

EDITOR'S PREFACE



To many Filipinx and Filipinx American studies scholars, the annual meetings of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) have consistently been the place to see each other as members of a collective. More than being the locations for presenting a paper, organizing a themed panel, participating in a roundtable discussion, or facilitating a workshop, AAAS conferences have historically been one of those scholarly venues where opportunities for socializing with one another are so valued, anticipated, and cherished. This is true, at least, for many Filipinx American studies scholars I know.

As a struggling graduate student many years ago, it was in an AAAS conference in Ithaca where I met in person a few other Filipinx American graduate students for the first time. It was a memorable experience for us green-horned scholars then because we did not merely attend and participate in the conference. More remarkably, we got to know more about each other, we shared and commiserated on our experiences of isolation in our individual campuses, we tried to validate our own work and eagerly connected our research agendas with each other, and we seriously devised ways to regularly keep in touch beyond the conference. Looking back now, I realize how formative that meeting was in shaping and growing our tiny cohort of FilAm scholars into what seems like a fairly robust collective now. A lot of cultivating and flourishing have occurred since and well throughout the rest of the AAAS conferences we have returned to and attended thereon. Our cohort of scholars, artists, and community activists has indeed qualitatively mushroomed into a size large enough to be one of the biggest, and probably the most vocal, sections of AAAS.

By way of a tribute to and acknowledgment of our ongoing productive presence and leadership within AAAS, and sometimes in defiance or criticism of it, we decided to feature a good selection of conference proceedings in this ALON issue. Culled from the most recent meeting held in Denver this year, we decided to put out these solicited pieces as they were presented, without undertaking formal review processes for each, and with just a few minor revisions and format edits done when needed. We wanted to preserve as much as possible the presentation contexts of these papers so as to capture the conference's notable moments of returning to, at last, meet face to face after two pandemic years of no, online, and hybrid gatherings.

Our line-up consists of papers that range from a historical recognition of Filipinotown in Los Angeles to a set of ruminations on the political economies and transformative cultures of care in several Filipinx communities. We have a couple of presentations on recently-released monographs about hip hop and the global Filipina body, a paper on Filipinx American performing arts, a “recipe for renewal,” and a contemplation on one of Lysley Tenorio’s short stories. We round up the proceedings list with a preview of a forthcoming book on Filipinx American teachers as well as a heartfelt account of “the politics and possibilities of joy,” by our very own Reviews editor Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr. I was in the very panel where Tony presented this piece, and this one made me remember what we often forget or take for granted as scholars and activists – taking pleasure in one’s work within a collective!

Leese Street Studio takes us to the palette-rich and multi-symbolic parts of the fantastic artwork of Mike Arcega and Paolo Asuncion, as they engage with the iconic “traysikels” of the Philippines by re-situating them in the U.S. And we have an incisive review of do-cumentary filmmaker Sung-a Yoon’s *Overseas*, a film about overseas Filipina domestic workers. We end with a featured course syllabus on the Martial Law era provided by the Critical Filipino/Filipina Studies Collective for our Forums section. We anticipate this syllabus to indicate yet another form of “return” in the comeback of the Marcoses to Philippine contemporary politics.

In many ways, our pandemic has slightly waned, allowing us to slowly and carefully go back to our usual ways of being with others. The AAAS conference in Denver signaled a version of that return even though many of us chose not to come, and the rest of us who attended opted to continue masking or limited our social interactions, or stayed in the city for only a short while. Nevertheless, this issue celebrates our long-awaited, though abbreviated, return to the sociality that we have been pining for, while also marking the anxieties and trepidations of coming back as the pandemic, including its multiple forms and concomitant effects, continues to linger. We remain always hopeful for future “possibilities of joy.”

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