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MIND THE GAP

Supressed to Addressed



Calafia 2023

CALAFIA FELLOWS

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CALAFIA IS YLI'S STATEWIDE YOUTH POLICY JOURNAL THAT AMPLIFIES THE NARRATIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON TOPICS AND ISSUE AREAS IMPORTANT TO THEM AND THEIR COMMUNITIES. CALAFIA'S PAST ISSUES HAVE FOCUSED ON YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM, EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, AND ADDRESSING STIGMAS WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR.

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MIND THE GAP

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Adamari, Clarissa, Jocelyn, Jovani, and Rayyan – the Calafia fellows who have stamped their stories, perspectives, and voice onto this publication.

The following pages bring to life the culmination of hard work and reflection as they've captured their one-of-a-kind experiences. Their voices come alive on paper as living, breathing records of their journey, thoughts, and emotions. From discovering the meaning of advocacy in one's community to breaking the undisturbed silence of cultural taboos, we, as readers, are transported to their realities, collectively left to wonder: What does it truly mean to be an advocate? How can I succeed when faced with a barrage of systemic barriers? How can I "be myself" when society won't accept me?

Throughout the 9 months of the program, María, Jarrett, Nancy, and I have witnessed the immense growth and development of these five fellows as they've honed their craft. Challenging themselves and experimenting with new territory in the form of podcasts, poems, and Op-Eds, they've remained tenacious and unrelenting, conducting research, insightful interviews with experts, and drawing on their own perspectives to craft stories infused with both distinctive character and voice.

To our readers, we hope these stories inspire, motivate, and incite introspection as our fellows remind us that we are not defined by the barriers that constrain us, but rather by the unique experiences that ultimately shape our lives.

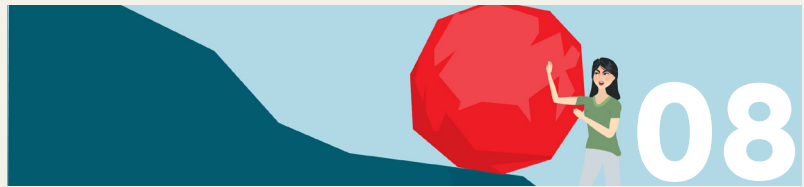
And, to our fellows, thank you for providing us with the gift of your voice.

Katelyn Chang
Senior Calafia Fellow

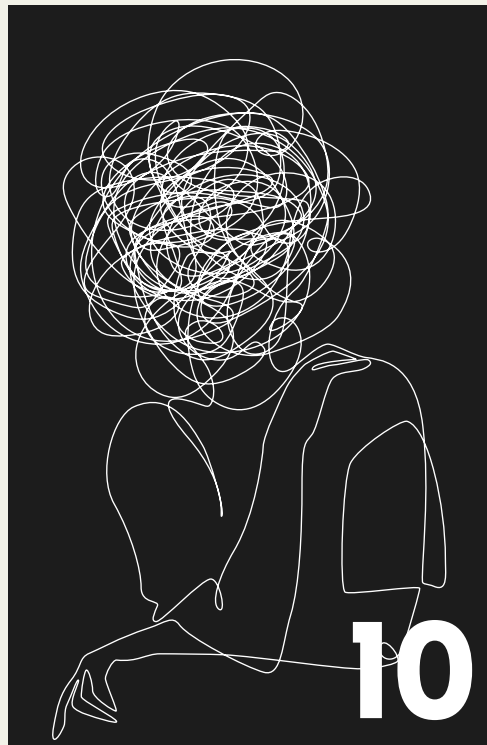
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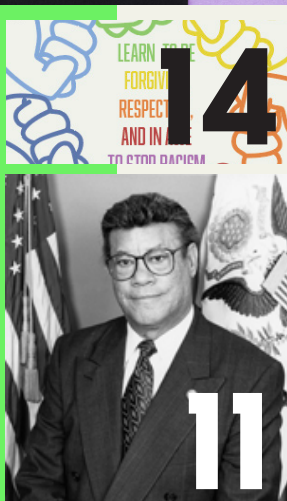
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How a Non-Profit Organization May Save Your Life

Adamari Cota she/her

Photos by Flying Doctors Volunteer Supervisor Maria Smith

I wasn't fully aware of the circumstances our society was facing until I got the chance to see it in person when I volunteered at the Flying Doctors event in September 2021 .

Flying Doctors is an organization that provides free dental, optometry, and health services to communities in critical need. That day I also realized that I wasn't the only one who wanted to see a change. There were over 300 volunteers waiting patiently at the entrances.

