

**IMMIGRANT LIVING:  
101 AND BEYOND**



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

## Surviving in a hostile immigrant environment

*Wherever we look upon this earth, the opportunities take shape within the problems.*

—Nelson Rockefeller

DESPITE the enforcement of harsh and restrictive laws that targeted certain ethnic groups, ethnic business niches began with small and tentative success experiences gained by a few trailblazing immigrants within certain communities. Barred from entering the mainstream work force, many had no choice but to go into tiny businesses catering to their own communities as a means to survive. The success formula of one or a few is quickly copied and transferred to others within the community, thus building a momentum where many go into the same business and succeed as well until a saturation level is reached and new industry niches need to be discovered and explored.

There are distinct differences among cultures and it must be noted that certain cultures are more predisposed to going into particular business than others. Risk-taking as a cultural trait seems to be more pronounced in some ethnic groups than in others. Those that have language difficulties and have a long historical and cultural background of setting up retail outlets from one generation to the other in their home countries are more predisposed to transferring their business skills into their new environment, learning as much as they can on their own and from observation.

Certain groups like Jews and Armenians have long histories of being involved in business in every area around the world where they settle. This tradition is passed down from one generation to the next because the family has had the experience, the know-how, the contacts, the business secrets, and the advantage of having start-

up capital.

Others without such a business tradition or built-in advantage go into business because they have no other choice. With little or no English language skills and even if they are well educated and hold extensive experience, they could not find employment in the general job market comparable to what they had before in the old country. Rather than take on jobs that for them might be demeaning, they have chosen to set themselves up in business.

Each ethnic group has shown expertise in handling businesses in certain identifiable niches. Among those who have exhibited entrepreneurial skills that have resulted in establishing specific businesses include:

- Koreans who are known for operating grocery stores, liquor stores, dry cleaning shops, restaurants, appliance stores and many other businesses;
- Asian Indians and Pakistanis who own convenience stores, food-service and delis, lodging facilities in the hotel and motel industry, and jewelry kiosks and stores;
- Cambodians who are particularly noted for operating retail bakeries and thousands of doughnut shops in many locations in metropolitan areas;
- Filipinos who buy up and convert homes and operate nursing facilities for seniors, the handicapped and the infirm; small restaurants and food markets;
- Thais who run restaurants that offer their distinctive culinary fare;
- Armenians and immigrants from the Middle East who have the rug and carpet, jewelry business

and automotive repair business cornered;

• Vietnamese who are more than likely to own beauty shops and nail salons (some regulations covering nail salons in some states are written in the Vietnamese language indicating that they have cornered this industry niche as experienced manicurists);

• Chinese who operate banks, oriental food markets, hotels, dry cleaners; import and export businesses, manufacturing and countless restaurants, among many others.

Some immigrants plunge headlong into business soon after arrival with the help of friends and relatives who are already in business. Others bide their time and test the waters tentatively at first. They start businesses after garnering the range of experiences in certain industries and saving enough money for start-up capital.

If you have what it takes to do as well or better than those who have done so in your own ethnic community, by all means, explore the entrepreneurial route. The rewards, after surviving the initial years of struggle, can be tremendous. Sometimes, all it takes is a dream.

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### DIRECTLINE

## The big, small film festival

by BOY ABUNDA  
Philstar.com

*UGAT sa Lupa* starring Gerald Madrid and Angelie Urquico is one of the 10 finalists in 2009 Cinemalaya's short film category

With the number of people who attended the media launch of the 20 finalists in Cinemalaya's full-length and short film competitions, CCP president Nestor Jardin proudly remarked, "When before Cinemalaya organizers had a hard time inviting people to cover the event, this year, we had to turn down requests for coverage because we could not accommodate them for logistical limitations."

Nestor Jardin also noted that when Cinemalaya started five years ago, only a handful of people came to watch the movies. Last year, almost 30,000 watched and he hopes that the number will increase this year.

