

# FILIPINO CHRONICLE

HAWAII'S #1 FILIPINO NEWSPAPER

◆ MARCH 22, 2014 ◆

## THE LONG ROAD TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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**EDITORIALS**

# The Quest for Universal Health Care in the Philippines

**U**niversal Health Care, also referred to by the Philippine government as *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan*, is defined by the University of the Philippines' *Acta Medica Philippina* journal as the "provision to every Filipino of the highest possible quality of health care that is accessible, efficient, equitably distributed, adequately funded, fairly financed, and appropriately used by an informed and empowered public." Summarizing this definition, the Aquino administration puts it as "the availability and accessibility of health services and necessities for all Filipinos."

As early as six years ago, there were proposals to create an action plan which would help the Philippines move toward providing better health care for everyone. In a 2008 meeting attended by public health experts, health professionals, health reform advocates, clinical specialists and economists, universal health care was discussed as a solution to the continuing inequity in the delivery of health care services to the rich and poor, which the experts concluded was the country's most pressing health problem.

Building on the work of the participants, who later reorganized themselves as the Universal Health Care Study Group, President Benigno Aquino III espoused universal health care as his administration's primary advocacy for the health sector after he won the 2010 election. The administration identified three main thrusts for its Aquino Health Agenda, namely 1.) financial risk protection through expansion in enrollment and benefit delivery of the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP); 2.) improved access to quality hospitals and health care facilities; and 3) attainment of health-related UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

But there were several major obstacles to attaining universal health care. First, the two national health care financing mechanisms of direct government subsidy through the Department of Health (DOH) and Local Government Units' budgets, as well the NHIP were unable to adequately provide financial risk protection for the poor. Second, and as a direct result of the first problem, poor households had insufficient access to quality outpatient and inpatient care from health care facilities. Third, owing to the failure of the financing and health care delivery systems to address the needs of poor Filipinos, it was unlikely that the Philippines would meet its MDGs by 2015, especially its targets to reduce maternal and infant mortality.

Slowly but surely, Filipinos are beginning to see these proposed reforms take shape. For instance, the years 2011 to 2013 have been

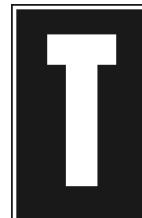
(continued on page 3)

## In Support of Bus Advertisement

**M**ayor Kirk Caldwell introduced a bill late last year to allow for advertisements on the exterior of City buses and handi-vans as a way of generating an additional \$8 million in revenues. Bill 69 (2013) makes good sense considering that the City is facing a budget shortfall and rising public demand for bus service. Currently, the City's award-winning bus system serves about 220,000 people a day. The mayor has already promised that revenues generated from bus advertisements will be used to fully restore bus routes like Country Express Route E that were cut in 2012 due to high operational costs. The original Express Route E was heavily used by Ewa and West Oahu residents into Downtown and Waikiki—two major employment centers.

We agree that Hawaii's natural beauty is a valuable asset that must be protected. While we oppose billboards, the proposed advertisements, which would be placed on the back and sides of City buses, will be no different from commercial vehicles sporting signs that we already commonly see on our streets and highways.

## FROM THE PUBLISHER



he next few weeks or so is Spring Break—a time for our hard-working students to enjoy a little "R&R" before the home stretch. Speaking of which, I can't believe that there's only about 10 weeks left before school is out. If you're a parent, have you noticed how much your kids have grown and changed over the past year? Sure, there were challenges to overcome, but overall you should be pleased at what your kids have accomplished and learned during the year.



Our cover story for this issue was written by Gregory Garcia who delves into the Philippines' National Health Insurance Program which provides comprehensive health care services to all Filipinos, regardless of social or economic status, through the Philippine Health Insurance Corp (PhilHealth). Prior to the implementation of the new program, access to health insurance coverage was limited to government workers and private sector employees who paid contributions as members of the state-run PhilHealth. For the program to succeed, there will need to be better monitoring by the government to confirm that beneficiaries are indeed using the services, that those services are being delivered well and that people's health is improving. Turn to page 4 to find out more about how the Philippine government is implementing the new national health insurance program.

Also in this issue, we'd like to congratulate Dr. Lindy Aquino on her appointment as a contributing editor. Dr. Aquino has over 40 years of editorial and journalistic experience. She was a former columnist of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the largest newspaper in the Philippines, and a contributor to international publications and newspapers including the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, and other journals and publications too numerous to mention. In this issue, Dr. Aquino writes on the FilCom Center's search for a new president and chief operating officer (COO). She also provides an exclusive interview with outgoing president and COO Rose Churma. Please turn to page 11 for more on the FilCom Center.

We also welcome Dr. Jay Dinong Valdez as our newest contributing writer. A licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Valdez submitted our Healthline column for this issue entitled "Suicide—the Silent Epidemic" (see page 6).

In closing, please take time to read the other stories and columns that are included in this jam-packed issue, including a special feature on page 8 about Jessica Cox, an extraordinary Filipina-American who recently visited Tacloban and other typhoon-damaged areas in the Philippines. As always, we invite you to contact us at: [filiptinochronicle@gmail.com](mailto:filiptinochronicle@gmail.com) with any story ideas, tips or concerns regarding Hawaii's dynamic and vibrant Filipino community. Our sincerest thanks to all of you for reading and faithfully supporting the *Hawaii Filipino Chronicle*—the state's leading Filipino newspaper!

Until next time...aloha and mabuhay!

*Chona A. Montesines-Sonido*

The bottom line is that the City shouldn't have to *kow tow* to special interest groups like the Outdoor Circle that opposed viable revenue generating solutions such as Bill 69 (2013). Such groups are entitled to complain and state their opposition, but in all fairness they should also suggest revenue-raising ideas. In light of the City's projected \$156 million budget shortfall for the 2015 fiscal year, we need to be more open-minded to viable revenue generating solutions and not pre-judge bus advertisements until the issue is fully vetted in committee. If states like Vermont and Maine have successfully allowed exterior bus ads while still outlawing billboards, certainly Hawaii can do too.

The City Council's Budget Committee deferred the bill in January while the City's attorneys iron out legal issues and other concerns. We urge the committee to move the bill forward for further discussion and consideration.

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The Hawaii Filipino Chronicle is published weekly by The Hawaii Filipino Chronicle Inc. It is mailed directly to subscribers and distributed at various outlets around Oahu and the neighbor islands. Editorial and advertising deadlines are three weeks prior to publication date. Subscriptions are available at \$75 per year for Oahu and the neighbor islands, continental U.S. \$80, foreign country \$90. Copyright 2006-2014. The Hawaii Filipino Chronicle Inc. is located at 94-356 Waipahu Depot, Waipahu, HI 96797. Telephone (808) 678-8930 Facsimile (808) 678-1829. E-mail [filiptinochronicle@gmail.com](mailto:filiptinochronicle@gmail.com). Website: [www.thefilipinochronicle.com](http://www.thefilipinochronicle.com). Opinions expressed by the columnists and contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle management. Reproduction of the contents in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission from the management. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

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## CANDID PERSPECTIVES



By Emil Guillermo

**I** had a rare meal with my college son the other day. We ate Ethiopian food with our hands. Just like Filipinos! On a lark I asked him if people ever acknowledge he's Filipino.

And he said, "They think I'm Mexican."

It's the name. Guillermo.

Jimmy Kimmel's sidekick security guard doesn't help either.

The name is a heteronym. Same spelling, same meaning (it means "William" as in Guillermo Shakespeare). Ah, but there's the rub: pronunciation.

Most people say "GEE-yer-

# Lessons from "Adele Dazeem": Saying My Name, Correctly, the 100 Percent Filipino Way

mo," in homage to the Spanish colonizer and/or their three years of high school Spanish.

Even some of my relatives pronounce it that way....to my chagrin.

The correct way of course: "GILL-yer-mo."

That's "Gill" as in "breathing apparatus of a fish."

"Yer-mo" as in "Yer mo" wears combat boots."

Ah, phonetics. But go ahead. Do this test anywhere in Hawaii.

Ask any self-respecting Filipino who hasn't been otherwise brainwashed. Doesn't matter what ancestral province in the Philippines they're from.