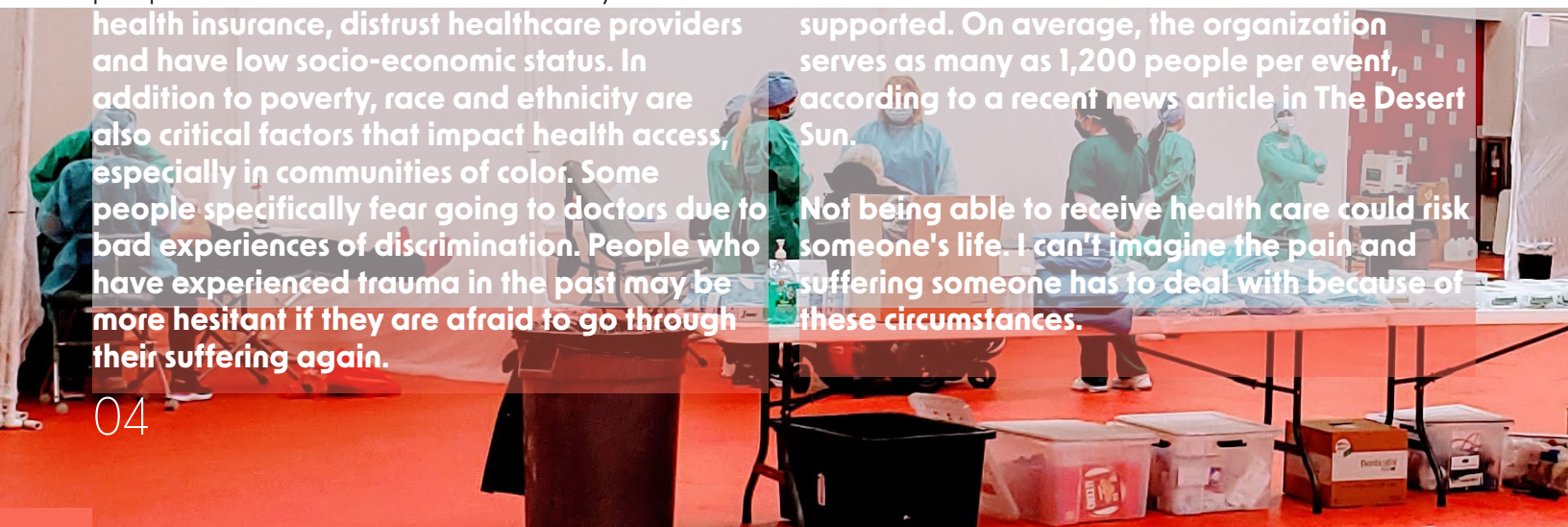
Seeing my community come to a space where they could receive free health access and not feel scared to get help was amazing.

Like many communities of color, many of the people of the Eastern Coachella Valley lack health insurance, distrust healthcare providers and have low socio-economic status. In addition to poverty, race and ethnicity are also critical factors that impact health access, especially in communities of color. Some people specifically fear going to doctors due to bad experiences of discrimination. People who have experienced trauma in the past may be more hesitant if they are afraid to go through their suffering again.

I know our people are struggling to seek health access and that is really heartbreaking. The level of dental pain people were feeling was alarming. During the event there were many age ranges, I specifically remember helping an elderly man who was in such pain that he wasn't able to communicate with me. This is one reason clinics like The Flying Doctors are so important in supporting communities that don't have critical access to health care. The American Hospital Association states that 30 million people in the United States live without health insurance. This is equivalent to packing nearly four New York Cities onto the National Mall. This number is alarming not just to me but to many who are currently suffering.

Having resources such as the Flying Doctors in critical areas is essential and should be supported. On average, the organization serves as many as 1,200 people per event, according to a recent news article in The Desert Sun.

Not being able to receive health care could risk someone's life. I can't imagine the pain and suffering someone has to deal with because of these circumstances.



Enrique Lopez, a volunteer at the Flying Doctors 2021, expressed his emotions and experience while volunteering at these events: "I honestly felt sick to my stomach," he said. "The lack of access to healthcare is a problem in today's society..."

According to a Desert Sun article, "a few years ago...a clinician detected breast cancer in one of the patients at the free event." A non-profit could save your life!

It is phenomenal that a free clinic could detect something life-threatening. So why aren't we giving them the support they need?

We often tend to shrug these problems aside and not realize how big of a problem it is. Finding the correct amount of volunteers for these services is difficult, and non-profit organizations face lots of challenges each day. One challenge is limited government funding. Unit4 Communications states, "Most nonprofits end up getting less funding than they want or need, while some are left with no funding at all." With these challenges, sometimes it is hard to continue giving out services. Nevertheless, we still try our best, and that's what we should all do.

Throughout the years, there have been many myths about health nonprofit organizations. One of them is that nonprofits are large when in reality most nonprofits are small in the number of employees as well as budget size. They usually rely on volunteers and foundations, which, according to the National Council of Nonprofits, "represent only 14% of the total annual revenue to the charitable nonprofit community."



Not everyone lives in a circumstance where they can just go to a doctor when they feel like it. In communities where people can't always afford healthcare, we need to change our perspective on nonprofits. As we lead these myths into our thoughts we are often left with a bad perspective about some organization or might even make assumptions.

Hours before the Flying Doctors clinic opened that day in September, people were lined up. In the hot Coachella heat, hundreds of people showed up just for the opportunity to get free medical care. It was powerful.

In addition, not many people can afford healthcare, and money plays a key role, in some ways, our system is cheating and delegating responsibilities to non-profits to fill in the gap. The truth is that if we had health justice in the world many communities wouldn't have to suffer daily. Besides money shouldn't play a role in whether were healthy or not. Health is a fundamental right, not a privilege.



