
FILIPINO ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE (FAJ)

A MENTAL HEALTH REPORT ~ KUMUSTA TAYONG LAHAT 2021

Acknowledgements:

Common Counsel Foundation Funds for An Inclusive California_(F4ICA) and Filipino Mental Health Initiative of Alameda County. On behalf of FAJ, this report is dedicated to those who are impacted by loss and their loved ones.

The FAJ Mental Health Report Team

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic poses a threat to the Filipino community's mental health-seeking behaviors. This report examines three surveys completed in 2021 surrounding themes of loss/grief, Filipino/a/x mental health, wellness, and strategies on destigmatizing mental health challenges in Filipino communities. Results of this study influenced the development of a digital mental health resource directory providing access to mental health services for Filipinos in Northern California.

Keywords: promote mental health, Filipinos, community wellness, Covid-19 pandemic, loss, grief, healing, digital mental health map, FAJ Healing Advisory Committee, *Ginhawa*, TAG: *Tulong* = Triage, *Alalay* = Assist, *Gabay* = Guide, *bùgsay (paddle) up!*

Executive Summary

In 2021, Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ) conducted three different surveys related to mental health targeting three populations: 1) Filipino residents in Alameda County, California, 2) Mental Health Providers with some self-identifying as Filipinos or serving Filipinos, and 3) FAJ staff and student interns as key informants. In this report, FAJ contextualizes mental health issues surrounding grief and loss experienced during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the enduring history of colonialism, racism, and the increasing emergence of anti-Asian and Pacific Islander violent hate crimes affecting Filipinos today.

Findings from FAJ's Mental Health Report in 2021 illustrate the severe impacts of mental health, grief, and loss experienced by a Filipino community in Alameda County. Notably, **96.7% of participants responded that they had experienced emotional stress; 7 out of 10 participants had experienced significant loss** in the past year. The top three reasons participants stated that they did not seek help were: 1) *"I don't think I need help,"* 2) *"I feel ashamed to ask for help,"* and 3) *"I don't know where to go for help."* Participants reported **communal, non-medical activities as the most desirable activities to support wellness**. However, a third of participants still reported interest in seeking medical referrals for mental

health. Recurring themes from key informant responses echoed **the importance of developing a sense of community, enhanced mental health care navigation, increased awareness of decolonization and indigenous practices, and solidarity among BIPOC groups.** Survey results from Mental Health Providers led to the development of **FAJ's 1st interactive online provider map** and a brief video tutorial for Filipinos seeking culturally and linguistically sensitive mental healthcare. The map is accessible on FAJ's website, <https://filipinos4justice.org/>, or a direct link via <http://filipinos4justice.org/mental-health-resources/>. In addition, **FAJ's Healing Advisory Committee 2021** was piloted in the Fall of 2021 through Summer 2022 to concentrate on promoting wellness strategies for FAJ's diverse staff of Filipino/a/x, mixed Filipino/a/x and non-Filipinos.

Recommendations of this report suggest further exploration and standardization of culturally relevant approaches led by and with Filipino/a/x mental health professionals, including *Bùgsay, A Healing Journey towards the Horizon Ginhawa* framework for community healing and resilience, and the *Tulong, Alalay at Gabay (TAG)* mental health crisis intervention tool. FAJ's goal to achieve solidarity with other BIPOC groups and disabled Filipinos/as/x will be met by actively including the perspectives and experiences of multi-racial/multi-ethnic Filipinos/as/x and disabled Filipinos/as/x in our discussions of mental health. For more information, read FAJ's 5-year Strategic Planning documentation.

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Purpose & Background

With continued recognition of the importance of mental health awareness and to further advocate for more culturally relevant services for the Filipino community, Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ) and Filipino Mental Health Initiative-Alameda County's (FMHI-AC) partnership expanded to gather more information about the needs of Filipinos in Alameda County in Northern California. FAJ proposed a mental health project aimed at improving the Filipino community's mental health-seeking behaviors through a focus on empowerment and stigma reduction. FAJ's approach is grounded on a belief that the historical trauma experienced as a colonized people and the marginalization experienced as an immigrant population fosters isolation, insecurity, and a lack of confidence in Western approaches to health and mental health. This is further complicated by a shortage of culturally sensitive service providers knowledgeable about the Filipino community's barriers to wellness or the traditional approaches to healing some Filipinos fall back on in times of crisis.

In the summer of 2020, FMHI-AC conducted an informal community-based online survey that asked Filipinos about their emotional stress and factors that would help enhance their wellness during amidst the height of Covid-19's initial Shelter in Place which was made more complicated by the anti-AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) violence.¹ FMHI-AC's hope is

¹ Saw, A. Yellow Horse, A. J., Jeung, R. (2021). Stop AAPI Hate Mental Health Report. Retrieved from Stop AAPI Hate website: <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Stop-AAPI-Hate-Mental-Health-Report-210527.pdf>

to hear directly from the community in order to gain a deeper understanding and awareness of Filipinos' emotional wellness needs and how Filipino culture and values shape their thoughts and actions when seeking support. In 2021, a team was formed that included two FAJ staff, student interns and FAJ's first Public Health Consultant. The goals included: 1) how to destigmatize mental health challenges in Filipino communities and 2) to create a digital mental health resource directory promoting access to available mental health services for Filipinos in Northern California.

