

# I Love A Good...

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*"Playing romances are difficult enough to begin with; doing intimate scenes in front of an audience or a camera takes some getting used to, and can be very uncomfortable. However, when my partner is talented, smart, generous, open, wise and—o sige na nga!— handsome, the journey is one I look forward to taking... scene after scene, night after night."*

soap operas in the US. I played a character named Lien Hughes (originated by Ming Na, the speaking voice of Disney's Mulan) for three months. When I screen-tested for the role, he was my partner. I guess they wanted to see how we'd look together. He is an incredibly handsome African-American, tall, dark, and really muscular. I think his bicep measured the same as my waist— my waist at the time, anyway.

There was a scene where my character breaks up with his. It was going to be emotionally difficult to do. We made it a point to run the lines over and over again, until they were etched in our minds, so we wouldn't have to think about them when it came time to tape. Rehearsal time was limited, so we took it upon ourselves to work on our own. The scene was shot in one take with tears streaming down our faces.

Throughout my limited time on the show, he was generous and gentle, and I always knew I'd be safe... in those biceps.

#### Jose Llana

Who'd ever think I'd have a Pinoy leading man on Broadway? How wonderful was this going to be?

First time I met Jose was at his audition for *Flower Drum Song*. Tall, dark and handsome, he opened his mouth to sing *You Are Beautiful*. I then stood up to stand near him to sing *Like A God*, and then without warning, he planted a kiss on my lips! Whew! Better than coffee! I knew right then and there that he would be playing Ta opposite me.

We performed the show both in Los Angeles and New York. The best part was that we were Asians playing romantic leads in this Rodgers and Hammerstein treasure...and on Broadway at that! It was a rare opportunity that neither of us took for granted. We were both so proud of being Asian, and Filipino. Through it was a short run, we were grateful that it came at all. His strong tenor was always, always (he hardly took a night off) in fine shape.

#### Peter Saide

This is my current leading man, the Prince in *Cinderella*. You can watch his audition at <http://www.cinderellaonstage.com>, sweaty palms and all.

It's a given that the role of Prince would require a man who looks like he jumped out of a fairy tale. Aesthetically and vocally, Peter fits the bill. However, what impresses me most about him is not how talented he is as an actor, but how great he is as a leading man and as a team player. He understands that his responsibilities extend beyond the klieg lights, especially on this tour.

Brandy Zarle (one of the stepsisters) told me this anecdote that I'd like to share: While we were all still in Manila, she experienced a bit of homesickness and sadness. She's a newlywed, having married her husband Tim only a year or so ago. As we were getting ready to head to China, Peter told her, "You're still somewhere over the Pacific; you haven't completely given yourself over to being in Asia." That prompted her to think of ways to help herself with the process. He apologized for speaking out of turn, but she thanked him for his wisdom. In short, it was the smack in the butt that she felt she needed. She's much happier on this tour now. Broadway Asia definitely hired the right guy. It's an absolute joy to share the stage with him every night.

#### Aga Muhlach

I saved this one for last.

We've done two films— *Bakit Labis Kitang Mahal* and *Sana Maulit Muli*, with plans for a third in the works (yes!). Not only is this man ridiculously handsome, he's also sensitive and generous as an actor. Some rumors put us together as a real-life couple, but none of them was true. His reputation as an incurable romantic did precede him, but that didn't concern me. In the end, we became great friends— and we still are. I felt completely safe with him, and was thankful that, throughout the making of those two movies, he held my hand and made this difficult medium much easier for me.

I'm just tickled pink that he has expressed great interest in working with me again... unless he just wants to take revenge for my subjecting him to the experience of being onstage for my last Manila concert. A valid reason. Let the punishment fit the crime, therefore! I'll take it, with much happiness.

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## Hometown Associations

# Linking Immigrants to their Mother Country

By JHERLYN MENESES  
AJPress

Living in a foreign country is truly very challenging. Adapting to a new culture and unfamiliar ways can have unimaginable effects to the newbie immigrant, both mentally and socially.

But thanks to the now more aggressive and developed Hometown Associations (HTAs), immigrants have a better and much easier access to various resources aimed to cushion the weight of social integration.

HTAs are a byproduct of globalization and have flourished with the aid of modern telecommunications technology. It started in the late nineteenth & early twentieth century which aims to provide assistance & other services which were unavailable to immigrant groups.

HTAs are organizations formed by people from the same ethnic group of like interests. Currently, they unite members to form social-cultural identity and as a leverage for political empowerment. They allow migrants to maintain ties with their homeland, providing a strong connection with one's roots and a deeper sense of identity or consciousness. They act as a social network for migrants whether they are new individuals in a foreign land or established migrants.

Sensing the problems that new immigrants face and a need for a major facelift in terms of their objectives, the HTAs conducted a timely transformation into a more progressive civil and political network that not only aims for wider social recognition, but more importantly for meeting the countless needs of its members. The serious social and cultural challenges faced by new immigrants form the very agenda of the HTAs.

Hometown Associations focus on two important things: the integration of migrants in their country of destination and linking them with development efforts in their country of origin. Integration program includes welfare services, assisting with legal services and educational opportunities. They started as informal, volunteer-driven groups geared towards fundraising activities for members and for charities or social and religious activities in their hometowns. Now, they have become more organized. They help set the stage for infrastructure, human development and other investments in their home communities.

Filipinos in the United States, are one of the most generous groups among overseas Filipinos. Giving is practiced personally and the use of organizational & institutional vehicles. These groups become the focal point of philanthropic activities.

An estimated 3,000 Filipino Associations in the US have been recorded and are subdivided into 9 categories: Hometown Associations, Professional Groups, Alumni Associations, Community Organizations, Faith Based Groups, Business Groups, Student Associations, Cultural Associations & National Associations. Some noted charities are ABS-CBN Foundation USA, Philippine Children's Fund of America (PCFA), Philippine International Aid Foundation (PIAF), ANCOP/Gawad Kalinga, Bugasong Pag-Ulikid Foundation USA, Feed the Hungry, Give2Asia, LBC Foundation, Philippine Children's Fund of America, Philippine International Aid Foundation, Ivory Charities Foundation, University of the Philippines Medical Association of America & The Ayala Foundation USA (AF USA) among others. The recipients of the following are normally churches & other faith based institutions, hospitals, NGOs & foundations, universities & colleges, government & sometimes direct to individuals.

It is important to recognize the contributions of Hometown Associations and their exemplary role in rendering developmental impact in our society, both in origin & destination countries. It is time that we Filipinos not only help in promoting these associations, but we should participate and be involved! ■



## IN REUNION THERE IS STRENGTH.

In our continuing efforts to serve the Fil-Am Community, the Asian Journal will be featuring profiles of Filipino hometown associations here in the United States.



Please submit a brief background of your hometown associations, a list of current officer and contact information for the benefit of our readers who may wish to get in touch with you.

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