

**AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIETTA "MARGIE"
LLORENTE GONZALES**

An Oral History Conducted by Cecilia Winchell and Vanessa Concepcion

Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

©Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander
Oral History Project

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries
Director: Claytee D. White
Project Manager: Stefani Evans
Transcriber: Kristin Hicks
Editors and Project Assistants: Vanessa Concepcion, Kristel Peralta, Cecilia Winchell, Ayrton Yamaguchi

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islanders Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

PREFACE



Marietta "Margie" Llorente Gonzales, painting by artist Sharon Courtney, November 2020

"As you see, two things I did, community activities, one is political and one is civic engagement. Both of them actually are things I had been doing in the Philippines when I was there. I've been doing them for a long time. Being a volunteer is really running in my veins. I've been a volunteer ever since I was a child, I think."

Marietta "Margie" Llorente Gonzales was born and raised with her sister in Manila, Philippines, the older of two daughters of a businesswoman and a civil engineer. Even though the family had means, Margie's father taught his daughter the value of money and budgeting—a skill she took to heart and allowed her to buy a house three years after immigrating to the U.S. with her husband.

In this interview, Margie describes her childhood and schooling in Manila, her college years at the University of Santo Tomas and Philippines Women's University, and her lengthy courtship with her husband, and her background in dance and choreography, performing, scriptwriting, editing, publishing and broadcasting. She recalls all of this through the backdrop of Philippine

politics—of attending college during student strikes organized by the Communist Party, of her relief when martial law was declared, and of transferring schools. She recalls her work with the Philippines Speaker of the House and his partnership with President Fidel Ramos; martial law and the Peaceful Revolution, Ferdinand Marcos, Imelda Marcos, Corazon "Cory" Aquino, and the Communist Party in the Philippines.

Margie describes her new life in the U.S. that began in September 1994, and how adjusting to a new culture was easier for her than it was learning to navigate the change from being an independent Manila woman in her forties to being a wife living with her in-laws in Daly City, California. She explains the reasons she and her husband decided to move to Las Vegas in 2002. She talks about fulfilling her dream to work for the government when she became part of the first Transportation Security Administration (TSA) baggage screening team at McCarran Airport in 2002. In this position, Margie leaned on her degree in Communication Arts by editing and publishing a McCarran International Airport (now Harry Reid International Airport) TSA newsletter for four years.

Margie's twin loves of civic engagement and politics led her to become involved in the Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus (AAPIDC) and Hillary Clinton's 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns, where she made the first-ever traditional Filipino *kamayan* for the Democratic National Committee. Finally, she describes her work with Sonny Vinuya to advocate for a pathway to a green card for Filipino teachers recruited by the Clark County School District.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with Marietta "Margie" Llorente Gonzales
November 1, 2021, and November 22, 2021
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Cecilia Winchell and Vanessa Concepcion

Preface.....iv

Family history and grandparents; Metro Manila; commuting to elementary school; father's lessons in budgeting, and mother's talent for reselling and jewelry making. Father's career and decision not to come to the United States, mother's decision to come part-time. College years: architecture, student activism, martial law, commuting, and transferring to Philippine Women's University (PWU). Courtship and marriage to Ricardo Gabriel "Jag" Gonzales.....1–14

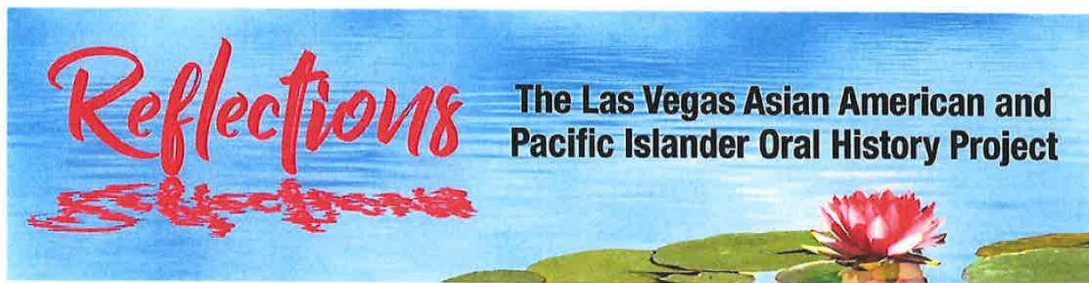
Dancing, choreography, teaching, and performance; radio interviews, scriptwriting, hosting, and producing and multiple media promotions. Department of Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration (DHS TSA) McCarran (now Harry Reid) International Airport newsletter 2004–2008. Immigration to U.S. in 1994, Daly City, California; working at JCPenney's and Strouds Linens; buying first house 1997. Moving to Las Vegas in 2002, buying house, 2009 recession, retirement from TSA, and COVID-19 pandemic.....15–27

Adjustment to married life and Daly City as "Adobo City." Researching Las Vegas cost of living, quality of life, entertainment, and jobs; Las Vegas realtor, and The Filipino Channel (TFC). Work in Philippines for five-time Speaker of the House, Jose de Venecia Jr. TSA hiring process, health insurance, swearing-in, retirement, and newsletter.....28–44

Politics; Asian Community Resource Center (ACRC) Foundation; Democratic Party; Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey; Asian American Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus (AAPIDC); first U.S. recognition Nevada State Democratic Party Walked the Extra Mile Award 2014; Hillary Clinton 2008 campaign and Nevada Caucus. Jose de Venecia Jr (JDV), Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos, and Rainbow Coalition 1992–1998. Jose Maria (Joma) C. Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP NPA); Ferdinand Marcos, Imelda Marcos, and shoes. People Power Revolution and President Corazon "Cory" Cojuangco Aquino.....44–59

Martial law, commuting to college, and the student arm of the CCP. Filipino teachers with Clark County School District (CCSD) since 2017 and contractual housing restrictions, COVID-19, and paycheck delay, and hosting Filipino CCSD teachers. *Kamayan* as a political event. Partnership with Sonny Vinuya, president Asian Chamber of Commerce, to advocate for teachers to receive H-1 visa (with path to green card) rather than current J-1 (temporary cultural exchange) visa. Teacher shortage creating difficulties for teachers. Las Vegas entertainment/hospitality industry creating diversity and reducing anti-Asian hate.....59–72

APPENDIX: AWARDS AND COMMENDATIONS, 1994–202273–84



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: MARIETTA "MARGIE" LLORENTE-GONZALES

Name of Interviewer: Cecilia Winchell, Vanessa Concepcion

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 11/01/2021 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, distributed, placed on the Internet or broadcast in any medium that the Oral History Research Center and UNLV Libraries deem appropriate including future forms of electronic and digital media.

[Signature] 11/01/2021
Signature of Narrator Date

[Signature] 11/1/2021
Signature of Interviewer Date
[Signature] 3/21/2022

UNLV | UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Box 457010, 4505 S. Maryland Pkwy, Las Vegas, NV 89154-7010
Phone: (702) 895-2222 Email: oralhistory@unlv.edu www.library.unlv.edu/reflections

Good morning. Today's date is November 1st, 2021. I am Cecilia Winchell. I am joined here by Stefani Evans, as well as Margie Gonzales.

Could you please spell your name for the record?

My legal first name is Marietta, M-A-R-I-E-T-T-A. My nickname is Margie. My maiden last name is Llorente, L-L-O-R-E-N-T-E. My married last name is Gonzales, G-O-N-Z-A-L-E-S.

Thank you. We would like to start off by talking a bit about your familial background, where you come from, your lineage, if you could trace that for us.

Oh, I would love to. It started with my great-great-grandfather, whose name was Atanacio Llorente. He was a military general in Spain. He had two sons, Felix and Rafael, who became high-ranking military officers. They were both assigned to the Philippines, and both married Filipinas. One of the sons, Felix, was where I came from. He had eight children with his wife, Margarit Resurrection, and the eldest was my grandfather, Ernesto Resurrection Llorente. From Ernesto came my Llorente lineage. From Ernesto came my dad, and then came me and my younger sister, Cindy Llorente DeLos Santos, and then came me. That's the family tree, but I didn't have the chance to meet my grandfather Ernesto because he passed away before my dad was born.

Do you know anything about your mother's side?

From my mother's side, I only met my grandfather, Pablo Conchas, because my maternal grandmother, Fortuna Das Marinas, had also passed before I was born. Both of my maternal grandparents were Filipinos from the Visayan Islands. My grandmother was from province of Leyte, where I was able to go to when I was young, because my late mother took me and my sister there for vacation. My grandfather Pablo hailed from the province of Cebu. I remember he was very much a disciplinarian and was very caring about us. I remember him very well. All of

them have passed, unfortunately, my parents, my grandparents, both sides. I have no more aunts and uncles on both sides except for one, Froilan Conchas, my later mother's younger brother. He is in the Philippines, been sick for months now, and I am still very much in touch with him. We Filipinos take care of our relatives in times of need and if we can afford to help. If he needs anything, I send help. Since he is the only uncle that I have left, I want to make sure he is doing okay.

Could you tell us about some of your favorite memories with your grandparents?

Yes. I remember my grandfather Pablo was, as I said, very much a disciplinarian. As a child, I witnessed how he was disciplining his two sons, my two uncles—not so much on my mom because my mom was a good daughter—very independent and resourceful. I think that helped my mom to become a strong woman, because of the strong father that she had. I remember my grandfather was very good with *arnis*, a Filipino martial art with two wood sticks. I remember him doing that and teaching *arnis* to his sons. That's a very good memory I have of my maternal grandfather. I don't know if you believe in this—when people die, they say that the spirit doesn't leave this world right away. Somehow, when Grandfather Pablo passed away, I felt that his spirit visited me before it was actually gone. It was in my sleep. I felt like he visited me, because my younger sister and I were his only grandchildren. He was telling me, “Look after your sister; look after your sister.” That's the only thing he was telling me, “Look after your sister.” That's the only thing he was saying, “Look after your sister.” I don't know if it was just a dream, but I remember that very well, and I made sure I did what he told me. I look after my sister up to now.

On my father's side, I told you I only met my grandmother, Cirila Basco Llorente. Oh my God, she was the most wonderful grandmother ever. Just like our first cousins, my sister and I love our grandma. My dad was born with only a mother because his father already passed when

he was still in the womb. He was so close to his mother. My paternal grandmother was a midwife. A midwife is somebody that helps you give birth. My grandmother was a very popular midwife in the neighborhood and in some other places. She was very good at what she did. She never ran out of patients, because she was well recommended by other people.

All of my cousins, including myself, came out into this world because of her. There was no maternity expense for my mom and my aunts when they gave birth, because of my grandmother. I remember when she was older and not so busy, she would, stay one week at our place, and the following weeks she would be at my cousins' places. Everybody had their share of her. She always had time for all of us. That's why she was so well loved by everyone. She would tell us stories. I still remember her stories up to now, the stories that she would tell us when she was in bed. My sister and I would be there, and she would be telling us stories with emphatic, hard gestures. We love and miss her dearly, really. I remember her very well up to this time.

Could you tell us more about your childhood; where you grew up; how you grew up; your parents; siblings; schooling, stuff like that?

We're only two children in the family, my younger sister, Cindy and me. My mom had two miscarriages, supposedly the eldest one and the youngest one. My sister and I would have been middle children. I was not supposed to be the eldest. But had they lived, we would have been three girls and one boy. The youngest was supposed to have been a boy.

Can you tell us about your childhood; where you grew up; how you grew up; about your parents?

I remember that. I don't know if it's also the same with you, but as you grow older, the more things you remember. I think I can still remember back to when I was two years old. It's not that I remember so many things, but I could still remember a little bit. I was born in the city of

Manila, in our home on Zurbaran Street. I remember the house in Zurbaran, even though we left that house when I was two years old. In my mind I can still picture the living room and the dining room. I could still remember that there was an ice cream place there, and I could still picture the street right outside our home. I was so young—two years old—so how come it's still in my mind? I know that was our home and I was born there. I did not grow up there. We kept moving from there. We moved, we moved, we moved, several times. We went from the northern side of town, Manila, to the south side of town, Parañaque, and everywhere in between.

STEFANI: *But still in Manila?*

It's now called Metro Manila because it's like a county. Let's say I was born in North Las Vegas, and then we moved to Las Vegas, and then we moved to Henderson, and then we moved to Boulder City; something like that. My elementary and high school years were at Malate Catholic School in Manila. That's the same school of my sister from grade one all the way through high school. It was just one school, so we were loyalty awardees when we graduated high school. When I was in grade one, my sister was not in school yet. It was when I was in grade three, she became grade one. I never went through preschool or kindergarten. I went straight to grade one. With my parents, we were good. They were able to teach us basic education at home. When I was in grade one, it's not like I was lost or was behind. We did well, even if we went straight to grade one. When my sister started going to school, I was in grade three, and we commuting. My mom only accompanied me to school for grade one. Grade two, I was on my own. That means I will do public transportation and commute from my home to school in grade two.

I started becoming independent at a very young age. That means grade two I was on my own. I don't remember my mom taking me to school at that age, but she would go to school to bring lunch; that I remember. Now, grade three, it's me now who is in charge. I am now the big

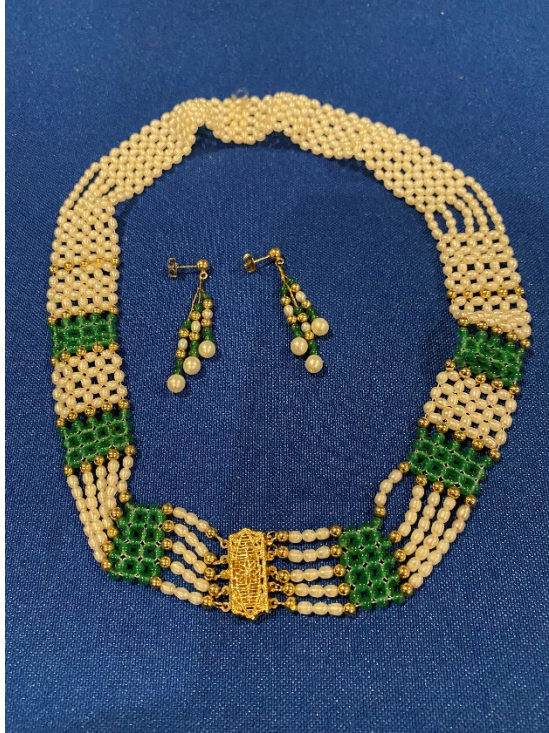
sister, so my younger sister would be with me. We would be commuting from our home to our school. The commute was about thirty minutes. That means I was already taking care of my sister at that age. I was practically raised to become independent. I was glad my parents did that.

When we were in high school my dad would give us an allowance good for two weeks. My dad would be paid twice a month, mid-month and end of the month. He would give us an allowance good for two weeks, so that means if we were good in budgeting, we would have extra money for weekends. If you're not good, oh, by the second week towards Thursday and Friday, it's like, oh my, gosh, there's little money left. That means you did not do well in budgeting. He was training us in budgeting our money, another good training that we had at that time. Same as when we were in college. It's like this: If my classmates had, let's say, five pesos to ten pesos as pocket money in a day, my dad would be giving us two pesos and fifty centavos or three pesos. That's the big difference. Even though he was making a lot of money because he was a civil engineer and he had very good pay. People would be thinking we would have been rich or something or wealthy because my dad was earning very well, but my dad did not give us a lot of money. He would still be training us to do well with what we have. "This is your allowance. Budget your money." I am very thankful he did that. It's not like we were splurging.

After college, allowance stops. That means you have to look for a job. It's not like, oh, because we were still living in the family home, we can just continue staying there and we can just be watching TV or whatever. No. Your allowance would stop because you had to look for a job. While looking for a job, because you already have a degree, if you say, "I will apply here; interviews, I have to go there," he will provide you with transportation money and money for food if you need to eat lunch or whatever. He will provide that. Then if you already got the job, so that means you will start, let's say, beginning of the month up to the middle of the month, that

is your first two weeks, and then you will receive your first pay. From the first day of work, he will provide you money so you can go to work and, also, be able to eat lunch. He will provide that all the way to two weeks. Your first paycheck, you have to pay him back. You have to pay him back because that's actually not free money. It's a loan. It's a loan, and so you have to pay him back the money that he provided you for the two weeks. Then after that it's already your own money. That means you are already budgeting on your own. You are providing for your own out of your own income. I think that's the best training a parent could do, and I am really very thankful about that.

