

MY ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) STORY BY JESS DELEGENCIA

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My parents sacrificial love for me took the form of bringing me to the U.S. to flee the economic hardships and repressive regime in the Philippines in 1983. My parents, like many AAPI immigrants, bought into the “American Dream” – which for them represented a better life and future for their children. My parents did not have the option to relocate my entire family overseas, so I became a “parachute child,” part of a phenomenon of young children brought to the U.S. to pursue a better education without their families.

When I arrived in the U.S. I learned the hard way that this so called “American Dream” was a myth. While my parents protected me from the challenges back in the Philippines, they were not aware of this country’s racialized history, and the ways it manifested for AAPIs in this country. For Filipinos, part of the intended impact of almost

50 years of American colonization was educating their “little brown brothers” to idealize all things American, creating this “colonial mentality.” Ironically, our experiences in the U.S proved to be less than ideal. From the Chinese Exclusion Act to Japanese internment to anti-Filipino riots, the U.S. often had a way of alienating us as AAPIs wanting to call this country home.



Despite the challenges though, we Filipinos have always found a way to redeem struggle and turn it into celebration. As part of the AAPI Community, celebrating AAPI heritage means knowing our roots and recognizing our shared challenges so we can meaningfully build and celebrate our sense of family and home.