

# OPINION & FEATURES

## The leadership we seek



**L**AST August 30 in Manila, 50 Ramon Magsaysay Award recipients and 300 community and business leaders of Asia stressed the need for good, effective and credible government to solve the region's problems. The forum said that while partnership among nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, people's organizations and international and multilateral organizations is needed, development can happen only with "accountable, transparent, ethical and efficient" governance.

But to start with, a nation can have good governance only if it has a leader who is honest, upright and incorruptible, sincere and selfless. An excellent example of this was the late President Ramon Magsaysay after whom the Magsaysay Award, Asia's version of the Nobel Prize, was named. He drew the respect and support of the people in government because of his honesty

and incorruptibility and his genuine concern for the people.

Leaders should be honest. They should not cheat or steal anything, whether it be money, private or public property, or ballots. They should be honest in their statements; they should be true to their word. They should not use the powers and resources at their command for self-aggrandizement or for ensuring a perpetual hold on power. They have to be frank and candid. They should have no hidden agenda.

Leaders have to be upright and incorruptible. They should not say one thing, like, for instance, that they are against corruption, and yet countenance corruption or themselves get involved in graft-ridden and anomalous deals. Presidents can set the example by strictly prohibiting their relatives from taking an interest in government projects and transactions. Magsaysay was able to do this, why can't other presidents do it?

Leaders should be sincere and selfless. They should hold the interest of the people paramount. They are in office to serve the people and not to serve their selfish personal, family or special group interests.

They have to have a special bias for the poor and the disadvantaged. They should remember what Magsaysay said: "Those who have less in life should have more in law." The rich have all the resources they need to promote and protect their interests. The poor need special care and protection. Last week's forum recognized this when it said that there was a need for an effective and credible government supported by "more enlightened and pro-poor policy structures."

Leaders should be accountable to the people. Elective officials, particularly, should always answer to the people for their decisions in the course of governance. Again they should remember what Magsaysay said when making an important decision: "Can we defend this at Plaza Miranda?"

Leaders have to be ethical. A public show of piety or religiosity will draw the news photographers but will not impress the people. Leaders' lives have to be governed by a set of moral values and principles of conduct. They may be brilliant lawyers, economists or other professionals, but if they are not ethical, they cannot really be considered leaders. Their people will not respect them and follow them.

Many people are losing hope or have lost hope in our country. But our country is not hopeless. We have rich natural resources and an intelligent and talented people. What is needed is a leader who will set the right course for the nation and lead it on the path of progress. A leader who will set the example of honesty, integrity, incorruptibility, accountability, sincerity and selflessness.

When will we have such a man or woman to lead us and lift us out of the pit of despondency? (Inquirer.net)

### GUEST EDITORIAL

### COMMENTARY

Prosy Abarquez-dela Cruz, J.D.

I HOSTED an event tonight to watch the Democratic Party Convention, a convention attended by 84,000 folks, more than half are women, more than 12% are Latino, and more than 10% are gays.

I watched them with strangers, neighbors and soon after the event, my newfound friends.

This is the first time I am watching a political convention with vigor and renewed interest, the same interest as my friends have to change this country. It is how I got myself out of my comfort zone, a box I conveniently put myself in, but now prefers to dialogue with folks I just met, to engage and connect with all.

It is what I allow myself to experience, to open the doors to all Americans, regardless of age, background, affiliation and in so doing, mirror what soon to be President Barack Obama talks about, a respect and reverence for all Americans who are in these shores, a respect for this country who allowed my dreams to come true, a respect to secure a better future for my children, by working hard now to repair, to rebuild, and to recreate a humanized America that works for all of us, instead of the select 5%.

When the fireworks were lit, as spectacular and awe-inspiring as the Olympics opening and closing ceremonies, there were tears in most eyes, tears that affirmed that this Democratic Party gets it, gets what we are feeling, gets what this country is about: a nation of immigrants with aspirations to reach its ideals and its promise to be the land of the brave and the land of the free.

