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April 14, 2020

#Makibaka: A Visual Culture of Anakbayan USA's Multimedia Movement for Philippine  
Liberation

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2020

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An abstract of  
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## Abstract

### #Makibaka: A Visual Culture of Anakbayan USA's Multimedia Movement for Philippine Liberation

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This thesis aims to use Anakbayan USA's propaganda materials as a centering framework for understanding Anakbayan USA as an organization as well as the issues it tackles in pursuing its mission for Philippine and Filipino liberation, marking the distinctions of these identities and experiences in the process. As the first ever academic study of Anakbayan USA, my study reflects on the organization's progress and aims to serve as a tool for it and other diasporic activist organizations like it to more critically engage with the successes and challenges they face during pivotal periods of growth. I analyze recruitment media from the national leadership's multiple social media platforms, text and images from local chapters' publications, and images from Anakbayan USA's Third National Congress. In my analysis, I argue that while Anakbayan USA finds itself slowly adapting to the growth of the technological landscape of youth participatory media, it approaches its work with a robust collective methodological goal, a dedication to translating efforts on American soil to change in the Philippines, and strong understanding of the relevance of its place in the United States as the heart of the Philippines' history of struggle and resistance.

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And to the members of Anakbayan USA, who welcomed me with open arms and a call to action, to the people in the slums of Manila and the provinces of Cebu, to those in crowded jail cells in Mindanao and those in Bataan who recall the scars of war all too well, to those in diaspora, who are waiting to find their true home, and to my Lola: this is for you.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Sino Ako?

My last name is Spanish.

I don't exactly know why I thought for so long that my last name, Oquindo, was indigenous to the Philippines. My mother's insistence on signifying my multiracial identity and connection to her heritage by giving me two Irish first names—"Erin" and "Kaelie"—was always joked about as compensation for the brownness of my skin, the darkness of my hair, and the presumed uniquely Philippine nature of my last name. Compliant with Filipino tradition, my parents made my middle name the same as my mother's maiden name. Her maiden name is "White." I live daily with that irony.

My last name, then—that was the one piece of me I thought was indigenous and untouchable. I wouldn't find out how wrong I was until early November of 2019, when my father sent me and my mother a link to a digitized copy of *the Alphabetical Catalogue of Surnames* (lit. *Catálogo Alfabético de Apellidos*) from 1849 Manila. Inside was a concerning finding. The catalog does not list the last name "Oquindo" anywhere in its pages; only "Oquendo"<sup>1</sup> can be found. My father suggested that our surname could have possibly been "Oquendo" in the past and was misspelled at some point in our family's history over the years. That idea didn't sit well with me. I had always been an Oquindo, had insisted on its correct spelling and pronunciation, and had taken pride in what I had always confidently—and, upon further reflection, ignorantly—assumed was purely and indigenously Filipino.

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<sup>1</sup> issuu. "Catalogo Alfabetico de Apellidos : Transcribase Este Decreto Con El Catalogo de Apellidos," Pg. 97, Accessed December 4, 2019, [https://issuu.com/filipinasheritagelibrary/docs/catalogo\\_alfabetico\\_de\\_apellidos?e=18015266/13622223](https://issuu.com/filipinasheritagelibrary/docs/catalogo_alfabetico_de_apellidos?e=18015266/13622223).



I decided to do some more research and found little to no historical records of the last name “Oquindo” anywhere, but many for the last name “Oquendo,”<sup>2</sup> just as my father had suspected. According to House of Names, its roots are Basque. It translates as “‘empty (barren) place,’ ‘without oats,’ ‘brambles’ or ‘pastureland.’ The initial bearer of the surname Oquendo,” the site reads, “was one who was located in a barren area or was close to a place which was abundant in pastureland.”<sup>3</sup> Finding out my last name was just the distorted hand-me-down of a colonizer’s surname was a violent and damaging blow to my cultural psyche; I felt as bereft of an identity as those old Basque fields were of fruitful crops.

Ever since I was young, I struggled with my multiracial identity, and particularly with connecting with my Filipino heritage. I never knew how much of that identity I could really claim as my own, even though I felt affected by my presentation as a Filipino every day of my life. Growing up in a homogenous white neighborhood in the middle of Tennessee, I rarely met a classmate who had even heard of the Philippines before middle school, much less could locate it. Parents in the pick-up line at school would ask my mother when she adopted me from China. Not *if*, but *when*. Where I grew up, I couldn’t go a single day without being told in some way or another, by either the people among whom we lived or by my extended Filipino family—sometimes coded, sometimes explicit, that I was *different*—“brown” different, “exotic” different, “foreign” different, “mestiza” different, “mixed” different, “you have so much white in you” different, “I’ve never heard of the Philippines” different. The spectrums of multiracial life within my home were reduced to these rigid binaries depending on my audience; I was a single brown anomaly when I left the

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<sup>2</sup> “Meaning and Origin of: Oquendo,” Family Education, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.familyeducation.com/baby-names/name-meaning/oquendo>.

<sup>3</sup> HouseOfNames. “Oquendo Name Meaning, Family History, Family Crest & Coats of Arms.” Accessed December 4, 2019. <https://www.houseofnames.com/oquendo-family-crest>.

house and a foreign, hard-to-understand, aggressively American wonder on long distance calls to family in the Philippines.

As a multiracial gender non-conforming person, no label fits me quite well enough to call any identity I hold a definitive and singular “home.” Everything around me was consistently split into twos: two cultures; two languages; two genders; two separate expectations for my presentation, expression, and existence. In the same way I struggled with finding a home in my gender—am I woman? Am I man? Am I neither? Am I both? Can there be something else? —I asked parallel questions about my cultural identity. What did it mean for me to be American? To be Filipino? To be neither? To be both? To be something else?

*Sino Ako? Who am I?*

My struggles with these questions of identity prompted me to explore my narrative in small, personal ways. I begged my father to show me photos, teach me slang and jokes, and cook me the food he loved as a child. I called my white half-brothers “kuya,” and practiced performing the *manolo*<sup>4</sup> to imaginary visiting elders in the mirror. I taught myself to use fragments of phrases in Tagalog as I spoke to my grandmother, who lives in Cainta, Rizal, over FaceTime. I wrote about my dreams of traveling to Cebu in the form of poetry, personal essays, and short stories about people looking to connect with a home they had never seen. I pinned a small Philippines flag next to my bed and played with the yellow fringes dangling from its edges to help me fall asleep.

That wasn’t enough. I still didn’t feel like I had a *people* with whom I could identify. It was nearly impossible to develop a sense of community where I was living based on my race, so I looked elsewhere. Eventually I found a home-away-from-home via activism with communities of people who shared a common objective of freedom and justice for marginalized and oppressed

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<sup>4</sup> A traditional Filipino greeting of respect where a young person holds an elder’s hand in theirs and touches it to their forehead as they bow.

populations within the United States. These became my safe havens. In these spaces, I was not alienated for my differences because those differences were valued, and they lent me a perspective that finally felt useful in its uniqueness. I felt content continuing my activism alongside people with whom I was comfortable and on issues local to those around me.

But then, in 2016—

**“They Are Slaughtering Us Like Animals”**

*~The New York Times*<sup>5</sup>

—things in the Philippines changed drastically.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s violent war on drugs, which spanned across the nation but concentrated itself in the archipelago’s metro capital of Manila, began with an aggressive and unrelenting force.<sup>6</sup> Reading that 2016 *New York Times* article was the first time in my life I had ever cried for a people. *My* people. My unknown motherland. I first viewed these crimes against the Philippine people as isolated atrocities imposed by a sociopathic leader, but the problem of oppression in the Philippines is not so simple. The suffering of the Filipino people crosses boundaries and implicates those outside the country’s borders just as much as those within them. The United States itself currently offers praise and aid to Duterte’s brutal treatment of Filipinos: in 2016, as the drug war began, 53% of U.S. financial aid to the Philippine government was allocated for the Philippines Department of Defense.<sup>7</sup> The Philippine government is no stranger to American military assistance and the Philippine people are no stranger the violence that accompanies it. The United States plays an unsettling historical role as one of the Philippines’

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<sup>5</sup> Berehulak, Daniel. ““They Are Slaughtering Us Like Animals,”” *The New York Times*, December 7, 2016, sec. World.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Miller, *Rodrigo Duterte, Fire and Fury in the Philippines* (Victoria, Australia: Scribe Publications, 2018), 245-271.

<sup>7</sup> “U.S. Foreign Aid to the Philippines: 2016,” U.S. Aid, accessed March 4, 2019, [https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/PHL?fiscal\\_year=2016&measure=Obligations](https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/PHL?fiscal_year=2016&measure=Obligations).

imperial powers, spanning from 1898 to 1945. The “tutelage” of Filipinos to evolve into ideal imperial subjects of America’s young empire,<sup>8</sup> that infamous “White Man’s Burden,” lingers in the psyche of both native Filipinos<sup>9</sup> and Filipino Americans today. Whether the United States acknowledges that past or not,<sup>10</sup> many Filipinos and Filipino Americans remember and, in that remembrance, resist. The Philippines is no stranger to unrest, to uprising, or to revolution, and the history of the Philippine people is riddled with resistance movements that aim to advocate for and center a working peasant class and effect genuine liberation for *all* people of the Philippines under a just governing system—too many to recount in this thesis alone. One organization, however, has grown from that history of Philippine resistance into an organization of youth activists dedicated to carrying out the same principles of liberation that their revolutionary ancestors did in the context of a modern world. That organization goes by the name “Children of the People”—Anakbayan.

Anakbayan<sup>11</sup> is an organization self-described as “the comprehensive national democratic mass organization of Filipino youth and students” with a branch in the Philippines and various overseas branches, the largest of which resides in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Founded on November 30, 1998, the United States branch of Anakbayan focuses on advancing “the cause of national democracy: workers, peasants, fisherfolk, urban poor, students, out-of-school youth, women, professionals, migrants, Moros, Christians, etc.”<sup>13</sup> The organization traces its international origins

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Kramer, “Imperial Concessions: Race and Empire Revisited at the Philippine Exposition, St. Louis, 1901-1905,” *Radical History Review* (Winter 1999): 75-108.

<sup>9</sup> Approval rates for the United States internationally are staggeringly high in the Philippines and accompany equally shocking approval rates for the Trump Administration (Miller, *Rodrigo Duterte*, 305).

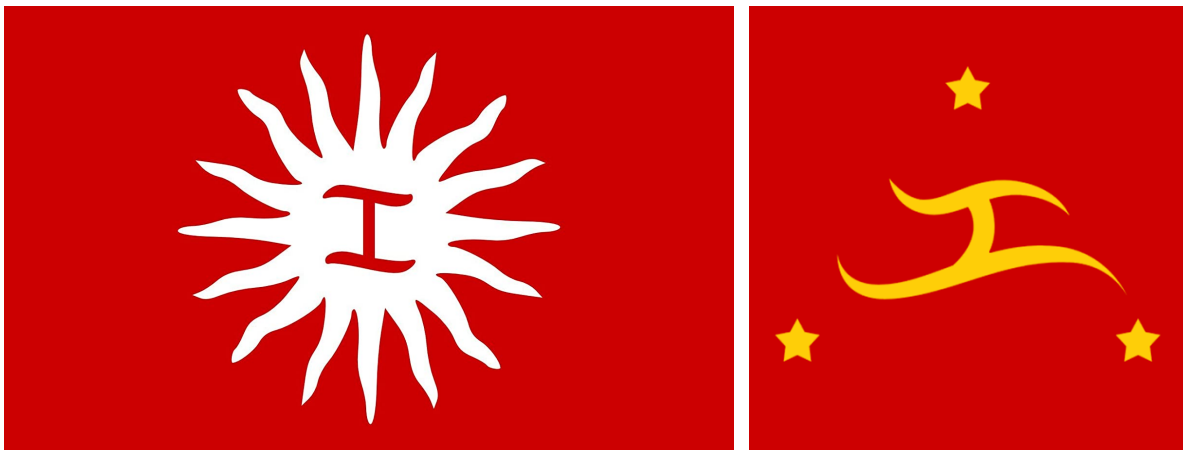
<sup>10</sup> Rund Abdelfatah, “Becoming America,” *Throughline*, podcast audio, February 13, 2020, [npr.org/2020/02/12/805240795/becoming-america](https://npr.org/2020/02/12/805240795/becoming-america)

<sup>11</sup> Multiple sources list both a stylized form “ANAKBAYAN” and a non-stylized “Anakbayan” as acceptable formats for the organization’s title. In this paper, I may use them interchangeably depending on context but will mostly refer to the organization in its non-stylized form.

<sup>12</sup> “Home,” Anakbayan USA, <http://www.anakbayanusa.org/>.

