

# DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

**INTERCEDE** for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

August 2004

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



## **TWO MILLION REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING FIFTY ONE (51) TROOPS**

**Rene P. Ciria-Cruz, Pacific News Service**

**(reprinted from San Francisco Chronicle, July 26, 2004)**

American officials, several of their allies and many U.S. media criticized Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's decision to recall her nation's small military contingent in Iraq in order to save the life of Filipino hostage Angelo dela Cruz. They called the move cowardly and said it sent terrorists "the wrong signal."

For most of dela Cruz's compatriots, however, and from the standpoint of their national interest, it was a sensible, even courageous move. There was more at stake in Arroyo's decision to pull out of Iraq than saving the life of an unfortunate hostage or avoiding the ire of the U.S. government, a key source of foreign aid for the Philippines. The hostage crisis imperiled a crucial survival mechanism for the impoverished nation -- the gainful employment of millions of overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East. Some 2 million Filipinos work in the region, with nearly a million in Saudi Arabia alone, according to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs.

These large contingents of Filipino workers have become a critical prop of the Philippine economy. They represent the millions who can't find work in their own country. They send home some \$8 billion a year (remittances were largely responsible for a 4.5 percent GNP growth in 2002), providing otherwise income-strapped families the spending power that keeps the economy afloat. A number of Filipinos have been among the unintended victims of suicide bombings in Israel, and a number were killed in recent attacks on foreigners working for American firms in Saudi Arabia.

For Arroyo to insist on remaining in the so-called "coalition of the willing," despite the terrorists' threats, would have exposed all Filipinos in the region to a dramatically higher level of danger -- where they are transformed into deliberate targets of terror because their government persists in giving political cover to Bush's "coalition" by keeping a symbolic military contingent in Iraq.

In such an eventuality, the mass return of millions of Filipino workers evading terrorist attacks in the Middle East would mean disaster for the Philippine economy. The Philippine government is simply not prepared to absorb a sudden influx of jobless returnees. The large-scale repatriation of Filipinos from the Middle East also would mean trouble for many Arab countries -- including some of America's allies -- that have come to depend on imported Filipino labor or expertise for a multitude of tasks, from domestic work to construction and management. There can be no doubt that President Arroyo's decision to pull out of Iraq to protect other Filipinos was quietly encouraged by many an Arab host government.

Clearly, Arroyo's decision was also politically self-serving, given the popular outcry for dela Cruz's safe return. Overseas Filipino workers -- an estimated 8 million labor in 150 countries -- risk their lives and endure long absences from their families. They're often called modern-day heroes by Filipino officials and media alike. In 1995, President Fidel Ramos' popularity plunged when he failed to save the life of Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker who was hanged by the government of Singapore on a questionable murder conviction. Dela Cruz's kidnapping brought back memories of that execution, and the political danger was not lost on Arroyo. She had just assumed office after a bitter election whose credibility is held in doubt. Failure to bring back dela Cruz alive would have given her enemies effective ammunition in a poisonous political climate rife with talk of destabilization plots.

*Cont. next page*

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**Let's Celebrate  
INTERCEDE's 20th Year Anniversary**

**Watch for upcoming INTERCEDE  
ANNIVERSARY ACTIVITIES:**

- ☞ **October 22, 2004 - Dinner Fundraising**
- ☞ **December 4, 2004 - Christmas Dinner  
Dance at Ramada Hotel**

## *Join the Pot-Luck Picnic to Celebrate*



## **INTERCEDE's 20th Anniversary**



**Sunday, August 8, 2004, from 11:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.  
At Earl Bales Park, (North of Sheppard, East of Bathurst)**

**See you there!**

For most Filipino opinion-makers -- and from the standpoint of the Philippines' national interest -- pulling out of Iraq was not a "wrong signal" to terrorists. The wrong signal was to send a troop contingent to begin with, which only served to militarize the longstanding and purely civilian Filipino presence in the Middle East and made it a likely target of terrorist attacks.

As for Washington's implied threat of leaving the Philippines at the mercy of its homegrown terrorists, it's empty and face-saving. The Philippines remains the most important staging area for U.S. operations against al Qaeda's affiliates in Southeast Asia, as predominantly Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia are less than ideal hosts. In fact, several U.S. military exercises are set to take place in Southern Philippines. Like it or not, Washington is stuck with Manila, and Manila knows it.

*(Rene P. Ciria-Cruz is an editor at Pacific News Service and Filipinas Magazine.)*



**Farewell with Love from Salma Saadi**

**THANK YOU INTERCEDE!**

When I first came to INTERCEDE on October 21, 2002, I had just completed my university degree and felt very excited, but scared to be part of such a respected agency for my first job. It has almost been two years since I came to work here and my time has been very rewarding and challenging. I cannot describe how much I have learned and grown from my position as a counsellor at INTERCEDE.

