

Quarterly News Journal of the Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solidarity

Facing Justice

Fall/Winter 2005



FACES
develops new
strategies and
directions

Helen Toribio
Legacy Fund
awarded to
FACES

FACES returns
from Face2Face
Exchange Trip



**FILIPINO/AMERICAN COALITION
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SOLIDARITY**
Building Environmental Justice Across Borders

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Cover photograph courtesy of Tamarah Tilos

FACES envisions an interconnected world where people are healthy and free to realize their potential through cooperation and solidarity. We aspire for communities that are accountable for the safety and well-being of each other and Mother Earth. We hope for a world where people respect the interdependence of species, protect and preserve the resources of the environment, and sustain all living creatures for present and future generations



Gary King/Tamarah Tilos



Originally formed to seek environmental justice for the communities affected by toxic contamination at former U.S. military bases in the Philippines, FACES has evolved into an intergenerational organization that works for environmental justice transnationally within communities in the United States and in the Philippines, and builds partnerships through advocacy, education, service, and organizing.

New Directions, Building Solidarity

Message
FROM THE CHAIR



Dear FACES members, supporters, and allies,

When FACES formed in 2000, the thrust of our work was to educate and raise awareness, advocate, and build a vibrant constituency around the bases clean-up campaign. Our work was grounded in our partnership with our Philippine-based sister organization, which led the campaign in the Philippines.

As many of you witnessed, political challenges on the ground and on the national and international fronts, halted our work, and caused us to take stock of ourselves organizationally (see *Position Paper, 2003*). This spurred a process that involved engaging FACES members and supporters nationwide and reconnecting with Philippine communities and organizations to assess the strategic direction of the organization (see *2004 Trip Report*). We discovered that we needed to broaden our vision and mission to encompass the complex and nuanced relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines. Thus during our 3rd National Membership Conference in January 2005 we adopted a new vision, mission, strategy (see *National Conf. Report*), and soon after, a modified name.

To lead our broadened transnational environmental justice (TEJ) agenda, we hired a part-time staffer,

officially located our office at Pusod (www.pusod.org), and formed a 9-member Board of Directors (BOD) to lead three main program areas—Advocacy Research Institute for a Sustainable Environment (ARISE), Face2Face (F2F), and *Kamalayan*. Since then, **ARISE**, the technical arm of FACES, has been dialoguing with organizations in the Philippines on how to build a transnational partnership. The **F2F** solidarity trip brought 15 participants to the Philippines in July 2005 to engage in hands-on activities and support the development of these partnerships. And *Kamalayan* (which means consciousness), our educational program, led discussions around our political and cultural identity, to deepen our notion of TEJ and to prepare participants for the 2005 trip.

The FACES BOD reconvened in October 2005, to reflect on the recent trip (see *2005 Trip Report*) and gear up for 2006. Our approach to TEJ is building leaders within the Filipino/American community by bringing them face-to-face with issues that touched them personally and politically. Additionally, we fill a niche in the Philippine TEJ movement by providing scarce technical assistance, validating the struggles that people-faces with our presence, and, in turn,

obligating ourselves to take action. To truly ground our experience we need to deepen our relationship with our current partners: Metro Subic Network for Bases Clean-up (MSN) and the United Front to Oust the Oil Depot (UFO-OD).

Through ARISE, we will be dialoguing with both organizations on how to build a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship that works towards TEJ. As these partnerships develop over the next few months, F2F will be gearing up for the 2006 trip where participants will engage in solidarity activities with MSN and UFO-OD. To support this effort, *Kamalayan* will continue to nurture the experience of the 2005 participants and prepare the 2006 participants for next year's trip.

FACES has thrived on the energy and generosity of our members and supporters. With our ambitious agenda, we need the support of our membership more than ever. Please contact us to find out ways to get involved and show your support.

In Solidarity,

Galatea King
Chair, Board of Directors

referenced reports can be found on the website



Dang Nguyen

On July 6, 2005, FACES was awarded with the Helen Toribio Legacy Fund. Members of the Committee present the grant, which will fund a 2006 Face2Face intern, to FACES.

