

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

For Immediate Release:

We, the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies at the University of the California, San Diego, stand in solidarity with our communities and vehemently condemn the racist, sexist, and violent events that have unfolded in the past weeks at the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Southern California.

Despite the seemingly random and incoherent slurs and attacks found on these fliers, the messages they send are unequivocal in degrading our communities. We firmly advocate against representations that would seek to portray these events as "unfortunate" or "isolated"--they are neither. These events did not occur due to random chance, but were insidiously intentional and premeditated, following in a long and arduous historical trajectory of anti-Asian racism and sexism. We cannot simply attempt to rationalize, or even conceal, the hate contained in these fliers by claiming ignorance--the hate and violences sedimented into these fliers are manifestations of the systems of oppression that continue to operate invisibly unless we take action to shine light on these structures.

These events call to question the issues of campus climate for Asian and Pacific Islander (API) students, who are often left out of these discussions by the institution. Over the past decades, API students have been constructed as the "model minorities"--high achieving, self-sufficient, and silent. It is because of these assumptions that API students are well-adjusted to the struggles of being at a university campus, or even have no struggles, that there is little urgency for the establishment of an Asian American Resource/Research Center. We are always assumed to have access to all resources we need socially, mentally, academically, and financially and that we feel safe on this campus. We can no longer hold on to these damaging stereotypes, because we have our struggles, we need support, we need resources, we have our stories, and we are not silent! We advocate against the willful apathy of institutions of higher education that would take the safety and experiences of API students for granted. Through the smokescreen of rhetoric that constructs API students as "overrepresented," we see the truth that the API community is critically underserved through the lack of representation in administration, faculty, staff, student services, and curriculum.

Despite comprising nearly half of the undergraduate student population (10,686 Asian and 1,192 Filipino for total of 11,878 students, which is 49.5% of the UCSD undergraduate population, UCSD Student Profile 2013-2014), what are the services that our communities have on this campus? In regards to disparities that exist with mental health issues in the Asian American community, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at UCSD does not have even one full time Asian American, non-administrative, clinical staff member. Looking at the curricula, no program exists for Asian American studies and the course offerings have been severely limited by the leaving of key faculty such as Lisa Lowe and Nayan Shah. Without new faculty lines being opened and new courses being offered, it is difficult to imagine the creation and expansion of a robust academic program that captures the diversity and issues in the API community at UCSD. What are the educational, professional, and developmental opportunities that our students have lost and still continue to lose out on in never learning about the history and current issues that face their communities today in education, health and medicine, science, politics, business, law, journalism and other fields?

It is already exhausting enough for API students to have to deal with the everyday racism, sexism, and homophobia in the university, and yet we still have to contend with macro-aggressions such as these letters and fliers. We demand long term solutions that do not just "band aid" the situation until the next violent act occurs, but truly take into consideration the voices of the students and communities who have been so grievously injured. We demand that our voices no longer be met with silence and inaction, but rather with tangible, comprehensive, sustained, and measurable changes.

We, the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies (CCAAS) at the University of California, San Diego, demand:

- The creation, establishment, and sustained funding of an Asian American Studies Minor program.
- Open new faculty hiring lines that will teach and advise students pursuing Asian American Studies.
- The creation of new classes that span topics such as Asian American Women's Studies, Asian American Sexuality, Asian American Health, and Southeast Asian American History and Contemporary Issues.
- Increase hiring of API staff to serve as resources for the API student population in various aspects of campus life.
- The creation, establishment, and sustained funding of an Asian Pacific Islander Middle Eastern Desi American Research and Resource Center (APIMEDA RRC)
- Increase college access and outreach efforts and resources for Asian and Pacific Islander students, especially those who are classified as Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander under the U.S. Census
- The creation, establishment, and sustained funding for an API welcome day during Triton Day and the design and printing for an API Student life book
- Increased funding for and permanent investment in SPACES, which has consistently provided growth and development of a number different access and retention programs that serve the API communities at UCSD
- Increased funding for and permanent investment in Ethnic Studies, Critical Gender Studies, and Literature.
- Increased funding for and permanent investment in CAPS to hire clinical staff and develop community programs for API students and students of color; stressing the needs API students in the United States and not be aggregated with Asian international student needs
- Making transparent the disaggregated statistics for admission and retention of Asian American and Pacific Islander students

Signed,

The Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies at UCSD

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Student Organizations in support – Asian & Pacific Islander Student Alliance, Cambodian Student Association, Hmong Student Association, Kaibigang Pilipin@, Kamalayan Kollektive, Nikkei Student Union, Southeast Asian Collective, Vietnamese Student Association