<sup>13</sup> “Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship | Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime,” Anakbayan USA, Los Angeles, CA, 2019.

to the secret society called *Kataas-taasang, Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng Anak ng Bayan*, also known as the Katipunan resistance. The Katipunan people’s army, led by anti-imperialist Filipino organizer Andrés Bonifacio, fought against Spanish forces in the six years before the beginning of the Spanish American War as part of the Katipunan Revolt.<sup>14</sup> From these beginnings, the first iteration of the iconic red “ka” flag was born (See Fig. 1). The red and yellow of the Anakbayan flag, found throughout Anakbayan and Anakbayan USA media, symbolizes a deep history of anti-imperialist resistance toward the goal of national democracy and freedom for the Filipino people (See Fig 2). As the United States branch grows and evolves, that symbol grows to represent healing and liberation for those in diaspora as well.



**Fig. 1** One of the original flags of the Katipunan resistance (left);  
**Fig. 2** The current Anakbayan logo (right).

Anakbayan USA boasts membership along both the East and West coasts and some inland states. The organization is divided into chapters,<sup>15</sup> chapter organizing committees, and remote members, or “kasamas,”<sup>16</sup> who connect with the larger collective via various online groups and

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<sup>14</sup> Ed. Monica Allarey Mercado, *PEOPLE POWER: An Eyewitness History | The Philippine Revolution of 1986* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1986), 310.

<sup>15</sup> Anakbayan Canada operates as a chapter subsumed under the Anakbayan USA umbrella organization.

<sup>16</sup> *lit.* companion, partner, associate; used by Anakbayan USA to mean “comrade.”

messaging apps.<sup>17</sup> As part of their work advocating for Philippine liberation, Anakbayan USA members connect with their various audiences via a wide range of propaganda materials. Anakbayan USA pays special attention to the media they create and share with the public and populations within their sphere of influence, and they often use the term “propaganda” to refer to such media. The American colloquial use of the term “propaganda” may invoke a negative reaction for U.S. audiences; within mainstream discourse, the term generally refers to a politically charged organization advertising to an audience with the intention of manipulating an otherwise uneducated mass population toward a polarizing objective. While Anakbayan USA is most definitely a politically charged organization, their use of the term “propaganda” does not hold the same negative connotation as the general public’s. Anakbayan generally uses the term to refer to any public facing text, document, or other media created by Anakbayan and its membership with the goal of developing the organization’s public image. In this thesis, I adopt Anakbayan’s usage of the term “propaganda” when referring to such documents.

Part of the reason Anakbayan USA’s propaganda is so central to its operation is its positionality as the only branch of Anakbayan that lies within the “belly of the beast”: the United States. Anakbayan USA’s struggle within the United States is vital to the conversation about Philippine liberation in the same way that the United States as a power is vital to the conversation about Philippine oppression. Filipino-Americans, then, are also integral to conversations about the duality of American identity and Filipino identity. Filipinos are argued to be the “first Asian Americans,” as Filipino soldiers under the Spanish empire made contact with the Americas in the early 1600s.<sup>18</sup> The history of the Philippines and the history of the United States are inseparable.

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<sup>17</sup> Joelle Lingat, “Anakbayan USA New Member Training,” PowerPoint presentation, October 1, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Suh, “Early Encounters Between the United States and Asia,” Lecture, August 30, 2019.

The United States' acquisition of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War led the Philippines to believe it would be released from the imperial rule of the Spanish and finally free to live as an independent nation. This, however, was not the case; the United States would control the Philippines government and strip the land of its resources from 1898 to 1942. During this time of American rule, the United States adopted the Philippines as its test project of imperialist power. Before, the United States only had experience settler colonialism: the continental United States as we know it today was built by taking and inhabiting land and committing what Dr. Kelly Lytle Hernández describes as “resource extraction,” “labor exploitation,” and “mass elimination” of the Americas' native peoples and other populations of color.<sup>19</sup> The case of the Philippines was the first in which the United States would try its hand at developing an imperial empire, focused on the absorption of the Philippine archipelago and its people into the possession and control of the United States. For forty-four years, the United States attempted to rule the Philippines in the same way its European contemporaries ruled their respective colonies and territories.

This action tugged against the heart of the United States' core values; the hypocrisy of the nation's possession of the Philippines was evident not only in many American citizens' dissent (Mark Twain himself was an extremely vocal and artistic critic of U.S. imperial activity)<sup>20</sup> but also through a shift in the way the U.S. saw itself; the nation, during the Philippine American War of 1899 to 1902, avoided referring to itself as “the United States,” instead donning the less obviously hypocritical “America.”<sup>21</sup> This “America” went on to establish its forces in the Philippines under

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<sup>19</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017),

<sup>20</sup> Jim Zwick, *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> Rund Abdelfatah, “Becoming America,” *Throughline*.

the command of General Douglas MacArthur, who oversaw military occupation of the Philippines and relations with the Philippine army.

In 1941, Japan laid siege to the Philippines on the same day they bombed Pearl Harbor. The charge was seen as an attack on the United States and a call to war, but little to no effort was focused on defending the Filipino people as part of that war. More important to the U.S. was keeping a stronghold on the Philippines as their *territory*, not caring for the safety of the people suffering atrocities in the Pacific east.<sup>22</sup> After General MacArthur's return to the Philippines and the American's defeat of Japanese forces, the Philippines would finally receive independence in 1951—only to continue to rely heavily on United States economic aid because of the years of environmental devastation caused by both the U.S. and Japan.<sup>23</sup> Because of this, Anakbayan holds the belief that the United States never truly relinquished control of the Philippines to its native people, an argument supported by Donald Trump's friendly gestures toward Duterte, especially in relation to the deadly drug war starting in 2016.

In an Instagram post from December 2019, Anakbayan USA expresses their support for the impeachment of President Donald Trump with the additional request that Americans remember that because of the imperial ties the United States has to the Philippines and because of its history with high-level obstruction of liberation movements on the mainland, that the “Land of the Free” has never been without dirtied hands. Anakbayan USA writes, “The Philippines remains semi-colonial and semi-feudal because of U.S. Imperialism's collaboration with Philippine landlords

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux).

<sup>23</sup> “The Struggle for Independence,” Filipino Canadian Writers and Journalists Network, 2017.



and business elite.”<sup>24</sup> The post goes on to denounce Trump’s military support of Rodrigo Duterte’s martial law in Mindanao.

The United States is tied to the Duterte regime just as it has been tied to the oppressive colonial rule of the Philippines for decades, and Anakbayan USA aims to use its station within the United States to bring to light the U.S.’s imperial sins against the Philippines. One key tool the organization uses to achieve its goal is its propaganda materials. Anakbayan USA relies on the power of images, place, and space to convey its message of resistance, as other liberation movements have done throughout the world. Liz McQuiston’s book *PROTEST! A History of Social and Political Protest Graphics*, displays in powerful volume the impact and worth of mass communication via activist media—such work crosses cultures, nations, causes, and agendas.<sup>25</sup> There is no question that visual works for the purpose of protest have made cultural and political impacts globally, but too often our understanding of such media is confined internally to the nations in question. What are the capacities, opportunities, and limitations for diasporic activism and mobilization and for media outreach based in such? What are the outward and inward effects of recruitment materials, personal reflections, and public mobilizations? The conclusions I reach in the following pages beget higher understandings of the United States and its relationship to the rest of the world as a mecca of diversity, of oppression, of incarceration, and of redemption through resistance. They also expand understandings of people in diaspora, of media’s development of diasporic connection, and the role of these in international activism and advocacy.

This thesis aims to use Anakbayan USA’s propaganda materials as a centering framework for understanding Anakbayan USA as an organization as well as the issues it tackles in pursuing

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<sup>24</sup> Anakbayan USA (@anakbayanusa), “Instagram Photos and Videos.” Accessed February 8, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6RFCFag6I3/>.

<sup>25</sup> Liz McQuiston, *PROTEST! A History of Social and Political Protest Graphics* (London: Quarto Publishing, 2019).

its mission for Philippine and Filipino liberation, marking the distinctions of these identities and experiences in the process. As the first ever academic study of Anakbayan USA, my study reflects on the organization's progress and aims to serve as a tool for it and other diasporic activist organizations like it to more critically engage with the successes and challenges they face during pivotal periods of growth. I analyze recruitment media from the national leadership's multiple social media platforms, text and images from local chapters' publications, and images from Anakbayan USA's Third National Congress. In my analysis, I argue that while Anakbayan USA finds itself slowly adapting to the growth of the technological landscape of youth participatory media, it approaches its work with a robust collective methodological goal, a dedication to translating efforts on American soil to change in the Philippines, and strong understanding of the relevance of its place in the United States as the heart of the Philippines' history of struggle and resistance.

Of course, developing a visual culture of Anakbayan USA's media materials necessitates a hands-on analytical approach. The following chapters include visual culture analyses of content on YouTube and TikTok, in zines, and on Instagram and Twitter. In Chapter One, I examine the ways in which Anakbayan USA often struggles in identifying its audience when putting together recruitment materials, knowing how much information to include or exclude, and finding a voice that is universally accessible. I also examine the beginnings of the organization's attempt to transition to a more participatory model of media making. Chapter Two examines Anakbayan USA's strength as a non-hierarchical organization and as an organization of diasporic identities throughout the United States, particularly adept in executing theories of nonviolent direct action. Looking at original art and text from members of Anakbayan Portland (Portland, OR), Chapter Two examines the success of using art and personal narratives from the diaspora as a tool to

agitate<sup>26</sup> their membership to mobilize in demonstrations to end United States military aid to Duterte’s martial law. Chapter Three reflects on Anakbayan USA’s Third National Congress, particularly its mobilization tour, via its social media coverage on Instagram and Twitter. Anakbayan USA’s National Congress offers chapters across the United States the opportunity to convene once every three years to debrief on the status of the movement, make any necessary amendments to governing documents, and mobilize together to kick off their next three years of activism. I had the privilege of attending the Third National Congress in Los Angeles in November, gathering materials and hearing presentations from members of chapters from all corners of America. My analysis of the event’s coverage in Chapter Three will study the way Anakbayan USA takes advantage of both its position in the United States and its strength in numbers as a coalesced group of various chapters and chapter organizing committees to direct its activism toward historically relevant cultural sites and influential diplomatic figures.

Anakbayan USA, driven by youth and students across the country, transforms constantly as the United States—the “beast”—tears through our modern digital age. As the cultural language of our country evolves, the young people who make up Anakbayan USA change along with it, and the landscape of Anakbayan’s visual materials transforms to accommodate that change. Recognizing the impacts of these developments is key in accurately responding to further change and propelling the movement toward its ultimate goal of national liberation in the Philippines.

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<sup>26</sup> Anakbayan USA uses the term “agitate” to mean motivation toward action and activism. Throughout this thesis, I will once again adopt the organization’s language.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **YouTube, TikTok, and Anakbayan USA’s Digital Recruitment Efforts**

As an advocacy group for national democracy in the Philippines, Anakbayan USA experiences the compounded responsibilities as a public-facing organization to not only validate its existence as a group advocating for Philippine peoples’ issues, but also to validate itself as a necessary and helpful entity within the United States. The propaganda created by both the national branch as well as its localized chapters serves as just one of the ways Anakbayan USA disseminates its messaging to the larger masses and develops its legitimacy from a third-party view. Propaganda (also casually referenced as “prop” within the organization’s membership) also serves as an educational tool to help those outside of the organization contextualize the issues Anakbayan presents.

The Anakbayan USA social media campaigns I examine in this chapter center around three main objectives:

1. to recruit youth in the United States to group membership, either via remote involvement or as part of an established chapter/chapter organizing committee;
2. to advance their causes to a larger, third-party audience, and develop allyship/solidarity from other American organizations for the call to liberation of the Philippine people; and
3. to support Anakbayan Philippines in their efforts to bolster the National Democratic movement in the Philippines by coordinating campaigns and messaging to be consistent with efforts overseas.<sup>27</sup>

These objectives are not mutually exclusive; some content created by Anakbayan USA may serve, or intend to serve, any combination of the above three listed. I would argue that almost

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<sup>27</sup> Joelle Lingat, “Anakbayan USA New Member Training,”

all of said content serves at least two of the three purposes in delivering its messages. One of Anakbayan USA’s main mantras is an easy-to-remember acronym: AOM (Agitate, Organize, Mobilize).<sup>28</sup> As the “agitate” part of AOM generally refers to recruitment or publicity efforts, I categorize Anakbayan USA’s recruitment propaganda as falling under the “agitate” category of its operational framework.

Anakbayan USA’s posts on its social media platforms—including but not limited to Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube—as well as its print propaganda, use different forms of rhetoric and visual elements such as text, color, photography, video, and design to target their various audiences. In this chapter, I analyze a YouTube video and a TikTok video from Anakbayan USA leadership to examine the execution of the three objectives listed above via visual analysis. In doing so, I aim to explore the position of Anakbayan USA as a large organization attempting to recruit potential members to join local efforts with their nearest chapter or to join as individual remote members, and where national leadership sees challenges in doing so.

