

Drop in homicide cases in Los Angeles leads nation

Mayor Villaraigosa, Chief Bratton also reported year-to-date across the board crime reductions

LOS ANGELES—Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, joined Chief William Bratton to report a 30 percent drop in homicides, as well as across the board reductions in the city's year-to-date crime statistics.

"Three years ago the residents of this City made an historic investment in a larger police force, and today that investment is bearing fruit where it matters most - in lower crime rates, less gang violence, and safer streets," Mayor Villaraigosa said. "While some may want us to do an

about-face in our public safety strategy and cut off funding for our cops, we must state clearly and unequivocally that we will never sacrifice the security of our neighborhoods no matter what the cost."

Reporting reductions in crime across all categories, year-to-date the city has experienced a 6 percent drop in overall crime and a 5 percent decrease in violent crime. Additionally, Los Angeles leads national homicide comparisons with a 30 percent drop in homicides.

In the first four months of

the year gang crime dropped 7 percent, and gang related homicides declined by 30 percent. Neighborhoods across the city also experienced a 54 percent decrease in gang related shooting victims.

Under the Mayor's police hiring initiative, the city continued its historic buildup of the Los Angeles Police Department and surpassed the largest officer deployment in the department's history. Since taking office, the Mayor has expanded the police force by over 750 officers and remains on track to reach 10,000

officers by the end of the year.

Complementing the City's historic police buildup, the Mayor's office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development has targeted gang intervention and prevention efforts where they are needed most—in the areas of highest gang crime. This summer, the City will once again keep the lights on at parks in the most gang-ridden neighborhoods with its Summer Night Lights program. Last year, Summer Night Lights helped to record the City's safest summer in more than 30 years. ■

LA Council OKs layoffs launch

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles City Council has voted to start the process to layoff 400 city workers and eliminate 1,200 empty positions.

The council's vote on Tuesday, May 5, comes as the city seeks ways to close a \$530 million budget gap. Staff can now start identifying which workers should be let go if the council approves the \$7 billion budget for 2009-2010.

The city's public employee unions opposed the measure and urged the council to delay the vote until negotiations with the city have concluded over early retirement options.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa wants city unions to agree to pay freezes, furloughs and other concessions to save more money. (AP)

Fr. Peyton sculpture by Pinoy priest unveiled in Ireland

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on his way to sainthood.

Filipino painter and sculptor Joey Velasco, who was chosen over other sculptors from Ireland, the United States, South America and the Philippines, made Peyton's statue.

Velasco's sculpture will be erected in Peyton's birthplace in county Mayo in Attymass.

After the unveiling ceremonies, Cardinal Sean Brady of Armaugh, primate of Ireland, held a mass, which was broadcasted over Ireland.

Velasco, who flew to Ireland for the event, said he felt honored and happy to be chosen.

'Not an easy task'

Velasco admitted that working on Peyton's sculpture has been a challenging and difficult task.

Fr. Jim Phalen, Peyton's successor in the Family Rosary Crusade Movement, commissioned Velasco to do Peyton's sculpture.

Velasco said he relied on pictures and videos that were available and read Peyton's book "All for Her," a tribute to Mother Mary that served as his spiritual guide.

"(I felt) the pressure of doing it for a man who is on the road to canonization. The superior general and the leaders of the congregation had to come to my studio several times just to check on the work in progress."

"Unfortunately, none of them also saw Fr. Peyton up close when the priest was still alive. But the spirit is strongly present

within them."

To fill in the blind spots, Velasco said he used his imagination and a bit of intuition in sculpting Peyton.

"Normally, I require different angles and sides. Even back view to get the likeness. So I had to use a bit of intuition and imagination to fill in the blind spots. I did five revisions to get the likeness."

"Another thing on the picture references, they are of different ages and era, so it was hard to decide which one to choose. One thing I realized though, in all his years, the passion had been strong," Velasco recounted.

He said he even consulted UP portrait artist Norman Sustiguer to help him.

What further aggravated his work was that he was ill when he did Peyton's sculpture.

"I asked for his intercession and the scheduled operation last Jan. 23 was deferred. I received healing from him, first to have enough courage and serenity, and physically the bleeding suddenly stopped," Velasco said.

