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PULSE

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Empowerment

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MEET THE TEAM

WHAT DOES DECOLONIZING MEAN FOR ME?

by marielle a. reataza

When I was in sixth grade, I was in a small class of 20-ish students, three of whom were Filipino. Having grown up in an area where every Filipino I knew was somehow related to me, I felt a sense of comfort in the presence of fellow kababayan. Three students in a class of 20? It felt like some kind of achievement!

It was silent reading time, and Allen* turns to Isaac* and me, the two other Filipinos in the class, and states, "I hate being Filipino. Filipinos copy everything American. Filipinos have no culture. Look at our TV shows—they're just dumb game shows. It's embarrassing. I wish I could erase my Filipino side and just be white." Isaac and I turned to each other, dumbfounded, but noticeably pensive.

I repeatedly think about that day, now over twenty years ago. What does it mean to be Filipino? What is Filipino culture? I asked myself these questions over and over again, unable to separate what I saw was American versus distinctly Filipino. Is Filipino culture *lumpia*? *Pancit*? Being Catholic? Family parties? I did not know any Filipino or Filipino American history, and I resigned myself to believe that maybe Allen was right.

College was when I had my first exposure to Filipino anything involving US history. Admittedly, it was the first time I also felt relevant. Having immigrated to the US in the early 1990s and overstaying my visa as an undocumented immigrant child, I never felt at home. I lived in constant fear that I would be deported, separated from my family.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILIPINO

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Further studies during college brought me to Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden," penned in 1899. This piece, written by the celebrated and Nobel Prize-winning author of *The Jungle Book*, encourages US imperialist pursuit of Philippines: "To serve your captives' needs / ... / Half devil and half child." And that's when I started to understand why I could not respond to Allen that day.

It's been about fifteen years since I first read that poem, and the consequences of Spanish and US colonialism in Philippines continue to reverberate over time, playing dominant roles in the erasure of native "Filipino" history and culture. Over time, there has been a greater surge of commentary from Filipino community leaders, artists, healers, and academics, allowing us to tell our own stories, our own authentic narratives. I am grateful for these pieces that will continue to guide my understanding of history, culture, community, and self. Retracing and—in some cases—rewriting Filipino and Filipino American history, for me, has become an act of reclamation, and more importantly, an act of decolonization and self-love.

***Names have been changed.**



BROKEN TOKEN: WE MUST ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

by bel gaines

"Our country is fighting for her life. We must all heal together" is what Joe Biden said earlier last week as he formally accepted the Democratic nomination. That's something I could get behind, especially as this is our **SELF LOVE** issue.

Now let's leave the pleasantries here for a moment. I promise to pick them back up later on towards the end. **SELF LOVE** can be contradictory, somewhat elusive, and sometimes misses the mark. Unfortunately, the same can be said of Kamala Harris. We on the left cannot sit idly by and let the Sunkist orange and his flock of red hatted sheep define our candidates. We must forcefully examine Senator Harris' record and call her out on a career that has been rife with poor judgement. The Democratic Party has come quite a long way since the 90's. The Democrats of yesteryear were much more tough on crime and a lot less sensitive to the needs of minorities. Senator Harris passed the bar exam in 1990 and joined the Alameda County prosecutor's office shortly thereafter. This was in the midst of Bill Clinton's Crime Reform Bill, which made clear the federal government's support of harsher sentencing. The bill stopped just short of advocating for mass incarceration. Yet during an election year, it was exactly the type of bill the Democrats needed to show that they were not soft on crime (aclu.org, 2019). As a young assistant prosecutor Harris gained her notoriety and reputation for being feisty and tough. Both skills necessary to be an effective vice President, and I feel she would do excellent in this role. Yet, we cannot ignore her role in arresting dozens of black/brown men for minor offenses. It is imperative to ask Senator Harris:

"How can you be our champion, when you locked-up so many people of color for minor offenses?"

Getting firm with Senator Harris now, will keep the conversation centered around the issues that matter later.

