

We have all undergone hardships in the past 2 years that COVID-19 has been a constant in our lives. The newest generation has been able to witness history in the making and has had to adapt quickly. The events that seemingly began with the first wave of the pandemic have not slowed down since the start of 2020. Future generations will have a difficult time covering all this in their history classes. I will be able to smile and laugh knowing I have lived through it; knowing that I have had first-hand experience with the questions our children will ask. While we have not escaped the clutches of Covid just yet, the question still remains. How can I move forward from here? My high-school career is almost at an end, as are those of my peers, and we are wondering how we can continue to contribute to our community. Over the past 2 years, many have relied on others to get them through the rough patches dredged up by society. There has been more attention to focusing on mental health and the stigma arising from it, an increase in support for marginalized communities, and even working more towards better self-care. I have a unique perspective on many of the issues brought up during the pandemic. As I move forward as a young adult, there are issues I would like to help contribute to.

The Covid-19 virus not only brought the fear of being infected to everyone but a new stigma against Asian people as a whole. Hate had always existed but this was a new wave. The rise of attacks and hate crimes across the country has brought tons of support to the Asian-American community and the start of the Stop Asian Hate movement. The sympathy that arose from these attacks was something that has affected my family as well. My grandparents are immigrants from the Philippines making me a 3rd generation Filipino-American. Even though I am only half Filipino, my mother has tried to keep my brother and me educated about our culture. Learning about my family's journey to the US, visiting the Philippines, and eating the food is a part of my life so witnessing the rise of anti-Asian hate across the country was an odd

experience for me. As a half Asian American, I inform as many people as possible about Filipino culture and the Stop Asian Hate movement. I don't think enough people are aware of what is going on. Many people took on a sort of fear, based on ignorance, and lashed out at Asian-Americans. The virus is believed to originate from China and so many people took this as Asian people were to blame for the pandemic in America. This backward outlook on finding blame is still prevalent, but the attacks have slowed down in recent months. During the height of the pandemic is when the attacks were most frequent. This is not an excuse to leave the Stop Asian Hate movement behind. Just because there is progress does not mean there isn't work left to be done. There are many different non profit organizations that can be donated to like Asian Americans Advancing Justice or Stop AAPI Hate. I myself can continue to be representative of my community and offer support where it is needed.

Aside from the major political aspects of supporting and helping my community. There is a smaller, more down-to-earth way I can support equity and growth. I have been in martial arts since I was 6 years old. Now, 12 years later, I have a 3rd-degree black belt in taekwondo and regularly assist in teaching classes of younger students. Being a high-ranking assistant in my school, I have many responsibilities when it comes to teaching. I have to know whether or not what I am teaching is correct and set a good example for the class. There have been instances where students are difficult to work with, but I still must push through. As it is my job to help them progress, I cannot show disdain towards any student and must put in an equal amount of effort to include all of them. Moving forward, I am sure that opportunities to further my support will present themselves. Until then, it is through these ways that I am able to support equity and inclusion in my community.