The Inaugural Fellowship Experience with AAPI Data

by Nayomi Her

As of January 16th, 2024, I became one of the inaugural Data-Narrative-Action fellows with AAPI Data. Becoming an inaugural fellow with AAPI Data is something I wouldn't have believed had I been told that five years ago, let alone seeing a Hmong woman in the research and policy space. While my undergraduate experience prepared me well for this fellowship, there is so much that I have learned in the last six months about myself and my future career in research and policy, all thanks to AAPI Data:

1. Finding connection in a remote environment
2. Reaffirming my commitment to data equity

Finding connection in a remote environment

Since my first interpersonal interaction with AAPI Data in the fellowship interview, I have left every meeting feeling more inspired and grounded in my work on Asian American economic outcomes. In the beginning, I held some worries that I would have a hard time connecting with the team since the fellowship is remote. In recognition of this, bi-weekly meetings that cover either professional development skills training (Skills Series) or discussion forums (Real Talks) were embedded into the fellowship.

- The Skills Series covered a range of professional development topics related to the Data-Narrative-Action framework:

    - **Data**: Designing a research project and what quantitative/qualitative methods you should use.
    - **Narrative**: Communicating the research findings in words and visualization for communities, policymakers, and everyone in between.
    - **Action**: Turning the findings into policy through partnership and advocacy.
- Real Talk discussions cultivated team bonding and interpersonal professional development across fellows and partner organizations, touching on topics such as:
    - Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) researchers in a white-dominant world
    - Networking and elevator introductions
    - Peer connection

With these bi-weekly meetings, I have felt connected with the team as if I have been physically working alongside them. These meetings are very interactive and typically take advantage of small-group discussions, which is super helpful in discussing these topics in detail with fellows from AAPI Data and other organizations that I don't get to interact with as much.

Reaffirming commitment to data equity

One of my main takeaways from this fellowship is that I am sure that I want to continue researching Asian American outcomes and advocating for data equity, especially in the realm of data disaggregation. As a part of this team, it has been highly fulfilling to be surrounded by so much support for AANHPI data equity and professionals with a wealth of knowledge on AANHPI research. Relating back to the Real Talk discussion on AANHPI researchers in a white-dominant world, this AANHPI-centered environment is something that I have been

missing. As a young professional looking to continue work in this field, this can be deterring but finding this network and support system is so important to avoid exhaustion and burnout. As a part of an organization focused on bridging AANHPI data with community impact, I have learned not only how long and slow the fight for data equity is but also how the wins in data equity and community impact empower my passion in this fight.

Conclusion

The Data-Narrative-Action fellowship has been a transformative experience, teaching me invaluable lessons about myself and my career in research and policy. The bi-weekly professional development sessions and discussion forums have helped me build strong connections despite being in a remote environment, growing my network and peer support in AANHPI advocacy, research, and policy. Being part of a team dedicated to AANHPI data equity has been fulfilling and empowering throughout my project and will stay with me after. The support and knowledge from AANHPI professionals have flourished my passion for this field and prepared me for a future of meaningful work in research and policy. I am more determined than ever to contribute to positive change and equity in the AANHPI community through rigorous research and impactful policy advocacy.