Many people experienced grief during the Covid-19 pandemic. Grief is a normal response to a loss during or after traumatic events such as a disaster, the death of a loved one, adverse changes in lifestyle, and unemployment. Common grief reactions according to the CDC include anxiety, distress, anger, periods of sadness, shock, disbelief, denial, loss of sleep, and loss of appetite². The Covid-19 pandemic caused ecological grief resulting in social isolation, losses of loved ones, tourism, and togetherness. Given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, FAJ's F4ICA 2021 team duplicated the 2020 survey and added two more questions specifically on a difficult topic of Loss and Grief, to capture a glimpse experienced by Filipinos in Alameda County a year after the Covid-19 pandemic.

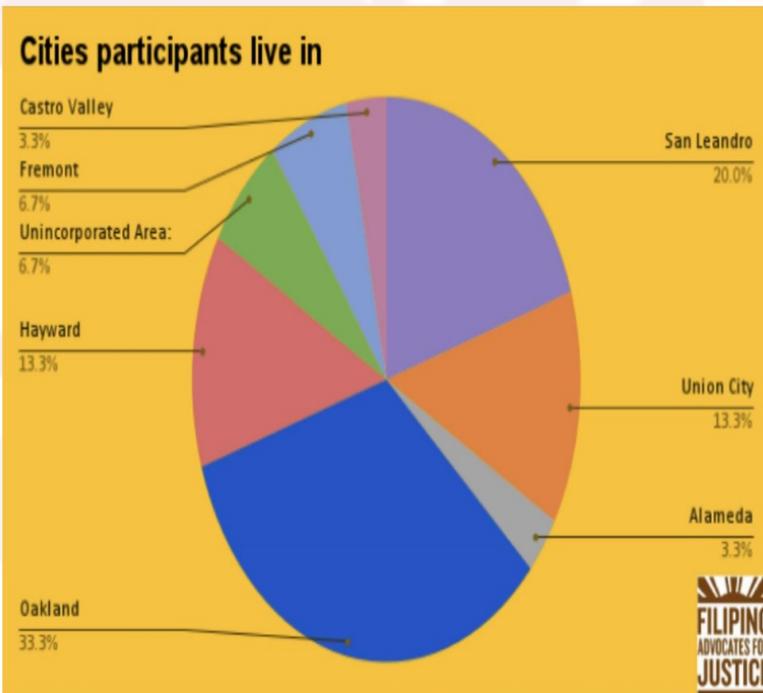
² Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/grief-loss/index.html>

Demographics

At 1.5 million, Filipinos are the largest Asian group in California. The Bay Area is home to 500,000 Filipinos, the 2nd largest Asian American sub-group in California. Nearly 100,000 Filipinos live in Alameda County (88,349 in Alameda County as of 2015, around 6% of the County's total population) with the

majority living in Central and South County in cities including Hayward (16,882), Union City (14,516), Fremont (14,743), and San Leandro (8,286).

Approximately 55,000 are Tagalog speakers in Alameda County where

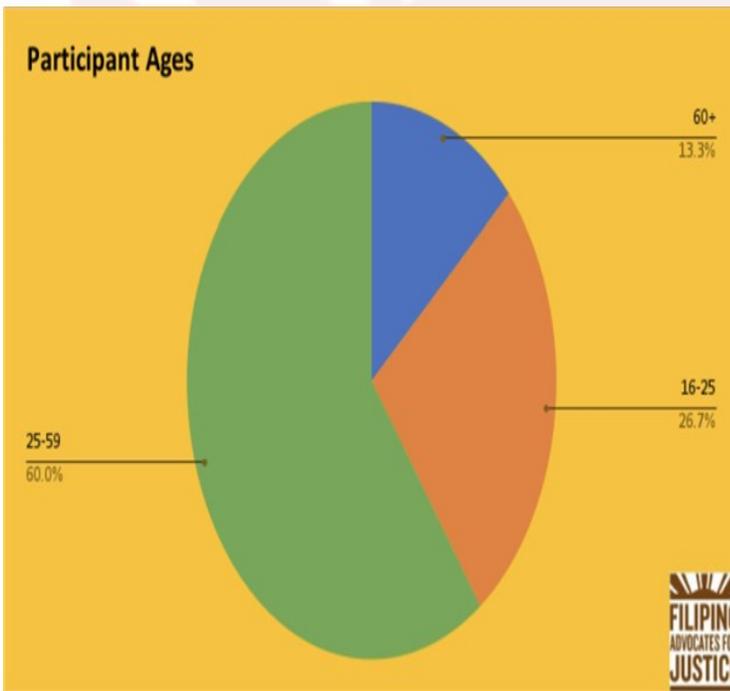


Tagalog is a threshold language. Union City has the highest percentage of households of Tagalog speakers (14.5%), followed by Newark (8.8%), Hayward (7.4%).³ From FAJ's website⁴, more than 50% of Filipinos immigrating to the USA daily arrive in California; 3,800 Filipinos are DACA recipients; Filipinos represent 20% of registered voters residing in Union City.