I perform my analysis with these categories of inquiry in mind so that I may easily compare each piece of media:

1. What is in the image?<sup>29</sup> What does the audience see, read, or hear?
2. Where can the image or video be found, and who has access to it?
3. Who is the target audience(s)? Alternatively, how does perspective affect the way the image is interpreted or received?
4. What is the tone of the image? What kinds of emotion does it evoke?
5. What are the perceived goals of the media in question?

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<sup>28</sup> Adrian Bonifacio, “Plenary Workshop 1: Mass Campaign Training” (Lecture, Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Note that in the context of this chapter, the term “image” may refer to any piece of media, whether photographic or not (e.g. a zine page, flyer, video, infographic, etc.).

6. Does the media in question achieve these goals? What critiques can be given to the media?  
How could this be done differently to better achieve said goals?

Focusing the analysis on these questions allows for a stronger understanding of the material as comparable pieces of content regardless of their medium, focusing on the impact it has for potential members or other third parties based on various audiences' perspectives.

I perform this style of analysis with Roland Barthes' theory of "the rhetoric of the image" in mind, found in his book titled *Image, Music, Text*. Barthes identifies three distinct messages of an image: the linguistic message, which refers to both the denotative and connotative aspects to text within or accompanying an image; the symbolic message, which refers strictly to the connotative elements of the visual image; and the literal message, which refers to the basic denotative fact that the subjects pictured or recorded were physically in a space together at one time and were documented as such.<sup>30</sup> Breaking down these messages and how they fit into the categories of inquiry previously stated lends clarity to the media's purpose, and, by extension, the methodology of Anakbayan USA's public relations strategy. My introduction to Anakbayan's recruitment strategy begins on the popular video sharing platform, YouTube.

Anakbayan USA's YouTube video "JOIN ANAKBAYAN" was created by members of Anakbayan USA's national branch in 2014 to recruit American<sup>31</sup> youths to join the organization.<sup>32</sup> The video begins with a black screen and white texts flashing on it, reading the following question: "how much do you know about your history?". A clip of Lapu-Lapu, regarded as an indigenous Filipino hero because of his resistance to Spanish imperialism, fighting one of Magellan's soldiers

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<sup>30</sup> Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), 32–51.

<sup>31</sup> I use the term "American" instead of "United States residents and citizens" here because Anakbayan USA also recruits members to Anakbayan Canada. Anakbayan USA's membership may include North Americans who are not within the United States.

<sup>32</sup> "JOIN ANAKBAYAN." Anakbayan USA. YouTube. April 22, 2014.

in an unknown movie dramatization, is shown directly following the text. Many clips follow in rapid succession of Filipinos resisting oppressive powers, eventually revealing the red “ka” flag of the *Kataas-taasang, Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng Anak ng Bayan*,<sup>33</sup> often referred to as simply *Katipunan*.<sup>34</sup> The iconic red flag accompanies protestors up until the second black screen with white text: “what do you know about the Philippines today?”. The clips following this question have a much more current feel to them as the video shifts to images documenting the recent and current state of life and struggle in the Philippines. Images of poverty, of children suffering, of police violence and resistance to such violence are shown. Next, images of devastated lands and stripped natural resources appear on the screen, along with some peasant farmers working and giving testimonies on their difficulties working with fertilizers and pesticides. Then come images of the Hacienda Luisita massacre (where Filipino police and armed forces attacked unionized sugar mill strikers), protests on the streets Philippines’ capital of Manila, and highly controversial leader Bengino Aquino III, past president of the Philippines, seated in conversation with past United States president Barack Obama. Next on the list of questions: “what do you know about your community?”, followed by Filipino American domestic workers, nurses, and others in the labor force, appear. Finally: “want to know more?” concludes the list of questions. Images of meetings and mobilization efforts of Anakbayan USA and allied organizations in various locations across the United States follow. Non-diegetic<sup>35</sup> music plays throughout the entire video, consistent over all the separate clips. After the video displays and labels various events Anakbayan USA has been involved in, the clip ends with “join the movement” and “join ANAKBAYAN” flashing

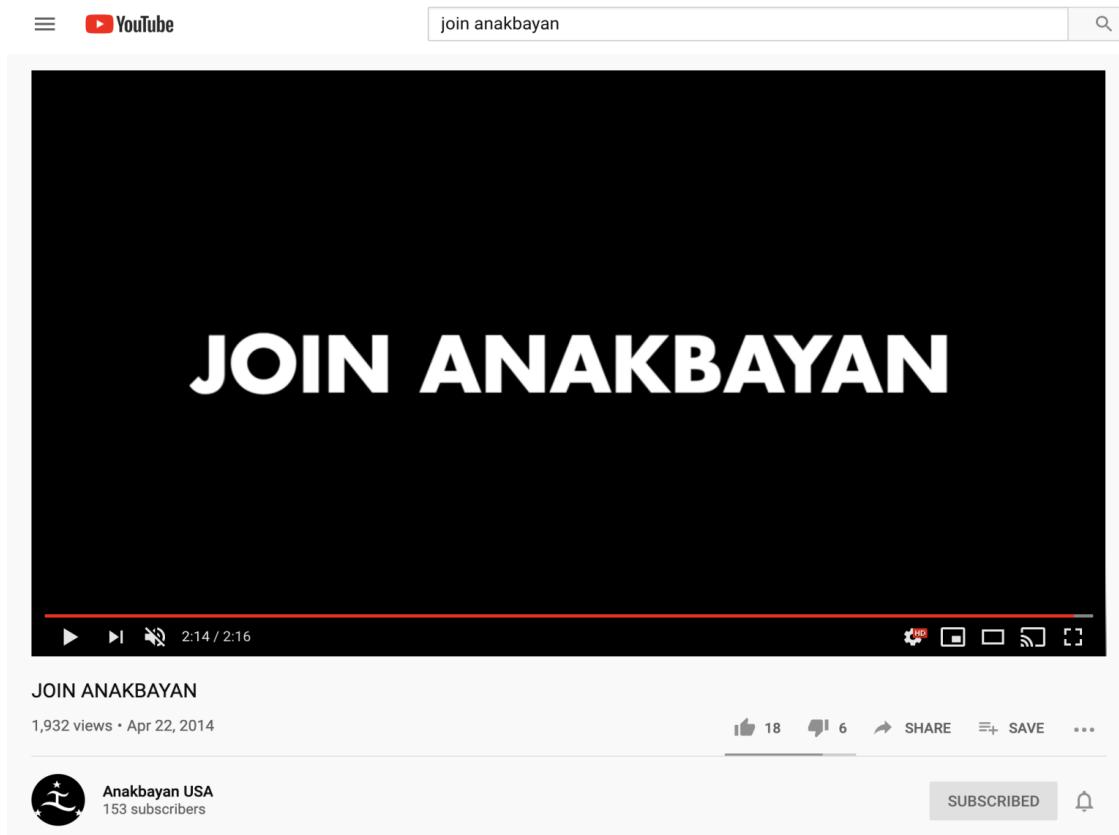
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<sup>33</sup> Hermenegildo Cruz, *Kartilyang Makabayan: Mga Tanóng at Sugol Ukol kay Andrés Bonifacio at sa KKK* (Manila, S.P., 1922), Project Gutenberg eBook.

<sup>34</sup> Also abbreviated as KKK.

<sup>35</sup> Meaning the source of the sound is “off-screen,” or not present within the shot.

across the screen in the same style as the initial questions (See Fig. 4). The video lasts a total of two minutes and sixteen seconds.



**Fig. 3** The “JOIN ANAKBAYAN” promotional video is accessible to all audiences who have access to the YouTube platform, but only includes contact information in the video’s description box. Screenshot from YouTube.

Focusing on the directed messaging, what Barthes calls “anchorage” and “relay” in the video’s text, the audience understands that it is supposed to link the clips of farmers, workers, and fighters to the greater history of the Philippines and those who are a part of the Philippine diaspora. In order to make these connections in full, however, audience members must hold both English-speaking skill as well as an understanding of Philippine history, culture, and current events. The wording of “*your* history” as opposed to that of “the Philippines’ history,” with a similar pattern in “*your* community” instead of “the Filipino community,” leads me to infer that the target



audience of the video is Filipino-American youths rather than American youths at large. The exclusively English-language text also signifies that the propaganda aims to reach American or other English-speaking audiences, not speakers of Tagalog, Visayan, or other Philippine languages. The composition of the video supports this; the clips (which do not seem to be independently taped by Anakbayan USA itself but rather pulled from different videos and films) are without context or explanation and are only identifiable by those who have a certain level of background knowledge about the Philippines and its history as a victim of imperialism. Barthes argues that “the reading of the photograph is always historical; it depends on the reader’s ‘knowledge’ just as though it were a matter of real language.”<sup>36</sup> Because of this, the material’s meaning is not particularly accessible to those without a contextualizing education, a Filipino-American identity, or both. This may serve a dual purpose: for those who do recognize the historical significance of the images presented in the video, their answer to the first question “do you know your history?” is most likely “yes.” For this audience, the video serves as a recognition of the struggle so often forgotten or dismissed by colonial European narratives.

How, then, does this translate to non-contextualized audiences, or those who may have never heard of the National Democratic Movement in the Philippines? For these audiences, the idea reads as confusing and misdirected. There is no contact information provided in the video itself, no real educational or informative piece, and no call to allied action beyond Filipino-American youth. It would be safe to say that this video was not made with the intention of being found by a third-party observer to lead them to the cause. It is more likely that the video was created as an agitating<sup>37</sup> media piece for those who already have some level of contextual

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<sup>36</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), 28.

<sup>37</sup> Note that in the context of Anakbayan USA operations, the term “agitate” refers not to irritating audiences, but rather motivating them to join and/or continue in the movement. “Agitate” is the “A” in “AOM” (Agitate, Organize, Mobilize).

information. It may have been created with the purpose of showing at conferences, interest meetings, or some other Anakbayan USA-hosted event, which would have provided the necessary context to make the video more effective in its objective. This hypothesis is further supported by the lack of individual engagement on the YouTube video itself; on the video sharing site, “JOIN ANAKBAYAN” has only been viewed or shown just under two-thousand times and has garnered only eighteen likes and six dislikes.<sup>38</sup> This indicates that the video does not receive a lot of traffic from individual internet surfers (but, when considering Anakbayan USA is a nationwide organization that only has under two hundred YouTube subscribers,<sup>39</sup> the video itself seems to have reached a proportion far beyond the organization’s YouTube following). In addition, the video itself is the fourth to come up after searching its name in full in the YouTube search bar. All these factors combined lead me to believe that the “JOIN ANAKBAYAN” video exists more as a complementary agitation tool to a larger recruitment effort, online or otherwise, rather than a video that is meant to exist independently.

If Anakbayan USA is a youth-centered organization, what about this video appeals to a younger audience? One key element signifying youth as a target is the music used, present throughout the entirety of the video. The non-diegetic music plays instead of the diegetic sound that may have been present in these individual clips separately, like the voices of those being interviewed or possible voice overs that may have been present. The purpose for this was likely to connect these unrelated clips into a single collective without having to manage difficult transitions. At the same time, it develops a certain sound scape that appeals to the target age groups. The song has a strong, hip-hop/pop beat reminiscent of music largely enjoyed by youth audiences today, further positioning it in a youth-centered space.

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<sup>38</sup> As of December 1, 2019.

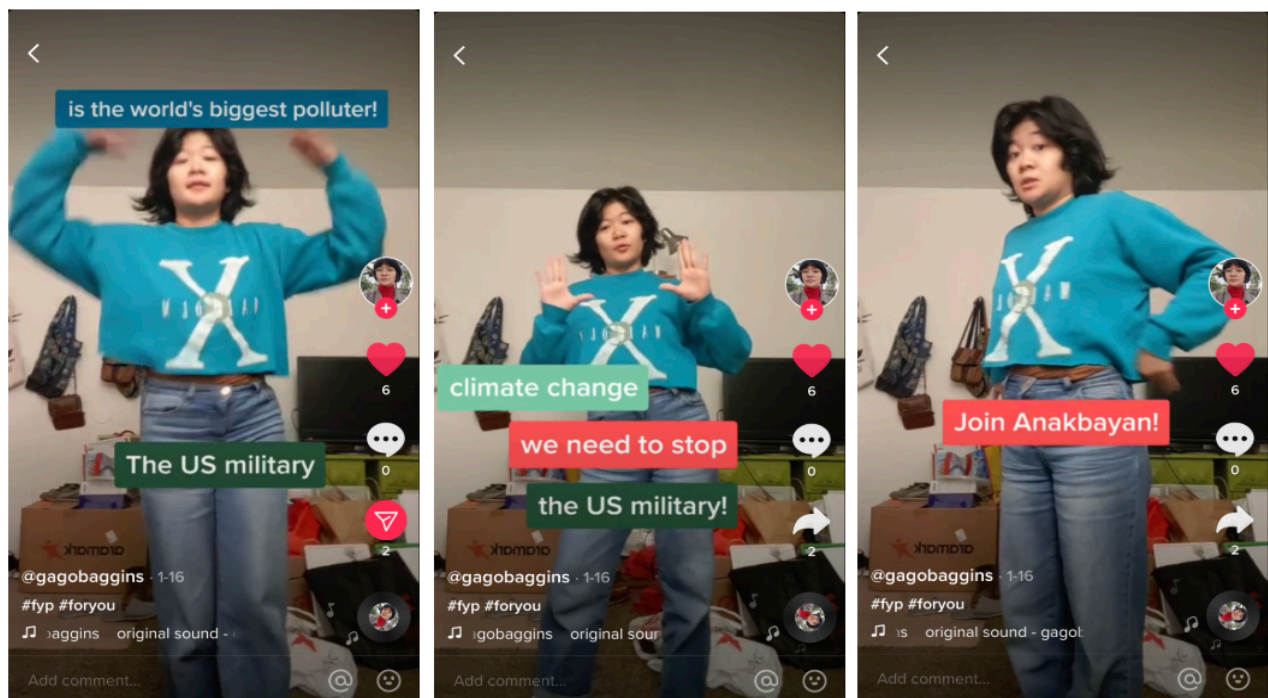
<sup>39</sup> As of December 5, 2019.