A FASHION STATEMENT: FIGHTING RESTRICTIVE GENDER NORMS

RAYYAN ZEIN *THEY/THEM*

Expressing creativity had always been a difficult task for me. Although having a surplus of imagination, I was lost on how to apply my creative thinking in a productive way. It felt as though my mind was an encaged bird, desperate for freedom. However, through my fashion, I have found one of the greatest ways to express myself.

Although regularly receiving peculiar looks from others, I take great pride in my appearance. The most important thing to me is my jewelry. I dress in excessive amounts of chains, rings, earrings, and bracelets. These accessories often hold meaning, such as a ring passed down to me belonging to my great-grandmother, as she is the primary inspiration for my fashion. In addition to my jewelry, I find pleasure in wearing makeup. Although I am not very talented at it, applying something as simple as blush or eyeliner significantly boosts the confidence I have in my appearance.

Since I do not fit the societal standard on how people should appear, I frequently experience backlash. I regularly hear hurtful comments being directed towards me. Entering public spaces became a source of anxiety, as I have had objects thrown at me simply for wearing a dress. We often suppress individuality in our community, whether it'd be through stating who may and may not wear makeup, or our restrictive gender roles.

My great-grandmother was committed to fighting this. Despite living in the 1930s, she opposed society's standards by publicly wearing a black and white suit, neatly decorated with a purple bow tie. Although deceased, she leaves behind a strong legacy. A legacy that tells us our differences should be appreciated, not hated. Every day I strive to continue my ancestor's lifework of combatting the misogyny in our society. Whether it'd be by wearing feminine clothing or applying make-up, I will ensure the bravery and courage she demonstrated will not be in vain. Through my fashion, I have found an impactful way to express my creativity while showing others that individuality is valuable.



AP Exams

BY: Jovani Contreras he/him
ID: 49385722001
DATE:

WRITE HERE

Taking an advanced placement (AP) exam for me is a financial risk. AP Exams are expensive. Students pay nearly 100 dollars per exam, and that's an exam you have to pay for even if you fail. This is thanks to the college board company which runs a monopoly over the business of advanced placement exams.

Coming from a low income household, I have to pick and choose what exams I take.

I don't get to attempt as many as I want because of the steep price, yet exam scores are one of the deciding factors in college admissions. And if I do pay for more exams but fail, it's money down the drain. When I was waiting for my first AP scores, the thought of failing and essentially wasting the money that went into the exam haunted me. While this pushed me to study hard for my exams, it became unhealthy. I would cancel plans to review content or stay in to take notes instead of enjoying my weekends.

It feels like a vicious cycle where low income students can't afford the exams, thus aren't competitive for good colleges, thus remain low income. I know it's not that simple but sometimes it feels like it is.

Exams are a struggle, but there are some ways for low income students to reduce the cost. Look into your school's policy to see how many exams they can cover for you. Some schools offer to pay for AP exams if students take specific classes.

Students with financial needs are also eligible for a \$34 dollar price reduction on each exam after filling out a fee reduction waiver. These resources could significantly lower the price of your exams. Sometimes it may seem like the financial barrier makes getting to college impossible but there are resources out there. It is possible.

IMPORTANT

USE NO. 2 PENCIL ONLY
MAKE DARK MARKS
ERASE COMPLETELY

STUDENT SCORING EXAMPLE

[A] [B] [C] [D] [E]

Diminish Disinformation about the AAPI Community and Build Cultural Confidence

Jocelyn Yang she/her

The worst thing is not the expansion of disinformation about the AAPI community but that many Asian youths believe in these myths. Since I realized the abundance of intentional disinformation about the AAPI community, I began my journey to stop Asian hate and encourage the Asian youths around me to be confident about their cultural identity.

When I invited some of my Asian friends to help me launch the first Asian American Cultural rally at school, they immediately refused my invitation: "No one would be interested in Asian cultures! It's so awkward to participate in this rally."

Initially disappointed by their reactions, I realized that my journey to stop Asian hate involves more than simply uplifting AAPI cultures. It requires motivating other Asian youths who feel ashamed about their cultures.

Racism against Asian Americans started in the 19th century when Chinese immigrants came to the United States during the California Gold Rush. They played a vital role in building the transcontinental railroad and helped develop the agriculture, fishing, and mining industries.

In the late 19th century, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, banning Chinese immigrants who were seen as threats and regarded as the "Yellow Peril." After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, 122,000 Japanese citizens were unfairly forced into internment camps.

COVID-19 has spurred a rise in AAPI hatred for the last two years. Many people used the virus as an excuse to harbor racism and xenophobia toward the Asian community. For instance, the former US president, Donald Trump, claimed the virus was the Kung Flu or the Chinese virus.



It is crucial for the younger generation to explore the connection between the history of racism against the AAPI community and the current hate crimes. Jericho Abanico, a social justice coordinator at Moreau Catholic High School, is the first teacher who established the social justice curriculum.

"I think the main purpose of setting up this class is to focus on more understanding of what socially happens around the world to people," he said. "And as young folk, I believe that social justice education and curriculum are needed to plant a seed because we are training our future leaders. Eventually, people will create policy, and they will be these people who make decisions."

In addition, Laura Carther, the Coordinator of the Asian American Disinformation Table, suggests writing and sharing personal narratives instead of directly combating strangers online.

I strongly encourage each state's Department of Education Board to establish a specific social justice or ethnic study curriculum for the next generations. At the same time, I encourage Asian youth, especially those in middle and high schools, to explore themselves profoundly and reflectively to break down stereotypes and disinformation about Asian American communities.