³ Source: [Statistical Atlas](#)

⁴ Source: <http://filipinos4justice.org/>

In an article published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* (2020)⁵ as possibly the first systematic review through an appraisal of 15 narrative studies in 7 countries about psychological help-seeking among Filipinos including its barriers and facilitators, Martinez et. al reports that mental illness is the third most common disability in the Philippines with ~6 million Filipinos estimated to live with depression and/or anxiety, making the Philippines the country



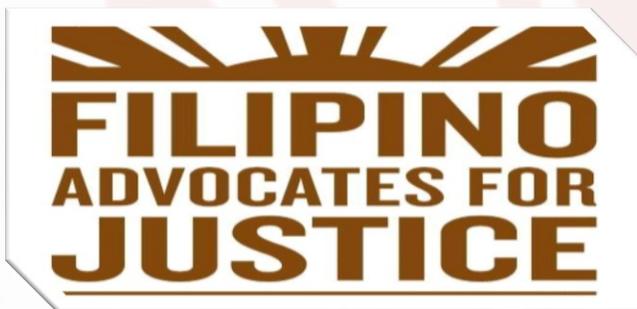
with the third-highest rate of mental health problems in the Western Pacific Region. Furthermore, Martinez et. al cite that 12% of Filipinos living in the US suffer from psychological distress, higher than the US prevalence rate of depression and anxiety.

Results of this study included that low utilization of mental health services among Filipinos regardless of their locations, with mental health stigma as the primary barrier, while resilience and self-reliance as coping strategies were cited in qualitative studies. Social support and problem severity were found as prominent facilitators.

⁵ Retrieved on Page 1 from *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 55, 1397-1413. doi: 10.1007/s00127-020-01937-2

Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ)

“Honor Your Wellness.” ~ Christopher Cara, 2021



Since 1973, Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ) has served Filipinos and other immigrants in the East Bay providing immigrant integration services, leadership

development, and advocacy for the most vulnerable in our community: youth, new immigrants, and low wage workers. FAJ’s mission is to build a strong and empowered Filipino community by organizing our base, developing leaders, providing services, and advocating for policies that promote equity and social/economic justice FAJ is the only Filipino non-profit in the East Bay Area rooted in its unique blend of community organizing and its healing integrated approach: a social movement that may lead to healing others, community participation, and healing communities by themselves. At the time of this report, FAJ has one licensed mental health provider employed despite the growth of the organization and its staff and the growing numbers of Filipino residents in the area. On behalf of the 2021-2022 FAJ Mental Health Report Team, it has been a great honor to work on this important yet challenging project as initial steps in tackling the complexities of Filipino/a/x’s mental wellness. *Bùgsay Up! Mabuhay FAJ. Mabuhay tayong lahat. Isang Bagsak!*⁶

⁶ *Isang Bagsak* (one down) is adopted from a ritual used by Anti-Martial Law activists in the Philippines. To show unity, *Isang Bagsak* was powerfully proclaimed by a member of the movement and in unison the

2021 Methods and Eligibility Criteria

Survey #1: Mental Health Survey

The target audience was Filipino/Filipino/a/x American residents above 18 years old in Alameda County. From July 2021 to September 2021, an anonymous online survey was promoted on social media via personal and professional networks during the Summer of 2021 (a year after the 2020 initial survey was initiated during the first year of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the beginning of Shelter in Place in Alameda County). Initial survey questions were duplicated from the 2020 survey which was intentionally written to be brief and anonymous. The survey referred to emotional distress and how culture and values shape access and engagement with mental health services. The survey utilized non-stigmatizing language and appealed to a broad audience including age range, immigration status, etc. For example, instead of using the term, “mental health problems,” “emotional stresses” were used. Likewise, “support” and “help” were used instead of “program” or “services.” Two questions were added specifically regarding Loss/Grief via emailed consultation with Joanne La Torre, MSW, LCSW, PhD Candidate, an active core member of Center for Babaylan Studies (CFBS)⁷, and personal communications with Filipina-American Clinical Psychologist, Jeannie Celestial, PhD.

community would make a loud sound either by clapping or stomping. Started by Arnelson Concordia, a teacher-activist-scholar, *Isang Bagsak* was combined with the Unity Clap, which some have attributed to the Farm Workers Movement. Source from PEP’s Tatlong Bagsak Curriculum Folder.

⁷ Retrieved on 1/20/22 <https://www.centerforbabaylanstudies.org/joanna-la-torre>

Survey #2: Mental Health Professionals

The target audience were Filipino/a/x Mental Health Professionals surveyed via social media groups of Filipino Mental Health Professionals and emails. The goal was to create a virtual map and database of Filipino/a/x mental health providers as well as a resource of accessible providers in Alameda County. The following information were requested: name, credentials, practice, National Provider Identifier (NPI), address, website, telehealth, sliding scale, insurance accepted, specialties, gender, sexuality, age group served, language(s) spoken, and types of therapy provided. FAJ staff initially pitched a proposal to Sean Martinez, a volunteer with technological expertise, regarding digital online presence, strategies to help provide accessible online mental health support, and information to the Filipino community and to advocate for more mental health resources.

Survey #3: FAJ speaks on *Ginhawa* (Wellness)

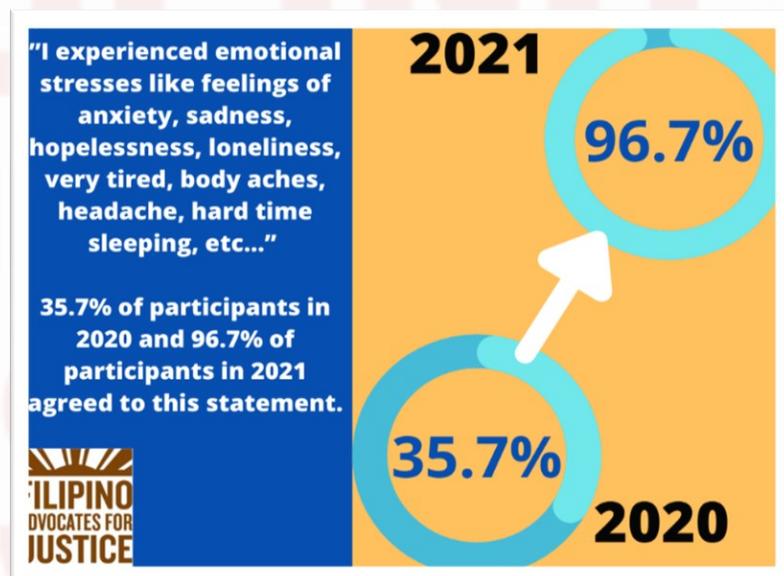
The target audience was the FAJ community as key informants including its advisors, staff, and student interns. Data were collected anonymously via a 4-question survey on *Ginhawa* (Wellness) in their own words by FAJ community members who serve the Filipino residents in their communities.

