

Senator Pimentel Leads Protests Against 'Ethnic Slur' in a Filipino Movie - MabuhayRadio

Written by Manuel Lino G. Faelnar

Saturday, 05 January 2008 02:51 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 January 2008 04:24

Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr., has taken up the cudgels for the numerous viewers who are offended by an "ethnic slur" in the Tagalog film, "Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo." Senator Pimentel said: "The film is conveying a wrong message to Filipinos by denigrating the use of the Visayan language, which is most-widely spoken in the Visayas and large parts of Mindanao. It offends the sensibilities of the Visayans and other non-Tagalog speaking citizens by making them feel they are less Filipino than the Tagalogs. It creates useless hatred in the nation."

To have a background on the controversy, here is Cebuano writer Bobit S. Avila, who wrote in his column, "INSIDE CEBU" last Friday, January 4, 2008:

"Last October, the whole Filipino community here and abroad vehemently expressed their indignation to the racist slur or remark by actress Teri Hatcher on an episode of the hit TV drama series Desperate Housewives where she insulted Filipino doctors who graduated in Philippine medical schools. That slur incensed the entire nation; after all, Filipino medical practitioners are highly sought-after in many Western countries, including the United States. The ABC network has since apologized for the offensive remark, making sure that it would never happen again.

"Well, if you think that since this incident, movie actresses would have stopped making racist remarks, you're dead wrong! Last Christmas, a movie entry in the Manila Film Festival, Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo, from my favorite movie producer Star Cinema featured a conversation between actresses Gloria Diaz and Judy Ann Santos, who was complaining that her child was learning to speak Bisaya from her yaya. She said, "Dapat Tagalog para Pinoy!" Translated, she was practically saying, "You should speak to the child in Tagalog, otherwise, it's not Filipino!" (Editor's Note: The rest of the column of Mr. Avila is reproduced in its entirety at the end of this article.)

Senator Pimentel said the scene "smacks of an ethnic slur" and "offends the sensibilities of the Visayans and other non-Tagalog speaking citizens."

Among those who protested, aside from the officers and members of the DILA Philippines

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Foundation, Inc. (Defenders of the Indigenous Languages of the Archipelago) was Don Pagusara. Here is what Don sent to this writer:

Date: Jan 2, 2008 11:48 PM

Subject: Re: SAKAL, SAKALI movie racist and discriminatory

To: Manuel Faelnar

“Dear Manny,

“Grabe. . .! Bay, this is outrageous! We should broadcast (or at least register) our protest to this! *Dili nato ni palabyon!* Please ask Senator Nene Pimentel to find ways by which we can deliver to the concerned people our protest.”

Mr. Pimentel said the conversation was “insensitive” and “arrogant” and called on the Lopez-owned Star Cinema, to apologize and delete the scene from the movie.

The senator from Mindanao said that he was acting on numerous complaints from viewers offended by the slur. Mr. Pimentel said: “The film conveys a wrong message to Filipinos by denigrating the use of the Visayan language, which is most-widely spoken in the Visayas and large parts of Mindanao. It offends the sensibilities of the Visayans and other non-Tagalog speaking citizens by making them feel they are less-Filipino than the Tagalogs. It creates useless hatred in the nation.”

Senator Pimentel said Filipinos, both Tagalog and Bisaya, should be outraged at the film's ethnic slur. “It should elicit the same, if not a louder howl of protest than the one brought against an American television series 'Desperate Housewives' wherein one of the characters made remarks maligning Filipino health professionals.”

Mr. Pimentel said further: “The Tagalog joke about how the Bisaya speak Filipino and English with a funny accent. That's fine, we can live with that but to come out in the open and say that the only real Pinoys are those who speak Tagalog is wrong.”

The senator mentioned the said episode in the American television series, “Desperate Housewives.” The episode was aired in the United States on Sept. 30, 2007, where the character Susan Mayer, as played by actress Teri Hatcher, told her doctor: “OK, before we go any further, can I check those diplomas? Because I would just like to make sure they are not from some med school in the

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Senator Pimentel said that Malacañang acted on the “Desperate Housewives” remarks and condemned the incident as equivalent to a racial slur. The Office of the President asked the show's producers to apologize to Filipino medical professionals for putting them down.

