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AGIT! CALL TO ACTION: STOP ASIAN HATE THROUGH ANTI-IMPERIALIST INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Germaine Lindsay Saladino Juan

As the Vice-Chairperson for Anakbayan Hawai'i, I delivered this speech at the "Stop Asian Hate" rally on March 27, 2021 at the Hawai'i State Capitol. 808 Against Hate was a coalition of O'ahu-based organizations that organized the "Stop Asian Hate" rally. The coalition was formed by the following groups: Young Progressives Demanding Action, Hawai'i for Black Lives, Youth Climate Coalition, Coronacare Hawai'i, and the Sunrise Movement Honolulu Hub.

On behalf of Anakbayan Hawai'i, I was given the opportunity to speak after Coronacare Hawai'i member Mikey Inouye invited our organization to share a statement concerning the rise of xenophobic sentiments and uptick in anti-Asian hate crimes during the global pandemic crisis. On a personal note, I was interested in participating in this rally to challenge the lack of revolutionary representations of Filipinos in Hawai'i. We are a huge ethnic group in the islands, but our voices are always drowned out when it comes to community conversations, even in "Asian" spaces. Because of anti-Filipino and immigrant racism in Hawai'i, local Filipinos are oftentimes apathetic towards their heritage and even ashamed of it. As a 1.5-generation immigrant, I see this causing intra-communal conflict among Filipinos in Hawai'i. By choosing to speak at the "Stop Asian Hate" rally on behalf of my organization, I wanted to challenge anti-Filipino and immigrant racism as well as foreground revolutionary cultural representations of Filipinos in Hawai'i.

I wrote this speech in collaboration with Yoko Liriano, the co-chair of the Hawai'i Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, and Misty Pegrum, the chairperson of Anakbayan Hawai'i. We co-created this speech by outlining our thoughts on a Google Document. In the original outline for the speech, we included the following: An introduction of Anakbayan's background, a history of class solidarity between ethnically diverse workers during Hawai'i's sugar plantation era, our analysis that situates the pervasive anti-Asian violence amidst the COVID-19 global outbreak through the National Democratic line (anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, anti-feudalism), a call to action, and the concluding Isang Bagsak Unity Clap. On the day of the rally, we were given a 3-minute time constraint for delivering our speech. For this reason, I revised the speech by removing the history of class solidarity between laborers at the plantations.

After speaking with my co-conspirators Yoko and Misty, we decided to write an *agit* speech. “Agit” is short for “agitated” and is often used in Filipino activist spaces in the context of delivering an empowering speech against the opposition. We identified the opposition to be white supremacy and capitalism. Moreover, we stated that the white supremacist and capitalist system produced the model minority myth for Asian Americans which inherently pits Asian Americans against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. We wanted to deliver the message that true liberation for our Asian communities lies within the demilitarization of our communities wherever we are in the world—whether that be in our homelands or in our diasporas.

In all the co-written speeches I deliver on behalf of Anakbayan Hawai‘i, Yoko always encourages me to emphasize that the struggle for revolution is rooted in my own Ilokano identity. I was born and raised in Dingras, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. Both sides of my family are deeply rooted in the town. For the “Stop Asian Hate” rally speech, I traced this sympathy of armed revolt and liberation to the Ilokana militant leader Gabriela Silang who organized the masses after the assassination of her husband, Diego Silang. Gabriela is a powerful symbol of an Ilokano woman, of a Filipino woman, who led revolutionaries toward a sovereign Ilocandia. Gabriela serves as a reminder that revolution runs through our blood as Filipino people. She serves as an empowering figure that reminds us that we are capable of leading movements toward our people’s liberation. My favorite part of the speech was being able to initiate the Isang Bagsak Unity Clap among approximately 300 people who attended the rally. This marked Anakbayan Hawai‘i’s first time mobilizing the Unity Clap to bring people together. I decided to strategically implement the Unity Clap after being inspired by Anakbayan activists from the continental United States who practice this tradition in their own organizing work. I love how the tradition of the Isang Bagsak Unity Clap bridges the struggles between the diasporas and the homeland.

