

Practitioner's Essay

The Fight for Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State

Bao Lo, Annalise Xiaohui Harlow, and Timothy P. Fong
Special Thanks to Neelam Bandhu, Yee Thao, and Marie Lorraine Mallare-Jimenez

ABSTRACT

More than fifty years after student activists of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) fought to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in higher education, Ethnic Studies continues to face many of the same challenges since its inception, including budget cuts, the lack of university support and autonomy, and political and public backlash. As an unfinished movement that began with the TWLF, the fight for Ethnic Studies in higher education is about the solidarity of students of color to challenge and fight back against the lack of funding and support of university administration that aims to downsize, delegitimize, and eradicate Ethnic Studies from the academy. With students of color at the forefront of this movement to defend and expand Ethnic Studies, AB 1460 was signed into law in the summer of 2020 by Governor Newsom, which mandated an Ethnic Studies course as a graduation requirement in the California State Universities. Student activism is Ethnic Studies praxis and continues to be vital for the advancement and future of Ethnic Studies. This article addresses the student activism that propelled the fight for Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State, and ultimately the passage of AB 1460. We center student voices and the struggles to advance Ethnic Studies in the university. We show how students resisted the disrespect and backlash from some antagonistic faculty and administrators. Students witnessed the ongoing fight for Ethnic Studies, and they also learned

that they can transform their education through their own voices and power. The fight for AB 1460 and the student activism that transpired reflects the intergenerational TWLF legacy of Ethnic Studies and reminds us that student activism has and continues to be the foundation for the ongoing fight for Ethnic Studies. We also discuss the impact of one of the courses that meets the new Ethnic Studies requirement, Introduction to Asian American Studies. Students have become empowered through this course, specifically as they have come to see themselves as agents of social change, a key element of the TWLF and Ethnic Studies.

INTRODUCTION

The Ethnic Studies Student Association is committed to empowering Black, Indigenous, and students of color, and allies through the preservation and teaching of Ethnic Studies. Since the establishment of the first College of Ethnic Studies in 1969, at the San Francisco State University, students have committed to the fight for proper representation in our education. We will continue the struggle to ensure a true and accurate history of our social justice in efforts of liberation for all peoples. The Ethnic Studies Student Association will work alongside California State University, Sacramento students to provide necessary resources to achieve this goal and support our student community.

Mission statement, Ethnic Studies Student Association

Ethnic Studies in the California State University (CSU) system began in 1968 at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) after the longest student-led strike in U.S. history known as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) strike of 1968. The TWLF was formed largely by African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and Native American student coalitions who fought to increase enrollment of students of color, hire faculty of color, and establish Third World Colleges (Lo, 2019). In 1969, University of California, Berkeley followed suit and launched their own student-led campus strike, effectively joining the TWLF. For five consecutive months, the TWLF continued their strike and confronted opposition not only from university administration but also local and federal law enforcement.

Finally, in March of 1969, negotiations between the strikers and the universities commenced (Banales, 2019). Included in the negotiation process were fifteen demands—ten specific demands from the Black Student Union, and five from the greater TWLF.

At both universities, TWLF strikers demanded that Ethnic Studies faculty have the autonomy to develop and control their course curriculum, as well as hire new faculty. This would ensure that students be “[provided] relevant education on all levels to peoples of the communities they are supposed to represent and serve” (San Francisco State University, n.d., n.p.).

More than fifty years after student activists of the TWLF fought to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in higher education, Ethnic Studies continues to face many of the same challenges since its inception, including budget cuts, the lack of university support and autonomy, and political and public backlash.

As an unfinished movement that began with the TWLF, the fight for Ethnic Studies in higher education is about the solidarity of students of color challenging and fighting back against the lack of funding and support of university administration that aims to downsize, delegitimize, and eradicate Ethnic Studies from the academy. With students of color at the forefront of this movement to defend and expand Ethnic Studies, Assembly Bill 1460 (AB 1460) was signed into law in August 2020 by California Governor Gavin Newsom, mandating an Ethnic Studies course as a graduation requirement in the CSU system. Following passage of this law, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors added an Ethnic Studies requirement for high schools and Assembly Bill 101 was signed into law in October 2021 (California Community Colleges, 2023; California State Legislature, 2021). Currently, the University of California (UC) does not have an Ethnic Studies undergraduate requirement. However, the UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools has developed a proposal to make ethnic studies an A-G requirement for California schools (Fensterwald, 2022; Jimenez, 2022; Wu, 2022).