In 1994 Senator Harris began dating Willie Brown, a powerhouse in San Francisco's political machine. He was speaker of the state assembly at the time and used his connections to land Senator Harris a spot on the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. Though I see nothing wrong with this, the internet is already crafting ways the spin her cozy relationship with Brown as "opportunistic". There's so much to unpack regarding her relationship with the much older Brown (30 years), that I'm going to leave that research in the hands of the reader.

In 2003, Harris survived a hotly contested run-off to become the first black woman in California to ever become district attorney. Though she ran on a progressive mantle, the district attorney's office became quite aggressive once she took the reins. The conviction rate went from 52 to 67% within the first three years (<https://www.politico.eu/article/kamala-harris-what-you-need-to-know/>). Most of these convictions were people of color and added to the already overcrowded prison system in California. There is a laundry list of issues, yet these are the ones critics claim are the most damaging as must be accounted for:

- George Gage, an electrician with no criminal record who was charged in 1999 with sexually abusing his stepdaughter, who reported the allegations years later. The case largely hinged on the stepdaughter's testimony and Mr. Gage was convicted. The first prosecutors held back evidence and the appellate judges even sent the case to remediation. Then District Attorney Harris did not back down and proceeded with this case. George Gage is still in jail. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/opinion/kamala-harris-criminal-justice.html>)



- In 2004, Harris received backlash for not pursuing the death penalty in the tragic shooting of Isaac Espinoza. The death penalty was usually sought in every case that involved a police shooting in death, so this was a stark break with tradition as former Senator Dianne Feinstein criticized Harris in the middle of her eulogy of the slain officer (<https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/How-an-SF-cop-killing-case-could-haunt-Kamala-13558890.php>)
- Kevin Cooper, the death row inmate whose trial was infected by racism and corruption. He sought advanced DNA testing to prove his innocence, but Ms. Harris opposed it. Her decision was later overturned, yet only in the face of viral Internet scrutiny (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/opinion/kamala-a-harris-criminal-justice.html>)
- In 2010, Kamala Harris faced harsh criticism for withholding information about a lab technician who was convicted for tampering with evidence and stealing cocaine from the drug lab. This technician was used in almost 600 drug cases, almost all were reversed due to her tampering. District Attorney Harris knew about these transgressions and did not alert any of the defending lawyers. She received a scathing rebuke from the judge for violating the defendant's constitutional rights (<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Judge-rips-Harris-office-for-hiding-problems-3263797.php>)

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These are truly just the tip of the iceberg of the problematic views the Senator has taken in the past. Most of her inconsistent positions are related to wrongful convictions, for this would force her office to admit guilt. The accusations of her being power-hungry, inconsistent, and opportunistic are indeed supported by her record. Though problematic, Senator Harris is a much better choice than the alternatives. Politicians are people too (believe it or not), and I do feel that a lot of her judgment calls were based on her own acceptance issues. 80-90% of elected officials in this country are white. Being a mixed raced woman, she had an even tougher challenge to balance stereotypes Kamala Harris did not want to be the Broken Token.

The Broken Token Phenomenon is my way of personalizing the song and dance people of color do in order to "fit in." It's very sad yet, every person of color who grew up around others different know what I'm talking about. It's hard enough being the token "fill in the blank", yet to be the one token who is a failure--is unfathomable. It was instilled in me at a young age that an undoubted amount of extra scrutiny was going to be placed on me without cause or consent. As a child, I desperately wanted to be a part of the group, yet the other children said no it was because I was black. You learn at a young age that being the broken token is not fun, and you do all in your power to reject the stigma. It took years of growth and maturity to finally be at a place where I am okay with myself. I love myself today, though the 30 years wounds from Faylane Elementary still haunt me on occasion. With this taken all into account, I do understand the emotional knots of being the broken token. I could only imagine what Senator Harris must be going through.