I encourage the youth to organize their communities toward a decolonial future for our people’s collective liberation. Discover the cause that you are deeply passionate about and find a local organization in your area that not only aligns with it, but also tackles it from an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist perspective. The National Democratic movement in the Philippines has an organization for each sector of society, in which some have overseas chapters: Anakbayan and League of Filipino Students are two of its comprehensive youth and student organizations; Gabriela, a women-focused organization; Bayan, a coalition that seeks to advance genuine democracy and sovereignty in the Philippines; Migrante, a Filipino and migrant organization; and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP), an organization for allies who are concerned for human rights in the Philippines; and many others. Anakbayan and HiCHRP (Hawai‘i Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines) are two active O‘ahu-

based organizations that center issues in the Philippines through the National Democratic line.

Transcript:

Mainit na pagbati sa inyong lahat, warm militant greetings to you all. My name is Germaine Juan. I am the Vice-Chairperson of Anakbayan Hawai'i. Anakbayan is a militant Filipino youth organization that is part of the National Democratic Movement. We stand for sovereignty for our home country and all oppressed nations.

Discrimination and violence against Asians are steeped in the same white supremacist, capitalist superstructure that oppresses our Black, Indigenous, and poor communities. This rise in xenophobic sentiments and anti-Asian hate crimes is the culmination of a long-running campaign of the imperialist United States to maintain white supremacy and power. The truth is that they will always try to pit us against one another because imperialists are afraid of the power that international solidarity has. We are the “model minority” when pitted against Black, Indigenous and other people of color, and we are the ever-foreign outsiders so no amount of proximity to whiteness or economic mobility will free us from this oppressive, racial capitalist system.

They built their system on racism because they know what will happen if the people of all oppressed and exploited nations stand as one. To “Stop Asian Hate” is to forge unity with all oppressed peoples, to demilitarize our communities, to disarm and defund the police, and to GET THE U.S. OUT OF THE ASIA PACIFIC AND OUT OF EVERYWHERE!

We stand with Black, Indigenous, third world, poor and working class struggles for liberation because, despite how the fascist, white supremacist system tries to divide and conquer us, we must form the broadest, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist front and brick by brick, wall by wall, WE WILL TEAR IMPERIALISM DOWN!

For as many years as there has been oppression, colonialism, and exploitation, there has also been RESISTANCE. Around the world, for centuries, people have always responded in revolt and revolution. In my home region of the Philippines, a woman insurgent, Gabriela Silang, took up the leadership of a revolt against Spain in 1763 for the people of Ilocos. For oppressed peoples, revolution is in our blood. Until this day, my people are fighting for liberation. They, like so many oppressed peoples around the world, are in the streets or taking up arms. The state is violent, and resistance is justified. We will not survive without solidarity and revolutionary optimism. Our liberation is bound together. And together we will win.

We would like to ask everyone to join us in a show of solidarity. This is called the Isang Bagsak Unity Clap. Isang Bagsak is adopted from a ritual used by anti-Martial Law student activists in the Philippines and was combined with the 1960s United Farm Workers Movement Unity Clap that bridged the communication gap between Mexican

and Filipino farmworkers. The two rituals were combined to be the Isang Bagsak Unity Clap by Filipino activists in California. Isang Bagsak literally translates to “one fall.” If one falls, we all fall but if one rises, we all rise. What we want everyone to do is start slowly clapping as one and to pick up the pace and when I say “Isang Bagsak,” we end with one, unified clap.

(Slow clap increasing speed) ISAAAAAANG BAGSAK! (Clap)

Long live international solidarity!
Imperyalismo ibagsak!

Thank you.

Link to video: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WUGO8DeSX7mtdVnORY2Hn19jHeAYZniB/view?usp=sharing>