On my mom's side, although she wasn't able to finish college, she at least had about two years of college. My mom was very resourceful and talented. She could find a way to have income. One of the things that she did was buy and sell. She would buy something and sell it, and then she would get a profit. She was doing that for a long time. I remember she would even sometimes travel, go somewhere else, and buy used appliances—like a used refrigerator or a used TV—and then she was able to sell those. She was like running a thrift shop, but she did not have a shop. Everything she had was in our home, and then later on they're all gone because she was able to sell them already. I remember her doing that. She knows how to make money even though she did not finish college. She has that talent. Then much later on when she was much older, she focused on antiques, paintings, and jewelry. She had friends who were antique collectors. Let's say an antique collector needs some money and will tell my mom, "Could you sell this painting for me?" That painting costs a lot of money because they were antique paintings. She would sell that painting for that collector, and then the same thing with jewelry.



She was very talented in stringing what's called excavated beads and, also, pearls. It's not just simple stringing straight. These are like meshed, like braided or something. She would redesign the old jewelry so that it doesn't look old. Some collectors who owned this jewelry would like to wear them, and they want them to look new and a little bit modern. That's what my mother does, restringing the jewelry for them. She was able to leave a few of her own pieces to me and my sister. Those are the things I remember. I could talk a lot about my family.

Are your parents still alive?

Unfortunately, my mom and dad have passed away. Actually, my dad passed away in the Philippines, and my mom passed away here, in the U.S. Why is that so? It was my dad's choice. It's because my dad worked for an American company for twenty years. The American company was in the Philippines. It's called the Atlantic Gulf and Pacific Company (AG&P) of Manila. That's where he started working. He worked there as an engineer, civil engineer, and then later

on became a sales engineer. My dad was very good at talking, very good at sales. My dad was fluent in English. My dad's thoughts were in English; they were not in Tagalog. That's the big difference. That's why he was fluent. He could speak to anyone in English. Grammar, perfect. Both written and spoken English, perfect. Working at AG&P, he had probably developed this kind of...disgust for his American bosses. I'm sorry to say that he felt he was much more competent, more experienced, much better in so many ways in comparison to his former bosses that he had no interest at all in coming to the U.S.

The only reason why he came here one time was because he was sent by the company, he had to visit their mother office. When he came back home, the more he said he didn't like it; he really doesn't want to be here in the U.S. I hate to say this, but it's like this. I remember what he said. "I know their history more than them." My dad was a well-read person. He loved to read. He was like a walking encyclopedia. He knows so much about a lot of things. Then he would be talking with Americans when he came here. It was like, "Uh...uh...uh. Come on, it's your own history. You don't even know about your own history?" That's how he felt.

When I came here and I could petition both of them, my dad declined for another reason. He said, "I'm already sick. I don't want to be a burden to you. I would rather just be in the Philippines. But your mom is a different story. Your mom wants to be able to experience the United States, so go petition your mom. I'm okay here." That means my sister and her family are in the Philippines and can look after him, and I am here, in the U.S., for my mom.

My mom came here. I was able to petition her. She came here, and she was even able to become a U.S. citizen. But when she came here, I would expect her to be vacationing in the Philippines for up to five months. She had to come back because she cannot stay in the Philippines beyond six months or she would lose her immigration (green card) status. She would

be there because my dad was sick, and I wanted to make sure that my mom could still spend quality time with my dad. She would stay there maybe five months and then come back here. That was what was going on until my dad passed away on August 16, 2003. When my dad passed away, there was no point in going back and forth every year, so she stayed here longer.

When she stayed here longer, she said, "I want to experience working." Even in her mid-seventies, she decided to work, and she worked for a department store at Fashion Show Mall. She experienced working. She experienced earning her own income, paying taxes and all that. She became a U.S. citizen. Then later on, on August 3, 2007, she also passed away. That's what happened.

I would like to now move on to...after high school, could you tell us a little bit more about what you did after your primary education?

College. Both my sister and I went to the same university. It's called the University of Santo Tomas. When my dad asked me, "What do you want to take up in college?" At first what I told him was, "I want to be like you. I also want to be a civil engineer like you." He kind of discouraged me and said, "You know, civil engineering is too masculine for you. This is more for males than females." Then he told me, "Sometimes you'll be climbing trees and measuring and all that." He kind of discouraged me. "Maybe there is something somehow related to it that maybe would fit you more." He told me about architecture, so that's what I did.

I enrolled in architecture at the University of Santo Tomas. I only got until the second year. I felt it was not really my line. It was not really the course that I should be taking. First of all, I can't even draw during our freehand drawing. My professor one time said, "Okay, tomorrow bring a drawing of a tree. Draw a tree, then show me the drawing." Everybody had really nice drawings with detailed trunk and branches. My God, they're pretty. When he saw

mine, oh my God, he said, “Did you draw this at night?” Because I drew the tree like a child, oh, oh. It was like how a child would draw a tree shape while the others, you would really see the drawing of an artistic adult. I said, “Well, I don’t really know how to draw a tree.” But I tried to learn, so I looked at what the others were doing. I learned. I would draw a tree now better than the first time that I submitted in my architecture class.

But proudly, as far as math is concerned, it’s great, because my dad was excellent in math. He was one hundred percent in math, and I got it from him. My sister, too. Math and English were my favorite subjects in school. I’m sure my sister and I got that from our dad.

May I go back because I forgot something? When I was young we would approach our dad for our homework and said, “Dad, could you help with this homework?” Then he would look at it and say, “Okay, you do it first, see what you can do, and then show me what you did.” We will do our best first because he wants us to do it first, even try it, even though it’s wrong, but try. That’s what we did. We had to at least find a way to answer the homework, to do the homework. Then when we were done, we have to show it to him, and then he will tell us if there’s something wrong. He will tell us, “This is wrong,” and then he would explain. Then when he said it’s correct, he said, “Wow, you did good,” because it was correct. He did not allow us to become dependent on him. He knows the answers, definitely, but he wants us to try to answer it first before approaching him for help.

Anyway, math, lots of math in architecture. When it was algebra, wow, perfect, I love algebra. The next was geometry and then trigonometry. The second year it was already calculus. It became boring for me already. I said, “Why are we even finding out infinity?” We’re working on zeroes and infinities. Calculus was no longer my type of math, and I found it already boring, and I found it unnecessary. Do we really need this and so forth? Really, architecture, I felt it was

not my line. I talked to my dad about it. What he advised was this: “If you want, go to an AB [Bachelor of Arts] course, because that will make you be able to choose what you will major in. Maybe there you will really find your interest.” And that’s exactly what I did.

I went from Architecture to Arts and Letters in the same university. But then, during that time, it was also during the [Ferdinand] Marcos era, before martial law was declared. It was already so nasty during that time because there was so much student activism, so much Maoism, so much Marxism—a lot of ideologies. I would be commuting one hour from home to get to the university only to find out there are no classes because of all these protests and strikes, rallies, whatever. Marching activists threw pill boxes into classrooms who were having classes. I didn’t like traveling an hour, sometimes two hours, and then reach empty classes. I want to go to school to learn and earn my degree. I didn’t care about what you’re protesting. That was my thinking then. That’s why I was not into this protest or this activism. Because I was just a student who wants to learn. I cared about the money that my parents were spending for their children’s education. I did not sympathize with the student protestors, in other words.

When martial law was declared, I loved it. It’s because finally the protests stopped, and I felt safer, actually. To my eyes, it was not a scary martial law. It’s just that there were checkpoints. Crime was gone. Who would want to be caught doing a crime during a martial law and be court martialed instead? Nobody would want that to happen, so crime was down. Now, as a student having some night classes, too, I felt safe going home knowing that the military was there; no crime, and all that stuff. I felt safer as a regular student, as a female, as a citizen. I felt safer during that time. There were a lot of things that a lot of people did not know. They thought when they said “martial law,” it’s scary. But that type of martial law, I loved it, because I was just a regular student who felt safe during that time. Even though my last class was at nine p.m.

and I would be travelling from the university back home, a one-hour commute, I felt safe. Anyway, that's what happened based on my personal experience.

What happened later was my sister, my dad, and I agreed we had to transfer to another university. Our first university was in the University Belt; that's where a lot of universities in Manila were located. We had to get out of that location, look for another college or university that was away from that area, and it would even be a shorter commute. We transferred to the Philippine Women's University (PWU). Both my sister and I graduated from the Philippine Women's University. I shifted to Communication Arts, and I know I did very well in that course. I found exactly what I love to do, and it was that. I finally earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts, and my sister earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Education at PWU.

Thank you. Could you tell us more about how you ended up in the United States?

That's another bit of a story. The reason I'm here is because of my husband, Ricardo Gabriel Gonzales. My husband was actually my college sweetheart, but we were in different universities. We practically grew up in the same town, Parañaque. My family lived there since my grade school years up to maybe first year of college, but I never met him during that time. We met when my family moved farther south of town. Even though we had not yet personally met, the two of us had common friends. I knew his cousins, but the two of us never met until later.

He became my boyfriend for five years, from 1973 to 1978. Then we broke up after five years. A year after we broke up, he went to the States. That means we no longer had communication. He was practically out of my system. He was already a thing of the past. In 1986, it was his first time to visit the Philippines since '79. He called up a friend. He told his friend to look for me and find out if I was still single, where I was living, and what my phone

number was. His friend did just that. I was surprised to see him and learn the purpose of his visit. I shockingly said, “What?” Ricardo and I finally saw each other again in January 1986. That was before the peaceful revolution that overthrew former president Ferdinand Marcos.

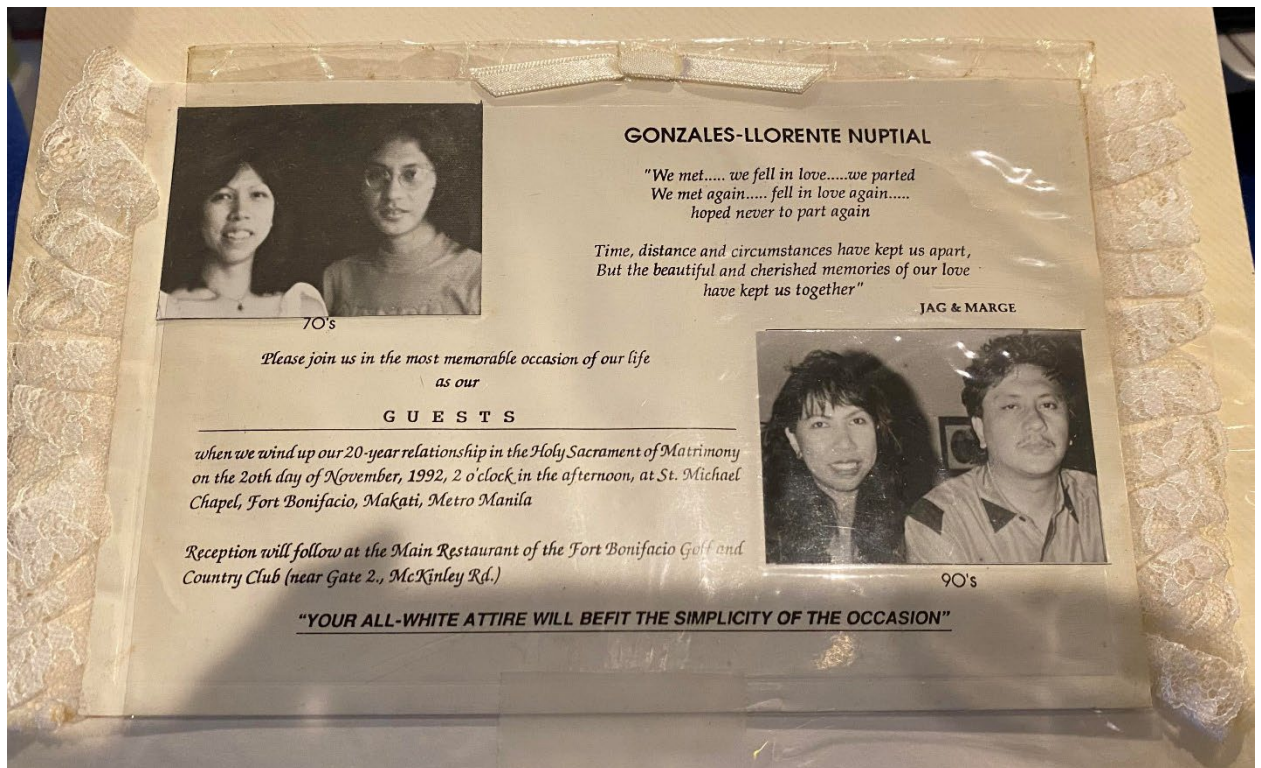
Before we got married in 1993, my focus then was on my career. I was not the marrying type. Getting married was not my priority. I was more into wanting to accomplish a lot of things for myself. I knew if I got married, my priorities would change. If I get married, it’s not like half of the time is a wife thing, and half of my time is my career. No. I would have to focus, first of all, on the marriage. If I get married, I want to make sure, as I’ve said, it would be my priority. I want to make sure it will be a good marriage, and then maybe later I’ll get back to my career. That’s why I said that I was not the marrying type, because I would rather accomplish a lot of things for myself first, while single.

Finally, I said, “Wow, many years have passed and he’s still there.” I just prayed, “God, is this really the man you want for me because he is still around and so many years have passed?” I said, “Lord, if he’s really the one for me, then give him to me a hundred percent. But if he is not the man for me, please make him disappear.”

After I prayed, I received a phone call from Jag (that’s how I call Ricardo). When I received a phone call from him, he was talking about marriage. I told myself, “Oh wow, God, that was quick.” I just prayed for it, and now He made the guy call. I thought that was really quick. We ended up getting married. Twenty-nine years later we’re still together. We were married in our forties. Our love story started during your college years, and finally after twenty years we, became husband and wife.

I call my husband “Jag” from the time I met him and up to the present. It was a short name for “Jagrod,” which is the name of the softball team of his hometown, where I also grew

up. Jag was the pitcher of the team and the team's name was stuck to him. Fans call him Jagrod when they see or recognize him anywhere. Jagrod was the combination of all the first letters of the first names of the players. My husband was the "R" in the team's name. In college, my husband was also an athletic scholar. Unfortunately, I never got to see him play his sports. Not even once. Jagrod Team was already defunct when I met him.



Could you tell us more about your career in the Philippines? You said that you were very focused on it. What did you do?

Oh my, gosh, you wouldn't believe. I was doing a gazillion things. Let's start with this. I should say I've been gifted with talents. My parents, too, were very talented. Starting with dancing, my parents were the best dancers ever. When they go to parties, they would always come home with gifts because they were always selected as the best dance pair of the night." My father was like a

Fred Astaire. He was the most graceful male dancer ever. My mom was a good dancer, too. It was perfect. They would ballroom dance, and everybody would just be awed and be watching them because they were both very good dancers. Especially with ballroom dancing, the man is the secret. It's how they hold you. It gives the command. The woman would make a turn, a half-turn or whatever. It is how the man holds the hand. Anyway, my dad was a natural dancer. As I've said, I mention Fred Astaire because Fred Astaire was a natural dancer. Gene Kelly was a scientific dancer because he learned dancing. He studied dancing. Fred Astaire did not have to. He was a natural, and my dad was natural, so I compare him more to Fred Astaire.

With that I was also gifted with talent in dancing. I became a dance teacher. I did dance choreography. When I was a student in the Philippine Women's University, I trained students to do stage dancing. It was not party dancing. It was more stage interpretive dancing. They call it modern dance. I love American dancers, choreographers like Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey. I watched those kinds of dancing. I formed a dance company called AB Communication Arts (ABCA) Dance Company at PWU, and I trained all those who joined. I also got invited to PWU's different college departments to perform solo if they had an event.

Some fellow students asked me, "So, Margie, where did you get trained in dancing?" I said, "I didn't get trained." "How come you can do that?" I said, "I'll tell you why. Let's say this dancer, a very good dancer, was taught by a dance teacher. That teacher also got trained by another teacher. That teacher also got trained by another teacher. If we go back to the beginning, there was an original who started it. Why can't we be that original and start it?" I said, "Because that original person did not get trained, but was just gifted. If they can be the original, why can't I be original?" I would just say that I was gifted. Whenever asked, "You did not get trained. How come?" Well, some people are gifted. Some people can write. Some people can make drawings.