Just ask them to pronounce the "Double L" sound.

The wise guys see two

"Y"'s and mispronounce it the Spanish way.

The real Filipinos will say it the right way, and as far as I'm concerned, the only way.

They see two L's and translate that into an "L" and a "Y."

They pronounce that "Ell-yeah," or as they say in the vernacular, "-ell yeah!"

Do it with any Double L. It's the same. That's the Filipino sound.

I figure the Baraquio sisters just bypassed the whole thing by doing the "--quio" trick.

It easily could have been spelled "Baraquito," and therefore double-elled into a sound of "Bara-KEEL-yo."

Clearly though, they went with the sound of the "Double Y;" It's the Spanish way, with the

undeniable "quio" spelling.

Now I know what you're saying. I can hear it from here: "What's the big deal, Emil?"

Well, plenty.

I hope you were watching the Oscars and that unfortunate mishap of John Travolta's where he said the name of the singer of the Oscar nominated song from "Frozen," sung by Idina Menzel.

But Travolta didn't say that. He called her "Adele Dazeem."

Several hundred million watching and Travolta "travoltified" Menzel's name.

The lasting buzz lasted well after the Oscars. You screw up your name and that's a big deal.

And the digital world went crazy. There was even a link on Slate to travoltify your name.

Mine is Eoian Gonzaleez.

I'll stick with Emil Guillermo.

The lesson to me was Menzel and others knew this wasn't a minor thing.

And yet how many times when people screw up your name do we just shine it on, and pretend it doesn't matter?

I used to stop making a big deal about it after the anchor people from coast-to-coast just couldn't get beyond the Mexican way of pronouncing my name.

And they weren't Mexican.

And neither was I.

Believe me, if you make waves about anything that's a slam dunk, where there is ab-

solutely no debate, no discussion, because you, after all, do know how to say your name, then the name mispronunciation idea is your time to raise your family flag and wave it proudly.

Why not? We wouldn't be caught dead pronouncing Lingle, LINE-gal, or Abercrombie, Aber-chromey.

But our names? Have we thought so little to not even bothering to correct someone?

The Spanish thing came through again at the Oscars after Travolta slighted Menzel. She sang "Let it Go," the song from "Frozen." And when the song actually won for best song, up came Robert Lopez.

Lopez. Spanish? Originally, yes. Mexican? No.

How many times did you hear, "I didn't know he was Filipino?"

Now the youngest (age 38) person to win all the prizes, the Emmy, the Grammy, the Oscar, and the Tony, is a Filipino American and most think he's Mexican.

So take a lesson in identity. Go ahead say your name. Hear a mispronunciation, correct it.

Don't do as the song and let it go.

My kids may not act very Filipino at times.

But they do say their names in a way to let people know, they know, they're Filipino.

EDITORIALS (from page 2, THE QUEST....)

landmark years for health-related policies and legislation. Under the auspices of the DOH, the upgrading of health facilities was started and around 20,000 RN Heals Nurses and 100,000 Community Health Team members were hired, mobilized and deployed nationwide to help in the delivery of health care services, especially in rural and poor barangays.

In December 2012, the president signed Republic Act 10351 or the Sin Tax Law, which revised the tax collection scheme for tobacco and alcohol consumption. Not only has there been a marked reduction in Filipinos' use of these products, which have always burdened the country's health care system, the revenues collected are now also being allocated to fund the government's goal to expand PhilHealth enrollment to the second poorest 20 percent of the population. Revenues are also being used to upgrade and modernize hospitals and other health facilities, as well as to expand existing preventive and promotive programs under *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan*.

On June 2013, the president also signed the National Health Insurance Act of 2013 to reinforce the government's thrust of

providing financial risk protection for poor Filipinos.

Unfortunately, one of the three important health-related legislations, the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act, is still languishing in a Supreme Court battle initiated by conservative and religious groups.

While the Philippine government's plan to achieve universal health care for all Filipinos is an admirable objective, clearly this is not something

that can be done overnight as numerous political and systematic hurdles still need to be overcome for the government to be able to implement all the programs it has outlined.

However, we urge the government to continue its direction and hasten its efforts in realizing its comprehensive and universal health care plan, which will enable the Philippines to achieve health equity and create an efficient and sustainable health care system for the country.

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**EMIL GUILLERMO** is an award winning journalist and commentator.

## COVER STORY

# The Long Road to Universal Health Care in the Philippines

By Gregory Garcia

**O**n June 19, 2013, President Benigno Aquino III signed into law Republic Act 10606 or the National Health Insurance Act of 2013, which is aimed at ensuring that all Filipinos are covered by the National Health Insurance Program through the Philippine Health Insurance Corp (PhilHealth).

The law mandates the government to provide "comprehensive health care services to all Filipinos through a socialized health insurance program that will prioritize the health care needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, persons with disabilities, women and children and provide free health care services to indigents."

The new law amended several provisions of Republic Act 7875 or the National Health Insurance Act of 1995, with the changes intended to strengthen the implementation of the National Health Insurance Program nationwide and to help marginalized sectors.

The changes include an amendment on Article 3, Section 6 of Republic Act 7875, which states that the program "shall not be made compul-

sory in certain provinces and cities until PhilHealth shall be able to ensure that members in such localities shall have reasonable access to adequate and acceptable health care services." The new law ensures that PhilHealth coverage is now mandatory for all provinces, cities and municipalities.

Another amendment was on the existing PhilHealth membership categories – employed, sponsored, individually paying, overseas Filipinos and lifetime – which limited membership to those who could pay monthly premiums and those whose premiums were shouldered by private entities or by the government. The new law directs PhilHealth to enroll members under categories that include all Filipinos regardless of social or economic status.

The new categories are as follows: members in the formal economy, members in the informal economy, indigents, sponsored members and lifetime members.

## No One Left Behind

PhilHealth President and CEO Alexander Padilla said in an official statement that Republic Act 10606 ensures quick and efficient delivery of PhilHealth services to Filipinos.

"We commit to provide the public with every inch of transparency from their government. After all, we Filipinos are the ones who will benefit from it. With the passage of the new law, coverage of all Filipinos, especially the poor, will be fast-tracked, while the benefits will be further improved, expanded and made more easily available," Padilla said.

Similarly, the act's principal sponsor in the senate, Sen. Pia Cayetano, said that the underlying philosophy of the new law is that "no one should be left behind."

"With this new law, we seek to identify and enroll the poorest segments of the population, numbering to about 25 million Filipinos, under the National Health Insurance Program. This measure addresses a shortcoming in the implementation of the original PhilHealth law (Republic Act 7875) by ensuring that the poorest of the poor, including the indigents, unemployed, self-employed and those from the informal sector would be enrolled in PhilHealth and



Pres. Aquino signs Republic Act 10606 into law last June 19, 2013

would actually benefit from its programs and services," she said in an official statement.

## Universal Health Care, Not Just Health Insurance

Some groups, however, are of a different mind, believing that the law is not the solution to the health care inequity in the Philippines and to the inadequate access to health care services being experienced by the poor.

Rep. Barry Gutierrez of the Akbayan party-list, for instance, urged Congress to instead push for the establishment of a comprehensive system for free public health care through a universal health care law, one that will support and strengthen the country's current health care system.

"Our current health care system is far from adequate. With the formulation of a universal health care law, it will ensure that every Filipino has full access to basic health care and services," Gutierrez said in a news release.

The group Health Alliance for Democracy also believes that it is the government's obligation to provide free and accessible health care to Filipinos. An expanded insurance program, the group said,

wouldn't be necessary if health care services were excellent and came at no cost.

"There is no need for health insurance if government is sincere in delivering health care services to the people. Funds for this program alone can be allocated to the improvement of deteriorating health care facilities and other equipment that are most needed by our government hospitals," the group told independent news agency *Bulatlat*.

Indeed, the amendment of the National Health Insurance Act is only a partial fulfillment of the Aquino administration's vision to provide universal health care for all Filipinos. The plan, as outlined in the president's 2010 administrative order entitled "The Aquino Health Agenda: Achieving Universal Health Care for All Filipinos," provided three strategic thrusts:

- Rapid expansion in National Health Insurance Program enrollment and benefit delivery using national subsidies for the poorest families
- Improved access to quality hospitals and health care facilities through accelerated upgrading of public health facilities

(continued on page 5)



Michael A. McMann, M.D.

