

Chapter 1

Devil on Earth

I began writing this book today, August 23, 2008. The events described are only fractions of those that have taken place in my life from July 25, 2007 to the present day; that is, those elements I am at liberty to share.

“Coffee in Greenhills, noon,” read the text message I received from a top brass US military man as I came home from the gym in Eastwood City one July morning.

“Ok, see you,” was my reply.

He responded, “Sorry for the late notice.”

I responded, “It’s ok. I told you I would adjust to your schedule.”

So I proceeded to a small coffee shop called Figaro, on the second level of the Promenade in the Greenhills shopping center, to meet this amazing soldier who had just flown in from Mindanao.

He was there ahead of me sitting with his back against the wall, wearing jeans, a blue collared golf t-shirt and his usual baseball cap. I sat across from him.

He said, “I thought you didn’t have a bodyguard?”

“I don’t,” I said. “He is missing, remember?”

“That’s funny,” he said tensing his body like a lion ready to strike, looking over my shoulder, his blue eyes powered by fire, “You’re being followed by two local military men in civilian clothing.”

“You must have brought them,” I said.

“No,” he said, “they’re here for you.”

“I realize why Paulie, my Buddhist oracle, was taken by the Americans. It was a very clear message to me,” I stated.

Instantly he responded, “Yes it was!”

My eyes glared into his, “And how would you know? Why would you know?”

Pushing my body forward, my eyes blazing with intent, I insisted, “Tell me!”

He moved away from me, arms crossed, and replied, “It has to do with the trail down the path...”

At this point, my mind was whirling, and rushing fast, evaluating quickly the situation at hand. Should I push further and bring out the beast in this man? Or should I be nice, acting like a civilized human being?

Then he smiled and stated proudly, “I belong to the upper one percent of the top one percent of the US military elite,” he stated, an intimidation technique, a nice way of demanding I back off.

“Fuck you,” I said. “I’m still smarter than you.”

This man and I normally meet for coffee on the rare occasion he is free, due to his strict and demanding schedule. So when he gets a chance to escape his box we meet for an hour, each time antagonizing each other over the war policies of America. I am anti America’s wars. I am anti-war. I am pro-peace.

I should also say at this point that I am not at all impressed by people’s physical appearance or their material possessions. I am not taken in by a title or position of people in society. It is only the

great mind and spirit in men that touches me. I seek the company of very few people and only those with freedom of mind. I have no patience sitting around women of my age whose concerns are limited to the current weight-loss racket, baking recipes, the size of diamonds, their next plastic surgery aspirations and how they can attract men. These women's shallow identity and self worth are hopelessly tied to the brand of their clothes, shoes, bags and the make of their mobile phones and cars. I cannot suffer fools. I need mental stimulation. This is probably why I have spent the last 11 years of my life working with Filipino artists publishing coffee table books on Philippine art and culture. Artists have more humility and are freer than most.

So I meet this man because his military mind is exceptional. He challenges what I know. Meeting him also helps me decipher how men such as he think. He opens a door for me to a world that is so unknown to most of us. Through him I have learned to unravel the realities of war, helping me come face to face with what my elder son Jason experienced in Iraq's deadly war zone. Jason is in the special operations forces. He was the only minority in his batch to pass the ranger's test in the US Army. How does a mother raise a son only for him to go to war? When Jason went to Iraq, each night before I went to bed I asked myself the same dreadful question, whether or not I would ever see him again. I cannot begin to explain the horror of my fears and nightmares. I know in my heart that my son will no longer be the same young man when he gets out of the army. Innocence will be lost. So I reach out to this martial man. I reach out hoping to understand this grim world of death and destruction laid out by America's military might. This has become so much a part of my world, even when I was growing up. And it has become even more a part of my reality as I have travelled through life.

Why would this man meet me for coffee? I suppose he has his reasons. Maybe as I hunger to fathom his world, he to, has a need to understand mine. Perhaps through our heated arguments he finds deeper insight concerning his actions and the decisions he made serving his country for over 30 years. I can't mention his true name although I have told him I will include him in this book. So, we will call him Commander Gabriel.

How do I describe Commander Gabriel? He has a soft face, thin lips, and dangerously deceiving blue eyes. His face is like that of an angel, a predator in disguise. He laughs the most peculiar laugh I have ever heard, the kind that comes from sorrow and pain. From a distance, Gabriel does not exude any kind of outstanding vivacity. However up close this soldier's energy is electrifying.

He is, as he said, outstanding. He belongs to the upper class of the US military elite which also means the size of his ego is bigger than the east coast of America.

