

Pope Benedict XVI says...

PAGE A1 ◀

continuing struggle of Filipinos in the face of the two powerful storms that devastated the country in a week.

Tuason said the Pope suggested that Filipinos should choose leaders who would lead them out of the struggle.

"The struggle against poverty in the Philippines calls for honesty, integrity and an unwavering fidelity to the principles of justice, especially on the part of those entrusted with positions of governance and public administration," the Pope said.

The Pope also said that Filipino public officials should rediscover the real ethical foundation of their political authority.

The Pontiff called on officials to work for peace, particularly in Mindanao, described as a region "scarred by conflicts."

In his statement, the Pope did not make any reference to a specific group but only said that the people should work for charity and persevere in the peace-building efforts in Southern Philippines.

"In an age when the name of God is abused by certain groups, the work of charity is particularly urgent," the Pontiff added.

The Pope also praised the "courageous steps" being taken in the Philippines "to foster reconciliation and mutual understanding."

He cited in particular the "commendable work" of the Bishops-Ulama Conference, the Mindanao People's Conference, and the many grassroots organizations.

Tuason was among three new ambassadors to the Holy See that presented their Letters of Credence to the Pope at his summer residence in Rome.

The two others were Henriette Johanna Cornelia Maria van Lynden-Leijten of the Netherlands, and Miguel Humberto Diaz of the United States.

Over the years, the Pope has been briefed about the situation in the country by Filipino bishops as well as by the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Vatican to the Philippines. ■

Ethnic-Americans support Fed stimulus package

SURVEY SAYS

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL
AJP/Press

LOS ANGELES—Ethnic-Americans view the federal government's \$787 billion stimulus package a "good thing" for the country compared to their white counterparts, according to a survey released by New America Media.

The survey, called "Gauging the Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act," found that two-thirds or more of Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans think that the economic stimulus package is a "good thing."

In contrast, less than half about 45 percent of white adults characterize the stimulus package in a positive way.

And while the poll reveals that they are all "optimistic about their personal financial situation in 2010," many of those surveyed do not know how they and their

community can benefit from the stimulus package.

"The story is what would you do if you had the largest infrastructure program and you didn't tell anyone how anyone can benefit from it," said Aaron Glantz of New America Media during a teleconference about the poll's result.

"We have the largest public investment since the Great Depression that has prevented fire fighters and police officers and teachers from being laid off. It has provided loans to many small businesses," added Glantz. "It has provided tax cuts ... it has tremendous opportunity for people who apply for job training and unemployment benefits and yet our poll found that most Americans do not know about this. They do not know how to access the stimulus [package]."

NAM Executive Director Sandy Close said the poll found that since passing the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act, President Barack Obama's administration "has not done a good job of informing Americans about the economic opportunities that currently exist because of the stimulus package."

Passed in February, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act poured billions of dollars in tax cuts for individuals and companies; and billions more to aid in healthcare, and aid to low-income workers, unemployed and retirees, among other investments.

The survey found that many ethnic Americans are struggling to survive in the difficult economic times.

More than 60 percent of Hispanics worry about their ability to pay housing expenses; 50 percent of Native Americans worry whether they can afford basic food, medicine and clothing for their families; and more than 30 percent of African Americans and Asian Americans worry about losing their current full-time job, ac-

ording to New America Media.

Overall, approximately half of Hispanics, Asian Americans, whites and Native Americans say that—as of now—the stimulus package has had "no effect" or that it has "made the economy worse." Only African Americans believe the stimulus package "has made the economy better." There are also regional differences regarding the impact on the economy: 48 percent of those polled in the Northeast said the economic stimulus had made the economy better but only 29 percent felt that way in the Midwest.

"The good news is that there's still time for all Americans to get help from the Recovery Act," said Close, noting that less than half of the stimulus funds have been spent so far. "The problem is that across racial and ethnic lines most Americans don't know this. They feel like the stimulus train has left the station and they're still waiting on the platform." ■

Investors Roadshow...

PAGE A1 ◀



Finance Secretary, Margarito Teves and his team (left side) during a meeting with a US financial company in Boston, Massachusetts on 21 September 2009.

Central to the team's presentations were the Philippines' "economic growth" story and how it was able to weather the global financial crisis. The team also described the positive short- and medium-term outlooks for the Philippine economy. They assured current and prospective investors in the US of the vibrant economy in the Philippines and its continued attractiveness as an investment destination.

