



**From the FANHS Family to the Mabalon Family:  
Remembering FANHS National Scholar and Trustee,  
Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon (August 17, 1972-August 10, 2018)**

By Emily P. Lawsin, National Vice President  
Filipino American National Historical Society  
August 17, 2018

On behalf of the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS), our Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Dorothy Laigo Cordova, the 27 members of the FANHS Board of Trustees, our 35 Chapters, and all of our members nationwide, FANHS extends our deepest condolences and love to Jesus “Jesse” Gonzales, Christine Bloch, Darleen Mabalon, the nephews, nieces, godchildren, and the entire family of our beloved Trustee and National Scholar, Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon. Last week, we were devastated as her family announced that on Friday, August 10, 2018, Dawn passed away suddenly while on vacation in Kauai, Hawai’i. She was 45 years old, just one week shy of her 46<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her ticket purchased, Dawn had plans to fly to our FANHS National Office in Seattle to help interview Auntie Dorothy for a film documentary on Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>. Instead, we will be attending her funeral in Stockton on that date.

Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon served as the National Scholar on our FANHS Board of Trustees. She embraced and embodied that title more than any other, generously sharing her brilliance, her education, her activism, her good humor, her time, and her scholarship with the entire nation and beyond. Dawn was our trusted FANHS



Trustee who wore many hats: she was the walking encyclopedia we trusted to know the answers to our questions on anything Filipino American; the researcher we trusted with our family secrets and sensitive information when she searched for our ancestors in genealogical databases and archives; the kusinera/baker/food scholar we trusted to feed and nourish our minds, bodies, and souls; the gifted author and

professor we trusted to write and share our stories with deep respect and passion for our Filipina/o American history; the community organizer we trusted to lead the fight for historical preservation in Little Manilas all over the country; the fierce Pinay – Filipina American – we trusted for her quick wit and contagious laugh, even in the struggle for social justice; the sistahfriend/comadré/cousin/niece we trusted and loved for her devotion to the community, her family, and her Stockton and Aklanon roots.

Dawn is, was, and always will be FANHS family. I first met Dawn when she transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1992. She was an undergraduate and I was a graduate student in the Asian American Studies M.A. Program. We were at an anti-Columbus Day rally for Chicana/o Studies when Dawn was a reporter for the *Daily Bruin*. After I spoke, Dawn found me on the side of the stage and said, “Oh my god, are you Emily Lawsin? My Uncle Fred Cordova and my cousin Joan May Cordova said I should find you!”

I said, “Oh my god, are you Dawn Mabalon? That’s funny, I just got letters from Uncle Fred and Joanie saying I needed to find you!” She did her slap-you-on-the-shoulder-HARD-then-clap laugh and we hugged as if we had



Dawn Mabalon & Emily Lawsin  
at FANHS National Pinoy Archives  
2013

found a long-lost relative. It turns out that while many people respectfully refer to the late FANHS Founding President Emeritus Fred Cordova as “Uncle Fred”, he *really* was Dawn’s paternal great uncle, as his father and Dawn’s grandfather were cousins. In her groundbreaking book, [Little Manila Is In The Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California](#) (Duke University Press, 2013), and at the Opening Plenary of the FANHS 2018 Conference, Dawn shares the story of how her grandfather, Pablo Mabalon, bought the historic Lafayette Lunch Counter in Stockton’s Little Manila from Uncle Fred’s mother, Margarita Balucas.

Dawn first joined FANHS via our Los Angeles Chapter, when she was an undergraduate student at UCLA. She attended her first FANHS Conference in San Francisco in 1994, where she met so many people who remain her friends to this day. She volunteered, organized, fundraised, and spoke at almost every FANHS National Conference since then, except for 2004 in St. Louis, when we nominated and elected her to the FANHS Board of Trustees. When her cousin/Ninang Joanie called her from the meeting to tell her, a surprised Dawn said, “What? I miss one conference and that’s the one where I get elected?” In later years, she would tell prospective trustees that story and joke, “Yeah, don’t miss a conference, you don’t know what can happen!” Her election, in abstentia, was a testament to the membership’s belief in her ability as a historian and community organizer. At the time of her election in 2004, Dawn had just become the first Filipina American to obtain a Ph.D. in History from Stanford University, then hired as a tenure-track professor of History at [San Francisco State University](#), and had founded, with Dillon Delvo, the [Little Manila Foundation](#) to preserve the historic Filipino district of their hometown of Stockton. In recognition of her historical research, Dawn was named FANHS National Scholar when she was re-elected for a second term to the Board of Trustees in 2010.

