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“My Experience as Asian American in the Northern Marianas Islands”

Even though it is a small area, the Northern Marianas Islands are undeniably full of different cultures and traditions. Many ethnic groups, specifically Asian citizens and Pacific Islanders, proudly call the CNMI their home; they comprise more than 80 percent of Saipan's population. Whether you were born or migrated from a different country, we still thrive as a community to empower one another.

My parents immigrated to the CNMI for work and started a family here. My identity as Asian American has been a little confusing. In the beginning, I felt as if I did not deserve to be a member of the Filipino community. I felt like my opinions and thoughts were invalid when discussing Filipino topics because I was raised away from the area of action and lived abroad. My different living situation made me feel as if I do not deserve the recognition Filipinos got. I struggled to find a label that I connected to, so I decided to research Filipino culture. At that moment was when I found out about the ethnic group that I was unknowingly part of, known as Asian Americans, who are Americans with Asian ancestry and/ or children of immigrated parents. This community was something I finally related to. On the island, I never felt indifferent because of my ethnicity, which was opposite to my other feelings. I was surrounded by other Asians, so whenever I was around them, I felt like I belonged with them. I liked that I could relate with other Asian Americans through shared experiences; it gave me comfort. Most of the representation here in the CNMI has been positive. When I see members from this community succeed, it not only impacts the view and generalization for our community, but it also

empowers me personally to strive for that success. It pushes me to fulfill the achievements that others succeeded in. It motivates me to become involved in that success and also positively represent the community. I am one of those community members, and I am proud to represent the Asian American Community.

I believe one of the best ways to respect and celebrate diversity in this community is by educating ourselves on each other's cultures. We can set an example for other communities to participate in Asian American and Pacific Islander appreciation month by first doing it within the community. Sharing about our experiences; getting to know each others' viewpoints is an expressive way to understand each others' lifestyles. Also, researching appropriate behaviors and mannerism is critical to be aware of when talking to other people from different countries; we should never offend anyone and be disrespectful. If we remove the negative energy between nationalities in the community, we can work together as one and spread love with other communities. Overall, being part of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community comes with many responsibilities, so being one with each other will help us all accomplish many goals.