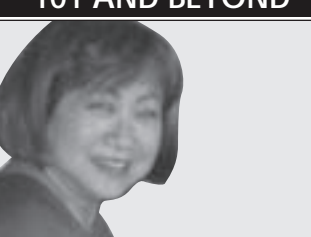


**IMMIGRANT LIVING: 101 AND BEYOND**



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

*Wise men learn from other people's mistakes; fools, from their own.*

—Plautus

WE live in the land of mind-boggling choices. We exercise the freedom to choose in nearly every aspect of our lives: from the mundane and trivial to the profound and significant. We choose which detergent to use or what color of hair dye your salon colorist will apply to your tresses this week. Those are the easy ones. It is the profound, life-changing choices that stump us often, such as choosing a career, choosing a mate, which lifestyle to adapt or where to live. If we are to live fully, it is imperative to learn this one critical skill of knowing how to make the right choices. Without this skill, life will just be a pathetic series of what-might-have-beens.

It is, at best, an intuitive skill. How does one acquire it? There are no simple, cut and dried steps. It helps to have a few essentials tucked in your belt such as: a broad knowledge base, a sound noggin, a good upbringing, a good heart, time and propensity for deep reflection and study to think things through, guidance from both the mortal

and the spiritual realms and the ability to extract the lessons from one's own experiences or better yet, from the collective pool of other people's experiences.

It is a tall order. No one can say for certain how the ability to choose wisely ever comes about in anyone's life. More often than not, this gets developed late in life when all the lessons from a lifetime of experience reach a critical mass and congeal. Things finally click and everything seems clearer. It could be a combination of nature and nurture where heredity may play a tiny part. Even the wisest of men can have fools for children just as there are children seemingly born with old souls, far advanced in their wisdom, who can have fools for parents. It is enough to know that you earn this skill yourself acquiring it layer upon layer with every season of your life from birth to death. At the highest levels, the intuition to make the right judgment calls at every turn, works like a sixth sense. This skill belongs to the most highly evolved

human beings.

Why is this skill so important? It is because for as long as the world turns, our choices determine our results. The law of cause and effect like the force of gravity that holds the universe together, rules human life. To understand intimately how the intricate workings of this law apply to our own lives, imagine it as borrowing heavily from the principles of accounting.

Visualize an invisible, unerring and indisputable ledger of one's life being recorded—its highs and lows, its pluses and minuses, the volume of both good and bad, both beauty and horror which one has generated through the course of his life, the amount and range of happiness and the depths of pain, misery and tears one has caused in others. And yet unlike human accounting, that same invisible ledger takes into account such intangible, unquantifiable factors, both human and divine, such as love, kindness, forgiveness, redemption, generosity of spirit and tender mercies. At

the end of it all, one is presented with the bottom line—either in red—what one owes life, a deficiency or a debt that must be paid—if not in this lifetime—then in successive ones or if one has lived life well and has reached the highest rungs of nirvana—in the black, on the plus side with profits to show, with a wealth of positive contributions to the self, to others and the world at large — a life well lived, a life well spent. It is a thought-provoking parallel that should give everyone cause to take a long hard look at one's own precious life.

On the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is the story of the last judgment. Michelangelo, more than half a millennium ago, painted man's spiritual history beginning with creation to the fall from grace to redemption by Jesus Christ on the ceiling of the chapel. Twenty years after he completed the ceiling, he undertook the painting of the last day on the altar wall. It is a jaw-dropping, massive work with about 400 human figures swirling about with Jesus and Mother Mary at the center. It shows in terrifying graphic detail how everyone shall be judged accordingly on the last day. It shows an angel with the Book of Good Deeds and an angel with the Book of Evil Deeds. The good book is less than half the size of the other one. The

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The Voice of FilAmerica

Political empowerment is still a treasure that eludes us as a community here in America. While we are the second largest Asian American community in the United States, we have yet to harvest the power that comes from our numbers. The Voice of FilAmerica features elected and appointed officials — regardless of political affiliation — in the different US states who are of Filipino ancestry. As your Filipino American community newspaper, the Asian Journal recognizes the fact that we all have a responsibility towards bringing political empowerment to fruition, especially for our future generations. It is our hope to have our voices heard all over America.

**Michael Magaoay**  
Hawaii State Legislature Representative and Chair of the Filipino Caucus

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJP/Press

HAWAII State Legislature Representative FilAm Michael Magaoay is the chair of the Filipino Caucus.