Prior to that, in 1997, Dawn earned a Master of Arts in Asian American Studies at UCLA. Her master’s thesis, “Filipina Pioneers: The Pinay in Stockton, California, 1929-1946” was the first to thoroughly document Filipina American women’s experiences in her hometown. Dawn believed it was important to recognize the field of Pinay Studies, focusing on Filipina American women, since much of the earlier writings focused on migrant males. She told us, “There are so few of us who do Pinay Studies, we need to just cite each other in everything to help the field grow. That’s what those old boys networks do, so we can do it, except we’ll do it better.” (And we did.) Dawn went on to publish several books, articles, and poems, produced and appeared in several documentaries, and mentored so many students that FANHS is compiling a “Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon Syllabus” to encourage future students and researchers to learn more about her work.

Dawn did much of the research for her master’s thesis, her dissertation, and her books at our FANHS National Pinoy Archives in Seattle and via the FANHS Stockton Chapter, which she joined in 1999. In 2008, together with artist Rico Reyes, the FANHS Stockton Chapter, and the Little Manila Foundation, Dawn co-authored [Filipinos in Stockton](#). In 2011, she co-edited with other members of FANHS, the Manilatown Heritage Foundation, and Pin@y Educational Projects, another book, [Filipinos in San Francisco](#). Both are imprints in Arcadia Publishing’s series on Filipinos. As a FANHS Trustee, Dawn digitized many of the historical photos in the FANHS National Office, and had many more preservation projects planned that we hope to continue.

In the 14 years that she served on the FANHS Board of Trustees, Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon volunteered, behind the scenes, on almost every trustee committee, including: the National Pinoy Archives Advisory Council, the FANHS Museum Committee, the Fundraising Committee, the student scholarships committee, the Social Media Team, and the Filipino American History Month Committee, which she chaired. One of her last gifts to

filipino american  
**FANHS**  
 national historical society

FANHS was writing the Filipino American History Month Theme for this October 2018: “Turning Points”, marking 120 years since the 1898 Spanish-American War and the Philippines’ Independence from Spain, and the 1968 student strikes to establish Ethnic Studies. Dawn sent in the theme before she left for Hawai’i and it can be found on our FANHS National website here: [tinyurl.com/FAHM2018](https://tinyurl.com/FAHM2018)



Kevin Nadal & Dawn Bohulano Mabalon at #FANHS2016 in New York.

The FANHS Executive Officers encourage all FANHS chapters, community organizations, educational institutions and individuals to dedicate their October 2018 observance of Filipino American History Month in memory of FANHS National Scholar and Trustee, Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon. Dawn had just finished writing a children’s book, [Journey for Justice: The Life of Larry Itliong](#), which is scheduled for release October 27 by Bridge + Delta Publishers. We encourage everyone to purchase that book (and all of Dawn’s books) and give them as gifts, as Dawn would do for her family and friends. We plan to honor Dawn at the next FANHS Conference, July 1-4, 2020 in Hawai’i. We also encourage friends and colleagues in academia to propose panel presentations in Dawn’s memory at the conferences that she would most attend (FANHS, AAAS, ASA, and OAH).

Dawn would privately lament how many people do not know that FANHS, since its founding in 1982, is completely run by volunteers and has no salaried staff. “We don’t get paid for this work. We do this out of love for our community, for our families,” she said. When I asked 86-year-old FANHS Founder and Executive Director, Auntie Dorothy Cordova, for a brief quote on Dawn, she said:



Fred Cordova, Joan May T. Cordova, Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, and Dorothy Laigo Cordova at FANHS National Office.