Spirit of Filipino-American role model lives on through Legacy Fund

By Aileen Suzara, FACES Summer 2005 Intern

I have never met Helen Toribio in person. Yet as I walked through a colorful garden of flowers she had planted and listened to stories of her from the vast network of students, friends, activists, community members, and loved ones whose lives she has touched, I began to piece together a vibrant, passionate, and inspiring woman. Born in the Philippines and raised in Hawaii, Toribio was the embodiment of her beliefs, working as a deeply involved Filipino-American cultural and community activist. Her body of work includes a position as professor of Asian American Studies at City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State, and a co-author of *The Forbidden Book*, a groundbreaking effort that explores US imperialism and the portrayal of Filipinos in American popular media during the Philippine American War. As a teacher, Toribio loved to mentor her students, and continually challenged them to engage in progressive social justice and community issues.

In honor of Toribio's life, the Helen Toribio Legacy Committee has launched a social justice internship program, creating opportunities for young adults to have meaningful work experiences with activists and community groups. The "Helen Toribio Legacy Fund" will donate internship grants to enable organizations to hire young adults to work on projects dedicated to environmental justice, civil rights, ethnic studies, or cultural activism. The groundwork for the fund has been laid by contributions from Abe Ignacio, Jorge Emmanuel, and Enrique de la Cruz, co-authors of *The Forbidden Book*. On July 6, 2005, a grant of \$5000 was presented to FACES. FACES is the first organization to benefit from this grant. As a cancer patient, Helen recognized the movement for a toxic-free world as an extension of her personal struggle.

Helen was also a founding member of FACES, and over the years was essential in recruiting many young people to its work. The grant will be utilized to hire an intern dedicated to working on the Face2Face Project, FACES' summer exposure trip to the Philippines that connects US participants to environmental and social justice struggles both in the US and the Philippines.

"Helen was a profound person who inspired those of us who had the privilege of knowing her and receiving her mentorship. Through this Legacy Fund, a young Fil-Am will be able to continue the kind of work Helen was passionate about," said Aimee Suzara, who worked with Toribio in FACES, Pusod, and the Colored Black n' White exhibit.

While I was not able to meet Helen face to face, I have learned that Helen's power to inspire is contagious. Not a week goes by without mention of her tremendous impact on members of the Filipino American community. It is as though I am meeting her now, through the voices and stories of those who knew her.

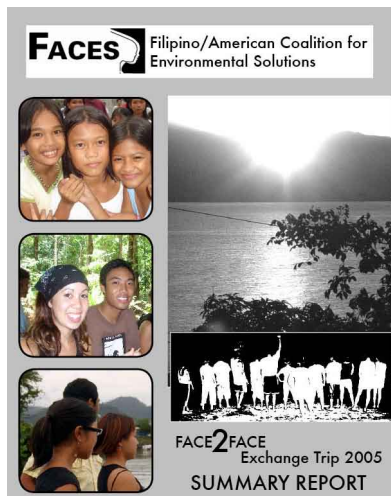
To keep the fund alive, continued community support is essential. If you are interested in donating to the fund, checks can be made out to:

*Filipinos for Affirmative Action (FAA)
310 8th St., Suite 306, Oakland, CA 94607*

All donations are tax deductible. You may also donate via FAA's website: www.filipinos4action.org. Please write on the check or note on website that your donation is for the Helen Toribio Legacy Fund.

FACES Returns from Trip, Report Now Available

Face2Face



On July 18, FACES led 15 Filipino/Americans on this year's Exchange Trip to the Philippines to witness first hand the transnational environmental injustices that communities are facing and to actively engage in activities to support their work. For ten days, the participants visited communities affected by toxic exposure in Madapdap, Sapang Bato, Subic Bay, Olongapo, Marilao, and Pandacan as well as met with organizations working to serve the communities, raise awareness, and fight for justice. They also had the opportunity to learn more about the Philippine political landscape, the culture, and other environmental issues. A summary of the trip, observations, and reflections can be found in the recently released Face2Face Exchange Trip 2005 Summary Report, which can be found on the FACES website. Additional reflections and testimonials about the trip are also included on page 5 of this newsletter. A US *Balibbayan* event to welcome the participants back and to provide a space for them to share stories and reflections is scheduled for January 2006. All are welcome to attend (see Calendar of Events on page 6 or the calendar on the website for details).

