

# OPINION & FEATURES

## Vigilante rule

**A**T a multi-sector meeting in Davao City last month, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said: "If you are doing an illegal activity in my city, if you are a criminal or part of a syndicate that preys on the innocent people of the city, for as long as I am the mayor, you are a legitimate target of assassination."

That was a dangerous statement to make. It is an open invitation to lawlessness, a justification for anyone to take the law into his hands.

The laws on due process govern everyone and every part of the Philippine territory, even mayors and cities that claim that they have a low crime rate because of vigilante justice. And even when the state goes the due process route, no criminal is put to death because the death penalty law has been repealed.

It is thus a welcome development that the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has finally taken cognizance of the unexplained killings of 814 people in Davao City since 1998. The suspicion is that the killings were done by the so-called Davao

Death Squad, a shadowy vigilante group.

If the 814 people were suspects in various crimes or were known criminals, they should have been

such process takes time for justice to be meted out to the guilty. To do otherwise would be to take a backward step and to return to the law of the jungle.

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### Maids and mothers

Rep. Risa Hontiveros of the Akbayan party-list group on Sunday condemned as "disgusting, derogatory and vile" an article written by a Hong Kong columnist and broadcaster calling the Philippines "a nation of servants." Writing about the Philippines' and China's conflicting claims on the Spratly islands, Chip Tsao urged his countrymen not to bow to the Philippines because there are more than 130,000 Filipino maids providing cheap labor in Hong Kong. Hontiveros took offense at Tsao's article and said

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arrested, charged, prosecuted, tried and sentenced. That is the process in a nation that upholds the rule of law, not the rule of the mob or vigilantes. One big danger in vigilante rule is the great possibility that an innocent man may be put to death without being accorded due process.

Government and civilian forces or groups cannot take shortcuts in enforcing the law. They have to abide by due process, even if



Photo courtesy of Inquirer.net

HK Magazine, which carried the story, should apologize immediately for the racial slur.

Tsao and his compatriots should realize that Filipinas are forced to work abroad because of lack of good-paying jobs in the Philippines. Many of these maids are teachers and professionals

with university degrees who work as maids and earn salaries that are several times what they would earn in their own country.

Tsao and his ilk look down on the Filipino maids who do menial and backbreaking work. But do they realize that without their Filipino maids, they would not be

able to work at high-paying jobs and enterprises? Probably the Filipino servants should make good their threat to go on strike.

The Filipinas may be servants "only," but they are performing a very important role in the economy and society of Hong Kong. (Inquirer.net)

## Among Ed for CEO of Chinatrust

**M**ONTHS before the last presidential elections, when the buzz was that the Lopez interests were seriously considering endorsing Noli de Castro, then a senator, for the presidency, I ventured the opinion that, if this was true, the giant business complex, whose top brass know a good management person when they see



STREET TALK  
Greg B. Macabenta

one, must have had a very high regard for De Castro's managerial ability, intelligence, financial know-how and people skills.

I then suggested that, if this was the case, why didn't the Lopezes consider De Castro for CEO of Benpres or, at least, president of ABS-CBN?

Surely, I said, a person who was qualified to be president of the Philippines was more than qualified to run a vast corporate complex. On the other hand, I added, if De Castro was not good enough to run the Lopez empire, then why inflict him on the Filipino people?

In fairness to Gabby Lopez and the rest of the enterprise, it was never really established that they were pushing De Castro for the presidency. However, it was no surprise that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo picked him for vice-president.

We all know why. The welfare of the country was farthest from her mind. She just wanted one more insurance policy for her campaign. Someone whose popularity with the masses could help neutralize the votes of Ronnie Poe and Loren Legarda.

Since then, we have all had to pray that Arroyo's health is sustained until the next elections (or an upheaval that will see her replaced by a competent

individual). Otherwise, good grief, we would end up with De Castro as president.

At any rate, here we are again, sending out feelers for presidential candidates—to add to an already top-heavy list of wannabes, many of them with more press releases than substantive performance in their curriculum vitae.

And jumping into the fray or, at least, testing the waters—is Pampanga priest-turned-governor Ed Panlilio. If you are to believe the press releases, there is a tsunami of support developing overseas and locally. Among those reportedly endorsing his candidacy is a certain Joey Bermudez, president of Chinatrust Philippines.

I have no doubt that Among Ed has the best of intentions. It certainly took a lot of guts to take on the combined muscle and money of the Pinedas, the Lapid and the Arroyos in Pampanga and trash them in the race for governor. There is also no doubt that he can claim the moral ascendancy that many of the current "presidentiables" can only talk about in press releases.

But unless someone can convince me that good intentions will translate into the ability to piece together a jigsaw puzzle of a battered economy, a Mafia-type hold on the rackets at the local and national level, poverty and joblessness, a broken-down bureaucracy, non-existent health and social services, a wayward educational system, an ill-equipped military, self-serving legislation, a questionable judicial system, the quid pro quo of foreign relations, and the gargantuan problem of managing the biggest enterprise in the country—government—I'm not sure I would like to endorse the good crusader for president.

Of course, I have the same reservations about many others who are (horrors!) ranking high in the SWS polls. But let's focus on the likes of Among Ed.