This article addresses the student activism that propelled the fight for Ethnic Studies at California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State). From the Bay Area student strikes in 1969 to the passage of AB 1460 in 2020, student activism has always been at the forefront of the movement.

AB 1460: TOWARD AN ETHNIC STUDIES REQUIREMENT

Prior to AB 1460, the CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies was created in January 2014 to address the elimination of Ethnic Studies programs on various CSU campuses. Two years later, the Task Force issued a report listing ten recommendations, including

making Ethnic Studies a General Education (GE) requirement, hiring fifty Ethnic Studies faculty members, and maintaining a moratorium on any adverse changes to Ethnic Studies departments and programs. On July 13, 2016, CSU Chancellor Timothy White specifically accepted the moratorium in a formal written message but rejected the call for hiring new Ethnic Studies faculty. The other recommendations in the Chancellor's letter were not mentioned, but he expressed his "deepest gratitude for the thoughtful, inclusive deliberations that resulted in this report" (White, 2016).

In Fall 2017, Chancellor White introduced Executive Orders (EOs) 1100R and 1100 to streamline graduation requirements, specifically restructuring GE requirements (EO 1100R) and removing developmental math and writing (EO 1100). At campuses such as CSU Northridge (CSUN), the EOs eliminated Section F (cross-cultural studies requirement) of the GE program, which many courses in Ethnic Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and Queer Studies satisfied (Campbell et al., 2019, 131). Implementation of the EOs drastically reduced enrollment in Ethnic Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, and Queer Studies. As these disciplines are not taught in K-12, removing Section F would further limit students' exposure to these disciplines. Campbell et al. argue that the EOs are "forms of institutional racism" that impacted a largely students of color population and excluded the disciplines of Ethnic Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, and Queer Studies (Campbell et al., 2019, 137). Consequently, the implementation of the EOs ignited campus-wide movements by students of color that went beyond CSUN, such as in demanding support for AB 1460.

AB 1460 was introduced in February 2019 by California State Assemblymember Dr. Shirley Weber, a former faculty member at San Diego State University and co-founder of the Africana Studies Department. The bill requires all CSUs to offer Ethnic Studies courses by the 2021-22 academic year and make one three-unit Ethnic Studies course a graduation requirement for incoming students of the 2024-25 graduating class (California State Legislature, Assembly Bill 1460). Since its inception, the bill has faced numerous attacks and criticisms. According to the system-wide Academic Senate for the California State University (ASCSU), "Legislative involvement in setting degree requirements could ultimately mean that the government's agenda supersedes faculty expertise as the basis for curricular decisions." Additionally, ASCSU contended, "If AB 1460 becomes law, it would

set a precedent for future curricular mandates to be imposed by the legislature, potentially jeopardizing not only faculty control over the curriculum but the quality of the university degree itself" (Warden, 2019). Additionally, the CSU Chancellor's office used economics as an argument against AB 1460, estimating the ongoing costs each year to provide Ethnic Studies as a result of this measure (Brandon, 2020). A group called "CSU Faculty Against AB 1460" also emerged and sent a letter to Governor Newsom to veto the bill, arguing that Ethnic Studies "is trapped in a limited conception held by some activists in the late 1960s," and called for a broader definition to include the other ethnic groups "such as Jews, Armenians, Arabs, and South Asians, all of whom are excluded by this bill" (CSU Faculty Against AB 1460). Along the same vein, the CSU Board of Trustees voted in July 2020 to approve an amendment to modify the university's GE requirements to include a course addressing "ethnic studies and social justice" to water down and undermine the efforts to pass AB 1460 (California State University, 2020).

To support statewide efforts for AB 1460, faculty and students of the Department of Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State lobbied at the California State Capitol. In February 2020, Ethnic Studies students and faculty made their way to the offices of legislators who were on the fence about the bill. Sacramento State students, specifically Ethnic Studies majors, went to the State Capitol to speak with legislators about the importance of having Ethnic Studies as a requirement. Neelam Bandhu, a Sacramento State freshman at the time, recalls her experience:

In Spring 2020, I was introduced to AB 1460 by Prof. Mallare. This semester was one of the most difficult semesters I endured in all four years because I was recovering from knee surgery. However, although I was actively trying to recover, Prof. Mallare briefly discussed AB 1460 and the need for student activists at the State Capitol to explain the urgency of this bill to senators. I decided to go to the Capitol even though I was on crutches. I was the youngest student who went to lobby for AB 1460 and to share my personal narrative with the state legislators. By lobbying for this bill, it created a space where I was able to vocalize my thoughts and concerns to California senators.