I have met and known other men like Gabriel and they all share the same ego. They exude an air of omnipotence, a god-like attitude supported by the fact that they have commanded armies of men into battle, ready to serve and die for their country – at all cost – at any cost. These great warriors have faced and escaped death so many times they do not see themselves as human. They sneer upon you mortal beings because you cannot possibly understand the tragedies that they have lived and conquered. Oh and the courage, the valour they possess is that which the rest of you could not begin to imagine. To these amazing warriors, the rest of you are second-class citizens. They are above you. They look down upon you and they judge you, “For if by chance you wandered into the same worlds of horror they have conquered, you surely would die.” It is this attitude that makes these men impossible to argue

with. They don't listen. They can't. They are unyielding. They are absolutely impossible. Just like me.

Gabriel has multiple personalities and an incredibly complex mind that mutates fast to adjust to any given situation. He is quick. He is bright. And he has courage beyond comparison. He has mastered the darkest side of his personality like no one I have ever known. In no doubt he is an eminent warrior. Yet, like many others in the military like him, he has suppressed the other side of his psyche, the good side. He has difficulty showing kindness, compassion and love. He doesn't allow himself one moment of weakness. Defeat is not a word he understands. It is as though he has made a secret vow never to trust another human being. As he sees, doing so would be a grave mistake. So although this man has won countless battles on earth and has confronted death many times, he is yet to face his darkest fear - to trust another soul.

I have the ability to gaze through time. From the time I was a little girl I have been able to astral project and travel into time, past and future. But I cannot control this special talent bestowed upon me by heaven. There are moments when the door unlocks and swings open allowing me access to other dimensions, defying space and time. But I do not possess full power over my gift. I have seen events in my life before they have happened. My closest friends are all clairvoyant with varying abilities. Those dearest to me can attest my gift including my partner who has lived with me for ten years. There are endless stories surrounding this gift I have. I will cite some examples.

When I was 23, I told my first husband Robert Ivler not to take a trip from Boston to Bangkok. We were living in Sterling, Massachusetts at the time. I told him that if he left, something tragic

would happen to him and I would never see him again. I cried in front of him, begging him not to leave. He sat me down and said he believed me but it was not in my power to decide who lives or dies. He told me that if it was his time to pass, he would embrace his death with a smile because he was “the luckiest man in the world – because I married him.” He left Boston one winter day in December to go to Thailand. I never did see him again.

One evening my partner and I, Steve Pollard, a principal economist with the Asian Development Bank, were sitting in a restaurant in the Podium shopping mall in the city of Mandaluyong. As we sat waiting to be served, I saw the manager standing six feet away with her back towards me. I told Steve that this woman couldn’t breathe. She was sick.

When she came to greet us, I said, “You are having an asthma attack.”

She asked, “How do you know?”

I replied, “I also know your husband beats you.”

Shocked by my statement, she ran to the bathroom immediately and wept for some time. When she recovered, she came back.

She said, “I would like you to meet my husband. I would like you to tell me what you see in him.”

She asked her husband, who was one of the chefs, to come out so that we could be introduced. We said hello to each other, shook hands and he went back to work.

After this, I told the woman, “Your husband is a good man. But he grew up in a very violent home. He was seriously beaten as a child. As a younger man, he killed someone in self-defence. You are not aware of this. Ask him about it. If he can tell you about this tragic event in his life then he can begin to free himself from this curse of violence.”

A week later we came back to the restaurant. The same woman came to greet us.

She said, "Everything you said was true."

When I met Andres Peña, who was the first secretary of the Mexican Embassy, at the Hard Rock Café in Makati several years ago. Upon shaking his hand, I said to him, "Within one year, you will divorce your wife."

In a state of disbelief he replied, "But I love my wife!"

I answered, "It has nothing to do with love. You are not happy."

Over a year later, Andres and I saw each other again at a dinner party. He came to me and told me, "I am now divorced. But how did you know?"

Paranormal behaviour can be explained by quantum physics. It is not really as surprising as many people think. The subconscious has access to so much information and can travel through space and time. It can access past and future. But one must have the freedom of mind and spirit to do this. Fears prevent people from releasing their ability to see.

I have been seeing older Buddhist seers for the past 18 years. These oracles use the tarot. Some who were born with the gift of sight need this instrument to peer into time. Others don't. But for the most part, what the seers see in their tarot is only confirmation of what I have already seen in my visions.

A few years ago I also started consulting Paulie Caoili, a younger augur.

I decided to have two sets of prophets because some of the predictions are so unbelievable. I needed a second, separate perspective. Paulie and the older seers have never met.

