

5/18/2020

My name is Sidhartha Taruc, a senior graduating with a B.S. in Public Health, and this is my reflection on COVID-19's impact on myself and my community. Suspension of large gatherings and in-person classes has definitely been a challenge for students and faculty alike, and although this may be one of the greatest difficulties for my current academic community, I'd like to reflect on a consequence of the pandemic that is non-class related.

PCN, or Pilipino Cultural Night, is an event that has been postponed due to COVID-19. Among the many issues these health conditions have affected, I do not believe this is the most pressing, but this event is very important to me and many of my peers. As the name implies, PCN is an annual showcase of pilipino culture. The event is completely student-run and is hosted by Akbayan, the pilipino organization of SJSU. PCN is not exclusive to SJSU as most university-based Pilipino organizations in California also host their own equivalent productions (CSU's, UC's, and private schools). Vietnamese, Latinx, and other cultural student organizations may also have similar events too. This production impacts many people as the cast itself has typically been around 200 student members each year, and the attending show audience is usually another few hundred family and friends to match. More than just numbers, this event is impactful to those who experience it, through its exploration of culture and identity.

Every spring semester brings a new PCN, with a new purpose and story. The show itself is based in acting with a plot and script, and is interwoven with many other aspects throughout the show. Cultural dance, modern (hip hop) dance, contemporary (ballet-influenced) dance, choir, band, and other backstage aspects are all incorporated at multiple points into the show. These aspects are usually integrated as relevantly as possible into the storyline. If a happy

achievement or sad struggle happens to a character, a dance or song may be placed specifically after that scene to accompany the feeling.

To me, there are two main outcomes of the production to its participants, both of which add to everyone's sense of identity. The first is the exploration of culture, whether it be through cultural dances or cultural topics incorporated into the story. The second is the joint effort to create an identity as a community and a cast through everything that the PCN experience offers. There are many months of practices leading up to the show day(s) and many opportunities to meet new people and strengthen bonds with people new and old. This collective effort among the cast members can give a sense of purpose and drive towards the final show, and towards many other goals, which solidifies the cast as a community and family. This couples with the experience of being a show/ production, which can be an opportunity difficult to find for many.

For now, this year's PCN has been postponed, with the possibility of having a recorded version of the show. Another school, Cal Poly Pomona, was able to achieve a live stream of their PCN, which consisted of a Zoom reading/ recording of their acting aspect, cut together with recordings of their dance performances. I know this experience offers much to those who participate in it and those who watch it, and is very important to myself and many others. I hope to finish my last year of my undergrad with my last PCN, but even more than that, I hope that it can continue successfully for future generations to gain from it as much as I did. I look forward to watching future PCN's from the audience.