

OPINION & FEATURES



In Remembrance

THEY may be behind bars, but the 1,500 inmates at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center have earned their share of global fame with the debut of their YouTube dance video, *Thriller* in 2007. And they owe their inspiration and the recognition that they were afforded from the man who started it all—the pop icon himself, Michael Jackson.

The King of Pop passed away on June 25 from cardiac arrest in his home in Los Angeles and the world was never the same.

Memorial gatherings, tributes and 24/7 news updates on investigations following his death continue to flood the airwaves until now.

The grief of his passing affected the inmates of Cebu just as profoundly.

And they could only lament and find comfort by giving their idol a most fitting tribute last June 27—one that required nine hours of rehearsal, stopping only to eat or when rain started to pour.

According to the Associated Press, the *Thriller* video “has attracted 24.3 million hits since it was posted two years ago, with nearly a million of them in the 24 hours since news of Jackson’s death spread.”

Despite his passing, Michael Jackson continues to touch and uplift the spirits of the Cebu inmates and they will continue to draw inspiration from the man who brought them fame and most importantly, a renewed sense of self-esteem. (AJP/Press)

EDITORIAL

DEDICATION. An inmate at the island province of Cebu impersonates the late Michael Jackson as he leads in the music icon’s ‘Thriller’ to pay tribute to Jackson Saturday, June 27. More than 1,500 inmates became famous in YouTube with over 23 million hits after they performed Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’. The ‘King of Pop’ died in Los Angeles, CA Thursday. He was 50. AP Photo by Bullitt Marquez

The lesson of the hardboiled egg



STREET TALK
Greg B. Macabenta

YOU can learn a few things from the most unexpected situations. One of our sons asked my wife how to make a hardboiled egg.

Her reply, “Don’t put the egg in the water when it is already boiling. It will crack. Put it in the water just as it is beginning to heat up. That way, the shell will get used to the gradual increase in temperature up to boiling point.”

That was an ‘Aha!’ moment for me.

Aha! So, that’s what the logic was behind the “revelation” of the departed Injustice Secretary Raul Gonzales about the distinct possibility of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo running for parliament in her district in Pampanga, should the system of government be changed.

That seeming foot-in-mouth statement of Gonzales was made so masterfully in that you couldn’t tell if he had made it up out of resentment at being dislodged from his cabinet post or if he was revealing a well-kept strategy of the Malacañang Department of Dirty Tricks or if it was a candid conjecture based on a purely hypothetical situation.

But, like the hardboiled egg being immersed in gradually heating water, the Gonzales statement or revelation or conjecture hardly created a stir amidst the uproar already caused by the railroad-ing by the Lowest House of Resolution 1109 calling for a Con-Ass.

What has actually begun to happen in Manila,

despite the sound and the fury of activists and oppositionists, is a process of either resignation to or increasing militancy against a move that, if the Senate is to be believed, is an exercise in futility.

But, you see, even the seeming nonchalance of the Senate, purportedly an independent body whose very existence is threatened by the introduction of a parliamentary system of government, may be part of the hardboiled egg strategy.

We should not overlook the fact that Arroyo is not entirely without allies in the Senate. You can also bet that those senators who are interested in becoming president will not mind being persuaded by Malacañang to look kindly on Arroyo should the presidential election actually happen.

In an extremely expensive presidential campaign, the persuasiveness of millions of pesos cannot be ignored.

Besides, if you check out the financial backers of some of the so-called “leading presidential candidates”—the ones with double digit ratings—you will realize that these financiers have not been averse to playing ball with the Arroyo government—otherwise, how would they have survived and prospered in the years that she has been in office?

But what about the merger of Lakas and Kampi? Wasn’t that proof, as Arroyo put it, that the administration was preparing for an election?

The skeptics have pointed out, of course, that she didn’t specifically say “presidential elections,” as if it mattered much. Even if she did specify that type of election, nothing would stop her from changing her mind and, to paraphrase Miriam Defensor Santiago, cutely admitting, “I lied.” Didn’t she change her mind before, when she declared that she wasn’t running after the term she had in-

herited from Erap Estrada had expired?