They did not go to school to learn how to draw, but they can draw. It's because they're gifted. It's the same thing with dancing.

Let's say I was asked to perform. If I was on the bus on my way home, my mind starts thinking of what music to use. Most public buses play music, so if I hear one that would be good for my dance, choreography will start in my mind. When I reached home and I didn't have the music, I immediately went out to buy the record or cassette. Then I will just be inside my room to listen to the music over and over again until the music gets into my system, it will be inside of me, and then I will start creating the steps. Then creating the dance movements would be natural and easy. When I get out of my room, I would call my mom and my sister and say, "Hey, I want you to watch me and make comments, be my first critics." I would be sweating because I was in my room dancing until the whole choreography is done. My mom and my sister would make comments. I would listen to them. If they say that step is not good, maybe you want to change it, or if they say wow, then, okay, that's it; I won't change anything. They were my best critics.

I did that for Philippine Women's University. I trained students. There was a cultural dance company that performs not just nationally but internationally that is housed in our university. There was one time, it was our university's foundation day, and I got invited to perform in the presentation. The title was "The Evolution of Filipino Women." From the Spanish regime in the Philippines to the American regime, the Japanese regime. It was "The Evolution of Filipino Women." I did the part during the American regime wherein we were introduced to the boogie and all that. I did that part, so I was given two numbers to perform. I will do my own choreography.

Now, the entire presentation was done by that cultural dance troupe that performs internationally. The dean of that cultural dance group saw me when I performed. As soon as I

finished my number, she immediately went to me backstage and told me, “Would you like to join the Bayanihan Dance Company because we need tall women like you for our European tour. I saw your performance.” I said, “I’ll think about it.”

Now, the reason I did not join was because, one, I was graduating. That would delay my graduation. I would have to reduce my units because I have to be training and rehearsing with them. That’s one reason. The other reason was I would lose my own movements; I would lose *myself* and learn the other dance. Every part of me, from the tip of my finger to my toes, would all be the Bayanihan Dance Company; I would lose my Margie Llorente movements. I said to myself, “You know what? It’s okay. I don’t really need to travel and perform and all that. I would rather just finish getting my degree and just continue what I’m doing.” I decided not to join them.

The dance company I formed at PWU did two dance concert series. I remember my first one was “The Plight of the Spirit.” It’s a spirit that went from hell to Earth to heaven. It traveled. I had to choose my main dancer to portray that spirit. It was my original concept. I choreographed it. We presented that in our university.

Now, I remember when I was in my senior year, there was another occasion in the university wherein the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior divisions had to have a presentation. They were all rehearsing, except for the seniors, where I belonged. We were all busy doing our thesis just thinking of graduating. There was no time to form a group and rehearse. On the day of the presentation, the president of the senior division called me at home. “Margie, I’ll be emceeding the program. It’s a shame that there is nothing from the seniors. Everybody is performing from the freshman to the juniors, and there’s nothing from the seniors.” She told me, “Margie, you are our only chance.” I said, “What? What do you want me to do?” I

was not even intending to watch. I had no class that day. I would just stay home and rest; that was all I was intending to do. Then she said, "Please, please represent the senior division, please. You are the only one I could think of." I said, "What time is the program?" She said, "Oh, at two o'clock." That time when she called me, it was ten in the morning. I said, "Two o'clock?"

The same day?

Yes, the same day. "Two o'clock? You want me to do something already?" "Margie, you do not need to do something original. Just do what you have performed before." Because they know that I've been doing performances before. She said, "Just do something that you've already done before. We can no longer make rehearsal, but you could perform solo so at least we have one number to represent the senior division." I said, "Oh my goodness." She said, "Please, please." She was practically begging me. I said, "Okay, okay, I'll save the seniors. Okay, I'll do it. Okay, but I don't want to wear my uniform. I'll just go there. I'm not going to wear a uniform. I'll just be in my civilian clothes." She said, "I'll take care of that. Don't worry. I'll take care of that." "Okay, fine," I said.

I was thinking it would be in the auditorium, the concert hall upstairs in the fourth floor because the concert hall, I practically only look at it as a classroom because that's where we held some of the classes. I had drama workshop, my acting classes were all there. Everything about theater, we were always there in the concert hall. I look at the concert hall like a classroom only. When I went to school for that program, it was not there. It was not in the concert hall; it was on the campus stage, with a much larger audience. I saw people watching everywhere. Oh, it was a lot of people. Everybody would be watching. Oh my God, and I've never performed on the campus stage. Everybody was watching. Oh my goodness, she did not tell me it would be here. Although I'm not really scared of the audience because I love a big audience. I said, "Oh my,

gosh.” I saw my classmates, and I was kind of hiding from the emcee. Well, maybe I will not perform anymore.

When the juniors were already performing so seniors would be next, oh, I saw that she was looking like, “Where is Margie? Where is Margie?” Because I would be next. Then my classmates, I was hiding behind them. “Okay, she knows you’re here. You have to represent us.” So, okay, okay. Then the emcee announced, “Now, the lone representative of the senior division, Margie Llorente.” They said that the juniors' presentation, because they were wearing something a little bit too sexy for the school, was stopped. They did not get to finish their number. They got censored. Now it was my turn. Others were leaving; they didn’t want to finish the program. When they heard my name, “Oh, the very good dancer. Oh, we’re going to watch.” It’s like I already had fans in the school. They went back to watching.

Actually, I did not prepare a dance number. I wanted to do something else. When I was already on stage, I said, “I know you’re waiting for me to do a dance number, but that’s not what I’m doing for this time.” I heard a loud, “Oh.” What I did was impressionism. I saw *The Godfather*. I know what they did to make Marlon Brando to look like this [pulls her cheeks down with her hands]. They put tissues inside. I practiced that. I rehearsed that. I wanted to speak like him. I practiced with tissue also inside. I just faced the mirror and did that. That time Bruce Lee was also very popular, and so I tried to do a Bruce Lee impressionism. Then people say I look like Carol Burnett, so I also did an impressionism of Carol Burnett. I did three.

The dean of our college, College of Arts and Sciences, actually from the first time he saw me perform, he became already a fan of mine. He already told me. The first time I performed solo at PWU, I was asked from backstage, “Hey, the dean wants to talk to you.” I said, “Why? What did I do wrong?” “No. He enjoyed your performance.” “Oh okay.” He told me, “I am now

a fan of yours.” He told me, “Every time you perform, please let me know because I would like to watch.” I saw the dean, actually, and he was smiling ear-to-ear because he never saw me perform impressionism before. It was practically the first time in the university. People would usually be dancing or singing. I saw our dean with a wide smile.

When I finished my number, I said, “Don’t worry. I also prepared you a dance number.” They were all so happy. I just did a very short one, just a minute, because I know they had been waiting for me to dance, so I did that.

Going back to the career, I used my talent in dancing to earn money by teaching dancing. I went into teaching slimnastics and then aerobics later because Jane Fonda came out with aerobics, so I also went into that. I was doing private teaching. Some social matrons would group together in one home, and then I would go there and be teaching them both aerobics and dancing. Then because I was a graduate of communication arts, I was able to practice my profession. One was by doing script writing. I did script writing for a radio soap opera. And then for broadcasting, I did radio broadcasting. First, I started just doing interviews and then submitting my interview for a radio talk show, a radio news and public affairs commentary.

I would submit interviews for radio until they decided to have a second program. The program was about show business or entertainment. It was so boring and had no listeners because it was being handled by somebody much older who was not really into newer things. I talked to the producer, and I said, “Maybe we need to improve for better listenership.” I told them my suggestions. After giving them my suggestions, I was asked, “How about if you handle it? Could you do it?” You’re challenging me. I said, “Of course.” I don’t want to say, I can’t do it. I said, “Sure.” “Okay, it’s yours; the program is yours.” So I was added as a co-host, and at the same time, as executive producer so I could improve the format and concept.

I completely changed how the program was being done because it's supposed to be about the film industry. I was able to get materials about film directing, film scoring, cinematography and all that. Then at the same time, because in the Philippines they love so much about *ET*, *Entertainment Tonight*, or personal things about the actors and the stars. Who is dating whom? But that's not what I want to do. I don't want to be talking about the personal lives of movie stars. I wanted to educate the fans; that's what I wanted to do. What I did, I was able to combine both. I would interview a movie star, but when I interviewed we talked about how they started in show business, how he or she was discovered, and what factors made them choose projects. Why did you do that role in a movie? How do you prepare yourself before the cameras start rolling? Things like that. Those are the things that now I am educating the fans, the movie fans. I would talk about, let's say, cinematography. I will interview a cinematographer so that that cinematographer will talk about his craft. Same thing with musical scoring, I would interview a musical scorer.

Then for the fans also I had fan mails, so they could actually write, send a letter to my program, but it was for a particular star. Let's say they're a fan of this particular actor. They would write, "So-and-so, what is your latest project?" Something like that. Or, "When is your birthday?" What I will do is put them all together. If I have ten letters for that movie star, I will get these ten letters, go see that movie star, and then will start recording his answers, so that at least it's not me answering on behalf of the actor or actress or star, it's them actually answering. They will actually say the name of the person who wrote. Let's say, "Margie Gonzales, I got your letter. Oh, you wanted to know when my birthday is? My birthday is this, this and that. And my latest project is this, this and that." At least it's directed to them, so they will be thrilled by that.

That's what I did for the program. At least I was able to practice my degree, the course that I got in college, first as a script writer, then as an executive producer and host. As far as TV is concerned, it's more about guesting; there was a point where I had a dance and fitness studio, and there was a manufacturer of fitness outfits, and so I was promoting the outfits and the studio. We would go to TV shows, perform, and promote. That's what I did for TV. For the print media, whatever I did for radio, I was also able to do for print media; I wrote about the entertainment industry like I did for radio. I experienced all that.

Now, here in Las Vegas, I was also able to use that when I was working for DHS TSA [The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration] Nevada. I decided to volunteer for the publications team. I launched the very first—the very first and I think it's also the last—newsletter magazine of TSA at McCarran (now Harry Reid) International Airport. I told you I love doing things differently from the usual. You know what a newsletter would look like? When I say *newsletter*, in your mind you already would picture what a newsletter looks like.

That's not what our newsletter looked like. I was the editor-in-chief and the head of the publications team, so I had a team of photographers and writers. I told our advisor, "I don't want our newsletter to look like any other newsletter of the different airports. I want ours to look different." "Okay, how different?" "I want it to look like a magazine." "Why a magazine?" "Okay, when you go to a news stand or magazine stand, what attracts you to read something? Isn't it the cover of the magazine? Isn't that the first thing that you're attracted to or that gets your attention? I want our newsletter to have a cover for it to look like a magazine." I explained the entire concept, and they loved it, although we were breaking away from the rules. But she supported it. Our advisor supported the idea.

You know what? It became popular. When TSA visitors from the other airports or headquarters would visit Las Vegas and would see our quarterly newsletter, [they'd say,] "Wow. Could you make sure I get a copy each time you have one?" Something like that. People admired what we had, although we could not be qualified to compete in the Best TSA Newsletter contest because we did not follow rules. I said, "It is okay. It doesn't matter as long as our newsletter is a beauty."

What I did was I united the different departments of our workplace. People think, "Oh, it will just be another management thing, so it will be all about our bosses." I said, "No. This newsletter is us." That means management is there, all the other departments, the screening workforce, baggage and passenger screening workforce, the human resources department, finance department, every other department will be featured there. Let's say, a TSA screener from checkpoint or baggage will be featured: it's not about her work; it's about outside of work. There was one I featured who was attending UNLV and he was a boxer. We featured him as a boxer, not as an employee of TSA. Now, there was one who was into marathons, so we featured her as a marathoner. It was more about life. The employees loved it because it was not about them in uniform. They loved that concept.

The thing is, after four years, I decided I don't want to do it anymore; somebody else should be doing this. It practically died. Nobody took over from me. They tried, but then the people in the office told me, "Margie, something was lost. It no longer has that pop." Then it stopped and that's the end of it. I don't think up to this time there is...I have every copy of it if you want to take a look at them, 2004–2008. I have them. I could show that to you.

When you first came to the United States, where did you land?

San Francisco, because my husband was residing in San Francisco at that time. He was in the Bay Area. I know in the beginning I came here to be a dutiful wife. First priority is marriage. But, of course, he allowed me if I wanted to work, and I was not thinking of big things. We had some kind of mindset for those leaving the Philippines and going to the United States. It's like forget what you are here, because you will start life all over again. We have to make adjustments because everything is new. It's a new country, a new culture, new everything. Even if we start here below, just work your way up. I knew that already, so my life was simple. First, it's about the marriage and my role as a wife.

Then from there, I started working. I did retail work. I just walked into a JCPenney's store and applied, and then the following day I was working. It was like that. It was easy. It was easy to land a job, especially in retail. I did retail for three months there at JCPenney. After three months, I told myself, "I think I already know about this job. Maybe I could find something with a little bit higher pay." I started at five dollars an hour.

There was a mall near our home so that means I didn't need to take the bus. I would just walk. I went to the mall and looked for another job. Sure enough, there was something that was for a floor supervisor at Stroud's Linens. I applied with my three months' experience, and I got it. I resigned at JCPenney. When I talked to our HR director, she said, "Margie, actually I have a position for you." The boss actually knew that I was meant to be in a better position there at JCPenney. "Are you already committed to the other place?" I said, "Yes, I already accepted it."

Anyway, I worked at Strouds. It was a linen store: bathroom and bedroom linens; all that. I worked there because it was two dollars and fifty cents more than JCPenney, so that's big for me, and I didn't have to take the bus, just walked. Anyway, JCPenney kept calling me to come back. One year past and they were still calling me to come back. Finally, after one year and three

months, I decided to accept and go back to JCPenney. I said, “Okay, as long as you will be paying me more than what I am getting here.” “Okay, sure.” They did that. It was not a big difference, but it’s still a little bit higher. The job that was for me, it was called Basic Logic Assistant, and I was improving the sales of the store. It was because I looked for items that weren’t selling, like forty-five days, sixty days, and find out why they weren’t selling. Then I’d make recommendations. I would solve the issue. I enjoyed doing that. I reported directly to the store manager. Not even the department managers had control over me. I can do anything I want in any department if it will increase the sale of their merchandise. I enjoyed doing it.

While I was doing that, they offered me to become a manager of a department. It’s called the service corridor, so I’ll be in charge of customer service, the JCPenney catalog, and the JCPenney credit card. It was a huge responsibility. I said, “No, I’m enjoying my job as a basic logic assistant. I would rather do this job. I don’t want to be a department manager.” And then, “What if we make you still do basic logistics assistant work and just at least be a key holder and you close the store?”

I ended up accepting it because I needed the pay increase that came with it. The third year that I came here, my husband and I were able to buy our first home in Daly City, still in the Bay Area. That’s a huge accomplishment for me. After just three years here in the U.S. and buying our own home. We were not nurses and doctors. We were only simple income earners, but we were able to buy our first home. God has been helping us. We were able to find a really good-hearted seller couple. The sellers, Nazario and Sonia Reyes, also Filipinos, were retired, very religious. They’re Catholics like us. Before we started looking for a house, we went to church first, prayed, and asked for signs. The sellers learned that from the realtor, Richard V. Querney. We were not approved by the lender because our income was not that big. The home was opened

again for sale, but then the sellers, told the realtor, “You know what? We’ll just help that Filipino couple because once upon a time we were also like them. We were also struggling and wanting to have our first home. We will just help them.” Where can you find sellers like that helping actually the buyer?

That was our very first home as a married couple. We bought it at about a hundred and seventy-five thousand. We sold it for more than four hundred thousand before we moved here to Las Vegas. We used the money to be able to buy our first home here in Las Vegas in 2002. Our first home here in 2002 was in North Las Vegas. I was working at the airport while my husband was working at Mandalay Bay. It was really too far for us to be traveling every day. My husband doesn’t drive, so he would take the bus. It would take him two hours to get to work. When my mom, who was living with us, passed away, I told my husband, “We don’t need a big house like this, a four-bedroom, two-story home. It’s just the two of us now. Let’s downsize and move closer to where we are working.” That’s what we did. We rented out that house and bought a townhome in the central side of town so that at least we’re closer to our workplace. Then we got hit. Remember when real estate went down? It crashed everything.

Two thousand nine?

