

HAWAII

# FILIPINO CHRONICLE

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# THE RITUALS OF LENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## EDITORIALS

## Uniquely Filipino Easter Traditions

**F**or Filipino Catholics, Easter is the “other Christmas.” The Philippines is the only country in the world that celebrates Christmas for an entire three months. But as far as religious holidays go, Easter is a very close second to Christmas in the hearts and minds of Filipinos. Lent starts with Ash Wednesday—the beginning of Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and temptation in the desert—and culminates in a joyous Easter Sunday celebration when He arose from the grave three days after his crucifixion.

Ever since Catholicism was introduced to the Philippines over 500 years ago, the people have developed uniquely Filipino traditions in observance of the Lenten Season. In lieu of Easter egg hunts as seen in Western countries, Filipinos have early morning mass, solemn processions and parades, Scriptural readings, church-to-church pilgrimages and dramatic recreations on Easter Sunday. Most deny themselves from consuming meat or other guilty pleasures, while the more devout ones choose to atone for their sins by having their backs whipped, wearing crowns of thorns or having their hands and feet nailed to a wooden cross.

Some say that with the passing of time, more of these uniquely Filipino traditions will slowly fade away, due mainly to increased secularization and Western influence. In metropolitan areas, the Easter Bunny, egg hunts and mini-carnivals are commonly seen at malls, shopping centers and hotels. Some Filipinos use the long four-day holiday, which includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, for family outings and getaways. Thankfully, such foreign influences are still a long way from replacing the traditional Easter traditions observed by Filipinos—a deeply religious people who take the Lenten Season seriously.

The choice to observe Lent is a personal one—the whole point is to focus your heart and mind on Jesus who demonstrated His immense love for mankind by laying down his life. The Lenten Season is a reminder of the importance of God’s love for us and the steep price that was paid for our salvation. May the Blessed Hope of Easter fill our hearts and minds and sustain us throughout the year. Easter blessings to all!

## 2016 Presidential Election: Decline of Media Coverage And Rise of Populism

**E**arly the age of propaganda is upon us and it’s no surprise that a masterful propagandist as Donald Trump is reaping the benefits.

The ceiling may be collapsing on millions of Americans but the mainstream media is more interested in shock value and profits to report on real solutions to most of our pressing problems.

On the issue of jobs and the economy as an example, Trump boastfully claims that he would be the greatest jobs-creating president. But when Trump is pressed on the details, the media is clearly content on his empty words and would much rather highlight rhetorical absurdities.

Trump elaborates that restructuring foreign trade with China, Japan and Mexico through tariffs is one way to make

## FROM THE PUBLISHER



ax season is fast approaching! Filing tax returns can be a time consuming process for some, while for others it is downright daunting. Kudos to you early filers but for procrastinators, keep in mind that the deadline to file your federal tax returns is Monday, April 18, 2016. If you are in need of good tax filing advice, please turn to page 16 for “Useful Tax Tips and Strategies.”

April also means the Lenten Season, which is a beloved time of the year for Filipinos. Most Filipinos set aside time during Lent to reflect on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Ph.D., writes more about Lent in her cover story entitled “The Rituals of Lent: Semana Santa in the Philippines.” If you usually give up meat or your favorite dessert during Lent, why not try something new this year? Consider going on an electronic fast and give up watching TV, Facebook, email, texting and all things electronic. No matter what you decide to do or give up during this Lenten season, let’s draw closer to God and prepare for a fresh experience of His love this Easter.

In other news, if you have or know of a teenager who’s into dancing or singing, you may want to sign them up for the upcoming “Music, Art & Dance (MAD) Fest” scheduled for March 27, 2016 from 3 pm to 8 pm at the Filipino Community Center (FilCom) in Waipahu. Contestants will be able to strut their stuff in music (Filipino song, contemporary English and rap); art (illustrations and photography); or dance (Filipino folk dance, contemporary and hip hop) categories. The event is co-sponsored by the Rizalian Youth Council and FilCom and is open to all youth. The deadline to submit applications is Friday, March 25, 2016 by 3 pm. Call FilCom at 680-0451 for more details.

In closing, we encourage you to read the other informative columns and articles in this issue. Feel free to email us at: [filipinochronicle@gmail.com](mailto:filipinochronicle@gmail.com) with any story idea, suggestion or concern you may have.

Until our next issue... *aloha* and *mabuhay!*

*Chona A. Montesines-Sonido*



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America strong again; but any economist would tell you the dangers a trade war could have on the U.S.’s already fragile economy. Retail, one of the only few bright spots of the nation’s economy, would sure to tailspin to abysmal lows as most products sold in American retail stores could suddenly be too expensive to import. Imagine all those “Made in China” products that practically all retailers carry – without new suppliers and adequate manufacturing infrastructure in the U.S. – how could retailers replace these products that their companies depend on for survival. The net result: more bankruptcies, less jobs, and a deeper recession looms.

It’s a symbiotic relationship – Trump’s and the media. Trump plays them for free publicity while the media bankrolls off his controversy and radical, inhumane ideas.

Speaking of radical, the GOP’s number two hopeful Ted Cruz wants to abolish the IRS almost entirely and keep a bare-bones staff to process simple postcard payments from his revamped flat tax scheme. Shouldn’t the media be following through on what this would actually do to government – a practically volunteer tax payment system resulting in a shortfall of tax revenue that ultimately affects all branches of government, safety, security, and infrastructure? Inquiring minds would want to know. But don’t expect a

(continued on page 3)

## CANDID PERSPECTIVES



By Emil Guillermo

# Politics and Showbiz in America

Caucus. Were you all not feeling well? Was it some bad poi? Unrefrigerated poke? Whatever it was, you gave thumbs up to the man who has turned American politics into his own reality show.

The debate before Florida, yet another episode of "U.S. Democracy Live!" drew an audience of 16.9 million on Fox. The ratings were consistently high with every debate and there's been 12 of them now.

TV execs realize they've got a real boondoggle going. Ratings gold for news channels that would otherwise draw a handful of people to watch some rehashed cable news thing. They surely can't be doing it to further democracy. Not unless you really think people should be debating the size of Donald Trump's hands. And it all seems to be working, at least for Donald Trump.

Rubio's campaign could be finished after March 15 if he doesn't win in Florida. And Ted Cruz has attributes that make you say, "Hmm, Donald Trump may just be joking around. He might not be THAT bad..." After Chicago, I'm not sure. As smarmy as Cruz can be, I don't think he'd incite a riot.

By the way, if you in the Philippines are paying attention to more than the anatomy of candidates, then you'll be pleased to know that 1) Donald Trump has reversed himself on torture and targeting families of terrorists. Someone told him about the Geneva Convention and he's decided it's a decent document; 2) While defending his "Build-a-Wall" idea to satisfy xenophobic tendencies of some Americans and riffing about China's "Great Wall," he did say he'd do something about China's reclaiming land and build up in the South China Sea. So he's aware of the issue enough to mention it at a rally this week.

But that doesn't get as much play as his ongoing exchange about his hands with the man he calls "little" Marco Rubio. Of course, the real reason to have more and more debates should be obvious.

We should have them, and lots of them, if the debates and their side-by-side comparisons could help control the high costs of political campaigns and their biggest expenditure—political advertising.

But giving up the right to produce your own targeted hit

piece without being beholden to a sense of truth, ethics or fair play? Of course, the politicians want to keep all that. And so do the TV folks, because who else runs the advertising? Bottom line? Everyone wants everything. Greed wins at every turn. And we're not even to the conventions yet. There's still the campaign for the Fall and the last minute November blitz.

Elections this year in the U.S. are ratings gold. And the profit margins? No one's paying a big star or two or three, with writers and production costs for a prime-time TV series. Just a couple of podiums in an auditorium and Donald Trump telling penis jokes.

Politics as show business for ugly people, indeed. Just ask Ronnie Del Carmen, who returned this week to the Bay Area after attending the Oscars as a nominee for Best Original Screenplay for providing the story for "Inside Out."

He was in Hollywood to be among the really beautiful people. This year, that meant "white," especially if you were a nominee. The Oscar show was must-see TV because of the shutout of people of color in the top Oscar categories.

The night's emcee, comedian Chris Rock, was funny in his monologue, even with jokes about grandma hanging from a tree. But he should have

stopped there.

The Oscars could have set things straight if the very first award, the one for Best Original Screenplay, went to Del Carmen, the only Asian American nominated in one of top categories. It could have made a statement about diversity in Hollywood but it wasn't to be. Still Del Carmen was pretty excited to be there.

"Watching the show is such a rare treat and so different from what we'd see on TV," Del Carmen told me. "I had to stay in the moment, this was a great honor to be here finally. I heard my name read on the very first category being awarded. Blows the mind. We made it!"

"We won for Best Animated Feature and not for Best Original Screenplay. We had quite the evening. After the Governors' Ball, my wife and I skipped the Vanity Fair party and went back to the hotel to see my two kids. We sat down to toast our victories. I was so happy they could join me on my special day."

Typical for a humble guy who shared his tale of EDSA with me last week. Del Carmen said the Asian joke that caused such a hubbub, the sight gag with the Chinese kids brought out as the Oscar accountants, didn't get much of an audience

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## EDITORIALS (from page 2, 2016 PRESIDENTIAL....)

write up anytime soon.

Interestingly, at the very least the GOP is starting to sound more in touch with the average Joe's struggle; and at times, almost resembling talking points of the Democratic Party.

Gov. John Kasich's talk on tolerance of gays and unifying all Americans to get along and Sen. Marco Rubio's quest to alleviate the burdens of college graduate debt -- both are key tenets straight off the Democratic Party handbook.

Perhaps the biggest news story that has yet to be written is the sharp rise of populism from both the right and left. The media and politicians still do everything in their power to promote partisan politics. But there is an organic real movement link-

ing both populist movements from the right and left wherein both Republicans and Democrats actually share similar values: investing more in the American people with better job and education opportunities.

Strip away the division and blame game that the party leaders espouse for their own gain and what do you have: struggling Americans wanting a better life.

But why would the American media want to promote this populist concept, a media whose origin was built on the societal woe of division, antagonism and war.

The 2016 presidential election is turning out to be even more revolutionary, historical, and frankly entertaining than the 2008 presidential election when Barack Obama

became the first Black American president. Considering how much social change occurred during Obama's tenure, imagine what kind of changes the next president will be able to accomplish. The time is truly ripe for revolutionary populist change. Already, we are witnessing the revolutionary make-over of the Republican Party and the divorce of its two major components: the Wall Street elite now being abandoned by its once loyal white, working class, uneducated, evangelical base. Already, we have witnessed a self-proclaimed socialist actually give Hilary Clinton a run for her money in parts of the country.

If the current political environment is any indication of what lies ahead, anything is possible after the election of our new president.

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## COVER STORY

# The Rituals of Lent: Semana Santa in the Philippines

By Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Ph.D.

**P**eople give up many things in the Christian world during the Lenten season. Children may give up chocolates, moms give up shopping and dads give up their nightly can of beer.

Waipahu resident Desiree Joi Mateo and her brother have given up meat—a decision that challenges their resolve.

“Every Friday has been a struggle to get through because of the fact that I cannot eat meat,” she says. “My brother and I are the only ones in the family who follow this restriction. When our parents cook meat for a meal on Friday, my brother and I have to cook our own food or go out and buy food. It’s a good thing we love sushi.”

Whatever is given up is in the spirit of sacrifice, however little or inconsequential, it is in keeping with the Lord’s sacrifice of giving up His life for all of humanity. On Easter Sunday, there is rejoicing, rebirth, life is renewed and hopefully, a better kind of life begins.

In the Philippines, Lent is known in most places for its Spanish name, “Semana

Santa.” In Tagalog, it is “Mahal na Araw.” The season begins five weeks early on Ash Wednesday, usually during the month of February or early March. Filipino Catholics attend mass to have their foreheads marked with the sign of the cross. The cross reminds them of their need to repent if life has not been good, or if they have done some bad things to others. They need to ask forgiveness for their human errors. The mark of the cross is an acceptance of one’s mortality and vulnerability. From then on, the Catholic mass liturgy and gospel, including the priest’s homily, focus on the story of the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Being the only Catholic and Christian country in Asia, the Philippines has developed Lenten traditions that are uniquely Filipino. While literally following the biblical nar-

rative of Jesus Christ becoming man, Filipinos have re-invented and spruced up the Lenten narrative to come up with social gatherings that are part of the Filipino Holy Week ritual. Foremost among these rituals are the Senakulo, the Pasyon, the Moriones Festival in Marinduque, the Visita Iglesia, Stations of the Cross, the Siete Palabras on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, and finally the “Salubong” (Meeting), that precedes Resurrection rites on the eve of Easter Sunday.

A closer look at these rituals show how Lent is dramatized and now part of Philippine theatrical history. The dramatization has been woven into custom and tradition for hundreds of years.

## Senakulo

The Senakulo is the foremost religious drama for Lent. This drama was imported from Catholic Europe during the Spanish period and is a mainstay in many Lenten celebrations in the provinces as the drama is written in the languages of the regions.

The plot follows the narrative of the suffering of Jesus from his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Last supper, to his carrying of the cross



on Calvary and his ultimate crucifixion and death. The drama is staged in town plazas or municipal halls located near the church.

In Manila, urban poor communities such as the ones in Tondo re-enact the Senakulo to call attention to the suffering of the poor and their struggles against poverty. The suffering of the poor is depicted as similar to that of Christ carrying the cross on Calvary.

## The Pasyon

The most popular Lenten ritual undeniably is the Pasyon, also known as the “Pabasa.” As the name implies, this is the reading of the passion of Christ. Jesus’ life from birth to death is chanted through verses written in five stanzas, each with octava (eight syllables) lines. The chanting and the format of the Pasyon have been indigenized and follow the pattern of the chanting of the

many epic poems among the ethnolinguistic groups in the country.

In the Pasyon ritual, the neighborhood gathers at a house, a community chapel or “visita,” a room in the town hall or even at a made-up altar on a sidestreet to chant and offer prayer. Chanters have a lead person known as the “cantora” (singer) who is a master of the tune and thus leads in the singing. The chorus collectively reads from a printed text.

There are three texts that have been used in the Pasyon. The earliest known one is written by Gaspar Aquino de Belen, published in Tagalog in 1704 as “Ang Mahal na Pasyon ni Jesu Cristong Panginoon Natin na Tola” (The Holy Passion of our Lord Jesus that is a Poem).

Aniceto de la Merced published “El Libro de la Vida” (The Book of (Jesus) Life in 1852. Then there is the Pasyong Genesis or Pasyong Pilapil published in 1814. Filipino scholar Reynaldo Ileto studied Pasyon in all three texts and published a book on Pasyon and Revolution (1979). He asserts that the Pasyon, rather than render Filipinos subservient to Spanish rule, may have instead inspired them to take up arms against their

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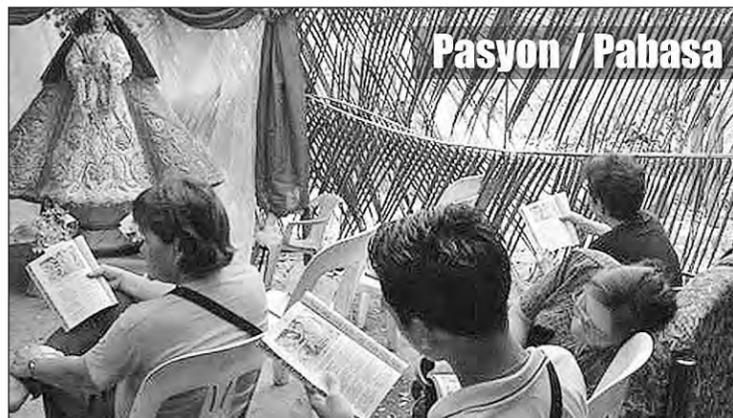
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COVER STORY

(from page 3. THE RITUALS...)

Spanish colonizers.

The chanting of the Pasyon can begin as early as the night of Domingo de Ramos or Palm Sunday and may end on Good Friday or Holy Saturday. The community or barangay where the Pasyon is read usually has a host who takes charge of providing food and merienda for the participants. Sometimes, a whole family invites professional Pasyon readers to their home and their own guests to sing with the chanters.

**The Domingo de Ramos**

Formal Holy Week celebrations are ushered in through the Domingo de Ramos or Palm Sunday. In this ritual, palm leaves are brought by Catholic parishioners into church as they take part in a procession led by the priest. The palms are blessed in the mass. Street vendors peddle palm leaves designed in exquisite shapes and sizes for sale on sidestreets of churches.

Honolulu resident Kenneth Simon remembers how his relatives would visit the public market and buy bouquets of palm leaves that were folded into birds or flowers.

“They were works of art and very beautiful to look at,” he says. “During the Palm Sunday mass, the palms are waved and the priest would go around and bless the ramos with holy water. After the mass, my grandmother would hang the ramos in front of our door and little altar. She told me it would help to bring rain for a good harvest season.”

The reading of the gospel on Palm Sunday is also one of the longest. There are three readers—a narrator, Jesus and one who represents the people. Jesus is followed by His disciples and predicts His coming death as He tells the disciples they would disappoint him, beginning with Peter who denies him twice. The liturgy then narrates how Judas finally betrays him for 30 pieces of silver.

**The Moriones**

The Moriones is a unique ritual that is held only in the towns of Marinduque, a small island province south of Luzon. The ritual is about the Roman

soldier Longinus, who participated in the crucifixion and saw Christ rise from the tomb. He goes around confused and proclaims that he saw the risen Christ. His fellow Roman soldiers beheaded him in order to stop him from spreading the message about the resurrection.

The rising of Christ from the tomb and Longinus going around town to proclaim that he saw the Risen Christ are re-enacted in the town plaza with the soldiers wearing different types of masks and parading the streets. A mock chase of Longinus and his beheading are staged as some townspeople acting as Roman soldiers exchange dialogues and recite their dramatic lines in Tagalog. The re-enactment of these scenes is accompanied by music from a brass band. The people who join in the Moriones, many of them tourists, line up on the sidestreets to watch.

**Visita Iglesia and Stations of the Cross**

On Holy Thursday, an afternoon mass is usually held with the officiating priest inviting prominent parishioners of the town for the ritual of the washing of the feet. The priest washes the feet of these parishioners during mass. It is also on Holy Thursday that devout Catholics do the Stations of the Cross and the Visita Iglesia. In most Catholic churches in the Philippines, there are icons that signify one station where Jesus stopped on the road to Calvary where he was crucified.

Sometimes, these Stations of the Cross are taken outside of the church and spread out throughout one village of the barangay. Fourteen houses in the neighborhood or locality are selected and then set up with an altar and made as stations of the cross.

In the Visita Iglesia, devout parishioners go around different parts of the town to offer prayers at different churches. This usually happens in large cities and municipalities where there is more than one Catholic church.

Waipahu resident Lorenz J.



A procession is held in Vigan, Ilocos Sur on Good Friday where huge statues are pulled by a car and taken around the plaza. (right): The Galvan's residence in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur serves as the 7th Station of the Cross. Photos by Lorenz-Jo Galvan

Galvan visited his hometown of Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur, in April 2012 for a family funeral. He participated in the Stations of the Cross in Vigan and Santa Maria.

“In Vigan, there were huge statues that were pulled by a car and went all around the plaza and the town,” he recalls. “The prayers were in Ilokano and played over a speaker and we bowed during some parts of it.”

In Galvan’s hometown, his parents’ home was used as one of the stations of the cross, with each station lasting about an hour and a half. His family also contributed a statue of Jesus in the parade.

“Me and my siblings walked all around the town,



went on our knees during parts where we needed to kneel and held candles,” he says. “It was an interesting experience. I was happy that I participated instead of staying home and watching TV with my cousins.”

**The Siete Palabras**

The mass where the “Siete Palabras” or the “Seven Last Words” before Jesus dies is done at noon on Good Friday. The day is the most solemn of all days during the Semana (continued on page 6)

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# The Worsening Climate Problem

INTROSPECTIVE By Tony Katigbak

I have written about our deteriorating planet in the past and will continue to do so because the problem is real and it's just getting worse. Just because we don't think about it or talk about it doesn't make it less real. In fact, we're just kidding ourselves if we think we can do nothing and the problem will go away. It's this ignorance and indifference that brought us to where we are in the first place and if we continue on this way, this indifference is what will spell our doom.

As far back as when my daughter was a little girl, people were already talking about the effect we were having on our planet. Back then, in the late 1980s the fear was already there in terms of the longevity of our natural resources and the sustainability of our planet, but the threat was abstract and obscure. It was like talking about running out of snacks from a giant bowl that was still full. We knew that we might run out eventually, but we knew that it would still be a long time before that day arrived.

Well, that day is here. As we continue to grab snacks from the bowl we can already see the bottom and we know that it's only a matter of time before there is nothing left. And the worse part is that we could have prevented this situation if we had just taken action sooner. Instead we chose to ignore the signs and just continue on our way and now we find ourselves in a position of having to be reactionary when we could have practiced prevention instead. Still, while it's a

pity we had to get to this point, it's not too late and we should focus now on making a change while we still can.

In line with this, former United States Vice President Al Gore was in the Philippines for a three-day leadership corps training by the Climate Reality Project, of which he is the founder. Climate warriors from all over Asia (roughly 700) gathered in the country for the training and to learn more about solid steps we can all take to reduce our carbon footprint and begin to make a real difference in our world.

Personally, I don't think the news of this training and this environmental summit is getting as much traction as it deserves. We are instead focusing so much on the candidates and the election and the whole circus that comes with it. While I understand that this is also important, it seems like looking at the small picture when the big picture is crumbling right before us.

According to the Long-Term Climate Risk Index of the thinktank Germanwatch, the Philippines ranks fifth as the most affected country in terms of weather events from 1994 to 2013 with roughly 1.13 deaths per 100,000 people as well as losses to the GDP in the same period. The country experienced the most number of extreme weather events with a total of at least 328. Looking at it that way it's almost cold and sanitized. To see the suffering of so many reduced to statistics makes me feel exceptionally sad. While other countries around the world see only the numbers, we in the Philippines have lived them.



After all, who can forget the devastation of the extreme weather events that have ravaged the country in the past? From Milenyo to Ondoy to the most recent Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan). We have had our share of horror from Mother Nature and it's only just a preview of how bad things can become. Even those who are suspicious and dubious of climate change can't deny that things have steadily become worse in the last five years alone. The world is getting hotter and the natural calamities are getting worse. We have just been lucky that since Yolanda we have not yet had to endure another storm of similar magnitude. But, that's not to say it won't happen again. After all, after Yolanda hit, researchers have claimed that if we don't change, it's only a matter of time before storms like Yolanda are the norm.

## COVER STORY (from page 5, THE RITUALS....)

Santa. It is on Good Friday that Jesus dies. Silence and reverie is observed. This is usually declared a holy day and people stay home, fast and do penitence.

Meat as food is avoided and unnecessary and noisy activities are shunned. In the Seven Last Words, the priest invites laymen to do a reflection of the meaning of each of the Seven Last Words. Those invited write down their thoughts and deliver them in the pulpit where the priest does the homily or sermon. At times, these reflections of the Seven Last Words are broadcast in town so that those who are not

We have definitely come to the point where we can no longer ignore the effects climate change is having on our planet. Last weekend, Gore went to Tacloban as part of his new documentary on climate change. Along with Senator Loren Legarda and Tacloban Mayor Alfred Romualdez, Gore went to the different recovering barangays and visited with several families who were displaced when the super typhoon hit. He also went to the cemetery where thousands were buried in a mass burial site.

I honestly don't know what else will motivate us to act. We have all seen, with our own eyes, the horrors climate change can unleash and yet we're still dragging our feet. Globally, countries have made the commitment to trying to limit global warming to just two degrees Celsius. This is an important decision that can help make a difference in the

world if we can achieve it. But in order to do that, we all have to help reach our goals.

Here in the Philippines it really has become time to focus on renewable energy. That is how we can do our part. We need to stop relying on carbon based fuels for the majority of our energy and focus on renewable energy sources like solar and wind. So much of it is

available to us – solar energy in particular – it seems a waste not to harness this energy source and continue using dirty carbon based fuels. With alternatives at our disposal there is no excuse for us not to be using clean energy. Granted it will take a big investment on our part to get the infrastructure into place, but the investment will be worth it in the long run.

At the end of the day, I think we need to recognize that we only have one world. We need to do our part in taking care of it. If we do, it will take care of us. If we don't... well, we've seen what can happen. As we head into the elections it's important for us to take a closer look at the environmental platforms of the possible candidates. We need to choose a leader who we know will be a good steward not just of the Philippines, but of the world too. (www.philstar.com)

in church or attending the mass can hear them.

In many towns especially those in Bulacan, icons of saints or santos, as the parishioners call them, are brought out of the household, adorned with decorations in a float and displayed to the townspeople in a long street procession. Thus, it is also on Good Friday during the town procession that people are regaled with the different santos that are usually owned by the richest people of the town.

## The Salubong (Meeting)

The final interesting and indigenized ritual of Lent is the "Salubong" which features the

participation of children as angels who come down from heaven to assist in the meeting of the Holy Virgin Mary and her son Jesus Christ. The ritual is set up at a high level at the church where the choir sings and a child dressed as an angel descends to remove the veil of the Virgin Mary so she can see her Son and meet Him.

Statues of the Virgin and Christ are then set up to meet each other in the central part of the church. The members of the choir are dressed as angels sing the Alleluia chorus. This is done on the evening of Holy Saturday and precedes the res-

(continued on page 7)

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

# Hirono Urges High Court to Uphold President's Immigration Actions

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono and 224 other members of Congress filed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in the United States v. Texas case, in which Texas and 25 other states sued to block implementation of President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Parents of

Americans (DAPA) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programs.

Both programs are on hold until the case is resolved by the Supreme Court, leaving workers and families across the country in limbo due to our nation's broken immigration

system.

A section from the brief reads: "Apart from its humaneness in keeping families intact, the DAPA Guidance facilitates the implementation of the Secretary's priorities and thus promotes the efficient and effective execution of the immigration laws consistent with the limited enforcement resources available. The Guidance

does this by encouraging eligible persons to submit to a background check so they can be identified and classified, and by enabling those with an economic need to support themselves lawfully."

The brief filed by Democratic members of Congress makes it clear that DAPA and expanded DACA are based on laws enacted by Congress that

grant the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) broad discretion to determine how to best enforce our country's immigration laws.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in United States v. Texas on April 18, 2016. In December 2015, Hirono joined 33 Senators and 184 Representatives in authoring a separate amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to hear the case.

# State DBEDT Launches Creative Lab Accelerator Program

The State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism's (DBEDT) Creative Industries Division (CID) recently announced the start of its Creative Lab Hawaii Accelerator Program (CLH Program).

The CLH Program is an economic development initiative that started in 2012. The program is designed to accelerate the growth of Hawaii's creative entrepreneurs through immersive, hands-on training in broadband/new media, producing, screenwriting, interactive media, music and design/fashion.

"We continue to focus on our overall growth strategy to create jobs, raise income and cultivate innovation," says DBEDT Director Luis Salaveria. "These types of programs help to position Hawaii as an innovation and knowledge-based economy."

The 2016 season begins with the Creative Lab Immer-

sive Program, which is a year-long experience comprised of three phases: an immersive 5-day workshop, 10-months of project mentoring and a week of business development meetings with industry leaders in key markets outside of the state. Strategic partners include the Writers Guild of America, West, Producers Guild of America, The Modern Honolulu, Hawaii International Film Festival and SpeediShuttle.

The Screenwriting Immersive workshop was held March 14-18, 2016 at The Modern Honolulu for writers in all genres looking to develop new content for motion pictures, television and broadband. Selected applicants in the immersive workshop received coaching on script writing and taking projects to market on multiple platforms.

A second workshop, the Producing Immersive, is scheduled for March 21-25, 2016 and will focus on devel-

oping the opportunities and skills needed to navigate today's multi-platform media landscape in film, television, mobile and online media.

Qualified applicants will receive coaching from John Soriano, a graduate of the University of Southern California film school who has wrote, developed and supervised motion picture and television projects in Hollywood for more than 20 years; Kevin J. Foxe, a producer, writer and director who has been worked in film, digital, web and multimedia for over 30 years; and Sonia Mehandjiyska, a 15-year entertainment industry veteran who has extensive experience in the selling and distribution of films and television series and is head of international distribution at Electric Entertainment.

"We are absolutely thrilled about the caliber of coaches who have agreed to share their time and expertise with our participants," says Georja

Skinner, CID Chief Officer and CLH Program founder. "Through a public-private partnership, Hawaii's creative en-

trepreneurs have been mentored to hone their craft and to expand their global export capacity."

COVER STORY (from page 6, THE RITUALS....)



Salubong

urrection on Easter Sunday.

To Filipinos, Easter Sunday is celebrated as the "other Christmas of the year" and is known as "Pasko ng Muling Pagkabuhay" or Feast of the Resurrection. On Easter Sun-

day, churches are usually filled with parishioners who have taken part in all the rituals and feel they have undergone some kind of cleansing to be able to live the everyday over again.

Many Filipino families in

Hawaii continue to hold fast to the Lenten season and its rich traditions.

"My relatives still observe Lent but in a lighter, yet still solemn mode like in the Philippines," Galvan says.

Filipinos in Hawaii know the impact of Lent in their personal lives. They have a good memory of the Lenten traditions that have been kept alive through the years. These traditions encourage individuals to live their lives with humility and grace, to reflect on their flawed humanity, to seek forgiveness and to move on as changed people for the better.

## Phil Consulate to Use Modified Postal Voting for 2016 Election

The Philippine government's Commission on Elections has adopted the use of Automated Election System Modified Postal Voting which will allow Philippine citizens to cast overseas absentee ballots at the Philippine Consulate General in Honolulu from April 9, 2016 through May 9, 2016—just in time for the country's elections.

All registered voters of the Philippine Consulate General in Honolulu who wish to receive their ballots through the mail are requested to submit to their request to the Consulate's Special Ballot Reception and Custody Group before April 22, 2016. Voters must submit requests via email to: honolulupec@hawaii.twcbc.com or by calling (808) 595-6316.

All requests received after April 22, 2016 will not be accepted.

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# Analysis: Financial Scandals Put Philippines on 'Dirty Money' Map

By Emmanuel J. Lopez

**R**ecent local financial scandals have embraced the headlines of major news dailies the past two weeks. The double-whammy experience, no matter how you look at it, has stirred suspicions and uncertainties on our local stability and control as well as our sincerity as an investment destination. The first occurrence, the alleged large-scale swindling activity perpetrated by a former point man of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), has put the agency and the entire bourse market in a fix in terms of trust and confidence that should be accorded the institution. Likewise, the occurrence of what could be the country's biggest money laundering scandal and biggest cyber heist of recent years should be a test of mettle on the country's financial market integrity.

The country, particularly the financial market, has been seriously calling for active participation of people who can engage and invest in the shares market, yet the call fell on deaf ears. Perhaps people know the risk that accompanies the trade, the uncertainty brought by the volatility of this kind of venture and the stumbling blocks behind the very low literacy rate of Filipinos behind this investment medium. The recent scam in-

volving a former employee of the PSE who doubles as an instructor of a reputable school while sidelining as an investment advisor will not do any good to our local bourse. In fact it is certain to create a drawback in our drive to attract investors in this side of the market.

This smart alec was occupied with deceitful activities as early as 2013 despite already been out of the PSE commission. He went on and continued to pursue his ill-intent with utmost impunity. This thick-faced guy was able to cheat an undetermined number of individuals, potential and existing investors totaling to an approximate amount of P350 million which includes both the principal and interest. The amount could even be higher had we included transactions made before 2013, the time when he was still with the PSE. The amount, without doubt, has been accumulated over years of covert operation. This dishonest practice—done instead of enticing existing shareholders to expand their investment—will most likely reduce people's interest or even cause active investors to withdraw from it, dealing a big blow to our drive of stabilizing our financial market.

The mere fact that the alleged perpetrator was an employee of an agency that promotes the interest of investors to engage in this kind of investment medium already



afforded interested investors an innate confidence. He is also authorized to give seminars that provide literacy and information about financial operations. Given these responsibilities, who would not believe him? There is that big probability that you will be duped because of his background as a legitimate employee of the the PSE and fully authorized to disseminate information about the nitty gritty of the trade.

If a person, an insider of an agency, whose job is to promote and protect the welfare of an investor, is capable of committing a scam of this magnitude that has adversely affected people's lives, then who can be trusted? How can we attract new and interested investors in the local securities market? The occurrence has already created mixed reactions and apprehensions in the local and international scene. The PSE, for its part, should have been extra vigilant with its job and must have released a disclaimer against the suspect as early as 2013. It seems, however, that none has been made until very recently, when

the die has been cast. As a result, many have fallen prey to the scam—an offshoot of laxity of agencies that are supposed to protect people's interest and gains.

As if the incident was not enough to cast doubt on our local financial market which in truth still needs to make its mark, a case of money laundering, perhaps the biggest in our history, and a high-level conspiracy allegedly involving prominent names in business through a reputable bank has been perpetrated. This "dirty money" upon investigation came from a bank robbery in Manhattan, allegedly owned by the Bangladesh Central Bank, transferred to the local bank via cross-border electronic fraud. It can qualify as the world's biggest cybercrime

heist and has put the Philippines on the map as a destination for dirty money. Initial amount uncovered was \$81 million with a peso value of at least P4 billion was traced to a local bank and wired back overseas, in a span of only a few days. The total amount stolen and hacked from the victimized country, Bangladesh, could reach \$1 billion. The stashed amount, meanwhile, could have been bigger had it not been for the timely detection of concerned authorities.

The activity should require intense investigation. Foreign as well as local investors who wanted extreme protection for hard-earned currency might fall prey to this kind of cyber criminals in the midst of the country's thrust for development. The government, for its part, should take a proactive position to protect not only local financial stability but likewise our image in the international financial community. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

**EMMANUEL J. LOPEZ, PH.D.** is an associate professor at the University of Santo Tomas and the chair of its Department of Economics. Views reflected in this article are his own. For comments email: [doc.ejlopez@gmail.com](mailto:doc.ejlopez@gmail.com)

## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

### Philippine Consulate to Hold Araw ng Kagitingan Ceremony

**T**he Philippine Consulate General in Honolulu will observe the 74th anniversary of Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) on April 16, 2016 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific's Main Memorial Shrine from 2 pm to 4 pm.

The ceremony will pay tribute to all Filipino and American veterans who fought in defense of freedom during World War II. The Consulate is co-organizing the event with leaders of the Filipino community and the Filipino-American Veterans of World War II.

Araw ng Kagitingan will include speeches by guests of honor, the laying of memorial wreaths in honor of fallen soldiers, the playing of taps and a memorial gun salute.

Invited guests for Araw ng Kagitingan include state and city elected officials, military officials, veterans, the Consular Corps of Hawaii and members of the Filipino community. The scheduled guest speaker is Jose L. Cuisa Jr., Philippine Ambassador to the U.S.

More information on Araw ng Kagitingan is available by calling the Consulate at 595-6316.

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## WHAT'S UP ATTORNEY?



By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tipon



person who aspires to occupy the highest position in the land must obey the highest law of the

land." Elamparo v. Poe, SPA No. 15-001 (DC) Comelec, Second Division, Resolution, Dec. 1, 2015.

The term "unconstitutional" means not allowed by the constitution of a country; not according or consistent with the constitution of a body politic." Merriam-Webster Dictionary. The term also means "in violation of the requirements of the constitution of a nation or state." <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/unconstitutional>.

On March 3, 2016, the Philippine Supreme Court rendered a decision by a vote of 9 to 6, granting the petition to annul and set aside three Comelec resolutions canceling the Certificate of Candidacy (COC) of Mary Grace Natividad S. Poe-Llamanzares ("Poe") for President of the Philippines in the May 9, 2016 elections. The Comelec had ruled that Poe is not a natural born citizen, that she failed to complete the ten year residency requirement, and that she committed material misrepresentation in her COC when she declared therein that she has been a resident of the Philippines for ten years and eleven months as of May 9, 2016. The Supreme Court held that Poe is a qualified candidate for President in the May 9, 2016 elections and that the procedure and conclusions from which the Comelec resolutions emanated are tainted with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack of jurisdiction.

Mary Grace Natividad S. Poe-Llamanzares ("Poe") was found abandoned as a new born infant in a Catholic

## Part I

## Poe Decision: Is It Unconstitutional?

church in Iloilo City, Philippines on September 3, 1968 by a certain Edgardo Militar. He turned over custody of Poe to Emiliano Militar and his wife. On September 6, 1968, Emiliano reported Poe as a foundling in the Civil Registrar of Iloilo City. The name given Poe was Mary Grace Natividad Contreras Militar.

When Poe was 5 years old, Ronald Allan Kelley Poe (Fernando Poe, Jr.) and Jesusa Sonora Poe (Susan Roces) filed a petition for Poe's adoption in San Juan, Rizal. On May 13, 1974, the court granted the petition and ordered Poe's name to be changed to Mary Grace Natividad Sonora Poe.

On July 27, 1991, Poe married Teodoro Misael Daniel V. Llamanzares, a dual Filipino-American citizen, in San Juan City. They went back to the U.S. where they had been residing. On October 18, 2001, Poe became a naturalized American citizen. On December 13, 2004, Poe returned to the Philippines upon learning of her adoptive father's deteriorating health condition. After her father died, Poe went back to the U.S. on February 3, 2005. On May 24, 2005, Poe returned to the Philippines, obtained a Tax Identification number, her 3 children followed, she purchased a condominium unit in San Juan City in the latter part of 2005. On February 14, 2006 Poe traveled to the U.S. to supervise the disposal of the family's belongings and returned to the Philippines on March 11, 2006.

On July 7, 2006, Poe took her oath of allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines pursuant to Republic Act 9225. On July 10, 2006, Poe filed with the Bureau of Immigration a petition to reacquire Philippine citizenship. On July 18, 2006, the BI issued an Order that Poe had reacquired her Philippine citizenship. On July 12, 2011, Poe executed before the U.S. Embassy an Oath/Affirmation of Renunciation of Nationality of the



United States. She stated that she had resided outside of the U.S. (specifically the Philippines) from September 3, 1968 to July 29, 1991 and from May 2005 to the present. On October 2, 2012, Poe filed with the COMELEC a COC for Senator for the 2013 elections wherein she answered "6 years and 6 months" to the question "Period of residence in the Philippines before May 13, 2013." Poe was elected senator on May 16, 2013.

On October 15, 2015, Poe filed her COC for the Presidency in the May 9, 2016 elections, stating that she is a natural born citizen and that her residence in the Philippines up to the day before the May 9, 2016 elections would be ten years and eleven months counted from May 24, 2005. Four petitions were filed with the Comelec to deny due course or cancel Poe's COC. The petitions basically alleged that Poe committed material misrepresentation in her COC when she stated that she is a natural-born citizen and a resident of the Philippines for ten years and eleven months before the May 9, 2016 elections. Two divisions of the Comelec granted the petitions and cancelled her COC. Poe then filed a petition for certiorari with the Supreme Court, which on March 8, 2016, granted her petition and set aside the Comelec resolutions by a vote of 9 to 6.

## Primary Issue

The ponente of the major-

ity opinion, Justice Jose Portugal Perez, correctly stated that the issue before the Comelec was whether Poe's COC should be denied due course or cancelled on the ground that she made a "false material misrepresentation". For the majority opinion see <http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=/jurisprudence/2016/march2016/221697.pdf>

But the opinion incorrectly stated that the Comelec "cannot itself, in the same cancellation case, decide the qualification or lack thereof of the candidate." How can the Comelec decide whether there is a "false material misrepresentation", unless it determines whether the candidate is qualified for the position that

he/she filed a COC for? Did the majority read our book with retired Judge Artemio S. Tipon "Winning by Knowing Our Election Laws" where we cite cases decided by the Supreme Court stating or recognizing that the Comelec has jurisdiction under Sec. 78 of the Omnibus Election Code over a petition to deny due course or cancel a certificate of candidacy and determine whether a false representation as to material facts was made in the COC? See *Domino v. Comelec*, 310 SCRA 546 (1999) (Comelec has jurisdiction under Section 78 of the Omnibus Election Code over petition to deny due course or cancel COC and can determine whether false representation was made as to residence of candidate; *Labo v. Comelec*, 211 SCRA 297 (1992) (Comelec cancelled COC of candidate stating he was a "natural born" Filipino when in fact he had become an Australian citizen. The most recent decision is *Caballero v. Comelec*, G.R. No. 209835, decided on 09/22/2015, where the Supreme Court held that the Comelec did not commit an error in cancelling the COC of a mayoral candidate for material misrepresentation when he stated in his COC that he

(continued on page 12)

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# MEATLESS, GUILTLESS PLEASURES AT CRIMSON HOTEL

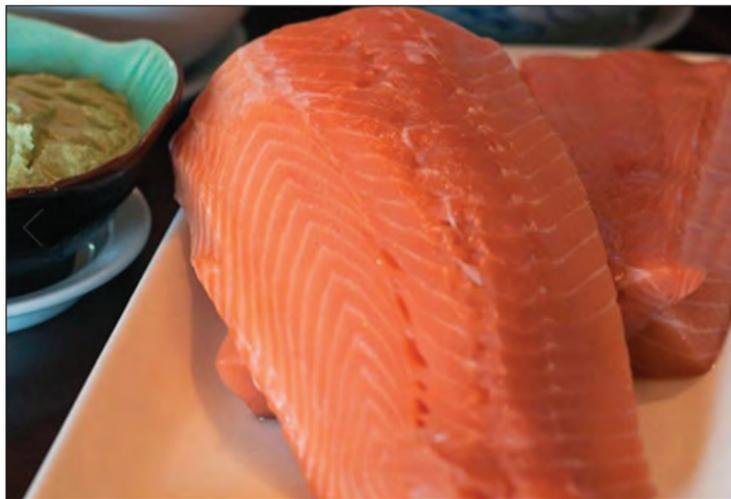
By Ching M. Alano

(Editor's Note: If you are visiting Manila and looking for a meat-free dishes during the Lenten season, you may want to read this article for your reference.)

**M**ANILA, Philippines — The Lenten season is upon us, a time when Christians are called on to repent, relent, rethink and re-examine their lives. Since the reason for the holy season is that Jesus Christ sacrificed His life to save mankind, the assorted hardcore carnivores among us are making the supreme sacrifice of abstaining from meat — and other meaty, guilty pleasures!

Not eating meat for a whole week (or maybe even for a lifetime) is not really hard to do if you visit Crimson Hotel, where the new executive chef, Martin Bower, has whipped up some meat-free, guilt-free offerings for Lent. A true Brit gentleman from Rugby (yes, the home of the rugby sport), Martin trained in classical French cuisine at the Stratford College under renowned chefs. Having honed his craft with chefs from the fine culinary corners of the world, Martin's cooking bears such influences as the fusion food culture of Melbourne (Australia) and Phuket (Thailand). And now, this creative, innovative chef is bent on making Crimson Hotel Alabang the premier dining destination south of Manila.

For Holy Week, Martin prepares two lean but mean dishes exclusively for The Philippine STAR, to delight the taste buds and lighten the spirit. There's pan-seared sea



Get fresh: Salmon comes fresh daily at Cafe 8.

bass that's grilled to thrill in crusty, caramelized perfection. Truly, in crust, we trust! It sits on a mound of baby spinach with sweet pea puree and spiced sweet potato. And then there's poached asparagus, your dream green, smothered with soft poached hen eggs and Bearnaise sauce.

Of course, non-meat eaters can also choose from the fresh buffet offerings at Cafe 8: steamed fish soy and ginger, fried popcorn shrimp curry salt, stir-fry yellow noodles with vegetables and seafood, fried rice eggs at the Asian Section; seared salmon saffron and chive sauce, steamed veggies herb butter, baked fish with mango, chili and coriander salsa, sinigang fish, gratin of eggplant and tomato with mozzarella at the Western Section; assorted sushi at the live station; seafood soup, potato, herb and white truffle soup at the soup station.

The dessert offerings are to diet for. The divine homemade (or is it hotel-made?) ice

cream will melt your heart — you can repent later and burn the calories by jogging (no, you won't burn in hell for eating ice cream during Holy Week). Another sweet temptation that's hard to resist is Cafe 8's leche flan, a take on the cherished Pinoy custard that's as indulgently egg yolk-rich as what your grandma probably used to make.

"Weekends are made for family bonding over good food and fun activities," says Michael Anthony Sagarán, marketing and communications manager, Crimson Hotel Alabang.

The Sunday brunch buffet caters especially to kids with familiar, well-loved food items such as chicken nuggets given a healthier twist by Crimson's dream team of chefs, who prepare everything from scratch using only the freshest, natural, preservative-free ingredients. But of course, there are the sweet treats at the dessert station for kids and kids-at-heart. There's also the kiddie candy bar with the ice cream and crepe station, plus a variety of ingredients you can toss into your glass to make your own halo-halo.

Sundays are made even sweeter for kids with kid-friendly film showings and a fun mini playground.

Easter Sunday will have kids happily hopping about



Pan-tastic: Pan-seared sea bass with baby spinach, sweet pea puree, and spiced sweet potato.

with the Golden Easter Kids Fest that includes a Mad Science kids show, Easter egg hunt, kids' maze, loot bags, and snack box at the Grand Ballroom, 2 to 4 p.m. (at P1,198 per ticket).

To make Sunday family bonding even more exciting and enticing, chef Bower has come up with a dim sum station, a Wagyu beef rump carving station, and a selection of cured fish and terrines.

In addition, health buffs will surely love Cafe 8's healthy selection of fresh greens and light appetizers at the salad bar. Over at the beverage bar, you can enjoy your healthy share of refreshing, nutrient-packed drinks from a juicer with select fresh vegetables and fruits.

So, what else is brewing at Cafe 8? There are upgraded sections that include Japanese with its premium selection of fresh tuna and salmon sashimi, an improved seafood section, and eggs benedict section.

The latest additions to the brunch buffet set (priced affordably at P1,600 per head, including bottomless juices) include imported cold cuts of salami from Italy, Serrano ham from Spain, and Saucisson sausages from France, from suppliers personally handpicked by chef Bower.

And if you wanna get real cheesy, this is the place to be, what with its cheese station teeming with different kinds of imported soft and hard cheeses (think Reblochon Lait Cru, Brillat Savarin Mons, Pont L'Eveque, Valencay, Brie Boite Blue, etc.).

At Crimson Hotel, guests also get a fine taste of great art by local artists that brighten up a wall here and a corner there. "The hotel owners invest a lot in local art," says Sagarán.

For March 24-25, room rates start at P6,000 net with breakfast for two and Visita Iglesia transportation. Yes, Easter Mass will be held. For March 26-27, room rates start at P7,900 net with Sunday brunch for two and Golden Easter Kids Fest tickets for two.

The truth is, Crimson Hotel in Filinvest, Alabang, with its five-star modern, artsy but homey, welcoming, and relaxing ambience is fast becoming not just a foodie destination but also a favorite staycation place down south. Putting a premium on guests' welfare, the hotel boasts rooms with air-conditioning units that are equipped with energy recovery ventilation for continuous circulation of fresh air. There are 345 guest rooms, 20 suites and 34 executive rooms with amenities of international standards. Aside from Cafe 8 for breakfast, lunch and dinner, it has the Lobby Lounge for desserts, nibblers, coffee and tea; the Deck Bar for open-air dining with Dedon Nestrest loungers for some quiet relaxation; the Grand Ballroom for conventions and events; and seven meeting rooms named after famous artists Monet, Calder, Miro, Pollock, Warhol, Mondrian, and Joya.

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## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

# Living Life Without Conventions

By Renelaine Bontol Pfister

**O**t's the Lenten Season. For us Filipinos, it's usually a time for more church, less baboy and being a little more conscious about Jesus' life. For me, Lent is a time for reflection.

But don't worry. I'm not going to give a lecture here. I have no credentials for that. But I do want to share something inspiring that I read recently.

A little background. "*Diogenes and Alexander*" is an essay written by Gilbert Highet about the meeting between Diogenes, a Greek Cynic philosopher and the Macedonian King, Alexander. Diogenes was kind of a weirdo in his time, to those who didn't know him and what he stood for. He lived on the streets like a homeless person, because he

did not believe in the material riches of the world and shunned them. He refused to even own a wooden cup. He lay on the street like a dog, and smelled like a dog. He preached to those who would listen. Meanwhile, word of him had reached Alexander the Great's ears. Alexander, being a student of Aristotle's and hoping to learn from Diogenes, wished to meet him. When Alexander found him, Diogenes was lying on the ground. He did not stand up or acknowledge the king.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Diogenes?" Alexander asked. To which Diogenes replied, "Yes, stand to one side. You're blocking the sunlight."

I thought this was profound because today, we are so enamored by celebrities and fantasize about their lives as if they were the models of perfection.



We pore over *People* magazine and *US Weekly*. What about those people who do good—the humanitarians, the altruistic and the philanthropists? (Have you ever watched *CNN Heroes*, for example? It never fails to impress me and make me feel useless at the same time). I wish there were more magazines about those people. I wish children idolized those people.

There is a passage from Highet's essay which is beautifully constructed and truly

inspiring. I've read it over and over:

"Live without conventions, which are artificial and false; escape from the complexities and superfluities and extravagances: only so you can live a free life."

I think this is great advice for us, right here, right now.

I'm not saying we should be homeless like Diogenes (I would be the first to protest if I couldn't take a shower twice a day). But I do think we're too caught up these days in

complexities and superfluities and extravagances—the latest fashion trends, a Louis Vuitton purse, a big house, a nice car. There's nothing wrong with them, but they don't equal good.

Diogenes and Jesus Christ led humble and simple lives, free from complexities and superfluities and extravagances. That made them free.

Since I moved to and worked in the U.S., I've lived in New Jersey and California, but I think Hawaii is a place where people live with the least conventions. Many of my friends and colleagues moved to Hawaii for the beauty of the place and not for the extravagances. We simply cannot afford to buy a big house here or indulge all our wants. We moved here because we enjoy the outdoors, the beautiful weather and the lovely people.

I feel lucky to be here. I think this is the place where I live with the least conventions (and headaches) of a material world. This is the place where I can be free.

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## HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

### Deadline to Register for Conservation Program Fast Approaching

Time is running out for farmers and ranchers to participate in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for 2016. This year's deadline is March 31.

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), CSP is a voluntary stewardship incentives program that rewards farmers, ranchers and foresters for managing their land in a way that produces real and measurable conservation outcomes—healthy soil, clean water and air and wildlife habitats.

Since the program began in 2009, nearly 70 million acres of farm and ranch land have been enrolled in the program. CSP participants receive an annual land use payment for operation-level environmental benefits they produce. Under CSP, participants are paid for conservation performance—the higher the operational per-

formance, the higher their payment.

CSP is a continuous sign-up program that producers can apply to enroll at any time of the year. NRCS applies a cut-off date for applications to be considered during a particular fiscal year. Once the cut-off date is past, producers may continue to apply, but they will not be considered for entry until the following year.

March 31 is also the deadline by which initial applications are needed from farmers with expiring 2012-2016 contracts if they want to renew them for another five years. Some 12 million acres already in the program are eligible for renewal this year.

To sign up, call Bernadette Luncsford, district conservationist, at 541-2600 ext. 109. More information about the program is available online at: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CSP-Farmers-Guide-2015-final.pdf>

#### (CANDID PERSPECTIVES from page 3, POLITICS...)

reaction where he was.

Funny how Del Carmen lost out to "Spotlight," a movie about abusive Catholic priests in Boston. It featured the work of director Tom McCarthy and composer Michael Giacchino, both of whom worked with Del Carmen on the Pixar animated feature "Up."

And both of whom were nominated for Oscars. I loved Del Carmen's "Inside Out." But as a Catholic, how could I not love "Spotlight," the movie that exposes the church's hypocrisy?

The U.S. Catholic Bishop's most recent report in 2015 (covering the year 2014) showed \$150,747,387 in costs related to child protection efforts and to allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors. The majority of that \$150 million paid out by the church went to victims and lawyers.

They should just make more movies

like "Spotlight" while they're at it. That film cost just \$20 million to make and has made \$39 million in the U.S., plus another \$24 million in foreign sales. That's \$63 million total to date.

Reports have the film opening in the Philippines in February to just under \$10,000. Too bad. Filipinos need to see that film. The Philippines was not spared from the abuse scandal. The film shows just how difficult it was to uncover. It took a free press and journalists empowered to seek out the truth. It was no fluke that the film won the Oscar for Best Picture. It showed how showbiz can connect us to real life in an important way.

**EMIL GUILLERMO** is an award-winning journalist and commentator who writes from Northern California. He recently won the 2015 Dr. Suzanne Ahn Award for Civil Rights and Social Justice from the Asian American Journalists Association, California.

#### (WHAT'S UP ATTORNEY? from page 9, POE DECISION: ...)

had been a resident of Uyugan, Batanes, for one year prior to the May 13, 2013 elections, but failed to present competent evidence to prove it. The Comelec's jurisdiction is founded on Section 2(1), Article IX-C of the Constitution empowering it to "[e]nforce and administer all laws and regulations relative to the conduct of an election." As Justice Carpio pointed out in his dissenting opinion "Screening initially the qualifications of all candidates lies within this specific power." For Justice Carpio's dissenting opinion, see [http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=/jurisprudence/2016/march/2016/221697\\_carpio.pdf](http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=/jurisprudence/2016/march/2016/221697_carpio.pdf)

To be continued in Part II

**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 specializes in immigration law and criminal defense. Office: American Savings Bank Tower, 1001 Bishop Street, Suite 2305, Honolulu, HI 96813. Tel. 808 225 2645 E-Mail: [filamlaw@yahoo.com](mailto:filamlaw@yahoo.com). Websites: [www.MilitaryandCriminalLaw.com](http://www.MilitaryandCriminalLaw.com). He is from Laoag City and Magsingal, Ilocos Sur. He served as an Immigration Officer. He is co-author of "Immigration Law Service, 1st ed.," an 8-volume practice guide for immigration officers and lawyers. This article is a general overview of the subject matter discussed and is not intended as legal advice.

LEGAL NOTES

# Immigrant Visa Waiting List is Long



By Reuben S. Seguritan

**1** 23,524 applicants were added last fiscal year to the immigrant visa waiting list in the various preference categories subject to numerical limits.

A report from the National Visa Center (NVC) and submitted to the Department of State shows that as of November 1, 2015, there were 4,455,274 family-based applicants, an increase of 123,524 or 2.9% from last year. The number of employment-based visa applicants was 100,747 up by 9,837 applicants from last year.

The Philippines placed second over-all, with 417,511

registrants. The other countries that round up the top five in terms of number of registrants are: Mexico- 1,344,429; India- 344,208; Vietnam- 282,375; and China- 260,265.

These numbers include not only the principal applicants or petition beneficiaries but also their spouses and children entitled to derivative status. However, they do not include spouses, unmarried children under 21 years of age, and parents of US citizens who are not subject to the numerical limitations.

The figures do not also include the significant number of applicants for adjustment of status. Also excluded are those who failed to respond within one year to the visa application instruction letter sent by the National Visa Center notifying them of visa availability. In such case, the petition is considered inactive and not counted in the waiting list totals.

For fiscal year 2016, or from October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017, the total number of visas to be issued is 226,000 in family-based preferences and 140,000 for employment-based preferences. The total per-country limit will be 25,620, which translates to decades-long wait times for applicants in certain categories from countries such as Mexico, India, Vietnam, China and the Philippines.

The numbers of registrants for the family-based preferences (F) are: F1 (adult unmarried sons and daughters of US citizens)- 322,786; F2A (spouses and children of permanent residents)- 276,022; F2B (adult sons and daughters of permanent residents)- 480,755; F3 (married sons and daughters of US citizens)- 825,991; and F4 (brothers and sisters of US citizens)- 2,549,718.

The Philippines has the

second highest number of family preference registrants with 388,214. The per-country limit on the annual number of family preference visas for FY 2016 is 15,280.

Mexico ranked first in all family-based preferences. The Philippines ranked second in F2B and F3 categories; fourth in the F2A category, and sixth in the F4 category. More cases may be added to the F1 waiting list because of the automatic conversion pending 2B cases into F1 cases upon the naturalization of the petitioner, but this can be avoided by availing of the opt-out provision under the Child Support Protection Act. By opting to remain as an F2B case, a longer wait time under the F1 category is avoided.

For employment-based preferences (EB), the breakdown of registrants is as follows: EB1 workers with extraordinary ability, outstanding professors and researchers, and multinational

managers and executives)- 3,474; EB2 (advanced degree professionals and aliens of exceptional ability)- 11,440; EB3 (skilled workers and professionals)- 61,584; EB3 (other workers)- 6,208; EB4 (special immigrants and religious workers)- 379; and EB5 (employment creation)- 17,662.

The Philippines ranked first in the EB3 (skilled workers) category, fourth in the EB2 and third in the EB3 (other workers) categories. Registrants from the Philippines comprise 30% of the total for employment-based preferences at 29,297, of which 96% fall under the EB3 (skilled workers) category for the Philippines. For FY 2016, the per-country limit is only 9,825.

**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)

## PHILIPPINE NEWS

# Balikatan 2016 Kicks Off in Palawan, Panay

by Jaime Laude  
Thursday, March 17, 2016

**M**ANILA, Philippines – This year’s first phase of the US-Phil Balikatan series had its soft opening yesterday with the joint launching of construction and medical engagements in Panay and Palawan.

Capt. Frank Sayson, Philippine-side exercise spokesman, said five different school buildings and scores of local residents in the two islands benefited from yesterday’s shoulder-to-shoulder joint American and Filipino activities.

Balikatan is an annual Philippine-US military bilateral training exercise, a signature element of the alliance focused on a variety of missions including humanitarian assistance, maritime law enforcement and environmental protection.

This year’s joint military drills will take place in various areas of the country following



the exercises’ official opening on April 4 and will run until April 15.

A beachhead landing to capture an “illegally occupied area by foreign forces in Panay” will be conducted by combined Filipino and US troops on the beaches of the capital town of San Jose in Antique.

Antique province in Panay directly faces the island province of Palawan.

“Throughout the joint exercises both forces will be working together to enhance maritime law enforcement throughout the Philippines to meet annual training requirements and enhance techniques, tactics and procedures as a critical part of interoperability of our forces,” Sayson said.

The annual joint military drills will also be conducted in

Crow Valley in Tarlac, Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Clark Air Field in Pampanga, Subic Bay in Zambales and in Palawan, all aimed at improving the ability of both forces working together.

“One of the main joint operations for this year’s exercise will be the conduct of a joint rapid reaction force as part of the distributed operations in the vicinity of Panay, demonstrating the partnered capability in rapid response,” Sayson said.

Invited as observers to this yearly joint military event are the military representatives from seven Southeast Asian-member states – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and regional allies India, Japan, South Korea and Timor-Leste.

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# Treating Computer Vision Syndrome

By Christopher Tortora, M.D.

**A**mericans spend seven hours a day on the computer during the average work day. Time spent staring at a screen takes its toll on one's eyes. Between 50 to 90 percent of computer users experience symptoms related to computer vision syndrome (CVS) or digital eye strain.

CVS can occur from extended use of any device with a digital screen. Symptoms include dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches and neck and shoulder pain. CVS is caused by any combination of the following factors: uncorrected refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism),

poor lighting, screen glare and poor workstation setup for posture and viewing.

During March, which is Workplace Eye Wellness Month, medical experts are raising awareness about this very common but treatable condition.

"The good news is that there's currently no scientific evidence that CVS permanently damages the eyes; however, some experts believe daily computer use may be a contributing factor to the rise in dry eye disease," says Steven Rhee, D.O., corneal specialist at the Hawaiian Eye Center. "Dry eyes can lead to more serious eye conditions and even vision loss if not properly treated."



To protect yourself from CVS, the first step is to correct any refractive errors by visiting your eye care professional. The National Eye Institute estimates that 11 million Americans age 12 and older suffer from easily treatable refractive errors. Having the proper glasses, contacts or surgery to correct these issues will de-

crease any added strain on your eyes.

The next step is to properly arrange your workstation: position monitor between 20 to 28 inches away from your eyes; adjust chair to support upright sitting that allows you to view the screen's center just below eyelevel at a 15 to 20 degree downward angle; change

screen contrast and brightness to level comparable to surrounding light; and use screen covers, lower lighting and curtains or blinds to reduce glare.

Lastly, follow these simple tips: take regular breaks and blink frequently to rehydrate your eyes; every 20 minutes, focus on an object at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds (20/20/20 rule); and try over-the-counter lubricating eye drops.

"If CVS symptoms become chronic, speak with your eye care professional to see if special computer glasses are needed or treatment for dry eyes is recommended," says Dr. Rhee.

CHRISTOPHER TORTORA, M.D. is a board-certified ophthalmologist at Hawaiian Eye Center.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS FEATURE

# Politicians Urged to Try 'Balagtasan' During Sorties

By Evelyn Macairan

**M**ANILA, Philippines – Tired of the routine and boring speeches of candidates on stage? Try sprucing up the campaign sorties with "balagtasan," including the use of verse to introduce candidates.

This is the suggestion of National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario, who believes that the balagtasan, where two or more persons debate on a particular subject through po-

etry, can be a fresh, catchy alternative to boring campaign speeches.

Aside from the usual singers, dancers and comedians hired to provide a break from speeches, Almario said candidates could add the balagtasan to their routine.

Almario, chairman of the Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino, said that he would encourage politicians and their political parties to revive the old Filipino way of verbal jousting.

"I think this will click, especially in the provinces," he said.

He also encouraged politicians to consider hiring local



National Artist Virgilio Almario

poets in the areas where they will hold sorties to give a patula or poetic-style of introducing themselves to the crowd.

"In fact, I have seen politicians who were given a patula way of introduction. There could be politicians who prefer a literary way of promoting themselves. They could hire

the local poets in the provinces," Almario added.

Meanwhile, Almario said he is looking and would vote for candidates who would champion the cause of promoting literature and knowledge in the country.

He believed that the voting public should understand the importance of literature in creating the people's identity as Filipinos.

While there might be more urgent issues, Almario said that literature should also be given the same importance.

His call for candidates to include the promotion of literature in their platforms was announced yesterday during the press launch for the celebration

of the Second National Literature Month in April.

Almario, National Commission for Culture and the Arts officer-in-charge executive director Adelina Suemith and National Book Development Board (NBDB) chairperson Flor Marie Sta. Romana Cruz said they have scheduled several literary and cultural events next month.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Alab ng Panitikan."

One of the activities is the youth camp at the Orion Elementary School in the Bataan town where the Tagalog poet Francisco Baltazar, known as Balagtas, lived a significant part of his life. ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com))

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**BIG ISLAND MEMORIES** By Grace Larson

**BIFCC VALENTINE'S AND MRS. HI FILIPINA CORONATION BANQUET** | February 27, 2016 | Nani Mau Gardens, Hilo, Hawaii



Attendees and contestants enjoy the Big Island Filipino Community Council's (BIFCC) Valentine's Day Celebration and Coronation. (Standing): Ann Carbery, Mila Parker, BIFCC Ms. Hawaii-Filipina Kamakaila Waipa and Mrs. AFHA Big Island Princess Arcelie Weaver. (Seated): Alma Cerra, Nick Cerra and Esther Skinner.



▲ A pose to remember after the coronation of Mrs. Hawaii Island Filipina 2016 Marilyn Domingo, together with BIFCC's executive board and board of directors.



◀ BIFCC officers, members and guests dance to the tune of the Electric Slide during BIFCC's Valentine's Day Celebration and Coronation.



Hot Mamas of the Big Island pose with Ronald Salvador before their dance performance. ▶

**HILO VISAYAN CLUB (HVC) ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS**



Hilo Visayan Club President Dayday Hopkins thanks Medicare/ Medicaid guest speaker Jo Yamada and Nick from the Hawaii County Office of Aging after their presentation last March 13, 2016 at the County's Aupuni Center conference room in Hilo.



Hilo Visayan Club Valentine's Day celebration at the Aupuni Center conference room last February 14, 2016. Attendees enjoyed dancing and feasting with friends and loved ones.



Elvira Pinar Johnson and Marjorie Sato-Kawamoto with HVC-VP Grace Larson during the Ms. HVC Filipiniana event.



HVC Ms. Filipiniana winner Liberty Quiroga showcases her winning attire with 2nd AFHA Princess of the Big Island 2015 Arcelie Weaver.

**BOODLE FIGHT FEASTING**

POTLUCK boodle fighting is the latest trend at family gatherings on the Big Island. Boodle fighting is a military style of eating where long tables are prepared and food is placed on top of banana leaves. Viands and rice are ready to eat using bare hands, while jugs of water are placed on the side to wash hands before the "eating combat." The "combat" refers to the act of grabbing and eating as much as you can before others do or before the food runs out.



Boodle fight birthday celebration of Hilda Baldwin last February 26. From left: Grace Larson, Hilda Baldwin, Esther Jatón, Connie Savage, Ann McStott and Caroline Minick.



A Boodle fight at the residence of Joy Escalante in Pahoa on March 5.



Family and friends of Petronila Tabudlo Blank (center, end of table) are ready for a boodle fight at her birthday celebration at Kahakai Beach Park on March 12.

## TAX TIME

## USEFUL TAX TIPS AND STRATEGIES

With the deadline to file taxes quickly approaching, taxpayers may need additional help. The following are useful tips and reminders that can help taxpayers maximize their refunds and stay on top of their returns:

- **IRA Contribution Deduction:** Have you told your tax preparer about your IRA contributions for 2015? Investors commonly forget to mention this fact unless they make the contribution near the time they actually file the tax return. A Traditional IRA contribution must be reported on your tax return, whether or not it is deductible.
- **Foreign Taxes Paid:** If you invest in foreign securities, you may have had to pay foreign withholding tax to another country. In this case, you may be able to claim the taxes paid as an itemized deduction on Form 1040 Schedule A or claim the taxes paid as a foreign tax credit on Form 1116. For many investors, these amounts are small and easily overlooked.
- **Points Paid on New or Refinanced Mortgage:** If you purchased a home or refinanced the loan on your current home in 2015, the points (prepaid interest) you paid may be deductible as mortgage interest. Refer to IRS Publication 936 to check your eligibility.
- **Health Insurance Premium Tax Credit:** If you purchased health insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace in 2015, you may be eligible for the premium tax credit. To claim the credit or reconcile advance payments of the credit, file IRS Form 8962 with your income tax return. The Marketplace is required to provide IRS Form 1095-A no later than January 31 to assist you with claiming the credit.
- **Tax Benefits for Education:** There are many deductions and credits available to taxpayers who have education related expenses. These expenses may have been reported to you on IRS Form 1098-T. To determine which credit or deduction is most beneficial to you, refer to IRS Publication 970 for a complete list. This publication will also help you with reporting and taxation of withdrawals from a 529 plan or Education Savings Account.
- **Charitable Contribution Deduction:** Not all charities send a confirmation state-

ment or letter of your gift when the contribution is less than \$250. Review your check records or credit card statements for any forgotten charitable donations. If you took a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA in 2015, be sure to review the instructions for Form 1040 to properly report this type of IRA distribution.

- **Medicare Taxes for High Income Taxpayers:** High income taxpayers must consider additional Medicare taxes when filing their income tax return. A 0.9 percent tax applies to compensation and net self-employment income that exceeds \$200,000 for a single person (\$250,000 for joint filers). IRS Form 8959 is used to report this tax. Taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income above these same thresholds may also owe an additional 3.8 percent on the lesser of their net investment income or the amount by which their modified adjusted gross income ex-

ceeds the relevant threshold. The IRS has created Form 8960 to calculate and report this additional tax.

- **Extending Your Tax Return:** In some cases you may not have all of the information needed to complete your income tax return by the April deadline. For example, if you have investments that report tax information to you on a Schedule K-1 instead of Form 1099, you may not receive your Schedule K-1 until after the return due date. If this is your situation, you may consider filing Form 4868 to receive an automatic 6-month extension of time to file your return. However, this is an extension of time to file, not to pay. You must pay your tax due by the original due date.
- **Estimated Tax Payments:** The IRS requires that you pay your income tax throughout the year as the income is earned (with a few exceptions). This is typically done through withholding. For income

that is not subject to withholding, you may be required to make estimated tax payments on Form 1040-ES in order to avoid penalties. Your tax advisor can help with this determination.

- **Tax Returns for Children:** It is easy to forget that your child had income during the year. Children with investment income or capital gains transactions may be required to file a tax return of their own. To determine filing requirements for your child's situation, review IRS Publication 929, Tax Rules for Children and Dependents.

Please keep in mind that the information above is for general purposes only and does not represent legal or tax advice. Because individual circumstances vary, please consult your legal or tax advisor about your specific situation.

Article courtesy of Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS

## Foreign Leaders Respect Philippines's Good Governance – Noy

by Delon Porcalla  
Wednesday, March 16, 2016

MANILA, Philippines – It only took the administration of President Aquino for foreign leaders to respect the Philippines – which used to be the “Sick Man of Asia” – after the government laid out the principles of good governance, according to the interior secretary.

Speaking before governors during a meeting of the League of Provinces at the Century Park Hotel in Manila yesterday, Aquino said he could relate to the anecdote shared by Interior Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento on how foreign leaders treated Filipinos shabbily.



U.S. President Obama and PhI President Aquino

“There was a time when state leaders would even treat us like we were beggars. Now they are asking me how I was able to spur our growth and economy,” he said.

“And I told them: good governance is good economics,” he added.

Sarmiento told the President the story of foreign immigration agents doubting the

purpose of his travel.

Aquino said he experienced the same thing, and on the national level, unlike Sarmiento who was a former mayor in Samar province. “And I told Mel, we are in the same situation.”

Sarmiento cracked a joke that when he was still a local chief executive, he envied

(continued on page 18)



Michael A. McMann, M.D.

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## TECHNOLOGY FOR DAILY LIVING

## ENERGY NET ZERO AND NO MORE NIMBY

By Sheryll Bonilla, Esq.

**G**resham, Oregon – a city east of Portland – saves \$500,000 a year in avoided electricity costs.

Eliminating the monthly electric bill is a big advantage for the 114,000 customers of the facility. Gresham's wastewater treatment plant used to be its largest energy user and is now the city's biggest energy producer. In 2005, a co-generation engine was installed at the treatment plant, beginning a ten-year project to reduce energy bills. In 2010, the city formed an Energy Management Team and set a goal of achieving net zero energy consumption within five years. In 2015, the city met its goal right on schedule.

Two 400kW Caterpillar 3508 learn-burn engine generators enable the wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) to generate 92% of its daily electricity demand. A 420 kW solar array contributes the remaining electricity needed. The solar power system didn't cost the city anything to install because it was done through a 20-year power purchase agreement at 2/3 the going utility rate. Gresham invested roughly \$5 million over 10 years and was aided by \$4 million in grants from the Energy Trust of Oregon and the Oregon Department of Energy. To save even more money, the city staff wrote all the grant proposals instead of hiring expensive consultants.

The WWTF takes in about \$250,000 in revenue from an 8 cents per gallon tipping fee for fats, oil and grease (FOG). Because these substances have high chemical energy content, adding them into the sewage boosted biogas production from 180,000 cubic feet to more than 300,000 cubic feet per day. About 5% of its generation is excess, which gets exported back to the Portland General Electric (PGE) grid. Under its net metering agreement with PGE, the treatment



Gresham's wastewater treatment basin. Photo: www.greshamoregon.gov

plant gets credit on future bills rather than income. The WWTF expects to use the credits in situations when engines are down for maintenance or if electricity demand is more than production. Unused credits are transferred each year to a fund for families on the PGE energy assistance program.

The Energy Management Team meets monthly to brainstorm and monitor progress on goals for power generation, conservation, and consumption. Smaller energy efficiency projects included capturing engine heat to heat the building and digester system. It partnered with a vendor that was contracted for a major LED street lighting project for the city, offering to allow the company to stage their equipment on the WWTF property for a year for free in exchange for giving the facility LED exterior lights for free.

#### Across the country

In Wisconsin, the sustainability award winning Sheboygan WWTF also achieved net zero energy using biogas. It was the first in Wisconsin to regularly produce more electricity than needed to operate, and the excess renewable energy is exported to the utility grid. The state of Wisconsin took notice and evaluated the return on investment in cogeneration technology for all the WWTF across the state. The numbers were encouraging. Installing anaerobic digesters and microturbines to produce and generate electricity using biogas, gave an average ROI

in less than a year for most of the treatment plants, with 4.6 years being the longest period. These investments save their county budgets money on operating costs.

Sheboygan WWTF installed its system under a partnership with Allied Energy which funded the project. To maximize electricity generation, energy efficient linear-motion mixers are used to boost biogas production. Each of the four digesters connects independently to a common header to be distributed to the utilization equipment. Parallel switchgear in the microturbine system synchronizes output with the electric grid. Like Gresham, Sheboygan's high production comes from fats, oils, and grease, in this case, cheese production wastewater. When plant engineers began adding the cheese wastewater, biogas production skyrocketed. Sheboygan's success is the result of a collaboration with Allied Energy, Union Solutions, Inc. and Energenec, which manufactured and supplied the biogas conditioning skids and Capstone microturbines for the net zero energy system.

#### The City Across the City by the Bay

Oakland, California's WWTF processes food waste from more than 100 semi-trucks each day, which provide free fuel for its electricity needs. The food is ground, made into slurry, and fed into 12 anaerobic digesters that produce biogas. Biogas production from sewage alone

supplied half the facility's electricity needs. Adding the throw-away food generates enough biogas to run the plant and send extra electricity into the grid, enough for roughly 1,250 homes.

#### Back Here at Home

These success stories hold promise for the state with the highest SPAM consumption in the country (another high energy content food). Our county councils struggle to meet all of the demands on island budgets, which include paying for sewage treatment plant operating costs. Oahu alone has nine wastewater treatment plants scattered around the island. If we could achieve Gresham and Sheboygan's net zero energy success, we could chop a bunch of dollars off our strained council budget. If we could replicate Oakland's excess energy production, we could send locally fueled electricity into the grid, bringing down rates from

lower importing of fossil fuels. Private-public partnerships and active grant writing efforts by city staff enabled these wastewater treatment facilities to become net zero energy consumers and excess energy contributors.

The other important benefit is diversion of waste away from landfills. Councils are deadlocked in finding the next dump site by political Not In My Back Yard pressure. Taking organic waste out of the landfill and instead turning it into electricity usable by everyone kills both birds with one stone. The benefits to us as Hawaii residents are worth the evaluation – diverting food waste from our landfills so that we don't have to fight over where the next landfill is placed; lower council operating budgets (and hopefully lower taxes); lower electricity costs from locally fueled power, and cleaner air. Let's hope our leadership invests in a team to make it happen.

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MAINLAND NEWS

# New York Restaurants Post Salt Warnings, and Diners Shrug

**N**EW YORK — As warning labels go, the small salt shaker emblems that began showing up on some New York City restaurant menus recently are fairly unobtrusive, but each is supposed to carry a powerful message. If the black and white logo appears next to a dish, it means it contains more salt, by itself, than doctors recommend that a person ingest in an entire day.

Getting diners to pay attention to the logos, though, is another matter.

"I haven't had health problems, other than I'm a little overweight, so I feel I should eat what I want until I have a problem," said Madi Boggs, a former resident of New York who now lives in Connecticut, as she tucked into a plate of crispy chicken fingers at a TGI Friday's in Manhattan.

The city began requiring chain restaurants to post the warnings in December. Hundreds have voluntarily complied, even as the industry has continued to delay enforcement of the rules through a



court challenge.

But customers interviewed Tuesday at several city restaurants said the labels were unlikely to change what they ordered.

"For someone that's young, it really doesn't matter, because they're still healthy," said Maite Acosta, a 20-year-old nurse from Birmingham, Alabama, as she dined at an Applebee's just off Times Square.

The hostess at the restaurant, Ashley Hurtado, said she thought the labeling was "a good idea," but also said it wouldn't change the way she ate.

"I'll eat anything, whatever I want. That's just how I am," she said.

New York City's regulation applies to restaurants and fast-food places with more than 15 outlets nationwide. It requires

eateries to post the salt shaker emblem next to menu items that contain more than the daily recommended limit of 2,300 milligrams of salt, or about the amount found in a teaspoon. Health experts say too much salt intake over time can lead to high blood pressure and other problems.

The National Restaurant Association went to court to challenge fines of up to \$600 for non-compliance that were to kick in Tuesday. On Monday, an appellate judge issued a temporary stay of enforcement while the appeal is underway.

New York has, for years now, been trying to attack chronic health problems like obesity, diabetes and hypertension by warning consumers about the hidden dangers in the food they eat.

The city banned the use of artery-damaging artificial trans fats in restaurant food. It tried, but failed, to impose a limit on the size of cups used to serve sugary beverages at food service establishments.

Eight years ago, it began requiring chain restaurants to post calorie information on their menus, reasoning that if people knew how caloric some dishes and beverages were, they might stay away.

That initiative was quickly replicated in several other big cities, but it may not have achieved its main goal, which is to change the way people eat.

Researchers at the New York University School of Medicine who reviewed 31 studies on calorie labeling concluded in a *Journal of Community Health* article published in December 2014 that its effect on diners was "marginal."

"While there are some positive results," they wrote, "overall these studies show that calorie labels do not have the desired effect in reducing total calories ordered or consumed."

City health officials said they interviewed more than 8,000 restaurant patrons and found better results. They said that patrons who saw the labels purchased, on average, food containing 100 fewer calories.

City health officials are optimistic that the new salt labels, if they survive the court challenge, will make a difference.

"We are certain it will have an effect. It's just too early to tell what that will be," said Christopher Miller, a spokesman for the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

In some ways, it has already had a limited effect. Panera Bread changed some ingredients in three menu items to lower the salt content, including its signature bread bowl.

Still, at a Subway sandwich shop in midtown Manhattan, employees interviewed Tuesday said only two or three people had inquired about the salt icons after they began appearing December — a sign of the challenge ahead in changing public opinion. (www.philstar.com)

PHILIPPINE NEWS (from page 16, FOREIGN...)

other local officials from other countries that every time they are invited to a conference abroad they easily pass the immigration process.

His foreign counterparts had always been "welcomed," but when his turn at the immigration desk came, the agent would always look at his passport, visa and match this with his face, repeat the process, then check the watch list.

Sarmiento also recalled the final common query: "What is the purpose of your visit?" to which he would reply, "I was invited to this conference."

The immigration agent would then make a follow up: "Do you have proof?"

He would then be forced to go over his files and show the official invitation.

Sarmiento also vividly remembers how the 100 pieces of business cards he brought remained intact, as nobody

would exchange cards with him, probably out of fear he might solicit for fire trucks or ambulance.

In the same meeting with the governors, Aquino reminded local executives that the government does not need to make promises since they have delivered much in terms of massive infrastructure projects across the country.

Aquino endorsed the candidacy of Liberal Party standard-bearer Manuel Roxas II before the governors.

He asked the governors to help Roxas continue the daang matuwid policy of his administration.

Aquino said he endorsed Roxas and his runningmate Camarines Sur Rep. Leni Robredo because he can personally guarantee that both will continue the reforms he initiated in government. (www.philstar.com)

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SARILING GAWA YOUTH COUNCIL'S 36TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE CAMP** | March 19-21, 2016 | YMCA CAMP ERDMAN IN MOKULEIA FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS; COST: \$140.00 per person | Contact Rouel Velasco, rouel.velasco@sarilinggawa.org/218-0833 for more information.

**FILIPINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HI'S 22ND ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT** | March 25, 2016 | EWA BEACH GOLF CLUB | For more info, contact Eddie Agas, Sr. @ 808-783-3327

**FILCOM SUNDAY: MAD FEST (MUSIC, ART AND DANCE FESTIVAL)** | March 27, 2016, EASTER SUNDAY | 3:00 - 8:00 PM | FILCOM CENTER, WAIPAHU, HI | For more info please call (808) 680-0451

**KAUA'I PHILIPPINE CULTURAL CENTER'S GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY** | March 29, 2016 | 3:00 PM | To take place on the LAWN NEXT TO THE YMCA SWIMMING POOL IN PUHI (FUTURE SITE OF THE KAUA'I PHILIPPINE CULTURAL CENTER) | For further info, contact 808-645-0257

**FILIPINO FILM FESTIVAL** | April 2-16, 2016 | Opening-Night Reception: April 2, 6-7:30 p.m, to be held at the LUCE PAVILION CAFE inside the museum but entrance is through Doris Duke Theatre entrance (on Kinau Street). Opening-night tickets cost \$35 (non-museum members) and \$30 (for museum members) and includes dinner with no host bar. ALL FILMS WILL BE SHOWN AT DORIS DUKE THEATRE, HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ARTS. Film prices tickets cost \$10 (general), \$9 (museum members), Free for 17 + under with the exception of special events. | Call: 808-532-3033 for further information or purchase tickets at honolulumuseum.org/event/films

**74TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "ARAW NG KAGITINGAN" OR DAY OF VALOR** | April 16, 2016 | 2:00 - 4:00 PM | NATIONAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY OF THE PACIFIC (NMPC) | Contact the Consulate at 595-6316.

**FILIPINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HI'S 2016 FILIPINO AND YOUNG FILIPINO ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AND SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS BANQUET** | April 16, 2016 | 7:00 AM | ALA MOANA HOTEL | Contact: Rocky Anguay @ 808-696-7970

**MAUI FILIPINO CHAMBER FOUNDATION ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP GOLF TOURNAMENT** | April 23, 2016 | THE DUNES @ MAUI LANI | Call 808-873-8605 or email foundation@mauifilipinochamber.com for details.

**ANNUAL TERNO BALL, HAWAII FILIPINO WOMEN'S CLUB (HFWC)** | April 30, 2016 | 6:00 PM | ALA MOANA HOTEL, HIBISCUS BALLROOM | Contact Nelly Pongco Liu @ 228-7808 or Carlota Ader @ 688-3215

**11TH ANNUAL FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MANAOAG** | April 28 - May 6, 2016: Nightly Novena at 7:00 PM | May 7, 2016 | HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH, 830 MAIN ST., HONOLULU, HI 96818 | For information: Cely Querido at (808) 368-8052/email: celyq@savio.com or Fred Martinez at (808) 358-8049/email: fmar10nez@yahoo.com

**UNITED PANGASINAN OF HAWAII 48TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER & DANCE** | May 14, 2016 | PACIFIC BEACH HOTEL GRAND BALLROOM | Tickets & Information: Cely Villareal - (808) 778-2481 or (808) 689-4911

**FILCOM CENTER'S 24TH ANNUAL FILIPINO FIESTA & PARADE** | May 14, 2016 | KAPIOLANI PARK, WAIKIKI | For details, contact 808-680-0451

**STROKES OF BRILLIANCE, HOSTED BY PHIL SABADO, CO-SPONSORED WITH MAUI FILIPINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** | May 26, 2016 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM | KAUNOA SENIOR CENTER, 401 ALAKAPA PL., PAIA, HI 96779 | Contact: (808) 270-7308

**MAUI FILIPINO CHAMBER'S GINTONG PAMAMA'S LEADERSHIP AWARDS BANQUET** | June 16, 2016 | MAUI BEACH HOTEL. | Contact: Jenna Gamboa at (808) 419-1617

**FILIPINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HAWAII INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS** | July 16, 2016 | 6:00 PM | TAPA BALLROOM, HILTON HAWAIIAN VILLAGE | Contact: Bernadette Fajardo @ 342-0890

**SANTANIANS ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII-USA INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS** | July 16, 2016 | 6:00 - 11:00 PM | HIBISCUS BALLROOM, ALA MOANA HOTEL | Contact: Dr. Julius Soria (722-9958); Amy Quides (255-6380); Aurora Garcia (722-3150) or email santaniansofhiusa@gmail.com

**FILCOM CENTER'S BAYANIHAN GALA DINNER 2016** | October 14, 2016 | 6:00 PM | SHERATON WAIKIKI HOTEL | Contact 808-80-0451 for more information

**PASKO SA FILCOM** | December 4, 2016 | FILCOM CENTER | Contact 808-680-0451 for details.

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## MAINLAND NEWS

# Program Allows Int'l STEM Grads to Stay Longer in U.S.

by Allyson Escobar

INTERNATIONAL students who earn their degrees in highly-sought STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields may be able to extend their stay in the United States longer.

The revamped STEM Optional Practical Training program, or STEM OPT for short, adds an additional seven months to the previous length of stay required, while offering some safeguards to address labor concerns voiced by hundreds of American workers and STEM students, reported the US News & World Report.

According to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) records, there are approximately 70,000 students currently in OPT—of those, about 23,000 are studying in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics fields. Some of these students were selected as skilled foreign workers eligible to apply for an H-1B, starting in October 2008, as part of the old program. Others can choose to continue their education, while some will depart the United States.

ICE and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officials have estimated that approximately 12,000 people will take

advantage of the new STEM extension.

The new STEM OPT rules were initially proposed in October 2015 by the Department of Homeland Security, after a federal judge vacated the previous rules that August. The judge's action also left an estimated 50,000 STEM workers and their employers hanging, until the DHS drafted a replacement for the public student visa program, which essentially paves the way for hands-on job training and experience after graduation.

According to Numbers USA, the original STEM extension was struck down "because DHS did not go through the public and comment process when they issued the extension

in 2008, which violates the Administrative Procedure Act (APA)."

District of Columbia District Court Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle gave a six-month deadline for a replacement program to be developed, after a technology workers' labor union filed suit against the first STEM OPT program.

Huvelle's ruling centered on procedural issues discovered in 2008 with the rule's original implementation.

DHS proposed the new rule on October 19, 2015, and received over 50,000 public comments. They had until February 12 to establish the

rule under the correct APA procedures.

Beyond offering graduates more field experience, the extension serves to give immigrant students more time. "If my work visa gets denied this year, I still have two more opportunities to apply, and I can keep working with the country," said 24-year-old Shruthi Aramandla, a New York University graduate from India working as an engineer.

The new OPT STEM extension will take effect on May 10. ([www.asianjournal.com](http://www.asianjournal.com))



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