*“How can you say in three sentences what should take a book to describe the body of work and importance of Dawn Mabalon to the Filipino American National Historical Society? I weep that this bright, funny, liberal, challenging scholar, foodie, excellent professor, stalwart friend, family-oriented Pinay, loving wife and FANHS shining star is no longer with us. So young – but accomplished so much. Thank you, Jesse, for sharing her with us.”*

~Auntie Dorothy

Our FANHS National President, Dr. Judy Patacsil, of San Diego, wrote:

*“I am so deeply saddened and still in shock about the loss of Dr. Dawn Mabalon, our FANHS National Scholar. Over the years, Dawn gave so much to FANHS and to the community. She gave in so many ways through her activism, her scholarly research, and her writings, including our FANHS themes for Filipino American History Month. It was the Saturday, just before Dawn left for her trip, that she and I spoke about her travels, her upcoming work during the semester, our FANHS National Museum, and her completed work on the themes for October 2018 – Filipino American History Month.*

*Dawn and her family contribute to and represent so much Filipino American history. From living and being leaders in Stockton, Dawn and her family are pioneers to the community. I was blessed to share the experience of being in Washington D.C. together with Dawn and her aunties last October to receive the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of our fathers who served in World War II.*

*Dawn was so passionate about history, food, and our Filipino American community. May perpetual light shine upon Dawn always, and may Dawn’s perpetual light always shine bright for us, so that we will continue to be inspired to carry on her great legacy. As the FANHS National President, on*

*behalf of our Trustees & the FANHS Chapters, I express our deepest condolences to Dawn's husband - Jesse, to Dawn's family, and to all who mourn her great loss."*

Anywhere that Dawn went: In the classroom, in academia, in the community, she worked hard to fulfill and uphold the mission of FANHS: *"to promote understanding, education, enlightenment, appreciation, and enrichment through the gathering, identification, preservation, and dissemination of the history and culture of Filipino Americans in the United States."* For that and so much more, we are eternally grateful.



Dawn Mabalon (right) after PEP's plenary at FANHS 2008 Conference Alaska.

Dawn would text her friends every day; we had a FANHS sisterhood group where she would text jokes, photos, or gifs of her emotions and her work. The last time we saw Dawn was in mid-July, at the FANHS Conference in Chicago, just three weeks before she died. She presented her research during the Opening Plenary, a Filipino Food Panel, a Filipino Farmworkers movement session, and during the General Membership Meeting. Although we hung out together every day of the conference, I did not get to give her our customary long hug goodbye, as she left the conference a day early to attend a family event. She said, "I'll text you when I get home, Maré." And she did.

Maré Dawn, this is not goodbye. This is a thank you for all you did for FANHS and for our communities. Our world will never be the same. We love you and will miss you. Rest in Peace, Rest in Pinay Power.

#DawnMabalonIsInTheHeart  
 #DrMabalonInspiredMe

"I hope that [my work] can inspire succeeding generations of Filipina/o Americans in Stockton, particularly the children and grandchildren of immigrants who arrived after 1965, to begin to see that the materials of everyday life—their grandparents' stories, documents, photographs, and other belongings—are history, and therefore, priceless."  
 -Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon  
 (1972-2018)  
[www.fanhs-national.org](http://www.fanhs-national.org)



Dr. Fred Cordova with Dr. Dawn Mabalon in the National Pinoy Archives

Dawn Mabalon was a central part of the FANHS Social Media Team and helped create many of our posts. Please see @fanhs\_national on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to share the memes we made to continue her legacy.  
 #DawnMabalonIsInTheHeart #DrMabalonInspiredMeBy



