

# MIGRANT HERITAGE CHRONICLE

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## MHC Legal Resource Program Scores in Political Asylum Case

By the MHC News Team

For the first time in five years, the Migrant Heritage Commission's legal resource program and volunteer lawyers from the Law Offices of Valera and Associates in Washington, DC successfully earned political asylum for a Filipino journalist in May this year.

According to Arnedo Valera, Esq., the US government has not been in the habit of granting asylum to seekers since the 1980s. He expressed awe when the petition was granted by the US Department of Homeland Security under its Asylum Branch Office.

"The process of applying for political asylum has not changed. For the past several years since the time of President Cory Aquino, only very few in the Philippines have been granted asylum. I am glad the petition was granted," said Valera, the legal counsel for the journalist whose name is withheld for security reasons.

Valera noted that the granting of the asylum indicated that the US government may already have been wary of the spate of killings and abductions of journalists and human rights advocates in the Philippines.

The Philippine journalist, a media practitioner for more than 15 years, fled to the US late last year in fear of his life, after following through on a controversial story on the recent national elections marred by large scale fraud and cheating in the southern Philippines.

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On the 4th of July, War Veteran Potenciano Dee (left), MHC Executive Director Grace Valera-Jaramillo (middle), PACP President Pio "Guding" Cabrera (right) led enthusiastic volunteers/organizations from the Fil-Am Community in Washington, DC and top officials of the Philippine Embassy.

## Reaffirming FIL-AM Friendship on the 4th of July

By the MHC News Team

It was America's biggest national birthday celebration commemorating the Signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 and Fil-Ams, carrying the "Fil-Am Friendship Day" banner, proudly waved US and RP flags to over 100,000 spectators along the stretch of Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C. last July 4. For everyone, it was a patriotic day of flag raising and waving of the stars and stripes, picnics and spectacular firework display all over the U.S.

Parading and dancing to the gongs, agongs and Philippine marching fiesta band music as well as Papaya, Filipino rap and "God Bless the USA" were over 100 enthusiastic Fil-Ams from various Fil-Am groups led by two of Migrant Heritage Commission's Executive Directors Grace Valera-Jaramillo (formerly Philippine Embassy's Cultural Officer and Attaché) and Jesse A. Gatchalian.

Valera-Jaramillo, who has been mobilizing Fil-Am community participation since 2004 for high profile festivals like DC's biggest Cultural Festival, the National Cherry Blossoms Festival and America's National Day Parade said "The Fil-Am community is fortunate to have been selected again to join America's National Day parade. Over 120 groups from all over the U.S. have been chosen to participate in this parade. It's a great avenue to increase visibility of the Philippines in the American mainstream

and to reaffirm Filipino-American friendship.

Gatchalian, on the other hand, added, "We take advantage of this opportunity to showcase Philippine culture, and remind Americans that Filipinos have done their share of sacrifice to help preserve American liberty and democracy."

The crowd applauded for the Fil-Am contingent in every block as they showcased the diverse, colorful and vibrant Philippine cultural suites of Cordillera/Mountain Province, Barrio Fiesta, Southern Philippines/Muslim, Maria Clara or Spanish and festivals like Ati-Atihan and Santacruzian.

Volunteer marchers came from various groups of MHC, BIMAAK, Benguet 13, FilCom of Blessed Sacrament of Washington D.C., Fil-Am Ministry of St. Michael in Maryland, Philippine American Community Partnership (PACP), ISA's Miss Teenage Philippines-USA, Miss Teenage Philippines Pageant Inc., Ultimate Eskrima Int'l, Fil-Am Heritage Dance Ensemble, Pangasinan Inc., War Veterans Group, Mother Butler's Guild of St. Mary's Rockville and St. Michael Silver Spring, Ang Bisaya Inc., Lord is my Shepherd Charismatic Group, Aklan Ati-Atihan, Mabuhay Inc., BOGWAS DC, El Shaddai, APODCAA,

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