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## COVER STORY

*(from page 4, THE LOANG ROAD ...)*

- Attainment of the health-related Millennium Development Goals by applying additional effort and resources in localities with high concentration of families who are unable to receive critical public health services.

The plan is also known as the “*Kalusugan Pangkalahatan*” agenda. But as health care reform advocates are now only beginning to realize, achieving a truly universal health care system for the Philippines is a process that may take years to accomplish. For one thing, PhilHealth figures show that in 2013, only 81 percent of Filipinos were covered by the National Health Insurance Program. For another, the public’s out-of-pocket expenditure for health care remains high.

Based on the 2011 Philippine National Health Accounts, out of the country’s ₱431 billion total health expenditures, Filipinos’ out-of-pocket expenses amounted to ₱227 billion (52.7 percent), while the national and local governments’ share accounted for only ₱116 billion (27 percent). PhilHealth’s contribution, on the other hand, was only ₱39 billion (9 percent).

Furthermore, many public hospitals and health facilities in the past have suffered neglect due to inadequacy of health budgets, and there is also a continuing weakness in the management and compensation of human resources for health. According to the Department of Health, the poorest of the population are the main users of government health facilities, so the deterioration and poor quality of many government health facilities is particularly disadvantageous to the underprivileged.

### Hawaii's Filipinos Weigh In

Hawaii-based scholar Dr. Teresita Bernales says she would like to think positively about the efforts being done by the government for the welfare of Filipinos.

“The Philippines’ universal health care or ‘Kalusugan Pangkalahatan’ agenda aims

for the “provision to every Filipino of the highest possible quality of health care that is accessible, efficient, equitably distributed, adequately funded, fairly financed and appropriately used by an informed and empowered public.” It is a government mandate with the goal of ensuring that every Filipino shall receive affordable and quality health benefits. This involves providing adequate resources — human resources, health facilities and health financing. Universal health care in the Philippines, if delivered as mandated by law, will make the Philippines stand side by side with the healthiest countries of the world,” she says.

However, Dr. Bernales also points out the need to address existing inequities and inefficiencies that encumber the delivery of services in Philippine health facilities.

“Through my firsthand experiences in our Ohana Medical Missions, I heard from many patients that they do not go to hospitals or see doctors for illnesses because they do not have money to pay for the medications prescribed, which they have to pay out of pocket.

“All health care facilities, both public and private, are mandated to service all patients, but their facilities should be able to meet high standards for them to give quality service. With the acute shortage of physicians and other health professionals, ‘free health care for all’ becomes a big ‘pie in the sky’ only,” she says.

Another scholar, Dr. Belinda Aquino, also believes that the Philippines should have a universal or national health care system which the government should be responsible for implementing competently.

“Many people do not have medical or health insurance, which makes it a matter of life and death at times, especially for the poor, who cannot afford hospitalization, surgeries or any form of medical care on even a short-term basis. There are public general hospitals and public health centers in just about every city or region which offer free medical services or services at reduced

cost, but even if there are such free public facilities, they are so overcrowded that patients are literally confined on the corridors when they get sick.

“There should be a plan to equalize the distribution of hospital beds in all facilities, whether public or private, to people who are in need of urgent care. After all, the government, through the Health Department, usually has the power to regulate the operations of hospitals in the country,” Dr. Aquino says.

While Dr. Aquino believes the passage of the National Health Insurance Act of 2013 is a good thing, she says the law should be taken with a grain of salt because the Philippines is known for having had trouble in implementing many laws in the past. Furthermore, she says the government should really have thoroughly evaluated and addressed the different considerations and prerequisites required for its implementation.

“This is a social issue, not just an economic one. What class or classes

in Filipino society absolutely cannot afford any kind of insurance? How many can afford it but are hiding their incomes? Things like these should be looked into.

“But before any such plan can be pursued, people must be educated on the need for health insurance and the benefits that can be derived from it. There is too much dependence on government, which is either incompetent, corrupt, overburdened or simply unable to deliver any

appreciable service to its population. Education in the schools, health practices, public health units and other facilities involved in health care should be reformed or strengthened to perform their duties and respond to challenges posed by an ever-growing population,” she says.

In effect, Dr. Aquino says necessary preconditions in a larger picture comprising economy, politics and culture should be there before the issue of health care can be adequately addressed.

“Education and public health are only two of these fundamental areas. The economy is another basic issue. More employment opportunities generated by a vibrant economy can provide better conditions for families, lift them up from poverty, and lead to more education for their children. This, in turn, is expected to lead to a broader middle class that is more able to look after its needs and acquire the ability to lift the society in general to more equitable levels,” she says.

### Health Care Portability, Retirement and Obamacare

Even as Filipinos begin to adjust to the rules of its new National Health Insurance Program, Americans are currently signing up for health insurance on marketplaces created by U.S. President Barack Obama’s controversial health care law.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, was passed with the goal of improving the quality, accessibility and affordability of health insurance. It is also aimed at reducing the number of uninsured individuals by expanding public and private insurance coverage and also at lowering health care expenditures by the people and by government. Some, however, have complained that its provisions are too complex and difficult to comprehend.

The uncertainty brought about by having to grapple with this new American health care law and of having to navigate through the Philippines’

*(continued on page 6)*

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## HEALTHLINE

**SUICIDE—THE SILENT EPIDEMIC**

By Dr. Jay Dinong Valdez

**T**he purpose of this article is to raise awareness on an issue that's plagued our society. It knows no boundaries and it doesn't discriminate against race, gender or social economic status. When it strikes, it's too late. The loss is permanent and many loved ones are left behind.

The plague is suicide. It's the third leading cause of death among people ages 15-24, according to the American Psychological Association (APA). Suicide ranks as the 10th leading cause of death in America based on 2010 data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This translates to someone dying from suicide every 13.7 minutes as reported by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

The most common disease associated with suicide is mental illness, with depression topping the list. Abusing drugs and impulsivity increases the likelihood of committing suicide. Generally, more women try to attempt to kill themselves, but

men are more successful because their methods are often more lethal.

Detecting someone at risk for suicide is a challenge for the Asian-American community, the reason being the shame and stigma associated with mental illness. Asians tend to internalize their problems and avoid talking about them as they reflect badly on the family and themselves.

Recent immigrants are vulnerable as they adjust to Western society. They're unemployed and have difficulty finding jobs. Financially, they're unstable and have to rely on family members for support. Many who aren't fluent in English cannot ask for help. Family members who can speak English aren't always available as they often work full-time jobs or work multiple jobs. Consequently, the feeling of isolation, discouragement and depression begins to set in. They might consider seeking guidance from their church, doctor, friends, family members, or folk healers; but most will do nothing because of the shame.

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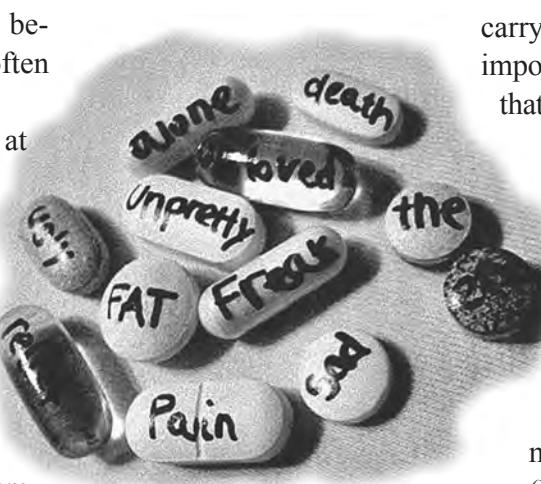
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They start to feel hopeless, helpless and desperate. To cope, some abuse alcohol and drugs, or withdraw completely. It becomes difficult to fall asleep, stay asleep or get up in the morning. Their appetite is poor, energy and motivation is low, and nothing seems to be pleasurable anymore. They feel alone and life becomes painful. Many Asians-Americans begin to experience physical illness and seek medical treatment, but they avoid talking about feeling depressed or suicidal, and the psychological symptoms are left untreated.