Review of 3 Survey Results

2020 vs 2021 Mental Health Survey Comparison

Compared to 2020, when only 35.7% of participants stated that they had “Experienced emotional stresses like feelings of anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, very tired, body aches, headache, hard time sleeping, etc.” in the past month, 96.7% of participants in 2021 agreed to this statement. Despite the stark increase in participants who experienced these stresses, the percentages of participants who stated that they seek help or support for these stresses barely increased: 58.5% said yes in 2020, compared to 60% in 2021. The follow-up responses

from participants to this question as to why they don’t seek help were also different between the two years: only 33.4% of participants in 2020 said they thought they didn’t need help or support compared to 50% of participants in 2021.



While the percentage of participants who reported experiencing stressors increased, the percentage of participants who also thought they didn’t necessarily need help or support increased. However, the number of participants who expressed any degree of interest in

potentially seeking support under different circumstances based on their answer to *“If you knew there was support in the community that understood your Filipino culture and values, would you be more likely to seek help?”* increased somewhat, suggesting an increased openness to seeking help. While the percentage of participants who said yes to this question remained largely unchanged (61.8% in 2020, 60% in 2021), 36.66% said maybe and only 3.33% said no in 2021, compared to the 24.1% who said maybe and 13.8% who said ‘No’ in 2020.

Participants who identified with a non-heterosexual sexuality were more likely to cite thinking that not trusting others or thinking that no one would understand them as a reason for not seeking help (44.44% of LGBT+ individuals vs 23.81%

What activities would you participate in for your wellness?

2020

- 1) Having someone visit me at home who understands my culture.
- 2) Joining a group with others experiencing same stress.
- 3) Getting a referral from doctor.

2021

- 1) Attending a community event with all ages invited.
- 2) Joining a group that does cultural activities together.
- 3) Joining a group with others experiencing same stress.
- 4) Getting a referral from doctor.

heterosexual individuals). One participant who identified as a bisexual woman entered her own answer and said that she was estranged from her family and did not want to be shamed. The greater reluctance of LGBT+ participants to seek out help for their emotional stresses and mental health

mirrors the health disparities members of the LGBT+ community in general experience partially due to social stigma (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion).

In 2021, communal, non-medical activities were reported as the most desirable activities to support wellness, with the top two answers to *“What types of activities would you participate in support of your wellness?”* being *“Attending a community event with all ages invited”* (73.33%) and *“Joining a group that does cultural activities together”* (63.33%). 53.33% of participants were interested in *“Joining a group with others experiencing the same emotional stresses”*, 33.33% of participants expressed interest in *“Getting a referral from a doctor and help following up with those*

referrals”, and 20% of participants answered *“Having someone visit me who understands my culture.”* The results to this question as well as the recurring theme of loss of relationships and social isolation in participant responses

what grief and loss services/resources would FAJ staff like to have available for themselves, clients, and communities served?

- bereavement support groups
- larger community services/memorials for the lost
- help insured clients navigate their healthcare plans and assert themselves when requesting care
- knowledge to refer people to professional help (therapy, financial resources, funeral services, etc.)
- grief support
- workshops and spaces to process grieving during a pandemic
- physical health practices alongside mental health practices to help release trauma in the body
- increased targeted outreach for existing services



to the kinds of loss they have experienced suggest that the collective aspect is a major draw to certain wellness activities.

From the 2021 Survey 1, 70% responded with a ‘Yes’ to the question: “Have you experienced significant loss in the past year?” While isolation and a loss of community or relationships were themes shared by participants in every age group, the difference between the responses of participants aged 60+ and the younger participants suggests that the most effective methods of building community and showing support may vary by stage of life. Participants in the 60+ age category were more likely to be interested in having community members visit their homes, with 50% of them citing this as a desirable activity compared to only 15.38% of participants under 60. While still a non-medical, interpersonal activity, home visits are more intimate than the other wellness activities and don’t require the mobility or transportation that larger community events do.

Survey 2021 #3: FAJ speaks on *Ginhawa* (Wellness)

As key informants, FAJ leaders, staff, interns, and advisors responded with their thoughts on *Ginhawa*, simplified as Wellness (see Discussion section). Themes of collective support and betterment, as well as pandemic-specific support methods surrounding coping, openness, accessibility for mental health discussions and services were identified in participant responses to the FAJ Speaks *Ginhawa* (Wellness) 2021 Survey. These themes overlapped and interacted with each other in responses, particularly acknowledging the difficulty of creating a sense of community due to the pandemic. The need to develop a sense of community is attributed to improving individual mental health and the community's mental health as a whole. Potential

solutions brought up by participants included assistance navigating the healthcare system for health concerns both physical and mental/emotional and regular spaces and meetings for a variety of community needs, including general socialization and connection, grief support, and sharing strategies for healing and coping. Participants highlighted decolonization, centering indigenous practices, and forming solidarity with other BIPOC groups as part of these solutions. See two images below on how FAJ responded to play as nourishment.

