

{xtypo_quote} **Bobby, I like your acronyms CRABS and ALIMANGO. Were they all your creations?—Don Azarias** {/xtypo_quote}

Thus, Don Azarias, a Chicago-based friend and frequent contributor to this website, asked in an e-mail. Instead of answering Don also by e-mail, I decided to come up with an article. This way this writer can share with the reading public how not only our Los Angeles-based writers' group but also other Filipinos in America have used acronyms in their activism. And/or as bitter retorts to their critics. Poet-pundit Fred Burce Bunao first used the "acrimonious acronym" phrase in a very-funny column that made fun of the contractions that I had been coining in my activism. Other Filipinos in America have likewise used acronyms as tools in their exercises of wit and humor.

The CRABS, the acronym for "Citizens Rebelling Against Bogus Spending," was actually coined by Tito A. Cortez and his friends in San Jose, California. It happened after they reported the anomalies being committed by Ben Menor, then the executive director of the Northside Community Center. This was after Mr. Cortez and company were lambasted by Mr. Menor's colleague, Atty. Rodel Rodis, in his column in the *Philippine News* broadsheet. Mr. Cortez and his friends came up with the very-witty acronym to get back at Atty. Rodis and make fun of his bitter but unfounded accusation that Mr. Cortez and company were "human crabs." Atty. Rodis and Mr. Menor were then national executive officers (NEOs) of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA).

The ALIMANGO. Now since the CRABS of San Jose will team up with our Southern California-based coalition in reporting to the California Attorney General Atty. Rodis, Mr. Menor and their fellow NEOs as crooks, I thought of another contraction that will be another tool in

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getting back at the NaFFAA NEOs. So I came up with ALIMANGO, which means “Alliance to Make Accountable NGOs.” The NGO is itself an acronym for “Non-governmental Organizations.” To the uninitiated, “alimango” is a variety of brackish-water green-colored crabs, which are now raised in Filipino fishponds.

Mr. Bunao became my literary mentor in 1988 when I started writing for the *Philippine Journal* magazine and the *Manila Standard*

edition of Los Angeles. Even as a graduate of the now-defunct San Beda College School of Journalism, I found that Mr. Bunao was able to give me pointers that complemented the teachings that I learned from my Bedan professors. Mr. Bunao passed on also his penchant for using witty but humorous retorts and satirical style of writing. He often reminded me that a satirical piece was very effective because people remember more the humorous retorts. He said also that the only way to counteract a lampoon is to come up with a wittier and funnier repartee. Doing such wordplay as a reply is a very difficult chore to do.

Often I would consult with my punning and acronym-making exercises with Mr. Bunao and the two other members of our so-called “Literary Gang of Four.” Romeo P. Borje, the dean of Filipino-American columnists, and Mar G. de Vera, a journalist-book author, are the other members of our literary group. (**Author’s Note:** Another article will be published as a separate piece about this Filipino-American Gang of Four Writers .)

The PALABAN. Mr. Bunao’s teaching paid off when I wrote about the so-called “Philippine Airlines (PAL) Scandal” in 1992. At that time, then Philippine President Cory C. Aquino sold 67% of the PAL stocks to a group headed by four of her Cojuangco nephews. The deal was actually financed by Philippine government-owned banks. Then I persuaded several Filipino-American community leaders to join me in a movement to get back the PAL from the

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Cojuangco-led business conspiracy. I coined the PALABAN, which was the acronym for “Philippine-American Lobby Against the Buyout of the Airline of the Nation.” While Mr. Bunao said that the “acronym was ‘pilit-na-pilit’ but it was a good start.” The community protest got the support of Dr. Carlos P. Manlapaz of the Ilocano National Association (INA), Dr. Rey Landero of the Confederation of Philippine-US Organizations (CONPUSO) and Jimmy D. Bautista, then the chairman of the Ninoy Aquino Memorial and Service Group (NAMServe), Los Angeles Chapter. The PALABAN managed to unite the pro-and anti-Marcos groups in Southern California. Please note that the INA, CONPUSO and NAMServe were by themselves witty acronyms.