Growing up I've always been that girl who was in a bubble. Not your original bubble that has a thin sphere of colorful liquid surrounding it. My bubble was gloomy, dark, and dejected by myself and others. I've always wondered why. Why is my bubble like this? Can I just be happy? I wanted to change this dark color that would follow me everywhere, colors such as yellow, pink, and green.

I wanted the rainbow of happiness around me. I started to change my color one step at a time. I remember it being a difficult challenge but I got the hang of it. I started participating in school, I made many friends, and I finally became the person I looked up to, which is my new self. I became happy and excited to share this

new person to the world. People started to communicate with me. They would describe me as the color pink - it represents who I am based on my characteristics. I'm happy most of the time, I'm very bubbly, and sensitive. I'm very different from the person I used to be.

Being able to take these steps was a success but with many challenges. There are a number of practical issues that made it hard to get mental health care. The main one was availability.

As not all insurance covers mental health, it was difficult for me as a lower-income person to access help.

During the time that I was seeking aid, the worries started rising.

Can I receive help today and be able to get it again next week? Thoughts like this followed me through my journey. No one should feel these types of emotions while trying to get assistance, especially for our own health.

Not only this but usually mental health issues are left without any support and ignored, making it difficult for us to shed our dejected bubble.

I was thinking about this time of my life and I reflected on it by making a poem:

**"I've always wanted to be a red rose
/ The red rose / That everyone sees
and admires / The rose that flows to
shows / I'm the red rose that's being
misread."**

This poem is meaningful because not only does it reflect the person I used to be but it's also a reminder to me that it's never too late to have life changes. These changes could lead to the person you are today and could help you become a wonderful person in the future. The steps I've taken helped me decide who I am and what I want for this world to know about me.

{CHANGE}

Exploring The Real Creator of Hispanic Heritage Month One Year After His Death

Clarissa Wing she/her

Who created Hispanic Heritage Month? Well, if you were to type these words into your browser, as I did, you would receive the bolded answer, “President Lyndon Johnson.”

It was the Mexican U.S. Representative for California Esteban E. Torres, who passed away nearly a year ago on January 25th, 2022, and introduced H.R. 3182 in 1987, a bill to call for the establishment of Hispanic Heritage Month. But ironically, as a Latino who fought to have his community recognized, Torres’ efforts around Hispanic Heritage Month don’t receive the same recognition as the white presidents and legislators who signed it into law. Andrés Rodriguez, an ethnic studies professor at San Jose City College, reasons “This is another product where the immediate recognition of these events is mostly from people in power. They certainly played an important role in terms of being in their positions as president where they sign the documentation. But, that’s where our understandings of history, and in particular, our history, really gets diluted.”

Even on the official National Hispanic Heritage Month website, the text only addresses the presidents’ contributions to the month. Over the decades, Hispanic Heritage Month has become a celebration of the influence and contributions of our community. But Torres continues to be written out of this history, even though he has a story worth knowing. Born in Miami, Arizona, Torres was raised by his mother and grandmother after his father was forced to return to Mexico during the mass deportation of the Great Depression when Torres was five years old. Torres remarked, “My mother and my grandmother were very strong women, very educated and very proud to be Mexicans. They were the ones that taught me to defend my rights.” The influence of his family instilled a strong belief in having pride in his racial background and advocating for cultural representation, which eventually led him to become involved in politics.

Aside from Torres, it was not easy to find information about who else was behind the movement of creating Hispanic Heritage Month, which further reveals how buried Latinx history remains.



Photo sourced from The U.S. House of Rep’s History, Art & Archives

However, the 1980s (around the time Torres presented his bill) was noted as an endeavor for unity in the Chicano Movement after the two decades of struggle to end discrimination against Mexican Americans. Karla Cativo who teaches race and culture and central American studies at California State University, Los Angeles, states, “Sometimes that takes advocating for our rights and our voices and not staying quiet when the leadership wants to take advantage of us. [W]e forget that, had it not been for the people, for those individuals in the background, really doing all the work, we probably wouldn’t be where we are and have all the things we have.”

Rodriguez puts it this way: “The contributors [like Torres] are the folks that were on the ground really fighting, really demanding, for this to happen. And, it’s important that those folks get recognized. Because, if we just leave it at some U.S. presidents who were involved in it by signing this into law, then it’s really not telling the whole story.” Rodriguez and Cativo are right; if we are not taught the truth of our history and do not advocate for our truth, our complete story is never told. Even in the month when our community is supposed to be uplifted and acknowledged, our history remains concealed and suppressed. So, since it’s not said often enough, let me say it again: There were Latinos behind the creation of Hispanic Heritage Month, such as Esteban E. Torres. As Esteban E. Torres’s one-year anniversary of his passing approaches, I want my community to realize the power our voices hold. If we do not speak out about topics that may be hidden or collectively suppressed, we will never make progress that truly celebrates Latino heritage and recognizes the depth of diversity.