If you are interested in planning or attending next year's trip, please contact Frolayne Carlos, Face2Face Program Manager, at frolaynecarlos@yahoo.com

Local Exposure Trip to Bayview Hunter's Point

Face2Face

On June 28, 2005, members of FACES attended a toxic tour of Bayview Hunter's Point in San Francisco through the Literacy for Environmental Justice (www.lejyouth.org), a youth empowerment and environmental justice education organization created specifically to address the unique ecological and social concerns of Bayview Hunters Point and the surrounding communities of Mission, Potrero Hill, Visitacion Valley, and Excelsior.

Site of the US Navy until 1970, the area, which has twice the cancer and 3 to 4 times the asthma rate than the rest of San Francisco, currently contains toxins that include lead, pesticides, radium, PCBs, asbestos, petroleum products, and many more. The shipyard contains a former radiology lab, a landfill, and brownfield sites, which all endanger the health of the surrounding residents, especially after a massive fire in 2000. Additionally, PG&E still operates an antiquated power plant near residents and schools. It is responsible for 24% of air quality problems in the area, dumps 20 gallons of chlorine into the bay every month, and releases smoke from smokestacks directly to houses. Very little clean up and accountability has followed through. During our toxic tour we learned more about what LEJ and the local youth are doing to address these injustices.

Toxic Tours

FACES is working to build on reciprocity between the communities and organizations in the US and the Philippines. An important part of this is raising our own awareness and gaining knowledge about the issues and circumstances in our communities here in the US and the bay area in order to share the US perspectives with our Philippine counterparts. Through local toxic tours, we hope attendees will gain insight, understanding, and experience about local organizations and the issues facing the communities they serve.

If you are interested in participating in a local exposure trip with other members of FACES, please contact us at facesinfo@gmail.com

3 Part Series on the Philippine Left Movement

Kamalayan

Kamalayan, which means consciousness, is the newly created internal education program of FACES. Through *Kamalayan*, FACES members engage in discussions and activities to deepen the meaning of transnational environmental justice and solidarity in our work.

Facilitated by Francis Calpotura, FACES launched its first *Kamalayan* discussion in June and July with a three part series on the History of the Philippine Left Movement. The first part of the series was focused on the history of the movement until 1990. The second focused on the history of the movement up to the present day. In preparation for the Exchange Trip, the third part focused on the history of FACES as well as discussing goals and expectations for the upcoming trip.

Filled with personal stories, reflections, history, and food, the series created dialogue among people involved in the movement, people who simply wanted to learn more, and the younger generation. It also helped to provide orientation and context for 2005 Exchange Trip participants.

If you are interested in facilitating a community discussion and/or would like to join the Kamalayan committee, please contact Francis Calpotura, Kamalayan Program Manager, at fcalpotura@earthlink.net. History of the Philippine Left Movement Series' notes and reading material will be available on the FACES website.

PERSPECTIVES



King/Tilos/Franisco

reflections and testimonials From Face2Face Trip

Call to Raise Awareness

Message from Ate Tess

Ate Tess is from the Institute of Popular Democracy (IPD), a non-profit research and advocacy institute in the Philippines. It houses a multi-disciplinary team of activist scholars who have multi-level engagements with civil society groups, reform-minded officials and government agencies. Recorded and transcribed, with permission, by Aileen Suzara, she spoke to some of the trip participants and shared her impressions of the trip.

We're not asking for a lot...we're not asking you to come to the Philippines and organize the farmworkers. We're just asking you to share what you saw here in the Philippines and open their eyes, that this is the Third World. That you have nice lives in the States because of the resources that were taken from the Philippines, from the other third world countries. Your prosperity comes from the poverty in this side of the world.

So I just hope that you, as Filipino-Americans, will start sharing what you saw here with your friends, keep them coming here so that more eyes will be opened, more hearts will be opened, to the realities of the world here.

And if you have some resources to share, that would be even better, because after all, what is caring – it's also sharing. So sharing is putting your caring into practice.

There's a lot of work to be done. For myself, I am so inspired to see you all because I thought all the height of activism and the height of the support of Filipino-Americans was in the '80s and '70s, so I am more inspired to do my work here. Many young people share the cause.

There's also another side to the coin. Look into the policies of your government. It's not just the situation in the Philippines, but looking at your policies, and whether they effect the Philippines.

Other important tasks for you to do is to see if you can end the negative arrangements, the negative world policies, that affect our farmers lives, the exchange of products, and the lopsided trade arrangements. That is your side of the coin.

