

Banyan Tree Project honors supporters at its 5th HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

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those affected by HIV/AIDS often impact their risk, and inhibit people from accessing health services.”

Simon announced that the city of Los Angeles continues in the struggle to raise awareness about HIV risk for women. Simon posed this question to the guests: “What do you think the biggest risk factor is for Asian and Pacific Islander women?”

“Marriage,” Simon said. “So many women are infected by their primary male partner, while being restricted from talking freely about sex and their sexual safety.” Simon said the city of LA continues in the fight against homophobia and transphobia within families and communities “because nothing can undermine our self worth than the loss of the love and protection of family.”

Simon announced the city continues in the effort to ensure that the youth have access to comprehensive education about sex and sexuality “because we cannot afford to leave another generation ignorant to a wholly preventable disease.”

When Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa launched the City of Los Angeles HIV Testing Initiative for World AIDS Day 2007, the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team (APAIT) joined the city as one of its inaugural partners. “The Banyan Tree Project’s call to action by getting tested; to take action by talking to their family, friends and community about HIV is a vital model; one which will help us reach our goal to expand both the supply of and demand for available and accessible HIV testing, for one million Angelenos,” Simon stated.

“This is vital today because API communities have the lowest rate of HIV testing of any ethnicity, and are believed to have the highest percentage of people who are positive and do not know their status,” Simon emphasized. A Banyan Tree Project study shows that as of 2005, an estimated 4,276 Asians and Pacific Islanders in the US are living with HIV/AIDS. Among these individuals, 77.1 per cent were men and 21.7 per cent women. It said that a total of 71 per cent of all AIDS cases involving men have reported gay or bisexual activity. Also glaring is the fact that a number of female Asian and Pacific Islanders who are HIV-positive or who have AIDS report not understanding their at-risk status, or have an unwillingness to divulge information about their sexual history. The study also pointed out that many government agencies and health care providers don’t perceive Asians and Pacific Islanders, especially women, as being at risk for HIV, and most A&PIs don’t learn of their HIV status until they are already very sick, or through mandatory screening.

APAIT executive director Jury Candelario said the goal of the Banyan Tree Project is to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination in A&PI communities that delays or prevents access to critical HIV prevention and care services. “HIV/AIDS continues to spread in communities of color, including Asians and Pacific Islanders,” Candelario said. “Among the A&PIs as a population, AIDS diagnoses increased by 34 per cent from 1999 to 2003 in the United States; the only statistically significant increases in HIV/AIDS diagnoses among all racial groups in the US, with the A&PI women having the largest increase of all.”

The Banyan Tree Project is a national social marketing campaign to stop HIV/AIDS-related stigma in API communities. Throughout the year, organizations and individuals all over the country get the word out about HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS-related stigma affect APIs, through speakers’ panels, conferences, television ads, news articles, and many other methods. It is made possible with generous support from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ■

Law protects renters from foreclosure evictions

by J.W. ELPHINSTONE
AP Real Estate Writer

BURIED in a housing law signed this week by President Barack Obama are protections that will help thousands of renters stay in their homes—at least for awhile—after their landlord has been foreclosed on.

The law allows tenants to remain in their foreclosed rentals through the end of their lease and then 90 days after that before being forced to vacate by the lender. Renters without leases will have 90 days, a significant improvement over what most received before: almost no notice at all.

“Until this law was enacted, there had been no national protections for any of these households,” said Linda Couch, deputy director

at the National Low Income Housing Coalition. “This gives renters time to adjust their lives.”

Now, renters like 49-year-old Rittie Brantley have more time in their apartments. Two days before Thanksgiving last year, a bank representative informed Brantley she had to move out of her rented three-bedroom apartment in New Haven, Conn., because the landlord was in foreclosure. Her lease, which expires in June, didn’t matter, he told her.

“I had a week to be out,” said Brantley, who depends on government aid to help pay the rent. “I don’t want to move to a bad neighborhood.”

Instead, Brantley took her case to the New Haven Legal Assis-

tance Association.

With the new law, “overnight, she received the right to live there through June and three months after that,” said Amy Marx, the attorney who represents Brantley.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates 40 percent of foreclosed properties in the country have renters and the new law could aid tens of thousands of renters.

