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The Filipino
Now

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

T1

features

SUNDAY | JULY 29, 2018



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

AFTER almost a decade since the destructive Typhoon Ondoy, two decades since the millennials started making an impact, and three decades since the first People Power Revolution (and the birth of The Philippine STAR), defining the Filipino has only become more complicated.

We gathered insights from Filipinos who embody unconditional resiliency and advocate empowerment in the face of modern challenges; local globetrotters who have traveled around the world, to refine our idea on where we stand at present; multi-hyphenate individuals, whose list of accomplishments may give us an idea on how to improve ourselves; and modern Filipino heroes, to ground us through our continuous search for peace and freedom.

VOYAGER **MANNY GONZALEZ**

HOW CAN FILIPINOS POSITIVELY IMPACT THE NATION AND THE WHOLE WORLD?

Filipinos blame our problems and our poor economic performance on everything and everyone but themselves. But most of the symptomatic problems — drugs, corruption and plain incompetence in both government and business — have their root causes in individual character deficiencies developed in childhood.

Filipinos fancy themselves good parents because they sacrifice for their children's material welfare. But many parents fail to teach good character values such as consideration for others, importance of following rules, gratitude for blessings, self-discipline and deferral of gratification, and even simple honesty. Teaching is not just "telling," but explaining, demonstrating by example, and reinforcing. Not enough Filipino parents take the time to do these.

More worrisome still, I see many parents who essentially ignore their children and just leave them to interact with their video games and telephones. Parental laxness is not a sign of love, but neglect; this doesn't build self-esteem, it fosters insecurity and desperation for attention. Even when supposedly eating together as families, it's often the case that each person is in his own electronic universe. How can you develop self-esteem if your parents are more interested in YouTube than in you?

The most useful thing a typical Filipino can do for the country is to raise children with good character and genuine self-esteem. Start at home.

WHY DO FILIPINOS NEED A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE?

Everybody needs a global perspective, so that they can



benefit from the wisdom, the mistakes, and the knowledge of other people. And everyone who aspires to participate in the global marketplace needs to understand the motivations and constraints of others. Historical perspective is important, too.

Many Filipinos lack a global perspective, and seem to be blissful in their ignorance. Here's a simple example: most countries issue passports which are valid for 10 years. Despite the enormous paperwork involved in issuing passports to many millions of Filipinos, it took our government 70 years to figure out that five-year passports are a bureaucratic waste.

HOW DID CIRCLING THE GLOBE HELP YOU DEVELOP YOUR INSIGHTS ABOUT THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE?

Through a series of lucky breaks, I have had the good fortune to actually live for many years in many great cities (Paris, London, Barcelona, San Francisco, New York, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Washington DC, and Hong Kong), and to do business or work with people of many more nationalities (Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, India). I learned a

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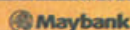


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lot about other cultures by keeping my eyes, ears, and mouth open.

My view is that the greatest danger in the world today is provincial-mentality nationalism, such as we see in many troubled parts of the world and even in some developed countries.

"Provincial" does not relate to where you grew up. It is a state of mind that bespeaks ignorance of the world, fear of those from different cultures and backgrounds, and a desperate, self-congratulatory belief in one's own superiority.

Provincial-mentality nationalism is on the rise. In Canada's Saskatchewan, a white man murders a Native Canadian, and is acquitted on all charges by 12 white jurors. In Catalunya, people who are genetically a mix of many ethnicities delude themselves that they are racially pure and thus superior to other Spaniards. Some Austrians, apparently unable to read maps, want to shut out foreigners. In the US, otherwise-intelligent people hope to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, preferring to deny the reality of global warming, and to ignore the stark fact that an ICBM can now deliver a payload anywhere in 30 minutes.

These provincial-mentality nationalists seek to tear down the institutions and the philosophies, which have sustained 70 years of economic prosperity and relative peace around the world. Those of us with a global perspective need to mobilize to oppose them.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE COUNTRY'S TOURISM? PUTTING IT BLUNTLY, WHAT DOES THE COUNTRY LACK?

You talked of adopting a global perspective. Let's do that. Well-run countries and successful economies diversify, and spread both risk and opportunity when able.

What's wrong with this picture?

Indonesia has 14 cities with over a million in population; the Philippines has two. Colombia has six major industrial metropolises of significant size; the Philippines has one. Kuala Lumpur is twice as large as the next largest Malaysian city; Metro Manila (counting the CALABARZON mega-area) is 20 times larger than the next biggest Philippine city. The US, a country with three times our population, does not even have one metro area as big as Manila. Manila is the fifth largest urban area in the entire world (though the Philippines is only



"TEACHING IS NOT JUST 'TELLING,' BUT EXPLAINING, DEMONSTRATING BY EXAMPLE, AND REINFORCING."

38th in GDP). Over 60 percent of the whole country's GDP is in Metro Manila; if there were a serious earthquake that disrupted power and water supplies, we might never recover as a country.

What's wrong with our picture should be obvious: too much concentration of everything in one place.

Metro Manila is long past the threshold of diminishing returns. Every P1 billion spent trying to correct its problems, just leads to P2 billion of other problems. Not just tourism, but the whole country, would be better off if our national government would stop throwing money down the drain trying to solve Metro Manila traffic, water supply, power supply, airports, slums — the whole lot. Stop wasting money on Metro Manila, and eventually businesses and people will migrate elsewhere. This will benefit those who go, those already in the places they go to, and those who stay behind.

WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PERSONAL GOALS RIGHT NOW?

Let me sound like a Miss Universe candidate. I hope that by writing and speaking in a humorous way on social topics, I can contribute to Philippine society, help improve our image abroad, and gain more respect and better treatment for Filipinos around the world.