My experiences have really opened my eyes and hopefully the new knowledge and skills that I have obtained will be with me wherever I go. My last day is August 14, 2004 and I will be leaving to complete my graduate studies at York University. Even though I am excited about all my new adventures, I am deeply saddened that I am leaving such a wonderful position and an extraordinary agency. It truly was an honour for me to be a counsellor here.

I would like to thank all the people who came to me seeking assistance and support. I wish you all the best. You are strong, smart and remarkable individuals. Do not ever forget that!!!

Also, I would like to thank all of my clients from the Caribbean who trusted me enough to share their experiences. A special thank you to all the women who came out for the Caribbean Connection Black Support Group. We have made this group strong and successful together!!

Also, a special thank you to my co-workers at INTERCEDE. You are my colleagues, my teachers and my friends. Thank you: Genie, Anita, Fely, Lourdes, Coco, Bernice, Jo, Marilyn and the Board. If I received any success because of this position it was because of all of you.



**PLEASE NOTE:**

**INTERCEDE  
SUMMER HOURS**

**From June 21 to August 27, 2004**

**Monday to Thursday : 9:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.**

**Friday: Closed**

**CARIBBEAN CONNECTION  
BLACK SUPPORT GROUP**

On Saturday June 19, the INTERCEDE Caribbean Connection Black Support Group had a discussion about the struggles and successes members went through in trying to obtain permanent residence status in Canada. Their purpose was to share their experiences, so they could pass this information to those who are in the same situation. Women with different circumstances talked about what worked for them and what did not. It was a very informative dialogue and many women felt that it was important to be open and talk to each other because there are many similarities in their circumstances. In addition, members shared information about resources that can be accessed in the GTA for people without permanent status.

During the summer, the Caribbean Connection will be participating in focus groups to be organized by the STATUS Campaign in Toronto. This campaign will address the needs of people without permanent status and ways to advocate with government on their behalf.

If you are a caregiver or domestic worker and are interested in attending a **Caribbean Connection Meeting please contact Salma** at (416) 483-4554 x 22.

**Caribbean Connection Black Support Group**

Next Meeting: Saturday, August 14, 2004

INTERCEDE Office

2:00-4:00 p.m.

\*If you have any questions please contact Salma at (416) 483-4554 x 22

**Q & A**

*Q. I arrived in Canada under the Live in Caregiver Program and I received my permanent residence last year. My parents are old and they don't want to come to Canada anymore. Since I am single and I don't have any relatives here in Canada, I sponsored my brother last January 2004.*

*I received a letter from Immigration stating that I was not approved as a sponsor because I did not meet the income requirement. However, they will still continue the processing of my brother's application in Manila under my sponsorship since I requested for that procedure in my application.*

*What are my brother's chances of getting approved for permanent residence?*

**A.** Your brother might be refused too of permanent residence status under your sponsorship because you did not meet the income requirement here in Canada. However, your brother should stress during his interview that he is skilled worker and he has great chances of finding good job here in Canada.

Should your brother has been refused, immigration will send you a letter to inform you of his refusal, but you can still appeal the decision. This time you can present new proof that you have found part time jobs and you can now meet the income requirement to sponsor your brother. For further information please call INTERCEDE office and talk to any of the counselors or ask for an appointment for office visit.

*Q. I am a live in caregiver from the Philippines and I arrived in Canada on February 2004. I found my employer through the assistance of an employment agency here in Canada.*

*I am working for a minimum of thirteen hours a day, six days a week, without overtime pay. Most of the time my employer asked me to work on Sundays, which is my only day off. Still I did not receive additional payment for working on Sundays. Last Good Friday, Victoria Day and Canada Day, my employer asked me to work but I was not paid holiday or premium pay. My employer told me that I am a live in caregiver and I am not entitled to overtime and holiday pay.*

*I have no idea how much is my gross pay because my employer refused to give me statement of earnings/pay slip.*

*I went to the employment agency that helped me come to Canada and told them my problem, but they told me the same thing as my employer. They even threatened me that they will have me deported if I leave my employer. They even stressed that the Live in Caregiver booklet from the Canadian embassy in Manila, which summarizes my employment rights under LCP, is just a piece of paper like my employment contract.*

*I am now confused, can they have me deported if I decided to look for another employer?*

*A. Under the Live in Caregiver Program, you have to complete the twenty-four month requirement working as live in caregiver within three years upon your arrival. You are given one extra year to change employers should your relationship with your current employer not working out. However, be aware of the time that you will spend looking for a new employer because you cannot afford to complete the twenty four months requirement after three years.*

Neither the employment agency nor your employer can have you deported just because you decided to look for another employer. Only Immigration can decide if you will be deported or not.