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carry out the plan. The most important point to remember is that suicide can be prevented.

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- History of suicide in the family
- Talk of suicide or death
- Suicidal gestures (cutting self)
- Chronic pain
- Loss of interest from pleasurable activities
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Poor personal hygiene and grooming
- Changes in sleep, energy level, concentration, appetite and mood
- Giving personal possessions away and making funeral plans wills and trusts

If you or someone you know is imminently suicidal or if you are concerned about someone, help is available by calling the following numbers:

- Access Line available 24/7

**COVER STORY** (*from page 5, THE LONG...*)

often deficient health care system are holding back many Filipino-Americans from considering retirement in the Philippines.

"One disincentive to retiring in the Philippines is the health care system. Most of the Filipinos who retire back home are 'pensioners' from social security and retirement checks, but except in some cases, they cannot transfer their medical insurance back there because only three or four hospitals in Manila and possibly one in Cebu are accredited by the U.S. Efforts toward 'Medicare portability,' have also been undertaken to no success," Dr. Aquino says.

Medicare is a federal government program which provides medical coverage to

U.S. citizens who are 65 years of age or older. Most American retirees, however, can't use their Medicare abroad. So far, only U.S. citizens living in Guam and Saipan are allowed by Medicare to obtain critical medical treatment in select Philippine hospitals.

Still, lobby groups in the U.S. are continuing to push for a Medicare portability law, which they say will help the program save money. One estimate shows that if just 200,000 Filipino-Americans chose to retire in the Philippines, Medicare could save at least \$1 billion every year.

As for Dr. Bernales, she says that more than Medicare portability, the overall condition of the Philippine health care system would still be her main consideration for retir-

(language interpreters available):

Oahu: (808) 832-3100

Kauai, Lanai, Molokai,

Maui and Hawaii:

(800) 753-6879

- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room or urgent care clinic
- Seek help from a mental health professional (contact the Hawaii Psychological Association via their website at [www.hawaiipsychology.org](http://www.hawaiipsychology.org))
- See your primary care provider immediately

Additional resources are also available online at:

- American Association of Suicidology: [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- Stop A Suicide Today: [www.stopasuicide.org](http://www.stopasuicide.org)

**DR. VALDEZ** is a licensed clinical psychologist. He is the owner of Aloha Counseling Services, LLC in Waipahu where he assesses and treats a wide variety of psychological, emotional, relational and learning disorders. He received his Psy.D. degree in Clinical Psychology (APA Accredited Program) from Argosy University in Honolulu.

ing in the Philippines.

"Right now they are still in the early stages of implementation of their universal health care agenda—working on how to enroll patients, determining if the budget is sufficient, upgrading health facilities like barangay health centers and Department of Health hospitals, and recruiting health teams of doctors, nurses, midwives and other allied health professionals.

"This 'health care for all' plan covers all seniors and retirees but I think all these sound too good to be true. I think it will take a long while until it is fully implemented in its truest form. I will want to wait until it has taken off in a very positive way before I consider retiring in the Philippines," she says.

## IMMIGRATION GUIDE



**By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tipon**

Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, has been revised to include more questions relating to good moral character and national security. It also has a new simplified format and uses a 2D barcode technology which will allow the USCIS to capture data more accurately. The barcode located at the bottom of each page and the additional questions account for the length of the new form.

The revised form is now 21 pages in length. The ten-page old version of the form is still being accepted. However, starting May 5, 2014, the USCIS will no longer accept previous versions of the form.

Eligibility requirements are better outlined on the new form. To be eligible, an applicant must satisfy the basic requirements, namely, continuous residence as a lawful permanent resident (LPR) for five years and if married to a U.S. citizen, three years; residence in the state or USCIS district claimed as residence for at least three months prior to filing; physical presence for a specified period of time; good moral character; attachment to the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution; basic knowledge of U.S. history and government; and ability to read, write and speak basic English.

A question relating to English language test exemptions was added to the revised

form. It specifically enumerates those who are eligible based on age and residency of the applicant. Those who are exempted from taking the English language test will still have to take the civics test. But if the applicant is 65 years old and has been living in the U.S. as a permanent resident for 20 years, he will take a simplified form version of the civics test.

Also, a section about the applicant's parents is also added to determine whether the applicant is eligible for citizenship through derivation or naturalization. If the USCIS finds that an applicant acquired citizenship through his parents, the applicant does not need to undergo the naturalization process. In this case, the applicant is issued a Certificate of Citizenship.

Questions relating to national security have been added to conform with the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004 and the Child Soldier

Accountability Act of 2008. The sections on employment and education history were revised to make the form more user-friendly. Also, the new form only requires the applicant to list trips outside the U.S. which were made in the last 5 years. The previous version requires all trips made outside the U.S. since becoming a lawful permanent resident.

The USCIS revised the preparer's statement to make sure that all parties especially the applicant "understands the form's information requests and that his responses were communicated as completely as possible." The interpreter's statement has also been revised. A section on renunciation of foreign titles is also added to the new form. Additional questions on membership in the U.S. Armed Forces are likewise incorporated.

When data is entered on the form electronically the 2D barcode located at the bottom of each page changes. The

USCIS scans the barcode and the customized information will be directly uploaded in their system. This allows the USCIS to process the data more efficiently and accurately. An application form with a damaged barcode or which was not completed electronically will still be processed.

**ATTY. TIPON** has a Master of Laws degree from Yale Law School and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines. He is originally from Laoag City and Magasingal, Ilocos Sur. Atty. Tipon specializes in immigration law and criminal defense. He served as an immigration officer and co-authored "Immigration Law Service, 1st ed.," an 8-volume practice guide for immigration officers and lawyers. His radio program airs Thursdays at 7:30 am on KNDI 1270 AM. He can be reached via mail at: 800 Bethel St., Suite 402, Honolulu, HI 96813, by telephone at (808) 225-2645 or by e-mail: filamlaw@yahoo.com. For more on Atty. Tipon, go online to: www.MilitaryandCriminalLaw.com. This article is a general overview of the subject matter discussed and is not intended as legal advice.



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## NEWS FEATURE

# Disabled Fil-Am Lends Assistance to Typhoon Victims

by Dennis Galolo



Filipina-American Jessica Cox, who was born without arms, joined relief efforts in late February 2014 to assist typhoon victims in the Philippines.

Cox joined other volunteers from Handicap International in distributing vital humanitarian aid to thousands of displaced victims in Tacloban and Guiuan in Eastern Samar where her family is from, and helping to clear debris. Her visit brings continued attention to the on-going crisis in the Visayas region.

"Stations have been set up to distribute clean drinking water and temporary shelters were distributed everywhere we went," Cox says. "My goal in some small way was to comfort the people living through this nightmare. They will need help for years to come and I hope that by sharing their stories I can help organizations like Handicap International continue their work on the

ground."

For Cox, the large-scale devastation was hard to comprehend, let alone respond to.

"There is still clear evidence of the destruction that Yolanda caused in the Philippines," she says. "My relatives to this day still don't have electricity or phone lines. But it was comforting to see the efforts that Handicap International is making to help the people who need it the most."

Handicap International also distributed crutches and rugged wheelchairs, and provided physical therapy for those with disabilities. Its mobile rehabilitation teams went door-to-door, helping the injured to regain their health and strength.

Cox, 31, also spoke with victims about the storm's aftermath and their future. Her presence and message were especially comforting to her *kababayans* in the Philippines, where one in four Filipinos is affected by a disability and where government services for the disabled and handicapped are virtually non-existent.

After visiting Tacloban,



▲ Handicap International Tacloban Field Coordinator Guerric Baranovsky gives Jessica Cox a tour of the destruction in Tacloban  
| Molly Feltner/Handicap Int'l

and believed that anything is possible."

That included overcoming her fears, one of which was the fear of flying. In 2005, Cox was offered a ride in single engine airplane. The experience was both frightening and exhilarating.

"I was instantly hooked," Cox recalls. "The feeling of flying an airplane is very empowering."