Amongst my friends tonight, we are represented by countries like Germany, Ireland, Russia, Scotland, Middle East, Poland, Japan, Philippines, Mexico, and some of us are first generation immigrants, and others are second and third generation families of immigrants.

Yet tonight, we shared a common dream, a common aspiration to see Senator Barack Obama become our president, to succeed, for in his success, we all succeed.

But we also know that his success is contingent on actions by each one of us to be active citizens once again. So, before we closed the night, we exchanged emails and phone numbers and made each one promise to go phone banking.

And over a garden-rich colored pizza, organic salad with champagne grapes and roasted peppers, jicamas, and desserts of eclairs, red velvet cakes and chocolate cupcakes, and of course, coffee, we took stock of the one liners that we all liked tonight from Senator Barack Obama's acceptance speech and the line-up of today's events, and there were many:

**Enough! Eight is enough (referring to Bush's eight years in office).**  
*"It's not because John McCain doesn't care. It's because John McCain doesn't get it. For over two decades, he's subscribed to that old, discredited Republican philosophy—give more and more to those with the most and hope that prosperity trickles down to everyone else. In Washington, they call this the Ownership Society, but what it really means is—you're on your own. Out of work? Tough luck. No health care? The market will fix it. Born into poverty? Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps—even if you don't have boots. You're on your own. Well it's time for them to own their failure. It's time for us to change America"*  
 — Senator Barack Obama.

Yes, it has been a long stretch of 8 years where there has been less progress for ordinary Americans. My husband predicted that this war in Iraq will stretch America to its limits that we will know

there is no other alternative but to make peace, to make diplomacy a first resort, to create cooperation amongst nations. I loved it when Vice President Al Gore said, "I believe in recycling, but that is ridiculous" referring to a recycled Republican administration in the White House if McCain is elected. It is time for change.

And that "big oil and coal—have a 50-year lease on the Republican Party and they are drilling it for everything it is worth. And this same industry has spent a half a billion dollars this year alone trying to convince the public they are actually solving the problem, when they are in fact making it worse every single day," according to Former Vice President Al Gore.

*"For while Senator McCain was turning his sights to Iraq just days after 9/11, I stood up and opposed this war, knowing that it would distract us from the real threats we face. When John McCain said we could just "muddle through" in Afghanistan, I argued for more resources and more troops to finish the fight against the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11, and made clear that we must take out Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants if we have them in our sights. John McCain likes to say that he'll follow bin Laden to the Gates of Hell—but he won't even go to the cave where he lives."*

— Senator Barack Obama

This election is really a contest between human needs and corporate greed. It is a battle of American working families' human spirit to emerge, to unify, to humanize its government and the world vs. American corporations' quest for more profits, for more tax breaks, for decreased social responsibilities to this nation and for more dependence on this industry.

So, when I see more folks walking and biking in Los Angeles, I know change is here, change is what America is about and America keeps moving forward. It does not look back.

**All across America, something is stirring.**  
*"For eighteen long months, you have stood up, one by one, and said enough to the politics of the past. You understand that in this election, the greatest risk we can take is to try the same old politics with the same old players and expect a different result. You have shown what history teaches us—that at defining moments like this one, the change we need doesn't come from Washington. Change comes to Washington. Change happens because the American people demand it—because they rise up and insist on new ideas and new leadership, a new politics for a new time. America, this is one of those moments"*  
 — Senator Barack Obama

It is happening. Just listen to the stories of first-time Navajo delegates from Montana or Teresa Asenap with Ph.D. from New Mexico who stirred the crowd of 84,000, and in unison, she got them chanting "Si, Se Puede." And the crowds so stirred, they gave a four minute standing ovation to Senator Hillary Clinton who displayed her grace and wisdom, a five minute standing ovation to Former President William Jefferson Clinton who made a case for Barack Obama's readiness to take office and fended off the naysayers who cast doubts on him being young and inexperienced. He declared, "they were wrong then, as I was on the right side of history". That was then in 1992. They are wrong now, as Barack Obama is on the right side of history in 2008.

