

OPINION & FEATURES

Our expats, our heroes

"The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example."

- Benjamin Disraeli, British Prime Minister and Novelist

THEY are not called *bagong bayanis* for nothing. In fact, our Overseas Filipino Workers—expats, as Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo believes that they should be called—could very well be the backbone of our country for the past decades.

Filipinos have continuously showed their talents and skills in any part of the world they are in. Their exceptional achievements have given the world form and substance to Filipino excellence, that their contributions cannot go unnoticed.

These heroes have toiled hard to succeed outside their homeland—and yet they have never forgotten their roots. Every year, billions of dollars in remittances are sent to their loved ones.

This does not only help in the lives of many Filipinos, but also pushes the economy of the country.

But what is more admiring about them is that they go beyond their families to help, through charities, foundations and organizations, not only here in the United States and other parts of the world, but also in the Philippines that benefit our fellow Filipinos.

These are our modern-day heroes. They do not ask for recognition or awards—but they continue to extend assistance and help to our *kababayans*. For us, their legacy will live on because of the great example of hard work, perseverance and sharing they have shown the whole world. (AJPress)

EDITORIAL

The march for change

I HAVE been traveling to several cities in the United States, seven on this trip and seven two months ago, giving priority to where Filipino-Americans either were bunched in great numbers or were of strategic influence. I saw the beginning of the US primaries, witnessed the great contest between Obama and McCain, felt the shock of an economic downtrend that turned into a meltdown, and I'm awaiting as eagerly as my Filipino-American hosts the new presidency launched on a message of change.

In this same year, I saw the crisis of rice supply and outrageous price increases, the removal of Joe de Venecia as House speaker, the return of Joc-oc Bolante from US detention and the continuing fertilizer controversy, the removal of Manny Villar as Senate president, another failed impeachment bid, and General Danny Lim's message of change.

Indeed, change is now inevitable—change that is not usual, and offers to be dramatic if not radical. Change does not target the Philippines specially, but the whole world; however, the Philippines is very vulnerable to change. That is the fate of a people whose capacity for assimilation has been intensified by a history of dependence. Ours is truly a fate that is sensitive and often adaptive to the fate of other nations, particularly the United States.

And it is the United States that is going through a process that almost all of its population have little or no experience of. Many compare the present crisis to the Great Depression 80 years ago, but the crisis is not only economic, it is also deeply social, political, and global. As a continuing vassal of the United States, the Philippines cannot but shudder as America itself cringes in fear. Its own struggle to overcome poverty, to dismantle corruption and to stave off violence in Moro land and in areas influenced by the New People's Army makes the Philippines weak from internal pressure and helpless before external challenges.

A reader asked me if I could also write about solutions, as I have been quite articulate about the ills that choke our people and country. In a complicated situation, the answers are usually simplicity itself. When a country is corrupt and judged by its peers to be so following a process of measure applied evenly to other counties, it simply says governance should be good and clean. When the country is massively afflicted with poverty, it simply says greed and avarice have won over caring and sharing. And when a people become victims of violence from war, rebellion and summary executions, it simply means personal or narrow agenda is stronger than respect for life.

To my mind and, I am sure, also to the minds of many, the answers are simple, available, doable and replicable. It is not that the answers are missing or baffling, it is simply that we do not want them badly enough, or not yet suffering enough. When those who govern are corrupt, people can take them down from their lofty posts if the courts will not. When the majority of Filipinos are poor, they can use their numbers to force change and equitable treatment. Revolutions do not honor constitutions but creates new ones. The problems that confront us have not hurt us to a point when we

simply move to eliminate them in the most direct and expeditious manner.

Because most of us are spiritually guided to give the other cheek, then we do. Because that same guidance tells us that we must not confront wrong with another wrong, we have no choice but to believe that the principle of good being more powerful than evil will eventually cause a divine way out for suffering victims. The Filipino's obedience to teachings and resiliency in the face of adversity has unfortunately combined to make him tolerant and hopeful.

But even tolerance and hope cannot stop the march of change. Change is part of a universal formula, a force that evens the odds and ultimately shows the most effective pathway for progress or for justice. And change has begun in America which had the most power to resist it. How can the Philippines then avoid it?

The agents of change have not been silent or lazy in the Philippines. They have simply misread the psyche of victims, or they have offered themselves to be the answer when they do not carry the anointment of life. And in their frustration, they presumed a ripeness that was not yet there but knocking more loudly today. Poverty is a curse, corruption is a curse, and all curses lead surely to violence and great pain.

