

Written by
Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

The News UpFront: (TOP STORY) as of Tuesday, March 23, 2010

~ The controversy was far from being resolved. Accusations as sharp as the swords of war were being hurled by the protagonists. As it appears now, the row over a Philippine government citation of a non-Filipino journalist for his reportage of hapless Filipino caregivers in Canada was the last straw. Charges of favoritism, official neglect, arrogance and contempt of the locals by the Philippine labor official are some of the root causes of the four-month-old dispute. Majority of the journalists in Toronto's 14 Filipino newspapers are watching in the sidelines, some in amusement, some in awe and some in utter disbelief. In the meantime, another Consulate official justified the citation awarded to the reporter.

.....

Written by

Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

Row Over Slur Goes Unresolved; Consul Defends Award to Non-Filipino Journalist

By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ

Member, Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE)

and Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)

TORONTO, Canada -- Accusations, denials, claims and counter-claims bordering on the personal -- that best sums up the still-simmering feud between a Philippine labor attaché here and Filipino journalists who are up in arms for being allegedly referred to as "morons".

The spark that prompted the controversy -- a citation given by Philippine

Written by

Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

Ambassador to Canada Jose S. Brillantes to a mainstream newspaper reporter, apparently on the strength of the recommendation of the beleaguered labor official -- now seems to have become a secondary issue.

From accounts by the journalists themselves, it wasn't the award that they resent as much as the pomp and circumstance when it was handed down. They claimed they were invited without being told that they would become mere witnesses to the event.

"We were used as props," said Ramon Datol, publisher of *Philippine Courier*. That sentiment is shared by Tenny Soriano, a columnist of *Balita* newspaper and incumbent president of Philippine Press Club Ontario, and Ace Alvarez, editor of *Manila Media Monitor*.

Datol and Alvarez had elevated their complaint against labor attaché Frank Luna to newly-installed Consul General Minerva Falcon, saying his conduct belied his position as a diplomat, during her first press conference early this month at a restaurant in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough.

Written by

Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

Luna, a lawyer who had renounced his Canadian citizenship to occupy his current post at the consulate, had called an unidentified press club officer "a moron" for suggesting that the citation be awarded instead to Filipinos advocating for caregivers.

Consul Edna May G. Lazaro justified the recognition conferred on Dale Brazao, reporter of *Toronto Star*, Canada's largest newspaper, stating his articles "contributed in large measure to the reforms in the Live-in Caregiver Program". Canada is home to a huge number of Filipinos engaged in caregiving.

"The citation," explains Lazaro, "was conferred by Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose S. Brillantes and attested to by Consul General Alejandro B. Mosquera and Philippine Labor Attaché Frank Luna. The conferment of said citation was made upon discussion among and with the consensus of Amb. Brillantes, Consul General Mosquera and Mr. Luna." Mosquera has since been replaced by Consul General Falcon.

Eddie Lee, publisher of *Atin Ito* newspaper, who at one point was being endorsed for recognition for his own set of stories, balked at his colleagues' protestations.

PHILIPPINE VILLAGE VOICE - Redefining Community News
Currents & Breaking News

Volume 4, Issue No. 2 / News That Fears None, Views That Favor Nobody /

. . . A community service of *Philippine Village Voice* (PhilVoiceNews@gmail.com) for the
information and understanding of Filipinos and the diverse communities in
North America

. . .

In fact, he belittled them: "Does anybody in the PPCO, or the whole PPCO
itself, or any individual, or group in our Filipino/Canadian community for that
matter, honestly say they possess the necessary political muscle or clout to
move the government officials to act on the workers' abuses, as Brazao and
the Star did? Personally, I do not think so. The
PPCO
itself could not even convince other Filipino/Canadian publications to join it."

These and Luna's descriptive slur had further inflamed the journalists.

"It's clear he (Luna) used the word moron on an unnamed PPCO official. He was referring to Mon (Datol) and Faye Arellano," Soriano said in an interview. He described Luna as "arrogant".

Datol has been so agitated by Luna's remark, saying it does not befit his position. "Somebody like Luna should not be called a diplomat. Besides, how did he get that position when he's not a career diplomat," Datol said.

Arellano, a freelance journalist and advocate for Filipino caregivers, has shrugged it off, not wanting to exacerbate the already strained situation. She said she had emailed Luna to call attention to his "insulting" and "insensitive" language to no avail.

In an email message to this reporter, Luna denied calling the journalists morons. "As you will note," Luna explained, "I did not call Tenny Soriano and

Written by

Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

Mon Datol as morons – it is their word, not mine."

Luna suggested that Soriano and Datol were trying to sow intrigue and to villify him. By a strange coincidence, Lee (who is reportedly a good friend of Luna), said the same thing in response to this reporter.

"Intriga ito nina Tenny Soriano at Mon Datol. Sila ay nasaktan. Sa aking pananaw, ginagamit lang nila ang dyaryo nila para sa pansariling hangarin kahit makasira ng ibang tao. Wala akong reklamo kay Mr. Luna," Lee said in Tagalog.

(Rough translation: Tenny Soriano and Mon Datol are sowing intrigue. They were hurt. In my view, they are using their newspapers for their personal ends even if that would ruin other people. I have no complaint against Mr. Luna).

Lee, a popular real-estate agent in Toronto, also accused the two journalists of "using" this reporter. He says in Tagalog: "Upang maunawaan mo ang buntot at ulo ng intriga," referrencing his article in his paper's January issue.

"Dito mo makikita ang paggamit din nila sa iyo."

When asked how he reached that conclusion and why he made the assumption that this reporter was allowing himself to be used, Lee did not reply.

His Tagalog statement was a significant departure from the flowing response (headlined "Corrigenda") he claimed he had written which, by its language, structure, attribution, length and presentation, must have originated from a lawyer.

Lee's "Dito mo makikita ang paggamit din nila sa iyo" was illustrative of his dramatic transformation from one so serious a writer to a reckless amateur.

Knowledgeable individuals interviewed for this story said Lee has never been a card-carrying journalist and his Atin Ito newspaper merely serves as the unofficial mouthpiece of whoever occupies the presidential palace in Manila

. Its beginning was closely intertwined with the ousted dictator Ferdinand

Written by
Tuesday, 23 March 2010 11:45 -

Marcos. # # #

{xtypo_quote} This Currents & Breaking News was sent by Romeo P. Marquez, Editor, *Philippine Village Voice*, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Volume 4, Issue no. 2, March 23, 2010 {/xtypo_quote}

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)