Maglaro tayo. Play as nourishment.
Fill in the blanks in your own way
with your poetic voice in any
language: "We are FAJ. Together
_____ . The gifts we share
_____ . Our
dreams/song/dance _____ .
Mabuhay."

We are FAJ. Together we stand, we laugh, we cry and we live. The gifts we share plant seeds and bear fruit for our community and all BIPOC. Mabuhay.

"We are FAJ. Together we build each other up, help those who are in need, and learn from one another. The gifts we share are rooted in compassion, our collective power, and hopes and dreams of the world we yearn to live in. Our dreams/song/dance sustain us to be prepared to build for the long haul as we're called. Mabuhay."



continued...

We are FAJ. Together endlessly serving our community. The gifts we share are priceless and appreciated by many. Our dreams/song/dance are being offered to our community. Mabuhay.

We are FAJ. Together we are strong, take care of ourselves and each other, and build each other up. the gifts we share is connection to shared vision for liberation. Mabuhay.

We Rise.
Fulfill us all.
Live on.



Discussion

Practice, Service Delivery and Policy Implications

Limitations of Findings:

Limitations of this report include the gap in survey implementation. The initial 2020 survey was conducted during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic amidst the challenges of the beginning of Shelter in Place policies set for Alameda County. There were three online responses that were taken out as their demographics did not match the Alameda County requirement (but they were from neighboring counties). The 2021 survey was conducted virtually a year after the Covid-19 pandemic with a new team, which consisted of new post-pandemic hires, with challenging pandemic restrictions such as transitioning to make-shift home-‘offices’ without disability accommodations at home and no access to office material and supplies nor printing materials. Zoom burnouts became a new phenomenon. Another limitation was the potential risk of sampling bias due to the online administration of these surveys. Further analysis of data collected by a culturally trauma informed expert that consist of a wide breadth of indigenous islander people’s knowledge base and a more extensive psycho-analysis with Filipino-a-x-in-the-Diaspora perspectives is highly recommended.

Expanding on Culturally Specific Mental Health and Healing Approaches

A. **Ginhawa**

Kumusta Tayong Lahat which signifies *Hello, how are we all (you and I, all of us)* became part of the title of this report to infuse healing through the sounds of our native tongue-speak. *Kumusta Tayong Lahat* is Pilipino (Tagalog), the official language in the Philippines although it is only one of the many languages spoken by the diverse islander populations. *Kumusta Tayong Lahat* also encapsulate the principles of *Ginhawa*⁸:

“Ginhawa, as a concept about wellness and wellbeing, intersects with and connects to the conceptualization of Filipino personhood in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*/Filipino psychology. Ginhawa is always embedded in culture and community. Ginhawa is manifest in the body’s vitality (*sigla*), ease in dealing with life (*gaan*), life potency (*ana*), joy (*ligaya*).... Ginhawa — Borders on harmony, not just wellness (which is usually in individualistic terms), but Ginhawa is relational...as in Kapwa. Therefore, Ginhawa is a quality of survival. Ginhawa is not an external intervention that is invasive. It is community resilience. It emerges or surfaces through facilitation

⁸ *Ginhawa*, as explained by Professor Leny Strobel, co-founder/former director/Elder of Center for Babaylan Studies (CFBS). Retrieved on 5/9/22 via <https://lenystrobel.medium.com/ginhawa-breath-wholeness-and-wellness-in-the-filipino%C2%B9-and-filipino-american-experience-e4346b2164f8>

from external intervention, e.g., mental health providers. This is part of the vital support system of communities that renders those affected by typhoons as survivors rather than victims.... the concepts of *Malasakit* / deep concern, *Loob* (inner self), *Kalikasan* (nature), *Kabuuan ng pagkatao* (wholeness) — are all aspects of *Ginhawa*...”