In their readings the older seers told me, "You give the blood of life to those close to you. You give them life they have never known.

This is your role for the people of the Philippines. You will free your people from ignorance. You will ease their pain and suffering. You will become an icon of hope and peace.”

These are only tiny portions of their prophecies and readings. Most I cannot share.

Paulie’s forecast said, “From the ruins of despair and destruction, you will shine as a beacon of hope for the poor. You will usher in a new world. “

Since Paulie has come into my life, I have been totally stunned by how similar his readings are to those of the older Buddhist seers. There have been times when they prophesized using exactly the same words. Later on I realized it is not amazing at all. After all it is the same soul that they are seeing through the tarot.

In the beginning of March, 2008, I was told by these two groups of augurs that I would meet a powerful man who would help me fulfil my destiny and that heaven would send this man from my past life to aid me in this one. They said that through this man, “I will achieve wisdom and omnipotence above all mankind.” But they warned this man is powered by the dark forces, evil is so great within him - this man, they say, is the devil himself on earth. And so in March this year, as foretold, I met Commander Gabriel. And yes through him I have learned wisdom I have never known before. Because through him I have figured out what war, death and destruction does to a good man. War corrupts the souls of even the most valiant of men.

Why do I seek to understand war, death and destruction? Did you ever ask yourself how one is able to appreciate true happiness without knowing pain? One can’t. To understand hate, you must understand love. To understand life, you must understand death. What makes you so sure you are sane if you do not know insanity?

How are you certain you're in control if you don't know how to lose it? How do you know what is good if you don't know evil? You don't. So it is only from learning about war, violence and destruction that I am able to achieve the genuine meaning of peace.

One evening on the phone Gabriel told me how he volunteered to stay in Iraq for four years knowing that each day he was there he would be protecting some 18 year old soldier who would have had to suffer in his stead. He told me how he spent many hours in hospital visiting young men and women in the service with bodies mangled, some burnt, beyond recognition, lying in hospital beds. And that he spoke to them for hours comforting them, giving them his cell phone so they could call home and speak to their families. During our coffee meetings he told me about comrades who had fallen. And as he narrated the tragic events of his life, I sat and listened, containing my desire to burst into tears. He had found a way of matching the more traumatic stories with humor. At first I thought it was sick to find amusement in these stories of soldiers dying, their life taken from them on the battlefield. Then I realized that in order to survive at all, he has had to create a dark, black humor for self-preservation. I sat and stared at this soldier's blue eyes while he spoke. As I listened, holding back my emotions and my tears as best I could, his eyes became tainted with the color of blood. And in those eyes staring at me, I could see an ocean full of dead bodies, children, men and women, and soldiers.

I asked myself, "Dear God, is there no end to all of this? Can man not find it in his heart to create peace?"

Today, I have a renewed appreciation of life because of Gabriel. I have embraced death and destruction through his eyes and the world will never be the same to me again. As the seers foretold,

“through him I will achieve wisdom and omnipotence.” And through my conversations with this exceptional American soldier, I gained the key to the endless cycle of reincarnation – the wisdom to complete the circle. But that is too much to discuss in this short book.

I remember the first time I met this warrior. After which I called my dear friend Celeste Chua to explain what it was like to meet Gabriel.

“It was the strangest thing meeting this man. As I looked into his blue eyes I felt I died and lived again. I died and lived and died and lived over and over again. I do not know how else to describe it. Through these warrior’s eyes I saw my reincarnations pass before me,” I said.

I didn’t know then that this was because he would teach me the true meaning of war and peace, of life and death.

As I said in the beginning, these are actual events of my life since July 25, 2007. It was foreseen that I would meet men of power who would bring me to my destiny. And this book that I am writing now is but a part of the whole picture, a part of a grand scheme that was decided in heaven before time began.

In 1997 the Buddhist seers told me that a man from Asia would walk into my life and this would mark the beginning of my ascent to global fame. They said that when I meet this man, who is an eminent warrior from my past lives, my fate will turn. This soldier, they said, holds the celestial sword of fire. The forces of good power him, the exact opposite of Gabriel.

At around four o’clock in the afternoon, July 25, 2007, I went to my restaurant, Bulan, in Little Baguio, San Juan, to change the artworks hanging on the wall. I was wearing a pair of shorts and rubber slippers, dressed to work and sweat. On my way to San

Juan I received a phone call from a very old friend, someone I have known for what seems to be an eternity.

