

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Fil-Am group leads multi-sector...

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The group is espousing a "Tenant to Homeowner" program because "none of the government efforts seem to be working."
 "Despite the massive reorganization of the Obama administration's home ownership priorities, the number of foreclosures will continue to accelerate, and no end is in sight as declining home values and increasing unemployment continue unabated," wrote Bautista and Marcia Griffin, president of HomeFree-USA, at American Banker.

HomeFree-USA and Mabuhay Alliance are two home counseling nonprofits serving every area devastated by the blight and economic cost of foreclosures. They have been aggressively pushing for the "Tenant to Homeowner" program and have suggested that it be funded by "a combination of Troubled Asset Relief Program and economic stimulus money".

The group likewise urged the various government offices and regulators to form direct partnerships with local community groups to solve the foreclosure crisis and that top officials meet with Mabuhay Alliance in California to tour areas around the state most hard hit by the recession and the foreclosure crisis.

Among these areas most hardly hit is the Inland Empire, and Mabuhay Alliance's Hispanic partners Luis Escoto and Amado Hernandez joined the group to shed light on what other efforts must be done in order to bring the Inland Empire back to life.

Support

"We are pleased the US Supreme Court has accepted a position that we have advocated for many years, which is the need for state attorney generals to play an active role in policing fraudulent financial transactions," read a letter from Mabuhay Alliance supporter Ted Lieu, chair of the California State Assembly Banking Committee. Assembly Member Lieu joined Mabuhay Alliance and partner Greenlining Institute in their two recent trips to Washington, DC.

Lieu also explained his strong support for the proposed tenant to homeowner program and the foreclosure moratoriums "and of increasing the eligibility of homeowners for federal modification programs even if they are underwater."

"Tenants and tenancy are a vital part of our nation's economy and social fabric," Lieu added, "It is of particular importance in many areas of California where there is a high rate of foreclosure and a high percentage of families who are underwater."

Efforts

Mabuhay Alliance has been at the forefront on behalf of the community to look for solutions on how to solve the foreclosure crisis

and encourage small business development.

With partners Chito Desuasido, CEO of GDE Holdings, Inc. and project manager of Bay Area Mabuhay Alliance; Robert L. Gnaizda, co-founder of and consultant for the Greenlining Institute, a Berkeley-based research and advocacy group that works on racial equality issues and other partners, Mabuhay Alliance discussed with various community members issues such as loan modifications, refinancing, foreclosure prevention and how the Obama administration's Housing Rescue Plan impacts homeowners.

Various foreclosure clinics have also been initiated in areas such as Daly City, San Jose, Solano County, Inland Empire's Riverside and San Bernardino counties, and even Las Vegas, Nevada, which are among the worst hit by the crisis. These clinics bring together homeowners, lenders and volunteer housing counselors, mortgage counselors and attorneys and discuss home foreclosures and bankruptcies.

Daughter Ordinario is one of Mabuhay's volunteer housing counselors. She gets satisfaction in being able to help fellow minorities, specially *kabayans*, go through their finances and their paper work on their loans and mortgages.

Ordinario and her fellow volunteers have been helping thousands of families and homeowners who are facing foreclosures, which continue to surge despite government's efforts to avoid it for as many as four million distressed homeowners in the country.

"The problem is that the government wants the homeowners to go directly to the lenders, and based on our experiences, most homeowners do not want to speak directly with the lenders. They need experts to help them understand the process better and that is how Mabuhay's foreclosure clinics have been helping the community," Bautista shared.

Results

After a battery of meetings, Bautista and her group are optimistic that the government is somehow open to their suggestions.

"I believe it has been a successful trip. Our friends in Washington, DC have been receptive, as far as our proposals are concerned. We actually look forward to working with them closely as we continue in our efforts to assist the minority communities," Bautista added.

The members of the group came from as far as Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco to collectively work with the goal of empowering minority communities.

