

# OPINION & FEATURES

## A doable stimulus plan

**A** measure that has been passed by Congress and is now awaiting the President's signature may yet be one of the answers to the current economic crisis and at the same time may provide a long-term solution to the problem of poverty. The measure, the Tourism Act of 2009, creates the Tourism Development Estate Zone Authority and the Tourism Promotion Board.

Alejandra Clemente, president of the Federation of Tourism Industries of the Philippines (FTIP), said the tourism economic zones to be developed by the Authority would create millions of jobs and generate \$10 billion in foreign exchange. She said that tourism could be an important engine of socioeconomic and cultural growth and generate investments, earn foreign exchange and create jobs.

Many countries today are visited by millions of tourists every year and earn billions of dollars in foreign exchange. According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2007 the top five most visited countries were France, 81.9 million tourist arrivals, \$54.2 billion in tourism receipts; Spain, 59.2 million, \$57.8 billion; United States, 56 million, \$96.7 billion; China, 54.7 million, \$41.9 billion; and Italy, 43.7 million, \$42.7 billion.

The Philippines was visited by only 3.4 million tourists in 2007, compared with the 17 million of Malaysia, 14 million of Thailand and 14 million of the small country of Singapore. Clemente said that even Vietnam, which is still recovering from the devastation of a long war, was slowly overtaking the Philippines.

The Philippines could study the experience of Spain which was an underdeveloped country until the 1960s. It developed its tourism industry and is now one of the top five most visited countries and the second biggest earner from tourism in the world.

Spain is not resting on its laurels and is continuing to develop business models that are environmentally, socially and culturally sustainable.

What does Spain have or, for that matter, what do Malaysia and Thailand have that the Philippines does not have? The Philippines has many tourist attractions like Boracay, one of the best beaches in the world; Palawan, "the last frontier," which has exotic wildlife, white sand beaches and natural wonders like an underground river; Bohol, which has the world-famous

Chocolate Hills and superb diving spots like Panglao and Balicasag; the Banaue rice terraces, called the Eighth Wonder of the Modern World; and Tubbataha Reefs, an excellent diving spot. The Philippines has a gentle, hospitable people, most of whom speak English. A melting pot of Malay, Chinese, Arabic, Indian, Spanish and American culture, the Philippines is a culturally active nation inhabited by musically and artistically gifted people.

What the Philippines lacks is a comprehensive, systematic tourism plan. A lot of infrastructure has to be constructed to bring many destinations up to world standards. Many hotels still have to be built to accommodate the growing number of tourists. And the government has to improve peace and order conditions; it has to crack down on kidnapers, robbers and con artists.

The development of the tourist industry would have a multiplier effect on the economy. The tourism



master plan would create 30 million jobs over a 10-year period and earn about \$10 billion in foreign exchange. When the number of tourist arrivals increases, there will be greater demand for food and services. A burgeoning tourist industry would benefit agriculture and the information technology industries. More factories would be needed to manufacture supplies for hotels and resorts.

A growing tourist industry could absorb the tens of thousands of overseas Filipino workers who have lost their jobs and are returning to the country. These workers only need to be retrained so that they can enter the tourism industry. An added advantage

is that they would not have to leave the country again, and the social problems created by absentee parents would be partially relieved.

Government officials are pushing stimulus plans to revive an economy that is being affected by the global economic meltdown. The tourism program envisioned under the Tourism Act of 2009 is one concrete, doable stimulus plan. If President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wants a ready answer to the current economic crisis as well as a long-term plan to solve the problem of poverty, she can find it in the measure that is just waiting for her signature. (*Inquirer.net*)

### GUEST EDITORIAL

### AS I WRECK THIS CHAIR

William M. Esposito

## Why do Filipinos act like kept harlots?

**T**HE Lance Corporal Daniel Smith custody issue triggered rallies in the vicinity of the United States (US) Embassy in Manila against the VFA (Visiting Forces Agreement). Many of these anti-VFA rallies were violently dispersed by the police.