On the other hand, you can also bet that, while Arroyo and her strategists are applying the hard-boiled egg technique to prepare the minds of the people and the political opposition for the possibility of a charter change, the same strategists are laying the groundwork for Plan B, which is for a presidential election to actually be held.

They are making the preparations for the presidential elections very obvious—what could be more obvious than the Lakas-Kampi merger—while making their Con-Ass moves just as obvious, the better to totally confuse the people.

This is part of the hardboiled egg strategy. The masses and even the media will eventually conclude that the Arroyo and her advisers have become confused and no longer know what they’re doing. That is designed to prompt the people and the opposition to let down their guard.

In fact, the clearest indication that the opposition’s guard is down is the fact that its leaders are allowing themselves the luxury of intramurals. They are so confident that Arroyo or her anointed presidential candidate will be easy to defeat because of her extreme unpopularity, they’re beginning to lose sight of the fact that their ranks have begun to be infiltrated.

Plan B is already operational. Moves have already been taken to soften up leading presidential candidates with campaign resources in exchange for leniency on Arroyo and her cabal, in case of an opposition victory.

Because politicians are the way they are—all subscribing to the classic principal of the late Senator Eulogio Rodriguez, Sr. that “politics is addition”—these candidates don’t mind talking to Arroyo’s emissaries and keeping their options

open to making a deal.

Of course, Plan C is operational as well, which is to ensure that the administration candidate for president will win—in case such a presidential candidate becomes absolutely necessary.

Now, what’s this about Arroyo running for congress after she relinquishes the presidency? According to this scuttlebutt, this explains her frequent visits to Pampanga—something, speculators say, she had never done before.

That, of course, is also part of the hardboiled egg strategy, which is to get the people used to the idea that she may actually want to hang on to power, any kind of power, but not necessarily as prime minister.

Is Arroyo as congressman to be counted as 20Plan D?

Yeah, why not? The more plans people and the media attribute to Arroyo, the more confused they will all become. With so many options confronting them, they will begin to feel vulnerable and will be more amenable to a quid pro quo.

The idea is to reach a point, quite like the hard-boiled egg, when nothing she and her cohorts do will shock or even surprise.

That’s when Arroyo will make the move of all moves, whether Plan A, B, C or D, designed to ensure that she will either remain in power or will be guaranteed immunity. At that point, her opponents will be more concerned with their interests, especially if profitable, than with exacting their pound of her flesh.

And the Filipino people will not complain—or crack up—because they will have become hardened to the harsh realities of an unprincipled politics—just like a hapless egg. (gregmacabenta@hotmail.com)

Time for immigration reform is now

(Editor’s Note: This editorial was produced in association with New America Media www.newamericamedia.org, a national association of ethnic media, and was published by ethnic media across the country this week to bring attention to the urgency of immigration reform.)

THE White House and members of Congress must move quickly on enacting a just and humane immigration reform package that will reunite families, reinvigorate the economy, and remove the term “illegal or undocumented immigrants” from the dialogue in this country. Ethnic media, which reaches over 60 million adults in the United States, calls on Congress to move decisively on immigration reform because there are few issues as important to the nation’s well-being as an overhaul of the inefficient, inhumane and economically debilitating immigration system. More importantly, we are also urging our readers and viewers to contact their Senators and Congressmen and let them know that immigration reform must be a national priority.

The immigration system is broken not just for 12 million undocumented immigrants, but also for specialized workers blocked from joining the American economy because of narrow quotas, and mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters of US citizens who must wait for years before being reunited with their families.

Our nation needs comprehensive immigration policies that will replace a broken system of raids and roundups with one that protects all workers from exploitation, improves America’s security and builds strong communities. It’s time to end the division between workers, which has allowed big business to exploit both sides. Clearly, working-class citizens and immigrant workers have much in common—dreams of better homes, education for their families and quality healthcare. There is more that brings us together, than separates us. United we can be a strong force for change, changes that that bring more workforce safety and humane conditions.