She completed her training and received her pilot's license in 2008. She holds the distinction as the first person born without arms to be granted a pilot's license. In fact, Cox is recognized by the Guinness World Record as the first woman to fly an airplane with her feet.

In case you're wondering, most single-engine airplanes have four controls—a yoke, throttle and a two rudder peddles. However, her specially-designed 1946 415C Ercoupe airplane was built without rudder peddles, which frees Cox up to control the yoke and throttle using her feet.

## Can't Stop Me Now

In addition to flying, Cox holds a second-degree black belt in taekwondo. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Arizona, is a tap dancer, certified scuba diver and pianist.

"I never say there is any-

thing that I cannot do. I used to say that I haven't done rock climbing but I had the opportunity last year to experience it for the first time," she says,

However, one particular task continues to present a challenge.

"I'm still trying to figure out how to tie my hair in a ponytail but in the meantime my husband Patrick does it for me," she says.

She met him through a friend who taught at a taekwondo school in Tucson. Patrick was also an instructor at that school. After a few months, he asked her out to dinner. The two were married in 2012 in South Pasadena, California.

Cox has spent much of past five years as a motivational speaker, traveling the world and inspiring others to believe that they too can achieve their dreams. She has been a guest speaker at the Pentagon, for Boeing and at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. She's also met Pope Benedict XVI and President Barack Obama, and appeared on The Ellen DeGeneres Show and CNN.

A documentary on Cox's life is in the works and should be ready for broadcast on TV by next year, she says. For Cox, her motivation in life is overcoming the challenge of something new and letting others know that it is possible to achieve their dreams.

"I would advise others, especially young people, to not give up and to be open to opportunities because you'll never know what might drop into your lap," she says.

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

## Leukemia Patient Needs Financial Assistance

The family of Jezreel Juan, 19, a recent immigrant from the Philippines who was recently diagnosed with leukemia, is appealing to the Filipino community for assistance.

Juan was rushed to the emergency room at Queen's Medical Center last June 2013 with symptoms that included a high fever, tuberculosis (TB), pneumonia, an enlarged spleen, liver problems and leukemia. He spent a harrowing six months in the hospital but miraculously achieved a complete remission of leukemia and resolution of TB and disseminated fungal infections.

However, to completely treat the leukemia, Juan will need a bone marrow transplant on the mainland which has



Jezreel Juan

been arranged by his physician, Dr. Michael Castro.

"The transplant brings the possibility of curing his disease," says Dr. Michael Castro. "But without it, there is no hope for long term survival and end of life discussions would be our next step."

The transplant would require him to remain near Stanford University Hospital for

post-operative follow-ups for a period of 100 days. Despite retroactive Medicaid insurance coverage, treatments have cost the family over \$1.2 million—a tremendous financial burden especially for Juan's father who works as a janitor.

"If there are any means available for the Filipino community to come to Jezreel's aide, it would provide the chance for a cure from this otherwise fatal disease," says Dr. Castro. "It's not an exaggeration that we are in a life and death situation with this young man. I'm hopeful that where there is a will, there may still be a way for Jezreel and his family, whom it has been a special privilege for me to take care of."

For more details on how to make a donation, please call (808) 671-3911.

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## SOCIETY PAGE

**HFWC's 60th ANNIVERSARY & 40th ANNUAL TERNO BALL**MARCH 8, 2014  
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Hawaii Filipino Women's Club 2014 Women Achievers of the Year receive their awards from Gov. Neil Abercrombie, Vice Consul Joyleen Espinosa-Santos and Mayor Kirk Caldwell



Ms. Terno 2014 Maria Fines Etrata & Mr. Barong 2014 Mayor Kirk Caldwell



Ms. Terno 2014 1st Runner-Up, Erika Joy Ordonez with trophy donors



Mr. Barong 2014, 1st Runner-Up, Ron Nagasawa with trophy donor



Mr. Barong 2014 2nd Runner-Up, John Mizuno with trophy donor



Ms. Terno 2014 2nd Runner-Up, Rachel Dela Cruz with trophy donors



3rd Runner-Up Ms. Terno 2014 Minami Gadiente



Mr. Barong 2014 2nd Runner-Up, Romy Dela Cruz with trophy donor



Mr. Barong 2014 consolation prizes: Ben Pulido, Wayne Hikida, Sen. Will Espero (2nd from right) and trophy donors



Ms. Terno 2014 consolation prizes: Melodie Aduja (2nd from left), Maryrose Borromeo (3rd from left) and Loida Yamamoto (2nd from right) and trophy donors



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L-R: Cora Baclig-Credo, Nancy Walch, Ruby Sarmiento and Elsa Talavera



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## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

# Obama Includes \$250M in 2015 Budget for Oahu's Rail Project

is vital to keeping the rail project on time and on budget.

"Thanks to the diligence and efforts of our congressional delegation, we continue to move forward with Oahu's rail system, fulfilling the legacy of our great Senator Daniel K. Inouye and his commitment to an affordable and reliable transportation option for Hawaii," Caldwell says.

The \$250 million budgeted for FY 2015 would be in addition to the \$250 million already appropriated for FY 2014. Both installments would be added to the \$556 million in federal New Starts transit funds received by the rail project.

# VA Increases Loan Limits for Hawaii Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has raised the loan limit for Hawaii veterans due to the rising costs of real estate throughout the state.

The VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program allows eligible veterans to apply for financing through private lenders and mortgage companies at more favorable rates. The VA Loan Limits are as follows for the following counties:

- Honolulu: \$721,050
- Kauai: \$713,000
- Maui: \$657,800
- Big Island: \$625,500

The decision drew praise from U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who says that Hawaii's veterans are challenged by

some of the highest costs of living in the U.S.

"The VA's decision to increase the cap on the home loan guaranty program better fits the real cost of a single family home in Hawaii, and is welcome news for thousands of veterans and their families who otherwise would be unable to utilize the benefit they earned," Gabbard says.

Over the past year, Gabbard worked to ensure that the VA's policies reflect the unique needs of Hawaii's veterans. She announced a resolution last month to a long-standing dispute that prevented veterans in Hawaii from using their benefits to purchase homes or refinance existing loans on properties served by rainwater catchment systems.

# FilCom Center to Host 1st Fil-Am Youth Summit

Young Filipino leaders from across the nation are expected to attend the 1st Fil-Am Youth Summit, scheduled for May 3, 2014 at the Filipino Community Center from 8 am to 4 pm.

The Summit will bring young leaders together to empower, inspire and discuss solutions on advancing Filipino-American advocacies in communities across the nation. Leaders in the community now recognize the potential of Filipino-Americans as a powerful force in community-building. The approximately four million Filipino-Americans in the U.S. comprise the second largest Asian-American population in the country.

Scheduled guest speaker is Tony



Olaes, a successful Filipino entrepreneur based in San Diego and U.S. Gawad Kalinga chair.

"The Summit will serve as an invaluable opportunity to discuss pressing issues that members of the diaspora confront," says Jose L. Cuisia Jr., Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. "I

(continued on page 12)

## FEATURE

# FilCom's Rich History—From Dream to Reality

By Belinda A. Aquino, Ph.D.

**T**he year was 2002, a happy one for the ever-growing Filipino in Hawaii. The Filipino Community (FilCom) Center had been completed and Rose Cruz Churma, who had written an article about FilCom in a local paper, called it a "dream come true." I had called it "history in the making" and a "coming of age."

It had taken vision, commitment, volunteerism, dedication and the good old Filipino work ethic to make it a "living reality." It was really a milestone for any Filipino constituency in an international setting. Until now, it is unrivaled among the numerous Filipino centers all over the world.

Churma, who was involved in the early conceptualization and planning of FilCom, recently stepped down as president and chief operating officer (COO) of FilCom after a few years at the helm. It is opportune to reflect on FilCom's history at this stage and we could think of no other person than Churma herself to look back on what it has all meant, at least to her, for the FilCom to have functioned in the past dozen years as a center of gravity for the diverse Filipino community in Hawaii. The handsome building and its vibrant atmosphere have attracted local, national and international attention. Filipinos, therefore, are understandably proud of it.

