

**IMMIGRANT LIVING:
101 AND BEYOND**



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

(Primarily because the good life based on the American Dream is fast fading from the realm of what is possible for many immigrants, I am reprising this article to remind us that despite all appearances, there's still a lot we can do to affect the quality of our lives even during recessionary times. This is partly to counter the increasing tendency of many to lose hope and commit tragic acts of desperation, decimating entire families and themselves, because of financial pressures.)

DO you believe in luck? And if you do, have you got the moxie to be lucky?

On its face value, being in the right place at the right time seems to be completely random and impersonal, much like a lightning strike. We have all heard of the incredible luck of people who have won the lottery multiple times and each time, they at least, bought a ticket, took a chance and made themselves available for Lady Luck to smile at them. Some

Luck, Moxie and the Good Life

*"The harder I work, the luckier I get."
—Unknown*

people modestly attribute their success to luck; others, to hard work but more than likely, it is a combination of both. They were lucky because they had gumption, persisted against all odds and worked their tails off.

The truth is, in some ways, we can influence good fortune with the attitude, motivation and oftentimes, with sheer moxie, with which we face our individual daily lives. If you expect bad things to happen to you or if you yourself confirm that you are unlucky, more than likely, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. You might as well admit it. You're a sad sack Eeyore with a permanent, black rain cloud hanging over your head. The negative energy you emit repels people who would otherwise be of help to you. You just might be the person who can brighten up a room simply by leaving it.

Perhaps, it's your personality and there's nothing you can do about it. You were wired to be negative and pessimistic and no motivational speaker can get you

out of that rut. You're one tough customer for the Holy Spirit to work wonders with. Fine. But for as long as you think that you have nothing to do with the ill fortune that seems to bedevil your life, you can just live with the dire consequences of fear, anxiety and unhappiness which result from being toxic and always believing the worst of things or of people.

Particularly during these uncertain times, no one can afford the luxury of a negative thought. But much more so for vulnerable immigrants who are on survival mode, an optimistic can-do attitude is a must. With this current economic morass, a big chunk of the immigrant population along with many more in the middle class, will regress back to survival mode, quite by default. Many who have moved to more comfortable levels but were caught by the real estate slump, lost their homes and jobs, may find themselves sliding back to square one and engaging in the daunting prospect of finding a job or retraining themselves to learn the skills that will help them find one.

A caveat: Jobs to your liking may be harder to find these days. For many in America and even in many parts of the globe, humble pie will be on the menu, even for those with the best credentials, abilities and track records. Be prepared to wait a long time until the clouds clear and the cadence of our modern lives move to an upswing. There's a cycle and a rhythm to this. As in all fortuitous events, timing is everything.

If you have the moxie to make the right choices, it is amazing to note how luck always dovetails.

Nota Bene: To ask questions, send feedback and requests as well as to inquire about advertising in any or all of the 6 print editions of Asian Journal in California, Nevada and New York/New Jersey and/or advertising in the Print Edition Online of Asian Journal, e-mail monette.maglaya@asianjournalinc.com **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE SENT FEEDBACK.**

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.

Robert Bunda

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL
AJP/Press

HAWAII Senator Robert Bunda (D-HI) became the first FilAm to attain a presidency of any state legislature in the US when he was appointed a Senate President in 2001.

The third-generation FilAm was born in Waiialua. Now, the Democratic President Emeritus senator represents the 22nd District of Kaena-Wahiawa-Pupukea. He is one of Bunda, a former Bank executive and insurance broker, has been a member of the Hawaii State House of Representatives from 1983 to 1994 and currently a member of Hawaii state senate since 1994.

He was appointed Presidential Elector for Hawaii in 1996 and chosen as a delegate to Democratic National Convention from Hawaii in 2004.

Aside from his political duties, Bunda volunteers actively with the Lions and a member of the Filipino Chamber of Commerce in Oahu.

Bunda graduated from Texas Wesleyan College and finished

graduate studies at the University of Texas.

He pursued business right after his graduation before working as insurance agent and a Bank Executive in the late 1970's.

He's also been a member of the Hawaii National Guard, Texas Army National Guard, and United States Air Force.

