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Election Day: Rediscovering L.A.

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER







Election Day is often about candidates, political parties, and the issues that divide us. But this year, on November 3, my experience became something more personal. Regardless of our political affiliations or how we choose to vote, Election Day reminded me of the importance of paying attention to the communities we call home. My voting center was at the historic Biltmore Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles, and what began as a simple trip to cast my ballot turned into an opportunity to rediscover my neighborhood and reflect on what it means to be part of this city.

After voting, I took some time to walk through Downtown Los Angeles, passing Pershing Square, The Gas Company Building, and the historic and modern buildings along Grand Avenue, Fifth Street, and Broadway. I found myself revisiting the familiar streets around Grand Avenue, where I once worked. There was something nostalgic about seeing my old work neighborhood from a different perspective. From the architectural landmarks along Grand Avenue to the historic theaters and storefronts of Broadway, I was reminded of the many layers of Los Angeles history. We often become so consumed by our daily responsibilities that we forget to appreciate the places we pass every day.

My walk eventually brought me to Grand Central Market, where I stopped for lunch. Surrounded by conversations, the aromas of different cuisines, and people from all walks of life, I was reminded of what makes Los Angeles extraordinary. Our city is a melting pot of cultures, traditions, and experiences. Immigrant communities have helped shape Los Angeles through their businesses, food, art, and contributions to everyday life. Behind every storefront and family-run business is a story of perseverance and sacrifice. Despite rising living costs, financial pressures, and everyday challenges, our communities continue to create, support one another, and find ways to thrive.

That Election Day walk reminded me why I value storytelling and community so deeply. Our voices matter far beyond the voting booth. Voting is one way we participate in shaping our communities, but so is staying informed, listening to one another, supporting local businesses, and speaking up about issues that affect our daily lives. We may not share the same backgrounds, beliefs, or political perspectives, but we all have a stake in the future of our city. Los Angeles is more than its skyline and landmarks. It is the people who bring those places to life, each carrying a different story and hope for the future. Our differences do not diminish our shared humanity, and every voice deserves to be heard.

ENTERTAINMENT

Maricar Cabasag Brings Smooth and Soulful Jazz to Birds of a Feather Jazz Lounge

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

On November 1, 2026, Filipino vocalist **Maricar Cabasag** brought an evening of smooth jazz, soulful melodies, and nostalgic favorites to **Birds of a Feather Jazz Lounge at Au Lac** in Downtown Los Angeles. Presented as ***Maricar Live! Smooth and Soulful Jazz!***, the performance celebrated the timeless music of the 1970s and 1980s, drawing inspiration from artists such as Kevyn Lettau, Randy Crawford, Sergio Mendes, Flora Purim, George Benson, and jazz-fusion group Seawind, featuring Filipino-American vocalist Pauline Wilson. With a repertoire blending jazz, soul, R&B, and Brazilian influences, Cabasag revisited the sounds of an era whose music continues to resonate across generations.

Among the evening's musical selections were a jazz interpretation of Chaka Khan's “What Cha' Gonna Do for Me” and Quincy Jones' “If I Ever Lose This Heaven.” A memorable moment came when Cabasag was joined by lounge co-owner and jazz vocalist Sidney Jacobs for a duet of the Brazilian classic “The Girl from Ipanema.” Their collaboration highlighted the spontaneous musical exchanges that make intimate jazz performances special, bringing together familiar melodies and the individual artistry of two vocalists.

Supporting Cabasag was a talented ensemble of accomplished musicians: Tateng Katindig on piano and keyboards, Sezin Ahmet on bass, Elique Caballero on drums, and Keith McKelley on saxophone. Katindig, a Philippine-born jazz pianist and musical director, comes from a family of musicians and has performed extensively in the Los Angeles jazz scene. Ahmet, a bassist, composer, and educator originally from Turkey, holds a doctorate in jazz performance from the University of Southern California. McKelley, known for his versatility across jazz, R&B, funk, and soul, has collaborated with artists including Bob James, David Foster, and Phillip Bailey. Together, the musicians brought a rich combination of experience and musical influences to Cabasag's performance.