Interim president and COO Geminiano "Toy" Arre, Jr. has been tasked to oversee the Center's transition and search for Churma's replacement. He preceded Churma as president and COO after retiring from government service in Hawaii and the Philippines.

## Sobering Historical Facts

The dream started back in the 1960s when the late Soledad Arre Alconcel, spouse of then- Philippine Consul Trinidad Alconcel, ran the Philippine Handicrafts shop at Ala Moana. It was the meeting

place for Filipinos at the time, including newly-arrived Filipino grantees of the East-West Center who were eager to catch up on news from home. Mrs. Alconcel always dreamed about someday having a true gathering place for Filipinos in Hawaii, something like a "home away from home."

But the vision and energy to push the dream forward came many years later as a younger group of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans came of age. Roland Casamina, president of House of Finance, always spoke about visiting a Filipino center somewhere in Canada, I believe it was, and had been inspired by it. The idea stuck in his head for a similar venture in Hawaii.

Soon after, Casamina convinced Eddie Flores Jr. to help out with the potential building project. Flores, owner of L&L Drive In and a well-known real estate entrepreneur in Hawaii, initiated a project in 1992 that would soon evolve into the annual Filipino Fiesta and Parade in May. An essential component of the fiesta is the traditional Flores de Mayo festival, which is very close to Flores' heart for obvious reasons.

At this same time, Anacleto "Lito" Alcantra, president of the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (FCCH) and the Group Builders Inc., a local construction firm, became interested in the proposed FilCom building project. A planning committee was formed with Casamina as chair and Alcantra and Flores as members. In 1993, the Filipino Community Center, Inc. was given a nonprofit 501c3 status intended to "develop, own and operate a community center," which would be self-sustaining. This meant undertaking a huge task of fundraising and recruiting volunteers for the ambitious project.

The programs envisioned for the future Center included a computer technology center, business and non-profit incubation areas, retail spaces, a thrift shop and a commercial kitchen. All available rooms would be rented out to generate

revenue for the Center.

Flores delivered a speech at the Philippine American Chambers of Commerce convention in Anaheim, California in 1998 and had said, "To build the Filipino Community Center [in Honolulu], my decision was to be active in the political arena because this is the only way we could get the funding and the land."

It was a realistic assessment and in time, things got rolling. American Factors (AMFAC) in 1998 donated a two-acre lot in Waipahu to the FilCom Inc., which holds the title to this day. The appraised cost of the donated land was \$2.8 million as of August 2000.

Then-Honolulu mayor Jeremy Harris supported the project and the City and County of Honolulu made an initial grant of \$500,000 which was used in part to hire architectural firm Wimberley Allison Tong and Goo to complete the bid documents for the future Center. The State of Hawaii under then-Governor Ben Cayetano also appropriated \$1.5 million, which was released in June 2000.

Private foundations also contributed generously to the burgeoning project. The individual dream of Mrs. Alconcel had become a "collective vision" for the FilCom's early leaders. The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation donated \$3 million, one of the largest grants given by the Foundation to a nonprofit at that point.

A bonanza was also received from the Consuelo Alger Foundation, which donated \$500,000 to build the courtyard with airy and open spaces for cultural programs and community meetings. It is appropriately called The Consuelo Courtyard with a mosaic portrait of benefactor Consuelo Zobel de Ayala Alger gracing the entrance. Patti Lyons, then-Consuelo Foundation president, said she always had faith "that it would happen this time," when her Board informed her that there were several previous attempts to build a Filipino Community Center. Most importantly, a com-

pelling demonstration of support came from countless and nameless community volunteers who donated whatever they could for their future second home. The Filipino community pledged during the decade some \$1.3 million.

Dedicated volunteers Edith and Roland Pascua, walked door-to-door soliciting contributions from Filipino families. Various in-kind donations and services from the grassroots and elsewhere began trickling in. A statue of the Philippines' national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, was donated from the Philippines. Murals for the alcoves of the now finished FilCom became part of the attraction, depicting early plantation life of Filipino pioneers in Hawaii. The Center became the main avenue for various activities related to the Hawaii Filipino Centennial Celebration in 2006.

To date, some 200 volunteers assisting with the Center's various programs and operational functions continue to make it a lively place for an array of activities related to FilCom's original mission of promoting Filipino history and culture and projecting the Filipino image internationally. It would be impossible to detail all of FilCom's achievements and activities because so much has been accomplished.

## Towards the Future

Like any other institution with growing pains, FilCom has experienced its share of issues and challenges that need

serious discussion and resolution. The salary of the president/ COO is measly to begin with and not competitive enough to attract excellent candidates for the job. Also, the relationship between the board and president/ COO have to be made clearer to prevent misunderstandings or miscommunication regarding planning and decision-making processes and to prevent clashes between the president and board chair, which can often happen in most organizations.

The role of the Board of Governors also needs to be clarified. The Board of Governors is primarily for fund-raising purposes, but what is the board's relationship with the FilCom president/ COO and the Board of Directors? How are members of the Board of Directors selected? Are the by-laws of the organization adequately implemented? Many more questions need to be answered. Institutions like FilCom need to institute reforms from time to time to survive. But this would require another article altogether.

The Chronicle would like to pay a special tribute to Rose Cruz Churma, who has given much of her time and skills to develop programs and activities to set the productive tone and appropriate personality of FilCom as a cultural center. That will be her enduring legacy. Not many people would have been willing and able to set out on this risky venture.

(continued on page 15)

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## PHILIPPINE NEWS

# Pacquiao: 'I Still Have the Killer Instinct'

by Dino Maragay

Tuesday, March 18 2014

MANILA, Philippines – Manny Pacquiao insists he is still capable of knocking his opponents out cold. It's just that knockouts, according to the Filipino boxing icon, need to come at the opportune time.

In a promotional blog released by HBO to drum up Pacquiao's rematch with Timothy Bradley, the fighting congressman said he has learned from his mistake against Juan Manuel Marquez in their last fight in December 2012.

Pacquiao battered Marquez in that bout and was on the verge of stopping him, but the Mexican tagged him with a perfectly timed counter shot right before the bell sounded to end the sixth round.

The General Santos City-based southpaw dropped face down and stayed motionless



for a few scary minutes, and Marquez celebrated the win over his archrival, perhaps the biggest of his career.

It was that bout that taught Pacquiao not to rush things.

"The one thing I learned from my fight against Marquez was patience. When I had him teetering I became reckless and went in to finish him. I was careless and he landed the perfect punch. That was learning a lesson the hard way. But I learned it," he explained.

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS (from page 8, FILCOM...)

urge everyone to participate in and support the Summit, so together we may also identify avenues for collaboration and courses of action that would contribute to the Philippines' further development. I look forward to meeting all of the attendees this May."

Interested participants are invited to register online for the Summit at: [www.fylsummit.com](http://www.fylsummit.com).

mit.com. A fee of \$50 will include conference packets and lunch. For more information about the Summit, call Kit Zulueta at (808) 291-9407 or via e-mail at: [fayshawai@gmail.com](mailto:fayshawai@gmail.com).

Proceeds from the event will benefit the FilCom Center and its numerous community programs.

Pacquiao rebounded with a win over Brandon Rios in November last year, and al-

though he dominated the Mexican over 12 rounds, he failed to finish him off.

Pacquiao hasn't stopped an opponent since his TKO win over Miguel Cotto in 2009, and this led some boxing observers – including Bradley – to conclude that Pacquiao's killer instinct is gone.

The Sarangani congressman disagrees.

"I still have the killer instinct. I am not afraid to use

my power and go for the knockout. But I will remember the lesson I learned from my last fight with Marquez. Knockouts need to come naturally, you should not force them," he continued.

Freddie Roach wants his ward to stop Bradley on April 12, especially since fans love knockouts. Pacquiao, for his part, is willing to oblige.

"Freddie likes knockouts and I like to make Freddie happy," he said. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

# House Passes Bill Declaring Malunggay As National Vegetable

by Louis Bacani

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

MANILA, Philippines - One of your backyard plants may become the national Philippine vegetable under a proposed law that has been passed by the House of Representatives.