He said, "I am so sorry to do this but we have a group of men who have just landed in Manila. One of them is a two-star general from the US. Will you open the place for us so we can have dinner early? We are on our way to your restaurant."

"Are you crazy? I'm wearing shorts," I replied. "I just got out of the gym. I haven't showered yet."

He replied, "Amore, that is your problem not mine."

"Va fan'culo!" I snapped.

By the time I reached Bulan, I had called three friends, Paulie, Celeste Chua and Carol Pineda.

"I sense something very strange is going to happen to me tonight. I need you to come. I want witnesses to this," I told them. They came.

That evening I saw ten men march into Bulan. To the best of my knowledge, two of them were generals, one was a Navy Seal and at least two others were with the Special Forces, all from the US Army. I'm guessing one was a former CIA agent. The others I would describe as "processors".

That night, as foretold, one of the men who walked into Bulan was a man whose soul I recognized from other lifetimes. We will call this man Commander Caesar. He is over six feet tall, dark skinned. His mother is of European decent and his father is Hawaiian Chinese.

"A man will walk into your life from Asia and your fate will turn..." the oracles foretold.

He has the same build as the actor Duane "The Rock" Johnson. He came in with another military man as tall as him with blonde hair and blue eyes whose job I gather was to protect him. Whilst in the Philippines, these two travelled always together.

Within me is something very dark like the blackness of Gabriel. I have tried to repress this part because I am fully aware of its abilities. I have suppressed my dark side like most people do and for many years only allowed the good side within me to thrive and prosper. Yet one must embrace evil with the same measure one accepts the good. It is only then one can find balance within and attain inner peace. When I saw the spirit of Caesar that evening I realized that although powered by good forces, his dark side is free. I didn't realize it was possible to have both parts of the psyche alive and well at the same time. And so upon absorbing this man's spirit and energy the door to the evil in me unfastened - the evil side within me awakened instantly and came forth into this reality, never to retreat again. In that split second I died; that is, the old "me" died.

Human beings go through metamorphosis as animals do. But our transformation is in spirit. As we journey along the path we go through a series of life and death experiences caused by crises or other major events. With death comes new life. For example, this happens to people when they go through separation with their partners and loved ones. Honestly, the best thing to do is to embrace the change and allow events to fall into place with an open mind and an open heart. The faster the fall, the faster one will rise. I have learned that this life is much about acceptance of pain. If we can accept pain with humility and do not struggle, tragic experiences become lighter to bear.

That night, I stood by the bar at Bulan talking to Caesar for the first time. His aid, the tall blonde, blue-eyed soldier with the Special Forces, stood close by.

I told the Austro-Asian looking commander, "You have great courage and compassion. But you do not trust. You were separated from a parent..."

He asked bewildered smiling like a little boy, “Do you know which parent?”

I replied, “I’m not sure. I will guess. It was your father.”

“You are right,” he answered.

“You have a powerful dark side.” I told him.

“Dark side?” he asked. “My dark side is the right side.”

After meeting Caesar, I decided to work on my coffee table book Philippines. And from publishing art books for the past 11 years, my fate did turn from. Now I am writing political essays. Today I am arguing with some of the greatest US military minds hoping that through all this, I will grow further and better understand the needs of mankind and the world.

The seers forewarned, “You will meet men of great power. Some will want to harm you but because of your inner strength, they will decide to protect you. You will touch their hearts and their lives will change forever. And they will do the same for you...”

In November last year as I was travelling again to the Bulan Restaurant at around five p.m. I sensed dread in my heart. They were having a big function that evening and I wanted to sit on the mezzanine to observe. On the way there, I made a phone call to Celeste and Carol.

I said, ‘You must come to Bulan now. I can’t explain it but something is going to happen to me tonight. My life will turn again.’”

Then I called Paulie and asked him to do the same. When the two girls arrived in Bulan, they found me waiting, sitting at a table on the mezzanine. Paulie arrived later. I began to explain to Celeste and Carol my concern and my vision about this evening but before I could finish my sentence, my phone suddenly rang.

The usual voice at the other end said, "I am coming to Bulan with a very important man. We are having dinner there. Please make yourself available and join us."

That night I saw an old familiar face that I have known almost all my life, the same European who brought all those military men into Bulan in July. This is the same man who, after the Marcos regime, could guess correctly each time before any presidential election who the country's future presidents would be. Many years ago, while having lunch at the Hyatt Hotel, he gave me the name of the Philippines' next president, three and a half years before the actual election. He has also taught me never to vote. According to him, I would be wasting my time because it is not going to be counted. During the last senatorial elections in the Philippines this man came to Bulan to have lunch with me and my Buddhist seer and friend Paulie. He gave us the list of the winners of the senatorial campaign before a single vote was cast. He said the winners are decided six months before the election. Out of 12 names, out of 12 winners, he only missed one. That one particular name on his list became the focus of much media controversy in the last election.