Our Visit to Pandacan

Felix Majabague's Thoughts

Felix "Boy" Majabague is the Barangay Captain of Pandacan in Manila, Philippines, a community that continues to be exposed to environmental contamination from the surrounding Chevron, Texaco, Shell, and Petron Oil Depots. He is working locally and globally to raise awareness and fight for corporate responsibility.

As much as I would like to share with you the feelings that we felt during your presence and visitation here at my Barangay as well as the fence line community of oil depots here at Pandacan, it is really indeed that I, as Barangay Captain of a fence line community, became stronger and more dedicated to fighting for the cause because in some part of this world, there is a group of people like your organization (FACES) helping and supporting the protection of human lives against big companies who do not care about the lives and safety of their neighborhood and community.

We, the communities, will be raising a range of concerns about oil depots in Pandacan and their impacts on the environmental and their health effects.

To all of you who share their sentiments and who really care about the safety of the people of Pandacan,
MARAMING SALAMAT PO!! AND MABUHAY KAYO!

An Invisible Government

Participant Reflection by Gary King

Gary King, from Minnesota, also works with other human rights organizations, including Philippine Scholars, an organization he founded to provide educational opportunities for families of victims of toxic waste.

One situation sticks in my mind as a sobering observation. When we arrived at our home in Cebu, there were three noisy and rude adult dogs, and four puppies. They all live on table scraps, often rice, put outside on the ground. Within 10 days, all four puppies had died, with very large bellies, and progressive losses of strength and consciousness. One person told me that to get an animal spayed or even shots would cost 300 pesos, akin to two days wages. So, the maids just let them run, and make noise much of the time, like guard dogs. The plight of their reproductions, and doom for their offspring, is not addressed.

I begin to understand how one can be pessimistic about the prospects for the country, especially when so many politicians can be paid to ignore most problems, such as those we in FACES observed.

Calling from Amerika

Participant Reflection by Tamarah Tilos

Tamarah Tilos, from Tracy, CA, participated in this year's trip. She is currently a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

After a month back here in the states I went to Borders in downtown Santa Cruz, home to a University of California and many liberals, in search of an English/Tagalog dictionary. Corporate Borders carried two Tagalog reference books and I purchased the cheaper one: *Making Out in Tagalog* (Renato Perdon, Tuttle Publishing 2003). I read through the conversational phrases that led to pick up lines and ways to initiate a sexual relationship. But it was only when I came across the phrase, *Tatawagan kita mula sa Amerika* (English translation: *I'll call you from America*) that it became lucid that this book was designed precisely for sex tourism in the Philippines, a legacy left behind by the U.S. Military along with all of their hazardous waste. I was reminded that the truths and realities we participants were exposed to on the Face2face solidarity trip are relevant to our everyday, privileged, American lives.

So what can we do? I spoke with over a hundred High School students in one day about the history, geography and current issues of the Philippines. I brought my photo album to share pictures of Philippine scholars in Madapdap, just outside of the former Clark Air Force Base, whose brothers and sisters suffer from cerebral palsy and congenital heart disease. I shared pictures of the oil tanks in the backyards of the urban poor communities of Pandacan; communities of children tantalized by the park given to them as a gift from Petron to literally cover up the hazard of the proximity of the buffer zone, a community threatened by the terrorism imposed by the abundance of oil and further, a community that doesn't even use the oil. Some signed up for FACES' e-mail list immediately and hoped to do what was within their means to help. Others were convinced, that as sad and regrettable as these realities are, there was nothing they could possibly do to make change. I pointed out that the same resources that prevent such things from happening to us can and do facilitate change when extended to grassroots organizations in the Philippines as I have learned from FACES as an effective transnational organization. I was also able to share the inspiration I found after meeting with the Metro Subic Network for bases clean up and Buklod in particular. I had been overwhelmed with doubt having only been a witness to the socio-economic affects of the aforementioned U.S. Military's legacy a.k.a. the Red-light District bordering the former Subic Naval Base. But if the women of Buklod, who live the reality of this circumstance, organize for empowerment and social justice, than I have no right to sit back and accept the odds!

In the Philippines Joyce, another Face2face participant pointed out a mural to me, which we interpreted as a message of the world being blind to the issues of the Philippines. I challenge all Face2face participants, as well as FACES members to contribute to removing that blindfold.

