



OLOLA ANN OLIB

66 years old, caregiver, community worker
from Dipolog, Philippines
living in the US since 1991

“I Wrote Letters for the Senators to Fight for my Rights!”: Olola Ann’s Story

“I felt I have the obligation to speak on behalf of the domestic worker community who are living through poor working conditions. That’s why I wrote to the Senators to let them know about our concerns .”

Olola Ann Olib is a native of Dipolog, Philippines, which she described as a sleepy town that holds her happy childhood memories with her three elder brothers. She enjoyed the peacefulness of her hometown until she had to move to Manila after finishing her college to find a stable job. Her parents wanted her to pursue law studies, but when she got married, she decided to shift to journalism because she enjoyed doing research and writing. *“My first article landed in the national magazine in 1976. That’s when I realized that my writings can actually have space in national papers.”*

With her writing and research skills, she was able to work for different government and private offices, including the Office of the President, the Department of Environment, and some major newspaper outfits in the Philippines. *“I was able to travel the whole country, from north to south, and visited several communities, and observed a lot of social, political, and environmental issues because of my work.”*

After several years of working in the Philippines, she decided to do something new, but she did not expect that she would end up moving to the US. *“Actually, I didn’t really think of coming to the US to work. It was just a coincidence. I had a conference in Puerto Rico. I had to stop by LA. I have so many friends in LA. So when they heard I was there, they came to see me, and they all advised me to not go back home to Philippines anymore. There is nothing there. And I asked, what will I do here. Then they said, you take care of the elderlies. I said, what?! I don’t know how to do that! But they advised that I can actually learn it and study in a caregiving class. So I went. And that’s exactly how my journey in the US started.”*

She found happiness in giving care for elderlies. After she was petitioned by her mother to become a permanent immigrant in the US, she decided to continue working as a caregiver. *“I just continued the process. And then I realized I enjoyed the work. I felt I was just playing. I like interacting with people. Especially the elderlies. And in the process I learned a lot. I went to school to learn some more skills and enhance what I know.”*



But as she carried on, she realized how she has been exploited by her agency, for delaying her pay, or deducting unreasonable payments from her pay. She also noticed how other caregivers are being similarly exploited but could not find the avenue to seek grievances. She used her research and writing skills to write a petition to the Offices of Senators Durbin and Gutierrez and to the Office of Attorney General to talk about the problems of domestic workers, especially those who are undocumented, and to ask them to help solve their problems. She celebrated the passage of the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights as a result of lobbying of domestic workers like her.

Read more about Olola Ann's story:

<https://www.afirechicago.org/single-post/2017/05/30/Oral-History-Olola-Ann-Olib>