THE “BACK DOORS” OF COLLEGE AD

Jovani Contreras he/him

As I wait for my college decision letters, I have to keep in mind how unfair the system behind those rejections or acceptances is. In 2019, the “Varsity Blues” scandal sent shock waves through the education world. Over thirty wealthy and affluent parents collectively paid more than 25 million dollars from 2011-2018 to inflate their children’s exam scores, bribe college officials, and ultimately buy acceptance letters to the most prestigious schools in America for their kids.

Although the parents of these students were prosecuted and charged for their crimes, the wide open “back door” for wealthy students was never shut. Today, while it may not be a major scandal or illegal crime, money is one of the biggest factors in college admissions.

Most students do everything they can to get into their dream schools; students earn good grades, take rigorous classes, and balance multiple extracurriculars to even have a slim chance of getting into a prestigious university, but one factor that no one can change is their financial background.

Personally, financial aid is one of the biggest factors in my college list. My financial background touches every part of my application from the AP exams I couldn’t take because of the high prices to the myriad of activities I could not put on my resume because I had to look over my siblings.

Finance influences every part of the college process and is arguably the biggest deciding factor. From not being able to pay for SAT tutoring to little things like the price of sending a college application to each university, your financial situation dominates your college admission chances.

Daniel Telfer has a lot of experience in the college admissions process. As a teacher and counselor at Summit Prep high school, Mr. Telfer gave insight into just how big of a role financial situations play in the college admissions game.

“Students who need to help provide [for their families] will always have more burden in the time that they are allowed because the opportunity cost of having a job for someone who’s affluent is incredibly low.” Telfer continued, “There’s also things like the greatest differential in whether or not you will do well on the SATs is whether or not your parents can afford to put you in an SAT class.”

The background of the entire page is a composite image. The upper half features numerous US dollar bills, primarily \$100 bills, falling from the top against a dark background. The lower half of the page is dominated by bright, intense orange and yellow flames. Scattered throughout the scene, particularly in the middle and lower sections, are pieces of white paper that appear to be burning or have been torn. Some of these papers are clearly identifiable as college admission forms, with visible text such as "COLLEGE NAME", "DEGREE", and "RECEIVED".

ADMISSIONS ARE STILL WIDE OPEN

Students who have to juggle work to contribute to their households can't take all the classes or participate in all the extracurricular activities that financially stable students can, whether that's taking an extra AP class or pursuing an unpaid internship. Money buys the best tutors for standardized tests, which in turn buys the best scores that colleges use to measure the "academic ability" of a student when really the SAT is one of the biggest measures of wealth.

Gisselle Penuela Solis is a first generation college student and a high school Senior applying to college this November. Outside of school, Solis works part time to support her family. "This year, I realized that my resume wasn't big enough for the college I want to go to. So I had to apply to more things. But then when the places I applied to told me exactly what I needed to do and when I asked for those days off, they weren't given to me."

Solis is one of many students whose applications were made weaker because of their financial background. But it's not just students who suffer from the tight hold money has on college admissions. Mr. Telfer went on to explain how high schools in low-income neighborhoods are victim to this dynamic.

"Property value directly goes into how much money a school will have in the public system based on that, that school can provide resources, pay teachers better, and make classrooms better." Mr. Telfer went on to say, "Teaching is one of the only industries where the lowest paid and the least capable teachers are sent to the kids who are most in need, the kids who are working in the conditions for the lowest success rates, that's almost the only time that experts are shuttled away to the students or, in this case, the demographic that needs it the least."

With colleges becoming more competitive than ever, students like me from low income backgrounds will receive more rejection letters than any other time in history. Ultimately, this system perpetuates a cycle of poverty, as students from families with low income households and low paying jobs will be left degreeless and forced to continue that pattern.

COVID-19 stoked more racial hatred during the past two years, particularly against Asian Americans. During this time, an Asian international student was killed in a shooting near the University of Chicago campus. An elderly Asian woman was attacked while walking down the street in the city of San Francisco. Soon after, many Asian Americans began organizing marches around the country to oppose anti-Asian discrimination. I felt resentful and miserable when I observed other Asian Americans in the US being bullied and harmed because of their ethnicity. Then I began to consider more about racism: why does it exist, and how can I resolve it?

Initially, I was unsure about my role in this conflict. I am Asian; however, I've studied abroad in the US for only three years. I didn't know who I would represent or what I should advocate for. I was eager to work on something that allowed me to find the answers. By experiencing more and becoming mature, I gradually realized the answer to why racism exists. Racism develops not only from our diverse races and different backgrounds but also from both political and economic oppression from white supremacy. In other words, racism appears most impactfully in the social and economic structures that oppress some while privileging others. My idea correlates with Yli's racial platform: "There is no 'neutral' when it comes to oppression."



LEARN TO BE
FORGIVING,
RESPECTFUL,
AND IN AWE
TO STOP RACISM

JOCELYN YANG SHE/HER

Dismantling white supremacy requires us to call it out wherever we find it – both at the interpersonal and systemic levels." Since we are different, we cannot actually feel or know the same as others, except by using our imaginations. This informative or cognitive gap can be used to separate us and assign our different values. As time passes, the informative gap becomes a stereotype. It sounds challenging to eliminate stereotypes and gaps; however, there is something we can do as ordinary people – we can learn to be forgiving, respectful, and in awe of others who have different religions or beliefs than we do.

After realizing that all of us can stop racism regardless of nationality and experiences, I ultimately found my role in the fight against AAPI hate and my belonging to the Asian American community.

