

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Filipino Educators And Community Celebrate 120th Independence

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ST. CROIX -- The Filipino community on St. Croix, which is largely comprised of teachers employed with the Virgin Islands Department of Education, celebrated the 120th Philippine Independence Day on June 17 with history, music, food, games and recognition of its members for their work in the St. Croix community, The Department of Education announced Thursday.

The celebration--themed "Kalayaan 2018. Pagbabagong Ipinaglaban, Alay Sa Masaganang Kinabukasan," which translates to "Freedom 2018. Fought for Change, Offer to a Copious Future,"--was the first of its kind in the Virgin Islands and was held at the St. Croix Educational Complex gymnasium.

"A month ago, it was just a dream to celebrate the Philippines one hundred twentieth Independence Day here in St. Croix -- our second home to most Filipinos here on the island," said Florendo Astropabio. "But with all hands on deck, everyone's blood and sweat, here we are commemorating, for the first time in the Virgin Islands, the Philippines Kalayaan 2018!"

Astropabio, Special Education Teacher at John H. Woodson Junior High School extended his appreciation to guests for attending the ceremony on Father's Day.

"We are grateful for your presence here," he said. "You chose to spend the day with us, especially on Father's Day. I am requesting all the fathers to please stand up, including the father of the Virgin Islands, (Governor Mapp). We wish you a Happy Father's Day from the Filipino community."

During his remarks, Governor Mapp highlighted the long history of the Filipino community in the Virgin Islands.

"Folks from the Philippines in the Virgin Islands and Philippine culture in the Virgin Islands, really isn't new to us," he said. "Folks from the Philippines in the Virgin Islands, they are family. They came in the mid-seventies I believe, in the health care system, as doctors and nurses."

"The community of folks from the Philippines and the community of folks of the Virgin Islands really are a blended community," Governor Mapp continued. "You bring tremendous value to the Virgin Islands of your service and work. We have reached out to the Philippines community for teachers for our students and for our classrooms here. And we're just very, very, very happy to have you."

A video depicting the history of Philippine Independence Day was shown following the governor's remarks. A Filipino dance group then took to the floor with the traditional folkdance Carinosa, which is marked by "hide-and-seek movements using a fan and handkerchief," said by Mark Grace Nacua, Science teacher at Elena L. Christian Junior High School. Following the Carinosa, a Filipino choir gave a special performance.

Elsa Zara, Filipinos Awards Committee Chairman and Special Education Teacher at Elena L. Christian Junior High School presented plaques of appreciation to members of the Filipino community who have served the St. Croix community in education, medicine and business. Governor Mapp and St. Croix Educational Complex principal Genitta Richards were also recognized.

Guests enjoyed traditional Filipino cuisine, and an exhibition volleyball match and Larong Pinoy, a traditional Filipino game, shaped the rest of the day.

School administrators, teachers, and government officials attended the celebration.