

BAY AREA YOUTH ACTIVISTS SEE POLITICAL DISPARITIES BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Posted on March 13, 2023 by OAKLAND POST



Outside of a Seafood City Supermarket in Milpitas, a crowd of young Filipino-Americans gathered last weekend to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) revolution, a march conducted to end the dictatorship of then-President Ferdinand Marcos. The commemoration last Sunday was organized by the South Bay chapter of Malaya Movement, a national grassroots organization focused on fighting for human rights and democracy in the Philippines. The post Bay Area Youth Activists See Political Disparities Between Generations first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Mark Allen Cu
Bay City News

Outside of a Seafood City Supermarket in Milpitas, a crowd of young Filipino-Americans gathered last weekend to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) revolution, a march conducted to end the dictatorship of then-President Ferdinand Marcos.

The commemoration last Sunday was organized by the South Bay chapter of Malaya Movement, a national grassroots organization focused on fighting for human rights and democracy in the Philippines.

Justher Gutierrez, a local coordinator for Malaya South Bay, enjoyed marching around the plaza in Milpitas and sharing concerns about the potential return of another Marcos dictatorship through the election last year of Marcos' son, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., commonly known as Bongbong Marcos.

Especially after the controversial rule of former President Rodrigo Duterte, which was under scrutiny by the United Nations Human Rights Council for alleged extrajudicial killings, some Filipinos are concerned that Marcos Jr. will continue to limit democracy just as they say Duterte did.

"We were there to recognize the painful history that was caused by the Marcoses," said Gutierrez.

However, not every Filipino-American present at the commemoration was there to support Malaya's

mission.

"There was this family that stopped and they were like, 'What are you doing? You don't even know who Marcos is or lived during his time,'" said Gutierrez.

Gutierrez handled the situation by handing a flyer to them arguing that the Marcos regime has manipulated the media and online discourse to make a name for himself. The family left angry and unconvinced.

"We have reached a point where there's two different realities," said Gutierrez about the differing political sentiment amongst Filipino-Americans.

In her experience, generational lines have separated the more politically active and human rights-oriented youth and older Filipino-Americans she says are less supportive of activism that is critical of the Filipino government.

The Filipino-American community in the Bay Area continues to have robust activism and political engagement. However, anti-imperial and decolonial activists like Gutierrez continue to see the generational difference in political sentiment as an obstacle in organizing members of the Filipino diaspora to discuss the Philippines' most pressing issues.

Bay Area activist groups have condemned Duterte's presidency, accusing it of human rights violations such as the "war on drugs," which the advocacy non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch says allowed for thousands of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement.

Many of these groups are demanding more freedom of speech for those critical of the government, with most censorship being the result of the Philippines' Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.

Most recently, Filipino-American activist groups such as Anakbayan Daly City have criticized the recent expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines.

Despite many of these activist organizations being led by Filipino-American youth, Kayla Soriano, a member of Anakbayan Daly City, struggles with getting Filipino students on college campuses to organize and act.

"I think that it's always been an ongoing challenge to find out how we can relate to Fil-Ams who are not particularly interested in these issues," said Soriano, using the shorthand for Filipino-Americans.

However, in Soriano's experience, educating Filipino-American college students about these political issues has prompted more of them to act.

"We've gotten them to engage with typhoon relief and even got some of them to come to our protests," said Soriano.

Still, Soriano finds it difficult to reach across the generational gap, saying there is a higher concentration of "diehard" Marcos and Duterte supporters amongst older Filipinos that makes it

difficult to educate them about the issues of their respective regimes.

Activist groups are not the only organizations witnessing this political disparity within the Filipino-American community. The nonprofit L.E.A.D Filipino was created to promote civic engagement, health equity and education amongst the Filipino community in the Bay Area.

Angelica Cortez, founder and executive director of L.E.A.D. Filipino, says having conversations about social justice is embraced in her organization, even if they may agitate some members of the community.

Cortez recounted times where community members have disagreed on and argued about topics such as colorism and Duterte's policies on drug-related crime. When witnessing this disparity, she tries to encourage critical thinking and mutual understanding.

"As a nonprofit, we are not allowed to be political. However, we always encourage our community members to be critical and to value equality and justice," Cortez said.

Through L.E.A.D. Filipino, Cortez organizes workshops and seminars to educate Bay Area Filipinos about the importance of civic literacy and engagement.

When talking about the youth activists within her organization, Cortez emphasized the privileges and protections afforded by American citizenship.

"You can go to a march and then go get boba with your friends after. It's not the same in the Philippines," Cortez said.

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EDITORS PLEASE NOTE: Image(s) related to this story can be obtained from the following Bay City News Service web link(s):

<https://www.baycitynews.com/images/BCN-20230304-FILIPINOACTIVISM-01.jpg>

Member organizations of Bayan USA and Anakbayan USA mobilized to the Philippine Consulate General in San Francisco, on February 6, 2023. (Glenn Mercado via Bay City News)

</www/bcn/general/03/newsclip.23.03.05.05.58.01.1.txt>

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