As mentioned above, this YouTube video is heavily dependent on its context. Some questions that may arise from watching the video are as follows: *what is Anakbayan? What do they stand for? How do I learn more? Where do I go to receive new information? Are they a political organization?* And so on. While, as previously discussed, the video itself was likely created to serve as a complementary piece of agitating media within a larger contextual framework like an interest meeting or a Facebook post, Anakbayan has multiple opportunities for this video to appeal to a wider audience, gain more traction, and be more helpful to those who do not have either the contextualizing background or information necessary for the video to be fully effective. For one, Anakbayan USA's logo is only found in passing clips of the regional flags at the organization's founding Congress in Chicago rather than featured in the text clips that break up the videos.

The effectiveness of this video is difficult to ascertain, because the simple view count on YouTube does not necessarily reflect the actual viewership of the video when considering the possibility of mass screenings. As mentioned above, the video could be an effective additive piece of agitating propaganda (often called "agit prop") to something like an interest meeting, public event, etc. Regardless, however, some easy improvements could make the video translate to independent audiences as well. Consistent branding would be a positive addition to this video because it would add a professional element to a video that seeks to "agitate" as large an audience as possible. Also, any sort of contact information would be helpful in developing more membership or traffic on social media platforms—if someone were to find this video on their own via YouTube, there would be no internal opportunity for that audience member to make contact. The closest thing they have is a link to the Facebook page in the description section of the video.

The "JOIN ANAKBAYAN" video is not a perfect piece of marketing for Anakbayan USA by any means, and as a six-year-old video, it no longer reflects the anxieties and issues of a modern,

Trump-era United States demographic. By offering the comments section as the only opportunity to interact in real time with the media, youth who take interest in engaging in discourse with the media piece cannot do so in a way that feels truly participatory. The team of scholars behind the book *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism* argues that “many youth are finding their voices through projects that encourage them to produce and circulate media.”<sup>40</sup> And as Anakbayan USA depends on active participation from its members to enact its mission, a clear next step in their “agitation” stage would be to take advantage of that voice finding. Members of Anakbayan USA leadership, in an attempt to keep up with this mass youth desire to take a larger part in political organizing, have turned to more modern methods of social media to meet their objectives of recruitment: agitating, organizing, and mobilizing. One of these mediums of communication is the newly popular video-sharing social media app, TikTok (See Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4** TikTok user and member of Anakbayan USA national leadership @gagobaggins performs a popular dance accompanied by messages encouraging the viewer to “Join Anakbayan!”. Screenshots from TikTok.

<sup>40</sup> Jenkins et al., *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 42.

Anakbayan USA leaders use TikTok to connect with potential youth members via humor and trends on the app. Users of the app often dance in front of the camera and are accompanied by text bubbles placed in various spots on the screen. The trend is easily traced through commonly used music in the video as well as a series of relevant hashtags (#fyp, #foryou, #foryoupage, etc.) designed to push content to users' "For You" page. One TikTok user and member of the Anakbayan USA national leadership, @gagobaggins, takes advantage of TikTok dance trends to push youth to join Anakbayan. "The US military," @gagobaggins writes, "is the world's biggest polluter!" They dance along to the song "Say So" by Doja Cat<sup>41</sup> while listing some of the things the U.S. has allegedly polluted soil and water with: "Agent Orange", "pesticides", "jet fuel", "lead", and "nuclear waste...". "To truly end...climate change," @gagobaggins concludes, "we need to stop...the US military!...Join Anakbayan!".<sup>42</sup>

By numbers alone, the TikTok video pales in comparison to the YouTube video with only 45 views and 6 likes. @gagobaggins perhaps does not have robust experience or expertise in tailoring their videos to "go viral" or gain a higher viewership. Nevertheless, the video itself represents Anakbayan USA's shift to include more participatory media-making in their public relations strategy as the platforms it uses evolve. By placing themselves on an app that generally attracts a younger audience, @gagobaggins markets more specifically to teenagers, students, and other youth with their recruitment message. By formatting their message to participate in trends on the app, @gagobaggins also increases their chances for engagement from users who may not be seeking out specifically Filipino-American material.

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<sup>41</sup> One of TikTok's most viral trends is the memorization and performances of the same choreography to the same songs in different settings or contexts (these contexts usually dictated by the accompanying text the user adds).

<sup>42</sup> @gagobaggins, "Join Anakbayan!" TikTok video.

The textual elements of the Anakbayan USA YouTube video and @gagobaggins' TikTok video differ in the functions they serve for the audience. In the YouTube video, the text alludes to issues and questions the audience's preexisting understanding of such; in the TikTok video, the text adds a direct and explicit layer of meaning-making for the video's purpose. In the YouTube video, the text and images work in collaboration with neither carrying intense contextual weight. In the TikTok video, @gagobaggins' message uses the image (in this case, a popular dance trend) as a medium to carry the context-providing "linguistic message," as Barthes describes. "The text," he writes, "is indeed the creator's...right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility – in the face of the projective power of pictures – for the use of the message."<sup>43</sup> @gagobaggins takes control of their audience's interpretation of the image they present by pairing it with a cohesive set of accompanying text that makes a more explicit and engaging argument than the YouTube video.

This TikTok video exemplifies a key element of Anakbayan USA's philosophy of mass campaigning and recruitment, called "linking and raising." To link and raise is to "help the masses connect their struggles to capitalism and imperialism and raise those issues to the greater masses for them to use and take action."<sup>44</sup> @gagobaggins first puts the content they create in the larger conversation by and about Anakbayan USA by calling back to issues addressed in the "JOIN ANAKBAYAN" video. The commonalities between the rhetoric of the YouTube video and the TikTok video, most evident in their anchorage, are a testament to both the consolidation of mission and messaging of each Anakbayan USA chapter, but also the common practice of "linking and raising" both videos try (to varying degrees of success) to do. What @gagobaggins does

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<sup>43</sup> Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 41.

<sup>44</sup> Adrian Bonifacio, "Plenary Workshop 1: Mass Campaign Training" (Lecture, Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019).

effectively, setting their content apart from the YouTube video, is eliminate the need for context for the outside viewer. By linking the issue of climate change, which affects people around the globe rather than in a specific demographic or location, to the United States military complex, @gagobaggins then raises the mission of Anakbayan USA to the attention of “the masses” and subsequently makes the case for the organization’s place on the world stage. In doing so, they also bring participatory content creation, something that individual chapter members of Anakbayan USA have been doing via other means previously, online at a national level. This type of content creation is bound to grow with both the platforms used and with Anakbayan USA as an organization.

When zooming in to individual chapters and their membership, however, a more intimate visual translation of Anakbayan’s mission and the experience of Filipino American youth is revealed. Local chapters and members of those chapters often publicize their involvement with Anakbayan USA via a much different form of propaganda: zines. Zines offer a more intimate look at how chapters and their members make sense of their place in the larger conversation of organizing, coalition building, and direct action in particular. In the following chapter, I analyze two pages of a zine from Anakbayan Portland to explore how individual visualizations of Anakbayan’s mobilization line up with various theories of direct action from activism scholars.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Zine Representations of Direct Action Methodologies**

Anakbayan USA sees more vibrant life in its members via the activity of local chapters, such as Anakbayan Silicon Valley, Anakbayan New York, Anakbayan Portland, and others, than it does as a national umbrella organization. This can be attributed to the ability for local chapters to develop their own communities of resistance in which they can collaborate and mobilize together with people they know who face similar issues within a common physical space. As a result of this physical closeness and community organizing, the media local chapters create differ greatly from nationally produced Anakbayan USA media and reveal more specific ways the organization's individual members understand their roles in the larger movement. The following chapter analyzes Anakbayan Portland's 2018 zine "Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance" to examine the ways in which chapters of Anakbayan USA imagine their local roles as enactors of direct action mobilization. I analyze two pages of the zine using Gene Sharp's theory of nonviolent direct action and a critique/alternative theory by Sean Chabot. While Anakbayan Portland members represent only a fraction of Anakbayan USA members and their experiences within their chapters, Anakbayan Portland is one of the most active chapters in the country. With this in mind, I use their zine as a case study to argue that Anakbayan USA members idealize their use of direct action to fit into the binary Sharp sets in his theory, but their emotional connections to the action itself more accurately fall in line with Chabot's alternative theory. The materials these individual chapters develop reveal not only the more personal and intimate elements of Anakbayan USA membership, but also how Anakbayan USA members see themselves as key to the larger struggle for Philippine liberation not *in spite* of their position in the United States, but *because* of their position in the United States.



Zines have a rich history as underground publications made to give marginalized voices a space to control and circulate their messages. While zines got their start as “fan magazines,” independent publications for 1930’s science fiction fandoms to share theories and other creative expressions related to sci-fi media,<sup>45</sup> it quickly became a means of underground expression and communication for activists groups as part of the Beat generation, punk music groups, and feminist movements.<sup>46</sup> The zine format has grown and evolved over the years, but the spirit and purpose of giving groups (often activist, almost always marginalized) a space to self-publish their ideas, messages, and artistic expressions has remained. For Anakbayan USA, this presents a prime opportunity for members to not only confer with one another but also relay their messages in a consolidated format to those not a part of the organization. In the case of Anakbayan Portland, one of the organization’s largest and most active chapters, zines are a vital means of communication and public relations. Their most recent zine publication is the focus of this chapter’s study.

**“Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance.” Anakbayan Portland. 2018.<sup>47</sup>**

“Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance” (See Fig. 5), created by Anakbayan Portland, a local chapter of Anakbayan USA, features multiple mediums of work centering Anakbayan Portland and its allied organizations in the area (including Gabriela Portland, Portland Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (PCHRP), and People Organizing for Philippine Solidarity (POPS)). Including the front and back cover, the zine is twenty pages long. Those pages contain a combination of art pieces, informative texts, poems, and personal narratives from uncredited

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<sup>45</sup> “TimelineJS Embed,” Accessed April 9, 2020. [https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1LjcG5w-E3kePXZ2ud7YNhRSeGbOJPhAeSofmsG8wcqs&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1LjcG5w-E3kePXZ2ud7YNhRSeGbOJPhAeSofmsG8wcqs&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650).

<sup>46</sup> Laura Van Leuven, “A Brief History of Zines | The Chapel Hill Rare Book Blog,” Accessed April 11, 2020. <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/rbc/index.php/2017/10/25/a-brief-history-of-zines/>.

<sup>47</sup> “Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance,” Anakbayan Portland, Portland, OR, 2018.

members of Anakbayan Portland. The zine has one overarching message woven throughout each work: a call to end U.S. military aid to the Philippines as it stands in support of the Duterte Regime.<sup>48</sup>



**Fig. 5** The front and back cover of Anakbayan Portland's zine "Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance." The front cover (right) pictures Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte with a red slash covering his eyes. The back cover (left) details Anakbayan Portland and allied organizations involved in the zine's creation.