Yes. We were hit, too, so we had to let go of the rental property and our townhome. We went back to renting for a while until we were able to buy again. In 2017, we bought again another townhome. I just retired from TSA when the [COVID-19] pandemic happened. All the casinos closed. My husband had to stop working. He applied for unemployment—I don’t know what was going on—but, he never got whatever he was supposed to receive, and that was from April all the way through August. My husband was telling me, “How come the others are getting this?” I told him, “You know what? In comparison to them, we are in a much better position.” Just to

keep his morale up, I said, “We’re both already receiving pension from Social Security, so we’re good. I have pension also from federal. You have other pensions also from your previous jobs in San Francisco.” I told my husband, “So, we’re actually okay. In comparison to the others, who don’t have anything, we’re in a much better position.”

Finally, come August, something happened. I attended a virtual roundtable meeting, and I asked if my husband was still qualified now that he’s back to work, but he did not receive anything from unemployment. Is he still entitled? I was told yes. With that, somebody in the meeting said, “Call me.” I called that person. Then I was helped by that person, and my husband got everything, all of it, lump sum, federal and state lump sum. When we got the money, I told my husband, “Let’s invest this money. Let’s not keep it in the bank because sooner or later that will be gone. We will eventually spend that money.” We bought another property. We bought another townhome in a much better place. It’s gated and all that. We still have that home, but we rented it out to Filipino teachers.

The first home where we were living, we ended up selling it. We just sold it last June 2021. But we kept the second property. Now, this home [where we are today] is my cousin’s home. I helped my cousin and his wife who live in Elk Grove, California, invest in properties here. I’m helping them take care of their properties; that’s why we’re here. The townhome that we bought—the second one, the last one—is still being rented.

I think we should split this into two parts because I still have a lot of questions.

[Colloquy not transcribed]

[End of first session]

[Second session Nov. 22, 2021]

Good afternoon. Today's date is November 22nd, 2021. I'm Cecilia Winchell. I'm joined here with...

Vanessa Concepcion.

Stefani Evans.

As well as Margie Gonzales. We would like to start off back where we left off. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about when you came to San Francisco first. What were the hardest things to leave behind back in the Philippines?

First of all, it was not really that difficult for me to adjust to life here in the U.S., because even during my childhood days, my family lived near the U.S. Embassy residences. We already had American playmates and family friends. Plus, my sister and I grew up in a Catholic school run by Irish nuns. We are exposed to people from other countries. My sister and I attended the Catholic school from grade one all the way until we graduated from high school, same school. Of course, we would be sounding like Irish, only during our speech class—yes, speech class—“just the tip of your tongue, lips on the teeth”; that was always our drill every time before we start the speech class.

Anyway, coming here, it was more about adjusting to married life—that is actually more the difficult part—not to the country, not to the customs and culture and all that, adjusting with different kinds of people. It was more about adjusting to a different life now, a married life, because I married late, and I've always been independent, and I make my decisions. I run my own life, I take care of my finances and all that, but this time it's different. I have to be a wife to my husband.

Now, I was very independent in the Philippines. I was able to have my own place. Of course, I asked permission from my parents. It's not like I'm going to be living with a man, and that's why I'm moving out of the house. It was more that I wanted to have the feeling of independence, of running my own life.

Coming here, my husband lived with his parents because he was by himself, and he petitioned for his parents, and so his parents lived with him. Now I have to adjust to married life with my husband and his parents. I'm the newcomer in the house, so I could not actually have my own personality in the way I would rearrange things or I would furnish the house and all. It was more about the parents because that's how they already set everything in the house. If you change something, go out, and come back, it's back to where it was. My personality was not in the house, so I just had to live with that. I respect, of course, the parents of my husband. But I have to adjust from being so independent on my own, and then now there's no longer that independence. It's gone, actually. But because I am very respectful and I love my husband and I love his parents, I adjusted. That was more the challenge to me—not the country, not everything else about the country. It was about my married life.

It was September 1994 when I arrived in San Francisco. We lived actually right outside San Francisco, almost the boundary, in Daly City. Daly City is a very Filipino city. You hear Tagalog wherever you go whether you go to the mall, you take the bus; anywhere you go that's what you're going to hear. They even call it "Adobo City" because it's really predominantly Filipinos who live in Daly City. The only thing is the climate is cold all year round. It's foggy all year round. I believe it's in the foggiest cities in the world; I think it is number two. I think the first one is somewhere in England. That's how it was when I arrived here.

After San Francisco, what was the reason you ended up in Las Vegas?

From the time I arrived, three years after, we were able to buy our own home. Everybody was shocked, like, wow. We were able to own a home only three years after I arrived. My husband has been here since '79. Nobody thought that he would finally have a home because he was just not into life planning or setting goals for the future. He is just a simple man who lives by the day. He wants a simple life. He just goes to work, goes home, looks after his parents, and, also, be with his friends. Just a simple, routine lifestyle. I'm more the person who has set goals. Owning a home is one of the goals, and we managed to have it realized three years after I arrived in the U.S.

Now, after that I keep hearing from other people. "Hey, you know, the sister of so-and-so moved to Vegas." And then later on, "Oh, I heard that so-and-so moved to Vegas." I kept hearing of people moving to Vegas. I said, "Why are they moving to Vegas? I'm curious. I'm sure there is a reason why they are moving to Vegas. Why are they leaving California and moving over there; live in San Francisco and going to Las Vegas?"

I did my own research. I started researching about it in December 2001. What I did, at work I get to answer phones. We have customers, clients calling up, and I get to answer calls. If there is a client from Las Vegas, I get to ask questions. "Oh, you're from Vegas. How's Vegas? How's life over there?" Then I found out that my sister's classmate in high school lives in Vegas, also moved from California. I got her phone number and called her up. I said, "So, what's your experience moving from California to Vegas?" Same thing. They're homeowners, and they love it over here. That was the first part of my research.

Then second: homes. That was the biggest thing, homes. I started looking for homes, and, wow, three bedrooms, four bedrooms, nice, beautiful homes, big ones, and so cheap, only in the hundred thousand. The one that we bought in Daly City, although we bought it also at the

hundred thousand price level, was only a two-bedroom house, really old. It's not that big, but it has a big backyard. But the homes over there, you practically almost have a common wall because it's right next to each other with no space in between.

I had my husband also interested in looking at Vegas homes with me. The two of us, practically every day, were sitting down in front of the computer, looking at homes in Vegas. We were really amazed with the cheap price of the homes and how beautiful and big the homes are compared to ours.

At that time, we had a family friend, Josepho M. Escobar, who studied here, had his MBA in California, and wanted to work in San Francisco. He asked permission if he could live with us temporarily because he wanted to look for a job in San Francisco. I said, "Sure, of course." He is a very good family friend. Actually, his mother is the best friend of my late mom and was a principal sponsor in our wedding. One time, Josepho came home and said, "Hey, Margie, I think this might be it. This might really make up your mind to decide on moving to Vegas." That was February 2002. He showed me "Ten Best Places to Live," and Vegas was, at that time, I believe, number two. It was in the top ten.

When I saw that, "That's it. We'll move to Vegas." With everything that I've learned and the homes and all that, we're moving to Vegas. That sealed the decision.

The next thing to do...I don't know any realtors in Vegas, so I started searching online. I called one, but he made me feel like I was just a one-sale client. I talked to one. Talked to another one. Just the same thing. "Hey, somebody will call you," and, "Surely, it's a loan officer who will call you." I didn't feel any connection. I called about three, four people. I didn't feel like I wanted to give my business to somebody who makes me feel like I'm just one of those. Finally, I talked to someone truly different from the rest. The others spent maybe at most ten

minutes with me. This guy, Richard V. Querney, spent one hour, at least an hour with me. Great credentials: Vietnam veteran, retired Marine colonel, three Purple Hearts, doctorate degree. I said, "Wow, okay." He asked me, "Do you know anything about Vegas?" I said, "Not much. I just did my own research." He educated me on the north, south, east and west of Las Vegas. I said, "Wow, this guy spent a lot of time with me telling me what's going on in Vegas, what's in the north, what do you expect to see in the west, in the east." Then when he learned that I was Filipino, "Oh, you're Filipino. My wife is Filipina," and then handed the phone to his wife. The wife said, "Hi, *kumusta?*" in Tagalog. I said to myself, "Okay, that's great, too."

Finally, I found the right person, the right realtor. When it was time to start looking for homes, I told Richard, "Before we start looking for homes, we need to go to church first." He asked, "What's your religion? What church do you go to?" I said, "Roman Catholic." He found a Catholic church near their home. He also told us, "Don't check into a hotel. You can stay at my home. I have an extra room. Don't spend for a hotel. You can stay at my place." That actually happened. It was a lot easier to work with him because he also has an office in his home. We don't have to go to his office. We can start looking at pictures and all that just right there, in his home. It's a lot easier for us and for him, too.

After church, he picked us up again after the service. Then we started looking for homes. It was a bunch of printed paper with the property, the description of the property. He gave me a pen and said, "We start looking at this and write comments." I said, "Wow, how professional." "Write comments so that if you don't like it, just cross it out. If you like it, put a star or a checkmark and then write something, why you like that property." That's how he handled us. I really did choose the right realtor.

We sold our house in California. We bought it for a little over one hundred and seventy thousand dollars, and we sold it for more than four hundred thousand at the time, so we can afford to buy a house here. Even the loan officer Richard assigned to us was really good. It's not like she just wants to make money on us. I said, "Can we put more money on the down payment?" She asked me, "What are you going to do with the house? Are you intending to sell it later, or intending to pay it off?" I said, "Sell it later." "Then don't put so much down payment on the house. Keep your money in the bank." That's what we did.

Anyway, up to this time, he is still our realtor and family friend. He's like an uncle. We have already experienced buying four properties with Richard. The last time we bought a property, the fourth one, was in December 2020. He is still our realtor, from 2002 to now. He's our very first friend in Las Vegas and still a friend up to now.

Those are the reasons why we moved here, plus the fact that this is a retirement place. If you get bored here, it's your fault. It's going to be your fault because there are so many things to do. My husband loves watching bands—live bands, concerts. Any band that will go on tour, Las Vegas will always be included, so that's why he loves it here, too, because he could watch all the bands that he loves to watch. Whether it's the Rolling Stones, whether it's Eric Clapton, or whoever, they will always come here. It's perfect for us.

As far as health is concerned, health insurance, health care, Las Vegas has improved a lot. We're good here. We found a doctor, and we have never changed our primary doctor ever since up to this time. I just actually saw him this morning. We have never changed because he has been very good. We found the best. We have no complaints. He is still taking care of us up to now. That one, too, another checkmark—health care. I may not say the same thing for education.

It could be the opposite. But health care-wise, yes. Thank God I didn't go to school here, I'm sorry, but I've been hearing nightmares. Horror stories.

What were your first impressions when you first got to Vegas?

First, everything is cheap. You order food in restaurants, and each serving is good for two to three people. It's so different in San Francisco. Your order there is really meant for just one person. If you order lunch here, oh, that's lunch and dinner, not just lunch; or it could be good for me and my husband already, just one order. As far as food is concerned, it's really cheap.

Less stress in buying groceries, no stress. In California, by nine p.m., supermarkets, groceries will close, so you have to rush. You have to be there before nine. They close at nine. Here, anytime, even three a.m., before the pandemic. Even three a.m., if you feel like going to the supermarket, you can go to Walmart, even Walgreens, anywhere. There is always a place to go. You will not be starving here. If you go hungry at one a.m., you can go out and eat. If you want to listen to music anytime, there is music. You can have music whether it's live music or not. Even if you just want to have a coffee somewhere, there's music. It's really good for retirees. Good for young people, too.

The only thing that other people perceive of Las Vegas, those who do not live here and who do not probably know anyone who lives here, think Las Vegas is just the Strip. Even when I had reunions with my high school batchmates and they come here, would you believe one of them asked me, "Where do you buy your groceries?" Because they only think of the Strip. I jokingly said, "Oh, when we need vinegar, we go to Caesars Palace. When we need soy sauce, oh, we go to Bellagio." I told them, "Wherever you live, whatever you have there, we have them here, too, and maybe even more. We may have even more than what you have in your city or town."

A good friend of mine in San Francisco, Louie Marco, who also only knows about the Strip said, “Margie, do you have Subway (the sandwich shop)?” “Of course. A lot.” He works for Home Depot. I told him, “San Francisco does not even have Home Depot. You have to go outside San Francisco to go to a Home Depot,” and that’s where he works, outside San Francisco. I told him, “When you come here, I’ll show you Home Depot stores, how many Home Depots we have here.” That’s what I really did when he visited here. I picked him up at the airport, and the next thing I did, because he really wants to know, I drove him to at least five Home Depot stores. He was wondering why Vegas has a lot of Home Depot stores. There is so much construction going on here. I said, “You want to see more?” He said, “No, it’s okay. I believe you.” He also asked me before, “Do you have Macy’s over there?” “Of course, we have Macy’s. We even have valet parking at Macy’s. You don’t have that.”

I had to also educate some other people about Vegas because they think of Vegas as just the Strip and downtown; the casinos, that’s it. Anyway, the question was why I stayed.

Your first impressions.

The first impressions were all good. Food is cheap, as I’ve said, and so are homes in comparison to San Francisco. Entertainment is best. When I was worrying about health care, that was answered, because I found a very good doctor who took care of us, and he’s still taking care of us up to now. Everything is cheap. Cost of living is really affordable. You can have a home, and you don’t need to be a nurse or a doctor or an engineer to own a home, and so that’s another thing. There were just so many open spaces when we came here in 2002, just so many open spaces and a lot of developments going on.

The thing is, at that time of our move to Vegas there was no Filipino Channel (TFC). That is something I watch every day. When we came here in July 2002, I had to order the

international satellite dish; I had to spend for that so I could have TFC: “Oh, I cannot live without it.” After just four months, TFC came to Vegas and the satellite dish was no longer necessary. It’s okay. At least I didn’t miss it for a few months.

SE: *That was July of 2002?*

We moved here July 27th, 2002. Come November—I don’t know exactly the date—there was already a Filipino channel.

On cable?

Yes, on minor cable companies first, but now it’s just directly. You subscribe to the Filipino channel directly and you will be provided a cable box.

Now, jobs. When we came here, I told my husband, “I’ll be the one to move first because I don’t want both of us not to have insurance. Health insurance is so important, especially for him. At that time, he already had issues with blood pressure, cholesterol, and sugar. I said, “I’ll go first. As soon as I find a job...” At that time, you only need three months, and then you’re going to be qualified for health insurance. I said, “Let me work for three months, and then as soon as I get health insurance and I put your name in there, then you quit your job and then join me here.” That was the plan.

Now, when I was in San Francisco, in the Bay Area, it’s always been my dream to work for the government, because I worked for the government before I left the Philippines. I want to work for the government. I don’t care if it’s city or county or state as long as it’s a government job. But I never made it. I never made it in San Francisco. I don’t have typing skills. I could type, but if I take a typing test, I will fail; I would be slow. But I could write letters. I worked for a five-time Speaker of the House in the Philippines, Jose de Venecia Jr. I wrote letters. I wrote letters for him. I could write very good letters. I could write signature-ready letters, but that’s not

the point. For an administrative job here in the U.S., they don't hire you because you're good at writing letters. They hire you because you are fast in typing. Okay, you type fast, but how about the grammar and the spelling? Me, I would type a letter that I myself composed, grammar is correct, and spelling is correct. I don't need to use spellcheck. I did that for Speaker of the House de Venecia. But, here, it's about the speed of typing. It didn't work because I would type only thirty [words per minute] at most. They need at least forty and above to qualify for even a clerical job.

My first job here in the U.S., as I said, was in retail. I stayed with retail until I became a department manager, and then I didn't want to do it anymore. So, when we moved here, I said the easiest way to get health insurance is for me to apply at retail because with my experience, I'm sure I'm going to be hired easily. That is what happened. I applied at Dillard's at the Fashion Show Mall. That time they were moving to their current location at the Mall.

I told you I was watching The Filipino Channel every day. One Sunday morning—maybe it's because God was helping me, so it was meant to be—I just decided to watch a local channel. I turn on the TV to a local channel, and right there was the announcement: TSA is hiring. That day, Sunday, was the last day to apply. I said, “Oh my goodness, this is the one that I heard about when I was in San Francisco. It's a federal job. They were federalizing screening in the airports around the country. But I didn't get to apply in San Francisco; I just heard about it. Now they're going to federalize McCarran Airport. When I saw it, I was like, oh my, gosh. At that time, my mom was still alive. I immediately went to my mom's room and said, “Hey, I will apply for TSA.”