John Rivera, executive advisor of Seattle-based Capital Solutions said he "is looking forward to implementing many of the solutions we've discussed and in making the Mabuhay Alliance a greater force for good

on a national scale."

He may not have been with the group but Assembly Member Lieu is with them in spirit.

"I would like to particularly commend Mabuhay Alliance for its very special efforts throughout California in seeking to reduce the adverse impact of the foreclosure crisis. They have been a vital alliance not only to our state's legislature and agencies, but also to the vast majority of financial institutions that are seeking a positive solution to the present crisis," Lieu said.

Bautista believes that the trip will be able to help Mabuhay help the homeowners.

"Tenant to home ownership is crucial in saving the homes of foreclosed families," she explains, "The next step is to work with the banks and with the support of the regulators, and Filipinos are now part of the solution." ■

Rising unemployment...

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Job losses in Nevada, in June alone, reached a staggering 12%, the worst in almost three decades. The figure is higher than the nation's unemployment rate of 9.5% in June.

Dwindling visitor volume of this tourist destination caused massive layoffs from the hotel and casino industry since the start of the year, Sen. Reid had said. City officials blamed the decline in visitors to the bad economy.

California's 11.6% unemployment rate, meanwhile, is the highest on record post World War II. Even the government, often thought of as a stable part of the economy, had started to lay off its employees, according to a report from the Los Angeles Times.

When home foreclosures started rising in 2007, this was due to sub-prime mortgages issued during the housing boom to people with shaky credit.

But this year, even people who have fixed-rate prime mortgages and those who have good credit cannot make their payments because they are out of work. That means even more foreclosures

and further declines in home values, the AP analysis showed.

To help simmer down the foreclosure crisis early this year, the Obama administration launched an effort to help 9 million people refinance or modify their loans to lower their payments.

But this is of no help to people who can not even afford the lower payments because they have lost their jobs altogether.

For the first six months, a total of 68,708 Nevada properties received a foreclosure filing. This is 23% higher than the previous six months and a 61% increase from the first half of 2008, RealtyTrac figures showed.

In California, a total of 391,611 properties received a foreclosure filing in the first half of 2009, making it the nation's fourth highest state foreclosure rate. Foreclosure activity in this state during the first half of 2009 rose nearly 14% from the previous six months and increased 15% from the first half of 2008.

Other states on the list with high foreclosure rates were Arizona at 3.37%, Utah at 1.46% and Georgia at 1.42%. ■

Fil-Am community leaders join Obama...

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won't step up to the plate and offer specific solutions to our shared problems...then he isn't prepared to lead." He then suggested looking up the word "Barack Obama" for the meaning of leadership and explained, "Leadership is the essence of our President's actions." He welcomed Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States by saying that President Obama is a partner in the White House. He also added, "He is challenging us to make this country a better place for your grandchildren...and mine."

President Obama arrived in a suit and tie; however, as a result of the heat and humidity, he removed his jacket saying, "It's a little warm here. I think we're going to have to take off my jacket." During the applause an audience member said, "We love you!" The President responded, "I love you back."

President Obama and Governor Corzine were not the only leaders present. Gathered behind the President and Governor were minority leaders of New Jersey. Two Filipinos representing the New Jersey community were Ludi Hughes and Rolando Lavarro. Hughes is the founder of the Asian-American Chamber of Commerce and the Chair of the Filipino Heritage Foundation in New Jersey, while Lavarro recently ran for Councilman (Jersey City Ward A), but lost to Michael Sottolano by a narrow margin of 445 votes.

In an interview with the Asian Journal, Lavarro explained the opportunities given by the event to community leaders. "This rally represented an opportunity for community leaders to showcase the growing diversity of the Democratic Party, particularly in New Jersey. It allows our Governor to know that Jersey City and Filipinos statewide are a critical voting block of the Democratic Party in November and beyond. It also shows our support for the President and his agenda, particularly an overhaul of the healthcare system and a public option. With our representation, we are letting our elected officials know that the time for change is now."