This chapter focuses on two pieces of Anakbayan Portland's zine in particular: page 7 (see fig. 6) and page 4 (see fig. 7). I choose these two pages because they both represent the more artistic and personalized sides to Anakbayan USA's visual culture. Much of what Anakbayan USA is able to effectively advertise to a larger audience, mostly online, is the more refined and easy-to-

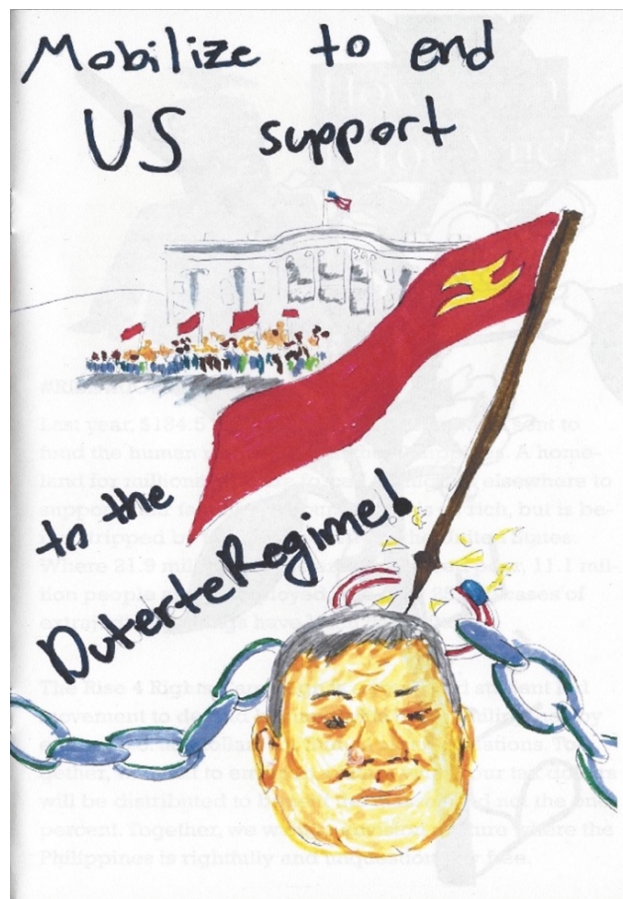
<sup>48</sup> It is also worth noting that there are some pasted graphics from other organizations within the zine, such as the "Violation of Civil Rights and Political Rights" graphic by Karapatan on page 19.

post social media elements such as Instagram graphics or, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, a YouTube video made of separate clips from both internal and external sources. Local chapters of Anakbayan USA, who have both more direct access to individual members (many of whom may be artists, poets, writers, etc.) and ability to print more ambitious and personalized art projects on a smaller scale, have the capacity to develop more personal propaganda materials than their umbrella organization, Anakbayan USA. This allows chapters to develop more personalized art and distribute said art to the “masses” (or “masa” in Tagalog) within their own communities. Using Anakbayan Portland’s zine as a case study, I examine how local Anakbayan USA chapters understand their place in the larger movement as enactors of direct action contributing to the collective mission. I place pages 4 and 7 of the zine in conversation with Gene Sharp’s *episteme* of nonviolent direct action as well as Sean Chabot’s alternative *phronesis* of nonviolent direct action to better grasp how local chapters both idealize their impact and grapple with their reality. In doing so, I argue that local chapters combine different forms of art to give added meaning, character, and a sense of humanity to their work as part of the greater Anakbayan USA movement.

### **Page 7: “Mobilize to End US Support to the Duterte Regime!”**

Page 7 of Anakbayan Portland’s zine features a straightforward graphic with a powerful message. The text reads, “Mobilize to end US support to the Duterte Regime!”, a statement signifying the overarching call to action throughout the “Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance” zine. Drawn at the top half of the page, just under the first half of the text, is the White House surrounded by protesters with red flags, most likely the iconic red “ka” Anakbayan flag. Along the bottom of the page lies a crude drawing of Duterte’s face in front of a long chain. One of the center links of the chain is decorated with the stars and stripes of the American flag. A large Anakbayan

flag flies in the center of the page, and the pointed end of its staff appears to shatter the American link in Duterte's chain, breaking the central connection just behind Duterte's head. While the drawing itself is simple, the message is unmistakable: Duterte's forces in the Philippines maintain an empire of imprisonment, and United States support acts as a central backbone of that empire. The unknown artist believes Anakbayan USA members can mobilize in protest to American powers, specifically the U.S. president's office, to end the support that keeps Duterte's regime intact. For identification purposes, I refer to this unnamed piece by its first word, "Mobilize."



**Fig. 6** A drawing of protestors at the White House and an Anakbayan flag breaking a chain with an American flag link behind the head of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte.

Like many of the other pieces in the “Stop the Killings” zine, “Mobilize” does not necessarily exemplify any strong artistic or technical skill. The art appears to be done in marker with a crude pencil outline underneath, peeking through in spots where the marker did not meet the original sketch. The slightly unprofessional look of the art reinforces the personal element and heart of Anakbayan Portland and other chapters’ media making: the purpose of these zines is not to create a refined publication that is simply pleasing to the eye as a consumer’s product; rather, these zines are expressions of *real* people, creating art in whatever medium they choose and with whatever skill they have, to communicate their message. “Mobilize,” for example, communicates volumes about Anakbayan USA members’ ideologies about how direct action in the United States can bring direct change to conditions in the Philippines. The action item expressed in the text does not offer so much explicit direction as it does a communication of a broader goal: “Mobilize to end US support to the Duterte Regime!”. As a commanding statement, it offers only a bare-bones “if/then” logic statement: *if* Anakbayan USA members perform direct action tactics directed at the United States executive branch, *then* the part of the Duterte regime bolstered by United States support will fail and break the “chain” of control the Duterte administration has over the Philippine people. The “Mobilize” graphic does not attempt to appeal to personalized, emotional connections to activism. It more closely appeals to Gene Sharp’s pragmatic *episteme* of nonviolent direct action: when a party of nonviolent protesters mobilize against a violent state, change comes as a matter of course.<sup>49</sup> Sharp’s straightforward theory, with a binary *good* and *bad*, *oppressed* and *oppressor* framework, reflects the young artist’s thought process as to how Anakbayan USA kasamas can pressure their governing powers to bring about their desired change. The art and

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<sup>49</sup> Gene Sharp, “Part One: Power and Struggle,” *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (New York: Porter Sargent, 1973).

message of “Mobilize” in particular exemplifies how Anakbayan USA members imagine and idealize their own hand in executing Sharp’s mobilization model.

“Mobilize,” in illustrating via metaphor the international effects of mobilizing in the United States, displays the heart of the “why” in Anakbayan USA’s mission. The organization and its chapters philosophize their mobilization efforts as “directly confronting the party in power to meet the needs of the people and what they want.”<sup>50</sup> In Anakbayan USA’s case, “the needs of the people” fall into both international, national, and local categories. For Anakbayan as a whole, including Anakbayan USA and Anakbayan PI, liberation of the Philippine people from imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism remains the perpetual goal. But for chapters like Anakbayan Portland, it is key to hold these international goals in relation to and conversation with the needs of the people immediately around them. This includes members of the Filipino diaspora, yes, but it also includes the many needs of those suffering under the different types of imperialist and bureaucratic capitalist effects. Employing Anakbayan USA’s theory of “linking and raising” on a local level, chapters often focus their efforts to help their local population of Filipinos and other oppressed groups in the area, all the while communicating their mission for Philippine liberation; Anakbayan USA’s strong ties to the Palestinian Youth Movement’s “Within Our Lifetime!” activists is just one example.<sup>51</sup> In an age of national coalition building and solidarity, Anakbayan USA seeks not only to reveal common issues to potential allies, but also to visualize the possibilities for the action they take to bring about real results.

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<sup>50</sup> Ina Jane, “Direct Action Workshop” (Lecture, Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Anakbayan USA, “Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Panel,” Panel discussion, November 30, 2019.

#### **Page 4: “I Was Born on Fire”**

Page 4 of Anakbayan Portland’s zine is the first poem in the collection. The piece does not credit any author and has no title, like many of the other works within the zine and other zines published by Anakbayan USA and its local chapters. It doubles as an art piece within the zine; the artist (who may or may not have been the original poet) hand-wrote the poem in what appears to be different colored markers in different fonts down the page, separating stanzas and emphasizing important words and phrases with black or red ink and capital letters. A black strip with red dashes running through it borders the left side of the text, and three diagonally placed dashes surround the upper-left corner of the poem’s first line, making what looks like both a quotation mark and a graphic novel-style mark of surprise or impact. The poem is surrounded by free-handed red lines that wander and trail down to the bottom right corner of the page, where they wind around two hand-drawn wrists to mimic binding ties. For identification purposes, I refer to this untitled work by its first line, “I was born on fire.”

As a text alone, the poem connects the generational experience of feeling the effects of imperialism in the Philippines to the experience of physical torture. The speaker repeats the phrase “I was born on fire” throughout the piece, and uses that metaphorical fire to enact a sort of vengeance on behalf of their people “deep in my belly / like I am swallowing stones” to “ignite the ones who hold the matches.” We can reasonably assume that the “people” whom the speaker references and claims as their own belong to the Filipino diaspora, either in the Philippines, the United States, or elsewhere in the world. “The ones who hold the matches” may refer to any oppressive power who fits into Anakbayan’s categorization of their defined three basic problems: imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism.<sup>52</sup> With the understanding that this zine

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<sup>52</sup> Adrian Bonifacio, “Plenary Workshop 1: Mass Campaign Training” (Lecture, Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019).

focuses primarily on advocating for an end to U.S. military aid to the Duterte Regime, we can reasonably assume those match-holders (i.e. oppressors of the Filipino people) in this case are Duterte’s government and the United States government.

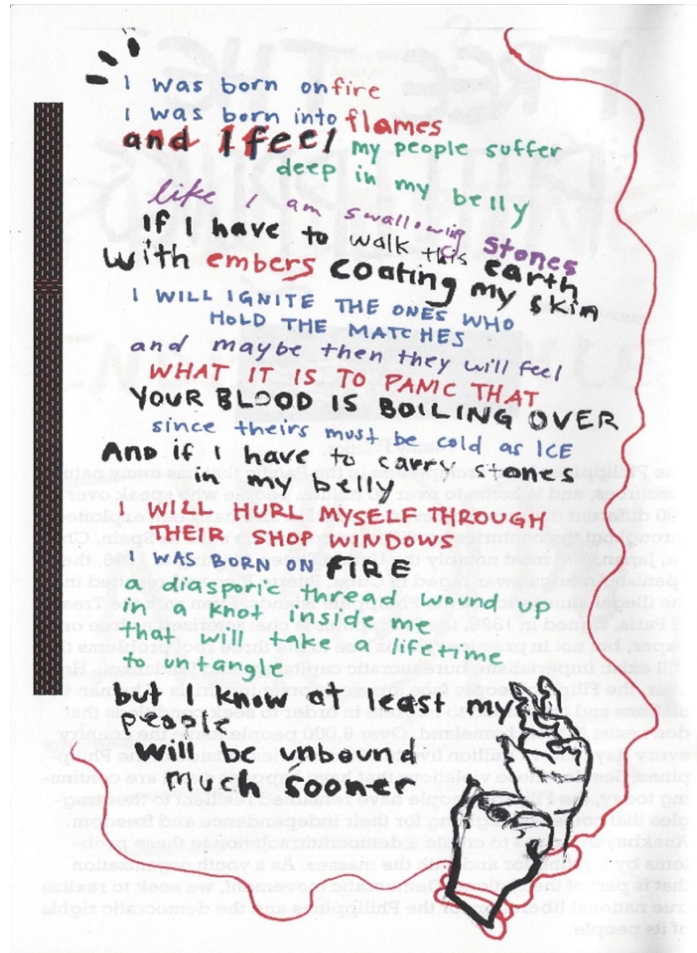


Fig. 7 Page 4 of Anakbayan Portland’s zine, which features a stylized poem and a small drawing, has no official title. Scanned from zine.

The author continues this metaphor of martyrdom with the following lines: “And if I have to carry stones in my belly / I WILL HURL MYSELF THROUGH THEIR SHOP WINDOWS.” While the fire metaphor touched on the pains of imperialism and colonization, these lines indicate a more pointed martyr-like action in the form of attacking “shop” windows specifically; this



reference to businesses and storefronts may be a nod to the third basic problem upon which Anakbayan's methodological framework is built: bureaucratic capitalism. By throwing themselves through a shop window, they would not be committing a targeted act of violence against an individual but rather direct action against a conglomerate or a corporation that consists of many intertwined people and systems. Anakbayan USA takes its direct action very seriously and studies its successes and failures in depth with every mobilization they perform (we will explore Anakbayan's intersecting uses of mobilization and social media in the next chapter). Anakbayan USA strongly abides by one key rule of direct action in particular: that in order for any public mobilization to be direct action, "business as usual" must be disturbed or disrupted directly.<sup>53</sup> The self-described "hurling" to which the speaker refers, whether literal or metaphorical, would undoubtedly be considered a method of direct action as defined by Anakbayan USA.

What, then, would be the long-term purpose for such violence/intense action? The speaker points to a binding thread, whose need to be unraveled takes precedence over the speaker's personal safety and wellbeing. The thread is interpersonal, multigenerational, cultural, economic, and beyond the individual. The speaker sees the need to unravel this as important enough to provoke the direct action they take by destroying the shop windows of their oppressors. This ideology is best exemplified by the last two stanzas of the piece. The first, which reads "I was born on FIRE / a diasporic thread wound up / in a knot inside me / that will take a lifetime / to untangle" reiterates the lasting effect of imperialist violence and oppression against the Filipino diaspora. In this stanza, the diaspora is named via the line "a diasporic thread wound up." The speaker also states that the thread "will take a lifetime / to untangle," which further recognizes the reality of large-scale resistance movements: they often take time and effort from multiple parties over

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<sup>53</sup> Ina Jane, "Direct Action Workshop" (Lecture, Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019).

multiple generations. One of Anakbayan USA's missions is to oust the Duterte regime "within our lifetime."<sup>54</sup> This wording is fairly self-explanatory: Anakbayan USA views the ousting of the Duterte administration as a project taking years upon years with a reasonable goal being within the lifetimes of its current members, who range from 13 to 35 years of age. This "lifetime / to untangle," then, fits in the larger context of the organization's greater mission.

