



VENERABLE VETERAN. Bataan Death March survivor Ramon Regalado reminisces at his home in El Cerrito, California, in this file photo taken April 6, 2017. Regalado died December 16 in El Cerrito, California, said Cecilia I. Gaerlan, executive director of the Bataan Legacy Historical Society, which has fought to honor Regalado and others. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

Survivor of World War II Bataan Death March dies at age 100

By Janie Har
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A San Francisco Bay Area man who survived the infamous 1942 Bataan Death March and symbolized the thousands of unheralded Filipinos who fought alongside American forces during World War II has died. He was 100 years old.

Ramon Regalado died December 16 in El Cerrito, California, said Cecilia I. Gaerlan, executive director of the Bataan Legacy Historical Society, which has fought to honor Regalado and others. She did not have a cause of death.

"He really embodied the qualities of the greatest generation and love for country," she said.

Regalado was born in 1917 in the Philippines. He was a machine gun operator with the Philippine Scouts under U.S. Army Forces when troops were forced to surrender in 1942 to the Japanese after a grueling three-month battle.

The prisoners were forced to march some 65 miles to a camp. Many died during the Bataan Death March, killed by Japanese soldiers or simply unable to make the trek. The majority of the troops were Filipino.

Regalado survived and slipped away with two others — all of them sick with malaria. They encountered a farmer who cared for them, but only Regalado lived.

Afterward, he joined a guerrilla resistance movement against the Japanese and later moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to work as a civilian for the U.S. military.

In his later years, he gave countless interviews to promote the wartime heroics of Filipinos, who were promised benefits and U.S. citizenship but saw those promises disappear after the war ended.

More than 250,000 Filipino soldiers served with U.S. troops in World War II, including more than 57,000 who died.

The veterans have won back some concessions, including lump-sum payments as part of the 2009 economic stimulus package.

In an October ceremony in Washington, D.C., remaining Filipino veterans of World War II were awarded the coveted Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian award.

Gaerlan said Regalado did not make the trip due to poor health, but he received his medal in December in an intensive care unit in Richmond, California.

He is survived by his wife Marcelina, five children, and many grandchildren. □

World Bank predicts solid 3.1 percent global growth in 2018

By Martin Crutsinger
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The World Bank predicts the global economy will grow 3.1 percent this year, which would be its best showing in seven years. The United States, the world's largest economy, is expected to receive a boost from the \$1.5 trillion tax-cut package congress approved in December.

The World Bank upgraded its global growth forecast for 2018 by a 0.3 percentage point from the projection it made in June. It is also forecasting solid growth of 3.0 percent in 2019 and 2.9 percent in 2020, after similar 3.0 percent expansion in 2017.

The U.S. economy will grow 2.5 percent this year, the World Bank now predicts, up a 0.3 percentage point from its June estimate. Its forecast shows U.S. growth slowing

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Despondent Seattle teen found a future through film

By Ryan Blethen
The Seattle Times

SEATTLE (AP) — When Vannady Keo left his mother's Kent home after his freshman year of high school to live with his father in Seattle, he could not have foreseen the importance of the decision.

As a freshman at Kentlake High School, Keo was struggling with depression, not doing well at school, and at odds with his Cambodia-born parents.

"I was just a typical American kid. My parents wanted me to have Cambodian roots, so those were some things we argued about," Keo said. "In school, I always had a lot of friends. I would always try and hide my depression by hanging out with them, being the cool kid, the class clown."

Moving in with his father was an attempt at a fresh start, even if Keo wasn't sure how it would play out. That new beginning happened shortly after the start of his sophomore year at Franklin High School. Keo received a pass to leave class and report to Room 205. He thought he was in trouble, given his academic effort up to that point.

Keo wasn't in trouble. He was about to be saved. The then-15-year-old found a group of other students sitting in a circle with Joseph Mills who runs the Southeast Asian Young Men's group (SEAYM) at the Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS). He wasn't sure what he was getting into, but decided to take a seat and listen. He was amazed to find other teenagers struggling with the same issues he grappled with: isolation, depression, and a disconnect with their immigrant and refugee parents.

"I was like, 'Wow, I thought I was the only one.' I just decided to open up that one day, and I opened up and told them my problems; we were just conversing about it and I don't know, it was really enlightening, and it made me feel not so alone."

