



## CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES NEW YORK

### **MESSAGE OF PHILIPPINE CONSUL GENERAL ELMER G. CATO**

I would like to thank the Chinese-American Citizens Alliance of Greater New York (CACAGNY) for organizing this rally to demand justice for Vilma Kari, the 65-year old Filipino mother who was violently assaulted while she was walking to church in Manhattan exactly a week ago today. All of us saw how Brandon Elliot, a 38-year-old convict who is out on parole for killing his own mother, kicked the helpless Vilma without provocation and stomped on her face while yelling at her “You don’t belong here!”

I can see in Vilma the face of my own mother and other elderly Asian women living in New York, who, due to the recent spate of violence against Asians, would not even want to leave the safety of their homes anymore for fear that they, too, would be violently assaulted. A few weeks ago, another elderly member of our community, 61-year-old Noel Quintana, got his face slashed after he was attacked with a box cutter while riding the subway on his way to work also in Manhattan.

These cases hit close to home, since we, Asians, revere our elders. It is part of our DNA to look after our elderly. This is why Elliot’s violent attack on Vilma had been particularly distressing to all of us. But contrary to what Elliot said, Vilma and the rest of the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Community belong here. Our community contributes significantly to the greatness of this city. The New York City Metro Area has the largest number of AAPI residents in the country, with more than 2.4 million people who contribute more than \$6.2 billion in state and local tax revenues.

Our contribution to the city does not end here. In the battle against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), Filipino nurses remain in the frontline against the pandemic. Data from National Nurses United shows that while only 4 percent of nurses in the United States are Filipino, about 30 percent of the almost 200 registered nurses who died from Covid-19 are Filipino. Twenty-five percent of Filipinos in New York work in the healthcare industry. It is, thus, ironic for Elliot to insist that Vilma and the AAPI community she belongs to do not belong here.

As we pray for an end to hate, racism, and discrimination, we urge everyone not to shut their doors to victims of hate crimes like Vilma. Please call 911 or the Crime Stoppers hotline of the New York City Police Department to report incidents of hate crimes. Filipino victims of hate crimes are also encouraged to get in touch with us at the Consulate General.

We take this opportunity to thank the NYPD and its Asian Hate Crime Task Force for their dedication to their work and their quick action in apprehending Elliot. Today, Brandon Elliot will appear in this Criminal Court, and to him we say Vilma belongs here, Asians in New York belong here, everyone belongs here.

Thank you.

Philippine Center  
556 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY, 10036