The second stanza, which reads "but I know at least my / people / will be unbound / much sooner," falls among the hands wrapped in the red thread that borders the bottom and right margins of the page. In this stanza lies the motive and hope that fuels many of Anakbayan's *kasamas*, both in the United States and the Philippines alike: that the "people" to which both groups belong "will be unbound / much sooner." This rehabilitation, which would presumably come from the liberation of the Philippines and the Philippine people, would bring about healing across the diaspora. This healing cannot be proven or demonstrated via statistics or sociological approaches, but rather is a more abstract cultural healing and growth process. Dr. Sean Chabot of Eastern Washington University argues that this form of civil resistance, drawn so strongly from a more abstract and personal desire for a healed collective is exemplary of his theory of *phronetic* social resistance, a response and critique to Gene Sharp's heralded *episteme* of "political *jiu-jitsu*" and nonviolent direct action. According to Chabot, "the power of activists to realize visions of beloved community and participatory democracy primarily depends on practical wisdom in concrete situations."<sup>55</sup> In the context of "I Was Born on Fire," the speaker's imagining of a people "who will be unbound / much sooner" informs and motivates their activism. The activism described in the poem points to

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<sup>54</sup> "Within our lifetime" was common phrasing among various presentations at Anakbayan USA 3rd National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, 2019

<sup>55</sup> Sean Chabot, "Making Sense of Civil Resistance: From Theories and Techniques to Social Movement *Phronesis*," in *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle*, ed. Kurt Schock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 227-257.

the blurred line between nonviolent and violent activism, which supports Chabot's less clinical approach to direct action methodology. Chabot argues that while Sharp "draws definite lines between violence and nonviolence," the realities of activist spaces reveal flaws in Sharp's argument. Chabot argues, "Actual experiences and events show that [violent v. nonviolent] binary is not so stable or clear-cut...any political action involves some degree of physical force and that resistance is never totally nonviolent."<sup>56</sup> "I Was Born on Fire" reveals the more complicated, blurrier elements of direct action that complicate the straightforward narratives of Gene Sharp's *episteme* of "political *jiu-jitsu*" and the "Mobilize" artist's thought process.

"Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance" teaches, imagines, and expresses the practical, the ideal, and the emotional elements of executing direct action on a local level. It shows that not only do local chapters of Anakbayan USA visualize themselves as the subjects of imperialist violence against the Filipino diaspora, but also as possible key enactors of impactful change to the ongoing military presence in the Philippines because of their positions within the United States. In the following chapter, I examine what this action looks like when Anakbayan USA members from across the country come together to perform direct action together, and document that action on their far-reaching social media platforms.

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<sup>56</sup> Chabot, *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle*, 234.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Place, Space, and Anakbayan USA's Third National Congress

On November 30th through December 2nd, 2019, Anakbayan USA held its Third National Congress in Los Angeles, California, with the theme “Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship | Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime.”<sup>57</sup> The Congress, which is held every three years, aims to bring all the chapters of Anakbayan USA into a single place to convene, educate one another, connect and encourage each other, and collectivize their mission as a national organization (including making amendments to the organization’s constitution and other materials) for the following three years before the next Congress. This past year’s Congress included national and international “situationers,”<sup>58</sup> solidarity panels of allied organizations, amendments and approvals to segments of the national organization’s constitution,<sup>59</sup> and small educational sessions on propaganda development, direct action, and local organization. On the last day, kasamas came together to protest the United States’ imperialist destruction of Philippine infrastructure and the ongoing devastation of Filipino lives via the Trump administration’s bolstering of the Duterte administration’s actions (both via the American president’s own words of praise for Duterte’s bloody war on drugs<sup>60</sup> and via US military support<sup>61</sup> for said war). Anakbayan USA kasamas from chapters across the country marched, chanted, carried hand-painted signs, and demonstrated their

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<sup>57</sup> Anakbayan USA, “Laban Kabataan,” Facebook, October 21, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/AnakbayanUsa/photos/p.2544320125657864/2544320125657864/?type=1&theater>.

<sup>58</sup> A “situationer” is a presentation by any member of Anakbayan updating members of the organization on the current state of certain points or issues of interest, such as economic issues facing Filipino Americans, US military activity in the Philippines, and so on.

<sup>59</sup> As the Anakbayan and Anakbayan USA constitutions are confidential to registered members of the organizations, I will not be sharing any elements from the amendment and approval portion of the Congress in this thesis.

<sup>60</sup> Louis Nelson, “Trump praises Duterte for ‘unbelievable job’ cracking down on drugs in the Philippines,” last modified May 24, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/24/trump-rodrigo-duterte-call-transcript-238758>.

<sup>61</sup> Anakbayan USA, “Join the Struggle to Oust the US-Duterte Regime!” December 2, 2019, pamphlet.

solidarity in action as they organized in the name of liberation for the Filipino people, both at home and abroad.

As I have explained in previous chapters, Anakbayan USA is no stranger to the historical implications and theoretical methodology baked into their mobilization efforts. The organization consistently places itself in conversation with and in relation to other issues of protest and activism happening in the United States via multiple methods and perspectives; I have touched on examples of appealing to diasporic connections to a broken motherland via YouTube recruitment videos, using the technique of “linking and raising” the issue of climate change to the cause of justice for Filipinos on TikTok, and the more personal imagining of nonviolent direct action in local chapters’ zine pages. No example, however, is quite as powerful in exemplifying what it means for Anakbayan USA members to mobilize in the United States itself, the “belly of the beast,” as the sight of kasamas collecting en masse on the streets of Los Angeles, exemplifying their digital and print messages in the physical realm via protest demonstration.

In this chapter, I use images from the 2019 Anakbayan USA Third National Congress posted on Anakbayan USA’s Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, as well as paper materials used on what I call their “mobilization tour” on December 2nd, to place Anakbayan USA in the larger conversation of protest and activism in the United States, Filipino and otherwise. I argue that the media covering the National Congress’ mobilization strongly represent the organization’s goals, the ideas of how to execute those, and the significance of their presence on United States soil by targeting their demonstrations at both culturally and historically relevant spaces and documenting those demonstrations on their social media platforms. In doing so, Anakbayan USA commits their in-person demonstration to public digital memory, both creating agitating propaganda and exemplifying the direct action methods they visualize as expressed in Chapter Two. I support this

argument through the analysis of two key materials. First, I look at a photo from Twitter of a sign Anakbayan members hung on a statue of General Douglas MacArthur and compare it to a similar defacement of a Christopher Columbus statue in Providence, Rhode Island, in 2018. Second, I look at Instagram coverage of the last stop on Anakbayan USA’s mobilization tour at the Philippine consulate in Los Angeles, where demonstrators ripped prints of Philippines president Duterte’s face in half. I analyze the visual importance of space and place considering these two mobilization actions and their documentation to argue the significance of Anakbayan USA’s presence in the United States not just digitally or textually, but physically as well.

**Anakbayan-USA (@anakbayanUSA), “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist,” Twitter photo.<sup>62</sup>**

Anakbayan USA’s first stop on its December 2nd mobilization tour was to march, chant, and speak at MacArthur park in the Westlake neighborhood of Los Angeles in front of the statue of General Douglas MacArthur. A few members of Anakbayan USA leadership spoke on a portable mic and speaker while other protestors stood with signs, banners, and bandanas featuring the famous “ka” symbol of Anakbayan. As the culminating event of the protest at MacArthur park, the protestors hung a red sign on the statue of General MacArthur with the words “U.S. Imperialist | #1 Terrorist | Anakbayan USA”. The organization posted a picture to Twitter of the statue and the sign hanging on MacArthur’s neck (see Fig. 8 and Fig. 9).

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<sup>62</sup> Anakbayan-USA (@anakbayanUSA), “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist,” Twitter photo, December 2, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AnakbayanUSA/status/1201579667410554880>.



**Fig. 8** Anakbayan USA posted a photo of the visual demonstration to Twitter with the caption “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist.” Screenshot from Twitter.



**Fig. 9** The expanded photo from Fig. 8. Taken from Twitter.

Anakbayan vandalized the monument as a protest against the idolization and immortalization of General Douglas MacArthur, a United States Army general who served as Field Marshall of the Philippine Army. One of his claims to fame was his quest to reclaim the Philippines from Japanese forces as an American territory during World War II. MacArthur, in a famous speech, promised “I shall return” after being forced to flee from the island of Bataan to Australia in 1942.<sup>63</sup> While his impassioned pledge signified the general’s supposed love for the Philippines, his military control of the archipelago was, to many, a continued attack on the sovereignty of the Pacific nation with none of the benefits of United States aid in defense against Japanese forces when the time came. Regardless, mainstream history remembers MacArthur as a war hero of both

<sup>63</sup> Douglas MacArthur, “I Shall Return,” March 21, 1942. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=18&v=NEbwuehH35I&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=18&v=NEbwuehH35I&feature=emb_title).

the United States and the Philippines.<sup>64</sup> To Anakbayan and Anakbayan USA, however, General MacArthur is but another arm of U.S. imperialism as “the number one enemy of people struggling for peace and justice across the globe.”<sup>65</sup> MacArthur is a symbol of the farce that is Philippines-United States harmony; more accurately, he symbolizes how the United States shielded itself from its true identity as an empire desiring to expand in space and power at the expense of the Filipino people.<sup>66</sup>

The image posted is almost completely engulfed in the massive wall and dilapidated pool/fountain portion of the memorial monument. In the center, A small and reserved looking metal statue of General MacArthur stands, bookended on the left and right with walls etched with the words “SOLDIER” (left) and “STATESMAN” (right). Two quotes, illegible from Anakbayan’s photo, lie etched underneath each title on either side of the statue. Around MacArthur’s neck hangs the sign left by Anakbayan USA members in its iconic color scheme: red and yellow with black and white accents. The photo appears to be posted with no edits or color correction, and the gloomy tones make the bit of sky above the memorial and the red of the sign the only striking pops of color against the overwhelming presence of concrete.

The “vandalism” Anakbayan USA committed against the MacArthur memorial represents only a mild form of anti-monument aggression, particularly regarding statues of imperialist powers. Just months before in October, unknown individuals vandalized a statue of Christopher Columbus to a far more extreme degree, covering the controversial colonial explorer’s body with

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<sup>64</sup> Barbara Silberdick Feinberg, *Douglas MacArthur: American Hero* (Danbury: Franklin Watts, 1999).

<sup>65</sup> “Anakbayan-USA 3<sup>rd</sup> National Congress: Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship! Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime!” *Anakbayan USA* (blog), December 15, 2019, [anakbayanusa.org/congress2019/](http://anakbayanusa.org/congress2019/).

<sup>66</sup> Jedi Jimenez, “National Training,” Anakbayan USA National Congress, Los Angeles, CA, December 1, 2020.



red paint and spray painting “GENOCIDE” along the base. Accompanying the vandalism, a red sign with white writing reads “STOP CELEBRATING GENOCIDE” (See fig. 10).<sup>67</sup>



**Fig. 10** A statue of explorer Christopher Columbus in Rhode Island stands vandalized on Columbus Day, 2019. Image from *Rare News*.

The red paint across the Columbus statue’s body and in the background of the sign looks like blood dripping from the explorer’s face and communicates a more severe and urgent message than Anakbayan USA’s demonstration in L.A. does. Perhaps Anakbayan USA could have made a greater impact with its efforts to provoke outside attention to its cause by going the extra mile in its vandalism. But considering issues of safety and ability to continue organizing, the group chose to keep their vandalism to something easily removable and less antagonizing. The enactors of the Rhode Island statue vandalism held multiple privileges. First, their topic of protest was relatively well-known; students learn of Columbus’ journey to the American continent in history classes across the country and even the Library of Congress credits the explorer as “a mysterious and controversial figure who has been variously described as... a visionary genius, a mystic, a national

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<sup>67</sup> Silke Jasso, “Christopher Columbus Statues Vandalized in Protest of Holiday,” *Rare News*, October 14, 2019, <https://rare.us/rare-news/christopher-columbus-statues-vandalized/>.

hero, a failed administrator, a naïve entrepreneur, and a ruthless and greedy imperialist.”<sup>68</sup> The vast cultural knowledge of Christopher Columbus allows the protestors to anonymously make a statement and vandalize the statue without having to give identifying context or additional information that would put them in danger of facing legal consequences for their actions. MacArthur’s historical legacy doesn’t have that type of cultural capital for those in the United States; his controversial image is more well known to Filipinos than he is to Americans. Protest against MacArthur’s commemoration in Los Angeles, then, requires more context than the protest against Columbus’ commemoration in Rhode Island. In order for Anakbayan USA to effectively carry out their goals of “linking and raising” they had to attach their name to their visual protest. The sign around the MacArthur statue’s neck, then, necessarily identifies the group that committed the act. For the sake of minimizing any negative encounters with law enforcement, Anakbayan USA had to be prudent in not only *how* they damaged the statue, but also *how much* they damaged it.

