



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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**New York Consulate's Delegates Recount
Memorable FYLPRO 2019 Experience**



Fourteen 2019 FYLPRO delegates pose in traditional Filipiniana dresses and barongs in celebration of completing their Immersion Program during the Closing Ceremonies. (Photo by Ayala Foundation, Inc.)

17 December 2019, New York- For seven days at the end of November, 14 Filipino Americans from across the U.S. embraced their roots, enriched their identities and strengthened their ties to the land of their ancestors.

In its eighth year, the 2019 Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO) included a diverse and talented cohort of leaders who have excelled in their respective industries -- from medicine, law, technology, business and media. In cooperation with the Ayala Foundation and Department of Foreign Affairs, FYLPRO and its alumni have gone on to

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build and strengthen ties between the U.S. and the Philippines via businesses and civic engagement projects.

This year, two delegates were selected to represent the Philippine Consulate in New York's region -- Philjay Somera Solar from Boston and Leezel Tanglao from New York.



The Philippine Consulate General of New York's FYLPRO delegates pose for a regional photo during the program's Opening Ceremonies held at Ayala Tower One, Makati, Philippines. Mr. Philjay Somera Solar of Boston (left) and Ms. Leezel Tanglao of New York (right). Photo by Ayala Foundation, Inc.

Solar currently serves as the Commissioner of the Asian American Commission for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, where he sits as Chair of the AAPI Young Leaders Symposium. He is the youngest and only Commissioner of Filipino descent. He is also the founder of Fil-Lennials of New England which highlights young Filipino-American professionals to inspire youth and build a stronger Fil-Am community. Solar is also involved in several organizations, including the Philippine American Mainstream Advocacy for Non-Partisan Associations, Inc. (PAMANA), National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA), BOSFilipinos, and the Massachusetts Youth Leadership Foundation.

Tanglao, who is a multimedia bridge journalist and media consultant, has worked at several major news organizations, including ABC, CBS, Vice, CNN and The Associated Press. She currently leads membership and innovation at HuffPost. She is currently a

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Reynolds Journalism Institute Non-Residential Fellow and is developing a tool to better measure the impact of stories. She most recently was selected as a 92Y Women in Power Fellow for 2020. In addition, she is an advisor for Filipino Americans in Science Technology Engineering Arts + Math New York Chapter (FASTER NY) and has presented at several past Filipino American National Historical Society conferences.

During the FYLPRO immersion week in Manila, Solar and Tanglao, along with their fellow delegates, met with representatives and leaders from government, business, community and culture.

Delegates explored Intramuros via bamboo bikes and then paid their respects at the Manila American cemetery. They heard from representatives from the Ayala Foundation, Department of Foreign Affairs and Rappler on the nation's current state of affairs.

They learned about the Philippine tax system from Tax Whiz Raymond "Mon" Abrea, founder of the Asian Consulting Group and connected with local businesses through the Makati Business Club and American Chamber of Commerce.

FYLPRO alums who have started businesses in the Philippines also gave delegates a look into the process.

The delegates also visited the Department of Tourism and Department of Trade and Industry and made a courtesy call at U.S Ambassador Residence with Deputy Chief of Mission John Law.

The delegates likewise paid a visit to Manila Mayor Francisco "Isko" Moreno Domagoso.

On community day, delegates traveled to Pampanga, to Sitio Monicayo and learned about the Aeta community and the efforts to provide water access and sanitation via Manila Water Foundation.

On the final day, delegates met with their mentors in conjunction with their legacy project.

Solar's legacy project includes leadership development and programming for Filipino American middle school and high school students in New England. Tanglao's legacy project is a multimedia deep dive into people's relationship to debt (utang ng loob) and surfacing those stories to a wider audience.



FYLPRO Delegates pose with Mayor "Isko" Moreno (center) after a courtesy call in his office at City Hall of Manila. Photo by FYLPRO.

The FYLPRO immersion trip marks the beginning of the delegates' deeper connection and ties to the Philippines and their Filipino identity.

"Participating in FYLPRO was an uplifting once in a lifetime experience that has empowered me to make an impactful splash back in my community which will send ripples of positivity and inspire others to follow," said Solar. "Being able to hear from like minded, committed Fil-Am leaders like myself as well as stakeholders in the Philippines has fueled my personal thinktank of the many ideas we can all collaborate together to advance Filipinos globally."

For Tanglao, FYLPRO was a transformative experience.

"It's never been more important to build bridges with our kababayans no matter where they are in the diaspora. Connecting with the community in the motherland has been the accelant to the fire that burns deeply within me to tell the stories of our people. Our stories matter," Tanglao said. "The community I found with my fellow FYLPRO delegates has shown me the power of diverse voices coming together who are united with a shared mission to serve our fellow Filipinos. I'm most excited and inspired by the collaborations that will be born out of this opportunity." END