines, the club is reaching out to students and off-campus activist groups to discuss what could be done to fight against bureaucratic capitalism and the dictator-style leadership of President Duterte. For all members of the community, we know that having Filipino pride isn't enough. Learning about our history and the current issues isn't enough. It is our responsibility to take that knowledge and help those who need help and bring awareness to the issues that must be solved. In short, through the application of undergraduate-led groups, such as Stanford's PASU, FA students in higher education must use all resources necessary to act against injustice and raise up the greater Filipino community.

[2] During his campaign for presidency, Duterte focused on eradicating the prominent drug problem that affects millions of people in the Philippines. Now, as President, he's declared a War on Drugs, taking into custody and killing any person suspected (not proven) of being associated with using or dealing drugs. The current death toll has been estimated to stand at 27,000. (Ellis-Petersen, 2018). In addition, since 2017, Duterte has ordered martial law on Mindanao, where an established population of Muslim Filipinos live, in order to prevent potential terrorist groups from congregating (Petty, 2018). Thus, almost 25% of the country's population is under complete military control in lieu of ordinary law.

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