Approved by the lower chamber on third and final reading last Monday, House Bill 2072 seeks to declare malunggay (moringa) as the country's national vegetable and November as the "National Malunggay Month."

Pangasinan Fourth District Rep. Gina de Venecia, the bill's

authors, cited the economic, nutritional and medicinal benefits of malunggay. She said the vegetable has been promoted by the World Health Organization for the past 20 years as low-cost health enhancer in poor countries.

De Venecia also stressed the importance of malunggay products to the Philippine economy.

"Malunggay tree is one of the most important plants that deserve national and international promotion due to the many bio-medical endowment and numerous socio-economic benefits that can be derived from it," De Venecia said in the

bill's explanatory note.

The Secretaries of Agriculture, Education, Health, and the chairman of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts shall create the rules and regulations for the implementation of the proposed measure.

The measure was approved more than a week after House Bill 3926 or the "Philippine National Symbols Act of 2014" was filed.

The new proposed law seeks to declare and recognize the country's national symbols, such as adobo as the national Philippine food. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

# UH Medical School Moves Up in Rankings

The University of Hawaii-Manoa's John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) has moved up several spots in U.S. News & World Report's 2014 list of best U.S. medical schools in the U.S.

JABSOM's Primary Care Program jumped nine places to 57th best in the nation, while its Research Program moved up four spots to 78th. U.S. News & World Report's annual rankings are based on expert opinion and statistical indicators that measure the quality of a medical school's faculty, research and students. JABSOM has consistently



University of Hawaii-Manoa's John A. Burns School of Medicine

ranked in the top 100.

JABSOM has led the nation for three years in extramural research funding among land grant universities without a university hospital. External funding for the school totaled \$57 million during fiscal year 2013.

More than 230 physicians

are currently training at health centers in Hawaii through JABSOM's residency programs. On March 21, 2014, JABSOM placed fourth-year medical students into its programs through the National Resident Matching Program. The new cycle of residency training begins July 1, 2014.

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## LEGAL NOTES



By Reuben S. Seguritan

**T**he demand for cap-subject H-1B numbers for fiscal year 2015 which begins on October 1, 2014 is expected to be greater than last year. Employers planning to file cap-subject H-1B petitions for foreign workers in specialty occupations are advised to initiate the H-1B petition process as early as possible.

Last year, 124,000 cap-subject H-1B petitions were filed during the first week of filing. Each fiscal year, an H-

## Prepare H-1B Petitions Now

1B quota of 65,000 is allotted to foreign workers in specialty occupations with an additional 20,000 for graduates with advanced degrees from the U.S. This year, the annual cap is expected to be reached during the first five business days of filing. The first day of cap-subject H-1B filing is on April 1, 2014, a Tuesday.

Employers whose H-1B petitions were among the 39,000 petitions not assigned a number in last year's lottery will most likely file another H-1B petition for their prospective employees. This will further augment the growing demand for H-1B numbers for fiscal year 2015 which is mainly because of the improving economy and the rising need for H-1B workers in the Information

Technology (IT) and financial fields.

The race for an H-1B number this year will require early preparation. Before the actual filing with the USCIS, the H-1B employer must obtain a certified labor condition application (LCA) from the Department of Labor (DOL). The employer makes several attestations in the LCA including a promise to pay the required wage to the worker for the entire period of the authorized employment.

The employers also attest in the LCA that the current employees and the union, if any, are given notice of the petition and that there are no strike or lockout in the occupational classification at the place of employment.

Processing time of LCAs

may vary. Employers who are filing H-1B petitions for the first time may be required to submit documents to verify tax identification numbers. The expected high volume of LCA filings may also delay the processing of LCAs.

The H-1B petition must also have documentary evidence of the beneficiary's educational background and work experience to make him eligible for H-1B classification. Documentary evidence includes diploma, transcript of records, credentials evaluations and license to practice the profession, if required, among others.

If the beneficiary's diploma has not been issued yet, the USCIS allows the submission of other evidence. The final transcript as well as

the letter from the Registrar confirming that all degree requirements have been met may suffice. It must be noted that all documents submitted should come from a verifiable authorized official of the school. Gathering these documents from beneficiaries will definitely entail time.

Given the limited number of H-1B visa numbers available each year, the race for an H-1B number will require early preparation and no room for error. Employers who are planning to file cap-subject H-1B sponsorship for prospective employees should therefore start the process now.

**REUBEN S. SEGURITAN** has been practicing law for over 30 years. For further information, you may call him at (212) 695 5281 or log on to his website at [www.seguritan.com](http://www.seguritan.com)

## MAINLAND NEWS

## Senate Passes Philippine Charitable Giving Assistance Act



**T**he U.S. Senate unanimously passed a bill co-sponsored by U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono and three colleagues that will provide expedited tax relief for Americans who make charitable donations for Typhoon Haiyan recovery efforts in the Philippines.

"Given the great deal of help still needed, the Philippines Charitable Giving Assistance Act will provide tax relief this year for families who have already donated and incentivize others to make new contributions," says Hirono.

Groups such as the Consuelo Foundation and Filipino Community Center support the Philippines Charitable Giving Assistance Act and note that many victims are still struggling to rebuild their lives four months after the typhoon struck.

"Mahalo to Senator Hirono and her colleagues for encouraging Americans to contribute to the relief efforts," says Edmund Aczon, chairman of FilCom's Board

of Directors. "Everybody can make a difference, even if it's donating just a little bit."

Hirono and her Senate colleagues have also called on the Obama administration to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Filipino nationals currently residing in the U.S. Designed as an emergency measure for nations facing extreme hardships, TPS allows Filipino nationals without permanent resident status to continue to stay in the U.S. and provide working authorization temporarily until TPS status ends. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))



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**ILOKO**  
By Amado I. Yoro



ua a balikas ti pamunganayantayo a dakamaten itoy a artikulo maipapan kadagiti kakabsat a babbai iti kagimongan.

Akem [role] ken bileg [power and authority]. Saanbayo nga umadayo iti Oahu Filipino Community Council [OFCC] iti agdama a liderato. Kadagiti 16 nga opisial ken direktor, 9 dagitoy a babbai: Jean Jeremiah, presidente; Angie Santiago, umuna a bise; Baybee Hufana Ablan, maikadua a bise; Loida Yamamoto, sekretaria; Eleanor Bru, katulongan a sekretaria; Luz Peirson, tesorera; Armi Farinas, auditor; Lydia Agustin, Rossi Paton, direktor.

Mabalin a babai manen ti sumaruno a presidente ti OFCC iti masungad a kombension intono Hunio 14, 2014.

# Saludo Kadagiti Lider a Babbai Iti Akem ken Bileg Kadagiti Imada

Idi antes tiempo wenco panawen, saan unay a maikkikan dagiti babbai ti gundaway iti dakkel nga akem wenco puesto kas iti pangulo wenco presidente. Asawa, ina ken agtagibalyo idi ti kaibatoganda.

Iti gimong, maikkanda iti akem a sekretaria, administrative assistant wenco katulungan. Ngem addan women's liberation. Timpuar metten ti makuna a 'panawen dagiti babbai'. Komunidad, simbaan, gobierno ken trabaho.

Kadagitoyen nga alda, saantayon a makideman ti kinapudno a mabalindan ti mangidaulo iti man trabaho, dagiti korporasion, governo, komunidad ken kagimongan. Maysa a dayaw, pagrebbengen ken panangitandudo iti kategoria ken kabaelan a mangidaulo iti ania man a tayak iti pagsiriban.

Iti kapauten ti OFCC nga aganay a 55 a tawen, ni Justo Dela Cruz ti immuna a presidente [1959], ngem kadagiti aganayen a 42 a nagpresidente, 9 a babbai ti nagbalin a presi-

dentena kas kada Matilda Molina, [1978-1979], Maggie Domingo, [1990], Marlene Manzano,[1992-1994], Edith Pascua, [1999-2001], Jenny Quezon,[2003-2004], Lynne Gutierrez,[2005-2007], Cirvalina Longboy,[2008-2009] Maria Etrata. [2010-2012] Jean Jeremiah [2012-2014] iti bukodda nga estilo ken wagas a mangidaulo. Addaanda met ti bukod a wagas a panangrisut ti problema ken panangmantenir ti gunglo iti bukodda a panangidalan. Adda bukodda a wagas, estilo ken resolucion. Adda latta makuna a negatibo ken positivo a resulta; adda makatungpal, adda met pakadillawan no dadduma.