Started in February 2007, the Filipino Caucus of the House of Representatives serves as the voice for Filipino communities throughout Hawaii.

The 17-member caucus is composed of Representatives who have met at least one of the following criteria: (1) should be of Filipino descent, (2) should have been born in the Philippines, or (3) should represent a district with a large Filipino population.



"This is your floor and the more you reach out, the more successful we can be," he said to the 17-member caucus. "We have to work cordially and set our priorities, because when we work together as one, we can really turn heads."

Magaoay represents District 46 that covers Kaena Point, Schofield, Mokuleia, Waialua, Haleiwa, Waimea, Pupukeya, Sunset, Kahuku, Kunia Camp, Poamoho, Wheeler, and Laie.

Born in Waialua in Oahu, he grew up in Waialua, graduating Waialua High School in 1971.

A local product, he received a BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Hawaii at Manoa on May 1976.

Magaoay has been a member of the Hawaii State House of Representatives since 2000.

Besides serving as the chair of the Filipino Caucus, he also chairs the Legislative Management committee and is a member of Energy & Environmental Protection, Finance, and Water, Land, Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs committees.

He is also a member of the Governor's Turtle Bay Advisory Working Group and prevented the closing of Kahuku Hospital and Poamoho, according to reports.

"All that I have done has prepared me for this unique and special job," he wrote on his website. "I am committed to our children, our community, our kupuna and our way of life. I care about our future."

For the past two years, as chair of the Filipino caucus, Magaoay has been influential in passing several legislations that benefit Filipino residents in Hawaii.

The Filipino Caucus members advocated for Filipino World War II veterans to receive pension benefits, burial grants and to reunite veterans with their family.

The Filipino Caucus has not only worked with legislators in the state of Hawaii but also those in Washington and leaders of the Filipino-American community. ■

**MINDING YOUR FINANCES**



ATTY. RAYMOND BULAON

**Can the Obama housing plan help you keep your home?**

to help homeowners whose mortgage is owned or backed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to refinance into a fixed rate. If you owe more than the value of your house, you may still qualify but your new mortgage cannot exceed more than 105% of your property's current market value. Here in California where real estate values have plunged to as low as 50% of the current mortgage amount in certain areas, it would be difficult to qualify for refinancing under this program. This article ONLY discusses the Loan Modification part of the program as this is what most people are interested in.

First of all, you need to understand that the plan only works

for people who make enough money to be able to afford their modified loan. So if you are unemployed or do not have enough income to be able to pay the modified loan payment, you are not going to qualify. I should also add that if you are overextended on all other debts (credit cards, car payments, personal loans, etc.), so that your total debt payments including your mortgage are 55% or more of your monthly gross income, you need to do something about your other debts in order to make this plan work for you.

Secondly, you must remember that this is strictly a voluntary program and your lender is not obligated to participate.

However, several of the largest mortgage servicers such as Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Citigroup have said that they will participate in this program. Your mortgage amount cannot exceed \$729,750. In some cases where loans have been sold to an investor that is not owned or backed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, a loan modification will not be possible.

A lot of people are asking if their mortgage balance will be reduced especially if they home is "upside down". The answer is YES, it is possible for a lenders to reduce the principal but they are NOT required to. To lower your mortgage payment, lenders will lower your interest rate or extend the payment terms to 40 years if necessary. Lastly, if you have a second mortgage, the amount can be forgiven if the Treasury makes a cash offer to have the debt forgiven. The lender, of course, is not obligated to accept the cash offer but it may be likely to accept it since that lender will probably receive nothing if the house goes into foreclosure and especially if the homeowner ends up filing for bankruptcy to wipe out a collectible foreclosure deficiency.

Lastly, if you do not qualify for loan modification under the Obama plan, your lender may have its own loan modification program. Call the company who services your mortgage for more information. You don't need an attorney or anyone to help you with a loan modification. However, a lot of people are con-

fused about the process and do not understand what information they should be providing their lender when they apply. Banks themselves are overwhelmed and often disorganized which makes it even more difficult, time-consuming and frustrating for distressed homeowners. It costs money to hire a law firm to do the negotiating for you but having a knowledgeable and experienced professional on your side who can fight for you can be worth it if you get the results that you need. After all, you may only get one chance at doing this especially if time is running out

so why take your chances? As a last option to deal with foreclosure, bankruptcy can also sometimes be an effective strategy.

For a free consultation, call Toll-Free 1-866-477-7772. Let us evaluate your situation and recommend possible options. We have offices in Glendale, Cerritos and West Covina.