Doesn't he remind us of a near-saintly presidential candidate who vanquished a near-satanic president and took over a government that had long suffered under a dictatorial yoke? I don't think anyone, including myself, ever doubted Cory Aquino's good intentions. But were those enough to bring our country out of the depths?

Anecdotal evidence tells us that her good intentions were undercut by friends and relatives, and the most competent advisers and cabinet members could not make up for her own inability to cope with the multifarious demands of the presidency. Mercifully, she made good her promise to step down after one term.

Fidel V. Ramos, steeped in military discipline, skilled in political quid pro quo and armed with 20a vision for the country won (I must say, again, mercifully) against another would-be president who came on the scene with fire and thunder: Miriam Defensor-Santiago. We now know what fate would have awaited the country had she become president.

We also know what fate befell the country when Erap Estrada became president. And we know what has befallen our hapless people with Arroyo as president.

Now, Joey Bermudez and a host of well-intentioned folks think that Among Ed is qualified for president? Again, with due respect, I beg them to look at it this way: Would he qualify as CEO of the Ayala corporate empire?

Would he be able to raise, like the Phoenix, an abandoned US naval base and transform it, with volunteer power, into an economic miracle, the way Dick Gordon did to Subic? Does he have the scalpel-sharp mind of a Diokno or a Recto? Does he have the leadership qualities of a Ramon Magsaysay? Can he handle foreign relations like Carlos P. Romulo? Does he have the business wizardry of Manny Pangilinan

(not to mention the work ethic)?

Bringing the standards to more esoteric and humane levels: Does he have the vision, the compassion, the humility, the salesmanship, the leadership qualities, the long track record, and the dogged consistency of Tony Meloto, the miracle man of Gawad Kalinga?

The only question to which I'm sure the answer will be "Yes" is: Will Among Ed try his very best to be a good president? I'm sure he will. But trying doesn't mean succeeding.

Failure can also be so devastating for our people. Because, at that point, they will say, "Let's just settle for someone who's corrupt but manages to get our country moving slightly forward rather than not at all." That's what they're now saying about Marcos, after years under Arroyo.

In America, there is now, among Fil-Am do-gooders, a call for a national conference at which likely presidential candidates—who are not cut from the same trappold mold—will be shortlisted. There is a note of desperation in the call. Indeed, the 2010 elections are not too far away.

I think it's a good exercise, provided the promoters approach this with an open mind and a willingness to hold the prospective candidates to the highest standards of integrity, intelligence, managerial ability, people skills, vision and statesmanship. Plus a great love for our country and our people.

Among Ed's name should certainly be added to the pool. But, better yet, I think we should just support him in his Quixotic campaign to give Pampangueños back their pride. That's a difficult enough task, as it is. Forget about the presidency. That should come in due time, if deserved.

Hasn't anybody ever heard of the Peter Principle?

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## We are not diminished

**T**HOSE who are planning to declare, or have already declared a fatwa on Chip Tsao, the Chinese columnist of HK Magazine who called the Philippines "a nation of servants" and several other very demeaning things, please rethink your move. His splattered blood and brains are not worth your effort. Thou shalt not kill.

The guy just happens to have no class, no breeding. He could be a survivor of amniocentesis, melamine milk poisoning, or a horrible childhood. Have mercy. We are a nation of compassionate carers, remember?

Tsao's words about Filipinos translated as "patay-gutom," the ultimate insult the "mata-pobre" haves could inflict on

the have-nots. Oh, but we have not been diminished. Tsao and his HK Magazine have. I bet our humorists will have a field day making us laugh at Tsao and the Filipinos' Hong Kong "masters." As we say, if you can't beat them, laugh at them. Filipinos are great at getting back by laughing their detractors to Kingdom Come.

Think of the many possible gag scripts around the theme, "What did the 'mata-pobre' say to the 'patay-gutom' and what did the 'patay-gutom' say to the 'mata-pobre'?" Paging Bubble Gang.

The HK Magazine publisher has apologized, but the magazine will have a hard time living down the racist, class-ist slur that has been inflicted on

Filipinos. They have poured a bucket of their own spit on themselves. Mwahaha.

Let's put that behind us, okay? To declare Tsao persona non grata is just giving him importance. As the Ilonggos would sweetly say, "Waay gani nakalibot sa dapog." I bet you don't know that that means. But you would know an answer to the question, "Why did the overseas Filipino worker (OFW) cross the street?"

We are a smart, hardy people. We, the wretched of the earth, will inherit the earth, and this includes the Spratlys.

As we move toward Holy Week, it behooves us to remember the millions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) burdened by the cross of separation from

their families and working in hostile environments and uncertainty in their jobs. Daily they are on a *via crucis*, on a *via dolorosa*.

Those of us who have never been OFWs should do the Stations of the Cross with the OFW theme. There are so many stories about the OFWs—their travails, their triumphs. Many have been brutally treated, betrayed, killed in foreign lands. Still millions continue to go out there to earn money for their families, to give back. They contribute much to the countries that hired them and have learned to love.

They do not deserve insults from ill-bred people like Tsao. And we must not fail them by speaking up on their behalf, by



making them feel that they are not alone out there.

You see them in hotels and restaurants, in shops and ships and streets, in the most unlikely places in foreign lands. You meet them in airports and airplanes. You know they've come from somewhere you've not been to.

You are amazed at their courage and their strength to carry the cross for family and country. (Inquirer.net)



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