

# The Philanthropic Life of Michael Balaoing

## Senior Vice President of the Entertainment Industry Foundation

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPpress

MICHAEL John Balaoing is a firm believer of philanthropy. The word, derived from Ancient Greek meaning "to love people", is the act of donating money, goods, services, time and/or effort to support a socially beneficial cause, with no financial or material reward to the donor. Michael believes in the benevolence of the United States and its people. He believes in the age-old pursuit of love, kindness, compassion and generosity. And, he believes in the Philippines and the Filipino people, and in giving back to the land of his heritage.

Inspired by his Filipino parents, Aida and Johnny, who, like all immigrants, struggled and sacrificed to make a new life here in the US, Michael has a deep appreciation for the good life that America offers. He is aware that millions of Filipinos back home in the Philippines live a miserable life of depravity. And that is why he is passionate about helping make life better, not only for Filipinos, but for needy people in general.

The Senior Vice President of the Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF), which is the philanthropic arm of the entertainment industry, Michael raises funds and generates awareness for various needs. From major movie studios and television networks to key guilds, unions and talent agencies, EIF combines the unique creative assets of the US-based entertainment community to promote health, education, the environment, and the arts, and children, youth and families. As a foundation executive for more than a

decade, Michael advises the "haves" on how to help the "have-nots". Fortune 100 corporations, select high net-worth individuals, and celebrated artists in TV, film, and music depend on Michael's insights on how to maximize impact with integrity through philanthropy.

In an interview with Asian Journal, Michael says "I definitely believe in giving back" which is the reason he has devoted his career to serving others and connecting the needy with resources they need. And it's not always money. Resources can also be in the form of talent, money, time, people, ideas, networks, even hope. Michael has been one of the country's top foundation executives and has helped award over \$250 million to major nonprofit organizations locally and globally.

Born in Manila, Philippines, Balaoing was raised in Los Angeles. He earned a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Princeton

University and graduated from UCLA School of Law. While in UCLA, he became a board member of the Public Interest Law Foundation, editor-in-chief of the Asian Pacific American Law Journal, editor of the UCLA Law Review, and a member of the Law School Admissions Committee.

Upon becoming a public interest attorney, Michael served the city, county and state government including the Family Violence Division of the LA City Attorney's Office, the LA County Children's Planning Council and the California Senate. He has twenty years of nonprofit experience, serving on over a dozen boards in the public sector locally and globally, including nonprofits, foundations and government agencies.

Balaoing spent over five years at The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF), one of the nation's largest private health foundations with an endowment of \$1 billion. As Program Director at TCWF, he managed the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI), a ten-year, \$70 million collaborative of nine foundations focused on preventing violence against youth in California through public education, policy advocacy, research and leadership development.

In 2000, California's Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger first appointed him to California Volunteers, the state commission led by First Lady Maria Shriver to engage Californians in service and volunteerism. In 2005, Michael chaired this \$40 million state commission responsible for inspiring 37 million Californians to help others - whether by building a playground or feeding the hungry.

In November 2002, the German Marshall Fund of



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit - the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, Galing Pinoy literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



families. As SIPA's Board Chairman from 1995 to 1999, he led the successful efforts to create a youth and community center and a community development corporation that housed services for at-risk children and built homes for low-income families.

Michael has also been the Board Secretary of the Ayala Foundation USA, bridging US donors with the Philippines to mobilize resources for major social development projects such as Habitat for Humanity, microfinance for the poor, and Gearing-up Internet Literacy & Access for Students (GILAS) - a public-private education initiative to bring the internet to over a million students at all 6,000 public high schools in the Philippines.

Michael is one of the privileged people on the planet who know their purpose in life and have dedicated their life to the fulfillment of that purpose. "My passion and purpose has been to identify and leverage resources - time, money, talent, networks, ideas, hope - to help touch and enhance the lives of others," he said. With this in mind, he is committed to dedicate his whole life to love, honor and serve others.

America and the Philippines are blessed to have philanthropists like Michael Balaoing, who play a vital role in leveraging the power of the strong and the privileged to champion the worthy causes of helping the weak and the needy.

Mabuhay and maraming salamat, Michael! You make your people proud! ■



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