The venue itself adds another dimension to the experience. Located at 710 West First Street, near Walt Disney Concert Hall, Birds of a Feather Jazz Lounge is an intimate, approximately 40-seat, Art Deco-inspired performance space inside Au Lac, a restaurant known for its Vietnamese-inspired vegan cuisine. The lounge is operated by longtime jazz musicians and educators Sidney Jacobs and Cathy Segal-Garcia, who have dedicated much of their careers to performing, teaching, and supporting fellow artists. Jacobs is a vocalist, songwriter, arranger, and producer whose musical background includes performing with The 5th Dimension, while Segal-Garcia is a respected jazz vocalist, composer, and educator. Their collaboration has helped establish a welcoming space for established performers and emerging musicians to share their artistry with audiences.

Beyond the music, Cabasag's performance reflected the cultural diversity and creative connections that continue to define the Los Angeles jazz community. The evening brought together Filipino, Turkish, Brazilian, and American musical influences, illustrating jazz's ability to cross cultural boundaries and unite people through shared appreciation. I also had the opportunity to interview Sidney Jacobs and Cathy Segal-Garcia about their musical journeys and the vision behind Birds of a Feather Jazz Lounge. Watch for their upcoming interview on *Chat With Mic*, where they share more about their experiences and passion for jazz. Both will also be featured in *In the Mix Magazine*, continuing our celebration of the artists and creative spaces that enrich the cultural landscape of Los Angeles.


Photo by Mic Diaz

ENTERTAINMENT

Maricar Cabasag Brings Smooth and Soulful Jazz to Birds of a Feather Jazz Lounge (*Continued from Page 2*)

















COMMUNITY

Mayor Karen Bass Visits Filipino Community Ahead of Election Day

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



On November 2, 2026, just one day before Election Day, **Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass visited Island Pacific Supermarket** on Santa Monica Boulevard, joining members of the Filipino-American community for an afternoon of cultural celebration and civic engagement. Accompanying the mayor was Los Angeles City Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martínez, who represents District 13, which includes Historic Filipinotown. Also present was Nino Jefferson Lim, founder of Island Pacific Supermarket, a Filipino-American grocery chain established in 2000. The gathering brought together public officials, business leaders, senior citizens, and community members in celebration of Filipino heritage and civic participation.

Among those participating were Filipino-American senior community members Cecille Ramos, Perla Santos Bermudez and Trinity Foliente, who helped bring a festive atmosphere to the occasion. Trinity Foliente raffled off two Huggie Bears associated with Tulong Mo, Pasa Ko, a community initiative featured on Avelynn Garcia's show on TFC Global to the promote upcoming Sharon Cuneta concert in Pasadena. Also present was G Töngi, Director of Communications and Community Partnerships of Island Pacific, adding to the gathering of familiar faces and community personalities. The activities reflected the warmth and camaraderie often found at Filipino community events, where generosity, friendship, and shared experiences bring people together.

A highlight of the gathering was a cultural dance performance by a group of senior women, celebrating Filipino heritage through movement and tradition. Their participation was a reminder that cultural preservation is not limited to younger generations or formal celebrations. Senior members of the community continue to play an important role in passing down traditions, sharing their experiences, and keeping Filipino culture visible in Los Angeles. Their performance brought an additional sense of pride and celebration to the afternoon.

Located at 4641 Santa Monica Boulevard, Island Pacific Supermarket has become more than a destination for Filipino groceries, fresh seafood, and familiar foods from home. It also serves as a gathering place where Filipino-American families can reconnect with their heritage and introduce others to their culture. Mayor Bass's visit followed other community engagements recognizing Filipino-American contributions to Los Angeles, including the city's celebration of Filipino American History Month in October. Such occasions provide opportunities for residents, community leaders, and public officials to interact beyond formal government settings.