[Malagip met a tallon a babbai ti nagpresidente ti UFCH: Maggie Domingo, Lynne Gutierrez, Jenny Quezon- ket mabalin a babai manen ti sumaruno].

Iti agdama a listaan ti OFCC, adda dagiti unit organization members nga idauluan ti babbai:

1. Pacita Saludes, Annak Ti

Kailokuan Iti America,

2. Jenny Quezon, Annak Ti Caoayan 2002,

3. Veronica Esteban,

Cabugao Sons & Daugh-

ters Association of Hawaii,

4. Maria Etrata, Filipino Business Women Associa-

tion,

5. Luanne Long, Filipino Nurses Organization of Hawaii,

6. Bernadette Fajardo, Fil-

ipino Women's Civic Club,

7. Letty Saban, Hawaii Fil-

ipino Women's Club,

8. Armi Farinas, Magsingal

Association of Hawaii,

9. Dorie Villafuerte, Pa-

suquinio Assocaition of Hawaii,

10. Maggie Domingo, Philip-

pine Cultural Foundation,

Inc.,

11. Tina Salvador, Philippine

Nurses Association of Hawaii,

12. Maryrose Borromeo, Rimat ti Burgos Associa-

tion of Hawaii,

13. Alice Castaneda, San Juan-

Lapog Associaiton of Hawaii,

14. Heidi Luarca, San Nicolas Teachers Association of Hawaii,

15. Amy Ungos, San Nicolas Goodwill Foundation, Inc [Damilian],

16. Davelyn Quijano, Sinait National High School Alumni Associaiton of Hawaii,

17. Erlinda Sanchez, The Fil-

ipino Hotel Workers Orga-

nization,

18. Maria Etrata, The Primary

Care Providers of Hawaii,

19. Marilyn Villar, Tri Star

Line Group,

20. Esther Pascual, United Group Home Operators,

21. Merelle Gonzales, United Laoagueneos of Hawaii;

22. Tessie Aganon, Vigan Assoication of Hawaii & Assoicates.

[Adda panagsukat ti presidente tunggal tawen gapu iti baro nga eleksion kas maibatay iti Constitutionda]

Kadagitoy a gunglo, adda bukodda a goals and objectives maibatay kadagiti bukodda a pagalagadan.

Mainaig itoy, saludo ken lugay para kadagiti dadduma pay a babbai a mangipangulo kadagiti bukodda nga organisation, mabalin a kamengda wenco saan iti OFCC.

Gladys Menor, Calayab Association of Hawaii, Maria White, Santaguenians of Hawaii, Leticia Dalit, Santa Marians of Hawaii, Baybee Hufana Ablan, University of the East Alumni Association – Hawaii Chapter, kdpv.

Kadagitoy a babbai a lider, kaaduanna wenco isuda amin ket naglasatda kadagiti nadumaduma a pagsaadan iti sakup ti gunloda. Nadumaduma a pagrebbengen kas pangulo ti komite, wenco kameng iti komite a nakasubokanda nga immuna tapno adda met pa-muonanda nga agserbi ken mangidaulo.

Saan a barengbareng ti agserbi ken mangipangulo iti ania man a gunglo. Naited dayta a pagrebbengen a kakuyog iti panagtalek, kinapudno, integridad ken panangipatungpal kadagiti maiwayat a projekto a pagimbanan ti kaaduan, saan a para iti bukod a bagi.

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**ARAW NG KAGITINGAN (DAY OF VALOR) • WEDNESDAY** • April 9, 2014 | 4:00 PM • Punchbowl National Cemetery of the Pacific • Contact 808-595-6316 to 19 ext. 106

**15TH ANNIVERSARY, 2014 REUNION & AFFIRMATION OF OFFICERS OF INCAT • SUNDAY •**

April 27, 2014 | 6 PM • Empress Restaurant • Contact Lina Longboy @ 294-1446

**50TH ANNIVERSARY, BADOC PINILI AID ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII • SATURDAY •** May 3, 2014

| 8:00 AM-2:00 PM • Ke'ehi Lagoon Memorial Park, 2685 N Nimitz Hwy • Contact Trinidad Agamao @ 848-1645

**ANNUAL FILIPINO FIESTA AND PARADE • SATURDAY •**

May 10, 2014 • Kapiolani Park | 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM • Contact FilCom Center @ 680-0451

### FEATURE *(from page 11, FILCOM'S RICH...)*

ture, which entailed much sacrifice on her part, and for that alone, she should be commended. The following interview with Churma has been edited for space and clarity.

**Q: Give us a brief summary of the beginnings of the FilCom Center starting from its planning stage.**

A: FilCom was established as a non-profit corporation in the early 1990s with the late Stanley Suyat and Roland Casamina as incorporators. I don't remember the details but I think it was Anacleto "Lito" Alcantra who talked to Roland about forming a committee at the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (FCCH) to look into the establishment of a Filipino Community Center on Oahu.

The facility was technically under planning and development from 1992 to 2002. I became involved sometime in 1993. Eddie Flores, Roland and Lito persuaded me to get involved because I am an architect by profession. In essence, the thrust of my practice back then was project development and planning—the first steps in the physical development process of a particular program or project. It was a natural or logical option for me.

The initial thrust was to locate the land for the proposed FilCom Center. In the early 1990s, the sugar industry was phasing out. AMFAC approached us to help them rezone agricultural sugar lands in Waipahu into business-zoned properties. In return, they would give us a two-acre lot in fee simple as noted in the master plan report prepared for Waipahu. We earned the two-acre parcel by lobbying for the rezoning. The deed to the parcel was recorded in 1999 or 2000. Once the nonprofit had

the land, grants came from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for planning and environmental assessment purposes. The capital campaign started in earnest sometime in late 1999 with the announcement of support from the Consuelo Foundation in November 1999, which facilitated eventual support from other foundations.

Through the efforts of Karen and Nestor Garcia, architectural firm Wimberley Allison Tong and Goo initially provided pro bono services and offered their facilities for use by members of the Filipino American League of Engineers and Architects (FALEA) who donated time and resources to complete the required building drawings. Once the grants came in, FilCom paid the fees with large discounts for professional services.

Incidentally, the group that was formed years ago to oversee the design and construction of FilCom is now the Facilities Committee, which is still headed by Manny Lanuevo, who works with the City and County of Honolulu. Because of them, the installation of photovoltaic panels for FilCom went smoothly.

**Q: How was FilCom organized?**

A: There was a series of interim or temporary executive directors early on. A period of stability came when Geminiano "Toy" Arre, Jr. was elected president and COO. Arre had been retired from the City and County of Honolulu as the Budget and Finance director and had spent some time as a consulting financial officer in the City of Manila. He was offered the job after returning from Manila.

I served as Interim Executive Director/ Project Manager from 2001 to 2001 until Eva

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### SANTANIANS ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII-USA

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD OF

DIRECTORS • SATURDAY •

May 24, 2014 • Ala Moana Hotel | 6:00 PM • For more info. please contact: Julius Soria @ 722-9958

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**Q: Are there other comments you would like to make? People were somewhat surprised with your resignation because you've done so much for FilCom.**

A: I appreciate all the time that your paper is putting on FilCom's developments. You are doing a great service to the community. With regard to having spent so much time with the Center, I must admit that it was more than a job to me. As an architect, I had an emotional connection to it because it was something new that challenged my imagination. In fact, I took a pay cut from my architect's salary

when I joined FilCom, which I do not regret for a moment. Back then, as now, I saw the possibilities of the Center in promoting and energizing Filipino culture and achieving its rightful place in Hawaii's multi-ethnic society.

In essence, I saw my role in shaping FilCom's future as not just another job, but a mission. I believe I have come close to fulfilling that mission and that it's time to allow new blood to create a new narrative for FilCom that will resonate with the continually-evolving, diverse and multi-cultural community in Hawaii.

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