Neelam Bandhu advocates for the passing of AB 1460.

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Ethnic Studies major, Stephen Sobonya, describes his experience lobbying at the Capitol:

It was certainly nerve-wracking. I was in a place I had never been before. I had to go through this TSA thing where they patted you down . . . so it was kind of intimidating at first. Once you go to the Representative's office, you realize that they genuinely want to hear you because you are one of their constituents. It provided me a space to honestly speak my mind about something that I am passionate about.

In contrast, Ethnic Studies major, Alex Gonzalez Jimenez, describes his interactions with state legislators as less welcoming:

We saw how assemblymembers only came to speak to visitors when it was something that interests them. When we came to lobby for AB 1460, some assemblymembers only wanted to hear what they wanted. We had some Members send out their aides to listen to us and this was frustrating.

As AB 1460 moved steadily through the legislative process, CSU became more concerned and started looking for alternatives to the legislation. A resolution by the ASCSU mimicking AB 1460 that required

campuses to establish an Ethnic Studies requirement was proposed. On February 27, 2020, the issue of an Ethnic Studies requirement came to the Sacramento State Faculty Senate. Alex Gonzalez Jimenez, who became the President of the Ethnic Studies Association after lobbying at the Capitol, spoke about this meeting:

After lobbying, we decided to take a step further on the push for AB 1460 at the Faculty Senate meeting. When we arrived we didn't expect to have a huge turnout of students. I remember a professor saying, "We have never seen this many students attend an event in a while." We came to this meeting with a plan to speak on why we should include Ethnic Studies as a GE. Although we came prepared to speak at this meeting, there was so much resistance from the science departments. They did their best to silence me and the other student speakers. We presented a large poster with the message, "Leaders who do not act dialogically but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress." However, some faculty members did not care.

The Faculty Senate meeting room was packed with students strongly and powerfully supporting AB 1460. Ethnic Studies faculty and students opposed the ASCSU resolution because it called for more drawn-out deliberation and would not take immediate action. The Sacramento State Faculty Senate, with the room full of anxious students watching closely, voted to not send an answer to the Chancellor's Office for fear that a response would merely provide legitimacy to the CSU's efforts to undermine AB 1460.

At Sacramento State, there is already a "Race and Ethnicity" graduation requirement which complicated the discussion on AB 1460. For members of the Sacramento State Faculty Senate and campus community, the proposed bill stirred up confusion as to why there was a need Ethnic Studies on top of the already existing graduation requirement, which showed the lack of understanding of Ethnic Studies and its purpose. Student leader and Ethnic Studies major Linsey Diesta explained that while the Race and Ethnicity requirement exists, it still fails to capture an understanding of race, ethnicity, and even Ethnic Studies. She added, "Right now in the Race and Ethnicity catalog, the kinds of courses you can take include classes like taekwondo, judo, and salsa dancing. These classes are really not about race and ethnicity. How do you get the depth of race and ethnicity by taking judo?" (Muñoz, 2020). It was evident that AB 1460 serves not only as a means

to bring Ethnic Studies to the entire student population, but also to fill gaps in the existing Race and Ethnicity requirement.

In the following Faculty Senate meeting held on March 5, 2020, a finalized draft in support of AB 1460 was reviewed. Again, students from across campus came to this meeting to show their support for AB 1460 and speak about the importance of Ethnic Studies. One student who had attended the previous meeting described the follow-up meeting as far less welcoming than the first. The student stated that:

At the second meeting, it was clear we had struck a nerve when the Faculty Senate told a majority of us that we weren't allowed to enter the room, "because of the Fire Marshall code." Yet after a quick count, the room was actually under capacity. It seemed to me that this was just [an] attempt to keep us out, quiet and uninformed; a tactic that didn't work.



