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TERRAPINOISE

Putting the "know" back in Filipino.

6.9 Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Central Philippines

Forty-three people were killed, 54 were injured, and 73 are believed missing as a result of the 6.9 magnitude earthquake that hit the central Philippines on Monday, Feb. 6, 2012, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), an agency of the Philippine government.

The earthquake struck the heavily populated islands of Negros and Cebu, triggering landslides and the collapse of buildings, according to an article published online by the San Francisco Chronicle. The earthquake also resulted in damaged roads and bridges and the shut down of the power supply, according to an article published online by the Hindustan Times. The area is about 400 miles southeast of the Philippine capital, Manila, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The earthquake was also felt in at least seven central provinces, including Negros Occidental, Iloilo, Cebu and Bacolod, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

A total of 1,556 aftershocks have been recorded by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology following the magnitude 6.9 earthquake as of Feb. 13, 2012. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration has continued to warn the public against possible flashfloods and landslides.

The island province of Negros was the worst-hit area, "where at least one landslide in a mountainside town near the epicenter is believe to have buried dozens of people alive", according to an online article published by the Voice of America. In addition to inaccessible roads and bridges, rescue efforts have been hampered by the occurrence of aftershocks and heavy rains, according to Benito Ramos, the executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

The Philippines is located on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a belt around the Pacific Ocean that is prone to frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. In 2011, around seven million people were affected by 21 natural disasters in the Philippines, which resulted in 400 deaths, according to the Centre for Research of Epidemiology of Disasters. The Philippines suffered its worst earthquake when a 7.7-magnitude earthquake killed nearly 2,000 people in Luzon in 1990.

-Melanie Balakit

Damage from the earthquake included shattered roads

TerrapiNOISE Staff

Editor:
Jonathan Reyes
Writers:
Andrew Aggabao
Public Relations Chair
Tyler Babich
Community Service Chair
Melanie Balakit
General Body Member
Jason Newton
Secretary

Interested in contributing to TerrapiNOISE? Want to contribute to our new political debates forum: "Black, Brown, and Nothing in Between"? E-mail Jonathan Reyes at jonathan.js.reyes@gmail.com

*Note regarding the article "Dhingra Aims to Take Vacancy Left By Shinigawa at AAST: Dhingra is no longer a candidate for the position.

Dhingra Aims to Take Vacancy Left By Shinigawa at AAST

Since 2006, Dr. Larry Shinigawa has served as the Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland. Dr. Shinigawa will be stepping down from this position soon, and the process of finding his successor is under way. During the month of February, the University will host a events featuring each of the three finalists under consideration to become the next Director of AAST. One interesting part of this process is that Donna Hamilton, Dean for Undergraduate Studies, has asked for student input. Students are welcome to attend these events and are asked to email Dean Hamilton with their opinions and concerns. FCA members should take special interest in this process, since our own Filipino-American Studies Program (FAST) is part of AAST and will be affected by the new Director.

Last week started the series of candidate presentations with Dr. Pawan Dhingra from Oberlin University. Dhingra presented his research around Indian-American hotel and motel owners. This included enlightening information about cultural norms and how they affect practices of minority business owners. Looking specifically at Indian-American hotel owners, Dhingra found a significant number who put effort into hiding the fact that they actually owned their hotels, usually by presenting a façade of a typical "White" or "American" business. These hotel owners hid their identity by hiring Caucasian workers for front desk jobs and displaying Christian holiday decorations even if the owners were not Christian. Dhingra connected this to a number of stereotypes and xenophobic issues.

Later that week, Dhingra gave a talk about his vision and plans for AAST. He said that while he would like to start by taking a "listening tour" and talking with the program's staff and students, he did have some ideas about how to help AAST grow. Dhingra's key point was expanding community opportunities such as bringing in high profile speakers and finding work study programs.

To get more information about the process or when the next events will be, talk to anyone on E-board.

-Tyler Babich

On Obama's First Term as President

After 8 years of President George W Bush, Barack Obama rode a wave of optimism and excitement not seen since the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. Throughout the campaign, he was hailed as a transformative figure that would re-shape politics and end the partisan gridlock that had come to define Washington. Now, for the sake of full disclosure, I will acknowledge that I was not an enthusiastic supporter for Mr. Obama during the 08' campaign and was highly skeptical of the "Hope and Change" mantra that had ultimately come to define candidacy and the early months of his president. That said, I recognize the circumstances in which he entered office in January '09 and cannot help but find myself troubled by the vitriol deployed by the loyal opposition to undermine the important achievements of Mr. Obama's first time. Now, I am not trying to suggest his first term (on the whole) has been all roses and daises. There have been many points throughout the last three and a half years where Mr. Obama and his team have dropped the ball (I'll get to Obamacare later). Nonetheless, I believe it is important to give credit where credit is due and address the unfair attacks launched by his opponents.