Sure enough, I went to Alexis Park Hotel, where hiring was taking place. When I went there, there were a lot of people waiting, so they said, “Go to the desk and write your name and

then take a seat.” My mom, who came with me, easily found a seat. Then I found one for me, too, and I sat down without realizing it was right outside the door where all the applicants are called to go in. As soon as I sat down, the door was opened by someone who announced, “We need one more for the next orientation.” She looked at me and directed me to get in. I had just sat down but was immediately called in, so I joined the next orientation. They said, “You can take the qualifying test now. We have a room. Or you could do it online at home. If you pass it, that means you qualify for the real test.” I said, “I’ll just do it here.”

I went there, and took the computer test. It’s just like the DMV test. I take the computer test. Someone announced, “If it says *pass*, just raise your hand.” I passed, so I raised my hand. Then, after that, the next step is to take a whole-day series of tests. There was an option to do it in two half-days or do all of it in just one day. I said, “I’ll do it in one day.”

I remember it was the former Aladdin (now Planet Hollywood) Hotel. I was there before eight a.m. I was there early. I was residing in North Las Vegas, but I made it there really early. Anyway, I took the first test, and I passed it. The whole morning was for the first and longest test. If you pass it, then you will wait in another room, then somebody will take you to the next ones in another location.

I was in the waiting area, and there were only two of us waiting. We saw the others were going straight out. Oh, that means they didn’t make it because they didn’t have the wristband already. That means if you didn’t pass, you go home. The thing is, the two of us—the other one was a male and I didn’t have his name—were so guarded, because we should not be talking to anyone. They don’t want anyone who has taken the morning test to reveal what the test was about. That’s why we just waited and waited until the two of us were escorted to the shuttle to the next venue for the afternoon tests. Then he said, “Wow, I’ve never felt so much like a VIP.”

And I said, "Oh, I was thinking differently. I thought the people who see us might think that we were being escorted out of the hotel because we did something wrong."

We went to another venue, the Alexis Park Hotel on Harmon. It was a series of tests. After that, they told us, "Just wait for a call." Because of that, I sighed, "What I know, if it's a federal job, sometimes it could be a year before they call you. It's not like they will call you next week or three days after." I said, "Okay, I will just continue working at Dillard's."

They called me September 2002. We moved here July 2002. September was when I took the test, and they called me right away, so that's why I had to quit Dillard's. They informed me that I passed. There were more than a thousand who applied, but only two hundred of us passed. I made it to the two hundred. We would be pioneers of baggage screening at McCarran International Airport. We were the very first team who were there. I was very happy. My dream came true in Vegas. Who would think? Because I was thinking I would land in a hotel or casino job; that's what I thought would be my job here. I said, "My dream of working for the government, and it's even beyond city, county, and state. This is federal and Homeland Security." It's like, wow. It's the biggest accomplishment ever for me as a new U.S. citizen. It was November 17th, 2002, when we were sworn in.

The day that we were sworn in was also the start of health insurance, that same day. I did not have to wait for more than three months to get my husband to join me here. As soon as I got sworn in, after that, I called him right away. "Okay, you can quit your job. We now have health insurance."

He quit his job and joined me here in December 2002. His job here is Mandalay Bay. He started working in March 2003 at Mandalay Bay. Up to this time, he's still working there, way past retirement age. His co-workers are asking, "When will you retire? When will you retire?"

Before, he thought of retiring, but he said, “I’m not like you. You’re very busy doing other things. I don’t want to just be staying home waiting for my time.” He would rather just continue working, so he's still there at seventy years old.

Me, I’m retired. I worked for TSA Nevada from 2002 to 2019. I retired January 31, 2019. I pioneered at McCarran Airport in baggage screening and I retired as Administrative Assistant at the Office of Regulatory Compliance. After seven years at baggage screening, I decided I would like to do office work. I think that’s where I really belong. I was very happy at the Compliance Office.



I told you about the newsletter. TSA here was forming a publications team. I asked the advisor, Sheila McCall, “Is there already a team?” And she said, “No, none yet.” I said, “I’m

interested in applying to become a member.” She said, “How about if you lead it?” I said, “Umm...” I ended up leading the publications team.



This is the newsletter. It's quarterly, so four issues a year. I did it for four years. In the beginning, I was editor-in-chief for this one and this one and this one. After that I was editor-in-chief and art director at the same time. I ended up doing the layout because no one else would when our art director transferred to another airport. It's good that I was watching the one who used to do the layout; I watched him because we worked together, I being the editor-in-chief and him, the art director. Somehow, because he was moving to a different airport, I said, "Oh my, gosh, who is going to be the art director? We need to produce a newsletter." I ended up doing it

myself. If we were on vacation out of town, I would have my laptop with me doing layout. I was doing that work.

This is four years of my work. As I've said, I did not follow the guidelines of the TSA on this one. We were the only newsletter that looked like a magazine with a cover, like this. The other airports, the usual newsletter. You know how they would look like. They already have stories on the first page. That's why we were not qualified to compete in the best TSA newsletter amongst airports in the entire country, but we still felt we had the best. It's okay. We had fans from other airports. Every time they see it, "Oh, what's this? Oh, could I bring a copy with me back to our airport? This is great." I also sent copies to TSA headquarters in Virginia, because they love our newsletter. That's more than enough recognition, never mind winning the competition.

This is it. Inside there is this insert, Class of 2002. These are all the ones that started the year I started. I started, in November 2002 for Baggage Screening, but at Checkpoint they started earlier; they started August and September 2002, while baggage started later, in November. Checkpoint screening first and then us, but the same year. We were all pioneers.

SE: How did you develop the procedures for baggage screening and all that?

Oh, there were already trainers. They call it the Jump Team, because they jump from one airport to another, training. They actually formulated the manual, the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). Then the SOP kept on improving and improving and improving. Even the machines kept improving and improving, also. We started being seen at the lobby, doing screening work. Now you no longer see us because we're already somewhere else in the airport. You only see the checkpoint, the passenger screeners. They're the ones you see.

We started with this one [sorting through newsletter issues]. Cover photo is just something that get from Google. Same thing with this one. But starting with the third issue, it's already our own, because we have photographers. Let's use our own photos. Let's not use Google Images for the cover. With this one, we're using our own pictures. This cover photo matches the theme, Making America a Better, Safer Place.

Now, this one was a dog that my co-worker saw at the carport parking lot, the employee parking lot. First, the dog was scared. You she saw it, the dog would run. But my TSA co-worker loves dogs, so she would actually bring food to the parking lot. During her break, she would bring food to the parking lot. She knows there is a dog there that needs food and water. Maybe it belongs to somebody. Maybe the dog ran while the owner was checking in, and they could no longer find the dog. Somehow, he ended up in the employee parking lot. She brought food and water for the dog every day. Even when she was off, she would go there just to bring food until probably the dog decided to be a little nicer to her and started not being scared when she sees her. Then she called up whoever was in charge and told them about the dog and that she wanted to adopt the dog. She went to whatever rules or procedures need to be done; she did it, and she finally ended up adopting the dog. She loved the dog. That's why she and the dog are our cover photo, because she is our main story.

Now, this one is because this was our first-year anniversary, and we featured 9/11. The reason why The Homeland Security was formed, the reason why TSA is there, is because of 9/11. We featured 9/11. On the cover is a TSA, supervisor, but he was at that time a first responder in New York. Inside this issue, we featured him plus another TSA employee, Joesphine, who was a survivor. She worked at Twin Towers at that time. There was a run in her nylons that a co-worker noticed and said, "Oh, you have a run on your nylons." Josephine

answered, Oh okay, I'll go downstairs and buy another one." When she was downstairs, that's when the tragedy happened. She told us that every year—actually, she passed away already. She told us every year the 9/11 the survivors would be meeting, and every year they were decreasing because they were dying, one by one, probably because of all the fumes, because of everything that they inhaled. They started getting cancer and other illnesses. One by one they were dying until she herself passed away, but we were able to get her story before that happened.

That's why I love this project, because this is not just about management, which we do feature on the first few pages. But if management was featured, it should have something to do with the theme. Whatever is the theme of each issue, that's its focus; that's for the newsletter. I will tell you about this later, what I did for you. So, next?

Can you tell us about some of your community activities?

Community activities, you need at least one week to get through them. As you see, two things I did, community activities, one is political and one is civic engagement. Both of them actually are things I had been doing in the Philippines when I was there. I've been doing them for a long time. Being a volunteer is really running in my veins. I've been a volunteer ever since I was a child, I think. If the school says, "Oh, they need a group to perform," okay, I volunteer. I will teach dancing to my classmates, and we would perform. I've been a volunteer ever since whether it's for our church, in school, or anywhere they need a volunteer. I believe I have been given some talents that I could share, and that's how I feel about my talents. Those were given not for you just to make money out of, but to share. I've always shared my talents. Remember I told you in college I formed a dance company, and so I shared my talent with students.

Now, political. I don't know why, but I love politics, too. I love helping people win, making candidates win. It doesn't matter if I don't get paid for doing so. A lot of people get paid

for it. But if I believe in a candidate, I will help make him or her win. You don't need to pay me. I don't need to work and get paid. But if I believe in you, I'll help you. That's up to now, up to this time.

Civic engagement. I even reached a point where I thought of having my own foundation. I called it B.R.A.I.N., B-R-A-I-N, with a period after each letter: Betterment and Recognition of Asian-Pacific Islanders in Nevada. I called it B.R.A.I.N. Now, why did I think of B.R.A.I.N.? Because it's about literacy. We wanted to have volunteers to teach, to tutor, to augment what they learn in school if they need some more help in learning whatever it is. It could be math, it could be English, it could be arts, anything as long as it's about literacy. That was the goal of B.R.A.I.N. I had people join me. We're already forming it until our sponsor organization executive director—also a good friend of mine, but she passed away last year. The founder of Asian Community Resource Center (ACRC) Foundation, Emily Higby, proposed a different plan. ACRC was already at that time going on for seven years. For health reasons, she wanted me to take over ACRC, and then absorb the B.R.A.I.N. project into ACRC. B.R.A.I.N. became the literacy program of ACRC. That means we didn't even need to have our own 501(c)(3) because it also takes time to do all that. If we get into ACRC so we get absorbed, then we get to do the same thing. We get to do our literacy mission. That's what happened.

I became CEO of ACRC. The founding executive director, Emily Higby, was already training me because she wanted to retire due to health reasons. But the thing is, because of the 2020 presidential elections, I had to talk to her and say goodbye to ACRC. I said, "I cannot stop being political. I need to get rid of somebody in the White House. I really need to get out of ACRC because I cannot do political, as that will jeopardize the 501(c)(3)." Emily understood me because that's where she found me. She found me in the political world. That's how we met. She

understood my feelings on why I want to go back to doing political work. She let go of me. But I said, “It doesn’t mean I will not be helping ACRC. Anytime you need me, I will still be there as my personal self, as Margie Gonzales, anytime.” I kept that promise. Up to this time, I kept that promise even though she passed away already and now there is a new CEO, Marc Matsuo. I actually just talked to him this morning, so the communication is still there because they know my support is still there.

I went back to my political activities for the Democratic Party. That time, were a lot of candidates running to become president, and so I was able to work with some of them. I’ll show you souvenirs, like this one. This was signed by Cory Booker, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey. Now look, it is Tagalog. [Reading Tagalog from poster.] It’s about the caucus election. The reason for this is because I did training—caucus election training—in Tagalog. I asked a good friend, Phil Kim, who has ties at the Democratic National Committee, “Who else is doing this in the entire country?” and he said, “Margie, it’s just you.” There was nobody else doing caucus election training in Tagalog. I did this. Cory Booker was here. We did a training here. We did English and Tagalog. Why caucus election training in Tagalog? There is no caucus election in the Philippines. Filipinos would not know. What’s a caucus election? We only have general election; that’s it. No primary election, too. No caucus election, no primary election, just general election. It’s just like just waiting for November; in the Philippines, it’s May. Next year is going to be election time in the Philippines.



Margie Gonzales, first interview session, 1 November 2021

I felt that time in 2020, when campaign directors call the Nevada State Democratic Party and ask, “We want to do an event with the AAPI community in Nevada,” they will say, “Oh, call Margie.” The reason why is because I was the former chair—this is actually our shirt—AAPIDC, Asian American Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus. I was chair for four years, 2014–2018. I was the Asian connection. They sent campaign people my way. I said, sure, I’ll help you out.” I did an evening event for Cory Booker. I also did caucus election training in Tagalog for Senator Elizabeth Warren and a couple more presidential candidates at that time.

I would just be asking, “How many people do you need? How many people do you want?” If it’s a dinner event, how many people? Because we need to find out how many tables, how many we need to invite. I distributed the invites so that other leaders, too, can invite their own. Let’s say if it’s for a hundred people, ten tables with ten people each, “Okay, I’ll take care of two tables, somebody else will take care of three tables, and somebody will take two, somebody will take one.” I distribute so that it will be fair and diverse. I shared the invites to other AAPI leaders. That’s what we did. So, there’s an AAPI event for Cory Booker, another AAPI event for Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, to name some. I had the chance to meet these people. Even the governor of Washington, Jay Inslee.



At least seven or eight presidential candidates that time. That’s for the political side of me here in the U.S. As I said, it flourished because I became the chair for AAPIDC.

The very first recognition that the Nevada State Democratic Party gave me is this one, my very first recognition actually here in the country. It just so happened to be political. It says here, “In 2014, Walked the Extra Mile, Margie Gonzales, Nevada State Democratic Party.”

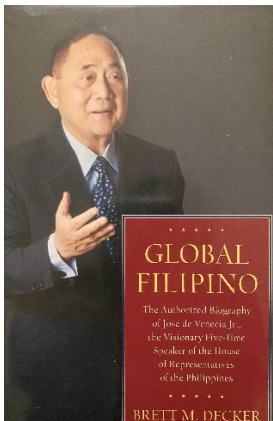


See associated awards in Appendix

It's the very first U.S. recognition I received, so I really treasure this. I just became chair for AAPIDC in February 2014, and I got this just after three months. Just three months I was already recognized. That's how much work I did in just three months as chair. As soon as I became chair—boom, boom, boom, right away—we did this, and this, and that. Well, because it's something I did extensively in the Philippines. I am so experienced on it. This is the first, and it's even from the state party—not just the county, because our AAPIDC is under the county. The State Democratic Party recognized me first, and then a year later, the Clark County Democratic Party also recognized me in an annual dinner gala, so I got both.

This is also the latest one so far that they gave me. This is the Women's Democratic Club of Clark County. When they did the Women's Equality Days event, they recognized me, too. The reason why I started getting politically involved here was because of Hillary [Clinton]. I was just a quiet voter until I heard that Hillary was running. I said, "Okay, I want to take part in it. I

better get out there, not just stay home. I have to do something.” This will be historical for the United States to have its first woman president. The Philippines already had two. For the U.S., none yet. It was personal for me. It’s because Hillary, when she was first lady, she went to the Philippines. This is my former boss, the Speaker of the House [showing book entitled *Global Filipino*].



A MAN OF THE
PEOPLE; A MAN
FOR THE WORLD

JOSE DE VENECIA JR., the five-time Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, has been for years a trail-blazer for the Filipino people, Asia, and the world.

In a political arena often plagued by uncertainty, intrigue, corruption, and poverty, he has fought relentlessly to cast off the Philippines' unflattering moniker as the "sick man of Asia" and has sought to bring political, economic, and cultural influence to the dynamic, hard-working people of his homeland.