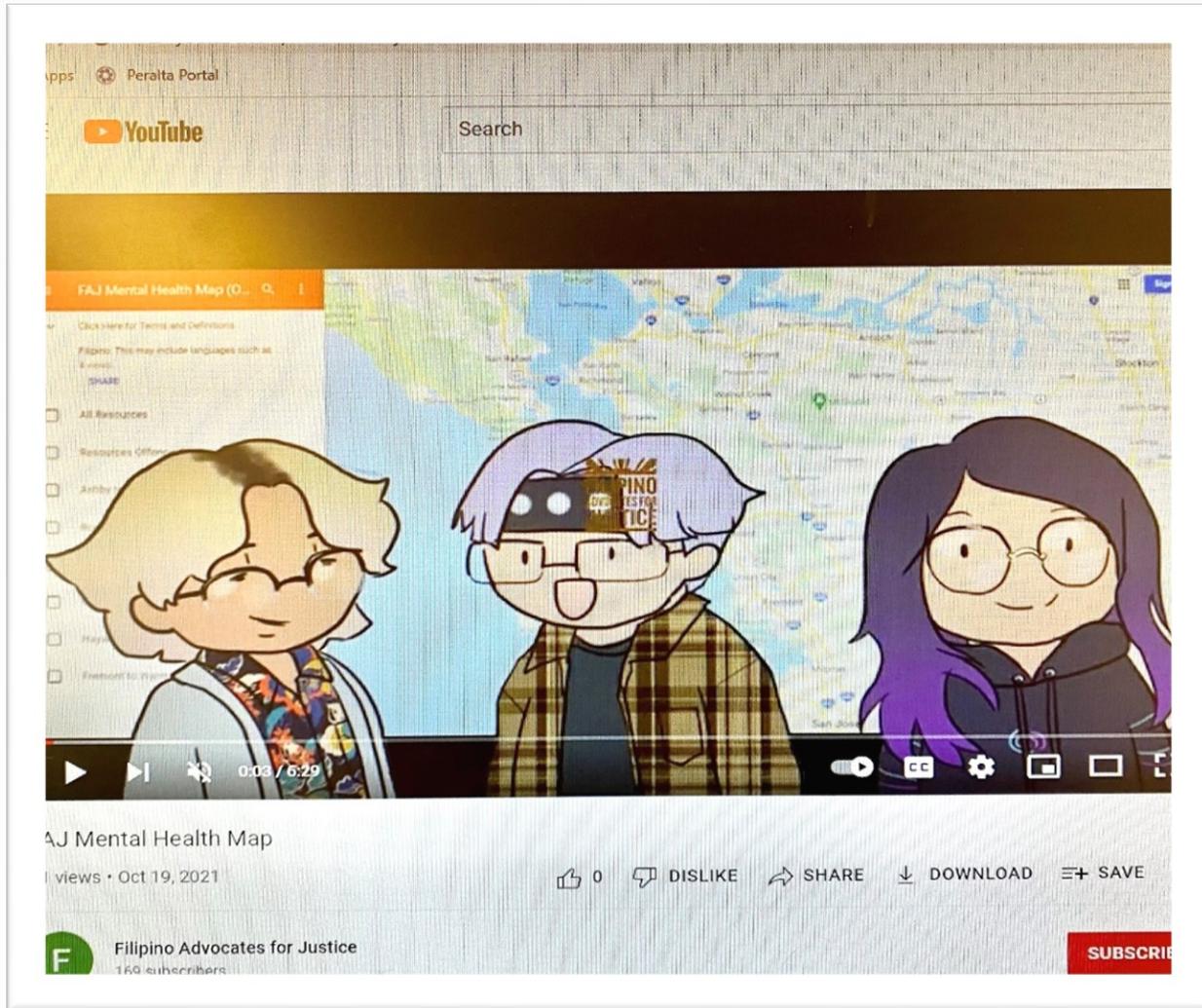
Amidst continued AAPI hate crimes, *Ginhawa* resembles a form of “shared breath” and community resilience. In times of great distress, global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic affect our *ginhawa* by reducing our ability to breathe as individuals and as a collective. While there are still many uncertainties and many unknowns as the whole world approaches the 3rd year of the current global pandemic, it is worthy to consider *Ginhawa* as a framework for culturally appropriate approaches for FAJ and Filipino/a/x communities. Rooted in community healing, CFBS touches on the elements of *ginhawa* involving physical health (earth), mental health (air), spiritual health, (water), and relational health (fire). These elements of care may be incorporated in existing FAJ programs and events to alleviate social isolation, cope with feelings of grief, deepen the sense of community, and connect individuals to remembering Filipino/a/x ancestral lineages, ancestral wisdom, as well as indigenous ways of living.

B. FAJ's 1st Digital Map of Mental Health Providers

“We should use the teaching like a raft to bring us across the river. And then when we've crossed the river, we can leave the raft there for someone else to use.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

As data of current mental health providers were collected from the 2021 Survey 2, a Mental Health Digital Resource Mapping Tool was created to address digital barriers in finding appropriate mental health support. This interactive digital mapping tool and resource list of diverse mental health providers in Alameda County is available via FAJ's website: <http://filipinos4justice.org/mental-health-resources/>. A fully animated video tutorial on how to use the digital map was created and included via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hxyLRAK8LU>. A disclaimer states that the contents on the Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ) website such as video, maps, data, resources, and other materials created by FAJ staff or obtained by Alameda County (collectively, "Content") are for informational services only. The Content is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice, treatment, or diagnosis. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions regarding a medical condition. FAJ does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or any other information that may be mentioned on the site. Reliance on any information provided by FAJ, FAJ staff, or Alameda County is solely at your own risk.

Figure 1. 2021 Digital Mapping Team: Sean Martinez, Alden Apusen and Aurora Sanchez



C. *Bùgsay* Up 2021 and Beyond

In the Fall of 2021. FAJ youth leaders and staff were introduced to *bangka* (canoe) and *bùgsay*⁸ (paddle) songs and dances with *Balik sa Dagat Bangka* (Return to the Sea

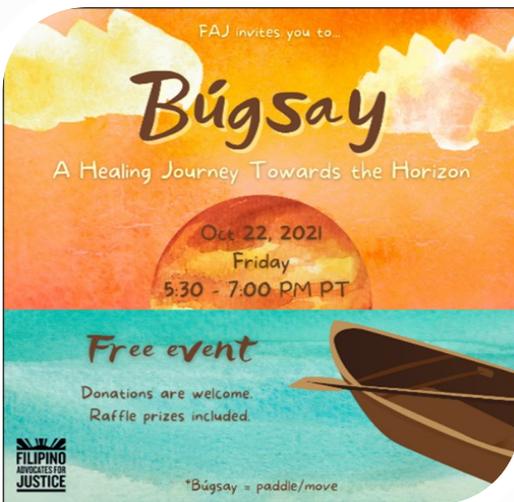


Figure 2. FAJ *Bùgsay*, A Journey Toward the Horizon Oct 2021 Flyer with image of a paddle on a brown canoe on the blue green waters with clouds in the sky and the canoe facing towards the sun midway level on the horizon. Flyer created by Agnes Bautista.

