



**“HMONG ADELE.”** Hmong pop singer Maa Vue smiles in Weston, Wisconsin. Vue has been called the “Hmong Adele,” but her fame so far has been found only among Asian Americans. (Keith Uhlig/Wausau Daily Herald via AP)

## Hmong pop singer gains popularity

By Keith Uhlig  
Wausau Daily Herald

**W**ESTON, Wis. (AP) — She’s been called the “Hmong Adele,” but her fame so far has been found only among Asian Americans.

A lot more people now know about Maa Vue’s musical quest.

The *Wausau Daily Herald* reports that her singing and music videos in Hmong have inspired more than 37,000 people to subscribe to her YouTube channel, and her music videos are watched millions of times. One video, “Rov Pom Koj Dua (See You Again),” a duet with another Hmong singer, David Yang, has more than 4.8 million views. That online popularity netted Vue a music recording contract with a Hmong-owned California company, Yellow Diamond Records.

Her performances resonate with young people who, like Vue, straddle the line between modern life in the United States and the ancient Hmong traditions that have been part of the ethnic group’s culture for generations in southeast Asia.

“My style of music was unique at the time” she started singing professionally six years ago, Vue said. “I used a con-

temporary style with the Hmong language. ... Now there are many people doing it. There are Hmong rappers, Hmong rock singers now.”

One of Vue’s primary goals is to preserve the Hmong language through her music, to help young people learn to speak it by approaching them in a way that resonates.

“The Hmong language, to me, is a dying language,” Vue said.

Along the way, she and other young musicians who use the same template ruffled feathers among traditionalists.

Traditional Hmong singing is very different from western-style music; it’s more chanting than singing, and is not a melodic art form. Applying American musical styles with the Hmong language was not immediately embraced by elders who likely viewed Hmong pop as another form of diluting the culture.

The owner of Yellow Diamond Records, Tre Xiong, 28, of Merced, California, said the pushback from the elders has eased as Hmong pop music has shown its staying power and is proving to be a way to keep the language in use.

“Music is a universal language, and they’ve come to realize a new generation is

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## Filipino WWII veterans awarded Congressional Gold Medal

By Matthew Daly  
The Associated Press

**W**ASHINGTON — Celestino Almeda joined the Philippine Commonwealth Army in 1941, fought alongside U.S. soldiers during World War II, and for nearly a decade has been seeking money the federal government had promised.

The 100-year-old veteran got his recognition and finally his money, too.

Almeda received the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation’s highest civilian honor. Veterans Affairs secretary David Shulkin also announced at a capitol ceremony that Almeda was getting a check, 72 years after the war ended.

Shulkin’s announcement drew gasps from some of the hundreds in attendance at the medal ceremony, which house speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wisconsin), acknowledged was “long, long overdue.”

Almeda, dressed in his military cap, told the crowd he was glad to be able to accept the medal, noting that “many have passed away waiting for 75 years for this time to come.”

Almeda said he and other Filipino veterans have long “felt unrecognized for fighting for our country,” adding, “I wondered why” since he and his fellow soldiers had brought “victory during a long war in the Philippines.”

The gold medal signified that his service — and that of thousands of other Filipino veterans — is recognized, Almeda said, calling himself a warrior who “will never quit.”

Almeda was a 24-year-old teacher when he joined the Philippine Commonwealth Army in 1941. After the war, he resumed his career as a teacher and was granted U.S. citizenship in the 1990s. In 2003, he began receiving medical benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs under a law aimed at Filipino veterans.

But Almeda, now 100 and living outside Washington, has been fighting for nearly a decade to receive a \$15,000 lump-sum payment promised to Filipino veterans under the 2009 economic stimulus law.

Almeda was among more than 250,000 Filipino soldiers who served alongside



**OVERDUE RECOGNITION.** Celestino Almeda, a Filipino World War II veteran, speaks during a ceremony at Emancipation Hall on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Almeda and other Filipino veterans of World War II were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

U.S. soldiers in World War II, including more than 57,000 who died. After the war ended, President Harry S. Truman signed laws that stripped away promises of benefits and citizenship for Filipino veterans.

Only recently have the veterans won back some concessions and acknowledgment, including the gold medal.

Ryan said the capitol ceremony was more than “a feel-good story of delayed recognition. We are here to immortalize the legacy of great liberators, who have paved the way for generations to follow.”

The ceremony — and the gold medal — should “serve to ensure that those who fought for freedom are never forgotten, and always remembered,” Ryan said.

Senator Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) said Filipino veterans enlisted for World War II “knowing full well that the enemy could discover who they were and retaliate against their families.”

Even after their service “was practically erased from American records ... these veterans never gave up,” Hirono said. “They organized and fought for what they had earned.”

In 1990, congress awarded U.S. citizen-

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