

Pacquiao joins Jolie, Oprah in Forbes 100 list

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL
AJPress

LOS ANGELES—The Pound for Pound king is getting some top recognition. Manny Pacquiao was named to Forbes "100 list of Most Powerful Celebs."

Pacquiao ranked 57th in the magazine's list. "Widely regarded at the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world, Pacquiao had two blockbuster fights in the past year: He took on Oscar De La Hoya in December and Ricky Hatton in May," wrote Forbes staff. "Pac-Man is a huge celebrity in his home of the Philippines and plans to run for political office there once his days in the ring are over. Counts Nike and beer maker San Miguel among his sponsors."

Angelina Jolie took Forbes No. 1 spot and Oprah Winfrey ranked 2nd, Madonna 3rd, and Beyonce Knowles 4th rounds out the top four.

Notable athletes Tiger Woods ranked 5th, Kobe Bryant 10th, Michael Jordan and LeBron James placed 18th and 19th, respectively. Indy car racer Danica Patrick ranked 100.

According to Forbes, Pacquiao earned \$40 million in entertainment income from June 2008 to June 2009.

Earlier in the year, Pacquiao made it into *Time Magazine's* "100 Most Influential People." ■

Filipino artist to lead mural-painting in Bayanihan Festival

NEW YORK CITY—Filipino Americans will have the chance to participate in a community mural-painting project during the First Annual Bayanihan Cultural Festival on June 21 in Elmhurst, Queens.

Award-winning Filipino artist Eliseo Art Silva, who has painted more than 60 murals all over the United States and the Philippines, will lead in rendering the giant wall painting depicting the Filipino American life and the issues confronting the community in New York City.

The First Annual Bayanihan Cultural Festival, organized by the Philippine Forum and the Bayanihan Filipino Community Center, will be held at the Hart Playground on 69th St. and 37th Avenue in Woodside, New York. It is the first-ever Philippine Independence Day celebration to be held in the heart of the Filipino community in Queens.

The whole-day festival, sponsored by Jollibee, Western Union, Census 2010, Manila Gorilla and RCN will also feature cultural and musical performances by Filipino American artists, a flea market for Philippine products, native food and delicacies, children's arts and craft, basketball exhibition, free health screening and free legal (immigration) consultation.

"For the Bayanihan Cultural Festival, I have decided to combine the uniquely Filipino mural style *letras y figuras* with the woodcut protest art posters widely embraced by Filipino artists during and after the martial law era from the 1970s- to 1980s in the Philippines, said Silva.

"The woodcut design will allow for the participation of hundreds of participants throughout the day of the festival through a paint-by-number system which I developed when I was a master



muralist of the Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia, the mural capital of the world," Silva added.

The finished mural will be displayed at various sites throughout Woodside, Queens and will

be permanently displayed outdoors at the Bayanihan Community Center on 69th Street in Woodside.

Santiago Pilar, an authority on 19th century paintings and a

► PAGE 5

No less than Presidency for De Castro

PRESSED by the media, De Castro remained coy about his intentions and whether he would run as an independent, preferring to tell reporters to wait for his announcement which may come as late as the deadline for the filing of candidacy.

The Vice President, who was greeted with applause when he entered the Kalayaan Hall at the Philippine Center Building, said that although he was glad about the Pulse Asia Survey results which showed him as the most trusted public official in the Philippines, that is not alone spurring his decision on whether to seek the Presidency in the 2010 elections.

"Trabaho lang kasi ako, eh (I'm about the job)," he explained. Because ang ating mga kababayan eh may political fatigue. They don't

want to hear or see government officials na nangangampanya this early. Ang gusto nila trabaho lang. 'Yun lang naman ang ginawaga ko. 'Yung survey naman eh ginagawa ko lang inspiration. Hindi yan ang barometer ko to file for my candidacy (The people have political fatigue. They don't want to hear or see government officials campaigning this early. What they want is to see us work hard which is exactly what I'm doing. I just use the survey as inspiration. It's not my barometer for filing my candidacy).

De Castro also reiterated his position on the Constituent Assembly, or Con-Ass, which is a hot topic in the Philippines right now.

"I'm against the Constitutional Assembly, or Con-Ass. I'm for a change in the constitution but through a constitutional convention. That was my stand when I was a senator. There were 16 senators who signed for a Con-Con during our time... Up to now, I am for Con-Con," the Vice President said. "Let us change our Constitution, but through a Constitutional Convention, not a Con-Ass."

And his message to Filipino Americans? "Government is doing everything to solve the problems in the Philippines. Even before this global financial crisis, the government made reforms which is why the country did not really feel the global financial crisis too much. Hopefully, we can get past the crisis this year," De Castro stated. "And, thank you, to our Filipino overseas workers. They made a big contribution in helping the Philippine economy continue its progress."

Reaction to the Vice President and his short speech was positive among the leaders who attended the event.