The organizers have also kept the ticket price to the festival still at P100 to encourage more people to watch Cinemalaya films.

Through the years, Cinemalaya has become a venue to showcase outstanding films and discover new, talented filmmakers. Next year, it will open a new category for mainstream indie directors.

Nestor Jardin added that films in competition are required to have English subtitles because more and more foreigners are coming over to watch these films. And 20 percent of the audience are foreigners.

This year, 140 scripts were submitted for the full length category. The selection committee picked 10 finalists which were given a seed money of P500,000 each and the winner will receive P200,000 cash prize and a Balanghai trophy. Cinemalaya received less scripts this year because of its decision to impose stricter rules. Aside from the synopsis, entries were asked to come up with a sequence treatment of their stories. "Sequence treatment was required because last year, some of the best stories failed when translated on screen," said Laurice Guillen, competition chairman.

The 10 finalists that will compete in the full length category are *24K* by Ana Agabin; *Ang Panggagahasa kay Fe* by Alvin Yapan; *Astig* by GB Sampedro; *Colorum* by Jon Steffan Ballesteros; *Dinig Sana Kita* by Mike Sandejas; *Engkwentro* by Pepe Diokno; *Last Supper No. 3* by Veronica Velasco and Jinky Laurel; *Mangatyayan* by Jerrold Tarog; *Nerseri* by Vic Acedillo Jr.; and *Sanglaan* by Milo Sogueco.

In the short film category, 62 short films were submitted and 10 made it to the finals. They are *Behind Closed Doors* by Mark Philipp Espina; *BLOGOG* by Rommel "Milo" Tolentino; *Bonsai* by Alfonso "Borgy" Torre III; *Hulagpos* by Maita Lirra Lupac; *Latus* by John Paul Seniel; *Musa* by Dexter Cayanes; *Si Bok at ang Trumpo* by Hubert Tibi; *Tatang* by Jean Paolo "Nico" Hernandez; *Wat*



Ugat sa Lupa starring Gerald Madrid and Angelie Urquico is one of the 10 finalists in 2009 Cinemalaya's short film category

*Floor Ma'am* by Mike Sandejas and Robert Seña; and *Ugat sa Lupa* by Ariel Reyes. The short film winner will receive P100,000 in cash prize and a Balanghai trophy.

Cinemalaya will also feature the Brocka Retrospective, with the screening of his films like *Wanted: Perfect Mother*, *Tubog sa Ginto*, *Stardom*, *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*, *Tatlo Dalawa Isa*, *Maynila sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, *Insiang*, *Bona*, *Bayan Ko* and *Macho Dancer*.

Aside from the competition, Cinemalaya will also feature the following: World Premieres and NetPac films, Kids' Treats, Gay/Lesbian films, The City in Focus section, Women in Indies, Off Center section, Documentary section and Ani: Best of Last Year Movies.

Another event to watch out for in Cinemalaya is the film congress, Linking Digital Highways, which will be held at the CCP Little Theater.

During the media launch, Cinemalaya also unveiled its new ad campaign billed Cinemalaya Cinco which was done by Black Pencil Advertising, Inc. The ad campaign celebrates the fifth year of Cinemalaya which has become a major event in local film industry. The ad campaign tags Cinemalaya as the "big, small film festival," conveying the importance and impact of Cinemalaya on Filipino independent cinema.

Cinemalaya opens July 17 and runs until July 26. Films will be shown at all CCP venues, namely the Main Theater, the Little Theater, Dream Theater, Tanghalang Huseng Batute, Silangan Hall and the MKP Hall.

Cinemalaya Cinco is presented by the Cinemalaya Foundation, Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Film Development Council of the Philippines and Econolink Investments, Inc. Cinemalaya is an all-digital film competition aimed at discovering new Filipino filmmakers.

For ticket information, call 551-7930 or 832-1125 local 1800 to 1808, 832-3704 or 832-1125 local 1409. ■

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