



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS REMARKS AT FILIPINO FLAG RAISING CEREMONY**

**Elmer G. Cato, Consul General, Consulate of the Republic of the Philippines:** (...) Commissioner Manuel Castro, Commissioner Edward Mermelstein, Bowling Green Chairman Arthur Piccolo, members of the Filipino American community, (speaks in Tagalog.) Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. (Speaks in Tagalog.)

First of all, on behalf of the more than 85,000 Filipinos who call New York City their home, I would like to thank Mayor Eric Adams and his administration for hosting this flag raising ceremony to commemorate Filipino American History Month. This flag raising ceremony marks the first time the Philippines flag is being raised outside the Philippines Consulate General in Midtown. And this is a recognition of the many contributions and achievements of Filipinos here in New York City.

Many think that the shared history between the Philippines and the United States started with America's annexation of the Philippines following the declaration of our independence from Spain in 1898. It actually started more than 300 years before the Philippines became an American colony, when the first Filipinos landed in Morro Bay along the coast of California during the golden age of the Manila Acapulco Galleon Trade. Many may also not know that in 1857, or in 1587, Filipino seafarers known as Manila Men established the first Filipino settlement in the coastal wetlands of Louisiana, making it into a thriving fishing village.

Many may also not know that Filipinos also fought on both sides during the American Civil War. They also saw action under the American flag during the First and Second World Wars. Filipinos first arrived here in New York City at the end of the Philippine American War in the latter part of the 19th century. Most of them were students enrolled at Columbia University and New York University as well as other institutions. Others arrived later through Ellis Island and settled in the city. They were followed by Filipino veterans returning from wars in Europe and the Pacific.

In 1946, the Philippines established its diplomatic presence here in New York with establishment of the Consulate General of the Republic of the Philippines. Today, Filipinos comprise the third-largest Asian American population here in the United States with over 4.5 million. Here in New York City, we are the fourth-largest Asian ethnic group.

This is not only an extraordinary testimony to the immigrant success story, but also proof of the enduring friendship between Filipinos and Americans. This multifaceted relationship has only deepened and strengthened over the decades, especially here in New York City. We have seen the important contribution to New York City of Filipinos, particularly our doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020.

When New York City became the epicenter of the pandemic, Filipino nurses and other medical professionals stayed true to their oath to take care of the sick and the dying, sometimes at expense of their very own lives. Today, we honor the 30 Filipino doctors and nurses we lost during the pandemic, as well as other fallen heroes of New York City as we hoist the flags of both the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines. And we also honor the city that has welcomed, nurtured, and sheltered the Filipino American community through the years.

With the recent surge in harassment and violence against Filipinos and other members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, we find comfort in the efforts of Mayor Adams and his administration to fight hate and discrimination. Such as increasing police visibility, especially in subways, launching public awareness campaigns and conducting bystander intervention trainings. And so on behalf of the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Filipino American community in New York, I give our assurance to Mayor Adams of our full and steadfast support in helping ensure that New York City remains a beacon of democracy, freedom, and equality. (Speaks in Tagalog.)

**Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs:** Thank you so much, consul general. And it is now my honor to introduce to you the mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** I was telling the consul general, I wanted one of the barongs. I want to wear that when I'm in office. When you think about the rich diversity of this city and what it represents, when you think about the contributions, and I remember during the peak of COVID-19, when many people close down and sheltered in place, when many people social distanced, when many people left the everyday shops and places where we do business. And I was out in the streets, and you know what I saw? I saw our immigrant population. I saw their stores remain open. I saw them stock the shelves in our restaurants. I saw them in our hospitals providing the medical care. I saw them continue to lift up this city. I will say this over and over again, people talk about the immigrant population in this country. The immigrant population, we need the immigrant population more than the immigrant population needs us.

You provide a service to this country that we should all be proud of. And that's why here at Bowling Green is the cornerstone of our financial institution. For the first time, we're going to raise the flag of the Philippine community to send a loud and clear message that we're going to raise our spirits, we're going to raise our energy, we're going to raise the greatness of this city. But you can't only talk about being inclusive. You have to be about being inclusive. And what does that look like? It looks like Ed Mermelstein, my commissioner of International Affairs, the

first Ukrainian, Russian-speaking to hold that position. It looks like Commissioner Castro, the first Mexican American, a dreamer that came here with his parents from Mexico, and now he's a commissioner in charge of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

But it also looks like one of my deputy mayors. It looks like the great Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer. Come on, Maria. First Filipino American to be a deputy mayor in the City of New York, the most important city in America. And she leads with a level of proud, of how she represents the AAPI community. As she looks at the development and how we move our city forward. I'm so proud to have her as a deputy mayor of the City of New York. 124 years of independence.

We have 70,000 Filipino Americans living in this city alone. That's political power and strength. You want to harness that to make sure your voices are never ignored. That they're often heard. We're not going to use this as a one time event. Every year, we will be here to commemorate this great body of people who represent the greatness of this city.

So I want to take a step back and turn it over to the deputy mayor to say a few words on behalf of the Filipino community and how proud we are in this community. Deputy Mayor?

**Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce Development:** Thank you, mayor. I was able to share a few words earlier, but I'll just repeat a couple. I did want to greet everyone and use the Tagalog that I had. I definitely remember and say (speaks in Tagalog.) To also recognize just the proud tradition of Filipino Americans. All of our families hail from incredible towns and cities and provinces of the Philippines. There are a couple of provinces that my family represents, Pampanga and Batangas. And this is going to be a matter of, I know a lot of argument, but I would submit that Pampangans cook the best Filipino food in the entire country, in the entire country.

But most importantly, working for Mayor Eric Adams, working on behalf of this administration is an opportunity to work for this great city. And I have always believed, and my Filipino parents believed, and I know generations of strivers and doers and survivors believe that New York City is the purest distillation of the promise of this country as a land of opportunity. And so that is what we celebrate here today. And I just want to thank each and every one of you again for being here with us. (Speaks in Tagalog.)

**Commissioner Castro:** And now mayor, there's a special gift for you today. (Laughter.)

**Consul General Cato:** This is the national...

**Mayor Adams:** Oh, I was just saying I wanted one.

**Consul General Cato:** So this is the barong.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, yes, yes. Let me see if I can fit it over this shirt.

**Consul General Cato:** Wear that the next independence...

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah. Love it.

**Commissioner Castro:** Give it up for Mayor Eric Adams. Give it up for Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer.

All right. Now please join us in singing the American National Anthem and raising the flag of the United States of America.

(...)

**Commissioner Castro:** Give it up for Ms. Mheco Manlangit. And now please join us in singing the Filipino National Anthem and raising for the first time in the City of New York, the Filipino flag at Bowling Green Park.

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