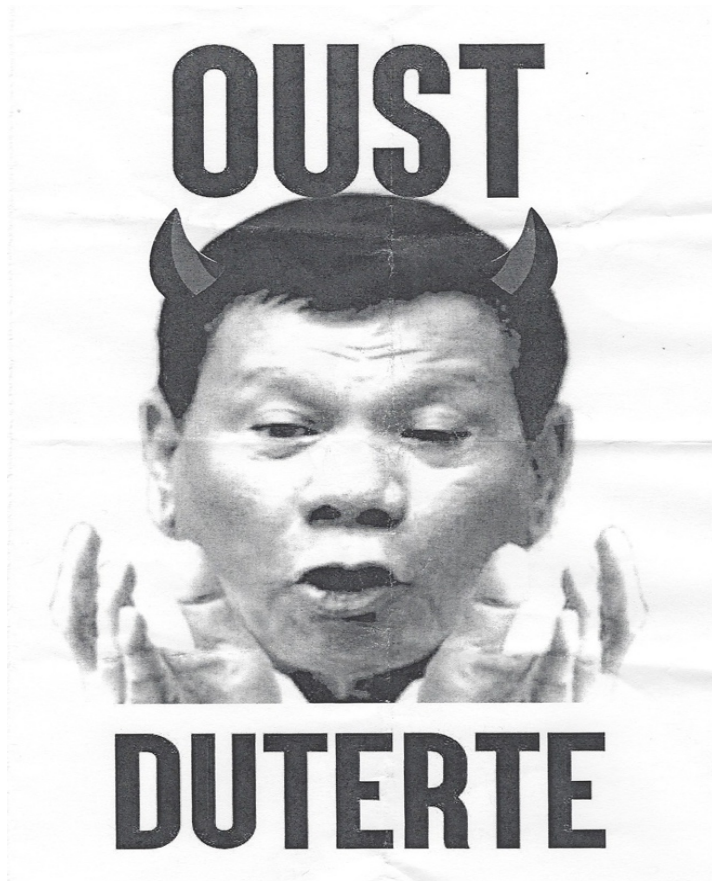
As a consequence, the small red sign appears to be marginally insignificant in comparison to the vastness of the monument. The small difference it does make, however, still draws all the attention of the photo. An almost too-pointed metaphor for Anakbayan USA’s impact on the state of the Philippines, the small red sign conveys its strong and simple message: The United States cannot absolve itself from the genocide so many of its immortalized figures committed for imperialist gain. Regardless of how large and looming the mark of conquest has on the minds of the American people, groups like Anakbayan USA and those who marked the Rhode Island Columbus statue will always come forward with their own forms of resistance, small and large, to remind the masses around them of the red marks in America’s history of heroes.

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<sup>68</sup> “1492: An Ongoing Voyage | Christopher Columbus: Man and Myth,” *Library of Congress*, Accessed April 1, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/1492/columbus.html>.

**Anakbayan USA (@anakbayanUSA), “Makibaka, Huwog Matakot,” Instagram video.<sup>69</sup>**

To end Anakbayan USA’s December 2nd mobilization tour, the Anakbayan USA protestors marched together to the Philippine consulate for their last demonstration. An Instagram video published to the Anakbayan USA account recounts the scene: standing in front of The Equitable Building, in which the Philippine Consulate General’s office resides, kasamas gather with banners, signs, their chapters’ flags, and photos of Duterte’s face with cartoon devil’s horns photoshopped on his head. The words “OUST DUTERTE” frame the top and bottom of the paper’s image (See Fig. 11).



**Fig. 11** Anakbayan USA demonstrators held and tore a photograph of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte with devil horns on his head. Scanned handout.

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<sup>69</sup> Anakbayan USA (@anakbayanUSA), “Makibaka, Huwog Matakot,” Instagram video, December 2, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B5lfmafAk8C/>.

In the Instagram video, kasamas hold up these photos along with their other materials, all while wearing matching tan and red shirts. Chairperson of Anakbayan USA, Adrian Bonifacio, begins the call-and-response chants to invigorate the spirit of the organization:

Bonifacio: “**Imperyalismo!**” (*“Imperialism!”*)

Anakbayan USA: “**Ibagsak!**” (*“Tear it down!”*)

Bonifacio: “**Pyudalismo!**” (*“Feudalism!”*)

Anakbayan USA: “**Ibagsak!**” (*“Tear it down!”*)

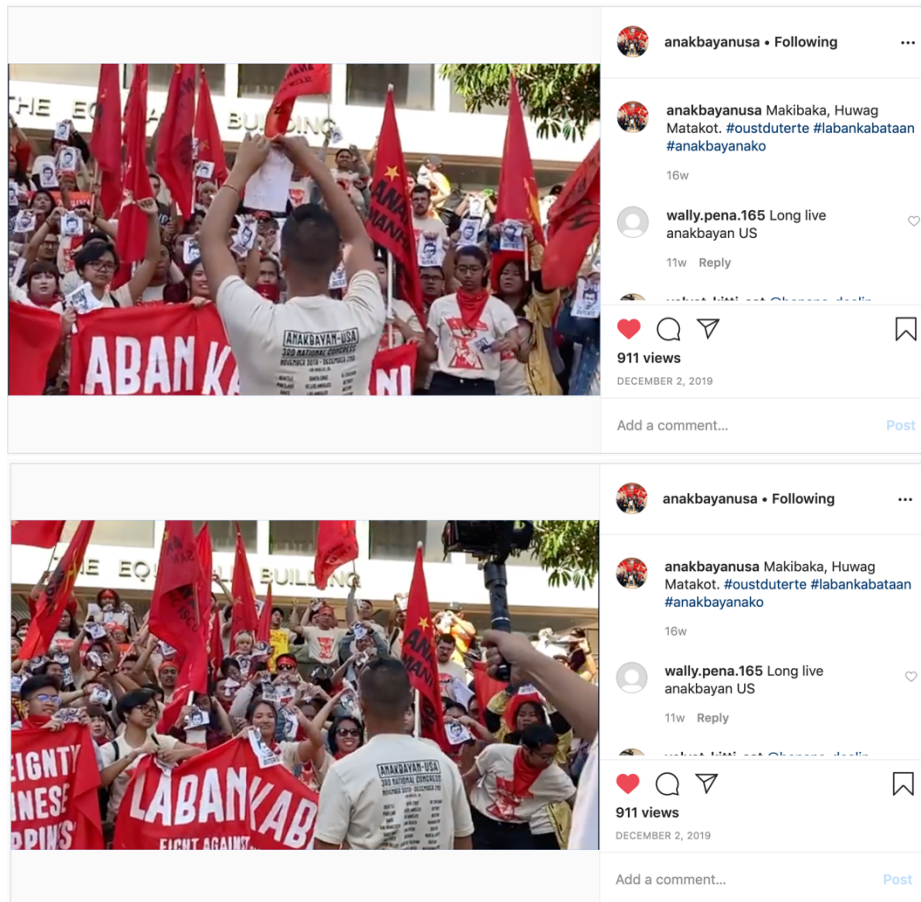
Bonifacio: “**Kapitalismo!**” (*“Capitalism!”*)

Anakbayan USA: “**Ibagsak!**” (*“Tear it down!”*)

Bonifacio: “**Dutertelismo!**” (*lit. “Duterte-ism,” meaning “The Duterte Empire!”*)

Anakbayan USA: “**Babagsak!**” (*“He will fall!”*)

Then, in a slowed-down video clip, the group members tear their pages of Duterte’s face in half. Some members in the crowd throw pieces of the paper in the air, and they fly up to contrast white against the red of the flags. Those flags fly as high as they can in front of the staggering height of The Equitable Building (See Fig. 12). Seeing the red against a looming tan stone structure, I recall the “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist” sign hung on the neck of a metal MacArthur monument just hours before. This time, the red disrupting the plain tan of the establishment is larger, stronger, and more alive. Attached to this sea of red is a sea of real people from around the country who collectively believe in fighting for a common cause, exemplified in the call-and-response chant above.



**Fig. 12** Anakbayan USA demonstrators, with leadership from Chairperson Adrien Bonifacio (facing back), tear images of Duterte’s faces in front of the Philippine Consulate General’s office in Los Angeles, California. Screenshot video from Instagram.

Anakbayan USA’s demonstration in front of the Philippine Consulate General’s office that day realizes the imagery set forth in the previous chapter’s zine page in Fig. 6. The red of the Anakbayan flag against the white or tan of United States establishment buildings runs as a common thread throughout the organization’s propaganda and is brought to reality by the group’s organizing together on the steps of The Equitable Building. The belief Anakbayan USA members hold in their ability to effect change on United States soil finds its voice when the organization collectively puts it into action via well-placed, intentional, and directed demonstrations. The Instagram post capturing the moment reads “Makibaka, Huwog Matakot. #oustduterterte #labankabataan #anakbayanako” in the caption, which translates to “Dare to Struggle, Do Not Be

Afraid. #OustDuterte #YouthFight #IamAnakbayan.” Anakbayan USA uses these mantras and chants within the video, as part of their mobilization while marching, and in their social media captions to consolidate their messaging to concise and provocative catchphrases for chapters to use in their organization efforts across the country.

The banner held across the front of the protesting crowd displays the Congress’ theme, stated at the beginning of this chapter: “Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship | Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime.” This statement serves as the “what” when breaking down Anakbayan and its mission, and the demonstration itself illustrates the “how” by mirroring members’ idealizations of direct action and mobilization. The publicization of the demonstration is also not limited to the physical space alone; “Makibaka, Huwag Matakot” reaches the feed of every USA individual chapter, remote members of the organization and other unaffiliated followers of the organization’s Instagram page around the world. While the physical impact of the demonstration in front of the Philippine Consulate General’s office is small, its digital imprint spans across nations and classes. Demonstrating in front of the Philippine Consulate General in L.A., of course, is of smaller scale than Fig. 6’s illustration of demonstrating in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. It is not, however, lost in obscurity. Rather, it demonstrates the potential for Anakbayan USA to grow to the level it aspires to reach in order to break the chains they visualize Duterte’s administration, with the help of the United States and other powers, to have placed around the Philippine people.

Directed mobilization and the repeated visual metaphor of the Anakbayan colors signifying change in the locations where such mobilizations occur bring to light Anakbayan USA’s purpose in working and demonstrating in the belly of the beast they call home. *Place*, i.e. *where* Anakbayan USA chooses to demonstrate, plays a key role in the impact such demonstrations have for the

organization's mission. The placement of the demonstrations at the MacArthur memorial in MacArthur park and the Philippine Consulate General's office in Koreatown hold both historical meaning and current political relevance respectively. First, by placing their first mobilization campaign at the MacArthur memorial, they perform their "linking and raising" technique by linking the place of MacArthur park to the history of MacArthur himself and therefore connecting the Philippines and Anakbayan USA's message to the Los Angeles monument. Secondly, by protesting in front of the Philippine Consulate General's office, Anakbayan USA demonstrators linked the Los Angeles space (and the people inside) to current events in the Philippines, bringing attention to the role United States activity has to the current state of the Philippine people.

*Space*, the visual geography of Anakbayan USA's demonstrations in the images and videos they posted on social media, also contributes to the mobilizations' impact. I return to Barthes theory of the symbolic message as well as his words on subjects of an image: "special importance," he argues, "must be accorded to what could be called the posing of objects, where the meaning comes from the objects photographed." Barthes finds particular meaning to the location and posing of subjects within an image, and the space they take up. He continues, stating "the interest lies in the fact that the objects are accepted inducers of associations of ideas...or, in a more obscure way, are veritable symbols."<sup>70</sup> In the photo of the vandalized MacArthur statue posted to Anakbayan USA's Twitter account, the space the red of the sign takes up in relation to the vast gray of the rest of the monument presents a visual symbol of the small but growing movement of Filipino Americans advocating for the people of the Philippines. In the case of the Instagram video in front of the Philippine Consulate, the larger and more lively image of the sea of red flags and chanting protestors demonstrates the faces behind the direct action itself and symbolizes a more fierce and

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<sup>70</sup> Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 22.

people-powered grassroots movement. With the Los Angeles mobilization, and with every mobilization local chapters execute and publicize to social media, a single message is clear even beyond the call to end the US-Duterte regime: Anakbayan USA was here, and it “shall return.”

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I reflect on how Anakbayan USA’s presence in the United States has personally affected myself others as members of the damaged diaspora the organization aims to connect to the homeland and the cause of Philippine liberation. Via the words of an unknown essayist from Anakbayan USA based in New York, I examine the more intimate and personal elements of Anakbayan USA’s significance for modern Filipino Americans.