The one area of success I feel the president does not receive his due credit is the 2009 stimulus package. While most economists agree we would have been far worse off had the stimulus plan not been enacted, you would never hear that on talk radio (a bastion of conservative commentary). It has been used as a reference by the Tea Party movement and its supporters an example of "runaway government spending" and the Obama administration's "European-style socialist agenda" (This one never gets old). However, one has to wonder how they would have responded (Don't give me that crap about letting the banks fail).

In addition, I feel the president should be credited with turning our attention towards our nation's crumbling infrastructure. It makes no sense to me that we would appropriate billions of dollars to build roads and bridges in Iraq and Afghanistan while slashing such spending here in the homeland. The United States cannot have an economy of the future while relying on the infrastructure of the past. The president has recognized this, and as early as last year, proposed an ambitious infrastructure plan that would have invested billions repairing our roads and railways while creating thousands of new jobs. However, the GOP would not hear of it because the plan included a tax surcharge on the very wealthy and was ultimately blocked in the US Senate. I would have thought Wall Street would have liked its roads fixed (would have been easier to get to the banks). I guess not.

Now, I am not trying to say Obama's first term was a trailblazer. Personally, I have never been a fan of Team Obama's approach to healthcare reform. While there are, many portions of the Affordable Health Act that many Americans support, the Obama administration never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Instead of drafting the legislation in an open process and bipartisan manner, the White House's decision to punt to Congress

Continued on next page.

on the drafting will probably go down as one of its signature missteps. In recent days, the White House only reinforced my grievances. Anyone could have seen the uproar over the White House's new regulations on the distribution of contraceptives by the Catholic Church and faith-based health providers. I will never understand why the White House decided to pick an election year to reignite the culture wars, thought I suppose they have never been known for anticipating blowback. On the Arab Spring, I acknowledge the president's record on the Arab Spring has not been entirely consistent either (Bahrain and, to a lesser extent, Yemen, come to mind).

Personally, I suspect the frustration with the president's first term is tied to the high expectations the country had when he took office. In many ways, I say the American people set themselves up for disappointment. Upon taken office, you would have thought he could erase our problems with the snap of his fingers. Unfortunately, people soon came to realize he was not superman, but a mere mortal doing what he believes is best for his country. Before we begin to assess Mr. Obama's term, I would hope we are not afraid to first assess our own expectations. Mr. Obama can be rightly criticized and judged harshly in many cases these past four years. However, let's give credit where credit is due.

-Jason Newton

And Now For the Other View…

Barack Obama's first term as president of the United States has been mediocre at best, and I would go as far to say a disappointment, and even failure at worst. And my opinion does not only reflect my ideological and political differences with the president, but also a commentary on his effectiveness with implementing his administration's policies as well as his ability to work with the entire government et al.

For example, one of the first promises he made in January 2009 after being inaugurated was that he would close the prisons in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Setting aside the fact that those detention facilities safely detain severely dangerous threats to the nationals security and lives of the United States, and despite significant media distortion does not any significantly more than any average prison violate human rights, and that the writ of habeus corpus which is denied most detainees does not apply to non-US nationals, if we were to judge the effectiveness of President Obama in his pursuance of his own promise, I point out the fact that the prison base in Guantanamo Bay today is running smoothly and just as plainly as it was in January 2009. On issue after issue, the president has not lived up to the sunny optimism that his admittedly excellent rhetoric, but it goes to show that he just talks a really good talk but is clearly a political toddler who was entered into a marathon after he just barely learned how to walk.

It still greatly saddens me at how the great majority of supposedly young and educated voters were so easily fooled by candidate Obama's fancy speeches yet utterly failed to see his true nature as an inexperienced idealist who had no legitimate governing experience. It would only have taken five minutes to open Wikipedia and see that he had not even finished his first term as senator of Illinois. In fact, he announced his campaign barely 2 years into the 6 years that define a senatorial term, and before that he was a Illinois state senator for seven years, in which he barely took leadership on any significant legislative matters, and was a law school professor and a community organizer before that. While his colorful career can be admired, it was nowhere near the credentials necessary that would prepare him to be the leader of the free world. This is reflected in his management of the executive branch, in that arguably the defining legislation pushed as president was his national healthcare proposal, nicknamed "Obamacare," which was expensive, did not garner any support from Republicans, and is still one of the most controversial items in the political sphere today. While his watch saw the death of Osama bin Laden, it is ridiculous to credit him as the main factor in this event, as the hunt for this top terrorist was started by President George W. Bush since 2001, whose last secretary of defense was the only member of the Bush administration who stayed into the Obama years, meaning the great majority of the mission for bin Laden's life was carried out by President Bush, and the management and direction of the military continued to be executed by leadership appointed and vetted by George Bush.