As seen on primetime television, these rallies involved young men and women and it is hard to fathom how the police can perceive them as threats to peace and order. Why then do the police have to disperse the young rallyists with such brutality?

Considering that the Cpl. Daniel Smith custody issue involves Filipino pride in the face of an obviously one-sided VFA, we wonder if there is a tinge of nationalism at all in the Filipino hearts of these policemen.

How come we as a people seem unable to recognize the real damage that the opportunistic foreign superpowers are doing to our country. Instead of protecting our country, how come many of us are stupidly inclined to fight fellow Filipinos instead?

How come we can only see the corrupt practices of fellow Filipinos? But when it comes to superpower exploitation—far more damaging than what all the Filipino plunderers steal—we are indifferent and apathetic.

How come over here it has become legal and popular to protect the interests of foreigners (like passing the Mining Act that promoted foreign development of Philippine ore) and illegal to question these acts of betrayal (like when anti-Mining Act demonstrators are jailed).

Of course, for the majority of Filipinos, that attitude stems from ignorance or what the eminent Professor Emmanuel Q. Yap calls IDIOCY—the inability to know the truth. But then, considering Filipino reaction to the corruption and murders tagged to the government—we wonder if awareness of foreign exploitation will merit any reaction from Filipinos too.

Is it therefore a question of lack of awareness or to be brutally frank about it - the lack of patriotism and nationalism? Is it a case of surrendering to a superpower even before a good fight is fought?

If the SWS or Pulse Asia surveyed Filipinos whether they would be willing to fight exploiting superpowers and their reason for answering YES or NO, will it surprise you if a majority of the respondents will answer NO and state that it is pointless to fight a superior force?

Can nationalistic natives win over a superpower that is attempting to dominate and exploit their country? Of course, they can. It has been done. Over the last four decades, there have been nationalists

who fought superpowers and won.

Recently, the Iraqi resistance to the US-led invasion of their country is a good showcase of nationalists who drove away a superpower-led occupation. The US-led coalition is set to leave Iraq.

Not too long ago, the North Vietnamese defeated and expelled the mighty US and before that, the French. After the Vietnam War, the Afghans expelled the hitherto undefeated Red Army of the now defunct USSR.

The Vietnamese and Afghan victories were attained with the support of other superpowers. The North Vietnamese were supported by the USSR while the Afghans were supported by the US. The Iraqi nationalists are said to be supported by Iran and Syria.

It is a fact of life that when natives are fighting a nationalist war for independence and sovereignty against a superpower—a superpower rival will tend to support the nationalists. This is what proxy war is all about.

If the Filipinos decide to fight US domination, especially its sinister agenda in Mindanao and the Spratlys, expect China and Russia to want to help Filipinos wage that war. The big question is: Do Filipinos have the nationalism, the heart and the resolve—like the Iraqis, North Vietnamese and Afghans—to fight the US?

Maybe those Filipinos who are suffering the most from the exploitation—assuming that they finally know the historical truth—will rise and expel the exploiting superpower. But will our leaders have the same resolve to fight?

In the era of colonization, when the natives win a resounding military victory, the foreign superpower will call it a massacre. Such was the case in the Battle of Little Big Horn and the Battle of Isandlwana.

The superpower also has the habit of branding the natives as 'savages' and then uses that to justify genocide. Such was the case of the genocide of the native Americans and the Aztecs of Mexico.

It is not suggested that we recklessly declare war on the US. Considering how we've become the biggest fan of anything American, the whole world will likely laugh at us if we suddenly do that.

However, unless Filipinos demonstrate a united national resolve to correct the long lop-sided US-Philippine relationship, unless we produce real leaders who will fight for our national interests, unless we as a nation prove that we are willing to fight and die for our country—we will remain a vassal state of an exploiting superpower.