Supporters of AB1460 who were told to leave the University Union's Green & Gold Room and stand outside as Sacramento State's Faculty Senate converse about the bill. (March 5, 2020)
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Other students also reported that a member of the Faculty Senate called accused Dr. Bao Lo of being "argumentative" for simply providing clarification to a question. One student explained:

When Dr. Lo tried to give her expertise after the announcer asked a question, I feel he tried to shut her down, almost as if he was offended that she was more educated on the topic than he was. In that moment his white fragility came to the forefront, and he felt the need to undermine her and the rest of the Ethnic Studies faculty to maintain that power after he felt threatened.

By the end of the meeting, the issue of AB 1460 was tabled in order to dedicate an entire future Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the issue. This meeting never took place due to the COVID-19 pandemic and eventual lockdowns.

THE PASSAGE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AB 1460

Because of strong support by CSU students and despite pressures from the CSU administration, Governor Newsom signed AB 1460 into law on August 17, 2020. This action simultaneously mandated students take Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement at the twenty-three-campus system beginning in Fall 2021 and overruled the more modest Ethnic Studies and social justice graduation requirement the CSU Board of Trustees approved a month prior. AB 1460 also required the CSU Chancellor's Office, the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies, and the ASCSU develop core competencies to be achieved by students who complete an Ethnic Studies course by the 2021–22 academic year. This was accomplished by October 2020 and formally approved thereafter (Zinshteyn, 2020).

However, months after CSU's new Ethnic Studies requirement became law, the conflicts continued. There was no longer any debate whether students should be required to take a class in Ethnic Studies or the core competencies, but the system and faculty were deeply conflicted over how the requirement would be adopted. The CSU system wanted to make the new Ethnic Studies course a uniform, lower-division requirement that is part of the GE program. This meant that transfer students would have to take an Ethnic Studies course before coming to CSU. It also meant community colleges would also have to expand their Ethnic Studies offerings—and their hiring—to accommodate students who plan to transfer. As a result, CSU Ethnic Studies faculty members who advocated for AB 1460 may never engage with many transfer students. In addition, AB 1460 stipulated the Ethnic Studies requirement would not increase the number of units required to graduate with a baccalaureate degree and intended it to be a GE requirement throughout all CSU campuses.

CSU Ethnic Studies faculty and their supporters, on the other hand, wanted students to complete the single-course requirement with trained Ethnic Studies professors from established CSU campus departments and programs. They were opposed to the requirement being met at community colleges. At the same time, supporters recognized that some Ethnic Studies departments and programs at larger campuses were strong while other campuses were not as developed or had very minimal Ethnic Studies presence. Because of this, supporters called for flexibility on how the requirement would be offered from campus to campus, including allowing AB 1460 to be fulfilled by either a lower- or upper-division course and not mandating it as a GE requirement.

At Sacramento State, the Department of Ethnic Studies drafted a resolution to oppose the Chancellor's proposed implementation of AB 1460. The resolution went through a first reading in the Faculty Senate on October 20, 2020. For this meeting, students prepared a statement that they read collectively during the open forum. The statement was also signed by 138 students from various disciplines on campus within a day and circulated to every senator at the meeting:

We are students at Sacramento State and are here to support the Sacramento State Ethnic Studies Resolution to oppose the Chancellor's Proposed Implementation of AB 1460. AB 1460 was originally proposed to implement the disciplinary rigor and methodologies of Ethnic Studies in addition to addressing the marginalization of historically underrepresented groups and bringing to light systemic racism within institutions.

The Chancellor's proposed implementation fails to center these issues. Ethnic Studies is an academic discipline that intervenes in epistemic racism of the modern Western university and Eurocentric imperial culture. Ethnic Studies curricula centers race/ racism, imperialism, colonialism, power relations, and social change in their approach—critical topics for understanding the world from new perspectives—to work towards the liberation of all people and society. More importantly, it is a discipline that comes FROM the work of student activists and is rooted in student empowerment.

We ask for your support—as OUR Faculty Senate—for Ethnic Studies that centers our students, methodologies, and curricula. We ask for your support in OPPOSING the Chancellor's proposed implementation of AB 1460. AB 1460 mandates Ethnic Studies as a requirement in the CSU and gives purview to the faculty. AB 1460 does NOT specify the Ethnic Studies course to

be a GE requirement and AB 1460 does NOT specify the Ethnic Studies course to be an upper-division or lower-division course.

