

Dying With Dignity: The Case of the Filipino Caregiver in Canada - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

Wednesday, 25 June 2008 09:56 - Last Updated Wednesday, 25 June 2008 10:31

An Irish follower of Jose P. Rizal sent to his fellow Rizalists an appeal to help Juana Tejada, an Overseas-Filipino worker (OFW) in Canada. Ms. Tejada is a cancer-stricken Filipino caregiver, who has been ordered to leave Canada by Aug. 8, 2008. Her application for permanent residency has been reportedly refused on the ground that her illness might pose excessive burden on the Canadian healthcare system.

Here is what this Irish follower of Dr. Rizal emailed his fellow Rizalists (including this editor): *“Dear All, Can you please give this heart-rending story the maximum exposure and publicity so that the greatest possible number of signatures may be appended to the petition to have this dreadful deportation (from a country with one of the finest cancer-care services in the World) halted? Kind Regards, Don Brennock, Dublin*
.” Yes, Mr. Brennock’s appeal is meritorious. But . . .

This column says that if Ms. Tejada’s cancer is terminal, her supporters in Canada and her employer must send her home, so that she can die with dignity in her own house, as surrounded by her loved ones. There is no better place to die than in one’s residence in the homeland. There is no better place to be buried than in the land of one’s birth. Especially if Mrs. Tejada’s cancer has metastasized, her supporters must see to it that she goes home with all her benefits, including sick leaves and what is due to her from the Canadian social-security office. The OFW community must help too Ms. Tejada, so that she could enjoy the remaining days of her life in comfort, as made more comfortable by the hugs and kisses of her children and husband.

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halted?—Don Brennock, Dublin.

But if Ms. Tejada's ailment is curable, the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa must file a diplomatic protest because it is the duty of the Canadian healthcare system to take care of employees in the country. After all, Ms. Tejada was not admitted by Canadian immigration officers as a refugee or worse, as an illegal alien. She is a contract worker duly petitioned by her employer and she has been paying not only her share of Canadian taxes but also social-security contributions.

On a bigger outlook, the Tejada case magnifies how the much-vaunted socialized medicine cum healthcare system of Canada pales in comparison with that of the United States. Legal foreign workers who get sick in the United State are not deported because their illnesses "might pose excessive burden on the American healthcare system." For all its deficiencies, warts and all, the American healthcare system appears more humane than its Canadian counterpart.

Ms. Tejada's case illustrates also a defective system in the Philippines where OFWs are treated more like milking cows for corrupt bureaucrats, rather than what the Philippine President called them, "***The modern-day heroes of the Philippines*** ." If the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Overseas-Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) are doing their jobs monitoring the welfare and the health of the OFWs, then it would not have been necessary for Overseas Filipinos and foreign friends of the Philippines like Don Brennock to be making appeals and petitions for and on behalf of a healthcare worker like Ms. Tejada.

The OFWs are heroes because their remittances have kept the homeland economically afloat and the government coffers in the black. And heroes do not have to beg to get the protection of their government.

If Ms. Tejada's cancer is terminal, her supporters in Canada and her employer must send her home, so that she can die with dignity in her own house, as surrounded by her loved ones.

In another perspective, Ms. Tejada's ailment brings to mind the dire predicament of the Philippine healthcare-and-hospital industry. Yes, it is indeed tragic that many Filipinos are born and they die without ever seeing a physician or a nurse in their lives. It is tragic because the Philippines is the biggest provider of nurses and other medical professionals to many industrialized countries in the world. To read this contradiction, please read (again) this article, [The Philippines: A Land of "Mona Lisas"](#)

And to compound the misery of Filipino patients, especially those that develop fatal illnesses, the Philippine government spends for public health services less than \$400-million per year. Then the government remits more-than \$5-billion (spelled with a B) servicing its foreign debts (interests and parts of the principal), aside from rolling over a major portion of the interest year in, year out.

