

Presidential Address
August 27, 2022
The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel and Convention Center

Consul Gilbert Segarra, Representatives of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, Philippine Nurses Association North Houston founders and past presidents, Distinguished guests, friends, relatives, and to the Bold and Unstoppable PNA NH Executive Board members, good evening!

It is an honor to stand before you today on this fantastic evening. I am thrilled that you are all here as we celebrate the awardees of our first ever Nursing Excellence and Scholarship Awards and, of course, the induction of our executive board as we look forward *with great enthusiasm* to all that is before us.

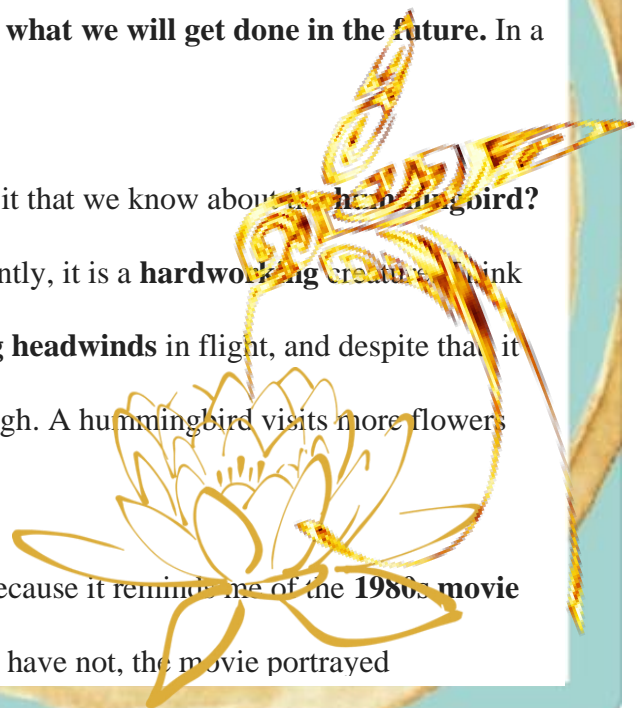
I owe a debt of gratitude to our sponsors for helping us. Our extraordinary committees are led by our executive board members, who put this program together under the leadership of Jan Lim and Vi Dioneda. Can we give them a round of applause, please? Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to lead the stewardship of PNA NH. The founders and past presidents (all of them are here tonight) have carried out an empowering mission that has shaped a legacy of excellence in our nursing profession. **But we have more to do!**

Before we go on, I want to explain why we have so many hummingbirds and magnolia flowers in this ballroom. Their significance as symbols is rooted in the very thing that has enabled us **to accomplish what we have done in the past, what we are doing now, and what we will get done in the future.** In a word, that **thing** is called **ATTITUDE!**

Let's look at why I selected the **hummingbird**. What is it that we know about **the hummingbird?** While it is very small, it is also very **nimble**, and more importantly, it is a **hardworking** creature. Think about it! At times a hummingbird must **battle relatively strong headwinds** in flight, and despite that it somehow works its way around the problem and makes it through. A hummingbird visits more flowers daily than **just about any bird in nature.**

Now let's look at the **Magnolia**. I chose the Magnolia because it reminds me of the **1980s movie Steel Magnolias**. I am sure most of you have seen it, but if you have not, the movie portrayed



characters that **persevered** and **endured** through their **storms**.

That endurance, hard work, nimbleness, and perseverance **sums up** the **ATTITUDE** that enabled us, is enabling us, and will enable us **to get things done!!!**

From day one, there have been many wonderful things accomplished by the PNA NH **founders, past presidents, and their executive boards**. There were so many things but what stands out that comes to mind is when the PNA NH became an independent chapter under Dr. Dimafiles presidency. This allowed the chapter to have its own identity.

This is a remarkable accomplishment. **And I want us to continue** that tremendous work with the **same attitude** as we pursue our goals today and in the future. As president, **I believe** it is my job to lead and **learn from those who have been in the association** much longer than I have. However, **I do have to lead**, and these are the **goals that I want us to pursue**. Note that the goals are aligned with the PNAA's national goals on a broader scale.

1. National Goal – Increase membership by a minimum of 15%. **That is a worthwhile goal!**

We can contribute to that by being **BOLD** and **UNSTOPPABLE** by making our goal to increase membership by a **minimum** of **60%**. Do you know why I picked that number? Here is why. In less than two months of our stewardship, we have increased our membership by **51%**. **And we are just getting started.**

2. National goal: Support the Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity is a consensus study from the National Academy of Medicine that explores practical strategies for the nursing profession. Now more than ever, we must collectively extend our reach by constantly searching for opportunities. How do we do that? We forge partnerships with organizations and associations to create a pathway to better prepare and recruit healthcare professionals, especially in nursing. When you reviewed the program tonight, did you all wonder why one of our speakers is a high school student? You all heard Jocelyn Auxier, the president of the Texas HOSA. The association she leads consists of brilliant

young minds like her whose career path is in healthcare. And if we truly are serious about impacting the future of nursing. In that case, we must focus our work on creating alliances with Filipino Young professionals and Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA). **They** are our future! How do we get there? We will leverage our members' and executive board's experiences and backgrounds by providing mentoring sessions, programs, and leadership guidance for these young minds. And we should be able to track the conversion rate to nursing in each cumulative encounter. Exciting times ahead of us! **And for this team, we are just getting started!!!**

3. **National Goal: Increase Interagency collaborations.** There are things that I am passionate about that I know my team supports. One of them is to **STOP Exploitation** of foreign nurses, of course, especially Filipinos! What does that look like from a local level?