Filipino-Americans are acutely sensitive to the dynamics of poverty and corruption in the Philippines and decry not only the ugliness of social cancers but the shame all Filipinos have to bear because of these. From across oceans, Filipino-American advocates of change send clear messages that they, too, will use the mood of change in America to trigger the changes they seek in the motherland. There is no doubt that leaders in Filipino-American communities will seek to be heard by an Obama presidency, with Hillary possibly the next secretary of state.

The demand for good governance will be better served if a corresponding invitation for responsible citizenship will be presented to both government and people. People powered revolutions had caused initial change in governance which could not be sustained because citizens did not understand that they, too, had to show the change they demanded from others.

Power need not always be the object of change; it can also be empowerment. People forget that change in the form of empowered Filipinos dislodged power twice in recent history. It is true that power can trigger change, but just as true that the empowered can change the powerful. When a current situation is not good, the powerful can lead others to change. If not, then they must risk being changed.

What is clear is that more than usual change is the prognosis of the times. As America and the rest of the developed world reel from the change that buffets them, Filipinos everywhere must understand they are next. (Inquirer.net)

The centennial man

OUR meals begin, not with a prayer, but with a roll-call of our names as we gather around the table like schoolchildren eagerly wanting to please our teacher. When he is satisfied that we are complete, he slowly recites the prayer before meals with eyes downcast and hands clasped above the table. Then, with precision and grace, he takes hold of his spoon and fork and eats the food already placed on his plate. Good food means no leftovers. But when it's too bland for his taste, he is quick to reason that he had too much for his snack.

"Lolo" [Grandfather] has a hard time hearing the conversations over meals. But when he grasps a word that engages him, he always has something to tell and some big laughter to share. Nobody can match his mastery of geography because he traveled around places in the country before settling in General Santos City. He can narrate historical events from a first person point of

view, such as how he and "Lola" [Grandmother] were spared by the Japanese because of *Lola's* cooking expertise and sewing talents.

Almost always, *Lolo* would lament his failing eyesight that deters him from doing the things he wants to do: gardening, dancing,

traveling, attending meetings, etc. Perhaps he is the epitome and precursor of a modern-day multi-tasker. I remember accompanying him to his meetings as concurrent president of the Senior Citizens' and Retirees Association. Not that he needed assistance, he just needed someone to take charge of the karaoke or to take pictures of him as he gave his speech or performed folk dances along with the other elders.

He was always on his toes, always doing something, always looking after his plants, always looking after us, always thinking about others. I never heard him complain about anything. When I try to look back, all I can recall is him being always there for us: he was the one who first took us siblings to watch a movie (during such time when movies were shown in double programs), our human alarm clock (whose only time is "*Alas siyete na!*" ["It's seven!"]) even at 6 o'clock in the morning, took us to school as preps, pinned our medals when our parents couldn't come on recognition day, gave us extra money for school allowance.

My superhero *Lolo* has now slowed down a little but has remained independent and the "man in charge." It took a long

time before he started using his cane and only after a lot of prodding from us. It took even longer for him to learn to accept assistance and a helping hand. "*Kaya ko pa naman*" ["I can still do it"], he protested.

Idle moments find him staring blankly in midair but always wearing the contented smile of a man who has aged gracefully. When I tell him how handsome he looks, he retorts without batting an eyelash, "*Aba siyempre!*" ["Of course!"] His sense of humor has not worn off after all these years.

One time, though, he asked my mother, his daughter, "*Nahihirapan na ba kayo sa akin?*" ["Of course, not,"] my mother reassured him. "Never. You will never be a burden to us. You continue to bring us joy."

He gave her that easy and contented smile. I know he feels much loved by his children and by us. And that explains that smile.

Lolo can still walk around (he's memorized every nook and cranny of the house, eat by himself, bathe and dress himself. His body may have become a little fragile, but his mind is as sharp as anyone can imagine. He tells us there is nothing more he could ask from God as everything that he prayed for has been given to him. His prayer now is for God's grace and blessings to his children and their family.