The Ethnic Studies faculty at Sacramento State oppose placing the requirement solely in lower division and in General Education. We ask the Faculty Senate to support and endorse the Sacramento State Ethnic Studies Resolution to Oppose CSU Chancellor's Office implementation of AB 1460 and rescind its GE plan because it does not have the authority to restrict this Ethnic Studies requirement to be a GE and be subjected to GE regulations.



Sacramento State students support AB 1460.

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Ultimately, the CSU Board of Trustees approved amendments to the CSU GE Breadth Requirement at a November 2020 meeting and it was quickly formalized into written policy the following month (Burke, 2020). To comply with AB 1460, the amended policy was significant in four ways: (1) it reduced Area D (Social Sciences) from twelve units to nine units, (2) it created a brand-new GE Area F (Ethnic Studies), (3) it imposed Area F be fulfilled as a lower-division course, and (4) it explicitly stated that Area F could only be fulfilled by courses with an Ethnic Studies (such as ETHN) or Ethnic Studies-related prefix (such as AAS—Asian American Studies). With this system-wide policy in place, it was now up to each campus to implement AB 1460.

Throughout the implementation of Area F at Sacramento State, the Ethnic Studies faculty and students faced similar stall tactics used prior to the passage of AB 1460. Annalise Harlow, an Asian American Studies minor, explains:

As a new member of the [Ethnic Studies Student Association (ESSA)], I worked with the senior members to draft statements to present at the University Faculty Senate meetings. In our statements to the University Faculty Senate, we emphasized the need to stay true to the values of Ethnic Studies: liberation, student activism, and authenticity. Ethnic Studies has faced constant battles with universities and public opinion. At Sacramento State, the issue that we faced was that Senators from non-Ethnic Studies or Social Science departments wanted to guide the language of the new requirement, now known as Area F in the General Education curriculum. The proposed language from the Department of Ethnic Studies made the expectations of Area F clear and the values of Ethnic Studies even clearer.

At the Faculty Senate meeting on March 18, 2021, the first reading to implement Area F in GE was on the agenda. The requirements for courses to be approved in Area F include having the prefix “ETHN” and meeting three out of the five core competencies. Students prepared another statement to the Faculty Senate to quickly approve these guidelines, specifically the justification for Area F to be taught by the Ethnic Studies Department:

The CSU needs to adopt an Ethnic Studies curriculum that does not dilute the field of Ethnic Studies and the student learning objectives put forth by the Ethnic Studies Department for GE Area F. There is no more time to prolong the implementation of AB 1460. The incoming freshmen of Fall 2021 will be waiting, and their courses need to be ready. How will you prepare for this if you keep stalling the process?

Since Area F was toward the end of the meeting agenda, the discussion was left unfinished. This prompted students to attend the following meeting on April 1, 2021; students again clearly outnumbered the Faculty Senators in attendance. Neelam Bandhu from the Ethnic Studies Student Association reminded everyone in the audience the passage of AB 1460 is a fulfillment of those who came before us (Jaramishian, 2021). She passionately stated:

Ethnic Studies was founded by student activists. It would be a betrayal to disgrace the legacy and principles of Ethnic Studies by “watering down” the stories, the history, and the activism of those who brought us Ethnic Studies in 1968-69. We are far from a post-racial and fair society. The recent shooting in Atlanta is evidence of this. If we are to move towards a better society, we cannot stop fighting for equity now. It is vital that the CSU system stays true to the history and purpose of Ethnic Studies so that we can move forward with integrity and consciousness.

The Sacramento State Faculty Senate formally approved the establishment of an Ethnic Studies requirement in GE Area F at their April 1, 2021 meeting.

The Department of Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State was uniquely well-positioned to quickly operationalize the new GE Area F. As one department with four programs (Asian American Studies, Chicana/Latina Studies, Native American Studies, and Pan African Studies) we already had five lower-division courses that could easily fulfill the requirements of GE Area F: ETHN 11 (Introduction to Ethnic Studies), ETHN 14 (Introduction to Asian American Studies), ETHN 30 (Introduction to Chicana/Latina Studies), ETHN 53 (Introduction to Native American Studies), and ETHN 70 (Introduction to Pan African Studies). As one department with four programs, we worked together on integrating the new GE Area F Core Competencies into each of the introductory courses and moving them smoothly through the department curriculum committee.