Canoe) Journey⁹, a grassroots community group learning/relearning to build and heal communities by connecting to cultural seafaring practices and the natural world. Thus, a 23-foot long ‘world *bangka*’ dugout outrigger canoe is available and waits for FAJ’s future paddle-making workshops and paddling on local waters in solidarity with local indigenous communities

including mixed *Indi-Pinoys/Indi-Pinays* in the spirit of ‘*bangka-nihan*’⁹. In celebration of Filipino American History Month in October

2021, the Mental Health Digital Resource

Mapping Tool and tutorial were showcased for the first time in public along with a brief summary of the FAJ-led first-ever Alameda County Filipino Mental Health Report and a Filipino-American youth-led *Bùgsay* dance. Despite its virtual zoom-space, FAJ’s Culture Night in 2021 created a safe space for FAJ participants to open up about their stresses, crises, insecurities, isolation, and feelings of helplessness. *Bùgsay, A Healing Journey towards the*

⁹ *Bangkanihan* is a new word coined by Enunja Ti Tatinmiji Hataji which are two words combined: *bangka* (canoe) and *bayanihan* (pronounced as buy-uh-nee-hun). The term *bayanihan* itself literally means “being in a *bayan*”, which refers to the spirit of communal unity, work and cooperation to achieve a particular goal.

Horizon¹⁰ wove in healing and organizing, storytelling, popular education, and interactive workshops with powerful youth poets and FAJ leaders, advancing FAJ's vision in the years to come. Going forward with *Bùgsay Up 2021 and Beyond*, to develop intentional exchange opportunities, a recommendation is to form partnerships among other Filipino/a/x national and international youth and adult programs such as Sariling Gawa (<http://sarilinggawa.org/>) in Hawai'i and the virtual Pilipinx American Public Health Conference (<https://www.instagram.com/paphc2022/>) which will enhance awareness and involvement in issues impacting Filipino/a/x communities as a step to improve local, state and federal communication mechanisms and procedure.

c. FAJ's Healing Advisory Committee 2021

Concurrently, as the 2021 survey process commenced, FAJ's Healing Advisory Committee was formed in September 2021 with limited funding. A selected committee of (Pilipinx, BIPOC, immigrant, and LGBTQI) Filipino traditional and indigenous practitioners

Suggestions as FAJ staff, FAJ as an org (pamilya), Individual selves, Community level, International level, Policy levels, etc. that may be helpful during these current pandemic times:

- practice self care
- large scale education on decolonization
- reinvestment in our community
- social gatherings with staff
- more intentional exploration and integration of indigenous practices and wisdom



¹⁰ View event recording via <https://fb.watch/9bMibKd44d/>

and mental health care providers to provide guidance to FAJ staff and FAJ program leaders embodiment, somatic and resilience practices. Healing space offerings are based on priorities with tools and processes to engage staff participation to address and prevent burn-out. The 2021-2022 initial committee members are: Angela Angel, Karen Villanueva, Kawal Ulanday, Laura Coelho, Rod Penalosa, Jonathan Relucio, Adelina Tancioco, Bee Uytiepo, Mylene 'r.a.d. Leng Leng' A. Cahambing, Christopher Cara, Geraldine Alcid and Henry Smith. This diverse group includes grassroots-based community organizers, educators, advocates, storytellers, an herbalist focused on Philippine Herbal Medicine and *Hilot* (Massage and Chiropractic care), an Acupuncturist-Registered Nurse Leader, various movement and meditation leaders, wellness coaches, social workers, public health and mental health providers including psychologists, psychotherapist and a Registered Public Health Nurse/Healing Arts & Craft practitioner with a focus on revitalizing ancestral seafaring practices. Following Covid safety protocols, initial 2021-2022 staff activities conducted by

what would FAJ like to see happen for its leaders, its staff, interns, advisors and communities served?

more!

- listening to one another
- knowledge about the resources within and beyond them
- developed analysis on the intersections of organizing and healing
- embodiment of practices that develop collective resiliency
- more spaciousness and joy
- expand healing efforts, studies, and advocacy
- engaging programs for communities served
- training for interns
- staff days out!
- mental health awareness and destigmatization through workshops and events

less:

- dumping negativity on each other
- individualizing of problems
- burn-out
- less insecurity, anxiety and harm

challenges:

creating a sense of community and offering mutual aid and community care during COVID-19

FILIPINO ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE

this committee included: a *Deep Wellness 1:1* activity, an *Herbal Walk* in the local redwood park and a much-needed *Grief Circle and Ancestral Veneration* in-person gathering, and currently in progress is a summer 2022 FAJ Staff Retreat.

E. *Tulong, Alalay at Gabay* (TAG)

A First responder training and emergency response training for all public health community workers is needed that accounts for long-term service. One recommendation is ***Tulong = Triage, Alalay = Assist, Gabay = Guide (TAG)***¹¹, a standardized crisis intervention tool for Filipino/a/x communities in the United States developed by Joyce Vives, ACSW, IDMH&HR, CZT. In September 2019, Ms. Vives launched TAG, a crisis intermediary tool to teach grassroots in the Philippines about mental health disorders in the Philippines in partnership with QURE Healthcare and Department of Health in the Philippines. TAG is a community-based mental health education approach promoting prevention, early prevention, and crisis intermediation in the Philippines. Via the Filipinx Mental Health Initiative-Solano 2019 program, a 3-day TAG training course was taught to Filipino service providers in neighboring local counties. Ms. Vives currently resides in the SF Bay Area and per recent personal communication, she is available to teach to local agencies. Adapting TAG and aligning the program components to California/U.S. mental health education and intervention standards is an important step towards strengthening protective factors of reliable support, positive coping skills and reducing mental health stigma.