In the midterm elections in 2010, after allowing 2 years for the president to create "change we can believe in," the people of America spoke and saw the development of the Tea Party movement and a turnover of the Democratic Congress to a Republican one, very much because of the nation's dissatisfaction with the leadership of Barack Obama. Even with that said, the president who crooned about reaching across party lines and making compromises in order to help end the division in American politics, saw an even more divisive political atmosphere take hold.

Further, the role of the United States on the international stage has been greatly diminished. Shortly after the start of his term, the president went on a tour of the Middle East, spreading hollow promises of better relationships and relations with the Arab world. Yet after the start of the string of democratic revolutions that occurred in the Middle East,

Continued on next page

the United States was absent in the promotion of liberty and freedom. Regardless of one's opinion on the accusations of nation building and unnecessary involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, it would be disheartening if the United States does not even show support for the basic human rights of people around the world, especially given its potential to improve the United States' image overseas. Perhaps most dramatically, the president was seen as a hypocrite after the petition by Palestine to gain membership to the United Nations after reaching out in such a cavalier manner to the Palestinian people. While I agree with the premise that this was done to support our main ally, Israel, in the area, it was another example of President Obama's lack of foresight in his blind promises to nations who we cannot afford to become even bitterer towards us.

This past summer I attended the Town Hall meeting he held at Ritchie Coliseum, in the heat of the debt ceiling debate, and all I heard was him putting the blame on the government gridlock on the Republicans, when he himself refused to budge on any of his positions, sounded bitter, and in the end resolved the issue leaving both Democrats and Republicans even more bitter towards each other. So just to sum up: the economy has not significantly improved in the past 3 and a half years, the president's approval ratings are in the pits, and as the White House has begun to effectively run on autopilot for the next 10 months because he will be campaigning around the country, trying to convince Americans that his mediocrity and failures are reason to elect him to four more years of dysfunction and partisanship? I hope his speaking skills have improved, because it will take a lot more opinion spinning and distraction from facts now that he has an actual record of how ineffective he is as a president.

-Andrew Aggabao

On Black History Month

I found myself in shock and almost distaste one evening earlier this month when I entered the north campus diner and saw posters on every free wall space with photographs and biographies of famous Black Americans. I saw Thurgood Marshall, Maya Angelou, Barack Obama, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and then some. They were serving a special Black History Month dinner that consisted of cornbread, shrimp gumbo, and (I kid you not) fried chicken. All jokes about questionable racial sensitivity aside, I began to wonder, what the hell is Black History Month about? Has it really come to a lame attempt at educating a university population about things they should probably already know if they're smart enough to go to college, at of all places, a regular eatery, and displayed in such a manner that if someone was not looking closely could have mistaken for a new menu or trivial nutritional facts? That's definitely not the Black History Month I remember.

Now you might be thinking that I clearly overreacted at a well-intentioned event that was put on by the university. Nonetheless, I kept thinking about that experience and have come to realize that Black History Month is at best a pale reflection of what it was supposed to represent, and at worst an insult to the American identity. In an interview on 60 Minutes, Morgan Freeman bluntly states that Black History Month is "ridiculous." He explains the insult of relegating Black History to one month out of the year, and proudly proclaims: "Black History is American History."

I admittedly did not know that a Filipino American History Month existed until I began being active in FCA. In fact, that it is in October was the only thing I knew about it until about a minute ago when I googled it and learned that it was established in 1988 by the Filipino American National Historical Society, and not recognized by the United States Congress until November 2009. And while this may be a comment on my own cultural ignorance and childhood environment that lacked any significant Filipino presence outside of family parties, I do know that Filipino Americans have a unique and valuable history in this great country. Filipino Americans ought to stop worrying about whether or not they are "Filipino" enough, or "American" enough, or whether or not they are even Asian. Instead they should continue to live alongside people of all cultures and colors, and through the mutual interdependence of a community be freed from feeling like the "other." Having a Filipino American History Month, or a Black History Month may or may not help improve society, but more important is learning the rhymes of history in every culture.

-Andrew Aggabao

Upcoming Events:

March 3:
Camp PCN
9:00AM

March 5 and 6:
Modern Dance Practice
630PM @ Chem Atrium

March 10:
Terrapinoy Day
9:00AM @ The Armory

March 14:
Global Cafe
7:00PM @ Nyumburu Multipurpose Room

March 16:
New School Teachers
7:00PM @ Hoff Theatre