However, the next step in the curriculum approval process was more subjective and political. Secondary curriculum review committees are often dominated by other departments that are not knowledgeable about Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline at best, and sometimes outright hostile at worst. In this case, Ethnic Studies took full advantage of core competencies recommended by the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies that clearly stated: “any committee reviewing courses for the CSU Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement must be chaired by Ethnic Studies faculty; and, such committees must have a majority representation from faculty in the following departments/units/programs: Native American Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latina/o Studies faculty” (CSU Council on Ethnic Studies, 2021). Ethnic Studies faculty made up the majority of members and could stay united to ensure that all Ethnic Studies

courses were approved for GE Area F and that no other department could offer courses that meet Area F requirements.

GE Area F is now a formal policy and is prominently highlighted on the Sacramento State website. This three-unit requirement fulfills Education Code Section 89032. The requirement to take an approved three-unit lower- or upper-division course in Area F shall not be waived or substituted. The policy, commencing with students with catalog rights starting with 2021-22 academic year, are required to meet at least three of the five core competencies to ensure the integrity and protection of the discipline (Department of Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State).

AREA F, ETHNIC STUDIES: GROWTH AND IMPACT

During the first year of Area F courses, the Department of Ethnic Studies offered seventy-one sections in Fall 2021 and sixteen sections in Spring 2022. During the second year, the Department offered fifty-five sections in Fall 2022 and forty-one sections in Spring 2023. Each class is capped at forty-five students. This sudden growth in the number of *required* courses directly led to an unprecedented surge in hiring. With the passage of AB 1460, the Department of Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State has been able to hire eleven new tenure-track faculty, with four more tenure-track faculty starting in Fall 2024. The Department is also planning for a Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies degree program, with the first cohort starting in Fall 2025. The Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies will focus on preparing students for advanced doctoral programs, provide a degree for individuals to teach Ethnic Studies at both two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, train high school and middle school teachers to teach Ethnic Studies, and empower community leaders and established professionals who work with diverse populations. Prior to AB 1460 and the implementation of GE Area F, Ethnic Studies was one of the smallest departments at Sacramento State. Now, it is one of the largest in the university.

As one of the established Area F courses, ETHN 14: Introduction to Asian American Studies focuses on the discipline of Asian American Studies, including the history, purpose, and development of the field. The course also covers the Asian American movement, which was fundamental to the establishment of Asian American Studies in higher education; it also discusses contemporary challenges and opportunities of the field, including the contemporary and continued fight for Ethnic Studies in higher education and K-12. ETHN 14 concludes with the

agency of Asian Americans and efforts of Asian American Studies to achieve broader social change.

In the Fall 2022, students in seven of the sixteen sections of ETHN 14 completed a reflection paper that addressed their learning of the origins and purpose of Ethnic Studies. The students displayed a comprehensive understanding of the TWLF and the origins of Ethnic Studies. Specifically, students comprehended that the TWLF was a student-led movement that consisted of student organizations such as the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and the Black Student Union. As the longest student strike in U.S. history, the strikes at SF State and UC Berkeley led to the establishment of Ethnic Studies in higher education. One student in their reflection stated the following:

One of the first major turning points in Asian American Studies was the Third World Liberation Front strike at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University in 1968, challenging the lack of diversity in education. These strikes went on for months and there were often violent acts committed against the protesters, but they continued to fight for their beliefs.

Not only were students confident about their knowledge of the origins of Ethnic Studies, but they also understood the contemporary challenges of Ethnic Studies. Another student wrote:

In the spring of 1999, Berkeley students organized a strike to save the UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Department from budget cuts. Yet even after all that, it doesn't solve the fact that budget cuts and the loss of faculty members are still a challenge today.

Students were also given the opportunity to reflect on what they have gained from the course intellectually and personally. Nearly every student in the course emphasized a profound learning experience, both intellectually and personally. For many, they expressed that through the course material they learned more about themselves, their family's history, and that they wanted to further explore the topic of Asian American Studies. It was clear that students gained a sense of pride and empowerment through the course topics and themes. They also developed a community of peers and a sense of belonging through the course. One particular course topic, the origins of "Asian American" as a term, was often mentioned in the student reflections. Students expressed learning the term "Asian American" and its importance in creating a collective voice for Asians in this country, which allowed

students to understand the historical and political significance of being “Asian American.” As one student stated:

Personally, understanding the true intentions behind the term “Asian American” helped me gain better insight on what it really means because I thought it referred to those who were half white and half Asian. Understanding Asian American as a political identity made me feel visible within the American population and not ostracized.

