



"The pen is mightier than the sword."

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Filipinos on New Immigration Law

By: Ben Emata

SAN FRANCISCO, CA. May 28, 2006 - - Thousands upon thousands of Filipinos who are living illegally in the USA for years are having a free ride in their hope the new landmark immigration law being debated in the Senate will not only benefit the Mexicans if granted but also all other nationalities that contributed to nearly 12 million illegal immigrants. To show cooperation on a common battle with the Mexicans, the Filipinos join the former in massive rallies and demonstrations coast to coast.

Everyone is praying that the new law would not make violation of immigration law a felony. They claim that unlike the Mexicans who forced their way at the borders, the Filipinos entered the USA legally, armed with passport and valid visitors' visa. Their lack of job back home, however, and the opportunity of an immediate employment while in this great country, compelled them to stay beyond the limit allowed to them by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

They continued that they never wanted to stay long but only for some moments as soon as they shall have saved some money but the need of America for workers in health care touched them well. Many of the Americans do not want to take the dirty jobs in health care. The job involved patients who are advanced in age, sickly and could not manage themselves anymore. A care giver perform such job as assist the patients into the comfort room or in bed, give him a bath everyday, wash him, cook his meals and feed him, give his medicines at appropriate time, take him to his doctor's appointment.

At times, caregivers complained of irritable patients who shout and defame at them, do not give due respect, throw insult after insult and others would even attempt to hit them with fists. Some patients, they say, are racists who never gave a good look at Filipinos notwithstanding the care and help extended to them. The Filipinos



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nevertheless continued to give good services to these elderly patients who hurt them every now and then. They have to swallow the heartache because of the responsibilities back home in the matter of supporting their families.

Majority of these Filipinos have been in the USA for more than 20 years and still undocumented except for some of them who got married to American citizens and they were able to change their status. The process of law also legalized others who have children who immigrated here legally as nurses or doctors or in other categories. A strict law would penalize companies or employers who allowed illegal immigrants to work.

Sacrifice and hard work are the rules of these illegal immigrants. For the pioneers who came in California in the early 90's, the U.S. government issued them Social Security Numbers that would allow them later to apply for driver's license and open bank accounts. And many of them are religiously paying income taxes to show good faith and intentions, which can help them later towards legalization. More unfortunate are Filipinos who arrived after 1995 because they were denied of social security number. And because they live under darkness or underground, some of them had to agree to under-the-table pay scheme which means they skipped paying income taxes to their own disadvantage. They not only committed a bigger offense with the Internal Revenue Service for tax evasion but also they have nothing when they reach the age of retirement. A worker who completed paying 40 quarters of a certain percentage of his pay to the Social Security is entitled to retirement pension for life as well as health insurance when he reaches the age of 65.

The Filipinos are praying hard the new immigration law would not make violations a criminal offense. They hope instead an amnesty is granted to a good percentage of illegal immigrants who have been here for a long time and paying taxes diligently. They are banking so much on alleged rumors that the government might grant a general amnesty for everyone except those who have committed crimes and failed to obey the laws in the country.

And to show cooperation with the Mexicans who are mostly the target of frustration by the American government for its failure to control their passage at the borders, the Filipinos joined forces with them in rallies and demonstrations across the country. To



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show sympathy to their compatriots who are in distress, Filipino-Americans and even war veterans join them too in mass actions.

The new immigration reform, which is coming out any time this week after weeks of debate in the Senate, is awaited by millions of illegal immigrants as well as their relatives. Their future in this country depends largely on the provisions of the law as it determines whether they continue living with comforts in this country even living underground until they are deported forcibly or enjoy the privilege of existing here legally. The illegal immigrants intimated that even if they live continuously with the swords of Damocles on their heads, they don't mind so much because they earn more than enough their needs though in clandestine. They declared they are able to send money regularly to their families and their children are in schools. "It is still so nice living in this country even with this kind of life," said a Filipino caregiver.

Most of these people, if finally deported back to their homeland, will find it very hard to find a job considering their age. They have grown much older now after having been here for more than two decades. Nearly all of them have adjusted living in this country and do not want to be resettled again to anywhere else. Their ambition is to get their families to join them here where great opportunities are available for their children.

Of the nearly a quarter of a million Filipino illegal immigrants in the USA, it is estimated that some 300 to 500 are from Cagayan de Oro and Misamis Oriental. They perform odd jobs here as caregivers, nannies, masseurs, janitors, agricultural helper, waiters, utility men, gardeners, errand boys, painter-helpers, construction workers, etc.