

Filipina migrant among dead in NY massacre

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK—Their pursuit of the American dream collided with the nightmare of a mass killing.

In an all-American city that had seen better days, they were true strangers from lands as far apart as the Philippines and the former Soviet republics.

The American Civic Association was the place they turned to for help navigating their journey. But their bridge to a better life is now a monument of immigrant sorrow, the site of the April 3rd shooting rampage that killed 14 people—among them Dolores Carbonilas Yigal, from Cebu province, who had been living in the United States for two years.

The dead included the gunman himself, Vietnamese immigrant Jiverly Wong, 41, who killed himself on hearing the approach of police sirens, officials said.

The center is a stepping stone for recent arrivals, many of them with poor or nonexistent English-speaking skills.

Yigal was learning English there as she dreamed of getting a job working with children, her American husband Omri Yigal said.

Police arrived at the Yigals' house on the night of April 3 to tell him his wife was among the dead.

"They said she probably went quickly so she didn't suffer, I pray," Omri said in a shaky voice.

DFA condolences

Ed Malaya, spokesperson of the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs, said the Philippine Consulate General had sent an official to Binghamton to provide assistance to the Yigal family.

Binghamton has always been a lure for immigrants. More than 7,100 immigrants, most of them Asians, have settled in Binghamton since 2005, according to city statistics. They are a cosmopolitan mix of Kurds, Chinese, Filipinos, Africans, Iraqis—but only a fraction of the city's

predominantly white population of 43,000.

Police Chief Joseph Zikuski said most of the dead had multiple bullet wounds.

It was the nation's worst mass shooting since the April 16, 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, considered the bloodiest killing spree in modern US history.

The bespectacled Wong, who had taken classes at the center to improve the broken English that had left him feeling isolated, had burst in wearing body armor and shooting two handguns—a 9 mm and a .45 caliber.

The dead included four Chinese nationals, Beijing state media said.

Receptionist was a hero

Receptionist Shirley DeLucia, 61, played dead, then called police despite her injuries and stayed on the line while the gunman remained in the building.

"She's a hero in her own right," Zikuski said.

DeLucia remained in critical condition. Police said she and three other hospitalized victims were all expected to survive.

Con Thi Thach, 53, an immigrant from Vietnam, had scuttled in late for her 10 a.m. English class, where other immigrants were taking turns trying to discern the meaning of the phrase "in the black." Some thought it might relate to the black market, others were puzzled at why a color would have any other meaning.

It remains unclear why Wong strapped on a bullet-proof vest, barged in on the class and opened fire.

Perhaps most implausible of all is that the killer was one of their own—as well as a son of one of their own.

The gunman's father was well known in the area through his work years ago at the now-defunct World Relief Organization, helping new arrivals. He would hook people up with a doctor, help them get on food stamps. (*Inquirer.net*)

US airlines took some hassle out of flying in 2008

WASHINGTON—US air carriers led by Hawaiian Airlines took some of the hassle out of flying last year.

The airline industry had its best performance in four years in 2008, private researchers said Monday, April 6, in their annual study of airline quality, based on government statistics.

Right behind Hawaiian in the overall ratings of 17 airlines were AirTran Airways and JetBlue Airways. The legacy airlines—AMR Corp.'s American, Continental, Delta and UAL Corp.'s United—were clustered in the middle, while regional air carriers filled out the bottom rungs.

After its worst year for customer complaints in more than a decade in 2007, the airline industry last year flew fewer people but treated them better, arriving on time more often and losing fewer bags. Passengers also were not as apt to be bumped from flights by overbooking, which was a big problem when airlines were running at or over capacity.

The downside: Less flights, higher prices—some airlines now charge extra for any luggage—and fewer frills.

The study found consumer complaints dipped from 1.42 per 100,000 passengers in 2007 to 1.15 in 2008. Southwest Airlines had the best rate, only 0.25 complaints per 100,000 passengers; US Airways had the worst rate, 2.25.

Half of all complaints involved baggage or flight problems such as cancellations, delays or other schedule deviations.