A visionary, peace maker, coalition builder, and achiever, de Venecia has:

- conceived and implemented the historic dollar-remittance program that keeps the Philippine economy afloat and which has become a model for the third world
- provided breakthroughs in the peace accord between Christian and Muslim (MNLF) Filipinos and a second pact between government and military rebels
- pioneered Filipino projects in the Arab world that led to the employment of millions of Filipinos worldwide
- founded the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and the International Conference of Asian Political Parties to create the beginnings of an Asian Parliament and help achieve political and economic integration in Asia
- pushed the Christian-Muslim and Interfaith Dialogues approved by the United Nations to reduce politico-religious tensions and conflicts in various parts of the world
- presented his debt for UN MDGs plan, endorsed by G-77 countries but pending at the G-7, to finance the battle against poverty amidst the global financial crisis

To Jag & Margie --
 Valued friends --
 Thank you for your support
 of the great cause --
 I am proud of your
 work in America --
 you are truly
 Global Citizens --
 J. Venecia Jr.
 12-6-2008
 Book Launch in
 Las Vegas

Cover and Front Flap, Brett M. Decker, *Global Filipino: The Authorized Biography of Jose de Venecia Jr., the Visionary Five-Time Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2008). Autograph, "To Jag and Margie," by de Venecia 6 December 2008

Speaker de Venecia’s wife was the president of the Congressional Spouses Foundation when he was Speaker. They raised enough funds to be able to have a haven for abused women and

children, and Hillary went there. That was the personal connection, so that's why I came out for Hillary.

When I learned that she was running, I said I'd better get out there and help. That's what started me to get fired up and be out there and become very politically engaged. Not just on the second time that she ran in 2016, but the first time [for the 2008 election]. The first time was when Obama won the primary. I was already there. I didn't know anyone in the party. I didn't know anyone. All I did was just find a headquarters and walk in to volunteer. I said, "Hi, I am so-and-so. I want to volunteer and help." They said, "Sure." They told me, "Okay, you can use this phone. This is the script." That's how I started as a phone banking volunteer.

Then there was a time that we were going to be canvassing, so I went there. It was in North Las Vegas; that's where I lived at that time. Then, there was a problem in the voting precinct where I belong. The following day was the caucus election. They told me, "The one who is supposed to be the precinct captain was sick," at that time. They looked at names. They found out that I belonged to that precinct. They asked me that day, "Would you like to be the precinct captain?" I said, "I don't know anything about being a precinct captain," because I am just a new volunteer. "We'll teach you." I had just a few minutes of crash training. Because it's going to be the following day. They gave me the shirt that I would be wearing, the paperwork that I would need. They told me what to do and to show up at the precinct. I did; I became the precinct captain. It happened so fast.

Me too, I didn't know about caucus elections because I just came from the Philippines, too. That was my first time. But I learned it in a few minutes. First time for me to see a caucus election and what exactly happens in the room. That was my first experience with a caucus election. That helped me be able to do caucus election training much later because I experienced

it myself. Then later on, I experienced it again. This time, a Hillary v. Bernie Sanders [caucus]. Again, another caucus election experience.

I know you want to know about my former boss [Jose de Venecia Jr., or JDV]. He was a five-time Speaker of the House [of the Philippines]. The time that I was working for him was his first time to be the House Speaker. As a congressman, he was a diplomat because he chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee. The reason why he was effective in that was because he was an international businessman before he went into politics. His business was really international. It became one of the top thirty corporations in the world. He is very successful in business. He was called the Energy Czar in the Philippines because he owned the LandOil and Basic Petroleum (BP) companies in the Philippines. He opened the door of the Middle East for Filipino overseas contract workers. He was the very first one who did it, not some recruiter, but direct government-to-government contracts. He was big time.

Anyway, I got to work for him in May 1992. That time he was not yet the speaker. I had to live in their family home. The whole time that I was working for him, I was living in their home. I only got to go home once or twice a month. It's because weekends—there was another secretary, Melinda Siapno; actually, she was his district office secretary in his province, Pangasinan. She was told to come to Manila to also help me in the residence office. She said, “Oh no, I might not be able to do the job.” They said, “Don't worry. Margie is there. She'll be able to teach you.” That's what happened. There's two of us alternating weekends off. If I would go home, she would stay. If she would go home, I would stay. That's why we only got to go home two times a month, so every other weekend. But if there's a weekend event, either he is hosting a luncheon or whether it's a political event or a social event that he is hosting in his home, we [both] need to be there. The Speaker's family home was a mansion. The second floor,

where all the family rooms were, had a receiving area that can sit down a hundred people. It's a huge house, ideal for high-level politicians.

The household staff was large. Downstairs had the office of the Speaker and another office for his wife, Gina Perez de Venecia, because she, too, also had her own business. She had her own staff, also. Downstairs had a regular buffet setting. Second floor had V.I.P. buffet setting. In congress, the Speaker had a full staff and several connecting support offices. They handled different concerns of the House Speaker. While in the residence, it's just a small team, and we don't go to sleep while he's up. A lot of important meetings happen at night when he's home. That's when very important meetings happen. In congress, if there's no session by five p.m., employees go home. Not us in the residence office. While he's awake, we're up. In the mornings, usually we deal with a lot of media who wanted to interview him on the phone. They would start calling at about six in the morning. Melinda and I were the ones answering the phone.

Also, the Philippine President at that time, Fidel V. Ramos, did not reside in the Philippine White House. It's called Malacañang Palace. He chose to stay in his home. He would be traveling from his home to the Malacañang Palace. During President Ramos's travel between his home and the Palace, that my boss and the President would already be talking about work. That's why I know both of them are really hard workers. Now I learned why the Speaker of the House is very important to a country's president, because he is the one that makes sure that the president's programs are done. It was during the Ramos Administration when Asia's economy went down, really it was an Asian [recession]. Economy crashed in Asia. The richest Asian economies, like Japan, went down, but not the Philippines. For the first time, it was the

Philippines that survived the recession. It was during that time. It was during my boss and President Fidel V. Ramos at that time.

That time of the Asian Recession, the Philippines became an Economic Cub of Asia. The Philippines for the longest time was categorized a Third World country by IMF [International Monetary Fund] and World Bank. We were a Third World country. During the time I was working for Speaker de Venecia, the Philippine economy improved and went to a higher level; we were then categorized as a Developing country. My dynamic boss did a really good job as head of Congress.

When JDV first became House Speaker (1992 – 1995) he created the Rainbow Coalition, a broad alliance of the Philippine political parties committed to the programs of the Fidel V. Ramos Administration. So, even if Ramos got a low plurality in the presidential election, JDV's Rainbow Coalition converged other political parties and produced a solid majority in the House of Representatives. Now, why do you think it was successful? It's because my boss, he was the brain of all this. He united everyone in Congress.

He united the president with possible enemies because that should be the first thing the president must do: "Unite. Be friends with enemies." He did all those secret meetings with other top political leaders, even the Marcoses, because the Marcoses and the president were not on good terms. Actually, it was Fidel Ramos and Juan Ponce Enrile, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the A.F.P. and the Defense Secretary, respectively, that time who ousted Marcos. My Speaker boss said, "Make friends with the Marcoses and other detractors. Unite with them so that we will be successful, so your term will be successful, so you can do a lot of good things for the Philippines. You will have them on your side working with you." Speaker de Venecia hosted all of those high

profile, private dinners in his residence. We had all those reconciliation dinners, and the president was there and got united with all of his detractors and political rivals.

Then, next would be members of congress. My former boss established the Rainbow Coalition. That means unifying members of congress from different political parties together; Philippines has a multi-party system. He talked to the different leaders of each party, convinced them to work with the president for the good of the country. He shared committee chairmanships with the minority parties. It worked.

Every time there will be a congressman or a congresswoman who would come to the office, we were ready with the Rainbow Coalition MOA [Memorandum of Agreement] that they will sign because it's going to be several pages long. I think we had more than two hundred members of congress. If they agree with the goal, they will sign. The Rainbow Coalition MOA was published in the *Manila Bulletin*, a leading major newspaper in the Philippines. The center pages had the Rainbow Coalition with all of the signatures of the different members of congress belonging to different political parties. It was a major reason why the Ramos-de Venecia tandem was very successful.

SE: *What were the years for that administration?*

That would be 1992 to 1998. Ramos was elected in May 1992, and one term is six years with no re-election, as mandated by the Constitution.

VC: *I had a couple of questions, too, because you're talking about Filipino politics. Could you go back and explain the Peaceful Revolution that you keep referencing? You said that—*

Actually, that's the reason why the late President Corazon C. Aquino became the Woman of the Year, because she was the figurehead of the Peaceful Revolution. Why peaceful? Because no blood was shed. No firing of guns. No cannons. No grenades. Nothing. No violence at all.

Before that, there was a snap election that happened on February 7, 1986. The snap election was to prove that Marcos was still wanted by the people to continue being the president. The snap election happened in February. The two key players of the Peaceful Revolution were Fidel Ramos—who became the president later—was the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Then the other one, Juan Ponce Enrile, was the Secretary of Defense. They knew that if Marcos would win in the snap elections, they would be ousted. You know how it is to have positions. In those positions, you've got to have the confidence of the president. They knew they would be replaced.

Snap election happened, and it showed that Marcos won. There were student activists. The activists, I would say, would be an entirely separate thing. It's because I know you see in media a lot of people demonstrating against Marcos, but nobody is really saying the other side of the picture? Why? There is such a thing as the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army, CPP-NPA, or the People's Army. Up to now they are an active organization. It is a well-organized group led by somebody named Jose Maria (Joma) C. Sison. I hope I don't become controversial, but I just wanted to answer your question. I'm saying names that are controversial, and some people do not know. It just so happened that I was still in the Philippines when all these happened. Joma Sison is the head of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Right now, he is in the Netherlands, running it remotely. The CPP-NPA has a student activist group, there is the labor group, there is the farmers' group, and there is the New People's Army. The New People's Army is the armed one. So CPP-NPA is very organized. They are very well structured. If you see activism and they're students, it's the student unit in action. If you see marching of farmers, then know it's the farmers' unit that is doing it.

The armed unit, which is the NPA, used to be just hiding in the mountains in the Philippines. Now they are able to work down in urban areas. Why? Because Marcos is gone. Marcos had the best intelligence team during his time. The rebels could not move. Marcos was able to stop them. If a rebel comes down to the city, he or she will be detected because that's how good Marcos' intelligence network was. Marcos was a soldier and lawyer before he went into politics. When Marcos was gone, the insurgents came out of hiding. They killed police, soldiers. That's what happened.

The CCP-NPA was formed in 1968. They are insurgents who seek to overthrow the Philippine government and expel U.S. influence from the Philippines. They favor a new state led by the working class. Joma Sison was already captured during the Marcos era. It was a lot of work to capture this person. When Marcos was gone, the next president released him, so now Joma is in the Netherlands as a political refugee running the CPP-NPA organization remotely. So they are still active to this time. That's the part that people do not know about Marcos. They only remember Marcos by the shoes of Imelda—Imelda's huge collection of shoes.

I tell you, if you're a first lady for twenty years, of course you're going to have a lot of shoes, because she was promoting the shoe industry of the Philippines. Imelda Marcos was the best model of Philippine-made shoes and clothes. She would be wearing a Filipino wardrobe designed by Filipino fashion designers. She's beautiful. She's tall. She's statuesque. If she walks into a room, everybody would be looking. They would see her shoes. "Oh, this is made in the Philippines." In Marikina, a city in Metro Manila, that's the top industry. There are popular signature shoes that actually are "made in the Philippines." They're actually manufactured or put together in the Philippines. If you own a shoe business, would you give your first lady just one pair for her official international travels? I'm sure a dozen is at least what you're going to give,

so she could wear a new pair in the morning, and, if she attends a dinner function, she could another pair of shoes in the evening. Then, the following day, and the following day until she goes back home to the Philippines. Twenty years. Multiply that by twenty years and how many manufacturers of shoes would be gifting her. She has big feet, wears between a [size] nine and a ten, so it's not so easy to give them away, because most Filipinas have smaller feet, maybe [size] eight and below. Multiply those dozens by twenty years, definitely you would have a lot of shoes. If you know the Filipinos, even a movie star will have the same amount of shoes. It is common for Filipino celebrities to have a room dedicated just for shoes. Compare that to a first lady for twenty years. Owning a lot of shoes is something common to Filipinas who can afford it.

Going back to the People Power Revolution, nuns were there. They held hands, and they were in front of tanks. The tanks would not kill nuns in their habits giving roses to the soldiers. They're praying on the street. It ended up being a peaceful revolution, even though the head of the armed forces of the Philippines already wanted to do something to disperse the crowd, because that would have stopped it. If something bloody happened, it would have stopped the whole thing. People would be scared. They don't want to die. They'll probably look after their lives and leave. Marcos himself wanted no blood shed. He would rather take that risk of being ousted than to see people getting hurt or killed. The peaceful revolution became world news. In the new Constitution, the president's term was changed. It used to be four years with no limit of re-election. That was why Marcos was able to be re-elected multiple times in succession. That was changed to a longer term of six years but without re-election.

When Marcos was out, Cory Aquino (Corazon "Cory" Cojuangco Aquino) was chosen to be the interim president instead of one of the two key players, Ramos and Enrile. They wanted someone who was not directly involved, someone not political but symbolic. Although Cory's

husband was political, she wasn't. Cory's husband, Benigno Aquino, was a former Senator who was assassinated at Manila International Airport in 1983. Cory represented somebody peaceful because she was also a very religious woman who had maintained a low-keyed life of wife and mother until her husband was killed. She accepted to be the interim president. The Constitution was revised and a presidential election happened. She was elected the first president after the Peaceful Revolution under the revised Constitution. She became an officially elected president, not just an interim president. As I've said, she became *Time* magazine's Woman of the Year because of her role in the Peaceful Revolution (also called the EDSA Revolution or the People Power Revolution).

A lot of things that people don't know. If they think of Marcos, they think of Imelda's shoes.

SE: *I'm so glad you were able to put some context around that.*

I know it's probably a lot to explain, and you mentioned it in the first part of the interview, but what was it like living during martial law?

I love to share that. Before martial law, I was a college student at that time. Me and my sister, we were college students at that time. Our commute from home to our university was more than an hour. We would take what they call a jeepney and then a bus and then another jeepney, so three before we get to the university. We get there, and end up having no classes because of student activists. They were marching, doing rallies, and all that. Could you imagine someone who just wants to learn, who just wants to get educated, would travel that long to get to school, and then no classes? How would someone like me feel? Would I like to join them? No, because it's like stealing money from my parents because they paid for our tuition fees for us to get educated. To

work for a degree, to get our degree, and here we are traveling more than an hour to get to school, and we end up having no classes.

Then those activists would even throw pillboxes into the classrooms. They would see classrooms having classes. They didn't like that. They want the students to go out and join them in the rallies, join them in the march. They would throw pillboxes to the classrooms, and we would be running scared, of course. We're scared. We would run to get out of the classroom and be safe in the hallways. Then you see all those literatures, Maoism, Marxism. Why? Why all this ideology? Do we want to be communists? Remember what I said earlier about the CPP and the student arm. Why all this? Why communism? I don't want the Philippines to become a communist country. Why communist ideology? I wasn't happy about suspending classes due to student rallies. I just wanted to earn my degree. That area of student activism is called the University Belt in Manila. University Belt is where a lot of universities are situated, including our university.

When martial law was declared, wow, I loved it. No more rallies. No more walkouts. There were classes every day. I felt safer traveling even at night because I had classes all the way to nine p.m., and I had to commute back home. I felt safer because there was no crime. There were soldiers at checkpoints, so that's actually even better. As a regular student, I felt safe. I was happy. Those who were very much against it were activists, and so they were not happy. But I was happy. I am just a regular person, a regular student who wants to finish college, who wants to get a degree, so I was happy about it. That's how I felt during that time. It was not a martial law that was scary like in other countries when they say martial law, and you get scared. I was not scared because I was not doing anything against the government, so why will I be scared?

Later, my sister and I decided to transfer schools. We went to a different university—it's called the Philippine Women's University—because me and my sister wanted to be away from the University Belt. It was a shorter commute. We felt it was so much better. We got our Bachelor's degrees there. I got my Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts, and Cindy earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

For other civic work, these are the ones I received just recently. This is the very last one that I received, Outstanding Filipino American Citizen of Nevada, 2021. That was just, if I'm not mistaken, earlier this month. Of course, during Mother's Day, although physically I'm not a mother, I am a community mother, and I've been a mother to a lot of teachers.



Outstanding Filipino American Citizen of Nevada, 2021



Asian Pacific & Pacific Islander Mother of the Year, Mothers Day Tribute, 2021

Teachers live with us. I am hosting some Clark County School District (CCSD) teachers. [Gestures to a young man who walks through the room.] He is one of them. He is a math teacher. The first one who came in, she is a teacher here at Bonanza High School. Previously, we hosted two teachers from Roy Martin Middle School. There are a few other teachers that I have helped in housing all around the county. They [teachers] have been coming here from the Philippines since 2017.

