

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



MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA

*(WHEN the economy tanks and the unemployment rate is shooting through the roof, big government as well as big and medium-sized businesses cannot be depended upon to provide the spark that jumpstarts a moribund economy back to life. No jobs. No breaks. No doleouts. No-where to turn to. There is no other choice but to look at one's self for the opportunities that a hostile environment such as what we have now, can't provide. Immigrants seem to have a slight edge when it comes to survival skills. The reason is that immigrant groups throughout American history always had it tough.)*

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 predis-

posed 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 fa-

cilities 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.

The Korean-Americans are notable in that they help each other

out with their KYE (pronounced keh) system, an informal banking network of friends and associates an aspiring entrepreneur can borrow money from.

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. BE YOUR OWN BOSS is the courageous mantra. Be aware too that you will wear many hats. You may also be the book-keeper, seller, marketer, purchaser, receptionist and janitor all rolled into one. You may have to get the entire family in on the act. You may have to bootstrap in the beginning and tap seed capital from personal sources but once you can show lenders that you mean business and you mean to succeed no matter what it takes, they may even make a beeline to give you a line of credit for the next step. Some comedian once said that a bank is an institution that will lend you money if you can show that you don't need it.

The rewards, after surviving the initial years of struggle, can be tremendous. Some say all it takes is a dream. And may I add, a ton of gumption, energy and unceasing prayers.

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## Madz re-visits Secaucus

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sounded like the radio shows of old since it was complete with ambient sounds of the jungle and jungle animals. *ABBACapella* had elements of stage acting since Madz singers brought

It was interesting to note that some members carry around small reminders that guide them with the order of the songs for the evening. With the number of pieces they must know, the reminders are the closest thing they have to "music stands."

By the end of the evening, I was full of joy. First, to hear a one-of-a-kind performance and second, it is good to be Filipino; knowing that the Philippine Madrigal Singers represent Filipinos around the globe. They are vibrant, full of energy, tempered, poised, and the members are down to earth. There is no doubt that hearing them live exceeded any expectations I had of their skills and ability. Hearing their vocal performance on old records, complete with clicking and scratching, has been nostalgic.

The Madz Tour, achieves its primary goals of fundraising as a benefit; fulfills their ongoing title of UNESCO Artists for Peace by extending "UNESCO's message of peace and tolerance;" and re-uniting local Filipinos wherever they visit. It also created an opportunity for a family reunion at the end of the concert, where Bianca Lopez, considered to be one of the best Sopranos in Madz, had time to reunite with her brother, sister-in-law and nieces. ■



The Philippine Madrigal Singers

Photo by Richard Reyes

## 'Doc' Bernie dela Merced leads team for PIDCI elections

A GROUP of Filipino-American community leaders have banded together to form a "leadership team" as candidates for the Philippine Independence Day Council, Inc. (PIDCI) elections for President and six members of the Board of Directors for 2010.

Last year, Joji was co-chairperson of the Diwa ng Kalayaan contest, considered by the community as the top beauty, brains and talent contest of the Filipino-American community of the Northeast, if not the entire US.

While concentrating on this major integral aspect of the annual Independence commemoration over the last five years, serving as Co-Chair and in other high positions, Joji also involved herself with the other commemorative events to get a well-rounded and hands-on grip of the gamut of events.

Hector Magno is not only an active community leader, but also a highly successful entrepreneur being an entertainment promoter and producer of his own company, Magno PI, Inc. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the Mapua Institute of Technology; however his entrepreneurial acumen comes from his MBA degree which he obtained from Rutgers Graduate School of Management.

Hector is this year's Overall Chairman of the Philippine American Friendship Committee, Inc. (PAFCOM). At PAFCOM he became known as the Godfather of the Filipino Idol, a Festival crowd-drawer he introduced eight years ago. His idea of helping PIDCI, if elected, is to initiate the *Pinoy's Got Talent* variety show.

His other community activities include: President of Samahang Gapan (Nueva Ecija) USA where he raised funds for Gapan City public schools to provide computers, books, furniture and artesian wells. While he was President of Kayumanggi Chorale, Inc., Hector was responsible for raising \$20,000.00 for the Philippine National Red Cross, invariably he was nominated for the Presidential Award under then President Fidel V. Ramos.

Cathy Uy is a beauty queen, being this year's Mrs. PAFCOM. And it became a win-win situation when one of her daughters, Alexandra Uy, was judged PAFCOM's Miss Liberty. Earlier, Alex romped away with this year's Bituin ng Visayas title in PIDCI's Diwa ng Kalayaan (Spirit of Independence) competition.

Cathy is the other entrepreneur among the six candidates for the Board of Directors in "Doc" Bernie's "leadership team," being the CEO of SCAT Productions NY. She is coordinator of Binibining Pilipinas USA and La Bella Filipina Fashion Show. She also puts on fund-raising events for charity, such as Children's chance, in the belief that today's children or youth will be tomorrow's hope and leaders. As an entrepreneur, Cathy holds a stake in KUBO, a Fil-Asian fusion restaurant.

Madelyn Yu is President of the Philippine Nurses Association of New Jersey (PNANJ), considered the most dynamic Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) chapter. It has the highest number of members among all PNAA chapters.

In other community leadership pursuits, Madelyn is currently on the Board of Directors of the Bayanihan Club of Union Township.

Madelyn graduated from the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Nursing, and obtained her Masters Degree in Nursing Administration from Seton Hall University, where she received the prestigious Sarah Erricsson Leadership Award.

She was a Nursing Director at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center for 18 years, and is currently the Nurse Manager in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) of the Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, New Jersey.

"Doc" Bernie's group boasts it is the new leadership team for PIDCI. And they break up the acronym to stand for: Pilipino. Independent. Dynamic. Committed. Innovative. The team also crafted the slogan: Bagong Pagsasama. Bagong Bayanihan. Bagong Pagbabago. A powerful statement in the native Pilipino language the team says means: New Coming Together. New Cooperation. New Change.

(Advertising Supplement)

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