GROWING UP AS A CHILD TRANSLATOR

by stacy vo

I remember very distinctly the frustration that would overwhelm little 11 year old me whenever my mom would ask me to translate her very important government documents or applications. With our family just being my immigrant mother, little sister, and me, I felt the obligation and responsibility to help my mom by translating documents at a very young age. I'd come home from school, wanting to read books or watch a movie, only to have my mom ask me to help her translate some papers. I can't really distinguish whether the frustration I felt while doing this was because I just wanted to do my own 11 year old activities or because I myself did not understand what the words were saying. All I remember was feeling so frustrated with having to translate that I constantly wondered "why me." Why did I have to be the oldest in the family? What couldn't my mom have immigrated to the US earlier so she could learn better English? Why couldn't I just do normal kid stuff like all my friends? **Just why?**

Of course looking back on it now, I understand that my mom really had no other choice. Between working full time at two jobs to provide for my sister and me, what spare time did she have to learn better English?

Revisiting those memories from my childhood, I also wonder how many mistakes I made while translating, how many times I said words that did not make sense to her, or how many times I said random things so that I could just carry on doing what normal kids did. Did my shortcomings as a child translator affect her? Did I screw something up because I, as a 11 year old kid, did not fully understand what the documents were trying to say?

Only now, as a MPH student that I know the root of my problem growing up is the lack of language access. The problems of many immigrant families is the lack of language access in our country. The lack of language access leading to parents relying on their young children to translate important government documents or job applications. The burden that the lack of language access puts on these children growing up. The burden that I felt as a child to help my mom.

I remember trying so hard in school to do well in English specifically for two reasons. The first being that I just wanted to do better for my mom, to be able to help her even more. The second reason was so that I can be better than her, so that I wouldn't need help translating my own documents when I grew up. I hate to admit that this mindset to become better than my mom was mostly rooted in my shame as a child that my mom did not know English as well as my other elementary school friends' parents.

I hate to admit that I was ashamed of my mom for being an immigrant, and I was so ashamed that my friends at school knew we were immigrants. I wanted to be better than my mom so that my kids wouldn't have to experience the same shame I felt every time a classmate made fun of my mom's broken English. I wanted to be better than her because it was engraved into my mind that my mom was "inferior" because she was an immigrant and because she wasn't fluent in English.

But as I grew up, I started to despise the idea that immigrants were "inferior". My mom became more of my superwoman each and every day. With every growing year of my life, I started to understand the sacrifices my mom made to immigrate to the United States to give me a better future, the amount of work she did to put food on the table for my sister and me every day, and the late night hours she dedicated to learning English little by little. By the time I entered high school, my mom no longer needed me to translate as much as she had needed in my younger years. This wasn't because our country suddenly increased its language access, but because all those late night hours my mom spent trying to learn English paid off. My mom truly was a superwoman. She managed to work two jobs, raise two daughters by herself, and learn English.

No longer do I want to be better than my mom, but just better for her. My shame in the fact that my mom and I are immigrants so long ago has now turned into pride. YES, WE ARE IMMIGRANTS! Yes, my mom suffered due to this country's lack of language access! Yes, I was a child translator! But also, YES ALL OF THAT HAS MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY. All the hard work, dedication, and courage that my mom encompassed as a single immigrant mother in order to survive in America has taught me to be an independent and resilient young adult. I am who I am today because my mom showed me what it really meant to be an immigrant. And it definitely didn't mean we were inferior.

The lack of language access in this country only makes it seem that way.

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IMMIGRANTS WERE 'INFERIOR'

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THE CHANGE OF CHINESE WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS IN MODERN SOCIETY

by Huiyu Xie

The statues of Chinese women in society changes in various ways with different times. From the golden period of women's social status in ancient times to the declining status of women after the formation and development of Chinese feudal ethics. The concept of "three obedience and four virtues" restrained women's daily behavior norms, which further confined women's mind and body.

Nowadays, many concepts in people's daily life are still affected by the ideological constraints thousands of years ago. The social status of Chinese women is still much lower than that of men. The main reason is that external social factors imprison women, as well as the limitations of women's ideology and lack of spiritual world. From my perspective, in addition to the Chinese government's increasing protection and support for women's status, women need to change their own ideology. Eliminating women's thinking that they're inferior to men, establishing the concept of self empowerment and self-love are both important methods to enhance the social status of women. Women also need to have independent thinking, independent personality, and an independent economy.