You can leave your employer anytime you want, just give them notice for courtesy reasons. You are entitled to overtime and holiday pay, call INTERCEDE office for an appointment so we could help you with your unpaid salary and other employment rights.

*Q. I am in the Live-in Caregiver program and I am currently unemployed. Since my work permit was expiring and I did not have an employer, I applied for a Bridge Extension. Do I still qualify for OHIP coverage?*

*A. As long as your bridge extension is valid you do qualify for OHIP coverage. In addition, in order for you to get OHIP coverage you must have been in Canada for at least three months and be able to show proof of address when applying.*



### "It Was Worth Our While Coming Here..."

I'm glad my husband and I participated in the JSW. Being a newcomer from Iran for barely six months, we didn't know where to inquire, what and how to start, especially in looking for work. The job search tools like resume writing, job search for record keeping and all those practical tips on how to handle interview questions were all very helpful experiences for us during the workshop. It's a relief to know there are many resources available in the community for new settlers like us. It was a big relief when my husband found a job at a local grocer as an inventory clerk.

*Equally important is knowing wonderful people from other cultures. Indeed it was worth our while coming here for the four Sunday-sessions. Salaam!!*



**Behnaz Hojatian**

### VOLUNTEER CORNER

Special thanks go to our current team of volunteers, who, for the past weeks, have been generously contributing their time and skills to make work more manageable at INTERCEDE.



*In summer work we are unusually busier than the rest of the year. There are many walk-ins without appointments; clients old and new burn the phone lines throughout the day.*

*It's a time when we most need volunteers to help answer the phone and handle a higher volume of calls; to remind clients of their appointments with counselors and or of upcoming workshops and events; update our client database; to lend a hand in the preparation and distribution of flyers, newsletters and reading materials for Job Search Workshops; and assist in many other administrative tasks.*

*To Maritess Meriel, Tess Pacis, Michelle De Mesa, Joy Del Pilar, Liza Canada, Joan Custodio, Medina Manangan, Myrna Ablaya, Charmaine Cyril, and Trecia Lawrence — Please accept our sincerest appreciation. May your 'loop' increase.*



**Job Search Tips from Past JSW "Success Stories"**

- ☞ "A well thought of, customized resume is indeed one's ticket to successful job searching."
- ☞ "Plan to strategize for your job or career. It pays to upgrade your skills. Sharpen the saw, so to speak."
- ☞ "Be it job searching or keeping oneself employed in a formal organizational setting, is important to be always personable. Present yourself in a businesslike manner. Also, as much as possible, keep personal information to yourself--separating social or personal concerns from work issues."



**Bobbikins A. Reyes -- CIBC Electronic Banking Specialist  
JSW Participant, July 2003**

**"I followed to the letter the job search strategies I learned from INTERCEDE"**

- ☞ "Make a serious effort to discover the "hidden job market" (the insiders information) within the company where you're hired to work. In doing so, you could get hired directly by present employer.
- ☞ "Take extra caution in handling the referencing part of job search. Provide as much relevant detail to your chosen references. Discuss with your references how important to you the job you're applying for. Explain how you want to be perceived by your prospective employer. Provide a copy of your resume, cover letter and the job posting."
- ☞ "In a formal organizational setting, patience, hard work and self-restraint pays off. I'll stick to my guns, work on my career plans, as I'm working my way now towards my promotion as a purchaser for a multi-national company."



**Fe O. Flores -- Plant Operations Staff, Wrigleys Canada,  
JSW Participant, February 2003**

**FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP**

**FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS**

**WHEN: SUNDAY**  
 August 15, 22 & 29, 2004  
 September 12, 19 & 26, 2004  
 October 3, 17, 24 & 31, 2004

**TIME :** 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**WHERE: INTERCEDE**  
 234 Eglinton Ave E., Suite 405  
 Toronto, On, M4P 1K5

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up. Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada & sponsored by COSTI & OCASI

**INTERCEDE**

**Address:** 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405  
Toronto Ontario  
M4P 1K5

**Summer Hours:** Mon-Fri 9 am - 5 p.m.  
**Telephone:** (416) 483-4554  
**Fax:** (416) 483-9781  
**Toll-Free:** 1-877-483-4554  
**E-mail:** info@intercedetoronto.org

**INTERCEDE STAFF:**

- Jo Alcampo — Interim Administrative Co-ordinator
- Des Balce - JSW Facilitator
- Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor & Program Manager
- Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
- Salma Saadi - Settlement Counsellor
- Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant
- Fely Villasin - Part -Time Facilitator

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada - ISAP Program and Job Search Program with COSTI-OCASI; Ontario Status of Women; the Municipality of Toronto CSGP, Maytree and Trillium Foundations grant programs, for their financial support..



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