As an international student, I embody Asian cultures and increase solidarity among Asian teenagers by educating and sharing. Thus, I initiated the Universal Peace student organization and recruited several passionate team members. We successfully launched our first event, where we discussed how to stop Asian hate as high school students. Also, we hosted a webinar to share and discuss the misrepresentation of Asians in current media, the historical roots of Asian hatred, and how to fight against Asian hate as students. To expand our network, I joined the Dear Asian Youth organization and applied for the DAY Chapter leader at my high school. My team and I organized the first online fundraiser and received donations. We then donated all funds to the Stop AAPI Hate organization to support their hard work. This October, we will organize the first Asian American Cultural Rally at my high school to educate students about Asian racism and share Asian American cultures with everyone.

By exposing other youth to Asian cultures and teaching them to be forgiving, respectful, and in awe of those who are different from them (in terms of religion or race), I was able to find my role and purpose in the fight against Asian prejudice. To make my neighborhood and, eventually, the entire planet, free of racism, I will tirelessly campaign against it and educate others around me.

WANT MORE CALAFIA?

CHECK OUT THE **MIND THE GAP** PODCAST CREATED BY THE FELLOWS OF THIS PUBLICATION!



▼ Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed ...

What are gender roles?
Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed

3:24 -6:15

1x 15s 15s

▼ Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed ...

A Broken Game: Why College
Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed

1:33 -6:39

1x 15s 15s

▼ Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed ...

Innovation of Public Aid
Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed

0:59 -5:22

1x 15s 15s

▼ Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed ...

How can establishing social ju
Mind the Gap: Suppressed to Addressed

4:16 -11:58

1x 15s 15s

Breaking the Stigmas of Mental Health in the Latinx Community

Clarissa Wing she/her

Growing up, worries constantly filled my mind.

I was always overthinking the smallest actions and was constantly concerned about forgetting a belonging at home. Even as young as elementary school, after ensuring to pack all my school work and supplies into my backpack, I would check my bag once or twice more on the ride to school so I did not forget my homework. These worries progressed into high school. However, they shifted to excessive worrying about grades and upcoming tests, the need to have every assignment "perfected," the fear of failure, and uncontrollable negative thoughts. It was not until seeing videos of therapists online and doing my own research that I recognized these worries may actually be anxiety.

I never considered therapy as something that I could have access to. In the past, I thought that an individual only needed therapy if they experienced great severity with their mental illness. My family, although we are close-knit, did not have open discussions about our feelings or emotions. Before I had the courage to ask my parents if therapy could be an option for my anxiety, my older sister signed herself up for therapy at the beginning of 2021. My mom's response was that therapy is only for people experiencing more burdensome issues than her. But, because my sister is an adult, my mom knew she could not prevent her from going.

I could not comprehend why my mom disagreed with my desire to seek mental health assistance as she would simply reply by saying, "You don't need therapy."

She never expressed her truth until I sat her down one day before school to have a vulnerable conversation about my unhealthy mental state. In the Latinx community, there are many stigmas surrounding mental health and therapy. Some of these stigmas include believing that only "crazy" people go to therapy, assuming therapy shows a person is "weak," thinking that mental health problems are just "in your head," and concluding that one's problems are not "valid enough" to seek help. My mom, who is part of a hardworking, Latino family, adhered to these same thoughts. She also gathered that it was not possible for her daughters to struggle with their mental health because, in comparison to her upbringing, she endured much more difficult challenges, both financially and emotionally, in an immigrant family from Mexico.

I sympathized with my mom's perspective— although it left me feeling guilty that my problems were not as severe as hers, and that she never got mental health support. I also understood why she was hesitant about mental health services. It was not simple conveying to her the true meaning of therapy and why I felt I needed support for my mental health. It put me in an unfamiliar vulnerable position, but I knew there was a need for this conversation to take place. I expressed that seeking mental health services demonstrates one's strength as they communicate their need for help. Therapy takes a deeper look into examining the mental health challenges an individual faces, validates one's emotions, and assists in understanding their feelings to actively work towards resolving their concerns. After discussing with my mom, although still uncertain, she agreed she would try contacting my doctor to look into connecting me with a therapist.

My first therapy appointment was in May of 2021.

On that first day, I learned through my streams of tears how conditioned I was to present on the outside that I was emotionally okay. As I reflect back, I recognize that it partially derives from the Latinx culture that strives to present a strong image of one's self without any "weaknesses."

Our community is extremely hard-working and empowering. I admire each person who strives to uphold the strength we embrace, but I also realize it creates an unrealistic standard that prioritizes the satisfaction of the outside image and neglects the internal need. It is understandable why some Latinos consider taking a break from work and tasks or seeking assistance as being "lazy" or "sensitive." However, resting and reaching for help are healthy and needed.

The negative views of mental health have to be redirected for the generational mold to break. Change begins when we voice our perspectives on an issue or challenge we see in our community. To break this cycle of stigmas specifically in the Latinx community, it is crucial for both sides to understand and have empathy for one another. The first step can be an open conversation about what mental health is. Although it is not easy to initiate a discussion, it shifts the topic of mental health from "taboo" to routine.