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None of the information herein is intended to give legal advice for any specific situation. Atty. Ray Bulaon has successfully helped over 4,000 clients in getting out of debt. For a free attorney evaluation of your situation, please call Ray Bulaon Law Offices at TOLL FREE 1-866-477-7772. (Advertising Supplement)

**Seafood Bami**  
Combination of Canton & Sotanghon noodles topped with shrimps, mussels, squid & fishballs. Serves 2.

**Rellenong Bangus**  
Home-made style stuffed milkfish as served during fiestas. Completely boneless, serves 4.

**Bagoong Fried Rice**  
Fried rice with salted shrimp fry, Lechon tidbits and scrambled eggs. Serves 4.

**Pinaputok na Bangus**  
Grilled to order Milkfish stuffed with tomatoes, onions, ginger and wrapped in banana leaves. Completely boneless, serves 4.

Dine-in or take-out. Consult your server for details.

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**DEBT RELIEF**



ATTY. LAWRENCE YANG

MICHAEL Jackson died at the age of 50 last week. The world will miss his rare and tremendous musical talent. The immediate cause of death was cardiac arrest. But I believe his debts killed him. He had \$400 million of debt! Not even the King of Pop can handle that kind of debt. The human body is not built to handle that kind of debt. In the eighties, he bought the catalog of Beatle songs for \$48 million and his "Neverland" house in Santa Barbara for \$15 million. It is estimated that his ownership of his own and the Beatle songs is currently worth \$ 1 billion. But despite making hundreds of millions during his career as the most successful pop musician of all time, Michael Jackson owes between \$400 to \$500 million of debt. His lavish lifestyle is one reason for the mountain of debt. He is known to have spent millions on shopping sprees for toys and antiques and weeklong parties in hotels in Las Vegas. In 2005, his accountant testified that Michael spent between \$20 to \$30 million more his annual income. Do the math. In 10 years, he would have to borrow \$300 million to finance the deficit. With all his income and

**Debt and Michael Jackson**

assets, Michael could not make the mortgage payments on his "Neverland" house, which had a mortgage of \$23 million. His house was set for foreclosure late last year and was rescued at the last minute by an investor. He was able to finance his lavish lifestyle in the last decade by refinancing his assets for \$200 million. The child molestation cases which started in 1993 and ended in his acquittal in 2005 caused him to incur more debt to pay for his legal fees.

Faced with at least \$400 million of debt, even the great Michael Jackson had to return to work at the age of 50. At 10% annual interest, Michael would have to produce \$40 million to pay the interest portion of the debt. In 3 years, he would have to produce \$120 million to pay interest, and at the end of 36 months, after paying \$120 million of interest to his creditors, he would still owe the very same \$400 million. His creditors owned him. So, one of his creditors, arranged for Michael to perform in 50 concerts in England to start next week. Although tickets for all concerts were sold out in a matter of minutes, it is said that Michael would make \$1 million from each concert. If this is net profit for him, all the money that he makes from the first 40 concerts would just pay interest to his creditors if he owed \$400 million, but if he actually owed \$500 million, all the money he makes in all 50 concerts would just pay interest for 12 months! Just imagine the stress all this

creates on Michael. He is turning 51, but despite all the money he made, he owes half a billion dollars, and he has to start working again. If his concerns succeed, he will have to do at least 50 concerts a year just to pay interest to keep his debt current. To make sure his first concert next week is a big hit, he has to keep on rehearsing to make sure everything is perfect. He has to take painkillers to enable him to keep on practicing even though his body can no longer continue. So, his heart gives up. Frankly, I think his debts killed him, because nobody can pay off half a billion dollars of debt, not even Michael Jackson.

Michael should have followed the path of GM and Chrysler and sought bankruptcy protection to get rid of his debts. Chrysler emerged from bankruptcy in 45 days. Michael only owes half a billion dollars. If Michael chose bankruptcy he might have been able to block off a lot of stress caused by too much debt, and concentrate on making what he did best, making music for the world.

If you need debt relief, contact my office. I will analyze your case personally.

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Lawrence Bautista Yang specializes in bankruptcy, business, real estate and civil litigation and has successfully represented more than five thousand clients in California. Please call Angie, Barbara or Jess at (626) 284-1142 for an appointment at 1000 S. Fremont Ave., Bldg. A-1 Suite 1125 Unit 58, Alhambra, CA 91803.

(Advertising Supplement)