Bunda has never shied away from being a FilAm and has praised Filipinos for their hard working ethics especially their contributions in Hawaii.

"Filipinos have contributed to this state's rich multicultural heritage," said Bunda. "Their hard work and perseverance have not only created notable individual accomplishments and success stories, but they have, collectively, led to significant contributions to the state's business community and overall economy."

When it comes to Hawaii, Bunda believes that despite the global economic downturn, Hawaii would be able to "find innovative ways to turn adversity into opportunity."

"The Legislature needs to



avoid a piecemeal approach to lawmaking that sometimes sends mixed signals to the business community," Bunda wrote in the Hawaii Star Bulletin. "Hawaii's Superferry fiasco is a perfect example. Our major islands need to stay connected for commerce and communication and family connections. The Legislature should facilitate improvements to inter-island transportation systems, not obstruct them."

Bunda is one of five FilAms in the Hawaii state senate joining senators Will Espero, Lorraine Inouye, Donna Mercado Kim, and Ron Menor. ■

Fighting domestic violence...

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could use as a lifeline.

Without saying a word, as Avon chair and CEO Andrea Jung outlined in an interview, an "Avon lady" could reach out to a woman needing help just by handing her a brochure that contains information she needs. And just by selling the "empowerment necklace" or "empowerment bracelet," which was launched in other places but not here, women could "change the world one bracelet at a time," said Witherspoon.

The same "empowerment necklace," a small pendant with the "infinity" symbol hanging from a thin silver chain, goes on sale this month in the Philippines for just a little over a hundred pesos each. Proceeds of local sales will provide funding support for hotline services of local NGOs, while other groups are invited to submit proposals for funding.

Lesser-known
In the Czech Republic and

Slovenia, a survey showed that 46 percent of women in the region had been subjected to "mental violence," and yet most respondents believed domestic violence only consisted of physical abuse and that non-physical forms of violence were somehow "softer" or "less devastating" to survivors.

It was for these reasons that Avon decided to launch a campaign anchored on this "hidden threat," under the slogan "Not only bruises make you a victim."

Print ads show the faces of Daniela and Adriana, who are instantly recognizable in Central and Eastern Europe, and serve to draw public attention to the public service ads.

Avon and Czech Republic NGO partner Acorus, at a press conference late last year, revealed that Acorus' domestic violence hotline received more than five times the average number of calls before

the campaign, and 3.5 times the number of visits to their crisis centers.

The results are both heartening and frightening. They show how powerful a compelling public awareness and education campaign can be, not just in raising awareness of the issue, but also in spurring survivors to action.

But unless there are enough resources on the ground—enough hotlines, referral centers, shelters and counseling centers, as well as a responsive police, judicial and social welfare system—then the campaign runs the risk of merely increasing the frustration, if not the risk, for the women reaching out for help.

The local front
On the local front, NGOs working in the field of domestic violence have been around for decades. In fact, the Women's Crisis Center (WCC), on whose board of trustees I sit, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

But these NGOs are barely hanging on, bedeviled by funding shortfalls which have resulted, in turn, to a shortage of hotline counselors, shelter staff and trainers.

The WCC, for instance, which has been housed for many years in the East Avenue Medical Center, is facing the threat of eviction. Which is unfortunate since East Avenue is an ideal catchment area as this is where most emergency cases in Quezon City and environs are brought, with possible cases of domestic violence or sexual abuse referred immediately to the WCC.

Gutierrez may make for an ideal spokesperson or symbol—one who backs her advocacy with personal experience and commitment to the issue.

NGO representatives present at the *Advancing Advocacy* sessions hosted by Avon did raise some concerns regarding the employment of "celebrity power" for such a serious and life-threatening issue.

But then, we do live in the age of celebrity, and corporations like Avon have long recognized their power, not just to attract attention but even to change behavior (particularly consumer behavior and brand loyalty).

NGOs would do well to get on the bandwagon despite the risks. They might not have the money to pay celebrities' appearances or endorsement fees, but this is a two-way road. Celebrities generally like their names and faces attached to worthwhile causes, and it is the NGOs' good intentions and good works that they could leverage in the battle for the hearts and minds (and wallets) of the public. ■

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