Even in an imperfect world, the plights of the OFWs and their dependents in the Philippines who get sick are really reprehensible. And mind you, the tragic case of Ms. Tejada cannot even be compared to the tragedies that some Filipino woman workers in Japan – the so-called “**Japayukis**

” – have met. Some of the “

Japayukis

” have disappeared and their bodies have not been recovered at all. They are presumed to be buried somewhere in the Japanese homeland, being victims of crime syndicates that control their hiring and continued employment as bar girls, hostesses, prostitutes and what not. To read more about the “

Japayukis

,” please click on this link,

[Does the World Care About Japan's Modern-day "Comfort Women"?](#)

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This writer has also indicted before the woman leaders of the Philippines for not protecting their fellow women not only in the Philippines but also in the foreign countries where they are now toiling. To read this massive indictment against the Aquino and Arroyo Administrations and other Filipino woman leaders, please go to [The Woman Leaders of the Philippines Must Protect their Fellow Women](#)

If Ms. Tejada's ailment is curable, the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa must file a diplomatic protest because it is the duty of the Canadian healthcare system to take care of employees in the country.

Here are more details of the case of Ms. Tejada:

[Dying Filipino caregiver in Canada is being kicked out](#)

Posted 12:36pm (Mla time) (Mla time)

By Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

Philippine Daily Inquirer

In my column last week on "Caregiver" the movie, I ended by saying that the movie should have a sequel. Well, it's that column piece that is having a sequel. [\[Read more \]](#)

We offered Juana a path to citizenship if she would wipe the snotty noses of our brats. But some dim bureaucrat—in Alberta of all places, where they have the least understanding of what life is like here, and now — has decided that Juana's illness 'might reasonably be expected to cause excessive demand on health and social services.'...

She came here in 2003. She came to work. Never mind her dues, she paid her taxes. It is as simple as that. Here is another principle: we are Canadian; we do what's reasonable.

Juana would have earned permanent resident status when her three years were up. She did not choose to get cancer in 2006. We are giving her no choice. We are sending her home to

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die ...”

You can read Fiorito’s entire piece by logging on to <http://www.juana-tejada.info/> . The petition letter addressed to Prime Minister Stephen Harper is there for anyone to sign. I was the 801st signer. There is space for your own personal message.

I personally know one of the persons behind the petition. My US-based schoolmate, Mila Alvarez-Magno, and her husband Oswald are trying to gather as many signatures as could be gathered before August 8, the day Juana is to be sent home.

Here are excerpts from the letter:

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We, the undersigned, respectfully file this petition on behalf of cancer-stricken Juana Tejada, a Filipina caregiver, who has been ordered to leave the country by August 8 and whose application for permanent residency has been refused on the ground that her illness might pose excessive burden on the health care system.

We regard the deportation order against Tejada as no less than a death sentence, and a cruel and inhumane decision. It tarnishes Canada’s excellent international reputation as a humane and compassionate nation ...

Like the thousands who hope for a better life in Canada ... Tejada answered Canada’s call for caregivers and has served in Canada since 2003, separated from her husband and six siblings. She worked hard in a low-paying job that demanded more than the usual number of working hours that other working Canadians enjoy, to earn her right to become a permanent resident. But for her medical condition, she would have been assured of permanent residency,

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able to sponsor her family, after the required three years of service as a caregiver under Canada's Live-In Caregiver Program.

Her cancer is a disease she did not choose to have. She might even have contracted the disease in this country. During all the three years when she was able, Tejada, in her small way, had supported the health-care system that she now desperately needs to care for her.

She is no burden to the health care system. She is being looked after by generous and compassionate doctors who are providing their services for free. She is buying her medications with the financial support of friends, neighbors, and members of her community.

Even granting that there is a cost to the system, surely, it cannot be said that in order to save a few thousand dollars in health care costs in this isolated case, Canada is prepared to suffer the ignominy of sending Tejada back to her homeland, the Philippines, a country with no socialized health care system, to die.

Caregivers like Tejada provide valuable home care services to thousands of Canadian families. They enable Canadians who use their services to lead productive lives, and to maximize their contributions to society. Unlike the thousands of refugees Canada is known to accept and protect from potential harm or death, Tejada has served this country and paid her taxes dutifully. She has more reasons to seek humanitarian protection and care from Canada than most refugees...

Canada's greatness as a country rests, not on the stone-cold and literal application of its laws, but on the humane application of such laws and the wisdom of its national leaders in doing what is morally right. # # #

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