"It was nice," said Nanding and Mila Mendez of New York who organize the yearly Philippine Fiesta in Seacaucus, New Jersey. "It's nice to see the government extending its arms overseas to inform Filipinos about the developments and what's happening back home. We get inspired to help our countrymen back home."

"It was encouraging to hear him say that there are still jobs for Filipinos from outside the Philippines and it looks like he is confident we can survive the economic crisis," said New Jersey-based Leo-Felix

► PAGE 5

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Sen. Villar ready for 2010...

PAGE 1 ◀

environment, health care, responsive social care and high quality education, among many others, said he feels he is the most ready among all the candidates to deal with the problems facing the country today. He will be relying on his experiences and wherewithal to run the government which he says has been mismanaged in the past.

"It's about time that we managed the economy well," he said. "The new President must be able to manage from Day 1. We cannot afford a President who will do on-the-job training. We cannot just focus on one aspect and move on to the next. Everything has to be done simultaneously in order to guarantee improvements in all areas of government."

According to Villar, as President, one must be able to work with the different branches of government and society, including the Senate, the House, the Catholic Church and other institutions and have them work towards the same objective and move in one direction. If one has no experience in making the different institutions work seamlessly, then it will become chaotic, Sen.Villar added.

While delegation of duties will be one of the keys to a successful implementation of programs, Villar hinted that concrete results and a full accounting will be demanded.

"It is not enough that you promise me that you will do this or that," he explained. "If say you tell me that your department has presided over the planting of a million trees to help the environment, I will want proof. Where are those trees planted? How many are actually there? It is not enough that you give your word to me."

Sen. Villar further stated that efficient tax collection to about 18 percent of the gross domestic product and introducing the concept of competition may help improve the economy of the Philippines.

Elections in 2010?
As Sen. Villar prepares for the upcoming elections next year, he is wary of moves by Congress in promoting the forming of a Constituent Assembly (or Con-Ass) as evidenced most recently by the passage of House Resolution 1109 through Congress.

"I have been warning colleagues that the Charter Change issue is not dead as the administration and its allies would like us to believe," the Senator said. "*Kaya nilang gawin 'yan* in one day (They can do it in one day). I expected this to happen. I am not happy with it."

Villar says that further movement of the Charter Change (or Cha-Cha), or its approval, will depend on how the people will react to it.

"There are protests now," he said. "But the administration and its allies are adopting a wait-and-see attitude. If they feel that the situation will turn bad, then they will not push through with it. But if they can get away with it... On the one hand, *galit ang tao* (the people are angry), but whether that anger translates to widespread protests and a movement by the people, we'll just have to see."

Sen. Villar also lamented the fact that the Congress is asking Senators individually to support HR 1109, and not as an institution.

"My worry is when they say that, I have a feeling that they already have some senators with them. Otherwise, they would not be saying that," Villar explained. "When I was Senate President, I had to ask the Senators to act as one, as an institution. I had to rally all the senators when they attempted to do this before. We had to cross party lines then, and we did. That's why we were able to block this. Now, I don't think this Senate will do that."

C-5 issue

Sen.Villar also answered questions on the C-5 issue which has led to a Senate investigation on whether the Senator had benefited illegally or was involved in any impropriety related to the project.

"*Pinapahaba lang nila 'yan para manganak* (They are prolonging the issue and hoping it will bear fruit)," he declared. "Look at the composition of the ethics committee... all of the other presidential candidates are bunched there. The Committee on Finance has already absolved me of any wrongdoing. Even the Department of Public Works and Highways has cleared me of any impropriety."

"This is more of an irritation," he added. "I know that this is being used for political purposes for 2010. Even after one year of accusations, they have not proven anything. They have changed the rules in order to accommodate this case. In the original definition of the ethics committee, what they are accusing me of is not part of the rules. They changed the rules. That's why Sen. (Aquilino) Pimentel and Jovy Salonga said, '*Saan ka nakakita na iniba 'yung* rules and then they applied it retroactively? (Where else can you see a change of rules and then they applied it retroactively?)"

Villar revealed that their decision to not attend the Senate hearings were based on a few developments.

"*Talo ka na nga, kasi ang mga accusers mo* are the judges (You've already lost because your accusers are the judges), but do you know that we learned that even before the first meeting of the Senate ethics committee on Wednesday, a decision was already being passed around on Tuesday? Could you imagine, Wednesday ang meeting but there was already a decision by Tuesday. *Ano ito, eleksyon?* (What are these, the elections?) That's why we did not attend the meeting," Sen. Villar explained.

Ready to face anything

Sen.Villar's readiness for the rigors of the campaign for the 2010 elections can be gleaned from his response to the Senate investigation.

His family, he said, is also ready to deal with what's coming. "My family is ready," he declared. "*Simple lang ang family ko, walang gulo* (We have a simple life with no drama)."

And himself? "They cannot do anything more to me," said the Senator. "They've already started. I have nothing to hide." ■