Lavarro also expressed the need for a better healthcare system, not only for Filipino-Americans, but for all people. "An overhaul of the healthcare system is critical to all people. Healthcare costs have spiraled out of control," he said and added, "In the wealthiest nation in the world, the number of uninsured and inadequately insured is mind boggling. All people will have to realize that the cost of doing business and job creation are directly impacted by the increasing healthcare costs. We must have a public option and reign in the costs of healthcare if we are going to realize long-term economic growth in Jersey City and throughout the country."

In an interview with America.gov, Fil-Am community leader Ludi Hughes commented that "the only way to empower our Asian-American community is to transcend our individual backgrounds based on our country of origin and to become "Asian Americans."

Lavarro on the other hand, believes that being involved is one of the key factors to be recognized. "As a Filipino... as a minority, I believe the Democratic Party needs to diversify the party even more than it has done so, especially in Hudson County and Jersey City where the minority is the overwhelming majority. Filipinos have a voice. All people have a voice. Filipinos and all people have to do more to exercise our voice. Our involvement only begins at the voting booth and should continue beyond Election Day."

He also called out to the Filipinos to be more involved by participating in community activities, big or small, like block clean-ups, neighborhood watch groups, youth mentoring, soup kitchens and others. "Contact your local, county, state and federal representatives about the issues - healthcare, property taxes, bailouts, crime, and diverse government representation. Let your elected officials know that you want to see real change and not the same business as usual," Lavarro said and stressed, "Let them know you will hold them accountable and will reward their results and performance with your vote."

As President Obama's closing remarks were, "We're creating a movement for change, and that doesn't begin in Washington. That begins here in New Jersey." He added, "Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America." (Richard M. Reyes)

GMA, Obama to tackle...

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a lecture by Obama on reported efforts to extend her term via amendments to the Constitution.

The US-based Heritage Foundation earlier cautioned Obama to make clear to Mrs. Arroyo in their talks that his support for her administration does not include backing for alleged efforts to prolong her stay in office.

Mrs. Arroyo is scheduled to meet Obama on July 30. The White House earlier said she will be the first Southeast Asian leader to meet with Obama and the talks would likely center on terrorism and climate change.

Among the Cabinet members who would join the President entourage is Presidential Adviser on Global Warming and Climate Change (PAGWCC) Heherson Alvarez.

Alvarez will meet with his US counterpart, chief climate negotiator Todd Stern, in the US to discuss specific programs that would keep the two countries in stead with their respective climate change plans.

Among the terms Alvarez wants discussed is transfer of technology, which could give a long-term benefit to the country. ■



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Join the Fun! Join the Activities! Join the Contests!

Stand-up Comedy Contest
Perform in front of a big audience!

Oldest Attendee!
Bring your parents or proofs!

Teens Staring Contest!
Keep eye contact or you lose!

Fiesta Writing Contest
Write about the Fiesta & win!

Children's Painting Contest
Young minds and creativity wins!

Fiesta Models Search
Guys & Gals showcase

Fiesta Photo Contest
Snap a creative photo & win!

Chess Tournament
Bring chess set and clock!

Heavy is Cool!
Weigh, break the scales & win!

Major artists will be at the opening ceremonies on Saturday Aug. 15 at 12 noon for cutting of the ribbon. Partial list of local performers. For updated list & program schedule, log on to www.philippinefiesta.com

★ Sounds of Manila Crossing	★ Bayanihan Club Choral Group of Union	★ Gilbert Laurel
★ Ninth Paradigm	★ "Dancing with the Stars" Junior Champions	★ JR Lavarro
★ Blue Mango Bands	– Craig & Samantha Abaya Campos	★ Archie D
★ Rythmology	– Cara Abaya Campos & Jared Farcon	★ Noel Gamboa
★ Project D	★ NYFP (New York's Finest Pinoy)	★ Ciennese Lontok
★ Inspired Dance Crew	★ Nina Wago Mojares	★ Dr. Ramon Benito
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