



The Art of Salamat

Aileen Cassinetto

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locofo chaps, 2017

Note Verbale

The Editors of *Our Own Voice* present their compliments to the 115th United States Congress, and have the honor to thank 44th President Barack Obama for his service, to wit:

“The Affordable Care Act (covered more than 20 million Americans, including those with pre-existing conditions);

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (4.6 percent unemployment rate as of November 2016, down from 10 percent in 2009);

The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (re-regulated the financial sector after its practices caused the Great Recession of 2008);

Committed to a Global Agreement on Climate Change;

Repealed 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' (and formalized a new policy allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military);

Supported federal recognition of same-sex marriages;

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (gave women the right to file an equal-pay lawsuit with no statute of limitations);

Protected undocumented people brought to the U.S. as children (so-called DREAMers) from deportation and allowed them to apply for work permits;

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act (permanently protects over 548 million acres of land);

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (mandates more prominent cigarette warning labels, among other regulations);

The Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act (mandates a grace period on interest rate increases, and strictly limits overdraft and other fees);

Opening Doors Federal Strategic Plan (led to a 47 percent decline in the number of homeless veterans since 2010 and aims to end youth homelessness by 2020);

The 2015 USA Freedom Act (bans the governmental collection of bulk data, among other things);

Reduced the federal deficit from 9.8 percent of GDP in 2009 to 3.2 percent in 2016;

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (mandated higher nutritional standards for school lunches);

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act (applies existing hate crime laws to crimes based on a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability, in addition to race, religion, or national origin);

Protected LGBTQ Americans from employment discrimination;

The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (covers an additional four million children, paid for by a tax increase on tobacco products);

The 2011 FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (increased the number of food and safety inspections, including direct food recalls);”

The Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015 (awarded the nation's highest civilian honor to over 260,000 Filipino and Filipino-American soldiers);

Executive Order 13515 (a commitment to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders),

to name a few.

The Editors of *Our Own Voice* avail of this opportunity to renew to the 115th United States Congress the assurances of their highest esteem and consideration.

San Francisco, 7 February 2017

U.S. Congress

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“Taos pusong pasasalamat” —

(Gracias, desde

lo

más profundo de

mi corazón) —

must

then be prepositional,

for it

invokes

the heart, once

believed to

be

the seat of

all affective

states

of consciousness. To

thank deeply,

and

sincerely, (that is,

heartfully and

prepositionally)

implies that there

is a

recipient,

a benefactor, and

a good

deed

done. (Very different

from propositional

gratitude,

which merely suggests
a recipient's
appreciation

for a general
state of
affairs,

such as freedom
from want,
or

the absence of
rain on
a

given day.) To
thank someone
in

Filipino is to
say, "Salamat"
(most

likely Arabic in
origin, for
the

Arabs frequented a
precolonial Philippines
via

ancient trade routes).

To use
the

Filipino's language of
gratitude is
to

carry the heft
of a
sacred

duty. For every
Filipino is
aware

that “utang na
loob” is
a

debt that can
never be
entirely,

truly settled. This
means, the
beneficiary

is also, in

equal measure,
trustee –

keeper of the

obligations of
gratitude,

and honorable enough

to repay
a

favor (or pay

it forward).

In

other words, *marunong*

tumanaw ng

utang

na loob. Whether

every act

of

beneficence calls for

some degree

of

goodwill is debatable.

“After 337

days

holding out against

soldiers of

the

Katipunan, the small

Spanish detachment,

(barricaded

inside Baler's fortress-
like church)
finally

surrendered. In an
act of
benevolence,

President Emilio Aguinaldo,
in 1899,
decreed

that 'the survivors
shall be
treated

as friends not
as prisoners.'"

years later, in
an equally
“momentous

gesture, Spain's Congreso
de Diputados
formally

expressed the country's
gratitude toward
the

Philippines for declaring
the Philippine-
Spanish

Friendship Day on
June 30
of

every year in

commemoration of

the

historic Siege of

Baler. Spain's

unprecedented

move was made

in response

to

an equally unprecedented

initiative by

the

Philippines to pass

Republic Act

9187..."

For this and

other acts

of

beneficence, descendants of

the Spanish

soldiers

continue to bespeak

gestures of

goodwill –

the Philippine flag

flying in

perpetuity

in someone's ancestral

home somewhere

on

the Iberian peninsula.

Or snatches
of

lengua castellano afloat

some island
on

the Philippine archipelago.

Some days,
gratitude

is a canvas

funnel that
restrains

movement; it may

also be
that

it is all

that prevents

you

from drifting too

far too

soon.

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AILEEN CASSINETTO is a San Mateo County Poet Laureate finalist and associate editor of *Our Own Voice* (www.oovrag.com). She is the author of the poetry collection, *Traje de Boda* (Meritage Press, 2010), the sculpture poem, *The Boatman's Book Spine Poetry* (in "Chromatext Rebooted," Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2016), and the essay, *Foreigners Among Us* (Fellowship of Reconciliation, 2016).

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of Salamat

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