AANHPIs in the Bay Area - Realizations Pre and Post DNA Fellowship

Prior to completing this fellowship, when posed with the task of describing the AANHPI experience in the Bay Area, I think I would have felt quite a bit of pressure, but then would have spoken confidently about language access, limited educational opportunities, barriers to accessing healthcare, the lack of resources for families of current and formerly incarcerated individuals, the lack of employment opportunities, among other issues that have impacted my own journey and those I know and love. As I near the end of this fellowship, I would answer this question in mostly the same way, but now, I feel even more pressure coupled with a fire in my belly to connect with others across generations and the Bay Area who are also seeking answers or are also trying to having their voices heard to share their unique experiences.

I would make more demands. I would make more demands around data gathering and disaggregation to be able to get an even clearer answer to this question. Then, I would make clear suggestions and calls to action based on the overall data as well as the nuances and unique experiences that exist for each group. I know that my perspective as a Tongan American female from the Bay Area is important, but I also know there are so many identities represented within the AANHPI umbrella, that I do not believe any one person can truly give enough detail about what it means to be AANHPI. There are definitely many overlaps in the experiences of individuals from different AANHPI groups, but I believe that gathering as many narratives and perspectives from different ethnic groups and multiple intersecting identities. is essential to tailoring resources to the specific needs of each community and generation. For example, from both my own experiences and from completing research during this fellowship, I have learned more about the fact that AANHPIs are the fastest growing racial group in the US. Within this group, there are communities that have been in the US since the early 20th century and communities or ethnic groups that are newer to the US and therefore, their needs are going to differ a bit being that their roots in the US are a bit shorter and there may be fewer members of that specific community settled here. However, some issues and needs may persist for multiple generations like support navigating complex systems like healthcare in the US, the justice system, education, etc, but then, each of these resources will need to be tailored to the specific group they are aiming to help whether by being in their native languages or placed in particular locations like at local churches with trusted community members, at clinics, in grocery stores, or schools.

Prior to this fellowship, I was familiar with a few organizations in the Bay Area that support PI communities specifically like All My Usos in San Francisco or ‘Anamatangi based out of East Palo Alto, but through this fellowship, I had the pleasure of learning about organizations who support AAs, NHPIs, and AANHPIs collectively in different regions throughout the Bay Area. Some of these organizations include Asian Pacific Fund for which I had the honor of being a fellow, AAPI Women Lead in Alameda County, Taulama for Tongans in San Mateo County, and International Children Assistance Network in Santa Clara County among so many others. This experience was extremely humbling as I learned so much more about

AANHPI experiences as well as how to go about organizing my thoughts, how to engage with other members of the community and listen, but also share, and how to be curious and ask questions and dig deeper to learn more and act on that evolving knowledge. This experience was also super eye opening to learn about people like myself and organizations filled with people with a fire in their bellies that are actually doing the work to bridge the gaps in resources these communities are experiencing. As a Tongan woman working in healthcare and attending college to further her education, it can often feel lonely and incredibly overwhelming trying to navigate these unfamiliar waters while also trying to build up her community and create access for future generations. However, to learn of and even meet so many trailblazers doing the exact same thing whether it be, advocating for affordable housing, creating access to higher education, providing language services and resources, or hosting health fairs for the community to bring screenings and healthcare directly to the Bay Area's most vulnerable populations, it is even more motivating and inspiring to keep at it with intention and purpose.