Before, many renters booted out of foreclosed homes would have to find emergency shelter with family or friends because they have little savings to cover moving costs, first month’s rent and a security deposit at another apartment. In the worst cases, some families are forced into shelters for temporary housing.

And they had little recourse.

Foreclosures automatically terminate any lease. Only New Jersey and Washington, DC, had laws honoring leases after foreclosure, according to NLHC’s Couch.

Earlier this year, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac stepped up their renter protections, but they only applied to loans the companies held or guaranteed.

“The best we could do before is beg and plead with a bank to get extra time,” Marx said.

For their part, lenders applaud the new notice provision, but are unclear when the 90-day clock starts, said Francis Creighton, vice president of the Mortgage Bankers Association. The foreclosure process can last more than a year, and the law isn’t specific on when notice to the tenant must be given. ■

Fil-Am summa cum laude in Georgetown U

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work of Filipino-American writer Carlos Bulosan for his thesis, Tolentino wrote, “In keeping with Bulosan’s critical move to reclaim and retell a lost American history, I, too, hope to uncover voices that have been silenced—to render audible the exiled narratives often erased from the American historical archive.”

“Taking seriously the demand to refuse the silence that grants injustices impunity, I explore Bulosan’s text as a site of explosive liberatory potential, a text that uncovers the contradictions in the dominant narratives of American history,” wrote Tolentino.

Philippine Ambassador to the US Willy Gaa congratulated Tolentino, saying his achievement was an inspiration to all youths regardless of their nationality and spoke very highly of Tolentino’s upbringing and background.

Tolentino’s parents, Raymundo and Eleanor, who are based in Dallas, Texas, say their son was brought up to be proud of his Filipino culture and heritage and was taught to value education.

“We kept telling him early on that the only legacy we can give him is the best education,” said Mrs. Tolentino, a registered nurse, in a telephone interview. “We told him to study well and keep your heritage,” she added.

Tolentino also graduated valedictorian of his high school class at the Jesuit College Preparatory School in Dallas, Texas.

A visibly proud Tolentino held the Philippine flag high during the Seniors’ Convocation at Georgetown University.

Throughout his studies at Georgetown University, Tolentino was an active member of the University’s Club Filipino which aims to promote Filipino culture, diversity, and understanding within the Georgetown community.

Tolentino interned with the Migration Policy Institute in Washington DC and was described by policy analyst lawyer Lauren Laglagaron as an “exceptional intern whom the Filipino American community could rightly be proud of.” ■

Fil-Am activist’s companion surfaces

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that Filipino-American activist Melissa Roxas has also returned to her family in Metro Manila after being taken by armed men along with Carabeo and John Edward Jandoc for six days (not seven as earlier reported).

But no statement was given by the family on what exactly happened to her and on the condition of her companions.

Carabeo, Roxas, and Jandoc were taken from a farmer’s house in Barangay (Village) Kapanikian in La Paz town by suspected government soldiers last week.

The abductors, all armed and wearing ski masks, arrived on two motorcycles and a Kia Besta van without a license plate, reports from

the human rights group Karapatan said.

Dela Peña said Carabeo, 54, phoned his relatives at around 10pm Monday, May 25 to tell them he was in Bataan and that they should return immediately.

He said Carabeo’s relatives had been staying in Tarlac since May 20, the day they received a text message from an anonymous sender, telling them that Carabeo was missing.

Dela Peña on Tuesday, May 26 said they have yet to receive details on the abduction of Carabeo’s group and how he was able to return home.

The human rights group Karapatan was informed by the family of Roxas that she was

back and resting in her house in Quezon City.

Roxas, 31, an American citizen of Filipino descent, is a member of Habi Arts and Bayan USA, the Bayan chapter in the United States. At the time of her abduction, she was working as a volunteer health worker in Tarlac.

Dela Peña said they were still trying to determine if Jandoc, 16, had returned to his hometown in Aurora.

While relatives of the victims suspected the military of abducting the three, Major Rosendo Armas, information officer of the military’s Northern Luzon Command based at Camp Servillano Aquino here, denied any military participation. ■



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