

Written by

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The defining moment of Tobias Enverga Jr. as a member of the Senate of Canada came 10 months ago when he spoke briefly at the upper chamber for the first time since his appointment in September 2012. Neither mainstream nor local media reported it, perhaps because it was so insignificant in a stately place as the august halls of Parliament. But in the context of him being the first Filipino there making his parliamentary debut, calling "Filipino Canadians the best at karaoke" not only demeans the Senate, it also belittles the entire Filipino-Canadian community. Yet on his own, he demands respect by telling people to address him as senator.

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***DEBUT SPEECH IN CANADA'S SENATE* 'Filipino Canadians the Best at Karaoke,' Says Tobias Enverga Jr.**

**By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ** *Member, □ Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), □ Asian-American Journalists Association (AAJA), □ National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada (NEPMCC) and Reporters Without Borders*

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings. - Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

TORONTO - "Filipino Canadians are known for their hard work, dedication, warm hearts and, most of all, for being the best at karaoke".

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The quoted sentence above didn't come from any of those imported talents from the Philippines dishing out blurbs before their performance at community events in Toronto.

It was uttered no less by Tobias C. Enverga Jr., a member of the Senate of Canada, in his first speech in the Senate chamber on November 1, 2012. (Full text at: [http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/Sen/Chamber/411/Debates/115db\\_2012-11-01-e.htm#9](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/Sen/Chamber/411/Debates/115db_2012-11-01-e.htm#9)).

He must have thought that he was speaking before the usual hometown crowd gathered at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for Pinoy Fiesta & Trade Show, the yearly song and dance spectacle that has been, in Enverga's own words, "the biggest fundraiser of Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF)".

But it was within the august halls of the Senate where he delivered it in November, five days shy of two months since being appointed on the recommendation of his Conservative patron.

That was his parliamentary debut. But unlike other first appearances when the actor or performer tries to make a lasting impression, Enverga did his bit by inculcating on the Senate Filipino attributes that are the least likeable. (Related video at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lwx\\_euoquzQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lwx_euoquzQ)).

"The Filipino in me goes for his first three (hard work, dedication, warm hearts) - but his last - for being the best at karaoke" - speaks of the shallow mind he has and the trifling manner he accords the Senate.

My understanding has been that Filipinos, or in this instance, Canadians of Filipino descent, have one of the best minds in the world. There are Filipinos who have contributed knowledge and expertise in inventing many things that have improved the human condition. (Full information at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Filipino\\_inventions\\_and\\_discoveries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Filipino_inventions_and_discoveries)).

It's surprising therefore that Enverga never referred to how smart Filipinos are in a chamber composed of learned people who probably knew very little about the Philippines and Filipinos. His short speech, insulting and unbecoming as it was, showed so scant a knowledge of facts about his roots and his people.

His "hard work, dedication, warm hearts" address typifies the menial character that has typecast Filipinos in Toronto at least, which he could have corrected by highlighting the best there is and elevate the race. The "being the best at karaoke" is a put down, a slur commonly spoken in sleazy bars by patrons in a drinking binge.

Now comes Ramon Datol, commentator in one of the local tabloids. He was foaming at the mouth at the chance to be taken on a tour - available to anyone for free - of the Senate Hall and the Parliament during a recent trip to the capital Ottawa.

The sight of Enverga's chair apparently also brought him some orgasmic delight. He wrote: "I was really enthralled by the atmosphere of uprightness inside the Chamber x x x Lars (Lars Andersen, a policy advisor in Enverga's office) even pointed to me the chair where Senator Jun is seating. I was so proud that a Filipino is now occupying a seat in the Senate".

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Publisher and editor of *Philippine Courier*, Datol is a media colleague better known in the industry as a promoter of gay entertainment and caregivers beauty contest - ventures that, to me, border on exploitation. Nothing personal against what he does and says; it's his choice.

However, I take issue with his other statement, thus: "If a handful of Filipinos are still highly critical of you (Enverga) and continuously acting and playing Philippine Crabs; NOT me, not x x x 'coz we (there are five others he named) are all very proud of you and your achievements so far!".

This is the usual tactic of those afraid to confront the issues. Branding critics who seek accountability and transparency as "crabs" deviates from and trivializes the issues.

Enverga and his wife Rosemer Enverga have many things to account for. His PCCF is of questionable status. Their lackey, a certain Romy Rafael, also proclaims Tobias Enverga's claim that PCCF is a charitable organization, which is a direct contravention of what Canada Revenue Agency says . . . that it is not! (Full story at: <http://www.balita.ca/2013/03/misleading-the-public-enverga-caught-lying-about-his-charitable-foundation/>

Rosemer Enverga has not fully satisfied demands for her to submit complete financial statements involving three beauty pageants she managed under Philippine Independence Day Council in 2010. (Videos at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0BAxCQYRoc> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ttk5iRYCB0>).

The claimed audit showing earnings of \$12,996.74 from revenues of \$104,669.24 has triggered more questions. (Full story at: <http://www.balita.ca/2012/12/pidc-earns-a-paltry-fro-m-beauty-pageant-revenues-of-100k/>).

Meanwhile, our colleague is still frothing at the mouth. He said the presence of Tobias Enverga Jr. in the Senate is, in his Tagalog, "**nakaka-angat ng dignidad!**" (uplifts dignity).

But take a look at what Enverga also said in the same speech: "I rise today because recent reports indicate that the fastest growing second language in Canada is Tagalog, the native language of the Philippines".

That is not true - a mistake of fact - and the lie is now entered in the official records of the Senate. He looks dopey making that statement knowing that French, next to English, is Canada's second language.

Perhaps he took it from a *Toronto Star* story in October 2012 but failed to comprehend it. The paper reported that "Tagalog is the fastest rising non-official language spoken in Canada. The number of Tagalog speakers rose by 64 per cent between 2006 and 2011, from 170,000 to 279,000".

Does Enverga raise what remains of our dignity or shall we all just settle "for being the best at karaoke"?

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