

The Grass Gets Greener for Nora Aunor

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AJPress

Superstar Nora Aunor was both emotional and ecstatic Friday, after she aced her interview with an immigration officer in Los Angeles for her green card application.

"Napakasaya ko ngayon. Napakabait talaga ng Diyos!" Aunor exclaimed over the phone. "Ang laki ng pasasalamat ko sa Kanya at sa napakalaking suporta ng mga Gurfinkel sa akin."

The Law Offices of Michael J. Gurfinkel was instrumental in Aunor's green card application, as an alien of extraordinary ability.

According to the US Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Aliens with extraordinary ability are those with "extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation."

Nora Aunor's status as an icon in the Philippine entertainment industry is already given and she has proven herself time and again. She has made great movies and performed in concerts around the world.

Her case was not easy to handle though.

Controversies and issues hounded the actress left and right. Among them was the drug issue in 2005 when she was charged for alleged possession of methamphetamine or shabu.

The case was eventually dismissed by the Superior Court of Los Angeles after she completed an 18-month drug rehabilitation program, but that stayed in her record.

Gurfinkel's law firm prepared well for her green card application.

"We knew that the issue was going to come up so we were ready. There were no surprises. We demonstrated that this issue did not hinder her ability to get a green card" Atty. Gurfinkel said.

Through thick and thin, her supporters have remained loyal to her, and she is endlessly thankful.

"Kung maipapakita ko lang sa kanila kung gaano ko sila kamahal, gagawin ko," she quipped.

Aunor was not able to contain her emotions when she realized that contrary to her fears, she was able to ace the interview with the help of Gurfinkel's preparation, packaging and presentation of the case, as well as meeting with Nora ahead of time so she would know what questions to expect.

"Hindi ako nakatulog kagabi, ang dami-dami kong iniisip. Baka hindi ko masagot ng tama yung mga tanong o baka mali ang intindi ko sa mga tanong nila. Nerbiyos na nerbiyos talaga ako. Kaya nung natapos na at na-approve, napaiyak talaga ako," the actress said, her voice on the verge of breaking. "Napakatagal kong hinintay ang araw na ito."

Aunor also related that she prayed hard prior to the interview. "Todo-todo ang dasal ko. Tinawagan ko na pati ang mama at papa ko at humingi ako ng tulong sa kanila, saan man sila naroroon ngayon," she said.

The actress arrived in the United States in 2004.

She shared that she enjoyed the anonymity and her life away from the limelight.

"Nakapamuhay ako ng normal dito sa America. Minsan sa motel lang ako nakatira, tapos yung Laundromat sa kabilang kalsada so dala-dala ko sa cart yung mga lalabhan ko. Minsan, kulang pa ng quarters, yung ibang mga Pilipino binibigyan na lang ako," she reminisced.

A year later, she got embroiled in a drug issue at the Los Angeles International Airport that landed her on the front pages of the major Manila dailies and FilAm newspapers here in the United States.

"Actually, 2005 pa lang lumapit na ako kina Michael at Millie (Gurfinkel) pero within a few days hinatak ko ang immigration papers ko. Sabi kasi ng manager ko nag-commit na siya sa ibang abogado. Kaso walang nangyari sa papeles ko kaya tinawagan ko uli sila Gurfinkel mga October 2007. Handa ako noon na hindi na nila ako tatanggapin kasi umalis nga ako at lumipat ng ibang abogado," she said.

The law firm took her back with open arms.

For Gurfinkel, with his long list of top celebrity clients from both major Philippine TV networks, preparing a comprehensive file about all of Aunor's achievements as a performer par excellence was relatively easy - the drug issue was the bigger challenge.

But Gurfinkel is used to difficult challenges.

He also helped another superstar, Regine Velasquez with her "impossible" case of alien smuggling, which carries a lifetime ban and would have prevented Regine from ever performing in the US again.

Now another Superstar, Nora, has her chance to once again do concerts for her adoring fans in the US. ☐



Atty. Michael J. Gurfinkel with Superstar Nora Aunor

"Ang laki ng pasasalamat ko sa Kanya at sa napakalaking suporta ng mga Gurfinkel sa akin."



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