## CONCLUSION

### “Makibaka, Huwog Matakot!”

The journey to discovering Anakbayan USA was far more personal to me than I had ever imagined it would be. My journey in writing this thesis resulted in my first ever plane ride, across the country, by myself, to a place with far more Filipinos than I had ever been in contact with before in my life. Upon arrival to Los Angeles, I had the privilege of connecting with family for the first time in twenty years. Classic trips to museums and other tourist attractions in the city marked my first day in L.A. The next day was the beginning of the Anakbayan USA National Congress, where I planned to meet some new faces and collect materials for my thesis. I sorely underestimated the effect the people of Anakbayan USA would have on me and my understanding of my own identity as a Filipino, as an American, and as both. No amount of writing could accurately recount the energy of that experience. Luckily, however, a four-hour-long flight home leaves plenty of time to collect—or, maybe more fittingly, spill—thoughts on to a page. I messily scribbled the following in my notebook as I soared through unfamiliar air from coast to coast:

*What an incredible, unfathomably life changing experience.*

*What power the people have, what conviction, what intelligence, what organization, what passion. What a dynamic community. I don't know that I'll ever be the same.*

*Anakbayan now occupies my heart and mind in ways I didn't know they could be occupied. I arrived at [location redacted] alone, wearing a metal pin of the Philippine and American flags crossed like allies. I wasn't sure what to expect from the next three days.*

*Every time I met someone and told them that I wasn't affiliated from a chapter and had come by myself, I was met with surprise. It made me feel both alone and special. 'Yes, I'm the one person at this Congress flying solo.' How wrong I was.*

*In Anakbayan, no one is alone.*

My experience with Anakbayan awakened me to a new kind of community; this time, I did not have to choose between my culture and my activism. This time, I found people who stood with me in both. I had never felt that before in my life. I often thought to myself that the feeling would go away once I returned to my home in the American South. No longer surrounded by other Filipino youth, no longer surrounded by those agitating, organizing, and mobilizing for liberation in the Philippines, I would lose my verve for the passion that drives Anakbayan USA and see no need for representation in my hometowns of Nashville and Atlanta. But Anakbayan USA could not and would not be forgotten; on my Instagram feed, on my Facebook timeline, in my Twitter mentions, on my bookshelves, on my walls—Anakbayan dug itself so deeply in my life that I could never think to try to remove it.

The past three chapters of this thesis have revealed the many ways in which Anakbayan USA presents itself, its mission, and its action to the world. Anakbayan USA uses a myriad of media to reach outside audiences, always looking to invite new youth to join the movement to advocate for liberation for the Filipino people. Chapter One demonstrated that while all these methods vary in their successes, the organization progresses along with the times in which it finds itself, adapting with evolving technology to introduce participatory media-making into its recruitment efforts. On a more local level, Anakbayan USA's chapters publish paper materials that reflect not only the individual voices of the organization, but also the grassroots element of the group that will always be present. Observing common threads of rhetoric and schools of thought on direct action that chapters teach across the country, Chapter Two explained how paper materials like zines show the many sides to the direct action coin and remind the reader that national movements come from personal convictions, no matter how large they grow. There is a responsibility, then, for Anakbayan USA as a conglomerate of all USA chapters, to coalesce its

members into meaningful action. As Chapter Three illustrated, Anakbayan USA practices its teachings as a collective front of combined chapters and reflects the convictions of the people who make up those chapters to make their mark in key ways that point to both historical and contemporary significance as an argument not only for their cause, but also for the relevancy of their positionality in fighting for that cause.

Anakbayan USA exemplifies the capacities, opportunities, and limitations for diasporic activism and mobilization as it (and organizations like it) traverse the constantly transforming digital age by a) demonstrating a robust collective goal to end the US-Duterte regime; b) presenting, teaching, and visualizing a methodological framework for directing efforts on U.S. soil to change in the Philippines; and c) a strong understanding of the importance of its place in the United States as at the heart of the Philippines' history of struggle and resistance in the name of independence and national sovereignty. Anakbayan USA is not the largest diasporic movement for justice in the United States by any means. It is, as this thesis has illustrated, a prime case study for what the beginnings of such a movement can look like as it adapts, grows, and learns to market itself in the United States.

The organization continues to lay down its foundation as a “community of practice” in which its members can not only continuously learn about the causes for which they fight, but also learn how to bring those causes to public light in the U.S. sphere. In this way, it serves as a key model of what the media activism theorists of *By Any Media Necessary* call “the conditions that enable learners to question and rebuild a community’s foundations.”<sup>71</sup> By consistently learning from and critiquing their own progress, Anakbayan USA has the opportunity to take control of their propaganda strategy and continue moving into a more modern, participatory media model.

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<sup>71</sup> Jenkins et al., *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*), 295.

This thesis has contributed in part to Anakbayan USA’s process of self-reflection and growth by inspiring the organization to develop a National Propaganda Committee as well as a National Propaganda Archive. Starting with the materials found in this thesis, Anakbayan USA will begin documenting their existing propaganda materials and using those to educate their national leadership on how to better progress toward effective media strategies and expansion of the organization. Anakbayan USA has taken the lessons of this work to heart and is currently organizing to take advantage of their own media strategy.<sup>72</sup>

That Anakbayan USA grows and adapts continually with heart and direction is no question. But to commend the organization for the evident praxis in its propaganda materials alone would be to miss a large part of the more abstract, more intimate heart of the group. I cannot ignore the healing and invigorating power of finding a movement that celebrates and finds significance in the liminal space of being in the Filipino diaspora. Anakbayan USA serves as a space not just for the movement toward Philippine liberation, but also for Filipino Americans to share and make sense of the complicated relationships they have with themselves, their heritages, and their dissonant homelands. As part of the materials for the Third National Congress, Anakbayan USA national leadership asked for contributions from any and all chapters to the first ever national zine, titled “Laban Kabataan!”<sup>73</sup> The sixteen-panel, ten-piece zine features work from across the country, but two pieces in particular resonated with me the most. First, an essay by an unknown author, titled “Hanggang sa Tagumpay,”<sup>74</sup> reflects on the feeling of liminal space from the perspective of an activist flying from New York to Manila to fight the fight for liberation in the motherland. The speaker struggles with the conflict of feeling ties to both places they hesitantly call home, but not

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<sup>72</sup> Dominico Vega, “Propaganda Workshop,” Anakbayan USA Third National Congress, December 1, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> “Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship | Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime,” Anakbayan USA, Los Angeles, CA, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Lit. “To Success.”

feeling that they can truly claim either place: one, because it is a homeland they have never known; the other, because while it is the land and life they know, it is also the home to their people's oppressor. "Can a movement transcend a liminal space?" They ask. "Are liminal spaces not a dissociative experience kababayan must enter, a consequence of forgoing baggage that grounds them in a decadent life?" They claim that the experience of diasporic activism requires the discomfort of not fitting into the binary between oppressor and oppressed, between privileged and desolate—the movement must toggle that line as well.

Second, a small graphic novel-style panel by an unknown artist speaks to the ever-elusive, deeply emotional "why" that drives Anakbayan USA kasamas (See Fig. 13).



**Fig. 13** Anakbayan USA's zine featured a graphic novel page, about, illustrating a kasama's answer to the question: "Why are we fighting?"

“Why are we fighting?” The graphic asks. “Faces come to mind.” In this panel, a person stands on the edge of a coast, facing out toward the water. “Faces of those I love. Faces of those suffering.” Three faces take up the entirety of their frames, side by side. First a joyful face. Then, a face with an arm wiping away sweat from the brow, holding a sickle. The sickle forms a halo-like shape above the head of the third figure, the face of an elderly woman. “Faces of those no longer here.” These three faces can be assumed as three loved ones of the speaker, the person on the coast, pictured in the first and second panel. In the next three panels, the speaker introduces the audience to the side of the fight unknown even to them. Peasants working: “Faces of those I do not even know.” Andrés Bonifacio, leader of the Katipunan Resistance that would eventually become Anakbayan: “Faces of those who did not know me.” A modern Anakbayan member, protesting in front of a “Laban Kabataan” sign, presumably in the Philippines: “Who do not know me.” Finally, that same Anakbayan PI member, standing at a coast, looking out along their waters, back in the direction of the speaker in the second panel: “But who fight for me too.” The artist/speaker illustrates their personal connection to their activism by conjuring the faces that have and continue to affect and be affected by the struggle. In doing so, they connect themselves to the movement in the Philippines by developing a bridge of relationships and intertwined lives. The speaker of “Hanggang sa Tagumpay” reflects on a similar conviction of bridge-building and inevitable intimate connection to their motherland: “From Andrés Bonifacio to the martyrs of last year, last month, last week—they reach out, over mountains and seas and cities, thousands of miles, thousands of lifetimes away. And we hear them. And we answer.” Both speakers allude to martyrs and activists of past and present when explaining their connection to the movement. Perhaps this is a result of family teaching, or the teachings from Anakbayan USA itself. Nevertheless, it serves as a key driving emotional factor for their resistance.

I return to the question of liminal space, and I recall my initial questions once again. What does it mean to be American? To be Filipino? To be neither? To be both? To be something else? As I have found in my research and my subsequent connection to this movement, there is never just a single answer. As the essayist writes to conclude their work:

“What a dual life I will lead, one of a Filipino and one of an American.

However, this is simply a form of offering my life to the movement—no longer for myself, but for much, much more. To be a bridge, sharing and touching the lives that pass through. To finally transcend the bound of history and distance.

No longer will we be from-diaspora-to-homeland,  
But one home, one movement.  
Hanggang sa tagumpay.”

I *am* both. I *am* neither. I *am* something else. I am touched by lives I have and have not lived and propelled by faces I do and do not know and that do and do not know me. I am motivated by both a history and a language I have just begun to learn. Both, neither, something else.

My last name is Spanish—but that is not the end of my story.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this thesis is that it is a living archive of a movement that deserves to be remembered. Inspired by Dr. Kelly Lytle Hernández’s “rebel archive,” which collected activist materials of black and brown people affected by incarceration in Los Angeles from 1771-1965,<sup>75</sup> and Dr. Marisol Lebrón’s social media archival work in her book *Policing Life and Death: Race Violence, and Resistance in Puerto Rico*, I have aimed to develop a work that contributes to the formal institutional memory of Anakbayan USA and the

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<sup>75</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernández, “The Rebel Archive,” in *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 199-220.

movement for which it fights daily. As the future of the movement remains so uncertain, the present becomes ever vital.

As I think of the potential future for Anakbayan USA, I fear for the sustainability of a movement that must fight tooth and nail to prove its relevance on college campus grounds, across media platforms, and even within the home. I fear for the organization so heavily dependent on a youth plagued by a suffocating economy, a racist infrastructure, and international environmental and health disasters. I fear for Anakbayan USA and the young people of which it is comprised, as I imagine it is natural to do. When I fear like this, however, I remember the most important rallying cry of the Anakbayan movement:

“Makibaka! Huwog Matakot!”

“Dare to Struggle! Do Not Be Afraid!”



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## Images

**Fig. 1** Amazon. *Large Flag Philippine Revolution Flag of The Magdalo Faction of The Katipunan*. Accessed March 20, 2020. <https://www.amazon.com/magFlags-Philippine-Revolution-Katipunan-landscape/dp/B0173GAWH4>.

**Fig. 2** Anakbayan – UP Mindanao. *Untitled*. Facebook Profile Photo, May 7, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/UPMinAnakbayan/photos/a.460788250633649/1403982376314227/?type=3&theater>.

**Fig. 3** Anakbayan USA. “JOIN ANAKBAYAN.” YouTube video. April 22, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20k0uHqNCIY>.

**Fig. 4** emPathetic (@gagobaggins). “Join Anakbayan!” TikTok video, January 1, 2020.

**Fig. 5** Anakbayan Portland. “Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance.” Zine. Portland, OR, 2018.

**Fig. 6** Anakbayan Portland. “Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance,” 7.

**Fig. 7** Anakbayan Portland. “Stop the Killings: The Art of Resistance,” 4.

**Fig. 8** Anakbayan-USA (@anakbayanUSA). “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist.” Twitter photo, December 2, 2019. <https://twitter.com/AnakbayanUSA/status/1201579667410554880>.

**Fig. 9** Anakbayan-USA (@anakbayanUSA). “U.S. Imperialist, #1 Terrorist.”

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**Fig. 11** Anakbayan USA, “Oust Duterte.” Paper Handout. Los Angeles, CA, December 2, 2019.

**Fig. 12** Anakbayan USA (@anakbayanUSA). “Makibaka, Huwog Matakot.” Instagram video, December 2, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B5lmafAk8C/>.

**Fig. 13** Anakbayan USA. “Laban Kabataan! Fight Against Fascism and Dictatorship | Organize the People to Oust the US-Duterte Regime.” Zine, Los Angeles, CA, 2019.