



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES NEW YORK

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PH Consulate in New York Convenes 6th Fil-Am Community General Assembly



Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez (front, center) and Consul General Claro S. Cristobal (3rd from the left) with Fil-Am Community leaders under the jurisdiction of PCG New York during the General Assembly (photo by Mr. Michael Azucena).

18 February 2020, New York- The Philippine Consulate General in New York convened the 6th Filipino-American Community General Assembly in the US Northeastern seaboard on 8 February 2020 at the Philippine Center in New York to discuss important matters affecting Filipino-Americans in the 10 states under the jurisdiction of the Consulate.

Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose Manuel Romualdez delivered the keynote address in the annual event which was attended this year by almost 200

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community leaders representing 93 organizations. The Ambassador said that he was very grateful to see so many community leaders participate in the event. "The dream of any Philippine Ambassador to the US is to unify the Filipino community because you are a potent force in country," he said.

"Sometimes we have discussions and misunderstandings on some issues, but at the end of the day, *Filipino ka pa rin* and you should be proud of that," Ambassador Romualdez added.

Ambassador Romualdez likewise talked about the strong bilateral relations between the Philippines and the United States, and discussed the vibrant democracy and fully functioning legal processes in the Philippines. He emphasized the importance of sovereignty and of the need for the Philippines to be a strong, self-sufficient country.

Consul General Claro S. Cristobal presented to the community a report on the highlights of the accomplishments of the Consulate in 2019, including the new programs that were initiated like the Post Arrival Orientation Seminar (PAOS) for newly-arrived school children and their family and entrepreneurship training for Filipino women. The Consul General said that last year, the Filipino Restaurant Week, one of the major projects of the Consulate, expanded to Massachusetts, Washington DC, Virginia, and Maryland with the participation of the Philippine Embassy.

Consul General Cristobal likewise presented the Consulate's calendar of programs and activities for 2020 including the consular outreach and Consulate Saturday schedules. He underscored the importance of participating in the census, both in the US and in the Philippines, and encouraged the leaders to be involved in complete-count efforts of the community. He also provided the latest update on the COVID-19 situation in the Philippines and in New York.

Representatives of attached agencies took part in the General Assembly to share their programs and priorities for 2020: Mr. Francisco Lardizabal of Philippine Department of Tourism in New York, Mr. Nicanor Bautista of Philippine Trade and Investment Center, Ms. Celenia Dimaano of SSS, Atty. Angela Trinidad of Philippine Overseas Labor Office, Ms. Josephine Sanchez-Tobia of OWWA, and Mr. Michael Azucena of Pagibig.

In the afternoon of the full-day General Assembly, two panel discussions highlighted issues important for the Fil-Am community. The first panel tackled the topic "Inspiring Involvement of Young Filipino-Americans" and explored the issues facing young Fil-Am leaders and how they can be more involved in community matters. The panelists were Mr. Noah Benipayo, Chairperson of Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue (FIND) District 3, Ms. Jennifer Coliflores, President of Philippine-American Mainstream Advocacy of Non-Partisan Associations (PAMANA), and Ms. Venessa Manzano, Founder of The Filipino School of New York and New Jersey. The panel was

moderated by Mr. Brendan Flores, National Chair of National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA).

The 2nd panel discussed the topic "Broadening Involvement in Local Community Building and Socio-Political Processes" which was moderated by Mr. Steven Raga, Chief of Staff-New York State Assembly. The members of the panel were Mr. Rolando Lavarro, Jr., Councilman At Large in Jersey City; Ms. Ayesha Vera-Yu, CEO and Co-founder of Advancement for Rural Kids (ARK); and Ms. Deirdre Marie Levy, Founder of NYC Filipinos.

Mr. Jose Aguilung of the New York Regional Census Center discussed the 2020 US Census including the timelines and how to accomplish the forms. His team distributed flyers and information materials to the participants of the General Assembly.

During the General Assembly, Consulate officials gave a briefing on what to do in cases of emergency and security-related events in their respective areas. Updates and reminders on consular requirements and processes were also provided. END



(R-L) Ambassador Romualdez and Consul General Cristobal entertain questions from the community leaders. (Photo by NYPCG)



(L-R) Mr. Brendan Flores, Ms. Venessa Manzano, Ms. Jennifer Coliflores and Mr. Noah Benipayo discuss their topic during the 1st Panel of the General Assembly. (Photo by NYPCG)



(L-R) Mr. Steven Raga, Ms. Deirdre Marie Levy, Ms. Ayesha Vera-Yu, and Mr. Rolando Lavarro, Jr. discussing their involvement in community building and socio-political processes. (Photo by NYPCG)