COMMUNITY

Mayor Karen Bass Visits Filipino Community Ahead of Election Day (*Continued from Page 4)*

As Election Day approached, the gathering offered a reminder that community participation extends beyond the voting booth. Regardless of political affiliation, Filipino Americans contribute to the city's identity through entrepreneurship, cultural traditions, community service, and civic involvement. The presence of senior citizens, performers, and community personalities demonstrated the importance of recognizing voices across generations. Beyond the political calendar, the afternoon at Island Pacific reflected something enduring: the Filipino-American community's commitment to preserving its heritage, supporting one another, and remaining an active part of Los Angeles.













Photos by Mic Diaz

COMMUNITY

Island Pacific Celebrates 22nd Store Opening in Eagle Rock

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



Photo by Mic Diaz

Island Pacific Supermarket celebrated the grand opening of its 22nd location on November 5, 2026, bringing Filipino food, culture, and community together at 4044 N. Eagle Rock Boulevard **in Glassell Park, near Eagle Rock, Los Angeles**. Founded by Filipino-American entrepreneur Nino Jefferson Lim in 2000, Island Pacific has grown into a supermarket chain serving Filipino families and introducing Filipino cuisine to a broader audience. Special guests included Philippine Consul General Adelio Angelito S. Cruz. The occasion also featured a Certificate of Recognition from the City of Los Angeles, accepted on behalf of Island Pacific by actor Matt Ranillo. Hosted by Garry Lim, the gathering marked another milestone for the Filipino-owned business.

Music and entertainment added to the festivities, with performances by Filipino R&B singer Jay R, known as the Philippines' King of R&B, and his wife, singer and actress Mica Javier, who delighted guests with a duet. Young performer Lil Eddie also joined the lineup, while DJ Rose kept the atmosphere lively. Filipino-American artist Gingee brought her kulintang, a traditional gong instrument associated with the southern Philippines. Her performance became an interactive cultural experience when Javier and Priscilla Hunt joined in. Rapper Doble U, and entertainer and choreographer Gab Valenciano were also among the special guests in attendance.

The grand opening attracted Filipino-American community leaders, media personalities, and supporters, including Avelynn Garcia of Tulong Mo, Pasa Ko on TFC Global, Jessica Rodriguez of Bilyonaryo News Channel, and Lisa Lew of the Manila International Film Festival (MIFF). Also attending was Priscilla Hunt, a philanthropist and business leader recognized with MIFF's Trailblazer Award, along with Cora Oriel, publisher of Asian Journal. Their presence reflected the connections among Filipino-American businesses, entertainment, media, and cultural organizations.

Guests enjoyed a buffet lunch courtesy of PhilHouse, featuring pancit, lumpiang Shanghai, arroz Valenciana, pastil from Mindanao, and lechon, accompanied by sago't gulaman and pineapple juice. The selection celebrated the diversity of Filipino cuisine, from festive family favorites to traditional dishes reflecting Mindanao's culinary heritage. PhilHouse, Island Pacific's foodservice brand, offers Filipino home-style meals, making the buffet a fitting centerpiece for the celebration.

Beyond the festivities, Island Pacific's expansion reflects the growing visibility of Filipino-American entrepreneurship in Southern California. The new

COMMUNITY

Island Pacific Celebrates 22nd Store Opening in Eagle Rock (*Continued from Page 6)*

location offers groceries, fresh seafood, meats, produce, and specialty Filipino products, along with PhilHouse and San Honore Bakery. Its opening also highlights Island Pacific's IPASA NATIN (“Pass It On”) campaign, celebrating the sharing of Filipino food, stories, and traditions across generations. More than another supermarket, the new location represents a gathering place where cultural heritage, entrepreneurship, and community connections continue to flourish.



Photos by Rodrigo Suerte Felipe and Mic Diaz

























PAGEANTS & FASHION | RISING STAR SPOTLIGHT

Amanda Agoncillo: Beyond the Crown, Finding Her Confidence

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



For **Amanda Agoncillo**, the journey from a shy young girl to a confident pageant titleholder and runway model has been one of courage, perseverance, and self-discovery. A candidate and titleholder in Miss Philippines USA 2026, Amanda has transformed her experiences with childhood bullying into a message of encouragement for young women. During her interview on *Chat With Mic*, she reflected on how pageantry helped her find her voice, embrace her individuality, and recognize that true beauty begins with believing in oneself.