Let me share with you an example that was discussed during our SCR meeting two nights ago. A nursing agency recruited a nurse. He was brought to Florida, was dropped off at the Best Western Hotel, the hotel was paid for five days, and the agency disappeared.

Do you all know what the average funds these foreign nurses carry with them when they set foot in the land of opportunity, America? Some were lucky enough to come with money that would bridge them until their very first paycheck. Some were not. That was why they were here, to begin with. I remember to the last cent how much I had with me when I got here 30 plus years ago. I had 4600.00, not in dollars, but pesos. That was equivalent to \$100.00. That was then, and that was my experience. Some of them came here with 50,000.00 pesos, which was approximately \$1000.00, maybe more. That is great. But the psychological state cannot be taken for granted, especially since you are **8000** miles away, alone, staying in a hotel, having no transportation, and have not started working. We absolutely **cannot, should not** allow for this to happen!!! On a local level, we must build alliances. My meeting with Connetics's special project director sets this chapter to be in the know. They will notify us when their recruits are scheduled to arrive. Two weeks ago, they introduced me to a nurse who arrived from the Philippines a month ago to work at

Methodist Baytown. He would have been here tonight but is working the night shift. Additionally, 50 (5-0) Filipinos nurses will arrive in Beaumont next month. Leveraging alliances with organizations from a local level will prevent the exploitation of Filipino nurses. We are in the know, and **we are just getting started!!!**

4. **National Goal: Increase Community Outreach.** The PNA NH of previous terms has laid out a strong foundation in community outreach, such as the Foodbank, adopt a beach, sunshine committee activities, and ministry. This goal aligns with a passion of mine and our executive board. We will continue these extraordinary community outreach endeavors. However, I want to share with you one of the most significant projects this **Bold and Unstoppable** team has for 2023. Ladies and gentlemen, **mark your calendars!! September 17, 2023**, is the day that **we board the plane to the Philippines for a Medical Mission. I AM ALL IN** on this one. Can I count on you to support US!!! And again, **we are just getting started!!!**

These hummingbirds have been and will be working hard to accomplish these goals, although I told them always to be on the lookout for challenges and take on it **head on!!!** Be bold, be unstoppable, and carry that fantastic **ATTITUDE!**

Attitude is what got me here. My parents taught me the meaning of hard work, commitment, and family, and their values shaped my life. From a humble beginning, selling tomatoes in the market as a seven-year-old so that I could have lunch money, doing other students' homework in exchange for lunch, and not knowing what a volleyball was to becoming a varsity player and getting a full-ride scholarship in athletics and academics, I stand before you today still remembering the words of my mother when times were rough and believe me most of the times they were rough, and she would say, "Mila, what's the plan?" I didn't realize that question would be a part of me! She and my dad are smiling with us today. God bless them! What's the plan question is I know a familiar question to leaders? Right, Dr. Veronica, Kiki, Aileen, and all leaders in this ballroom? The truth is leaders ask that question. My executive board, leaders on their way, is very familiar with that question thrown at them during meetings, **plus more. What is the plan**

is usually followed by **what is the backup plan**, and followed by **what is the backup to the backup?** They know how to manage that question because, after all, they are **Bold** and **Unstoppable** and **love what they do**.

LOVING YOUR WORK is a legacy my parents and my family carry daily! Like Steve Jobs said, "You have got to find what you **love**. And that is true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you will know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So, keep looking!"

I found my **LOVE**, my favorite husband whom I dearly adore. My favorite husband has been a constant support for 38 years, and I thank him for all the **good times** and the **rough times**. I love him dearly. He and I cherish our son, **Ben**, and our daughter, **Claire**, who equally love what they do! We are so proud of them, and we love them so much. They couldn't be with us today. For one thing, our daughter is in her 3rd trimester, and yes, we will soon be grandparents to a baby Boy who I will call **Miles**. A Filipino tradition is that a grandma can call the grandchild whatever name she chooses 😊. And **THAT** is the end of it!!!

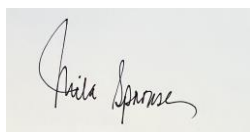
I thank my family for the love and inspiration that have been the cornerstone of my life. Nothing else comes first!

I found my **second love**, the love for our **nursing profession** and the love for developing, mentoring, and educating anyone, anywhere, anytime. Like this **Bold** and **UNSTOPPABLE** Executive Board, I know they love everything they do within their organization, especially with the **PNA North Houston**. I know they will stand next to me, tackling the strategic goals we set for ourselves. **We** are the **authors** of the next **chapters** in PNA NH's history! These goals will set this association to a higher level by extending our reach, our influence, and redefining the nursing profession as we work together, rooted in our values and energized by our vision to achieve the transformation that our mission promises.

Finally, there is one other thing I want to mention about the hummingbird and the Magnolia. The hummingbird **defies** the **odds**, and gets its just reward, the **nectar**! And the Magnolia may only be around for a short period, but its beautiful fragrant smell leaves a memory that lasts **the whole year in the area's lifetime**. **We will make** our lasting mark as we **defy** the **obstacles** and **challenge the status quo** as we **nimbly** move forward, **persevere**, and **live up to our motto**: Be **BOLD** and **UNSTOPPABLE!!!**

Would we want it any other way?

I look forward to continuing to be your president for the next two years. Thank you, and good evening!

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Mila Sprouse".

Dr. Mila Sprouse EdD, MSN, RN, CCRN, NE-BC
PNA North Houston President 2022-2024