We will never be accorded the dignity we deserve and will continue to be treated like a kept harlot. (*Philstar.com*)

## Victim of circumstance

**H**ER affidavit caused a sensation. Even without paying heed to Evalyn Ursua's allegation that the notary public before whom the affidavit was formalized

belonged to the opposing party's law firm, anyone reading the affidavit signed by "Nicole" can see how it serves Daniel Smith's legal purposes. And so the best that can be said concerning the affidavit's first nine points is that they bring up the very reasons lawyers say the courts tend to discount secondary affidavits like this one—it brings up too many questions, raises too many possibilities concerning motives, all of which serve to actually strengthen the value of actual testimony given under oath in open court.

But there are two portions of the affidavit that struck me as possibly highly revealing about Nicole's true feelings both before and after her rape case made her a household name.

The first is the last sentence of item 10 in her affidavit: "When people gathered around me at the seawall, everyone seemed to have drawn the conclusion that I was raped except for one who called me a b\*\*\*\*."

The second is point 11: "Based on the account of SBMA police, I was very hesitant to board the mobile police car that brought me to the headquarters for investigation. I was so confused and the first thing that entered my mind was how would my mother and boyfriend react if they learn that I was last seen with Daniel Smith and that a condom was seen on my pants after Daniel Smith left the van? I was scared of losing not only my American boyfriend but the chance of living in the United States. In fact, I did not immediately tell my boyfriend that I was raped by Daniel Smith. All I said was that something bad happened to me."

The first points to a process that began the moment those American servicemen kicked her out of the van. Her countrymen immediately began passing judgment upon her, and the verdict would only be that she had been victimized, or that she was a floozy. While many women surely shared her enthusiasms, and many young people displayed similarly reckless abandon in seeking companionship and fun, any misadventures get turned into a morality tale.

Filipinos of an older generation used to warn their daughters of the dangers of being too enthralled by GI's, saying "*Hanggang pier ka na lang.*" Behind that statement surely lies many other Nicoles, abandoned under circumstances ranging from the truly heart-breaking to the utterly degrading. But always, the essential assumption is there: not only of the uncouth,

### THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

predatory foreign male, but the gullible, weak, or worse, mercenary Filipina; and always, the elders of both sexes prepared to respond to any eventuality with "I warned you,

but you wouldn't listen..."

Which is exactly what her story became: a morality tale, but one deprived of a victim who, by the standards of her community, both local and national, could be considered truly innocent. From the very start, the question of whether she was raped got bogged down in public opinion being divided on whether her behavior prior to, and during, her encounter with Smith was relevant, or not.

Shunted aside was the event that, up to now, with or without her recantation, and whatever the reasoning of Smith or his lawyers, has stood up as genuinely true, and therefore, unquestionably a fact: she was thrown out of a van, disheveled and undressed, and with a condom providing undeniable proof of coitus having taken place, under consensual circumstances or not. This fact alone should have led to a general hue and cry condemning the servicemen and to a dressing-down of the American commander by Filipino officials.

We know the choice she made: to fight. We know her cause was taken up by many, even as many others viewed her cause with hostility. What we now know is that the ultimate cause of her lawyer and many who rallied around her—severing ties with the United States, consigning the RP-US alliance to the dustbin of history—was not her cause, and that furthermore that cause does not seem to have impressed either her or her family, much as they went along with the rhetoric in the beginning.

I've heard it argued that we, as a people, are less concerned with actual morality and are obsessed, instead, with saving face. What if Nicole's real concern was to somehow save face, if only partially? Or what if justice for her was not in what transpired in her coital encounter with Smith, but with how it ended? There is no crime called dumping a naked person out of a van, no means of seeking compensation for the public seeing you treated as a LBFM (Little Brown F\*\*\*\*\* Machine), as one American website refers to Filipinas. The only assurance of a semblance of recovering her dignity, never mind justice, may have been to claim rape.

The other possibility, indeed, what the justice system has concluded, is that rape took place, but to her, the crime was always about the perpetrator and not the country he served, and where she's finally gone to live. (*Inquirer.net*)

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Main Office:  
1150 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1904  
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