

An Open Letter to Consul General Aragon Over President Arroyo's Failure to Hold Press Conferences - M

Written by MabuhayRadio News Service

Tuesday, 11 November 2008 10:23 - Last Updated Tuesday, 11 November 2008 10:31

The MabuhayRadio.com editor has taken the initiative of informing the Philippine government of the Filipino-American media's lament over the refusal of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to hold press conferences during her visits to the United States. Bobby Reyes has sent the following e-mail to (and through) Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon of the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles. San Diego-based editor Romeo P. Marquez seconded the move of Mr. Reyes and e-mailed also his media group's concern to Consul General Aragon. Both e-mails are reproduced hereunder, including the original e-mail of invitation sent by the Philippine Consulate General to the Filipino-American media to a reception for visiting President Arroyo on Nov. 21, 2008.

Here is the e-mail of invitation sent by the Philippine Consulate General:

In a message dated 11/10/2008 4:32:55 P.M. Pacific Standard Time, info_pcgenla@earthlink.net writes:

May we inform you of the changes in the date and venue with regard to the reception in honor of H.E. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo:

DATE : Friday, 21 November 2008
VENUE: Grand Ballroom, Sheraton Gateway Hotel (near LAX)
6101 W. Century Boulevard, Los Angeles , CA 90045

Attire: Barong Tagalog/Filipiniana/Formal Dress

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Cameras may be inspected.

We wish to express our appreciation to all of you for your support and understanding.

Sincerely,

MARY JO BERNARDO ARAGON
Consul General

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Here is the e-mailed reply sent by Bobby Reyes to Consul General Aragon:

D ear Honorable Consul General Aragon:

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Acknowledgment is made to your invitation to the members of the Filipino-American press in Southern California. Thank you for giving us the information, except for the time of the reception.

With due respect to your esteemed office and to you, I wish to inquire if there is a press conference that Her Excellency, President Gloria M. Arroyo plans to hold on Nov. 21, 2008, at the said venue?

I have covered two of her previous visits in 2002 and 2003 and she never bothered to face the Filipino-American journalists and writers in a press conference. We did not even get a press kit and much more a copy of her speech. All H.E. President Arroyo did was to hold photo ops for some selected members of the Filipino-American community. She did not even give the Filipino-American photojournalists a chance to take pictures of her posing with some 30 community leaders and another photo op with her classmates from the Assumption College. She had an official photographer from Manila. While then Consul General Marciano Paynor, Jr., included me in the said selected 30 community leaders, I found it really a waste of my time during that presidential visit in 2002. After all, many of us working journalists are camera shy. Her press secretary could have just faxed or e-mailed a copy of Her Excellency's speech, which would have facilitated the coverage. There was no need for us to drive to the venue near the Los Angeles Airport, waste gasoline and pay the parking fee when sending a copy of her speech by facsimile or e-mail would suffice.

It really hurts to know that she agreed to be interviewed by a reporter of the CNN and other members of the American mainstream media during her June 2008 visit but Her Excellency did not have time to meet with Filipino-American journalists and writers in a formal press conference in San Francisco, Washington DC and New York.

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As a member of the Filipino-American working press and a journalism graduate at that, I wish to decline your kind invitation. Our media group will accept it only if there is a press conference (not a community meeting, where Her Excellency merely delivers her prepared speech). It is really unbecoming of us, professional media practitioners, to be merely used as props to and for a presidential visit. Our work is to ask Her Excellency questions that may be of interest to our readers, the Filipino-American community and the Filipino people. If Her Excellency cannot even answer questions that we have posted in our online publication and asked by Filipino national leaders like the Honorable Senator Pimentel, then the President does not have to call the members of the press to witness (sic) her speak before a Filipino-American audience and serve as part of the listening public, if not as propaganda props.

On behalf of the writers and staff of the MabuhayRadio.com, we send to you and your consular staff the assurances of our highest esteem and deepest appreciation of your collective outstanding public service to our community.

Mabuhay,

Very respectfully yours,

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Bobby M. Reyes

Editor

ww w.mabuhayradio.com and

Founder-Chairman Emeritus

Media Breakfast Club of Los Angeles

BCC: Other Members of the Filipino-American Press

Filipino Press

Filipino-American Community Leaders

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Here is the e-mail sent by Romeo P. Marquez:

In a message dated 11/11/2008 5:34:33 A.M. Pacific Standard Time, PhilVoiceNews writes:

In a message dated 11/10/2008 8:20:33 P.M. Pacific Standard Time, MEDIABCLA writes:

(Snipped) ***I wish to inquire if there is a press conference that Her Excellency, President Gloria M. Arroyo plans to hold on Nov. 21, 2008, at the said venue?***

(Snipped)

Dear Consul General Aragon,

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On behalf of my publications, The Philippine Village Voice, The San Diego Press-Journal and The Community Newsletter, I wish to reiterate the questions propounded by Mr. Bobby Reyes of Los Angeles.

My publisher and I would be pleased to attend a reception with President Arroyo but would decline any gathering with her without any assurance that she will meet with us in a no-holds-barred press conference.

Let us know soon if you please. Thanks and best regards,

Romy Marquez

San Diego

619.265.0611

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Here is the note of acknowledgment and appreciation that Bobby Reyes sent to Mr. Marquez, with copies to the original recipients:

Thank you, Romy P. Marquez. As a multi-awarded professional journalist in the Philippines, Germany and the United States, you got immediately the drift of my open letter to the Hon. Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon.

The problem with the past receptions with H.E. President Gloria M. Arroyo was that journalists and writers became part of a listening crowd, lumped together with senior citizens, publicity-seeking community leaders who wanted their pictures with the President printed in our media outlets and the Dicks, Toms and Harrys who wanted to make deals with the First Family.

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If the members of the working press have any self-respect and delicadeza in themselves, they would turn down the invitation to be part of the "silent audience" and become ballroom props, just like the flower vases on the tables. We journalists happen to be the Fourth Estate, the fourth leg of any country's government and we deserve the respect of the Office of the President. And we in the United States are not "envelopmental journalists,"

Mabuhay ka, Mr. Marquez.

Sincerely yours,

Bobby M. Reyes

Editor, www.mabuhayradio.com

BCC: Filipino-American mailing lists

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