The practice of speaking about mental health and wellness—as I have seen with my mom as she has become more open to therapy—helps in ending a repeated cycle of stigmas and creating a new generational cycle that prioritizes mental health and acknowledges it is normal to seek help.





Photo provide by yli photo bank

Gender Roles in the Modern Age

Rayyan Zein they/them

As a gender-queer non-conforming individual, I frequently experience backlash for my identity and how I choose to dress. I regularly hear hurtful comments being directed toward me. Public spaces now feel like minefields. Insults, slurs, and even objects have been thrown at me simply for wearing a dress.

We often suppress individuality in our community, whether it be through stating who may and may not wear makeup, or our restrictive gender roles, so people find themselves trapped within a certain set of rules just to appease societal norms. As a result of the harassment and misogyny that I have faced, my confidence has been lowered, and self-image violated.



Photo provide by Adobe Stock

It's likely that you've seen gender stereotypes everywhere you go. The notion of sexism, or discrimination based on gender, might also have been brought to your attention or experienced by you. The issue of sexism is prominent even within workplaces, as stated in an article published by Pew Research Center: "About four-in-ten working women (42%) in the United States say they have faced discrimination on the job because of their gender." People of all genders and gender identities can feel valued and equal by challenging stereotypes. But before we do that, what are gender roles?

A person's gender role is defined as how he or she acts, speaks, dresses, grooms, and conducts himself or herself based on the sex to which he or she is assigned. In general, girls and women are expected to dress in feminine nature, be accommodating, and nurture one another. Strength, aggression, and boldness are generally associated with men.

Samantha Toledo, who is a student at Fresno City College, often thinks of gender roles as the following; "Um, I always think of the oldest gender roles, you know, the fifties, like women stay home and cook and men go to work. I think of those basic ones." These stereotypes can be seen just about anywhere, and they are strongly encouraged by the media that we consume.

An article published by Harvard focuses "on the media's role and fixation on 'retro' gender stereotypes by routinely publishing stories about women choosing to be stay-at-home mothers or overemphasizing the notion that working women climb the corporate ladder only to jump off it into motherhood." The stereotyping of male and female roles and characteristics does not end there, however, as even objects are feminized or masculinized.

An article from Stanford University states that "Studies have shown that people apply gender to toys, numbers, colors, and even shapes (for example, squares are viewed as more masculine than circles). Gendered assumptions even seep into other social categories like race: "Research suggests that people see African Americans as more masculine and Asians as more feminine." The harm caused by extreme gender stereotypes is that they prevent people from expressing themselves and their feelings fully. The idea that masculine people can't cry or express sensitive emotions, for instance, is harmful to them. Moreover, feeling that they can't be independent, or assertive is harmful to feminine people. Everyone can be their best selves when gender stereotypes are broken down.

So... how exactly can we combat gender stereotypes? Well, the answer is not as complicated as it may seem. First and foremost, you should be a positive role model to your friends and family members. No matter what gender someone identifies themselves as, respect them. Provide a safe and accepting environment where people can express themselves without being constrained by gender stereotypes. Another incredible way to combat gender stereotypes is by pointing out things that encourage gender stereotypes. This can be advertisements, videos, movies, books, music, or even the way people behave. Any type of media can encourage gender stereotypes, so it is important to identify them and point them out.

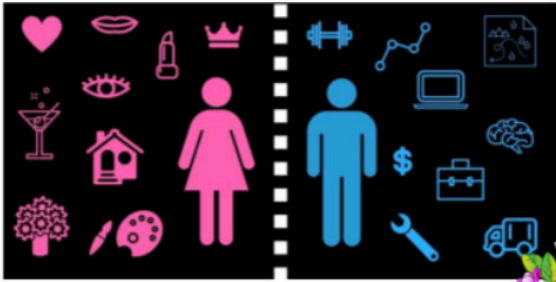
If you feel like it is safe for you to do so, speak up when someone around you is saying something that promotes gender stereotypes and may be sexist and/or misogynistic. That way, you will show the person that what they had said was not acceptable and that their behavior must change. Lastly, and again this will depend on how comfortable you are, you can defy gender roles and stereotypes by doing things that people who identify as your gender are normally not expected to do. This can be a multitude of things. My personal favorite way of combating gender stereotypes is by wearing a cute skirt with my outfit, despite not being a woman. By doing so, I am demonstrating to others that it is ok to dress how you want. Your body should be respected, and that starts with you allowing yourself to wear what you would like to wear.

MIND THE GAP

This magazine was created based on the designs created by the authors of the publication.

— Jarrett M. Ramones
Designer & Facilitator

Personal Narrative Title



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Background color: white
Spacing: 1, if enough space than 1.5

Rayyan Zein

They/Them
Central Valley

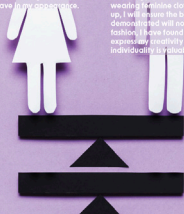
**A FASHION STATEMENT:
FIGHTING RESTRICTIVE GENDER NORMS**
RAYYAN ZEIN 007/008

Expressing creativity had always been a difficult task for me. Although having a surplus of imagination, I was lost on how to apply my creative thinking to a productive way. It felt as though my mind was an unopened book, desperate for freedom. However, through my fashion, I have found one of the greatest ways to express myself.