Along with this understanding, students also learned the importance of decolonizing the education system and now “feel called to fight for a curriculum that is more representative of different populations than one that solely focuses on colonial forms of thought.” A student explained:

I felt that I learned a lot from the readings as they had educational and historical value for them. Events such as the TWLF strikes, the connection between the Black Power and Yellow Power movements, and the history of the many ethnic groups that immigrated to America are just some examples along with the many other topics we’ve covered throughout the course. We also covered other topics relating to the course such as Asian American identity and how activism can bring about social change—both being connected through the course and its origins—which further clarified my understanding of Ethnic Studies as a whole.

The course also influenced the students’ educational and career ambitions, as some expressed that hoping to apply their course learning in future careers such as teaching in K-12. One student expressed that “they want their future classroom to be an environment which doesn’t measure knowledge through tests but through application and reflection.”

Although this was the first Ethnic Studies course for many students, the course was impactful for them. One student expressed:

I believe this course has impacted me and my life. I do not think this course has shifted my perspective but opened it in a way that helped me grow and become more educated on Asian Americans.

Students commonly shared that they developed an appreciation and understanding for Ethnic Studies and its purpose. Students were inspired by learning about the solidarity of African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicano, and Native Americans in their fight for Ethnic

Studies. Additionally, students learned to appreciate the value and privilege of this course. According to one student,

This course has taught me that I am privileged to be able to take an Ethnic Studies course in higher education and pushes me to participate in the fight for Ethnic Studies in K-12, so the generation ahead of me has a chance to experience an education that is transformative and relevant.

The course also shifted the perspectives of students due to topics and subjects that were not taught in previous classes. As one student explained, "It was not just me, but also many other students in our class as well [that] did not know many things that have been discussed."

Students have also become empowered through this course, specifically as they have come to see themselves as agents of social change. As one student expressed, "This course has inspired me to become part of the change. It has made me see that we can make changes in society." Another student added, "This course has impacted me by showing me that we, the people, have a lot of power if we hold our grounds as a community." Students have learned to become more vocal, value their own opinions and thoughts, and stand up for what they believe in. Initially, students thought they would learn about Asian American culture from the course. However, they learned more about the different experiences of people of color and the ongoing fight for Ethnic Studies. The course also helped students realize the ways they could make a change. After learning that student activists fought for the class they are taking as a requirement, students in the class were inspired by people their age who made a huge difference that will benefit future generations. The course allowed them to acknowledge and embrace their Asian American identity and created the opportunity for them to form strong relationships with people in the same community.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we discussed student activism as foundational for the fight for Ethnic Studies at Sacramento State and AB 1460. Through this fight, students learned to put their lessons from the classroom into practice. Our Area F courses teach the origins, purpose, and ongoing challenges of Ethnic Studies. With their involvement in the fight for AB 1460, students had first-hand experience of their course learning and reignited the spirit of the TWLF. Students witnessed the ongoing fight for Ethnic Studies, and also learned that they could transform their

education through their own voices and power. They soon realized that they were becoming the modern day TWLF strikers. The fight for AB 1460 and the student activism that transpired reflects the intergenerational TWLF legacy of Ethnic Studies and is evidence that the fight for Ethnic Studies is far from over.

As Alex Gonzalez Jimenez, who later became previous President of the Ethnic Studies Student Association, explains,

Fifty years later, we're still fighting the system that continues to oppress us and deny our education. With the passage of AB 1460, we saw a victory that continues to be watered down. We see how our department is being challenged to implement the bill. The administration is still trying to tell them how to run their discipline.

The future of Ethnic Studies depends on our ability to decolonize the Westernized University. Stevie Raymond Ruiz (2019) reminds us that "another university is possible" through our students and their ability to transform their education. The contemporary and continued fight for Ethnic Studies in higher education and K-12 requires ongoing, intergenerational activism of students of color, as the original TWLF demands have not been fulfilled. Student activism is Ethnic Studies praxis and continues to be vital for the advancement and future of Ethnic Studies (Campbell et al., 2019).

Remember that consciousness is power. Consciousness is education and knowledge. Consciousness is becoming aware. It is the perfect vehicle for students. Consciousness-raising is pertinent for power and be sure that power will not be abusively used but used for building trust and goodwill domestically and internationally. Tomorrow's world is yours to build.