Immigration is often portrayed as an explosive, divisive issue. In reality it’s not. Since the repeal of the national origins quota system in 1965, which discriminated against certain immigrants, a consensus has been building towards an immigration system that respects the country’s core values. These include economic opportunity, equality under the law regardless of ethnic background, and an embrace of the world’s most innovative, energetic and ambitious workers. Now, with the country facing serious competition from workers abroad, it’s more important than ever to create a world-class immigration system. It’s good for families, good for communities and good for America. ■

VERY often, when we are faced with challenges that overwhelm us—poverty, climate change, corruption—we feel inadequate, almost paralyzed into inaction. We think, “What can I do?”

Indeed, what can one person do to make a dent in these deep-rooted, widespread, often global problems? Many years ago, I watched the movie *The Power of One*. It was about a young white boy in Africa and how he was able to stop the discrimination against and the abuse of black Africans in their own community. I would recommend it to anyone who despairs of the situation in our country and in our world.

I am fortunate in that, while I grew up in a rather protected family environment, I was educated by the missionary sisters of the Holy Spirit. They impressed upon us, even while we were in the Primary Grades, how our donation of ten centavos to the missions could change the lives of children, of the disabled, of the homeless, of the illiterate. At that time, ten centavos was the price of a 6 oz. bottle of Coke, the price of a jeepney ride. It was then roughly equivalent to a nickel.

They urged us to share what we had, no matter how little, and to share not just our coin, but also our time and our talent. As I grew up, I would tutor classmates who found math difficult and teach catechism to public schools students. I also took on the larger problems of society through our Social Catholic Action, the College Editors’ Guild, and eventually became an activist in the political and social fields.

One of the songs that inspires me when

One Voice

by VICKY P. GARCHITORENA

I feel that I am not making inroads into solving a problem is the song *One Voice*. Some excerpts:

One Voice,
Singing in the darkness,
All it takes is One Voice,
Singing so they hear what’s on your mind,
And when you look around you’ll find
There’s more than One Voice,
Singing in the darkness...
Hands are joined and fears unlocked,
If only One Voice would start it on its own.

We need just One Voice facing the unknown,
And then that One Voice would never be alone...

Shout it out and let it ring!
Just One Voice,
It takes that One Voice,
And everyone will sing!

The movie and the song capture the essence of movements that are now capturing the imagination of world. In search of heroes, we look for individuals who, working quietly in barangays, in urban areas, in the mountains and valleys, strive to improve things in their neighborhoods. They help educate children and adults, plant trees on riverbanks, inform families on health issues, train teachers or cooperatives, organize microfinance initiatives to help the entrepreneurial poor.

A month or so ago, I came across an article on a Filipino who has been cited as a CNN Hero. What an honor. And when I read on, I realized why. Efrén Penaflores was born

into a humble family, with very little by way of human comforts. His father is a tricycle driver; his mother takes in laundry.

As a teenager, he was often bullied by toughies in the neighborhood. Instead of retaliating, he decided to organize a better teenage group to give the teens a choice. His group grew beyond his wildest dreams, to about 2,000 at last count.

Given a scholarship by World Vision, he could have just turned his back on his difficult childhood. Instead, he has decided to pay it back. Every Saturday, Efrén and his many colleagues go to slum areas in his neighborhood with pushcarts packed with blackboards, chalk, books, and crayons and offer free classes to the children in the streets.

Who knows how many lives he has transformed? The young boys and girls who were inspired to follow him—away from the gangs and from drugs and violence; the kids who are encouraged to stay in school because of his Saturday lessons out of his pushcarts. The communities who realize that they can take their destiny into their own hands and that they can improve their lives and the lives of others through simple acts of caring and concern. All it takes is time, a generous heart, and the courage to reach out to others, not caring whether one is rewarded or recognized or applauded.

Efrén has shown the *Power of One*. He has shown how his One Voice has resonated with thousands of youth who now raise their voices with his in a chorus of hope. May his tribe increase. ■



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