Creative Voices

expression through art and creative writing

Mother's Whispers

by Matthew Gonzalez

Matthew Gonzalez, from San Francisco, CA, recited this spoken word piece at the Despedida Party, an event that brought together the people and organizations that we met with in the Philippines. He is currently a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

my Mother whispers stories of impoverished folk to my heart and reminds me to take it as deliverance. spiral staircase led to a paradise that most of my brethren could never really experience. and enough instances brought me to a belief that i might just be a sucker for all things beautiful.

so i just sit in awe,
cry a couple tears, swallow up my fears, and be the same kid as usual. but the tanduay put my life on standby, rather not remember that i could be the social change.

my soul remains in a stagnant position, damned if i listened and believed all the broken truth. and although it seems like im rambling i start to understand that im the one who's spoken to. forth and bak. back and forth. government officials slapping the stork. because once again he's delivered to many babies. and for the sake of ladies still getting raped, we pray. my people's left in the dark, so i write to shed a light.

whats the best fight? we fight for freedom, they fight for life. and unlike their life, i despise the stuff that they use to make their skin white. and the despair in their eyes have too many stories i wish i really had the ears for. i wish that i could hear more and see more. but im riding on too many red horses yelling yeehaaww! and we romanticize a filipino everything. but the difference for us is that for every wrong we have a medicine. we have voices and choices for talking. they lost all their breath cus their too tired from walking. history repeated. current day death march. bodies feeling weak like my peoples after they left clarks. calvary hill to bataan. kill for kalayaan. search for kamalayan.

and as we fight for a collective welfare, we gotta realize we all breath the same air. and as we share the same Mother's whispers, we also gotta realize who's the real givers. different nation, parallel paper chase. evolved was a face cus of change on a naval base. and so i try and figure myself out. what better than to be submerged in the culture, but emerged as a vulture, i hovered. picking at their insides until i was able to digest some. AND SO I SAY AS WELL.. the Philippines is really a country worth dying for. my heart did it a little more every day.

Please e-mail FACES if you'd like to submit work for the creative voices section.

Hope, Faith, and Transformation

Participant Reflection by Robyn Lopez

Robyn Lopez, from Ontario, CA, participated in this year's trip. She is currently a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

The catalyst for my understanding and acceptance of the Philippine culture and what it truly means to be Filipino/ Filipino American started with FACES' Face2Face solidarity trip. By participating in on-site community interaction with the people of Sapang Bato, Madapdap, Pandacan, Lieya, Olongapo, Marilao and the women of Buklod, I have been able to cultivate a Filipino consciousness to bridge the gap between my parents' homeland (the Philippines) and my homeland (the United States). Aside from the adventurous activities, such as visiting the jungle or the beautiful beaches of Batangas, it was amazing to see how Filipino communities have used grassroots movement tactics to promote social change.

In particular, my sincere admiration goes out to the women of Buklod, the people of Pandacan, and Father Shay Cullen and his efforts with PREDA Fair Trade. These organizations have shown how grassroots interaction (actively going out in the streets to promote social justice) between communities and local organizers can really make a difference in promoting a revolution to fight against extremely large, selfish, and dangerous entities such as oil companies, corrupt government officials, and the sex trade.

The most memorable experience throughout the ten day program involved visiting the Pandacan community. My introduction to the Pandacan community and their fight against Shell Oil Company presented an unexpected personal challenge that was not only emotionally draining, but provided extreme "in your face" interaction that I honestly was not prepared for. I was able to witness the lifestyle of Pandacan squatters who either live a couple feet away from an active railroad track or a toxic oil depot. To think that these living situations are two of a very short list of housing options for many Filipino families is extremely depressing.

In addition to these dangerous living situations, Shell Oil Company created "buffer zones" (the space between the oil depot and community housing) that include a new playground, park, and basketball court to supposedly "entertain" local residents. However, such "entertainment" involved with these free community amenities are merely one of many tactics to distract local residents from fighting against the hazardous chemicals created by the oil depots. To make things even worse, the landscaping of these new communal amenities are fabricated to look like something fresh out of Disneyland. Realistically speaking, in Pandacan, like Disneyland, different worlds are provided. First you see the extreme poverty of local squatters, and then you walk past these green decorated iron gates and you step into a completely different

world where you would never even think that a poor community is near by. I cannot even begin to express the disgust I felt to see that money was wasted on an unsafe buffer zone where the lives of kids are endangered on a daily basis. Aside from the harsh reality Pandacan residents encounter, there is still a sense of hope to promote awareness for outsiders to help pursue action against these oil depots. The local Barangay captain and other community leaders have already created petitions and reports holding Shell Oil Company accountable for the increase of diseases and deaths among Pandacan residents. After seeing what the Pandacan community is up against and hearing the local Barangay captain ask FACES participants to help share their story with people from the United States, it is reassuring to know that there is still a sense of hope among a distressed group of people.