The CASTIGO. The next memorable acronym that I came up with was when I led the protest against the Miss Universe pageant in Manila in May 1994. I coined CASTIGO, which meant, the “Coalition Against the Stupidity of the Tourism Industry and Governmental Organizations.” Eventually we used the CASTIGO in protesting the waste of Philippine-government resources in fielding four floats in the 1997 and 1998 Tournament of Roses parades in Pasadena, California.

The Filipino OSCAR. Then our CASTIGO presented to Philippine tourism secretaries the so-called “Filipino Oscar Award.” The formal name of the prize was the “Oscar S. Tupido Award.” I said that Mr. Tupido was the Filipino equivalent of Forrest Gump, the reel version of American simplemindedness. Then Tourism Secretary Vince J. Carlos got the first Filipino Oscar Award in 1994 and his successor, Secretary Mina Gabor, her Oscar in 1998. We also awarded the Filipino Oscar Award to several NaFFAA founders for their savvy in turning the federation into a milking cow. Then *Filipino Express* columnist Ricky Rillera of New York wrote about the Filipino Oscar awardees in 2003.

The YIMBY. In 1998, I coined an acronym, YIMBY, which I registered as a domain name through our then webmaster, William “Bill” Saunders. It stood for, “Yes, in my backyard,” which was the opposite of NIMBY (Not in my backyard). I have the ultimate evidence for proving my coining the acronym. The “yimby.com” remains as our domain name. We gave up the other

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YIMBY domain names in the .net, .org, .com.UK and .biz categories, as only the .com has market value. In fact, we published starting in 1999 the “Yimby.com Asian-Filipino Online magazine” until Mr. Saunders died and he took the passwords with the server to his grave. But I continued to renew the \$35 a year registration fee with the www.Register.com since Mr. Saunder’s death. In 2000, somebody offered \$10,000 for the purchase of yimby.com but we turned down the offer. We demanded that the buyer add at least one or two more zeroes to his offer but he rejected it. But at that time business.com was sold for six-million dollars.

The NANAY. During the NaFFAA regional convention in Little Rock, Arkansas, in March 2000, I helped come up with an acronym that has become famous in the Filipino-American community. Dr. Joy Bruce, then the chairman of the NaFFAA Southeast region based in Miami, Florida, and I had lunch at a restaurant in Little Rock’s Excelsior Hotel, where many delegates to the NaFFAA convention stayed. The hotel was adjacent to the Little Rock Convention Center where the NaFFAA event was held. Dr. Bruce, along then with NaFFAA Arkansas State chair Elsa Bayani and the NaFFAA Southwest regional chair Gus Mercado of Dallas, Texas, sponsored my membership in the NaFFAA.

Dr. Bruce was then forming an advocacy to help senior citizens as a means of honoring her mother, who had recently passed away. It was easy to think of the Filipino term for mother, which is “nanay.” Over buffalo burger, which was one of the restaurant’s specialties, Dr. Joy and I came up with NANAY, which became the “National Advocacy to Nurture the Aged and the Youth.” The “youth” part was my special contribution to the acronym, as I thought of grandchildren (like then my five grandkids) being able to help the Bruce Family’s advocacy. (Editor’s Note: To learn more about the NANAY, please go to this website, www.nanay.com .)

The ATIC. When I started a campaign for reforms in the NaFFAA in May 2000, I came up with the acronym, ATIC. It stands for “accountability, transparency, integrity and credibility.” Even

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Philippine Senator Nene Pimentel used the ATIC in some of his e-mails to community leaders when he wanted to run for the Philippine presidency in the 2004 elections.

In Part Two of this presentation, I will describe the other acronyms and terms that came up and out of the fight for the ATIC in the NaFFAA. And the other words that I coined, some of which even became part of the court records of the libel case that a NaFFAA cofounder Lourdes A. Ongkeko filed against me in the Los Angeles Superior Court.

(To be continued . . .)

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