

# Two Filipinos are awardees of The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans

Every year, The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans program supports thirty outstanding New Americans, immigrants or the children of immigrants, who are pursuing graduate school in the United States. Fellows come from all over the United States and the world, and are able to study at the graduate program of their choosing. The Fellowship gives each Fellow up to \$90,000 in stipend and tuition support over two years, and it provides a lifelong community of over 500 New Americans who are committed to making significant contributions to US society and culture.

In 1997, Paul Soros (1926-2013) and Daisy Soros, Hungarian immigrants and American philanthropists, founded the Fellowship program. Creating the Fellowship program was the couple's way of giving back to the country that had afforded them and their children such great opportunities. They also felt that assisting young New Americans at the graduate school level was an unmet need, and a way to draw attention to the extensive and diverse contributions of New Americans to the United States.

The following reflections are by two 2014 Filipino Paul & Daisy Soros Fellows. Jassmin Poyaoan is pursuing a JD at UCLA, and Mike Alvarez is working towards a PhD in communications at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

If you or someone you know is

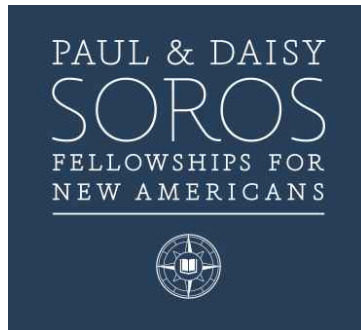


**Jassmin Poyaoan**

interested in applying for the Fellowship, please visit [www.pdsoros.org](http://www.pdsoros.org) to learn more and sign up for the program's newsletter. The application for the 2016 selection process will open in April of 2015, and the program will also announce the new class of Fellows at that time!

**Reflection by 2014 Fellow Jassmin Poyaoan:**

Born and raised in the Bay Area, CA around a large Filipino community, it was easy to take my Filipino identity for granted. However, my life changed overnight after my mother died unexpectedly and my father sent me to live in the Philippines with my grandmother. Living in the Philippines taught



me what it means to be simultaneously Filipino and American. Witnessing the poverty my family had endured and learning the stories of my mother and grandmother's resilience gave me pride in my Filipino ancestry. At the same time, I recognized that as an American citizen, I would never struggle in the same ways as they did.

Recognizing my privileges gave way to my empathy and passion to empower underserved communities. The systemic poverty in the Philippines and prevalence of overseas Filipinos workers has drawn me to the creation of quality jobs and the enforcement of a livable wage for the most vulnerable workers.

The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans has helped me attend UCLA School of Law, where I am leveraging business law to assist low-income entrepreneurs, community groups and non-profits create worker-owned businesses, negotiate



**Mike Alvarez**

Community benefits agreements, and advocate for living wage and wage theft prevention policies.

Throughout my work, I have assisted the Pilipino Worker Center and Filipino Migrant Center advocate on behalf of low-wage Filipino workers, many of whom are undocumented. As I continue my work, I strive to assist and connect Filipino communities here in the US and in the Philippines.

**Reflection by 2014 Fellow Mike Alvarez:**

I was born in the Philippines, and at age 10 immigrated to the US with my mother and two older brothers. We lived in Jersey City, New Jersey, and like many Filipino

immigrants we struggled to make ends meet. My mother juggled multiple part-time jobs, and both my brothers enlisted in the military. I didn't want my family to have regrets trading our comfortable lifestyle in the Philippines for a financially (and emotionally) difficult life in the US, so I vowed that I would succeed academically and create opportunities for myself and those in need.

I am currently pursuing a PhD in Communication and a Graduate Certificate in Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Specifically, I'm studying the impact of emerging technologies on suicidal behavior, and the potential of film to raise awareness about suicide. I'm also writing a book on the link between suicide and phenomenal creativity, and another book (a memoir) on my past struggle with mental illness.

The steadily rising rate of suicide, particularly among Asians and Pacific Islanders, is troubling, but what is even more troubling is the silence surrounding it. I want to break this silence, and The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans has been instrumental in my mission to turn stigma into dialogue. It has allowed me to travel widely so that I can present my research, as well as network with mental health professionals and organizations. With the Fellowship, I am also able to pursue my work on changing the way society approaches mental illness.

## Search still on for Fil-Am youth delegates to PH immersion

SAN FRANCISCO -- The search for the fourth batch of delegates for the Filipino American Youth Leadership Program (FYLPro) is still on, the Philippine Embassy in US announced.

FYLPro is a project conceptualized by Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia Jr. as a way to reach out to the youth, tap their talents and skills and hone their potential as future leaders, movers and shakers of the Filipino American community.

FYLPro is an immersion program held in Manila, where delegates are given the opportunity to meet and dialogue with high officials and policymakers in the Philippine

government, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and cultural experts, as well as innovators in various fields.

It aims to magnify the voice of the Fil-Am youth, increase their appreciation for Philippine culture, customs and values and develop their understanding and empathy towards the Filipino community both in the Philippines and in the United States.

First launched in 2012, the program has produced a group of dynamic and versatile Filipino Americans who now see the Philippines as more than a vacation destination, but as a place where they belong to and a nation that is part of their identity.

According to FYLPro Alumni, the program has enabled them to gain invaluable insights on Philippine and Filipino American issues, maintain a global network of innovative and influential individuals and realize a life-changing perspective.

Previous delegates have founded an organization focused promoting the social, educational, economic and political development of the Philippines and the Filipino communities in the US.

Projects such as Teach for the Philippines, Panalo Partnership with the Philippine Department of Trade and

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FYLPRO 2014 delegates with community members they visited. Photo by Bea Querido



# VICTOR G. SISON, P.C.

**ATTORNEY AT LAW / MEMBER: NEW JERSEY and NEW YORK BARS**

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► **NEW JERSEY OFFICE**  
 533 Central Avenue  
 Jersey City, NJ 07307-2503  
 Phone 201-798-8866  
 Fax 201-798-8170  
 Email: [vgslaw@gmail.com](mailto:vgslaw@gmail.com)  
 Website: [sisonlawoffice.com](http://sisonlawoffice.com)  
 Of Counsel:  
 Arvin G. Amatorio, Esq. New York Bar

► **NEW YORK OFFICE**  
 Of Counsel:  
 Arvin G. Amatorio, Esq. Law Office  
 116 West 23rd Street, Suite 500  
 New York, NY 10001  
 Phone 212-386-7621  
 Fax 212-386-7605  
 Email: [aga.esq@gmail.com](mailto:aga.esq@gmail.com)

Rutgers Law School, Newark, NJ - 1992 Juris Doctor  
 Pontifical Univ. of St. Thomas, Rome, Italy - 1972 STD Mgrna Cumlaude  
 Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Italy - 1969 SSL  
 Pontifical Gregorian Univ., Rome, Italy - 1967 STL