After arriving back to the United States I had to remind myself that there is only so much I can do overseas in order to help such a distressed group of people. But by promoting awareness and sharing my experiences of the Pandacan community and the other communities I visited, I have faith that some humanitarian solutions will see light. With that said, it's always important to remember the following:

"The individual is the first unit of collective transformation."
~ Anonymous



Lea Francisco



Tamara Tijos

Top: Oil Depots at Pandacan surround a park-like "buffer zone" where children play
Bottom: Face2Face Trip Participants at the despedida event

Take Action

Join or Give

Become a Member

Join a growing movement of church, environmental, peace and justice groups, students, scientists, professionals, and other concerned citizens who are uniting to build solidarity for environmental justice. By becoming a member of FACES, you will receive our quarterly newsletter with the latest news on the issue. You also will have access to regular e-mail updates, alerts, and other resources. Best of all, you will be joining a community of people who uphold environmental justice for all. All donations are tax-deductible.

Mail your membership contribution or become a member online.

Join a Committee

We invite you to take a more active role in the programs and activities by joining a committee. Because members of the committee are located around the country, most of the communication occurs through e-mail and conference call.

If you are interested in any committee (ARISE, Communications, Face2Face, and Kamalayan) and are already a member of FACES, please contact us.

Make a Donation

Support FACES! Help build our capacity and impact. FACES is dependent upon contributions of members and friends for financial support. All contributions are tax deductible.

FACES welcomes monetary donations, BART "tiny tickets" (BART tickets with small amounts), used functional cell phones, and in-kind donations (including service and expertise).

Mail donations to FACES, contact us about in-kind donations, or give online.

Host a House Party

Spread the word about the transnational environmental movement and the work of FACES. Help us reach out to broader audiences by hosting a house party in support of FACES.

Please contact Lea Francisco, FACES staffer, at leafrancisco@gmail.com for more information.

Invite FACES to speak

Help FACES reach more people, share stories, and educate others on the issues. Invite FACES to speak at your group, church, school, event, or organizations.

Contact Lea at leafrancisco@gmail.com to set up speaking engagements.

Support Paces4FACES

FACES Half Marathon

FACES has put together a running team, Paces4FACES, to raise money for FACES through a Half Marathon Run/Walk in Golden Gate Park on December 10, 2005. The group has set a fundraising goal of \$15,000.

Support Paces4FACES by sponsoring the runners and coming to future fundraising events. You can mail your sponsorship donation or give online.

If you would like to join Paces4FACES, please contact Christina Leano, ARISE Program Manager and marathon organizer, at christinaleano@yahoo.com

Visit Our New Website!

www.facessolidarity.org

Still under updating and construction, we now have a new website at www.facessolidarity.org. Our former website, www.facessolutions.net will re-direct to this new site. Visit us on the web!

Calendar of Events

Send an e-mail to facesinfo@gmail.com to join our listserv for updates and reminders.

Nov. 2

Paces4FACES Baja Fresh Fundraiser

on Fremont & Mission in San Francisco

Nov. 7

Presentation at Whut U.P.S.S. Conference

at Jack Adams Hall at SF State

Nov. 8

Presentation at UCSC

at Redwood Lounge on UCSC Campus

Nov. 10

International Environmental Justice Day

Nov. 12

Charity Talent Show Case in Santa Cruz

Organized by Filipino Student Association of UCSC

Nov. 18

Paces4FACES Chevy's Fundraiser

on Howard & Third in San Francisco

Nov. 23

Paces4FACES Elixir Fundraiser

on Mission & Guerrero in San Francisco

Dec. 10

Paces4FACES Half Marathon

in Golden Gate Park, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Jan. 21

Face2Face US *Balibkayan*

an event to hear about this year's trip, details TBD