

Written by

Tuesday, 01 November 2011 11:31 -

By Jesse Jose

A Cup O' Kapeng Barako

A bout a week ago, I had an interesting conversation on Facebook with Perry Diaz. Y'all know Perry D, right? He's a writer *daw*. He has two columns: "PerryScope" and "Balitang Kutsero." I like his

Balitang Kutsero

column. It's funny and easy to read. Perfect for simple-minded readers and wannabe

Kutsero

writers like me. So, I copied here the format of his

Kutsero

column.

Me: Hey, Perry.

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Perry: He he he.... Long time no hear.

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Me: You gonna be in Denver on the 22nd of October?

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Perry: What's happening there?

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Me: Some kind of a NaFFAA event or something. The local NaFFAA there invited my son, Chris Jose, a Fox News broadcast journalist in Denver, to be the keynote speaker on that date. So my wife and I are flying over there to attend and hear his speech. I was hoping I can finally meet you there in person. Shame on you if you don't know anything about this. You're one of those NaFFAA big shots, aren't you?

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Perry: I am not with NaFFAA anymore. I am now my own man. Hehehe.

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Me: You're now a solo kutsero, ha?

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Perry: Pare, I like being solo. □ If you're an eagle, you don't want to fly with turkeys. □ Besides, turkeys can't fly. □ LOL.

□

Me: You used to be with NaFFAA. □ So, pare, if I may say □ so, you used to be one of the turkeys then, right? □ But now, you're an eagle. □ Well, congratulations and welcome to the club! □ Learn from this long-time eagle. □ I've earned the name, Barako, as you know....

□

Perry: I was never a turkey, always an eagle. □ That's why I left them. □ Be careful, pare, if you stayed with them too long, you'd transform into a turkey. □ Hehehe.

MEETING ED NAVARRA, NaFFAA'S NATIONAL CHAIRMAN: □ So, the day before this NaFFAA dinner-dance event, my wife, Maribel, and I flew to Denver

. The event was dubbed "Filipiniana 2011," as presented by the Region V chapter of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations

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(NaFFAA) and its local member organizations. We stayed at my son's house. The theme of this event was to commemorate Filipino-American Heritage Month and to celebrate "our future." It was also a "passing on of the baton" of the leadership, with Donna B. LaVigne stepping down as Region V Chair, and Gisselle Rushford, stepping up to the position.

On the evening of the event, we got all dressed up, and headed to the Red Lion Hotel of Denver, where this celebration was held. We were early when we arrived at the place. It was supposed to start at six. Filipino time, seven. We were there just after six, but it looked like things haven't started yet. So we went to the bar across the hallway and gotten something to drink.

After consuming my first glass of wine, I stood up to get another one (I was ready to party) ... when someone from behind me made *kalabit* of my shoulder. I turned around, and there standing next to me was a Filipino American, in blazing red Barong, with his hand extended, who said: "Jesse Jose, I'm Ed Navarra ... Bobby Reyes told me you were coming."

I looked at his face, trying to connect that face in front of me with the mug photo of his column (Ed is also a columnist for a Fil-Am publication in Michigan) that I've seen on the Internet. In the mug photo, he's shown wearing a baseball hat. So, it took me a while to recognize him. I had to erase first that baseball cap from my mind and draw another image of Ed

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without the hat. Then, I recognized the face. I peered into his eyes. He had kind eyes ... that twinkled mischievously.

I liked what I saw. So I hugged him and said: "I finally got to meet you. It's so nice to meet you." And I really meant what I said to Ed.

He said: "You look a lot younger than your picture."

I said: "That picture is an old picture. Fifteen years younger than me."

Then I introduced my son and my wife. I am hard of hearing, so whatever Ed Navarra said after the introductions, I didn't hear no more.

Finally, the celebration began. It opened with the patriotic singing of the national anthems of America and the Philippines. Then ... the

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speeches. Then dinner was served. Chicken and overcooked veggies and green salad. The chicken was tough to chew, dry and tasteless.