Yuri Kochiyama

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DR. BAO LO is Associate Professor at California State University, Sacramento, in the Department of Ethnic Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. Her research interests include contemporary race and racism, decolonization, settler colonialism, and Asian American Studies, with a specialization in Hmong American Studies. She has published her research in a variety of academic journals, including the *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, *Amerasia Journal*, and *Ethnic Studies Review*.

MARIE LORRAINE MALLARE-JIMENEZ is a Lecturer with the Department Ethnic Studies Department at California State University, Sacramento, and at the Department of Asian American Studies at University of California, Davis. She holds a B.A. Bachelor of Arts, International Relations, Minor in Asian American Studies and M.A. Master of Arts, International Relations emphasis in National Security Policy &

Comparative Foreign Policy from San Francisco State University; J.D. Doctor of Jurisprudence with a specialization in Criminal Law and Litigation and an LL.M. Master of Laws in International Legal Studies from Golden Gate University, School of Law; and an S.J.D. Doctor of Juridical Science, International Legal Studies from Harvard University, School of Law. She has worked with the City and County of San Francisco namely the Community College District, City College of San Francisco, S.F. Mayor's Office, S.F. Municipal Railway and S.F. Public Defender's Office.

DR. TIMOTHY P. FONG is Professor of Ethnic Studies at California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Fong received his Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from the University of California at Berkeley His research specialty areas include comparative race and ethnic relations, contemporary immigration, politics and public policy, community studies, higher education equity and student engagement, and qualitative methodology (ethnography and oral history). He has written and edited several books including, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California* (Temple University Press, 1994), which received a book award from the Association for Asian American Studies. He is the co-editor, with Dr. Dina Maramba, of *Transformative Practices for Minority Student Success: Accomplishments of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions* (Stylus: 2020). This is the first book to focus wholly on AANAPISIs. He is also the co-editor, with Dr. Maramba and Dr. Mike Nguyen, of a special edition of *AAPI Nexus* titled, "Models of Change: AANAPISIs in Action" (UCLA Asian American Studies, 2022).

ANNALISE HARLOW (she/her) is a recent graduate of California State University, Sacramento with a B.A. in Sociology, with a minor in Asian American Studies. Annalise was named the "Outstanding Graduating Senior" by the Department of Sociology and a recipient of the Professor Ayad Al-Qazzaz Distinguished Achievement in Sociology Award. As a Chinese American adoptee based in Northern California, her research interests focus on Asian international adoption, Chinese adoption, and ethnic identity formation. She has also volunteered as a domestic violence advocate with Sacramento county's only AAPI focused domestic violence shelter, My Sister's House. Annalise was awarded the Thomas Swift Asian American Studies Scholarship in recognition of her contributions to the Sacramento Asian American community and work to amplify Asian international adoption research. In addition, her article,

“‘We can’t just stand aside now’: Oakland Fortune Cookie Business Stands with Black Lives Matter”, detailing how Oakland Chinatown has rallied behind the call for Black Lives Matter and emphasizes the importance of cross-racial solidarity, was published in *Ethnic Studies: An Introduction*, 4th Edition (Kendall Hunt, 2022).

YEE THAO (she/her/hers) is a student at California State University, Sacramento majoring in Anthropology and Ethnic Studies. In addition, Yee is also a Pathways Fellow federally funded program that supports promising students to pursue graduate and doctoral studies in educational research. She is active with the Full Circle Project (FCP), the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Ethnic Studies Student Association (ESSA), the Student Academic Success & Educational Equity Programs (SASEEP), the Committee for Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (CARDI), Sacramento Anthropological Society (SAS), Circle K International (CKI), and Hmong University Student Association (HUSA). Yee is also deeply involved with non-profit organizations in the local Sacramento region, including Hmong Innovating Politics and the Asian American Liberation Network, and Sacramento Sisterhood Collective.

NEELAM BANDHU (she/her/hers) is an undergraduate student at California State University, Sacramento double majoring in Ethnic Studies and Criminal Justice, while also minoring in Political Science. Neelam is also a Pathways Fellow who was recently accepted to Ralph Bunche Summer Institute Scholar at Duke University. Neelam is a student lobbyist, activist, leader in the fight for the passage of California Assembly Bill 1460 requiring Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement for all California State University students. She is the President of Ethnic Studies Student Association (ESSA) and is an Instructional Student Assistant in the Ethnic Studies department.