

***The News UpFront: (TOP STORY) as of Monday, August 24, 2009***

More intimation of improprieties in NaFFAA surfaced this weekend. While officials seemed to be slowly succeeding in defusing a tense situation, a friend of NaFFAA chair Greg Macabenta volunteers the idea that he and other NaFFAA officials might be "guilty" of wrongdoing, if not of a federal crime. This, at a time when his supporters are trying to extricate him from the unfolding mess. A formal request to the Internal Revenue Service to investigate NaFFAA for alleged irregularities was being worked out in Los Angeles

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Philadelphia

, a NaFFAA co-founder is seeking support to locate what he refers to "stolen money" from NaFFAA.

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**AS THE I.R.S. INTERVENTION IS SOUGHT,**

**NaFFAA Co-Founder Issues Appeal: "Please Help Locate 'Stolen Money'"**

Written by

Monday, 24 August 2009 13:40 - Last Updated Monday, 24 August 2009 13:59

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By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ

The author is a member, Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) and the Asian-American Journalists Association (AAJA)

S AN DIEGO – A co-founder of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) has issued an appeal to help locate what he referred to as "stolen money" from one of the organization's annual conferences.

The latest hint of irregularity surfaced during the weekend even as Los Angeles-based journalist Bobby Reyes disclosed his efforts to get the Internal Revenue Service and the Office of the Attorney General to investigate NaFFAA officials and their activities.

NaFFAA chair Greg B. Macabenta, through his self-proclaimed spokesperson Dr. Joy Bruce, has denied any wrongdoing while admitting, however, that he himself had made money from "professional" deals with

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Wells Fargo Bank, NaFFAA's biggest contributor.

Dr. Bruce, of Florida, has sought to insulate Macabenta from any intimation of scandal but a Sacramento-based care-giver and news distributor, Perry Diaz, a friend of Macabenta, advanced the unsolicited idea that Macabenta and other NaFFAA officials might have been "guilty" of wrongdoing, if not of a crime.

"I am not trying to say that Mr. Macabenta and the other officers of NaFFAA are not guilty of any malfeasance or -- as some misinformed readers believe -- federal crime," said Diaz, who is also a real-estate agent known in some circles as Porfirio Diaz, in an email posted in some e-forums.

Rather than extinguish the fire, Diaz's posted statement added more fuel to the raging controversy about NaFFAA, which is currently facing hardships due to its depleted funds, dwindling membership and lack of corporate and individual support.

With a claimed membership of about 500 associations, NaFFAA purports to

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be the "voice" of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in America. It has grouped all 50 states into regional chapters. (

***Editor's Note:***

*According to New York-based "Filipino Express" columnist Ricky Rillera, the NaFFAA actually had only some 169 members in 2004 and not the 3,000 association-members that the NaFFAA national executive officers touted.*

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A co-founder of NaFFAA, Ernesto Gange of Philadelphia, appealed for help in recovering an unspecified amount of money which he claimed to have been stolen from the federation. He did not say who took the money or when it was taken.

"Romy," he said in an email message addressed to this reporter, "I appeal to you to help us locate the stolen money, the receipts of the 2002 National Conference."

Gange stressed that the funds, "if recovered will help NaFFAA to survive this sad predicament, not paying our only staff Les Talusan for salaries owed to her, \$25,000 and other bills including rent and utilities."

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"If we find the stolen money, then, it will be a shot in the arm for our Federation," he emphasized.

There was no immediate comment from any NaFFAA officials about Gange's allegation, which was posted online yesterday (Sunday, Aug. 23).

Gange also said that he was "surprised" when the allegation surfaced that Macabenta was involved in what he called the "NaFFAA fund scandal".

But, he averred, "I am convinced that Greg's hand did not touch inside the Wells Fargo cookie jar".

Wells Fargo -- the bank and the foundation -- had donated a total of \$300,000 to NaFFAA. How and where it was spent has not been clarified, though the donor had not asked for any accounting of the funds.

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Gange claimed that NaFFAA national treasurer Lourdes Corrales is hiding important documents, including a form 990 routinely filed with the Internal Revenue Service.

" x x x the Audit Report 2002-2001, (which) was being guarded by Treasurer Lourdes Corrales from publication, for fear that it will implicate her, for lending Ben (Menor) her own money," he disclosed.

Ben Menor had pleaded no contest (which has the same effect as a guilty plea) to a felony charge of filing false statement and to another charge that he overstated his work hours at a senior housing program in San Jose. He agreed to pay restitution amounting to \$51,000, which paved the way for the dropping of two grand theft felony charges.

Gange recounted a teleconference with other NaFFAA officials which Corrales did not attend. She held the financial information and her refusal to attend the teleconference "made us mad," according to Gange. # # #

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**\* This "Breaking News" was sent by Romeo P. Marquez, editor, Philippine Village Voice, San Diego, California. Mailing address: P.O . Box 2118 , La Jolla , CA. 92038.**

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