More speeches ensued, and the presentations of awards, and the induction of the new officers. Ed was in the middle of all this. But I wasn't paying attention. I was concentrating on cutting and chewing my dinner ... of tough chicken meat. My wife already gave up on her chicken and pushed it to me.

Then Ed came to the podium to deliver his own speech. In the middle of his speech, I heard my name mentioned and Ed was looking at the table where we (my wife, my son and his wife, Jaclyn and a woman who was writer *daw* for an Asian Magazine, and two other well-dressed young Fil-Ams and me) were seated. I stood up and waved at him and at the crowd. The applause from the crowd was weak and brief.

When I sat back down, I asked my wife, "What did he say about me?"

My wife said, "Ace journalist ka daw." HmMMM.

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More speeches followed ... and more, and more. Long and tedious speeches.

Then my son was introduced by Francis Macalalag, the Regional Youth chair of NaFFAA. The introduction was long, too, I think. It was also a speech. But it was okay. He was talking about my son, so I kind of listened up.

MY SON'S INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH: At last, my son came to the podium to deliver his speech. The reason why we came to Denver : to listen to him deliver this speech. He drafted it the day before and practiced delivering it in front of Chloe, his and his wife's spoiled and lovable Yorkie pet. Here's the speech, en toto:

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First and foremost, I have to tell you how much of an honor it is to be here tonight. Being in the news business, you just don't hear enough "good" stories ... because we're always covering the bad:

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Crime, corruption ...

Sex and scandals ...

People losing their jobs ...

People losing their homes ...

□

So when you hear □ good stories about people like Trisha Sellers, a young Filipino American, who's volunteered tirelessly for the FACC, it's always a joy.

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It's stories like Trisha's that oftentimes go un-noticed by us, and when I say us, I mean the media.

□

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In a crazy world that bases everything off of ratings ... and what we think ... you the viewers who want ... everyday feel-good stories are ignored.

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It's the harsh reality of television news, and it's a damn shame.

□

It's stories like Trisha's that people want to hear about, too,

□

For the record, I don't know Trisha. In fact, tonight was the first time I met her. But as a reporter, I did my homework ... found a little background on her, and stumbled upon a recommendation letter to NaFFAA, nominating Trisha for the Region 5 Youth Award.

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In the letter, it talks about her role as the chair of the FACC cultural committee, and how her efforts have ensured the FACC dancers are the stars of the Annual Philippine Festival. While that is impressive, that's not what impressed me the most.

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It's the fact that Trisha is a natural born leader ... that stood out for me. Not only is she mentoring the next generations of Filipino Americans, she's teaching them to be leaders. Teaching them to never forget, or take for granted, who they are, and where they came from.

□

It's the basis of being a successful Filipino American in a world ... that at times can be cruel ... harsh ... and just plain nasty.

□

In order to achieve success, you have to know where you've been ... and have dreams on where you will go next.

□

Born in West Palm Beach, Florida and raised in a town about forty-five minutes to the north, being different, being Filipino wasn't easy for me.

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For those of you, who know the state of Florida, well, you can agree that outside the beaches, outside the resorts, outside Disney World ... are swamps ... small towns ... and mosquitoes!

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Don't get me wrong, I love Florida.□ But when push comes to shove, outside the Sunshine State and the hype, it's still the South.□ And the South will be the South.□ And the harsh reality of the South is: RACISM EXISTS!□ And many neighborhoods are still segregated.

□

In the "White" neighborhood I grew up in, people looked at my parents, my brother and me ... like we didn't belong.

□

Not all, but many.

□

We were called CHINKS, JAPS, GOOKS ... one neighbor even told us to go back to our own country.

□

For the youth□ in attendance here□ tonight, your time is now.□ Not anyone else's time, but your time. It's your time to shine.□ It's your time to achieve your dreams.□ Just remember along the

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way to realize where you're at, where you've been, and where you'll go next. -- Chris Jose

Because that neighbor was so ignorant, he probably didn't even know that we were a Filipino family. He probably thought we were the Chinese family next door with Hispanic last names.

□

Which, I am sure, boggled his mind!

□

He probably thought we use chopsticks to eat our food, when really we use forks and spoons.

