



NFALA

NATIONAL FILIPINO AMERICAN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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NFALA SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO KEEP THE PUBLIC MONUMENT IN GLENDALE CENTRAL PARK IN HONOR OF THE COMFORT WOMEN OF WORLD WAR II

CALIFORNIA — The NATIONAL FILIPINO AMERICAN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION (NFALA) is deeply troubled by the federal lawsuit filed by the Los Angeles office of Mayer Brown on February 20, 2014. The federal lawsuit seeks the removal of a public monument in Glendale, California, which has been in Glendale Central Park since July 2013, and was built as a tribute to the more than 200,000 women and girls from the Philippines, Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and many other countries who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II (“comfort women”).

The complaint shamefully alleges that comfort women “were recruited, employed, and/or otherwise acted as sexual partners” of Japanese soldiers. This description of comfort women as prostitutes and/or otherwise willing sexual participants defames the hundreds of women and girls abducted, tortured and raped during World War II by the Japanese Imperial Army, such as Maria Rosa Luna Henson -- the first Filipina comfort woman to break her silence about being abducted and raped repeatedly by Japanese soldiers at the age of 14. Maria died in 1997 without receiving the justice that she deserved, but her fight for justice and her story does not die with her.

“In a society governed by the rule of law, it is critical to acknowledge injustices to ensure that similar injustices do not happen again. The Glendale memorial is a reminder to us all that sexual violence should never be tolerated,” said Rudy Figueroa, Esq., NFALA President.

NFALA supports initiatives that ensure the tragic stories of the comfort women of World War II are remembered by our generation, so that the injustice and violence they endured will not be repeated. The U.S. House of Representatives House Resolution 121 aptly states: “[T]he Government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930’s through the duration of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces.” This Resolution, written and sponsored by Japanese-American Congressman Mike Honda of California, was unanimously approved by the U.S. House of Representatives. The passage of House Resolution 121, the Glendale City Council’s approval of the comfort women monument in its public park, and other acts of remembrance throughout our country should be commended.

“Although none of us can take back what happened to the courageous comfort women survivors - mothers, daughters and sisters who endured so much violence - we can all do our part to make sure that their stories are not erased from history. New Jersey is proud to have two monuments memorializing the plight of the comfort women of World War II. We support Glendale City Council’s approval of a similar monument and are deeply saddened by the federal lawsuit seeking its removal,” said Jhanice V. Domingo, Esq., NFALA NJ Affiliate and President-Elect of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey.

“Comfort women monuments honor the undeniable bravery of survivors of these atrocities and teach future generations that we cannot allow such horrible crimes against women to ever happen again,” said Abigail Rivamonte Mesa, Esq., NFALA CA Affiliate and President of the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California.

NFALA joins several Asian Pacific American bar associations and civic action groups throughout the country who have issued public statements condemning the federal lawsuit seeking the removal of Glendale Central Park’s comfort women monument -- a reprehensible attempt to improperly brand victims of sexual violence as willing sexual participants. It is our hope that our judicial system will discern that the federal lawsuit is nothing but a transparent effort to deny the historical fact that hundreds of thousands of women and girls from Asia, the Pacific and many other parts of the world, were victims of wartime sex trafficking.

The National Filipino American Lawyers Association (NFALA) is a national association of Filipino American attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students dedicated to promoting the professional development, interests, and success of Filipino American legal professionals nationwide. NFALA represents over 1,000 attorneys and various state and local Filipino American bar associations. NFALA’s members include large firm attorneys, corporate counsel, non-profit attorneys, solo practitioners and government attorneys. NFALA is the voice for the national Filipino American legal community and strives to fight for equal opportunity and the rights of underserved minority groups.