Since he was 12 years old, Velasco has been sculpting in Bacolor, Pampanga and gained fame for his *Hapag ng Pag-asa* painting, a take on the Last Supper where Jesus breaks bread with street urchins.

He also wrote a book and made a video of his experience painting the *Hapag* kids. His video won the Catholic Mass Media Award (CMAA) in 2007. ■

US celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

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turn around our economy and create millions of jobs," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. "Within this legislation, funds will be allocated to compensate World War II Filipino War veterans, who were never officially recognized for their service more than 60 years ago in the Pacific Theater."

Pelosi said that she was happy to reflect on the accomplishments and influence of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAsPIs) across the nation.

"This long-awaited formal acknowledgment of brave veterans who fought along side American soldiers to defend American's cause during World War II. I have long advocated for and am thrilled to see it passed into law and signed by President Obama," Pelosi remarked.

In New York City, the A/PA Heritage Month is considered as the community's cherished springtime ritual of renewal.

"Today, at the foothills of the United Nations, at the lush respite of Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, we pay special attention to our rich Asian American traditions and celebrate our heritage, which represents our valued legacy from the past, a living record of how we live today, and what we can build now to pass on to future generations," officials of the CAPA said in a statement.

The annual heritage festival, which is now on its 30th year is one of the more famous public events in the city which promotes dialogue and engagement among the Asian American community and its treasured neighbors

In 1978, a joint congressional resolution established Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. The first 10 days of May were chosen to coincide with two impor-

tant milestones in Asian/Pacific American history: the arrival in the United States of the first Japanese immigrants (May 7, 1843) and contributions of Chinese workers to the building of the transcontinental railroad, completed on May 10, 1869.

In 1992, Congress expanded the observance to a monthlong celebration. According to a 1997 Office of Management and Budget directive, the Asian or Pacific Islander racial category was separated into two categories: one being Asian and the other Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

Kick-off celebrations were also held in San Francisco at the Herbst Theatre and in Los Angeles, where Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa honored members of the APA community who have contributed to the growth of the city.

The Los Angeles ceremony featured an eclectic array of art, music and food, representing the Asian Pacific Islanders' diversity. Fil-A m actress Tia Carrere, and Daniel Ho, Grammy award-winning artists, who had collaborated on two Hawaiian albums, performed at the program at the South Lawn of City Hall, which was hosted by ABC-7 health specialist and reporter Denise Dador.

The Library of Congress is also celebrating during the month of May with several events, a display and a web presentation.

With a theme of *Lighting the Past, Present and Future* these events are free and open to the public. Among the events scheduled is a discussion with author Svetlana Kim, who will talk about her new book, *White Pearl and I: A Memoir of a Political Refugee*. Kim, who arrived in New York in 1991, was inducted into the Asian Academy

Hall of Fame in 2008. She shares this honor with former US Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao and former Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta.

Later this month, a program titled *Who Is Babysitting Whom?* will be held in the Pickford Theater and will explore the Asian tradition of respect for elders. It will feature a 22-minute film titled *I Wanna Babysit Lola*, with special guest, centenarian Remy Cabacungun; and a display of multigenerational family photos from the Library of Congress Asian American Association.

In her statement, Speaker Pelosi also paid tribute to Asian American leaders who are leading the way in the community.

"Leadership in this country is also drawing from the AAPI community and gathering the best minds and forces to guide them. With President Obama's appointments to his Cabinet of Secretary Steven Chu to the Energy Department, Secretary Eric Shinseki to the Veterans Affairs Department, and Secretary Gary Locke to the Commerce Department, we now have represented AAPIs as key decision-makers. Their heritage will add a key dimension in America's history of leaders and how they shaped this country," Pelosi said.

According to the Census, there is an estimated 15.2 million US residents in July 2007 who said they were Asian alone or Asian in combination with one or more other races. This group comprised about 5 percent of the total population.

Chinese-Americans are still the largest Asian group at 3.54 million, followed by Filipinos (3.05 million), Asian Indians (2.77 million), Vietnamese (1.64 million), Koreans (1.56 million) and Japanese (1.22 million). (Momar G. Visaya)



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