VC: *Could you talk about that teacher program with recruiting Filipino teachers here?*

I'm not the recruiter. Here's the reason I got involved. Since 2017, CCSD has been hiring teachers from the Philippines to reduce the [teacher] shortage. Now, the first batch in 2017, were all special education teachers. Now, the reason why they recruit from the Philippines is because we speak English. English is officially the second language of Filipinos. Any foreigner who speaks English can go to the Philippines and will be understood anywhere that person goes. Maybe some speak little English, but it's still English. If you speak English, people can understand you anywhere in the Philippines.

That first batch, 2017, they were housed in an apartment, a nice apartment, actually, in Henderson by Silverado Ranch [Boulevard] and Bermuda [Road]. Now, they were housed there for six months. They were under contract for six months. Could you imagine if you were teaching in North Las Vegas, and you will be commuting from Henderson? You're new to the country, and you have to be in school at seven or before seven in the morning? It was not easy, especially if you're new to the country, and you have to pay Uber or Lyft every time. Other members of the Filipino community started carpooling them. Now, I learned about the situation. They could not leave the apartment until after [they had lived there] six months. They want to move closer to their school, but cannot because of the six-month contract. I don't know what their recruiter was thinking or not thinking, why that happened. I said to myself, "Maybe I can help."

At that time, our home was near Pecos-McLeod [Interconnect], and Flamingo [Road], that area. We were actually near all CCSD offices and training centers. I told a retired teacher friendf, "If there are any two teachers who are teaching near my home that can probably just walk to their school, I am willing to host them for free." Sure enough, teachers wanted the

offer—a lot of teachers, actually, came to the house. There were more than a dozen that went there, but they already selected the two. They just wanted to see our home. They wanted to meet me. They wanted to see the room. They were actually just curious and excited. I housed them. I hosted them for five months for free. I told them, “You don’t have to pay me anything. I know you have to pay for the apartment.” For five months, they were paying for the apartment, but they were staying with me for free. I told them, “When you finish your contract, the six months, and you want to move, find an apartment closer to your school, and just let me know. I’ll even help you move because I have a van. I’ll help you move.”

They’re young and they’re teachers, special education teachers, so we treat them like family members, like our own daughters. The two of them, they were like our own. We don’t have children, so we treated them like our own children. When we go out to eat, we invite them to come with us. If somebody has a birthday, they would ask, “Could I celebrate my birthday and invite a few friends?” “Oh, sure, and don’t just invite a few.” That happened. They loved staying with us.

December comes, they talked to me and said, “We would like to continue staying here.” Maybe it’s because their family back home, too, probably felt that it would be much better for them to just continue staying with us than move to another place. They said, “We will just pay this time. We will just pay rent.” I said, “You know what? Don’t even call it rent. Call it sharing utilities. Call it that way because we’re not treating you like tenants, and we’re not your landlady and landlord. You’re family to us, and that’s how I want you to feel while you live with us.” That was in 2017, and they’re still with us up to this time. We bought a second house, and then I told them, “You have the option: if you want to move into the other house because you are our very first hosted teachers.” They chose to move to the new place in one of the master bedrooms.

Then this 2020 batch came along. They arrived December 5, 2020. They weren't able to teach until towards the end of February. They had their first paycheck already in March 2021. In the meantime, their pocket money was drying out. That was the time that there were a lot of organizations were providing food supplies due to the pandemic. Together with some civic-minded friends who joined me, "Let's pick up some food." We picked up some food sometimes in boxes, and then we would take them to my home, and some teachers would help me sort them. We put, let's say, all oranges together, all potatoes together, and [likewise] all the rest of the other items. Then we start putting them in bags and boxes so that when we deliver, they get a complete assortment. That's what we did so that they don't have to buy because they were running out of funds. They had no more money already. They hadn't started teaching. We delivered these food items to where ever they were staying, all around the county.

I started a drive together with ACRC and some other friends, leaders in the community, a donation drive. These teachers came from the Philippines, and it's a warm country. Then they're here in December, and it's cold. We had jackets, sweaters, blankets and all that. They got those, too. We did what we could to provide for them so that they don't have to buy or spend money to be able to have those, including bedroom linens, towels, and toiletries. We got a lot of donations for them. We're happy to do that for the teachers.

VC: You were talking a lot about food, and you provided groceries to people in the community. Could you speak more about traditional foods that you eat on a day-to-day basis, Filipino food?

Because I mentioned the word, "traditional," I'll go back to my political thing. I was the first—maybe the only one, but the first one—who hosted the traditional Filipino *kamayan* meal. *Kamayan* is eating using your hands. It's also known by another name, "boodle fight." I made

kamayan a political event here in the U.S. Filipinas here practice *kamayan*, but not politically. It's because there are *kamayan* parties held in homes on occasions, but I made it a political event. Again, I was the first one. Because I always try to think of new ideas. My friend at the DNC said, "Only in Las Vegas that it happened, *kamayan* as a political event." I did it during Hillary's campaign. I did three *kamayan* events for Hillary.



Hillary Clinton and Margie Llorente Gonzales, undated



Margie Llorente Gonzales and Chris Giunchiliani, 2011

I remember the second one was during a debate watch. The third one was already in the combined headquarters. It was a lot bigger than the first two. But the grandest of all was during the campaign of Governor Sisolak, [Steven] Horsford, Jacky Rosen, Susie Lee. Actually, the one I was helping was Commissioner [Tick] Segerblom, who was main host of the event. Jacky Rosen joined in. Okay, we'll do *kamayan* for Jacky Rosen and Tick Segerblom. Then everybody else in the Democratic campaign learned about it, so they all joined in. Then it reached the DNC, and the head of the DNC at that time, Tom Perez, learned about it and said, "I want to experience

kamayan, too.” They all wanted to experience it. They had heard about it. People were raving about it. We changed the date to be able to accommodate Tom Perez to fly to Vegas and be able to experience *kamayan*. It was the grandest *kamayan* ever, and all the candidates were there. As I’ve said, Sisolak was there, Horsford was there, Rosen was there, Susie Lee, Segerblom, and judges, maybe. Everybody was there. It was the most politically star-studded *kamayan* ever. It was the grandest *kamayan* I’ve done for the Democratic Party.

THE MUCH AWAITED DINING EXPERIENCE THAT IS TRADITIONALLY FILIPINO!

KAMAYAN

FEST 2018

Pagsaluhan natin ang masasarap na pagkaing Pinoy!
A dining and musical entertainment treat
with our Special Guests:

and

Congresswoman Jackie Rosen
Candidate for US Senate

NV Senator Tick Segerblom
Candidate for Clark County
Commission District E

E-mail
margie.g1310@gmail.com
to reserve your seat.

Fil-Am Democrats of Las Vegas

Sunday, Oct. 14, 2018 @ 11:30 am
United Way of Southern Nevada Building
5830 West Flamingo Road, Las Vegas 89103
(corner Duneville & Jones)

Of course, I support Filipino food, but not just Filipino food, Asian food. I introduced that to the teachers in my homes. I said, “Don’t just eat Filipino food. I want you to also

appreciate the food of other cultures.” I would say, “Hey, let’s go out and eat.” I would treat them to Thai food, Chinese dim sum, Vietnamese, Korean, and other Asian food. We would go to Chinatown. We would even eat Asian sandwiches. For my birthday, actually—Monday last week—I took them to the new one, the new shabu-shabu place, again, Asian food. Actually, in the Philippines, there’s also so many places to eat over there, except that it’s really expensive. I try to introduce other tastes, other cuisine to the Filipino teachers. Soon hopefully, I’ll take them to Mediterranean food, also. I’ve been telling them about it. Tonight, I actually have a meeting here at home at six, and I told them I will have Korean barbeque. I have the grill. I already bought the grill. The teachers have been enjoying it, too. That’s what I will prepare for tonight.

SE: Is there anything that you would like to talk about that we haven’t asked?

I told you about my political, my civic engagement. I’ve been interviewed by others. Business, I have my own business now. I was invited to join a business, too, and the reason why I joined...I’ve been an advocate for these teachers. There’s another one, Sonny Vinuya, who is the president of the Asian Chamber of Commerce. I think he knows you. I mentioned you to him.

SE: Please encourage him to say yes next time I ask him for an interview.

Okay, I’ll tell him. The two of us are advocates for the teachers. We are hoping to have a much better solution than just a J-1 visa. An H-1 [visa] would be so much better for them to come here as professionals. A professional visa, not a J-1 a cultural exchange visa, which is temporary; H-1 just like the nurses. When you bring in nurses, there is a pathway to a green card. We need them especially now. Teacher shortage is massive around the country.

And they are professionals.

Yes. The shortage is huge. They tell me what’s going on now in classrooms. There are classrooms with no regular teachers. They’ve been having subs [substitute teachers] week in and

week out, so they don't have a lesson plan. This middle school math teacher said some of his students don't know simple math that they should have learned in grade school. The teachers feel sad. They feel sorry that the students are in that situation. What quality of youth are we producing? What kind of high school graduates are we producing? They will not pass for college. They will fail because they're not learning enough.

Look at this scenario: students are on their cell phone while a teacher is teaching. That should not be allowed. When I was at TSA, we cannot use cell phone while working; we cannot be on our cell phones. We have to be on our break unless it's an emergency, a very important family call that you have to take. Then you'll be allowed. During classes, you could use cell phones? They could just be playing games. What kind of young people are we producing, and they're supposed to be future leaders? Then they fail in college because they don't have enough education. The teachers also informed me that their prep time, which is supposed to be a time for them to prepare for their classes, is now used for them to be substitute teachers. So, they get exhausted and feel sick. That's why they call in sick, to recharge so they could be back to work right away. Now the students will have a sub, and the sub will have a sub and so on. What happens to the students? I feel sorry about this.

I saw in the news that CCSD needs eight hundred more teachers. A hundred special education teachers are going home at the end of this [2021–2022] school year. The first batch that arrived in 2017, they're all special education teachers. They will be going home this year. Could you imagine what the effect will be on special children, on the special children of Nevada? They would lose the face that they're already comfortable with. They see their teacher every day, and they feel comfortable. Parents actually are happy that their special child feels relaxed with a teacher, and then that teacher will be gone. That's the situation now.

That's the reason why Sonny Vinuya and another partner, Lora Legara, invited me. Sonny knows I'm an advocate for the teachers. He knows what I'm doing for the teachers in helping them with housing and provision of food, clothes, whatever. He invited me into the business, so now there are three of us partners. We're now into placement, teachers, nurses, interns and trainees, but teacher placement is the main focus for now. It's GSC, Global Synergy Consulting, or Global Synergy USA if you search online. That's the whole point of why we're together, because we don't want them to experience any undesirable ones they previously experienced with their recruiter. They are heavily in debt in the Philippines. When they leave because of the exorbitant fees that is charged to them, like nine hundred thousand to one million in Philippine pesos is what they owe. They have to pay back the finance company in the Philippines with their first paycheck every month. It's thirteen hundred to fifteen hundred dollars a month for about a year and a half. Just to look at the transcript, six hundred dollars. Assess the transcript, six hundred dollars. That's twelve hundred dollars right there. That's what we don't want to do to our teachers and other professionals. We will do it ourselves; we will place them, but they will not be owing that much money.

I'm so glad you talked about that. Thank you.

Every time I hear their story, I feel sad. Now I am forming a group of bilingual (English-Spanish) volunteers. Knowing what's going on in the classrooms with Hispanic children who do not know English. These Hispanic children will not understand what the teachers are teaching. Now, is there anybody to help? None. That's our goal in forming this team of volunteers. I am reaching out to the Hispanic community, and I know I will get a lot of bilingual volunteers from them, and that's what I am thinking of forming now. Not just me. We're a group that's hoping to do this. I've gotten in touch with a lawyer who is also at the forefront of this, and then, we have

ACRC Foundation. I've talked to them, also. We will team up with the Hispanic community so that we all work together. At least we start somewhere to help with the non-English speaking students. Even students could be volunteers. They don't have to be graduates or professionals. Even students could help. That's something about me that I wanted to add to my life story.

I guess one final question.

Yes, this will be the last question. Have you ever faced discrimination, or do you know anybody personally who has faced that, especially with the rise of anti-Asian violence, in Las Vegas or [elsewhere]? If you could speak to that.

I was also the chair for the Asian American Pacific Islander Community Commission of Clark County for two years. My term ended at the end of June 2021. Now it's a young leader, Craig Valdez, who is the chair. We have loudly voiced our stand about that on different occasions. We've got a lot of support, especially from various public officials.

We are lucky, though, in comparison to other places that Las Vegas is not experiencing it that bad, even statewide. On the Asian hate issue, I'm thinking maybe one of the reasons is the nature of our industry. Who are the biggest players there at the casinos? Asians. The high rollers are Asians. Look at the machines, the casino machines. A lot of Asian themes, a lot of them, even Asian words, Chinese words, Chinese figures. People are playing it whether they're White, African American, whatever nationality. They love those games. They love Asian food. Who is eating there in the Asian restaurants? It's not just Asians. You see a lot of other people outside of the Asian community enjoying Asian food. Now we even have an Asian Marvel superhero. We have a lot of popular Asian artists, like Bruno Mars is Filipino. He is really one of the top. And other artists, too, are Asians, and they have huge fan [bases].

Hospitals, in the healthcare industry, a lot of Asians. Your doctor will be Asian; your dentist will be Asian; your cardiologist will be Asian. And most of all, your nurses will be Filipinos. I think all of this contributes to the fact that Las Vegas need Asians. Don't start discriminating us. We're the ones who are going to be taking care of you and your children and your parents. I think all of those add up, so that's why here we don't tend to experience as much as maybe in other places. Nevada is really a very diverse state. Whether you go to Reno or here in Clark County, it's very diverse. Maybe in most rural areas, there are a lot more White people, like in Congressional District 2. But generally speaking, Nevada is really a very diverse state, and we're lucky.

I've not experienced it myself. Have you experienced it?

VC: Yes.

That bad?

More verbal, but nothing ever physical.

Okay. What kind of verbal?

It just depended on the situation. They would just say something about my eyes or something like that. I don't know. Comments.

Then our teachers, too. Our teachers, they got the best evaluation. They have very good performance evaluations; these Filipino teachers that come here on a cultural exchange program get very good evaluations. That's why they're so open in getting more [teachers] from the Philippines. Now they also want Hispanics, too, from Latin [American] countries to also be able to come here and teach.

When the AAPI community came together to talk about the Asian hate topic, I said, "Why can't the popular Asian celebrities do something wherein people get to watch what they

say [and] to campaign about it?” Their words will be strong because they are popular people, and people will listen. It’s not just us. People all over the world do not know us. But if somebody who is a big name says it . . . why don’t they? We see them on Facebook; we see them on TV; we see them wherever. They don’t have to be paid. I am hoping that they just say something, because they’re Asians, too, and they’re popular.

SE: *Like a public service announcement or something?*

Yes, yes. Even just maybe three lines, or even two lines, because they’re popular; that will be loud. Having a blockbuster Asian Marvel superhero that tells you something. Hey.

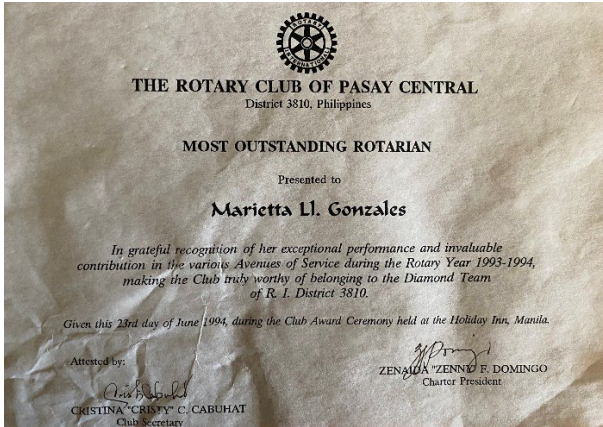
Thank you.

VC: *Thank you.*

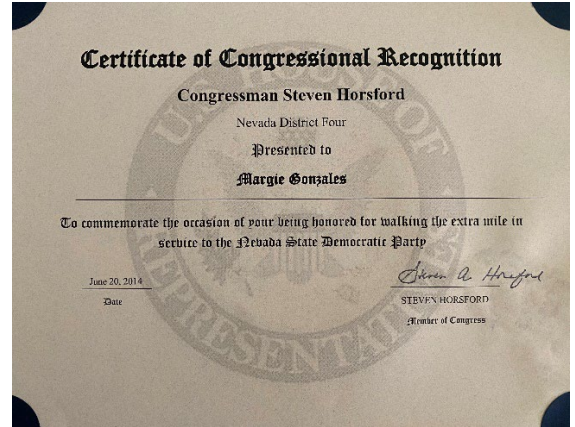
SE: *Thank you so much.*

[End of recorded interview]

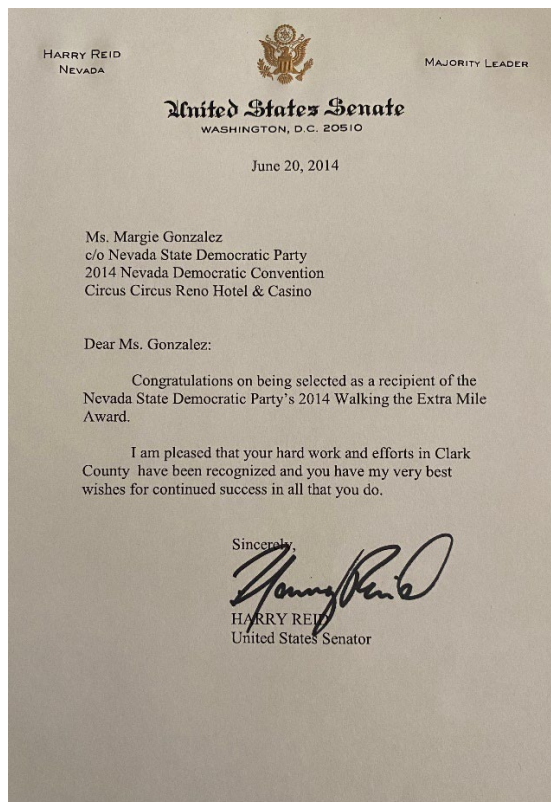
APPENDIX
AWARDS AND COMMENDATIONS, 1994–2022



Rotary Club of Pasay Central District 3810, Philippines
 Marietta Ll. Gonzales
 Most Outstanding Rotarian
 23 June 1994



Certificate of Congressional Recognition
 Margie Gonzales
 Nevada State Democratic Party 2014
 Walking the Extra Mile Award
 Congressman Steven Horsford
 20 June 2014



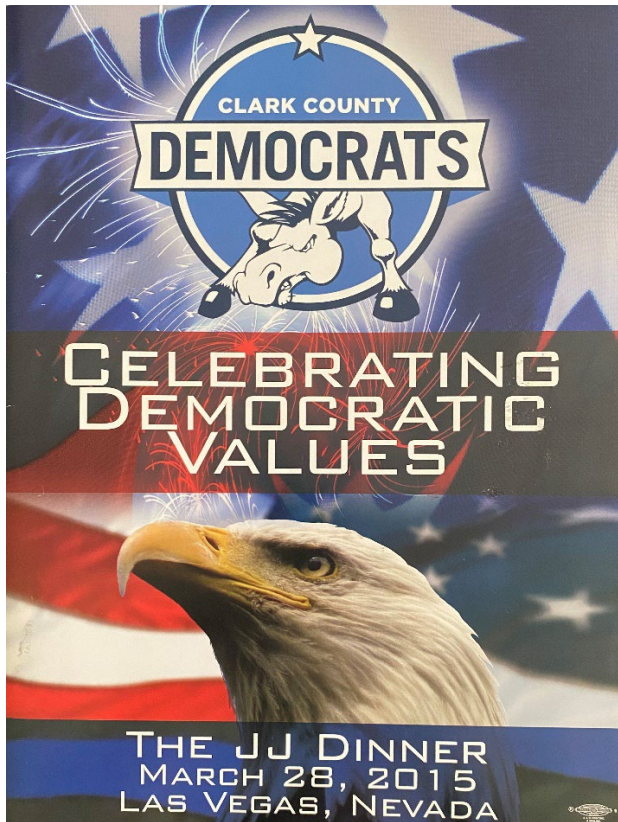
Letter of congratulations to Ms. Margie Gonzales
 for selection as
 Nevada State Democratic Party 2014
 Walking the Extra Mile Award
 United States Senator Harry Reid
 20 June 2014



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
 To Margie Gonzales
 Nevada State Democratic Party 2014
 Walking the Extra Mile Award
 Congresswoman Dina Titus
 20 June 2014



Senatorial Certificate of Commendation
To Margie Gonzales
To commemorate the first anniversary of the Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
and to recognize your hard work and dedication to the community
United States Senator Harry Reid
12 January 2015



Flyer, 2015 Clark County Democratic Party
Jefferson Jackson Dinner
28 March 2015



Plaque awarded to Margie Gonzales
Clark County Democratic Party
2015 Jefferson Jackson Dinner
28 March 2015

	<p>Margie Llorente-Gonzales Equipped with an A.B. Communication Arts degree and extensive experience in media, entertainment, and politics, Margie Llorente-Gonzales was running the residence office of 5-time Philippine House Speaker Jose de Venecia before she migrated to USA in 1994. After living in the Bay Area for 8 years, she and her husband moved to Las Vegas, Nevada where she got her opportunity to work for the</p>	<p>federal government and lead multi-culture fundraiser activities for her parish church. Having a heart of a Democrat and an admirer of the Clintons and Kennedys, Margie decided to experience US politics by volunteering in the Hillary Clinton campaign in 2008. She worked her way from phone banking to being a state delegate, an experience she will forever cherish. As chairman of the Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus, Margie is determined to carve a legacy of her style of leadership which can be described as positive, creative, productive, diplomatic, and very sincere.</p>
--	--	--

13
Text accompanying the award honoring Margie Gonzales as
Chairman of the Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
Clark County Democratic Party
2015 Jefferson Jackson Dinner
28 March 2015



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

No. 68

Senate

CELEBRATING ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today in celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter established Asian Pacific Heritage Week. This week of recognition was expanded to a month-long celebration in 1992. Every May, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month provides Americans the opportunity to reflect upon the many contributions made by the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in Nevada and across the Nation.

May is a significant month in Asian American and Pacific Islander history. The first ten days of May coincide with the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, which relied heavily on the work of Chinese immigrants. But Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month does not only recognize the past achievements of this vibrant community; this month is also a chance to honor the civil rights activists, farmers, scientists, entrepreneurs, health professionals, educators, and other members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, who continue to help shape our Nation into an even better place culturally, economically, and politically.

In Nevada, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are among the fastest growing populations and have enriched Nevada's history and culture. Hundreds of thousands of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders live in Nevada, and contribute to small business development and boost our economy. I am proud to represent such strong and innovative people, and I continue to work hard to enact legislation that positively impacts the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. For instance, I joined my colleague, Hawaii Senator Mazie Hirono, earlier this year in fighting for legislation that would reunite children and families of Filipino World War II veterans, and I will continue my steadfast support of family reunification efforts.

America is a nation of immigrants with diverse backgrounds and united common principles, which is part of what makes us strong, resilient, and unique. This month, we celebrate the wonderful and important contributions of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in Nevada and throughout the Nation, and I extend my best wishes for a joyous Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Congressional Record Vol. 161, No. 68, Proceedings and Debates of the 114th Congress, First Session
Celebration Asian American and Pacific Islander Month, Signed Statement
United States Senator Harry Reid
6 May 2015



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
 Margie Gonzales
 On the occasion of being honored at
 Clark County Democratic Party's
 Jefferson Jackson Dinner
 Congresswoman Dina Titus
 28 March 2015



Certificate of Recognition
 Margie Llorente-Gonzales
 For support of the Silver Lotus Awards hosted by the
 Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
 of Las Vegas, Nevada
 Nevada State Senator Patricia (Pat) Spearman



Service Award
 Margie Gonzales
 Outstanding performance and commitment to
 Filipino American Scholarship
 Foundation & Outreach Services (FASFOS) Mission
 Minerva M. Honkala

29 May 2015



Certificate of Recognition
 Chairwoman Asian American & Pacific Islander
 Democratic Caucus
 Irene Bustamante Adams
 Spreaker Pro Tempore, Nevada State Assembly
 13 February 2017

6 August 2016



Certificate of Recognition
 Exceptional service and volunteer work in the
 community
 Irene Bustamante Adams
 Spreaker Pro Tempore, Nevada State Assembly
 12 May 2017



Certificate of Commendation
 Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
 United States Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
 13 May 2017



Certificate of Recognition
 Margie Llorente Gonzales
 Constant support of the LGBTQ community
 Chris Hyepock, President
 21 June 2017



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
 Margie Gonzales
 for work to improve the lives of Southern Nevadans
 Congressman Ruben J. Kihuen
 9 November 2017



Certificate of Commendation
 Marietta "Margie" Gonzales
 Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic
 Caucus,
 the Las Vegas community, and
 Nevada State Democratic Party
 United States Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
 12 March 2018



Certificate of Special Recognition
 for service on Executive Board
 Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
 of Southern Nevada
 Congresswoman Jacky Rosen
 12 March 2018



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
 Margie Gonzales
 Outgoing Chair
 Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic
 Caucus

Congresswoman Dina Titus
12 March 2018



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
Margie Gonzales
Four years as Chair
Asian American & Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus
Congresswoman Dina Titus
14 January 2019



Women's Democratic Club of Clark County
Margie Llorente Gonzales
Women's Equality Day
8 August 2019



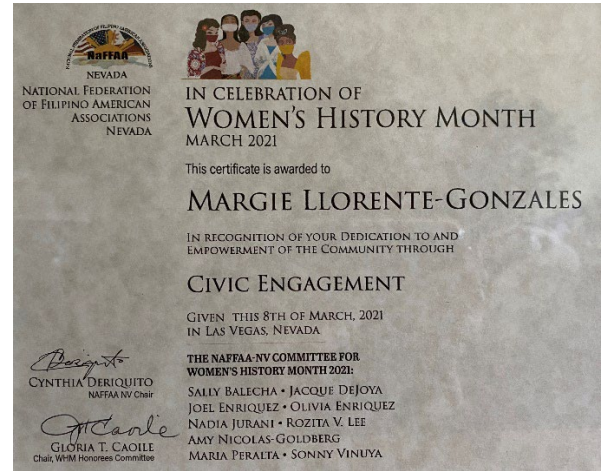
Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
Margie Gonzales
In recognition of outstanding and invaluable service to the community
Congresswoman Susie Lee
14 January 2019



Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition
Margie Llorante [sic, Llorente] Gonzales
2019 Women's Equality Day
Congressman Steven Horsford
8 August 2019



Certificate of Commendation
 Margie Llorente Gonzales
 Honored by the Women's Democratic Club of
 Clark County
 Women's Equality Day
 United States Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
 8 August 2019



In Celebration of Women's History Month March
 Margie Llorente-Gonzales
 Dedication to and Empowerment of the Community
 through Civic Engagement
 National Federation of Filipino American Associations
 Nevada
 Cynthia Deriquito and Gloria T. Caoile
 8 March 2021



Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce
 Margie Gonzales
 Support to the Asian Chamber of Commerce
 2022

Proclamation



WHEREAS, Clark County's support for inclusion and belonging for people of all races, national origins, and ethnicities is critical to guaranteeing the safety and security of the American people; and

WHEREAS, during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), inflammatory and xenophobic rhetoric has put Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) persons, families, communities, and businesses at risk; and

WHEREAS, since the December 2019 outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, the infection has grown to more than 119 million confirmed cases and more than 2.6 million deaths worldwide; and

WHEREAS, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 29 million cases have been reported in the United States; and

WHEREAS, some national leaders have used divisive and inflammatory rhetoric, referring at times to COVID-19 as "the China virus;" and

WHEREAS, such rhetoric is reminiscent of the late 1800's when Chinese Americans were deemed the "yellow peril," despite living in the United States for years; and

WHEREAS, such rhetoric is inaccurate and stigmatizing; and

WHEREAS, such statements have stoked unfounded fears and perpetuated stigma about AAPIs which have contributed to increasing rates of bullying, harassment, acts of violence, and hate crimes against AAPIs; and

WHEREAS, scientists have confirmed that COVID-19 does not respect borders and is not caused by ethnicity, and the WHO has cautioned against using geographic descriptors because they can fuel ethnic discrimination; and

WHEREAS, as the COVID-19 virus has spread, numerous AAPIs have reported experiencing microaggressions, racial profiling, hate incidents, and in some cases, hate violence; and

WHEREAS, since 2020, the AAPI population in Nevada has grown by 167%; and

WHEREAS, in Clark County, the AAPI community accounts for 10% of the population (200,000 people); and

WHEREAS, at the March 16, 2021 Clark County Board of County Commissioners (Board) meeting, the Clark County Asian-American Pacific Islanders Community Commission (AAPICC) expressed support for a resolution and combatting racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against AAPIs; and

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to affirm its commitment to the well-being and safety of the AAPI community members and ensure they know they are not alone, and they can speak out to help stop the spread of bigotry.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners for Clark County, that the Board, through the passage of this Resolution, that:

1. Clark County denounces intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Asian sentiment and supports the AAPICC in such efforts to combat intolerance, xenophobia, and anti-Asian sentiment.
2. Clark County joins cities, counties, and states across the country in affirming its commitment to the safety and well-being of AAPIs and in combating hate crimes targeting AAPIs.
3. Clark County will continue its efforts to protect residents and victims of hate crimes.
4. Clark County calls upon all counties, cities, and local governments across Nevada and the United States to adopt similar commitments to reaffirm their solidarity with AAPIs and commit to combatting hate.

PASSED, ADOPTED, AND APPROVED this 6th day of April 2021




Tick Segerblom, Commissioner

Board of Commissioners for Clark County, Nevada

Resolution to denounce intolerance, xenophobia, and anti-Asian sentiment; to affirm its commitment to the safety and well-being of all AAPIs and in combatting hate crimes targeting AAPIs; to continue efforts to protect residents, and to call all counties, cities, and local governments across Nevada and the United States to adopt similar commitments. Dated 6 April 2021.

Proclamation

W

WHEREAS, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is observed during the month of May to recognize the contributions and influence of AANHPI Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Clark County is proud to be home to a large Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander population that contributes greatly to the prosperity and enrichment of our Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities are deeply-rooted in both the United States and Nevada, reminding us of both proud and painful chapters of our history; and

WHEREAS, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities in Clark County have shared their rich culture and traditions while representing their communities through public service and advocacy; and

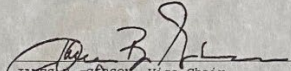
WHEREAS, we must acknowledge a darker aspect of the AANHPI experience in America - structural discrimination, prejudice and injustice - that most recently manifested itself in racist attacks on Asian Americans related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

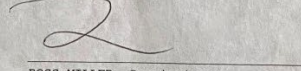
WHEREAS, diversity represents one of our greatest strengths, and by recognizing the contributions and accomplishments of Clark County residents who identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander, Clark County celebrates the importance of inclusion to building a brighter future for all of our residents.

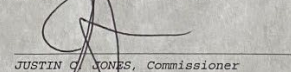
NOW, THEREFORE, WE, the Board of Commissioners of Clark County, Nevada, do hereby honor and recognize the AANHPI communities in our County, and proclaim May 2021 as

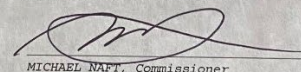
ASIAN AMERICAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN, AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

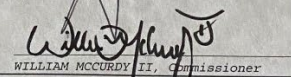
on the Las Vegas Strip and throughout Clark County, and encourage all residents to learn more about the history of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

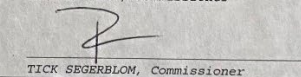

JAMES B. GERSON, Vice-Chair

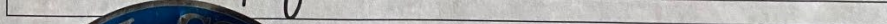

ROSS MILLER, Commissioner

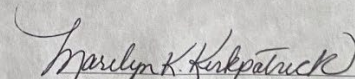

JUSTIN O. JONES, Commissioner


MICHAEL NAFFI, Commissioner

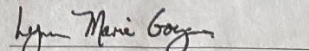

WILLIAM MCCURDY II, Commissioner


TICK SEGERBLOM, Commissioner




MARILYN K. KIRKPATRICK, Chair

ATTEST:


LYNN MARIE GOYA, County Clerk

Board of Commissioners for Clark County, Nevada
Proclamation for May 2021 as
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
Undated