Mr. Pimentel criticized also the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) for not noticing the derogatory remark while reviewing the film.

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Nation: Ugly slurs from Teri Hatcher to Judy Ann!

INSIDE CEBU By Bobit S. Avila

Friday, January 4, 2008

I have always been in the forefront in the fight for respect for all spoken languages in this country and since this movie was already shown in many areas, allow me to say that Star Cinema ought to tell its screenplay writers and especially its actors that they should be extra sensitive in making such racist slurs or uncalled-for remarks that hurt the sensitivities of people living in non-Tagalog-speaking areas.

I would have written this article a week ago, but then few people read anything during the holidays, focusing only on their last-minute shopping. But the die has been cast. When actress Teri Hatcher made that racist remark last October, it sent a loud outcry across the Pacific Ocean that Filipinos would never tolerate such an offensive remark. This latest incident should also send a clear message not only to Star Cinema, but also to other Tagalog film production outfits and film producers as well that we, the Visayan-speaking people in this country, would never tolerate such snide remarks!

If we're not happy with actress Teri Hatcher making offensive remarks against Filipinos, I'd like to make it clear here that Cebuanos, too, won't tolerate a Filipino actress like Judy Ann Santos making insulting remarks about us Cebuanos. If there are no reactions yet from the provincial

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government of Cebu or Cebuano congressmen, it is only because we were in the middle of the Christmas break or recess. I'm sure that when our elected officials go back to work, this issue will be discussed.

Perhaps now is the time to remind our friends in the Tagalog-speaking areas that when that Portuguese explorer in the employ of King Charles I (he was later known as Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) or the Spanish Crown arrived in the Island of Cebu with the ship Armada de Molucca, he was met by Cebuanos. The settlements along the Pasig River were only discovered when 49 years later Spanish Conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi came back to retrace (and to conquer Manila) the voyage of Magellan on this still unnamed archipelago, which was eventually named after King Philip II of Spain, who authorized the Legazpi expedition.

This brings us to the question, "Are the Bisayans, Kapam-pangans, Ilocanos, Pangasinenses, Bicolanos, Tausogs, Zam-boangueños, Ilonggos and Warays also not considered Pinoys?" Allow me to rephrase that question... "Is the Pinoy name reserved only for Tagalogs? Or should Cebuanos start talking about getting independence from the Philippines because we are not welcomed here anymore?" Judy Ann Santos ought to give us her reply to this query.

My friend Prof. Fred Cabuang, who is in the forefront in the struggle to preserve all the spoken and dying languages in this archipelago, wrote this: "When will we ever learn that being a Pinoy is not measured by one's ability to speak the Tagalog language only? Are the Bisayans, Kapampangans, Pa-nga-sinenses, Ilocanos, Bico-lanos not worthy of being called 'Pinoys' too? Do our Bisayan athletic heroes who did well in the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand have to learn Tagalog well before they are considered 'Pinoys'?"

"What about world-renowned Manny Pacquiao, does he have to learn Tagalog well, too, before he can be called a real 'Pinoy' hero? And surely, nobody will question the pride of Pampanga, our beloved President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her father Diosdado Macapagal; did they become 'Pinoys' only when they learned to speak Tagalog?" When will Pinoys learn and realize that the Philippines is a culturally-diverse country speaking different tongues?

Editor's Notes: *For e-mail responses to Mr. Avila's article, write to vsbobita@mozcom.com. Bobit Avila's columns can also be accessed through www.philstar.com. He also hosts a weekly talk show, "Straight from the Sky," shown every Monday, 8:00 p.m., only in Metro Cebu on Channel 15 of SkyCable.*

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Editor's Notes: Manuel Lino G. Faelnar is the director of the DILA Philippines Foundation, Inc. (Defenders of the Indigenous Languages of the Archipelago).

"Without our language, we have no culture, we have no identity, we are nothing."
-- Ornlfor Thorsson, adviser to President of Iceland.

"When you lose a language you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art."
-- Kenneth Hale, who taught linguistics at MIT.

"Words, if powerful enough, can transport people into a journey, real or imagined, that either creates a fantasy or confirms reality."
-- Rachele Arlin Credo, poet and writer. # # #

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