□

It was tough growing up down there!

□

Perhaps they were jealous of my Jordan basketball shoes and Nike Air Max's. Perhaps they resented the fact that my brother and I were more athletic. While they were in the stands, we were on the court.

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□

While they were eating their Wheaties the next day, they were also reading about us in the papers for leading the teams in points and rebounds.

□

But all that hate was hurtful.

□

My parents would reiterate and say: Be proud of who you are! Be proud that you're Filipino! Don't ever let anyone tell you what you cannot do or what you cannot achieve!

□

And although growing up in that neighborhood was tough, I used that as my motivation -- to be better than those close-minded people.

□

And that's where I've been.

□

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Where I am right now, I'd like to think that experience of my growing up has helped me. Not only as a person, but in my career as well.

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After graduating from Washington State in 2006, I spent two years as the weekend anchor and field reporter at KGWN, a CBS-affiliate station in Cheyenne

, Wyoming

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□

While I was there, I had the opportunity to learn the news business, cover an array of stories ... and even got to wear a pair of cowboy boots, a cowboy hat and Wrangler jeans to cover the Cheyenne Frontier Days in the world's largest outdoor rodeo.

□

From there, I went to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where I became an investigative reporter and the weekend Sports Anchor. I had the pleasure of covering Hawkeye football as they made their run to the Orange

Bowl Championship. But I think the most memorable story I did there was when I interviewed the leader of the Fraternal White Knights, a branch of the KKK, in the woods of a small town, with my photographer, whose last name

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was Morone.

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Can you imagine that? □ A Jose and a Morone, in the backwoods of Iowa, talking to the KKK!!!

□

I haven't done anything crazy like that since I've been in Denver. □ I am grateful that I've landed at an AWESOME station. □ And more importantly, in a great city. □ I am excited to call this place, home. □ And thrilled to be living my childhood dream.

□

For the youth □ in attendance here □ tonight, your time is now. □ Not anyone else's time, but your time. □ It's your time to shine. □ It's your time to achieve your dreams. □ In closing, just remember along the way to realize where you're at, where you've been, and where you'll go next.

□

Salamat po at magandang gabi ...

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THE SAME-SAME DANCE: I think it was a beautiful speech and beautifully delivered. The applause was long and strong. □

After this inspirational speech of my son geared for the young Filipino Americans of Denver, the entertainment part of this Filipiniana event began. There was a Tinikling dance performance, then a Hip-Hop dance display, then a dance eagerly performed by the elders.

Then ... the dancing began to the tunes of the LokoMotion Band. Tired of sitting down, I stood up and pulled my wife off her seat to dance the "Maski-Paps." But I noticed nobody dance this kind of dance in Denver. Everybody danced the same. I mean, the same steps, the same moves, the same

ikot ... □

and all at the same time, too.

□

I suppose "Same-Same" was the name of their dance. My "Maski-Paps" dance was unheard of. Well, here in Seattle, the "Maski-Paps" is THE dance.

While the dancing was going on, I also noticed that many of the young Fil-Ams and their parents were flocking around my son, getting their pictures taken with him. And this went on and on, until the event ended.

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He was the CELEBRITY there, I must say.

When I told Jaclyn, who's also a broadcast journalist for KRDO News Channel 13 in Colorado Springs, that I am going to write something in my column about this Filipiniana event, she said to make sure that I mention her cheesecake that she baked for the occasion of our Denver visit. So here's a mention of your cheesecake, Jaclyn. Like you, it was blonde and sweet.

The following day, Jaclyn's mom, Sandra, invited us to her gorgeous house in Brighton, a suburbs of Denver, for she has also prepared a scrumptious and healthy breakfast for us. I also got to rub the belly of her Yorkie, Jonah. Like mother, like daughter, Sandra and Jaclyn love their pet dogs ... and both pets love to have a belly rub-a-dub-dub.

As to those NaFFAA "turkeys" that Perry Diaz had talked about, I didn't see any of them. I only met and saw friendly Denver *kababayans*, merrily dancing, the "Same-Same" dance. And I had fun.

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