Amanda's journey has since taken her beyond the pageant stage and onto major fashion runways. In 2026, she walked for Filipino fashion designer Kenneth Barlis at New York Fashion Week, LA Fashion Week, and the Kenneth Barlis San Diego Fashion Show. These opportunities marked an exciting chapter in her modeling career, allowing her to develop her confidence while gaining experience in the fashion industry. What began as an unexpected opportunity has opened new possibilities for the young model, who continues to explore her passion for fashion.

Behind the glamour of pageantry and modeling is a young woman who understands the importance of dedication and hard work. Amanda recalled the long hours of rehearsals, runway training, and preparations while balancing her academic responsibilities. Despite the challenges, she found encouragement in the friendships and sisterhood she developed with fellow contestants. Proud of her Filipino heritage, Amanda hopes to inspire young girls who struggle with insecurity or self-doubt. She also remains committed to her education, with aspirations of pursuing nursing while exploring future modeling opportunities, including international fashion runways in Paris and London.

For Amanda, the greatest achievement is not defined by a title, a crown, or a fashion show. It is the confidence she has gained and the positive influence she hopes to have on others. Her journey reflects a new generation of young Filipinas pursuing their ambitions while remaining grounded in their values. Through pageantry, fashion, and her commitment to personal growth, Amanda Agoncillo is discovering that her greatest strength comes from knowing her worth and inspiring others to recognize theirs.



Photos courtesy of Amanda Agoncillo

***CHAT WITH MIC* Episode 90: Amanda Agoncillo**
Check out the full interview on *Chat With Mic.*

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Marlon D: The Art of Growing Without Giving Up

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

For more than two decades, **Marlon D** has used hip-hop as a personal journal, documenting life's struggles, triumphs, and everything in between. From his early days in Oxnard to becoming an established independent artist, music has remained his constant companion. But at 42, the rapper is discovering a different rhythm. During a recent conversation on Chat With Mic, Marlon reflected on how maturity, stability, and a renewed sense of purpose have reshaped his creative journey. Once driven largely by uncertainty and pain, his music now explores the possibility that happiness and peace can be just as powerful as heartbreak.

Beyond the recording studio, Marlon has embraced another calling as a special education teacher. After completing his graduate studies and teaching credentials in 2024, he began a new chapter working with young students, drawing on years of experience in youth programs, tutoring, and behavioral therapy. Coming from a family of educators, he sees teaching as a natural extension of his desire to make a difference. The profession has also provided the stability to continue pursuing music independently, allowing him to write and record during school breaks while finding inspiration in everyday experiences.

His creative momentum continues. Following two EP releases with his experimental music project Groundwork in 2025, Marlon released two mixtapes in 2026, including an 11-track collection titled simply "!". His evolving sound reflects an artist willing to experiment while remaining faithful to his hip-hop roots. Celebrating 20 years since his debut album, Shadows of My Reflection, Marlon is increasingly focused on longevity, authenticity, and creating music that captures who he is at every stage of life. Rather than chasing trends, he hopes to build a body of work that serves as a musical record of his personal evolution.

Perhaps the most compelling part of Marlon's story is his changing definition of success. Music no longer has to come before everything else, yet his passion for the craft remains undiminished. He now places greater importance on health, relationships, and the young lives he helps shape through teaching. His advice to emerging artists is to keep refining their craft, remain true to their sound, and recognize that inspiration can come from life's victories as much as its struggles. For Marlon D, growing older doesn't mean leaving his dreams behind. It means finding new reasons to keep them alive.



Photos courtesy of Marlon D





***CHAT WITH MIC* Episode 91: Marlon D**
Check out the full interview on *Chat With Mic.*

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