

# EDITOR'S PREFACE



**W**elcome to the very first issue of ALON: Journal for Filipinx American and Diaspora Studies! As editor-in-chief, I'm honored to be part of a terrific cast of co-editors, editorial assistants, and production staff members who are all excited and proud to present to you our inaugural foray into the thoughts, words, images, and sounds of our lives by way of an e-journal. About five years ago, when we first thought about launching a journal that will be specific to the interests of Filipinx Americans and their diasporic communities, our vision was clear: to be a nurturing space for recognizing, representing, and reflecting on the widest possible breadth and the most profound depths of our existence. We wanted something of our own, a journal that we could run together, and one that would be expansive and flexible across boundaries, hence our reference to *alon* as a signifier of the undulating waves of our pasts and presents, our dwellings here and elsewhere, and our experiences of coming and going. So, when the opportunity to be the flagship journal for the Bulosan Center for Filipino Studies came by, it was such a propitious moment we just had to seize. Gratefully, and with pleasure, the *alon* to which we belong—or the very ocean that enables us to belong—constitutes the ALON that we now make available starting now.

What might be Alon's role in our lives? What significance could it offer? We envision Alon to be both a chronicler and conjurer of our times, representing and recognizing who we are and who we've been, but also imagining and creating who we could be and what we can become. We, therefore, dedicate our energies to making these intersecting desires possible, positively considering a variety of scholarly and journalistic formats and artistic expressions from the perspectives of our multiple communities. We would like our readers, writers, artists, and community activists to signify, reflect on, and think alternatively, prodding all of us to find ways we could connect with each other and offering attitudes and practices through which we can craft possibilities of productive engagement. We encourage everyone to think intersectionally, to be sensitive to diverse contexts, and to expose contradictions that are often ignored or unrealized despite their powerful potentials. Especially in a moment when we're experiencing the vilest pandemic struggle of our times, for example, we intend Alon to engage

in attesting to the precarity of our well-being as well as in enabling our capacities to hope. Considering that among the most severely and lethally affected by Covid-19 are Filipinx health workers here and in so many other parts of the world, we can't overlook the extent to which Filipinx global labor can be economically profitable, as well as disease vulnerable, as much as it can be collectively admired, dreaded, or optimistically regarded all at the same time.

Heeding this imperative to account for multilayered analytics, Mina Roces, in our first essay, offers a glimpse into the many-sided lives of Filipina domestic workers as shopping mall consumers in Singapore. Writing on "The Politics of Visibility and the Politics of Appearances," she deftly points to a scaffolded reading of consumer power that can be simultaneously submissive and subversive, even in limited fashion. Ethel Tungohan, in our second piece, ruminates on "The 'Ideal' Female Migrant Subject as Grateful and Uncomplaining," by calculating the extent to which gender expectations seep into labor recruitment processes and migrant community transactions, while opening avenues for their decolonization. Such a gendered, as well as ethnic, ethos of caring that Filipinx migrant labor are expected to deliver on site, constructed both as value as well as obligation, is explored in the following essay, entitled "Filipino Formal Caregivers to the Elderly and Normalized Exploitation in the Workplace." Here, authors Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, Elaika Janin Celemen, and Kristal Osorio instruct us to consider seriously the hidden consequences of caregiving labor especially on the mental health of its practitioners. Finally, Michael Schulze-Oechtering provides an illuminating set of claims regarding the "solidarity politics" that arose in the aftermath of the murders of Filipinx American labor organizers Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes in 1981. By examining the overlapping angles of history from the optics of "Anti-Marcos Filipinos,' Other Anti-Imperialist Diasporas, and the Praxis of Collective Justice," we obtain some valuable lessons in pursuing collective justice that may be critically appropriate to our own times.

All these essays indicate the centrality of labor in Filipinx lives, something that organically came out, unsurprisingly to us, when we solicited both invited and submitted works for our initial issue. We expand this lens a bit by showcasing the work of Sherwin Rio in Alon's art section, dubbed as Leese Street Studio, to honor San Francisco-born artist, educator, and activist, Carlos Villa (1936–2013). According to our Creative Director and Art Editor Theo Gonzalves, "In his studio, Villa created visual artwork, held meetings, and gathered friends, colleagues, and family. So, in this online space, we pay homage to Villa's practice by inviting a new generation of artists to share their work with readers and viewers." Rio, an artist who deploys what he terms as "Filipinx-American visual language" that is inflected by colonial histories and intergenerational knowledges, is our first feature in this section.

Our Reviews section, edited by Antonio Tiongson Jr., contains an appraisal of a monograph, two documentaries, and a novel. Finally, in our Forums section, edited by Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez, we feature

the provocative works of a poet, a musician, an artist/performer, and a visual artist. This issue's Forum is entitled *Ang ka' tandaan mo duman*, a set of calls regarding memory and how memory comes to play in our daily lives. *Ang ka' tandaan mo duman* has two meanings in the Tina dialect of the Sambal (Sambali / Hambali) language, spoken by the Sambali and Sambal - Ita people, - "Do you know?" and "Do you remember?" Hence, this section plays on both statements as tropes of knowing and remembering, asking questions about Filipinx diasporic identities. The submissions within it hail the readers to know the submitters' identities and struggles through their artistic pieces, while at the same time, invoking the submitters' subconscious and consciousness to remember themselves and share themselves with the viewers.

We dedicate this first issue of *Alon* to the memory and inspiring legacy left behind by the late activist Amado Khaya Canham Rodriguez. I personally got to know Amado a few years back as a young boy who accompanied his mother, Robyn Rodriguez, in a conference organized by Filipinx American studies scholars. I knew then that he was a budding community and school activist, but when he suddenly passed away in August of 2020, I was astounded by the stories that many others shared about his extensive social justice and disaster relief work with indigenous communities in the Philippines, and with immigrants, caregivers, and youth groups in the Bay Area. Amado was in our minds and hearts when we were finalizing this edition, but he continues to be so as someone whose deep passion for social justice for the communities we most care about will surely inspire us to do better now and for the next generations. Thank you, Amado, for your comradeship, generosity, and love.

We definitely have a full plate of essays and artwork here, so, on behalf of everyone who had a hand in launching *Alon*, including the much-appreciated labor of our anonymous reviewers and behind-the-scenes workers, as well as our administrative and editorial crew, including the inaugural members of our editorial board and the leadership and staff of the Bulosan Center, I hope you enjoy what we have proudly and enjoyably worked on. We look forward to hearing from you and we are excited to continue our engagement with you in our future issues.

Rick Bonus  
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