As history progresses, the status of Chinese women has changed a lot. I will describe the status changes of Chinese women from six stages of life.

1. In the newborn period, we usually use the sex ratio at birth to evaluate the status of women. This index is often considered to be around 105 (105 males for every 100 females). However, the sex ratio at birth in China has always been high. Although since 2008, the sex ratio at birth has gradually declined, and it fell to 113.5 in 2015 and further fell to 111.9 in 2017, it is still on the high side. (http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2012_01/18/content2047892.htm)

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WOMEN ARE AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE WORLD

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2. In the early childhood period, girls are more likely to be abandoned. While conducting the survey from eight welfare houses in China, 2,126 of the total 3,857 children in the welfare house were girls.

3. In the basic education period (primary school, middle school), among school dropout children aged 10-14, girls accounted for 57.9%. Among children aged 10-14 who have never attended school, girls account for more than 60%. (http://www.china.com.cn/zhuant2005/txt/2006-03/17/content_6156231.htm)

4. In the period of higher education (undergraduate, master's degree, doctoral degree, etc.), women may also encounter gender injustice and discrimination while choosing a school after the college entrance examination. Usually, the admission requirements are more stringent than men.

5. In the employment period, Chinese women continue to be hindered and discriminated against in employment and job selection. The initial employment rate of men (77.3%) was significantly higher than that of women (65.9%). (<https://edu.qq.com/a/20140526/000045.htm>)

6. After retirement, from a gender perspective, the proportion of women receiving retirement pensions is only 1/2 of that of men, which means women are more vulnerable to poverty.

Although the status of women in China is still lower than that of men, under the implementation of various policies, the phenomenon of gender inequality has been greatly improved. "Care for Girls Action", intensifying the prohibition of "Two-non behaviors" (fetal gender identification and selection of gender for artificial termination of pregnancy), strengthening the penalties for abandoning babies in the criminal law, eliminating the gender gap for the nine-year compulsory education, etc. All these implemented policies letting people be more aware of the importance of equality between men and women.

As women, we should develop the skill of independently thinking, have our own opinions and not follow blindly, have insights and listen to opinions, also have our own beliefs and persistence. Independent women often have a very clear understanding of the world, they know what they want, and they are not obstinate to men but only respect men and the division of labor between men and women. Women also need to make the economy independent, only when their financial sources are independent, women can be fundamentally independent of men. One thing I remembered was what my friend told me. She has a younger brother in her family, her parents always ask her to give all the good things to her younger brother, and she has been instilled in the idea of "younger brother will be your support in the future, you have to be nice to your younger brother". Obviously, she lives in a typical patriarchal family. However, as she grew up, she was aware of how feudal thoughts her parents have, so she studied very hard and always believed that she could change her destiny by constantly enriching herself. Her insistence on personality independence enabled her to finally achieve financial independence. Now she can proudly show her parents that girls are not inferior to boys!



Love yourself, women are an indispensable part of the world!



The Team

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(she/hers/siya)

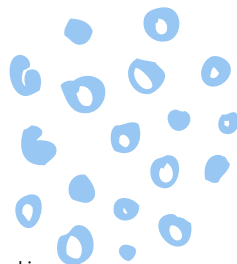
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Huiyu Xie is an MPH student at USC, concentration of biostatistics and epidemiology, and summer intern at NAPAFA SA. She is interested in collecting and analyzing data to help the health educators conduct education in the community and reducing health disparities.



BELFORD GAINES

(he/him/his)

Bel Gaines is trying to survive the chaos. My time here at NAPAFA SA has been extremely eye-opening. Graduating this year with my MPH, I'm finally getting a chance to spread my public health wings. I'm about social justice, helping others, and living mindfully.



STACY VO

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Stacy Vo is an MPH candidate at USC and summer intern at NAPAFA SA. She is interested in helping under-served communities and reducing health disparities.