

**IMMIGRANT LIVING:
101 AND BEYOND**



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

Filter it, pull the plug or think outside the box

I think, therefore I am.
—Rene Descartes

way through spadework (which, thanks to the wonders of communications technology, can be done by a few keystrokes on the internet) and the low tech way of simply asking around. Nothing, however, can take the place of gruelling personal experience that builds a personalized knowledge base. Read up on your own. Read books, both the paper kind and the electronic versions. But be selective. Life is always an adventure wherever you choose to live. But you ratchet up the color and excitement several notches higher the moment you choose to immigrate to another land. Like it or not, you have signed yourself up to learn and adapt and evolve every single day you are alive.

Go ahead, watch television. Do it in small doses though. American television exhibits amazing cutting edge technology and special effects are particularly stunning. Do not let your guard down. Do not be deceived by the glitz and glamour of the packaging and overlook the lack of substance in many shows. The same holds true for shows that come from other countries. A lot of these shows designed by marketers to appeal to the lowest common denominator border on the inane. There are much more spectacular things to discover in the real world outside the box in so many other ways that can be much more educational and fun. Check the offerings in public television. You might be pleasantly surprised by what's available. Weather and traffic reports may be all that you will need for the day. The daily dose of murder mayhem, and in Los Angeles, the staple of car chases by idiots seeking their "15 minutes of fame/infamy" portrayed in graphic detail can put a real drag on your psyche. No one whose heart is in the right place

and whose head is screwed on tight can be impervious or indifferent to some of the heinous crimes against humanity that are dumped daily in our homes. On those days that you feel you are particularly vulnerable to suggestion, pull the plug and take a leisurely walk around the block or put up your feet and read a good book.

TV is one formidable force that has the undeniable capacity to shape the way we think, the way we live and what we believe in. It can give shape and color to our hopes and dreams as immigrants. We all need to be discriminating in what it is that we allow ourselves and our families to watch. If we let it, television has the potential to "own" us. Never relinquish your power to say no. With your finger on the remote control, you have the power to switch to high quality fare or simply pull the plug.

Television is consumer driven. It responds to what sells. So play the game. As a consumer, you can choose to vote with your wallet, buying only those consumer products that support quality television programming that elevates rather than degrades people. Imagine the cumulative power of millions of buyers just like you who can influence television programming with what they choose to buy. Even as an immigrant who might still be many years from becoming a full-fledged citizen with the right to vote, you can begin to exercise and flex the power of choice by voting with your wallet.

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THE one thing that differentiates a life of deprivation from a rich one is the availability of choice. And making wise choices from the array made available to us, is not always obvious or easy. Awash with a steady stream of choices on radio, television, cable, satellite and the ubiquitous iPod, we have morphed into a society with choices served on a platter. And yet given the almost infinite variety from which we can cull out entertainment and some of the information we may need to figure out how best to live our lives during these interesting times we live in, paradoxically, all these sources are still strangely inadequate.

The messages may not always be in our own best interest. Mass media has evolved into a sophisticated selling tool that has to constantly balance that delicate mix of serving the public interest and serving the interests of business and industry that ensure its continued existence. Lately though, the balance has been skewed in favor of business. To a significant extent, big businesses do have some say as to what, why and how frequently messages get aired.

What can we do to avoid becoming a mindless sponge that sops up what the boob tube has to offer? In a word, FILTER. We must develop a filtering mechanism, much like an industrial strength sieve in our thinking cap to be able to discern only what is important to us and trash the major bulk of messages that assail us 24/7. The truths and the values, as they apply to us, must be ferreted out the old fashioned

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IMMIGRATION CORNER



ATTY. MICHAEL GURFINKEL

MOTHER'S DAY is a time when everyone should reflect on all the wonderful things and the sacrifices their mothers have made for them. It is also the time when Mothers feel blessed with the gift of motherhood, and feel the indescribable joy of being surrounded by their children.

Unfortunately, for some mothers who are in the US in illegal status, Mother's Day is not such a happy time. Instead, it is a time of sadness and emptiness. Many Filipina mothers come to me for consultation, and share the same sad story of the sacrifices they have made for the sake of their children: They were forced to leave their young children behind in the Philippines, for a chance to give them a better future, to be able to send them to good schools, for their food, clothes, and education.

And yet these mothers would do anything just to be with their children again. Now that these mothers are settled in this foreign land of America, they want to concentrate on bringing their family here in the United States: to be able to hug and hold them, and share with their children every single moment of happiness, triumph, and success.

Every mother who had to leave their children in the care of relatives or friends goes through unimaginable loneliness and anxiety, as they work endless hours to provide a better life for their family back home in the Philippines. The need and desire to provide a better future for their children ironically cause untold suffering for both the mother who left, and the children left behind.

The mother comes home from work, finding an empty house, devoid of the love and laughter of her children. She calls her children, especially during important occasions, such as Christmas Day, New Year's Day, birthdays, graduations, sharing with them the happiness of the occasion. But as soon as the mother puts down the phone, the joy fades, and the pain of separation becomes even more deep. She sees friends' children, and remembers her own children back home.

The children who are left behind, on the other hand, grow up without the love, care and guidance of a loving mother. True, they are able to go to the best schools, buy clothes, and eat good meals every day, but all they really want is to be with "Mommy."

Every time I go to the Philippines, I see Filipinos who can buy their clothes and food because many of them have mothers, or fathers, or children who are working abroad, sending them

A Mother's Day Greeting

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dollars for their upkeep. But behind their capacity to buy material things, lies that empty feeling caused by the absence of their parents or children.

I have had the privilege of seeing many mothers and children reunited in America, and I can tell you that there is no better joy in knowing that they can continue pursuing better opportunities together without being away from each other again. There have been many joyful reunions between mothers and children that I am happy and proud to have been a part of.

It's Mother's Day again this Sunday, and I continue to look forward to helping more mothers get their ultimate Mother's Day wish – to be with their children again.

For some mothers in the United States, the wait for the magical reunion with their children seems endless. Because of their lack of immigration status, they must spend year after year away from their children. I hope that they are doing something to legalize their status, so that they can spend Mother's Day and other important holidays with their children in the future.

On this Mother's Day, I send my love and greetings to my own mother, who was an immigrant herself, who left her country, family and friends to look for a better life in America. I am very much able to understand what my clients have gone through, since my parents were immigrants and they have gone through the same experiences as my clients. Special greetings go to my Filipina mother-in-law, whom I call "Nanay". Most of all, to the mothers who made the supreme sacrifice of separation, for the sake of their own children.

To all the mothers of the world, Happy Mother's Day!!!

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