The average on-time performance last year was 3 percentage points better than the year before, yet nearly one-quarter of all flights were late. The study said 12 airlines improved from the previous year, but only three airlines had better than an 80 percent on-time rate: Hawaiian, 90 percent; Southwest, 80.5 percent; and US Airways, 80.1 percent.

American, the nation's largest air carrier as mea-

sured by passengers flown the most miles, had the worst record, arriving on time only 69.8 percent of the time.

The rate of passengers denied boardings—usually bumpings due to overbooking—dipped slightly, from 1.14 per 10,000 passengers to 1.1 in 2008. Jet Blue had the lowest rate for the second year in a row, 0.01 per 10,000 passengers; Atlantic Southeast Airlines had the highest rate, 3.89.

All the airlines did a better job handling passengers' baggage. The mishandled baggage rate fell from 7.01 bags per 1,000 passengers in 2007 to 5.19 bags in 2008.

AirTran did the best job, with 2.87 mishandled bags per 1,000 passengers; American Eagle Airlines, which operates regional flights for American Airlines, did the worst, at 9.89.

The study, compiled annually since 1991, is based on Transportation Department statistics for airlines that carry at least 1 percent of the passengers who flew domestically last year. The research is sponsored by St. Louis University in Missouri and by Wichita State University in Kansas.

The improved performance was not surprising because 2007 was the worst year for airlines in the study, researchers said.

The aviation system suffered close to a meltdown in 2007 as domestic carriers recorded 770 million passengers—the busiest year for air travel since before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Aviation experts said the air transport system had reached capacity.

There were 741 million passengers in 2008, and airlines are reporting weak travel demand through the first quarter of this year.

Co-author Brent Bowen, chairman of aviation science at St. Louis University's Parks College, said airlines are suffering from the poor economy despite lower oil prices. (*AP*)

Filipinos urged to participate in 2010 census

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the nation's population every ten years. The information gathered determines how many representatives will speak for a County or City in Washington, DC and state, as well as the City's share of most federal and state funding programs. Programs and facilities affected by the census count include funding for schools, roads, hospitals, childcare and senior centers, among many other projects.

"We don't know where we're going if we don't know who we are," said Council President Garcetti during a press confer-

ence in Los Angeles City Hall. "And the Census is not only mandated every ten years, it has been a tradition in this country since 1790, something that we do to ensure we know who America is."

With the 2010 census only a year away, Census officials are getting a jump on the matter to ensure an accurate and complete count of the number of people residing in the US.

During the past week, politicians have been addressing their residents to take part of the Census, and Census Bureau officials were on the ground

floor canvassing neighborhoods to verify addresses.

The Address Canvassing project is trying to verify more 145 million addresses nationwide.

"We put to work approximately 140,000 people to canvass all known streets and roads throughout the country," said Lynne Choy, media specialist of the 2010

Census Los Angeles Regional Census Center. "The canvassers will identify every living quarter where people live or could potentially live, and verify more than 145 million addresses."

Census officials are making

sure that all residents will take part in the 2010 census.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has teamed up with community groups, faith-based organizations, labor unions, and business to ensure that every resident is counted.

"The Census is too important to leave anything to chance," Mayor Villaraigosa said.

However, many people in the community, especially in the Filipino community, have a misperception about giving their information to the Census Bureau, said Plata.

Plata said that Filipinos (es-

pecially Filipinos living illegally in the US) believe that any information they give the census bureau will be used against them or the information will be given to other government agencies like the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

"But that's not true," said Plata. "The census is completely safe and confidential. We do not divulge any information out there to anybody and we don't share our information to any federal government agencies."

According to the 2000 census, there were only 2.3 million Filipinos living in the US. Almost half (1.3 million) lived in California and about 300,00 lived within the Greater Los An-

geles County.

Plata said that there should have been more Filipinos counted in the last Census.

Plata said that it is important to have an accurate count of Filipinos.

"For example, suppose a disaster comes along (affecting Filipinos) and only 58 percent of Filipinos turned in their census information," questioned Plata. "What's going to happen to the other 42 percent? The government only gives money to what it sees on the census."

Plata added that filling out the census information is easy.

The census form asks 10 questions and takes 10 minutes to finish. (*Joseph Pimentel*)



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