The US companies commended the Philippine delegation for conducting the roadshow and providing them with timely and first hand information concerning the Philippine economy and investment climate as well as the policy thrusts of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. ■

AP Interview: White House amps up push on climate

WASHINGTON—President Barack Obama's so-called green team has undergone a growth spurt.

The group of Cabinet secretaries and White House advisers who meet regularly to craft the president's energy and environmental agenda now numbers 13, double what it was during the administration's early days.

It's just one of the signs that the administration is stepping up its push to pass energy and climate legislation this year, as the Senate continues to wrangle with Obama's other top domestic priority, health care reform.

The House has already passed a bill.

Since the summer, when everyone else's attention was focused on the heated town hall meetings over health care, Obama administration officials have been meeting with more than half the Senate, made calls to nearly 100 mayors in 17 states, and met with numerous governors, according to White House records. Their goal, according to Carol Browner, the president's assistant for energy and climate change, "is to get the bill moving and keep it moving."

"It's really engaging a wide array of peo-

ple across the administration to make sure that we're answering the questions that the Senate needs answered and working with individual members as they think about how they can support comprehensive energy legislation," Browner said in an interview. "It's just grown and grown and grown, with more and more Cabinet agencies and secretaries wanting to be involved."

In the days and hours before the House vote in June, White House officials and the president himself pressed reluctant lawmakers

▶ PAGE A4

White House Top Chef...

PAGE A1 ◀

need our help," Comerford told the audience.

The special weekend reception was an opportunity for Comerford to be with fellow kababayans and she proudly said that there is always that affinity, especially in big Filipino gatherings and she finds that heartwarming.

"In our community, no matter where we are, we're always like one big family," she said.

The White House executive chef also mentioned that she just arrived from a trip to the Philippines last month where she also received an award, and it was just like the reception she was given here tonight. Comerford said that she has a lot to be thankful for.

"Let me just pour my heart out a little bit. Every time I come to the Filipino community, they've really honored me and just celebrated this biggest thing in my life, which is such an endearing thing for me," she said in her short speech.

Comerford received the Mama Sita Award for Culinary Excellence from Mama Sita Foundation Clara Lapus. The award is named after the late Teresita "Mama Sita" Reyes, a trailblazer in quality Philippine cuisine.

She thanked the Mama Sita Foundation and acknowledged that her parents and all her sisters use their line of products. Mama Sita has become synonymous with Filipino cuisine, selling *caldereta* and *sinigang* mixes and various sauces, which are used in traditional Filipino cooking.

Ambassador Willy Gaa said Filipinos owe a debt of gratitude to people like Comerford for the honor they bring to all Filipinos.

"Cris is the pride of the Filipinos insofar as culinary arts are concerned," Ambassador Gaa said, referring to her by her popular nickname.

In 2005, Ms. Comerford became the first woman, the first cultural minority (Asian American), and the first Filipino American to become White House executive chef. Before that, she was its assistant chef for a decade. First Lady Laura Bush appointed her to the top position, after considering hundreds of top chefs nationwide.

Last January, First Lady Michelle Obama reappointed Ms. Comerford to the position, noting she brings "incredible talent to the White House operation and came very highly regarded from the Bush family."

"A great part of the mission of Mama Sita Foundation is to carry out her desire to bridge cultures through food and raise the visibility of Philippine cuisine world-

wide," remarked daughter Clara Reyes Lapus and Foundation president, who flew from Manila for this occasion. "It seeks to honor Filipinos who have given our country great distinction in the culinary arts."

"Now, it pays tribute to Chef Comerford for putting Philippine cuisine in the global culinary map," she added. "Indeed, she has brought international recognition to our country and our people."

Comerford is the first Filipino American recipient of the award, started by the Philippine-based Foundation in 2000. The Foundation focuses its activities on sustainable agriculture and tourism in the Philippines, and overseas Filipinos. In line with its corporate social responsibility, Marigold Manufacturing Corporation, makers of Mama Sita's mixes and sauces, principally supports the Foundation, which has promoted Philippine cuisine in many continents.

World leaders

Sony Robles-Florendo, author of *Signature Dishes of the Philippines* and a retired restaurateur in the nearby Baltimore, Maryland said, "Cris deserves this recognition. As Filipinos, we're all proud of her achievements."

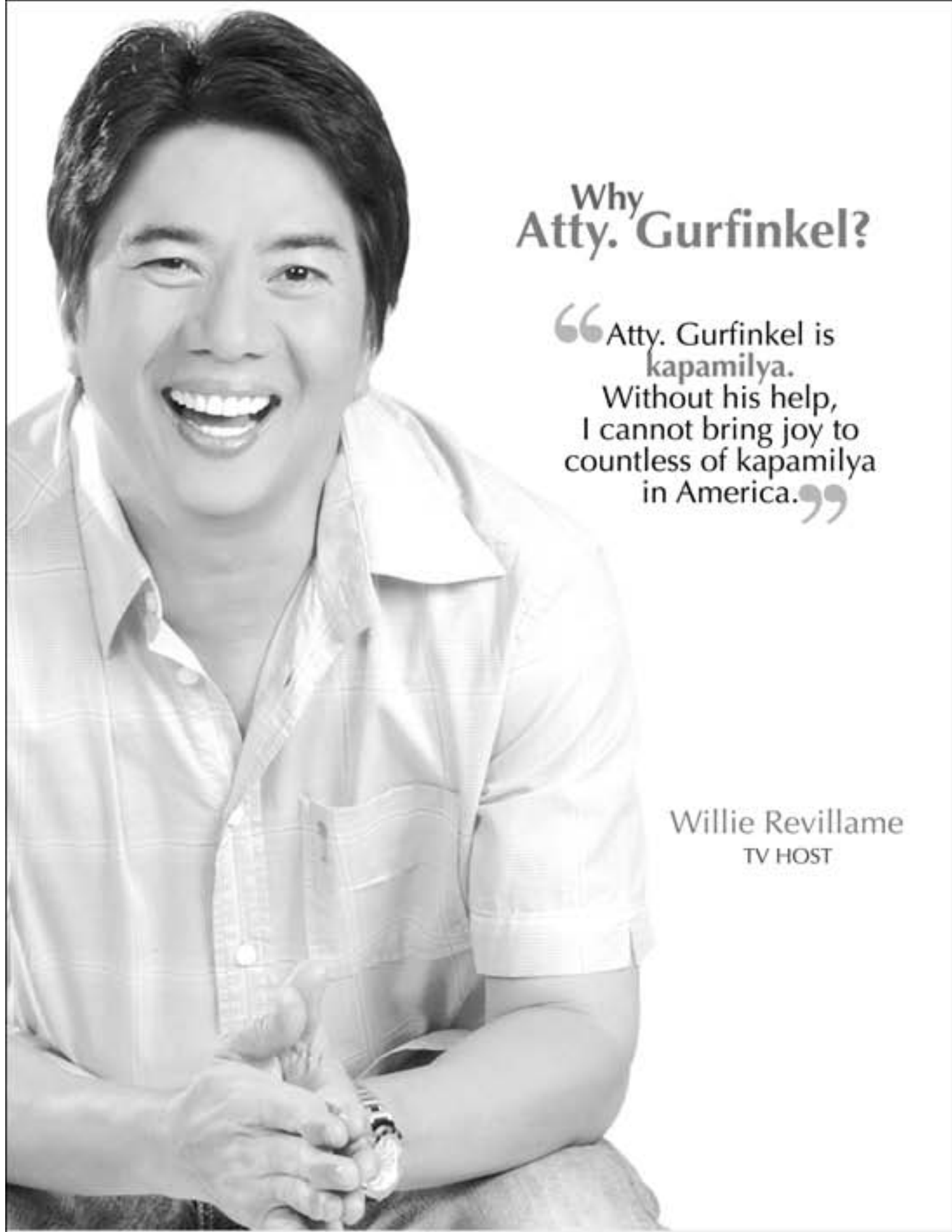
She added: "In her exalted position, she has promoted awareness and appreciation of cultures through fine Philippine and American cuisine, as well as other international favorites, when the President hosts state dinners for presidents and prime ministers, and other official functions with top dignitaries. It is a rare and wonderful opportunity."

Comerford has developed menus for state dinners, including one hosted by President George W. Bush for Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and recently, a social dinner in celebration of William Shakespeare's birth anniversary.

Born in Manila, the second youngest of 11 children, Comerford studied Food Technology at the University of the Philippines.

Overseas, she received training in French classical techniques, and specialized in ethnic and American cuisine. She worked as chef tournant ("revolving chef") at Le Ciel in Vienna, Austria. In this capital, she was chef at Le Grande Bistro at the Westin Hotel and The Colonnade at the ANA Hotel, where she introduced the "Culinary Arts Gallery" to showcase the best in American cuisine.

Comerford is married to John R. Comerford, a chef for a top company. The Comerfords have a young daughter, Danielle. ■



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