The 77th Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) was celebrated on Tuesday, 09 April 2018, in Chicago by the Consulate General of the Philippines, members of the Filipino-American Community in Chicagoland, U.S. Officials, surviving World War II veterans.

The program started at 9:00 a.m. with a wreath laying ceremony at the Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Bridge at the corner of State Street and Wacker Drive led by Consul General Gina Jamoralin and Mr. Dominador Ramirez WW II Filipino Veteran together with Filipino leaders.

The official program followed at the Philippine Consulate General which started 10:00 a.m. coffee and light breakfast were served before the program.

In her opening remarks, Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin said: “Today we recall the heroism of the Filipino and American troops during the World War II”. She also thanked the US Congress for passing the World War II Filipino Veterans US Congressional Gold Medal Bill in 2016 which give recognition to the valor and courage of Filipino soldiers during World War II. She said that twenty-two surviving Filipino Veterans and their next of kin receive the medals the previous year’s Araw ng Kagitingan ceremony held at the Philippine Consulate General.

Maj. Gen. Michael Zabonia, Assistant Adjutant General, Illinois National Guard, in his message, acknowledged the contributions of the Filipino WWII veterans as an important part of American military history and must honor the sacrifices of the soldiers who defended Bataan in 1942. He added that “we must ensure that these sacrifices were not for nothing, the bond between our two countries must continue to grow stronger”.

Illinois Scott Air Force Base Commander, Brig. Gen. Jimmy R. Canlas, expressed appreciation for participating in the event that offered the perfect opportunity to come together and pay tribute to the courageous veterans and survivors of the infamous Bataan “Death March”.

Mr. Dominador Ramirez, 90 years old, a veteran of World War II and wars in Korea and Vietnam, in his moving speech said, “Bataan has fallen, but the spirit that made it stand as a beacon to all liberty loving people cannot fail”

The program also showed a video clip featuring the trip in February this year to Corregidor, Subic and Manila of retired US Marines under Philippine Consulate General in Chicago’s “World War II Sentimental Journey Tour”, where they retraced their steps in Subic when they were serving in the US Marines as first responders at the time Mt. Pinatubo erupted in 1991.

Proclamations from Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel declaring 09 April 2019 as Bataan Day in Illinois and Chicago and a message-greeting from U.S. House of Representative Jan Schakowsky, 9th District of Illinois were read during the program.

The Philippine Consulate collaborated with partner organizations such as Maywood Bataan Day Organization, Chicago Nightingales, Zamboanga Del Norte Association of Illinois and Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Chicago. END

Chicago, 10 April 2019
Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin delivers her welcome remarks during the 77th Commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan held at the Consulate General. (Photo courtesy of Mr. Arnel Santiago)

Wreath laying ceremony at the Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Bridge in Chicago (L-R) Consul Ryan Francis D. Gener, Ms. Sol Anderson, Ms. Jelly Carandang, Commander Clemente Rodriguez of the American Legion, Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin, Dominador Ramirez, WWII Filipino Veterans, Mrs. Ramirez, Ms. Elaine Lehman, Rosa San Diego, Mr. Jose Arandio (Photo courtesy of Mr. Arnel Santiago)
Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin received a framed picture of the participants of "WWII Sentimental Journey" from Retired US Marines (MH-1776) Sean McDonald and Ted Zewczyk. (Photo courtesy of Mr. Arnel Santiago)

Group Photo with Consul General Gina A. Jamoralin with the Guests of Honor and the Filipino-American community during the 77th Commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan (Photo courtesy of Mr. Arnel Santiago)
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

RAHM EMANUEL
MAYOR

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, on April 9, 1942, 76,000 officers, including personnel of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFFE), along with the Philippine Commonwealth Army fought side by side as comrades-in-arms, making a heroic last stand in Bataan and Corregidor, Philippines to hold off the invading Japanese Imperial Army for three months; and

WHEREAS, only at the point of physical and emotional exhaustion did these courageous men and women – vastly outnumbered and severely depleted of food, military, and medical supplies – surrender to the invading army; and

WHEREAS, April 10, 1942 marked the infamous “Death March” where the defeated troops of Bataan were forced to walk a torturous fifty miles that began in Mariveles and Cabanatuan, and ended at Camp O’Donnell in Tarlac, which only 56,000 soldiers were able to complete alive; and

WHEREAS, according to the records of the Allied War Crimes Commission, over 24,000 American and Filipino troops perished as prisoners of war from atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army troops at Camp O’Donnell; and

WHEREAS, the embattled American and Filipino troops displayed extraordinary gallantry above and beyond the call of duty, in their defense of Bataan and Corregidor; and

WHEREAS, because of their bravery and sacrifice, the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and the United States of America share and benefit from a vibrant history of friendship, collaboration, and cooperation with the Republic of the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, the Filipino American community and the Consulate General of the Philippines as well as veteran groups from across the city will commemorate the 77th Anniversary of the Fall of Bataan, and acknowledge the heroism and efforts of both the “Death March” survivors and their fallen comrades:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RAHM EMANUEL, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2019 to be BATAAN DAY IN CHICAGO, and urge all Chicagoans to recognize the incredible bravery of, and selfless sacrifice made by, American and Filipinos veterans during World War II.

Dated this 12th day of March, 2019.

Mayor
April 9, 2019

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to send warm greetings to everyone gathered in Chicago, Illinois, to memorialize the 77th Commemoration of “Araw ng Kagitingan” (Day of Valor). This important event is an opportunity to pay homage to the thousands of Filipino and American soldiers who fought ferociously against enormous odds in the Fall of Bataan.

Bataan is remembered for the bravery and sacrifices Filipino and American soldiers experienced during World War II to uphold the ideals of freedom and liberty. Filipinos and Americans gallantly fought side by side to protect our democracy and will always have a precious bond and camaraderie. After the fall of the three-month Battle of Bataan, it is estimated that 24,000 soldiers died as the tired, sick, and starving troops were repeatedly beaten and denied food and water in marches that totaled about 60 miles to an abandoned military outpost. Those who were too frail to walk were bayoneted. Survivors were taken by rail from San Fernando as prisoners of war camps, where another 16,000 Filipinos and at least 1,000 Americans died from disease, mistreatment, and starvation. We will always remember and be grateful to these soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In 2009, the United States Congress awarded compensation to the Filipino soldiers who served before July 1, 1946 in the United States military. More than 100,000 Filipino soldiers dutifully served this country during World War II. I was proud to see our nation honor these brave Filipino veterans in what was long overdue. I fought for years beside all of you to pass this legislation and stood alongside you as we celebrated this huge accomplishment. The Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project is identifying and recognizing the surviving Filipino-American WWII soldiers across the country and abroad for their wartime service to the United States and the Philippines from July 1941 to December 1946. I supported the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015 that honors our Filipino Veterans with Congressional Gold Medals.

Today marks an important milestone in the Filipino and Filipino American communities. We should make sure that our community, and especially the younger generations of Filipino Americans, will always be reminded of the heroism, courage, and sacrifices of our World War II Veterans. It is important for us to hear the stories of these surviving veterans and never forget the story of the Bataan Death March. I would like to thank the Office of the Philippine Consulate General in Chicago, the National Federation of Filipino American Associations, the Filipino American National Historical Society and all the other organizations who worked hard to make today’s event successful.

On behalf of the people in the 9th Congressional District of Illinois, please accept my utmost appreciation to all our veterans who have served so we can enjoy the freedom we have today.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress