HEART-TO-HEART TALK WITH QUEZON CITY MAYOR SONNY BELMONTE
A Look At How He Turned Around A Financially Distressed Community

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Ray of Hope For Philippine Politics?

In a span of a few short years, Quezon City has gone from a bankrupt municipality to one of the most financially-stable cities in the Philippines. Many observers credit the remarkable, overnight turn-around to the courageous leadership of Mayor Sonny Belmonte.

A look at Belmonte’s track record shows that success has followed him throughout his career. He has excelled in running government corporations, headed the nation’s legislature and is now efficiently managing one of its most heavily-populated cities.

As mayor, Belmonte essentially ran Quezon City as a CEO would a large corporation—he eliminated red tape, cut non-essential personnel, terminated questionable government contracts, encouraged public input and feedback and upgraded the municipality’s computer systems. One of his first initiatives as mayor was to revamp Quezon City’s tax collection system by switching to a computerized process. This resulted in greater efficiency, ease and less graft. Now, any granting of business permits, assessment of real property taxes, and collection of various taxes and fees are all computerized.

He also pushed for a cleaner and greener environment; better government services in the areas of education, health and social services; and an improved network of streets, drainage systems and other infrastructure. Two years into the job, Belmonte received the Most Outstanding City Mayor For 2003. His accomplishments, integrity, work ethic, competency and solid family background also endeared him to many Quezon City residents, who overwhelmingly elected him to a second term in 2005.

Many are hoping that Belmonte would seek higher office and end the decades of government corruption that has plagued the country. They are quick to point out that unlike current and previous politicians, Belmonte has no graft and corruption scandal hounding him or any of his immediate family.

The decision will be most difficult for him. As a younger man, Belmonte was offered the plum position as Chief of the Bureau of Customs—one of the most graft-ridden agencies in government. But he politely turned down the offer from then-President Marcos on the advice of his family who told him: “That is a good job for a bad man but a bad job for a good man.”

An even tougher job would be that of the Philippines’ top executive. His supporters believe he is more than capable of leading the country forward. They are willing to follow, but whether or not he is willing to lead remains to be seen.

Celebrating Filipino History Month

Filipino-Americans are the fastest growing and third largest ethnic group in Hawaii. Since the arrival of the first Filipinos to the U.S. during the 1700s, Filipinos have contributed their share to America’s rich history, culture and society.

Recently, Gov. Lingle signed House Bill 3343 HD1 into law, which designated the month of October as Filipino-American History Month. The purpose was to commemorate the many contributions of Filipino-Americans. Hawaii is the first state in the nation to enact such legislation.

Filipinos’ contributions to Hawaii’s history began with the “salakadacs” who were originally recruited as plantation workers in the 1900s. They planted the roots for the Filipino migration and experience in Hawaii. Their sacrifices paved the way for future generations of Filipino-American leaders—leaders like Pablo Manlapit, Benjamin Cayetano and Benjamin Menor to name a few. Manlapit distinguished himself as a lawyer and spokesman for the Filipino labor movement. His work in the labor movement in the 1900s allowed future generations to enjoy improved labor conditions, higher wages and better benefits for all workers. Cayetano made history by being the first U.S. governor of Filipino ancestry, while Menor was the first Filipino-American in the U.S. to be elected as a State Senator and the first Filipino-American to be appointed to the Hawaii State Supreme Court.

The Ray of Hope For Philippine Politics? article suggests that Sonny Belmonte is a potential candidate for higher office, including the presidency. The article highlights his achievements as mayor of Quezon City and his integrity in the face of graft and corruption. Belmonte’s decision to seek higher office will be challenging but also potentially rewarding. The article encourages the reader to continue to take pride in the past accomplishments and continue working together for a brighter future.
Crisis Leads to Ingenuity (Part 2)

By Senator Will Espere

In 2007, on Oahu alone, the cost for imported fossil fuels to produce electricity was upwards of three-quarters of a billion dollars, or more than $2 million a day. That expense borne by Oahu businesses and residents is expected to be higher in 2008, since oil prices shot over $100 a barrel and continued to set record highs throughout this year. As one testifier described it, Hawaii’s dependence on oil is extreme, not only for cars, jet fuel, and utility gas, as well as a basis for many consumable products and fertilizer for agricultural products. According to one source, at least eight farms and Oahu's last dairy closed down within the last year, citing higher transportation and feedstock costs as primary contributing factors.

Alternative Energy

The Legislature found that encouraging the development of renewable energy is in the public’s interest. This year Hawaii became the first state in the nation to require that, as of 2010, all new single family homes must have solar water heaters. You might have heard news stories about "cow power" providing electricity in Vermont, Connecticut, Oregon, and parts of Canada. Another law that was passed permits farmers to install energy facilities on agricultural land, provided that agriculture remains the primary use of the land. Farm methane is one of the options available under the bill, along with wind turbines or solar panels. You may already be familiar with the clothesline bill that allows clotheslines that are out of view, despite association rules to the contrary. The bill was vetoed by the Governor. The Senate override the veto, but the House could not get 2/3 of its members to vote to do so.

In addition to these bills, the Legislature approved Special Purpose Revenue Bonds (SPRBs) to assist energy companies to raise investment capital to finance projects. Here’s a rundown:

H2 Technologies plans to construct on the island of Hawaii, a hydrogen generation research, development and manufacturing facility, and a gasoline- or diesel-to-hydrogen automobile conversion garage to transition car owners to using hydrogen rather than imported petroleum-based fuel.

Jacoby Development- GeoPlasma intends to plan, design, construct, and acquire land on the Big Island for a plasma arc municipal solid waste processing system. In its simplest sci-fi movie description, the plasma arc zaps landfills with hot-as-the-sun temperatures and produces methane which is used to generate electricity.

Oceaneinx, in its Maui Wave Energy Project will tap hydrokinetic power to generate electricity. Oceaneinx will plan, design and construct the facility off Pe’ahi near “Jaws” at Maui’s north coast and supply electricity to Maui Electric Company. The technology is being used in projects under development in Rhode Island, the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa. The waves flowing through the twin turbines forces air to reverbereate through a column, powering a turbine to generate energy. The project is expected to generate enough electricity for as many as 1,600 Maui homes by 2009.

Hui Mana ‘Oma’o (“Consolidated Green Power”) received a SPRB for renewable energy projects on Oahu. Its principals and affiliates have long been laboring in both the cogeneration and renewable markets in Hawaii.

Sopogy is a high tech company producing concentrated solar power systems. You may have read about the parabola in Australia, Spain, and California. Sopogy will plan, design, construct, equip, and operate a solar farm power plant on Oahu.

Cars

California, along with 17 other states – half the population of the country – put in their law books a requirement that by 2009, automobile manufacturers design cars that emit lower levels of greenhouse gases. A key way to reduce emissions is to increase fuel efficiency. I’m pondering introducing a bill to add Hawaii to that list of states so that our drivers can stop paying so much at the pump. Please let me know what you think about this.

The local newspapers already had an article about those highly efficient but “0 to 60 in 15 seconds” cars of the 1980s and 90s making a comeback, and the efficient but “0 to 60 in 15 seconds” cars of the 1980s and 90s making a comeback, and the efficiency still trails the Toyota Prius, which gets 48 mpg on the highway. You might have read about the parabola in Australia, Spain, and California. Early this year Maui Energy Group, LLC discussed with me its plans to offer electric cars by next summer, fleet sales only. The major auto manufacturers are said to be planning increases in the number of hybrid and flex fuel cars they produce.

Smart Cars

The Institute’s president said the car has a steel safety cage and four passenger safety was being traded for fuel efficiency, the 1,800 pound small package.

Daimler Mercedes-Benz has an article about those highly efficient "0 to 60 in 15 seconds" cars of the 1980s and 90s making a comeback, and the efficiency still trails the Toyota Prius, which gets 48 mpg in the city and 40 mpg on the highway. Toyota is working on an array of alternative fuel cars in addition to its Prius. Progressive Insurance earlier this year put in their law books a requirement that by 2009, automobile manufacturers design cars that emit lower levels of greenhouse gases. A key way to reduce emissions is to increase fuel efficiency. I’m pondering introducing a bill to add Hawaii to that list of states so that our drivers can stop paying so much at the pump. Please let me know what you think about this.

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Heart-to-Heart With Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte

By Carlota Ader

When Sonny Belmonte was elected mayor of Quezon City in 2001, the city was the most financially distressed local government unit in Metro Manila and perhaps the entire country. The city was crippled by a staggering amount of debt, including P1.25 billion to the Land Bank and another P1.4 billion to various contractors. The general fund was overdrawn by P10 million.

In a span of two short years, Belmonte turned bankrupt Quezon City into one of the Philippines’ most stable cities. Just how did he do it?

Effective fiscal management

Observers point out many factors, most notably prudent fiscal management policies, aggressive tax management strategies and a commitment to be more efficient and disciplined in managing and using its resources.

Much of the success can be credited to Belmonte’s fiscal management acumen. Among his first moves as mayor was to revitalize tax collection. He pushed for computerized tax collection, which resulted in greater efficiency, accuracy and less graft. The city government also developed a database system that now contains around 400,000 real property units with the capability to record payments, and the capacity to serve 20,000 taxpayer transactions a day.

Belmonte was also bold enough to pursue other necessary cost-cutting measures that had his fellow politicians typically avoided. Early on, he let lapse the contracts of about 3,000 casual hires whose services were no longer needed by the city government. Business taxes were also raised considerably to make Quezon City’s rates closer to the tax rates in neighboring cities. According to Belmonte, these were sacrifices that had to be made in order to realize the vision of a “Quality Community.”

Currently, his administration is further tapping the benefits of technology, principally, Geographic Information Systems, to create new revenue sources to ensure a continuously increasing revenue base for the city.

“Cities are now the new nations, able to source for themselves investments, business opportunities and resources,” Belmonte says. “In the Philippines, more progressive cities like Quezon City are igniting the engines of growth. Competition becomes easier now that we have put our ‘house’ in order.”

A Cleaner, Greener City

Quezon City has been named the 2nd Cleanest and Greenest City of the Philippines, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

When Belmonte first assumed office in 2001, he was astounded by the staggering cost of garbage collection, which even reached as high as P80 million a month. He directed the study and implementation of a package clean-up system, to replace the corruption-prone and contractor-influenced “per-trip” system. This resulted in a much cleaner city, with 500 tons less garbage a day, at a collection cost that was P20 million a month less.

Once the scene of tragedy, the Payatas dump has been converted into a controlled waste facility and has been recognized by the DENR as a model and pioneering disposal facility. It is now implementing a biogas reclamation project using the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto protocol.

Quezon City has also undergone a dramatic urban transformation. One of the first places this occurred was in Norvaliches, which now has its park complete with a fully lighted fountain and promenade areas. Widening and paving of streets, development of inter-linking roads, rationalization of traffic and disciplining of pedestrians greatly reduced traffic congestion.

Other redevelopment efforts have taken place in the Tomas Morato Avenue areas, Metro Cunco and the other northern portions of the City. Belmonte’s administration has inspired such confidence in the private sector that investments in private developments have grown exponentially since SB...
are amazed at the many improvements. I’ve taken great pride in that. Traffic has also improved greatly, not only because of the improved main thoroughfares, but also because of better-trained traffic officers. Quezon City now has a population of almost 2.7 million people. Over the past 7 years, our population has increased by about 500,000 people, which is about the population of Makati or some of the bigger cities of Metro Manila.

During my term, we constructed about 1,500 new schools, several new public health centers and increased social services. We have attracted more people to Quezon City and which accompanied it growth over the past 7 years. The paradox here is that the more you improve, the more you must strive to remain competitive. This means taking care of business and investments, which are needed to sustain job growth and economic activities for people, particularly the urban poor.

We have also strived to achieve balanced economic growth, which means not putting all your eggs in one basket, but diversifying and evolving our holdings. This includes improving our quality of life, our infrastructure, and our environment in general and so forth in order to achieve even more growth.

As a result of our growth, we have formed a Business & Investment Council to ensure that Quezon City remains competitive in this global economy we are now living in.

Q: How have you managed to attract tourists, foreign investors and business people to Quezon City?

A: Quezon City has so much to offer. Quezon City has the most IT centers in the entire Philippines, including call centers, BPO’s best hospitals, popular wellness destinations and the famous Lamesa Dam, which is a huge reservoir that holds the water supply for Metro Manila. Beside it is the 33 hectares Echo Park—a natural oasis in the heart of the city, which has a swimming pool, restaurants, refreshment bars, flower gardens, a butterfly garden, and a lot more.

There’s also Eastwood City in the south—a huge new city with lots of high rise buildings and shopping malls. An important commercial area is Cubao, which houses the Araneta Center and a number of landmark shopping malls, including the ultra modern Gateway Mall which connects to the MRT station. Near the Araneta Center are numerous bus centers where one can take a bus ride to almost any point in Luzon as well as in the Visayas.

Traveling North, there is Novaliches or Fairview which is primarily residential. In the area is a new business center anchored by SM Mega Mall which has attracted a lot of redevelop, particularly in the old Morato and Timog areas. We are fixing the sidewalks to become high class, wide sidewalks so people can walk and shop freely and comfortably.

In addition, there is the new, huge 5-story Trinoma Mall which boasts loads of water features, restaurants and middle class vendors. We are also developing Quezon City Memorial Circle. Its management has been turned over to us beginning July 1, 2008. We have a very ambitious plan for the Memorial Circle’s 26 hectares. These are just a part of the things that are very interesting to see in Quezon City, which is basically a city on the move.

Q: Do you have plans to run for a higher office?

A: Some people are saying that a business executive and action-oriented person like myself could go quite far, especially when you examine my accomplishments. So they are encouraging me to run for president. I am giving it careful thought but I also have to think of other ways of serving people, particularly through social and political idealism, publishing and art. They have three sons and a daughter all of whom are successful in their own rights – Isaac, editor-in-chief of the Philippine Star; Kevin, President of Philstar.com; Miguel, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Star Group of Companies; and Joy, an archeologist and civic leader.

In sum, Belmonte has managed to inspire his colleagues, constituents and even adversaries in making a difference in public service—even in a graft-ridden society like the Philippines and this by promoting productivity, efficiency and accountability. He has given a new meaning to the term ‘public servant’ by virtue of his outstanding accomplishments over the years.

“It is not just a question of climate or culture,” Belmonte was once quoted as saying. “It’s also a question of morale and incentives in action.”
Sexuality and Ethnicity: Issues from a Philippine Perspective (Part 1)

By Lilia Quindoza Santiago

my first lessons on sexuality and ethnic identity were learned from three women: my maternal grandmother whom I called Inang, my Ninang Lourders, an Igorot woman, and Dr. Dolores Feria, my teacher in comparative literature at the University of the Philippines.

My Inang, my maternal grandmother, practically raised me. Because of her, I was home-made, meaning, born inside the house. My mother gave birth to me inside our house with her help as Inang was a practicing partera (midwife) and hilot (massage therapist).

She was a skilled partera, who, while not schooled or certified, was sought after not only by pregnant women but also by all other women who had difficulties with their bodies and had problems with their reproductive systems. She could heal young women who had dysmenorrhea, was an expert as a massage therapist, and could fix dislocated joints and inflamed skin. She was a mang-aatang (Cagayan term for shaman)–one who ministered to the sick by offerings and prayers. She practiced burung’d (birdfern) (baptism through the plate) where she placed an egg on a plate and when the egg stands, then she prays over for the new name of whoever she was baptizing. She changed the names of my sisters through the atung so that they would not be as sickly and recover from recurring illnesses and fevers.

The women believed Inang had the power to heal their infertile or sickly bodies and could protect children. Stories about her “magic” abounded in our neighborhood. Inang could also fix the position of the child in the womb if this was balinsusit (inverted) or suhi (feet first). In many of her services, when the baby’s feet came out first, she would put the baby’s feet back into the womb, then slowly turn the baby around while labor was going on, so that the head would come out first.

I remember asking my Inang how she was able to do the things she was doing—this is, helping women get rid of their illnesses, helping them give birth or even helping them get pregnant. My Inang said it was a gift from Apo Dios, a Mamaikanbalin or God Almighty. Inang was a Protestant who belonged to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and went to Sabbath every Saturday.

My Ninang Lourders is an Igorot woman and a very devout Catholic. She was my mother’s best friend and I remember days when she and my mother would go to church together wearing those white CWL attire with blue sashes over their waists. Ninang Lourders hated hospitals and doctors and she gave birth at home, always. And I remember that her days of giving birth became occasions for neighborhood gatherings because she would invite everyone into her backyard to await her baby’s first cry. Then she would sponsor a cansao, which is an Igorot ritual for all sorts of celebrations—of one which is for birthing.

Dr. Dolores Feria was my teacher in comparative literature at UP taught me not only a fondness for literature, especially protest literature, but also the skill and art of resistance to patriarchal domination. Dr. Feria became a close friend especially during martial law when we were detained for about seven months in Fort Bonifacio as both of us became political detaines of Marcos’ martial law regime. Her first book, Long Stage Party (1992) became a very useful theoretical basis for my dissertation, later published as a book, Sa Ngalan ng Ina: Sandaang Taon ng Tulang Feminista sa Pilipinas (1997) with an English version, In the Name of the Mother: One Hundred Years of Philippine Feminist Poetry in Tagalog, English and Ilokano (UP Press, 2002).

Dolores Feria was born Dorothy Stephens, an American from Marcellus, Washington but changed her name to Dolores from Marcellus, Washington but changed her name to Dolores when she opted to marry Rodrigo Feria, an Ilokano and a good friend of Carlos Bulosan. She became Filipina not only by marriage but by aligning herself with the most progressive and enlightened desires of the Filipino people. She lived and died in the Philippines, and was known to have advocated thoughts and values “more Filipino” than the ordinary Filipino.

Now what did I learn from all three women?

Despite their differing faiths, both my Ninang Lourders and my Inang apparently were able to reconcile or blend their own ways of looking at the world, especially of the rite of birthing with their colonialist introduced religions. For Ninang Lourders, to be Catholic and still revel in the cansao was perfectly all right. For Inang Onor, there was no problem in becoming a devout Protestant and practice faith healing ministering to the spirits to bless people especially women in their birthing. I think that both women embraced their religions to re-enforce their belief systems and assert their ethnicity and sexuality as they desired to counteract with their roles in reproduction. I admired their resilience in faith, but more than that, they taught me how women can face up to a powerful conqueror’s belief system to assert the unique power of women in creating and sustaining the life of the individual and the community.

Women have a vast reservoir of knowledge and creativity in the reproductive process which can be invaded to heal their pain. Their wisdom, skills, and resourcefulness seem to be underestimated by many societies and in most ethnic formations, these knowledges and skills, are being eroded by overmedicalized institutions and forms of healing and technology. These must be a way of harnessing the ever reliable and still relevant indigenous modes of healing from the heart and heart of ethnic communities including those here in Hawaii and other parts of the U.S.

Dolores Feria, of course is another story but she is my own perfect example of how one can actually choose one’s ethnicity and live comfortably with astounding intellectual pride. I am using the stories of these three women in order to show how matters of sexuality and ethnic identity are interrelated and should be approached as social issues together.

Is one’s sexuality, at the same time, one’s ethnicity? The answer is yes, when we look at how sexuality can be negotiated from specific social arrangements and seen not just as some form of biological “queerness,” oddity or aberration but a necessary component of personal traits engendered by social and political exigencies. I will talk about this in my succeeding article.

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Lilia Quindoza Santiago, presently Assistant Professor of Ilokano at UH-Manoa has authored two trailblazing books on Filipino women: “Sa Ngalan ng Ina: Sandaang Taon ng Tulang Feminista sa Pilipinas” (In the Name of the Mother, 100 Years of Philippine Feminist Poetry in Tagalog, English and Ilokano) (UP Press, 2002) and “Sexuality and the Filipina” (UP Press, 2007). Recently, she spoke on “Sexuality and Ethnicity: Issues from a Philippine Perspective” at a lecture co-sponsored by the UH Women’s Studies Department and the Center For Philippine Studies as part of its Fall 2008 Colloquium Series.
Palin vs. Obama Beauty Contest
If McCain Disqualified Because Not "Natural Born Citizen"

By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tiron

ow! What a beauty contest it's going to be between Sarah Palin and Barack Obama if John McCain is disqualified because he is not a "natural born citizen".

A Niagara of lawsuits has been filed to disqualify McCain. Who are behind them? You know who. A San Francisco federal judge deplored their tactics saying that they are trying to defeat McCain "through litigation rather than via the democratic process." So far, none has succeeded. But his enemies will not stop, hoping a Democratic judge will disqualify McCain before the elections. In which event, the Republicans would have to name a substitute - Sarah Palin.

Natural-born Citizen Requirement

The U.S. Constitution restricts the presidency to two classes of citizens. Article II, Section 1 provides: "No person except a citizen of the United States shall be eligible to the Office of the President." McCain might be considered old, but certainly he was not a citizen of the United States at the time of the adoption of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. So, is he a "natural born citizen"?

McCain Born in Panama Canal Zone

John McCain was born at Coco Solo Naval Air Station in the Panama Canal Zone on August 29, 1936. His father, an officer in the U.S. Navy, was stationed there.

"Gotcha," exclaimed McCain's enemies, the Panama Canal Zone is not part of the United States. Therefore, McCain is not a "natural born citizen" of the United States.

Law Suits

On March 14, 2008, Fred Hollander filed suit in New Hampshire to disqualify McCain for not being a "natural born citizen" of the United States. The suit was dismissed because Hollander did not have "standing" to sue. More lawsuits were filed but were dismissed. The most recent action was filed in California on August 11, 2008 by Markham Robinson against John McCain, the Secretary of State of California Debra Bowen, the Republican National Committee, the Republican Party of California, and others alleging that John McCain is not a "natural born citizen" of the United States and is therefore ineligible to serve as president. He asked the court to issue a preliminary injunction to stop McCain from continuing with his candidacy.

On September 16, the court refused and dismissed the case, holding that Robinson did not have "standing" to bring the suit, because Robinson was not a candidate against McCain. The court indicated that it is "highly probable" that John McCain is a "natural born citizen." The court cited:

14th Amendment

The 14th Amendment to the Constitution ratified on July 9, 1868, provides: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside." This provision does not apply to Sen. McCain.

McCain vs. Lineberger

In this case the court held, "The fact that the 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868, has no bearing on the question of whether the natural born citizen requirement is constitutional as it existed at the time of the adoption of the Constitution." The court cited:

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SOCIETY PAGE


Cavitenians and Associates of Hawaii Scholarship recipients with committee members during the Recognition Night held at the Pacific Beach Hotel. (L-R): Lydia Dayrit, Cora Legaspi, Jeribie Sarmiento, Sarah Espiritu, Kathleen Santos, Cairene Vida, Gerardo Sarmiento and Trini Arquero

The Charlie Y. Sonido Md. Inc. Staff at a recent party in Kaneohe

Dr. Fernando Ona with Father Jack Healy at a PMAH picnic in Magic Island, Ala Moana

Seated (L to R): Dr. Richard Kua and Larry Sera and Standing (L to R): Aurelia Sera, Dr. Avery Go, James Pagdilao and Dr. Ian Levy Chua enjoying the camaraderie during a luncheon picnic at Magic Island.

Dr. Jojie Waite with son and Dr. Elenita Alvarez and Dr. Gabino Baloy enjoying lunch at a picnic at Ala Moana Park

Kathy Adaoag and Dr. Tessie Bernales are all smiles for a great shot

Dr. William Wong and wife Rita at a dinner reception in Kaneohe

L-R: Dory Villafuerte, Imelda Joaquin, Doneliza, Dr. Fe Baria and Alexi Joaquin at a gathering at Ala Moana Park

 Winners for Cavitenians Best Western Costume Contest pose with the judges. (L-R): Alan and Apple Matsushima, Minnie Corpuz, Letty Tesoro-Saban, Danny Sarte, Vic Clamor, Tess Solis, Jo Farina and Marina Toro
leadership of the nation’s largest physician-owned hospital is passing from one prominent local doctor to another. Leading Honolulu surgeon Dr. Collin Dang is taking the reins as chief executive officer of Hawaii Medical Center from Dr. Danelo Canete.

Dr. Canete led efforts to bring together over 130 Hawaii-based physicians to purchase the two hospitals now known as HMC East and HMC West in partnership with Cardiovascular Hospitals of America LLC, a leading U.S. hospital management company, in January 2007. As HMC’s founding CEO, Dr. Canete oversaw leadership of both the Liliha and West Oahu hospitals.

“After heading Hawaii Medical Center for nearly two years, I am stepping down from my leadership duties to focus on my cardiac patients,” said Dr. Canete.

Dr. Dang is assuming the CEO position and will be supported by a strong management team composed of the current team and new recruitment.

“Collin Dang is one of Hawaii’s best cardiovascular surgeons and an early supporter of the physician-owned hospitals. I have no doubt he will provide the vision and leadership needed to take Hawaii Medical Center forward,” added Dr. Canete.

Dr. Dang earned his undergraduate and medical degrees at Georgetown University. He conducted his internship at Georgetown University Hospital and D.C. General Hospital. Dr. Dang completed residencies in general surgery and thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at Sacramento Medical Center, University of California-Davis. He was most recently chief of cardiac surgery at HMC East. He is also a clinical assistant professor of surgery at the University of Hawaii-Manoa’s John A. Burns School of Medicine and president of Cardiothoracic Associates of Hawaii.

“Dr. Canete provided strong and steady leadership during a very challenging time for our institution,” said Dr. Dang. “Under his watch, both hospitals achieved several key goals, including reducing the length of stay for patients, increasing the reimbursement rate from insurance companies and upgrading medical and IT equipment at both campuses.

“Of particular note are the stellar rankings Hawaii Medical Center received in HMSA’s most recent Hospital Quality and Service Recognition Program, in which HMC East ranked second in large-volume hospitals and HMC West ranked first in small-volume hospitals. Dr. Canete will always hold a special place in Hawaii Medical Center’s history as its first ‘captain.’

Dang noted, "Dr. Canete’s leadership was crucial during a very challenging time for both hospitals. He oversaw the purchase of the two hospitals, bringing together over 130 physicians to a new, physician-owned hospital system. His leadership has been critical to the success of the hospital system, and we are grateful for his contributions."
Hawaii Medical Center Announces Layoffs

Hawaii Medical Center (HMC) announced last week that it would begin a new round of staff reductions after appropriate notifications have been made. Hospital officials estimate the reduction at its two hospitals in Liliha and Ewa will total approximately 150. HMC Chief Executive Officer Danelo Canete, M.D., said the staff reduction would take effect within 60 days from the date of notification.

“While this is a very difficult decision, it is necessary,” Dr. Canete said. “Thanks to the efficiency of our operating model and substantially improved patient care, we are able to treat patients more quickly and allow them to return their families sooner than before. This uses fewer beds while caring for the same number of patients, so we are overstaffed.”

Dr. Canete stressed the pending reduction is not a reflection of any shortcomings of the part of HMC’s employees. Rather, improved hospital operations and care at HMC have resulted in fewer complications and shortened the average patient stay by almost half, so HMC needs fewer personnel to treat them.

“Based on national standards, our staff is too large for the number of patients in our hospitals,” he said. “We will still have sufficient staffing to provide excellent patient care after the reduction.”

According to national benchmarks, HMC is overstaffed by up to 30 percent and needs to make the required changes to remain competitive.

“We expect to emerge from Chapter 11 within a year as a healthy institution that is financially stable and medically-excellent.” Dr. Canete said.

HMC filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on August 28, 2008, permitting its hospitals to continue operating while the company reorganized and arranged for new financing. An appropriately-sized staff will help reduce financial losses so HMC can invest in advanced technology and renovations.

“We recognize this is a difficult time for affected employees. We will help them transition, but we must do what is necessary to ensure HMC can continue to serve our community,” Dr. Canete said.

Filipino Community Leaders Receive Junior Chamber Intl Senatorship Award

On September 13, 2008, the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Senatorship Award was presented to two outstanding individuals—Roland Casamina and Larry Ordonez. They were recognized for their efforts at JCI’s 2nd Trimester State Convention held at the Ala Moana Hotel.

A Senatorship is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a member or past member of the Junior Chamber organization and confers “lifetime membership” in Junior Chamber International (JCI). The award recognizes individuals for their dedication and service on the local, national, or international level. The JCI Senatorship provides such members with an enduring link to the organization and its members worldwide. Both Casamina and Ordonez were nominated by the Honolulu Filipino Junior Chamber of Commerce and approved by the President of the Hawaii Jaycees and the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Roland Casamina

Casamina joined the Jaycees to improve his business standing in the community. He served as both officer and director for the Oahu Filipino Jaycees. Casamina was elected president of his chapter. As president, he directed the establishment of the Miss Sampaguita Scholarship Pageant and received the Outstanding Young Man of America award by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Larry Ordonez

Ordonez of the Oahu Filipino Jaycees in 1983. During his term, the Jaycees took part in Perlas USA, a local television show that showcased Filipinos’ talents in the performing arts.
The Philippines has better prospects for survival with the US Senate’s resounding approval of a sweetened $700-billion Wall Street rescue plan, the Arroyo administration’s economic managers said yesterday.

“There will be a happy Christmas and a merry new year,” Secretary Margarito Teves said at a press conference in Malacanang.

But he said the lower growth figures for this year and in 2009 will remain despite the good news from the US.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla said the approval of the bailout would lessen the fall-out of the global economic crunch on the Philippines and other developing countries.

“This (bailout approval) is going to be a positive factor in limiting fallout as a result of continuing financial turmoil in the US,” Espenilla said in the same news briefing.

Espenilla said the local banks are “strong in their own right and we have no problem down the road.”

“The bailout will improve chances of recession not taking place. It does not mean it’s no longer there, but we are talking of probability,” Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said.

“Slowdown will allow business to take place but in recession, there is contraction and people will be adversely affected, emerging economies will be adversely affected,” Teves said.

“In a slowdown, my neighbor is out of a job, but if it’s recession, I get unemployed, so we have to avoid recession at all costs,” he said.

“We need your help to communicate to the public what is happening. We are focusing on medium case scenario, which we are all prepared for,” he said at the briefing.

Recto said the Philippines’ macroeconomic fundamentals are better than those of the US itself “as far as the country’s debt-to-Gross Domestic Product ratio is concerned.”

The US has a negative savings rate while the Philippines has a positive savings rate, he said.

“The solution is spending,”

he said.

He said infrastructure spending will increase by 20 percent next year, and agriculture by a whopping 56 percent.

He said for infrastructure alone, the government has a public sector “infrastructure war chest” of P230 billion next year.

Of this amount, P147.5 billion will be spent by the national government, P32.1 billion by government-owned and controlled corporations, and P50 billion by local governments.

The national government’s 2009 infrastructure budget is 20.7 percent higher than this year’s P122.2 billion.

“The budget is funneled to a verifiable spending menu called HEARTS, for Health, Education, Agriculture, Roads, Technology and Tourism, Shelter and Security,” he said.

“The challenge is to have these agencies spend the money they have in the first few months. There had been flat growth in infrastructure spending…but in June, July, August we had an increase so we just had to keep it up,” Andaya said.

Recto said exports would be hit as the US accounts for 17 percent of the country’s exports.

“What the government can do is help the private sector by building infrastructure, by helping them open up markets such as China,” Recto said.

Recto pointed out that the US used to take up 35 percent of the country’s total exports.

The Arroyo administration has emphasized the need to increase trade with China, which is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is very close to the Philippines geographically.

Apart from exports, Recto noted that tourism is another sector that has huge potential for growth, particularly from markets such as China.

“To me the real key is government spending in infrastructure, in agriculture to temper inflation,” Recto said.

“So the challenge is to reduce inflation and spend for sustainable growth in the future and that’s where the importance of infrastructure and increasing agricultural productivity come in,” Recto said. (www.philstar.com)

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The proposal to allocate half of the telecommunication companies’ revenues from text messages to education and health programs has gained support from the House of Representatives and the Department of Finance, but lawmakers are opposed to any new taxes.

Sen. Richard Gordon clarified yesterday there would be no new taxes imposed on mobile telephone users.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said he would not support any new tax on text messages, saying that the government should instead improve its tax collection system.

Gordon called on the more than 60 million mobile phone subscribers to back his text income measure as Speaker Prospero Nograles and Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the proposal would help fund education and health programs of the government.

Nograles said Gordon’s move was a good sign to encourage people to practice “text for a cause.”

“There will be no additional cost on texting. Based on our estimates, our telcos still rake in a lot a profit at a cost of 50 centavos per text. So instead of cutting down on the cost of texting, telcos should allocate at least 20 percent of their profit to a trust fund for education and health care. This way, our texters will be texting for a worthy cause,” Nograles said.

Nograles also proposed the creation of a board composed of telecommunications heads and the secretaries of the health and education departments that would manage the “exclusive trust fund” to ensure that it would be spent only on the upgrading of schools, hospitals, and health centers nationwide.

Nograles said collecting P20 centavos per text message would earn the health and education departments no less than P540 million per day based on estimates that 1.7 to 1.9 billion text messages were sent every day in the country.

Teves also welcomed the proposal to collect part of telecommunications companies’ text messaging revenues and allot it for health and education, saying the government needs more funds for social services.

“If the new taxes can generate revenues, we would appreciate it,” Teves said.

A proposed measure, Senate Bill No. 2402 or the Health and Education Acceleration Program (HEAP), states the funds needed for the country’s education and health care requirements will be taken from the estimated two billion local text messages sent daily. (www.philstar.com)
WASHINGTON—After one spectacular failure, the $700-billion financial industry bailout found a second life Wednesday, winning lopsided passage in the Senate and gaining ground in the House, where Republican opposition softened.

Senators loaded the economic rescue bill with tax breaks and sweeteners designed to make the legislation more palatable to voters before passing it by a wide margin, 74-25, a month before the presidential and congressional elections.

In the House, leaders were working feverishly to convert enough opponents of the bill to push it through by today, just days after lawmakers there stunningly rejected an earlier version and sent markets plunging around the globe.

The measure did not cause the same uproar in the Senate, where both parties' presidential candidates, Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, made rare appearances to cast votes in favor of the legislation, as did Obama's running mate, Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware.

President George W. Bush issued a statement praising the Senate's move. With the revisions, Bush said, "I believe members of both parties in the House can support this legislation. The American people expect and our economy demands that the House pass this good bill this week and send it to my desk."

The rescue package lets the government spend billions of dollars to buy bad mortgage-related securities and other devalued assets held by troubled financial institutions. If successful, advocates say, that would allow frozen credit to begin flowing again and prevent a deep recession.

Even as the Senate voted, House leaders were hunting for the 12 votes they would need to turn around Monday's 228-205 defeat.

They were especially targeting the 133 Republicans who voted "no." Their opposition appeared to be easing after the Senate added $110 billion in tax breaks for businesses and the middle class, plus a provision to raise, from $100,000 to $250,000, the cap on federal deposit insurance.

They were also cheering a decision Tuesday by the Securities and Exchange Commission to ease rules that force companies to devalue assets on their balance sheets to reflect the price they can get on the market.

There were worries, though, that the tax breaks would cause some conservative-leaning Democrats who voted for the rescue Monday to abandon it because it would swell the federal deficit.

"I'm concerned about that," said Rep. Steny Hoyer, a Democrat and the majority leader.

Raising the deposit insurance limit—along with the SEC's accounting change—helped House Republicans claim credit for some substantive changes.

And with constituent feedback changing dramatically since Monday's shocking House defeat and the corresponding market plunge, lawmakers' comfort level with the package increased markedly.

Arizona Rep. John Shadegg, who voted "no" on Monday, said he was leaning toward switching, and Ohio Rep. Steve LaTourette said he was "getting there." Several others were weighing a flip, said Republican officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because the lawmakers had not yet announced how they would vote.

As revised by the Senate, the package extends several tax breaks popular with businesses. It would keep the alternative minimum tax from hitting 20 million middle-income Americans and provide $8 billion in tax relief for those hit by natural disasters in the Midwest, Texas and Louisiana.

Leaders in both parties, as well as private economic chiefs everywhere, said Congress must quickly approve some version of the bailout measure to start loans flowing and stave off a potential national economic disaster.

"This is what we need to do right now to prevent the possibility of a crisis turning into a catastrophe," Obama said on the Senate floor.

In Missouri, before flying to Washington to vote, McCain said, "If we fail to act, the gears of our economy will grind to a halt."

Critics on the right and left assailed the rescue plan, which has been panned by their constituents as a giveaway for Wall Street, and has little obvious direct benefit for ordinary Americans. (AP)
Changing Non-Immigrant Status

By Reuben S. Seguritan

A non-immigrant may acquire another non-immigrant status without leaving the U.S. This is known as change of non-immigrant status. The most common example is the case of a tourist who wants to study (F-1) or work (H-1B) in the U.S.

During the pendency of the application for change of status, he/she may remain in the U.S. even if the application is not adjudicated before the last period of his/her authorized stay.

There are certain important points to note before filing the application. It must be submit-
ted before the current status expires as indicated on the I-94, unless there are extraordinary circumstances beyond his/her control that prevented the timely filing. And he/she must be eligible for the requested classification.

When adjudicating a change of status, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) closely looks into the existence of a preconceived intent of the applicant. Is the applicant intending to merely prolong his/her stay? Did the applicant have another purpose when he/she initially applied for a visa, thus circumventing the visa processing rules of the U.S. embassy or consulate?

The applicant has the burden of proving to the USCIS that his/her intent to acquire the new status occurred only after the purpose for the original status/classification has already been fulfilled. In the case of a B-2 tourist, it means that his/her original purpose was to visit and tour the U.S. for a short period of time and not to stay indefinitely for another purpose such as to work or to study.

Some visitors come to the U.S. as tourists because in some U.S. embassies and consulates, the most expeditious way to get in. However, when the intent is to come to the U.S. to visit various schools and colleges in order to study in the U.S., he/she should inform the consular officer that he/she is an “intending student” so that a notation can be made as a “B-2 prospective student”. This will prevent a denial of the change of status from B-2 to F-1 when the applicant finally decides to enroll and study in the U.S.

If the tourist did not disclose his/her intent to visit schools, a change of status may still be granted, provided that the applicant can show that there is no preconceived intent to change the status upon arrival in the U.S. This can be shown by a change of plans or circumstances after the original purpose of the visit has been fulfilled.

In such a case, it is useful for the applicant to execute an affidavit explaining such change of circumstances. The applicant also needs to provide proof of financial ability to support his/her extended stay under the new status, ties to the home country, and other relevant information such as activities undertaken since arriving in the U.S.

The alien’s activities since his/her admission will also be looked into by the USCIS in deciding whether to grant a change of status.

In determining whether the alien had a preconceived intent, the USCIS follows a so-called 30/60 day rule. This means that the alien is presumed to have a preconceived intent if less than 30 days elapsed between his/her arrival in the U.S. and the filing of the change of status. If the application is filed between 30 and 60 days, the presumption no longer exists but a finding of misrepresentation may still be issued. If 60 days elapsed, the alien is relatively safe.

Since all non-immigrants are presumed intending immigrants, except for H-1 and L-1, it is important that all the factors and circumstances leading to a change of status are discussed with counsel to minimize possible problems.

LEGAL NOTES

By Michelle Alarcon, Esq

Employees have the right to be free from discrimination, a safe workplace, to take leave to care for your own or a family member’s serious health condition, right to be unionized, and the right to privacy. Beyond these, some of the most common employment questions include:

Do I have a right to keep my job?

In an employment-at-will state such as Hawaii, most private employers can fire you anytime with or without cause or reason, unless you have an employment contract or a labor contract, or if the reason is motivated by any of the protected categories.

I have been with my company for 20 years. Do I have the right to a pay increase and job promotion that I deserve?

Maybe, but pay increases and promotions are not guaran-
teeed by employment or wage and hour law. Wages, merit increases, and other pay issues are freely bargained for between the parties so long the employer follow the minimum wage, overtime, child labor, and anti-discrimination laws.

Do I have a right to receive commissions, bonuses, pension, vacation and holiday pay?

If you have “earned” these, then your employer is obligated to honor the incentives promised. However, unless you have a contract specifying otherwise, future incentives can be revised or taken away at the employer’s option. Incentives are not mandated by law. The same is true for vacation, sick days, and holidays.

Do I have a right to a medical insurance coverage for me and my family?

Hawaii remains to be the only state to mandate employer provided medical insurance to employees who work at least 20 hours for four consecutive weeks, but not for your dependents. Dependent coverage is an optional benefit by employers in all 50 states.

Do I have a right to lunch breaks or meal periods and coffee breaks or rest periods?

Thank your Hawaii employer if they give you these breaks with pay. Under federal law, your employer does not have to provide lunch or coffee breaks, and if they do, they do not have to pay you for it. Only 21 states provide meal period requirements, and 7 states also have rest period requirements. Like meal peri-

ods, the federal government does not require coffee breaks. However, short breaks between 5-10 minutes must be paid.

My boss asks me to do something that is outside of my job description. Can I refuse to do it without risking my job?

Employers have the right to expect fair work for fair pay and sometimes do not give one ground for termina-
tion. However, if you refuse a job related task because you are not flexible to do things out-
side of your job description, you are at risk of insubordina-
tion. If you believe that your legal rights may have been vio-
lated by your employer, talk to them first. If this fails, you may seek external help from agencies such as the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. You may file a complaint with or without a lawyer.

LEGAL NOTES


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vice and reflects only the opinions of the author on general employment is-
sues. MICHELLE ALARCON is a graduate of Loyola Law School in Los Angeles and her firm, the Law Office of Michelle Alarcon, LLC, focuses on immigration law and employment law. She is also a professor at Hawaii Pu-

This is a well known fact that the best Sushi Chef are those with a great background in the culinary arts. Most of the chefs that have been working for years in the industry have a degree in Culinary Arts. However, there are also many Sushi Chefs who have learned the craft by working their way up from assistant to master.

Some Sushi Chefs may have started as a dishwasher or line cook before eventually becoming a chef. Others may have learned from a mentor or family member.

Regardless of how they learned the craft, all Sushi Chefs must have a solid understanding of flavors and textures. They must be able to balance the different components of the dish so that each part complements the others.

Sushi Chefs also need to have excellent knife skills. They must be able to slice and cut ingredients with precision and speed.

Finally, Sushi Chefs need to have an artistic eye. They must be able to present the dish in a visually appealing way.

Because Sushi Chefs are often responsible for the creation of new dishes, they must also have creativity and imagination.

Sushi Chefs are the most important part of any Japanese restaurant. They are responsible for the quality of the food served to customers. Without good Sushi Chefs, a restaurant cannot succeed.

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Building Healthy Habits

Eating well. Your young child needs nutritious foods to build a healthy, strong body; to protect his body from disease and injury; and to supply him with enough energy to grow, play, and learn. Just as children’s growth rates differ, so do their eating habits. Some eat more and grow faster than others. Children eat more on some days and less on other days. Don’t worry too much if your child skips a meal once in a while. The amount of food he eats depends on his body size, level of activity, mood, growth rate, and metabolic rate (how fast his body uses the energy he gets from food).

It’s important to give your child foods that help him to grow and keep him healthy. Your child’s energy needs are high but his stomach is smaller than an adult’s. He probably will need to eat small, healthy meals often. Make sure all meals and snacks provide needed calories and nutrients by giving him a variety of foods. If your child eats too many high caliber foods (“junk” foods), he may gain too much weight. If he doesn’t eat enough calories and nutrients, he may not grow up as healthy as he could be.

As a parent, you are responsible for the kind of food that is offered and where and when it is served to your child. It’s your child’s responsibility to decide whether to eat and how much to eat. Forcing a “thin” child to eat more or withholding food from a “chubby” child is a “no-win” situation. It causes both the child and parent to become frustrated and unhappy. This may harm a child’s growth and development and may lead to unhealthy eating habits and behaviors. Help your child learn healthy food habits by:

- Providing lots of healthy foods
- Setting a good example by eating regular meals and making healthy food choices for your family
- Serving regular, well-balanced meals
- Making mealtimes pleasant
- Involving your child in meal preparation, like spreading jam on bread or setting the table

Here are three easy and nutritious snacks you can prepare with your child:

Banana Crunch: Roll a peeled banana in peanut butter or yogurt. Roll the coated banana in crushed cereal, wrap in plastic wrap or waxed paper, freeze until solid, and serve. (Variation: In-
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