**This election is not about me, it is about you.** Yes, this election is about us, it is about all of us, and unlike before, I have in my living room, assembled to watch the convention with my new found friends and here are their stirrings and shared thoughts:

Mia, a young Arab-American woman in her thir-

ties, says "Kennedy meets Martin Luther King, our leader of the future," to describe why she supports Obama.

Joan, a German/Scottish-American, Hawaiian social worker in her fifties, "I support Obama because of his intelligence, judgement, and view of the world. He will negotiate, using force as a last resort and raise our standing in the world. I believe Barack will bring the change we need, but we all need to help."

Chris, a Japanese-American assistant shares "He gets it, he got me excited and strong enough to offer my voice, to register my opinion, to be involved with other folks. He inspires me like no other."

Jesse, a Latino student in his early thirties, shares "I have never before, in my 18 years of voting, had the pleasure of the sense of honor and pride I have

our priorities as well while watching Convention night. Do you recall having this kind of interactive participation in past conventions? I have voted in at least 5 presidential elections, and recall none.

So, what are these national priorities? Keep in mind though this is a small subset of the 200 million American population, but it is an interesting sample and a snapshot of what ordinary Americans are thinking this presidential election.

**War in Iraq and Health Care** – were top concerns in 30 states. This is a clever way of prioritizing as ending the war at a cost of \$10 billion a month frees up the federal government to invest that money into universal health care. They are really two sides of the same coin. Monies tied up in Iraq are monies withdrawn from national, domestic use in America.



Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., addresses the Democratic National Convention at Invesco Field in Denver, Thursday, Aug. 28, 2008. AP Photo/Matt Salyes

in my nation and its people as I do when supporting Barack Obama. Not only because of who he is, but because he articulates so beautifully what I believe and know to be truth." And, Ike, a Filipino American professor has this to share: "He is bold, brave and a visionary!"

Prosy, a Filipina American retired professional, and host: "Barack Obama is the first politician who has articulated my heart's aspirations for America to put its divisions in the past, my spirit's yearnings for a caring, humanized America to reach its potential as a respected moral leader, and my mind's goal to see our federal government be of service to the highest common good: the majority needs of American working families, instead of the 1% wealthy Americans."

**Change does not come from Washington, it comes to Washington.** In my life's experience here in the United States, I know this to be true. Vietnam War ended when folks made their voices known to Washington, just as the voices around the country are now making it known that the War in Iraq must end. In the same breath, the voices are making it known that universal health care must be a universal right of every American and their text messages are charted accurately, on time, and precisely in this link. In the Democratic SMS campaign map, over 30,000 Democratic delegates texted their messages to the Obama campaign. These issues came out in order of priorities, as of 1245 am, August 29, 2008. Our group texted

**Economy is a concern in three states – Florida, Montana and Hawaii.** Understandably in Hawaii, where their economy is anchored on tourism and with more families in foreclosures and losing jobs, the disposable monies allocated for travel is nowhere to be found. Most families are suspending their customary travel on the road this Labor Day weekend, including us.

**Environment is a priority in 5 states – Vermont, South Dakota, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri and Texas.** And why would it not be, when cattle ranches are in some of these states with farm lands, and cost of fuel skyrocketing, of course, alternative sources of energies are most preferred to reduce our oil dependence? I also see the relationship that Barack Obama has linked the economy's revving up to a higher gear with 5,000,000 green collar job creations, utilizing wind and solar energies.

**Education is a priority in five states – Oregon, Arizona, North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia.** And in Oregon, where education is a priority, even their natural resources are well taken care of, their parks, their oceans. And what has that got to do with conservation and management of their resources? Because jobs taking care of the environment can only be had with good education, and good education = good jobs = good stewardship of our environment = good economy from tourists desiring to visit Oregon's coasts. So, when Amer-

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