The shift from despondent teenager to a focused young man was gradual, but the catalyst was his first encounter with Mills and SEAYM.

Mills started the group to help Southeast Asian middle- and high-school kids from refugee or immigrant families, a group that struggles with school more than others. In 2016, 79 percent of Washington high-school students graduated compared with 68 percent for Pacific Islanders, according to the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The documentary *Model Minority Stereotype*, made by SEAYM, points out that the dropout rate for Southeast Asians is higher than it is for other Asians, with 35 percent of Cambodians and 29 percent of Vietnamese leaving school before gaining a high-school diploma.

The program, which has been run out of ACRS for a decade, uses documentary filmmaking to teach life skills and build a connection to families, cultures, and community. The documentaries created by group members explore alcohol and drug use, racism, and the gap between parents and their children.

Mills runs outreach programs at numerous area schools, such as Franklin, Cleveland, and Rainier Beach high schools, as well as a number of Seattle's South-End middle schools. The group meets after school, often at ACRS in Seattle.

ACRS has a broad mission that began 45 years ago in the basement of Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church on Beacon Hill to serve Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. As the agency grew, it bumped around from Beacon Hill to the Chinatown-International District before finding its home a decade ago in Rainier Valley.

The services offered go beyond what is suggested by the ACRS name. The agency offers programs for all ages, including job training, helping immigrants gain citizenship, health and wellness, and even getting people registered to vote.

Immigrants and refugees of any nationality and ethnicity are welcomed. More than 40 languages are spoken by the staff. If a person comes through the doors speaking a language nobody at ACRS speaks, they will contract with an interpreter.

ACRS and SEAYM's influence on Keo has changed the trajectory of his life. Once school seemed like a waste of time and was only useful for people who want to become doctors or engineers, Keo said. Those professions didn't interest him and were out of reach because of his poor grades. SEAYM help him realize his "full potential" and understand that an education was important for his future.

This hit home after a documentary about marijuana use he was part of won a grand prize at a drug-prevention conference. The prize carried with it a trip to Washington, D.C.

Being in the nation's capital, meeting U.S. senators



SAVED BY SEAYM. Vannady Keo, left center, sprinkles powdered sugar like the viral "Salt Bae" meme for a laugh while working as part of the afterschool program at the Asian Counseling and Referral Service in the Rainier Valley, in Washington. Helping create gingerbread houses are (L-R) Bryan Phung, 12, Gordon Huang, 13, and Ivan Thich, 13. (Bettina Hansen/The Seattle Times via AP)

Patty Murray, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren, ignited something in Keo. Where once he didn't consider his future, he now saw a path. He is now working toward his two-year degree at Seattle Central College, with plans to transfer to the University of Washington and eventually get into politics.

The subject he did well in throughout high school was government and political science. His government teacher even said he wouldn't be surprised if Keo became a senator or a representative someday.

"For me, I don't want to make some random company money for the rest of my life. I want to put something into the world," Keo said, when talking about his future.

ACRS has become more than a place that helped Keo when he needed it. It is now his employer. He works 20 hours a week in an afterschool program for middle-school students.

Mills said that Keo has taken full advantage of all that ACRS offers.

"What's been fun with him is how he has taken to some of our afterschool programs to pursue his interests," Mills said.

On a recent afternoon, Keo and another ACRS employee tried to corral about 15 middle-schoolers while making gingerbread houses. Half of the ACRS gym was filled with round tables topped with bags of candy and an assortment of mostly completed gingerbread houses. The final product wasn't as important as the camaraderie, laughter, and flying powdered sugar.

Keo describes his work in the afterschool program as being a builder of relationships.

"I get close with them. To have someone to talk to. To be the person that I needed when I was in bad shape," he said. "These kids also have parents who are also refugees and immigrants, so sometimes at home wouldn't be the most fun. They can come here where they can participate with other middle-school students who have similar problems and build gingerbread houses."

None of this — helping kids like him, looking toward a future in public service, having a good relationship with his parents — would have been possible had Keo not gone to Room 205 when asked.

"All these new experiences were literally spilling out of ACRS and just because I got one random pass one day to come join the group."



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TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ Polo

Polo's "Talking Story" column will return soon.