¹¹TAG is currently embedded with the mental health program required by law and approved by Congress to be disseminated in all sectors in the Philippines including Department of Labor, Social Welfare, Local Government Units, Department of Health, etc. Source retrieved on 3/4/22:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdZvJf7ihqeIM6SAIh7LhcE5wBMv2M_eUkuGr_9DryKKOoiA/view_form

Fundraising Strategies to Support Filipino/a/x's Mental Health

As a final note, developing annual fundraisers, identifying mental health & wellness grants and initiating mutual aid funds centered on destigmatizing mental health challenges in Filipino/a/x communities are several ways to promote a healing-centered culture at FAJ. In addition, expanding funding sources will further support the operational and personnel costs to sustain community events, to improve and continue existing as well as creating new 'decolonizing' intergenerational programs i.e. to continue digital support for the online mental health resources including updating FAJ's digital mental health database and website services; to continue and sustain FAJ's Healing Advisory Committee to offer its various healing offerings that includes access to Post-Immigrant Traumatic Immigrant Syndrome brief counseling supports and navigation support to connect to longer-term therapeutic services; and perhaps include a designated safe space at the FAJ office sites as a **'Wellness Room'** where a combination of traditional healing sessions i.e. drop-in acupuncture, reiki, *hilot* massages/sessions and other traditional healing modalities, as well as accessible modern technological tools i.e. a chair massage, portable juicer/blender for healthy eating, portable infrared sauna or red light laser therapy tool that can hang over the door and easily accessed by FAJ staff and its community on a consistent basis (such items are easily cleaned with disinfecting wipes for the next user); and lastly, dreaming bigger than big, for FAJ to steer towards the horizon by building its first mini-dugout outrigger *bangka* (canoe) and *bùgsay* (paddle) as a community *bangkanihan* empowerment project by asking its community members, "Where is FAJ's canoe?" *Bùgsay up!*

Closing

Results of this study influenced the development of a digital mental health resource directory providing access to mental health services for Filipinos for one of the many counties where Filipinos reside in Northern California. This is the first FAJ Alameda County wide report that examined surrounding themes of loss/grief, Filipino/a/x mental health, wellness, and strategies on destigmatizing mental health challenges in Filipino communities. It is an initial attempt to further understand mental wellness and further research is recommended. Perhaps, over the years to come the survey may be repeated again, possibly duplicated by neighboring counties with a growing number of Filipino residents. During this pandemic crisis, FAJ has proactively taken on how to pick up and/or lay down and rest its *bùgsay* with its FAJ face-mask on and paddling on towards the unknown horizon by addressing its own *ginhawa* first with FAJ's Healing Advisory Committee and its workshops. The inner, deeper FAJ work in learning and understanding how it grows during challenging digital-hybrid pandemic living is an important and significant step towards wellness. May it sustainably continue by building (metaphorically) FAJ *bangka* to travel in local bay waters per protocol to share its resources safely, playing FAJ's TAG *Tulong, Alalay at Gabay*, and grow its diasporic roots deeper and expand our collective *ginhawa* beginning with *Kumusta Tayong Lahat*.

Important Links

<p>Survey 2021 #1 Initial survey questions were duplicated from the 2020 survey with added two inquiries specifically on Loss/Grief</p>	<p>https://tinyurl.com/FAJMentalHealthSurvey</p>
<p>Survey 2021 #2 Filipino/a/x Mental Health Professionals</p>	<p>http://bit.ly/FilipinoMentalHealthSurvey2021FAJ</p>
<p>2021 Survey #3 FAJ speaks on <i>Ginhawa</i> (Wellness)</p>	<p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UFGml8XWqL6llh3REn1JJE3ulMZbR-Un/view?usp=sharing</p>
<p>FAJ's 2021 Mental Health Digital Map in Alameda County</p>	<p>http://filipinos4justice.org/mental-health-resources/</p>
<p>FAJ's Mental Health Digital Map YouTube Tutorial</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hxyLRAK8LU</p>

Helpful Words (Simplified)

- A. *Kumusta Tayong Lahat* ~ Hello, how are we all (you and I, all of us)
- B. *Ginhawa* ~ Wellness; see Page 17 section for more details on *Ginhawa*
- C. *Mabuhay* ~ Thank you. Long Live. Cheers...
- D. *Bangka* ~ canoe
- E. *Bùgsay* ~ noun: paddle, oar; verb: to paddle
- F. *Indi-Pinoys / Indi-Pinays* - a term coined by persons with a mix of Swinomish and Filipino heritage
- G. *Bayanihan* ~ (pronounced as buy-uh-nee-hun) is a Filipino custom derived from a Filipino word “*bayan*”, which means nation, town or community.
- H. *Pamilya* ~ family
- I. *Maglaro tayo* ~ Let us play.
- J. *Tiyaga* ~ Tagalog for ‘patience and endurance’
- K. *Lakas ng Loob* ~ Tagalog for ‘inner strength and hardiness’
- L. TAG: *Tulong* = Triage, *Alalay* = Assist, *Gabay* = Guide

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