## FANHS Advisory

August 21, 2018

### Suggested Ways To Honor Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon's Memory

1. Buy, read, assign Dawn's books and articles, give them as gifts, make sure they are in your public libraries and classrooms. Start with:
  - [Little Manila Is In The Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California.](#)
  - [Filipinos in Stockton.](#)
  - [Filipinos in San Francisco.](#)
  - Dawn's children's book, [Journey for Justice: The Life of Larry Itliong](#), is scheduled for release October 27, 2018, by Bridge + Delta Publishers.
2. Watch the videos she appears in and listen to the radio interviews of her. Start with:
  - [Little Manila: Filipinos in California's Heartland - KVIE](http://www.littlemanila.org/videos-1/2016/3/12/little-manila-filipinos-in-californias-heartland-kvie) <http://www.littlemanila.org/videos-1/2016/3/12/little-manila-filipinos-in-californias-heartland-kvie>
  - [Beats, Rhymes, and Resistance: Pilipinos and Hip Hop in Los Angeles](https://vimeo.com/3722157) <https://vimeo.com/3722157>
  - [Interview on KQED about the 1965 Delano Grape Strike](http://ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/09/04/50-years-later-the-forgotten-origins-of-the-historic-delano-grape-strike) <http://ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/09/04/50-years-later-the-forgotten-origins-of-the-historic-delano-grape-strike>
  - See more **Little Manila Videos**, here: <http://www.littlemanila.org/videos-2/>
3. Read and share the **Filipino American History Month** theme that Dawn wrote: [tinyurl.com/FAHM2018](http://tinyurl.com/FAHM2018)
4. Dedicate your observance of **Filipino American History Month** in October to Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon.
5. Record interviews of your family members; preserve their stories, photos, and material artifacts for the next generation. Write and share.
6. Visit, get involved, and become a member of the new **FANHS Museum** in Stockton, where she volunteered as a historical consultant: [www.fanhsmuseum.com](http://www.fanhsmuseum.com)
7. In addition to the family's **GoFundMe** fundraiser for Dawn's memorial services: <https://www.gofundme.com/nakj9-dawno39s-memorial-fund>  
You can support the causes that were near and dear to her heart.  
These are some of the non-profit organizations that Dawn served on the board of:
  - **Filipino American National Historical Society:** [www.fanhs-national.org](http://www.fanhs-national.org)
  - **Little Manila Foundation:** [www.littlemanila.net](http://www.littlemanila.net)
  - **Asian Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation:** [www.apiahip.org](http://www.apiahip.org)
  - **Manilatown Heritage Foundation:** [www.manilatown.org](http://www.manilatown.org)
  - **Pin@y Educational Projects:** [www.pepsf.org](http://www.pepsf.org)

There are many, many more ways to honor Dawn. Share yours on social media using the hashtags:  
#DawnMabalonIsInTheHeart #DrMabalonInspiredMeBy.



### **FANHS Museum - Special Hours in Honor of Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon**

As a FANHS Trustee, Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon was a member of our FANHS Museum Committee. In her honor, the FANHS Museum will have special hours, especially for those traveling to Stockton for her funeral services. We encourage Museum visitors to carpool, as parking is limited.

Thursday, August 23, 2018: Open 11:00AM until 5:00PM.

Friday, August 24, 2018: Closed, as our volunteer staff will attend Dawn's funeral.

Saturday & Sunday, August 25-26, 2018: Open 10AM-5PM.

Questions? Call the FANHS Museum (209) 932-9037 or Email [Stocktonfanhs@aol.com](mailto:Stocktonfanhs@aol.com).

The Filipino American National Historical Society Museum is located at 337 E. Weber Ave., Stockton, California 95202.

[www.fanhsmuseum.com](http://www.fanhsmuseum.com)  
#DawnMabalonIsInTheHeart

## The Family Announces Memorial Services for Dr. Dawn Bohulano Mabalon



### Thursday, August 23, 2018

**1:00PM-4:00 PM COMMUNITY VIEWING** at  
Chapel of The Palms, 303 S. California St., Stockton, CA 95203

**6:00 PM ROSARY** at  
St. George Church, 120 W. 5<sup>th</sup> St., Stockton, CA 95206

### Friday, August 24, 2018

**10:00 AM MASS** at St. George Church, 120 W. 5<sup>th</sup> St., Stockton, CA 95206  
**Procession immediately following** to  
San Joaquin Catholic Cemetery, 719 E. Harding Way, Stockton, CA 95204

*Other Memorial Services are being planned in San Francisco and Los Angeles (TBD).*

#DawnMabalonIsInTheHeart