

Written by

Tuesday, 12 November 2013 21:41 - Last Updated Friday, 15 November 2013 10:35

Kapeng Barako

By Jesse Jose

A Cup O'

I live in the Northwest, in a little town, named Auburn, in the evergreen state of Washington. It's a typical small town, where most of its residents literally, know each other.

It's a multi-diverse community: Mexicans, Russians, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Native Americans, people from the Middle East and some Blacks, but the majority are Whites. There are two kinds of residents here in my town: those who live in new developments up on the surrounding hills and those who live in the low lands. Those who live on the hills are mostly the newcomers to this town and those who live in the low lands are mostly the old families, who have lived in this town for many decades.

I live on one of the hills, called Lakeland Hills. A couple of blocks from my house, I have a view of the valley and of Mt. Rainier, that awesome mountain that serves as one the landmarks of the big city of Seattle and its suburbs.

Though we are a varied people here in Auburn, we all get along well. When I first moved into this town from Florida, the first thing I noticed were the friendly smiles of welcome.

It's a peaceful town. When I first saw this open friendliness, I said to myself this is the town where my wife and two sons will stay forever and where I am going to live the rest of my life. I am twice retired, you see, from the U.S. Navy and from the state of Florida, as a Martin County deputy sheriff.

A Little Story About My Town and a Little Conversation with Newly-elected Mayor Nancy Backus - Mabuha

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I've lived in this town for over a decade now. Over the years, I've truly grown fond of this town. I've become a regular parishioner of the Holy Family Catholic Church and an active member of VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Post 1741.

I also took notice of the people who act as our political leaders.

This month, November 5th to be exact, as y'all know, America held local city elections for mayors and city councils. Here in Auburn, for the first time, a woman named Nancy Backus, ran to become the mayor of our town. She was born and raised in this town and has been a City Council member for several years. Curious who this woman is, I read up a little about her and discovered a lot of good things about her and of the good deeds she has done for this town.

A few days before Election Day, I emailed her and said:

"Ms. Backus,

"I am quite sure you will be the next mayor of our town. I've seen many letters to the editor in the *Auburn Reporter* and write-ups endorsing you that made you look like you can walk on water. I've seen your signs and placards all over town much bigger and more prominently displayed than that of John Partridge.

"I've also seen your Oct. 13 televised debate with Mr. Partridge a couple of days ago on Channel 21. May I say that you have more charisma and possess a more confident personality than your opponent. You sat up straight, shoulders back, whereas, Partridge leaned clumsily and heavily forward on the table. You answered all the questions posed to you by the debate moderator, without looking down from your notes, whereas, Mr. Partridge fumbled with his. You were impressive. You looked ready to assume the position of mayor of our town.

"But before I draw my penciled line on the ballot from your name to "yes," may I ask a couple of questions?

"As you know, the hottest issue among us, Vietnam-era war veterans of the city of Auburn is the Joint War Memorial. Majority of the members of VFW Post 1741 and the American Legion Post 78 are against this idea. We, at the VFW, voted on it twice, and twice we rejected it. My question is: Are you in favor of this memorial or are you not?

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"My second question is about those two rusting WW II Quonset huts sitting on the property of Tyee Cedar & Lumber Company on 'A' Street. It's definitely one of the many disgusting eyesores of our town. If you still remember, we've had a couple of email exchanges on this, and I appreciate your responses. You said that because of the Quonset huts' 'military and historical value,' you'll see into the possibility of moving them into a 'museum.' Are you really going to do that? Or, is it just lip service on your part? Thank you."

A day later Nancy Backus' name popped up on my computer screen with this reply: "Mr. Jose, I appreciate your kind words, and your thoughtful voting!

"The memorial issue is very complicated, but I am not in favor of it being located in Veteran's Memorial Park. Perhaps there is a place in our city -- perhaps even in another park, but I am not supportive of it being in Veterans' Park," she said. "I purchased a brick at the memorial to (at the time) honor my daddy who served in WW II. Now that he's passed away, it's a place that I go when I want to be near him. I understand the need for having a place to go to honor and remember. I am not a veteran, so I can't say that I could ever fully understand the emotions on both sides of this issue, but I do respect those emotions."

"I try not to ever just give 'lip service'! I wasn't raised that way," she added. "Those Quonset Huts are an eyesore as they currently stand! I did ask about the historic value of them -- as I told you a few months ago. I've looked at them more closely since then, and I have asked our Planning Dept. about their structural integrity. I've also asked about Code Enforcement. They are on private property, but if there is a structural integrity issue, the City could do something about them. If they truly have historic value -- as I was told by our White River Museum curator, then I would be interested in pursuing that, but if not, then I would encourage the property owner to improve them, or have them addressed with Code Enforcement. Did I answer your questions? Please let me know if I have not!"

"FYI, I did appreciate seeing you and hearing your opinions when you came to testify earlier in the summer at City Hall!," she concluded.

"Ms. Backus ... yes, you answered my questions," I replied. "Thank you for your response. Be assured that I'll now draw that penciled line across the arrow from your name and mail in my ballot today. I'll also encourage my wife and my son to do the same."

"Thank you much, Mr. Jose! I am honored to have your vote," she answered.

Right after election day, when it was reported in the news that Ms. Backus was leading in the count ... I sent her this email:

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Mayor Backus ... I wish to say my congratulations."

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An hour later, she wrote back, "Thank you, Mr. Jose! The count remains close, and I am hopeful our lead will continue as more ballots are counted. I do love our city, and want to continue serving!"

"Ms. Backus, you're it. I am sure, you're the winner. I said a prayer for you," I replied.

"I am blessed!" she answered. "Thank you so much for your prayer. You have touched my heart!"
I am touched, too, that she took the time to have this little conversation with me.

JJ

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