So, each time *Lolo* braces himself to say grace before a meal, and struggles with his eyesight while making a roll-call, I know that he has never kicked—and will never kick—the habit of looking after other people despite his very old age. Every utterance of "Bec, Romy, Joy, Oni, Jenny, Jason, Chin, Mai ..." is a sacred ritual and act of *Lolo's* love and concern which continue to grow stronger and deeper with time. (Inquirer.net)

Myra Jennifer D. Jaud, 26, a lawyer, is the 19th of the 23 grandchildren of Eliseo R. Dulay who celebrated his 100th birthday on Dec. 4.



GLIMPSES
Jose Ma. Montelibano

ASIAN JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Main Office:
1150 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1904
Tel.: (213) 250-9797 • Fax: (213) 481-0854
e-mail: info@asianjournal.com
http://www.asianjournal.com

Manila Office:
Suite 208, The Manila Bank Corp., Bldg.
6772 Ayala Ave., Makati City 1226
Tel.: (632) 893-1720 • Fax: (632) 813-8746

New York and New Jersey:
5 Penn Plaza, Ste. 1932, New York, NY 10119
Tel.: (212) 655-5426 • Fax: (212) 655-9241

2500 Plaza Five, Harborside Financial Center,
Jersey City, NJ 07311
Tel.: (201) 484-7249 • Fax: (201) 484-7201

Las Vegas Sales Office:
3700 W. Desert Inn Road
Las Vegas, NV 89102
Tel.: (702) 792-6678 • Fax: (702) 792-6879

ROGER LAGMAY ORIEL
Publisher & Chairman of the Board

BELLE M. SISON
Executive Vice President
Los Angeles Asian Journal

IVY MANALANG
Vice President - Marketing

MOMAR VISAYA
Editor-in-Chief

SHARON ANN BATHAN
Features Editor

DANTE SAMBILAY
Art Director

CORA MACABAGDAL-ORIEL
President & Executive Editor

MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA
Senior Vice President
Los Angeles Asian Journal

JOSEPH PERALTA
Associate Editor

MARIA LOURDES HALILI
Advertising Editor

ANDY TECSON / TED TALAG
Photographers

BANDER LAW FIRM, LLP
Legal Counsel

ADVERTISING AND ADVERTORIAL POLICIES

Asian Journal Publications, Inc. ("AJPI") reserves the right to refuse to publish, in its sole and absolute discretion, any advertising and advertorial material submitted for publication by client. ("Client's Material")
Submission of an advertisement or advertorial to an AJPI sales representative does not constitute a commitment by AJPI to publish a Client's Material. AJPI has the option to correctly classify any Client's Material and to delete objectionable words or phrases.
Client represents and warrants that a Client's Material does not and will not contain any language or material which is libelous, slanderous or defamatory or invades any rights of privacy or publicity; does not and will not violate or infringe upon, or give rise to any adverse claim with respect to any common law or other right whatsoever (including, without limitation, any copyright, trademark, service mark or contract right) of any person or entity, or violate any other applicable law; and is not the subject of any litigation or claim that might give rise to any litigation.
Publication of a Client's Material does not constitute an agreement to continue publication. Client agrees and covenants to indemnify AJPI and its officers against any and all loss, liability, damage, expenses, cost, charges, claims, actions, causes of action, recoveries, judgments, penalties, including outside attorneys' fees (individually and collectively "Claims") which AJPI may suffer by reason of (1) Client's breach of any of the representations, warranties and agreements herein or (2) any Claims by any third party relating in any way to Client's Material.
AJPI will not be liable for failure to publish any Client's Material as requested or for more than one incorrect insertion of a Client's Material. In the event of an error, or omission in printing or publication of a Client's Material, AJPI shall be limited to an adjustment for the space occupied by the error, with maximum liability being cancellation of the cost of the first incorrect advertisement or republication of the correct advertisement.
Under no circumstances shall Asian Publications, Inc. be liable for consequential damages of any kind.

ASIAN JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS, INC. publishes the Los Angeles Asian Journal, published twice a week; the Orange County and Inland Empire Asian Journal, Northern California Asian Journal, Las Vegas Asian Journal and the New York / New Jersey Asian Journal which are published once a week and distributed to Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange Counties, Northern California, Las Vegas and New York and New Jersey respectively.
Articles published in this paper do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Letters to the Editor are welcome. Letters must contain complete name and return address. The materials, however, are subject to editing and revisions.
Contributions and advertising deadlines are every Mondays and Thursdays. For advertising rates and other information, please call the L.A. office at (213) 250-9797 or the Las Vegas Sales Office at (702) 792-6678 or send us an email at info@asianjournal.com