Although regularly receiving gender looks from others, I take great pride in my appearance. The most important thing to me is my jewelry. I dress in excessive amounts of chains, rings, earrings, and bracelets. These accessories often hold meaning, such as a ring passed down to me belonging to my great-grandmother, which is the primary inspiration for my fashion. In addition to my jewelry, I find pleasure in wearing makeup. Although I am not very talented at it, applying makeup on simple or blank or anyone significantly boosts the confidence I have in myself.

Since I do not fit the societal standard on how people should appear, I frequently experience backlash. I regularly hear harmful comments being directed towards me. Entering public spaces become a source of anxiety, as I have had objects thrown at me simply for wearing a dress. We often suppress individuality in our community, whether it'd be through shaming who may and may not wear makeup, or our restrictive gender roles.

My great-grandmother was committed to fighting this. Despite living in the 1930s, she opposed society's standards by publicly wearing a black and white suit, closely decorated with a simple bow tie. Although disrespected, she lived behind a strong legacy. A legacy that tells of our differences should be appreciated, not feared. Every day I strive to challenge my community's framework of constructing the midgender in our society. Whether it'd be by wearing a dress and bag or applying makeup, I will express the legacy and courage she demonstrated with her life. Through my fashion, I have found an impactful way to express my presence, while showing others that individuality is possible.



06

Adamari Cota

She/Her
Eastern Coachella Valley

Adamari Cota she/her

Growing up I've always been that girl who was in a bubble. Not your original bubble that's in a thin sphere of colorful liquid surrounding the bubble. My bubble was gloomy, dark, and rejected by myself and others. I've always wondered why. Why is my bubble like this? Can I just be happy? I wanted to change this dark color that would follow me everywhere, colors such as yellow, pink, and green.

I wanted the rainbow of happiness around me. I started to change my color one day at a time. I remember it being a difficult process, but I got the hang of it. I started to change in school, made many friends, and finally became the person I looked up to. I wanted to share this new person to the world. I started to communicate with me. They would describe me as the color pink. It represents who I am based on my characteristics. I'm happy most of the time, I'm very bubbly, and sensitive. I'm very different from the person I used to be.

Being able to take these steps was a success but with many challenges. There are a number of practical issues that made it hard to get mental health care. The main one was availability. As not all insurance covers mental health, it was difficult for me as a lower-income person to access help.

During the time that I was seeking aid, the worries started rising.

Can I receive help today and be able to get it again next week? Thoughts like this followed me through my journey. No one should feel these types of emotions while trying to get assistance, especially for our own health.

Not only this but usually mental health issues are left without any support and ignored, making it difficult for us to shed our dejected bubble.

I was thinking about this time of my life and I reflected on it by making a poem:

"You always wanted to be a red rose / The red rose / That everyone sees and admires / The rose that lives to share / In the red rose that's being misread."

This poem is meaningful because not only does it reflect the person I used to be but it's also a reminder to me that it's never too late to have life changes. These changes could lead to the person you are today and could help you become a wonderful person in the future. The steps I've taken helped me decide who I am and what I want for this world to know about me.

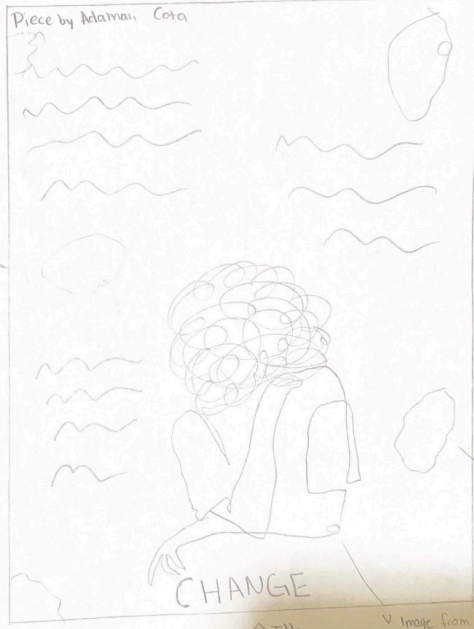


CHANGE

Color scheme
Blue and light blue

Bubble drawing

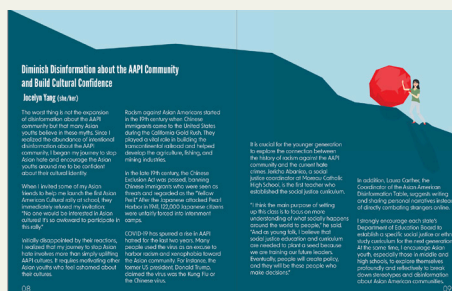
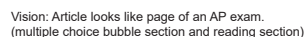
Piece by Adamari Cota



CHANGE

↑ Title

Image from bubble (used in my poem)



Adamari Cota**How a Non Profit Organization May Save Your Life**
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Jocelyn Yang**Diminish Disinformation about the AAPI Community and Build Cultural Confidence**
Page 8

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Clarissa Wing**Breaking the Stigmas of Mental Health in the Latinx Community**
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Suicide and Crisis lifeline:
Text or call the number 988

Crisis text line:
Text the number 741741 for free 24/7 support

Free online chat or text therapy from BetterHelp: <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/therapy/get-free-online-therapy-should-you-use-free-counseling/>

Free to low-cost mental health services at allcove: <https://allcove.org/>