On this particular evening my old friend was followed by a tall quiet man whose presence was like a silent, mysterious, dark shadow, a person who clearly didn't want to draw any attention - someone who didn't want to be seen.

I approached this stranger, who I'll call Colonel Sam, as he was about to go up the flight of stairs. "How many personalities do you think you have?" I asked.

"Four," he answered without hesitation.

"There is more. You just haven't met the others yet," I said teasing.

I was impressed by this man's honesty. How confident he was. I liked him.

The average human being shrinks in fear whenever they hear someone has multiple personalities. This is because they have their minds contained in a very small box. The psyche of any individual can be easily dissected into two equal parts, yin and yang. From these two parts, it can be further sub-divided into different compartments: the spiritual persona, the sexual, the violent, the mental personality, and so on. Because I am aware of my different personalities, I can use them individually, in pairs or collectively. But it is the children who have grown up in violent homes and environments, like me, that have these split personalities forced and developed to a much higher degree.

I should probably give my old European friend a name now. I will call him Marcus. Many years ago, I told him that I would publish in Tagalog the controversial book of my beloved friend Howard Marks entitled *Mr. Nice*. Howard Marks has one of the best criminal minds the world has ever known. He would smuggle up to 20 tons of Marijuana at a time (herbal medication as far as I'm concerned). He had forty-three aliases and had contacts with the CIA, the IRA, the Mafia and MI6. His book talks about the involvement of governments and members of the diplomatic community in smuggling drugs. Howard went to prison in Pennsylvania. Since his release in 1995 he has been the leading power to legalize marijuana in Europe.

My former hairdresser and friend David Mc Carthy, an American born in Massachusetts, living in Martha's Vineyard, who has had the privilege of cutting the hair of Dan Akroyd, Carly Simon and former US President Bill Clinton claims, "Howard Marks is a cult hero. Like James Dean."

Howard's book *Mr. Nice* is banned in the USA. He has written two bestsellers in Europe. He is a folk hero in the UK. He graduated with a PhD in Philosophy from Oxford University. He has a law degree, and is also a physicist, a comedian and a musician. As I write this, Howard's best selling autobiography "Mr. Nice" is being filmed in Europe. His movie will come out next year in the UK. When I told my friend Marcus that I would launch Howard's book in the Philippines in Tagalog, he said, "Just make sure my real name is not mentioned."

It was fate that brought me to Marcus. He showed me a world of deceit and terror, a world of death and chaos. He said his life was dedicated to weeding out bad people. He had a photo album in his apartment showing photos of people, before and after. The "before" photos, showed people still alive. The "after" photos showed their dead bodies after Marcus was done. At this time, he was still human although he wouldn't hesitate to kill and exterminate those who threatened the "faction" he lived to preserve and protect. He was brave, and also kind, loving and giving. He wanted so much to help the poor. He wanted so much to save the world and mankind. And he believed that if he devoted his life to the organization he served, he could make this world a better place. But the institution he married has neither soul nor compassion.

At some point in his career he made a grave mistake. He had to run. I never knew him afraid until this time came in his life. He asked me to help fund his escape. He would make short phone calls to my suite in Stamford, Connecticut asking for money, which I transferred immediately to his bank in Hawaii. I would send US\$10,000 to US\$20,000 here and there, each time he asked for assistance. At one point I handed over US\$50,000 along with the credit card I

gave him that he eventually depleted with over US\$25,000 worth of charges. But no amount of money can save a falling man when heaven wills it. And so this great warrior fell.

I have spent many sleepless nights asking myself how much I should tell you about this episode in my life. I could stop here. But there is more, so much more to tell.

Marcus ran for his life for a few months. I still had my house on the water in the quaint little town of Sterling, Massachusetts located on an acre and a half of immaculate land where the native Indians settled when the world was still young and innocent. Since the death of my first husband, I had kept this place as my sanctuary, where I would spend my weekends away from Stamford, a very busy city, 45 minutes away from Manhattan in New York. The house was my paradise. At this point, I should tell you that my husband Robert Ivler has been deceased for several years.

One Saturday morning, I arrived at my vacation home. When I checked my answering machine, there was a message from Marcus. The pain, the nightmare, the horror that came with his voice echoing from the other side of the world told me that he had been beaten and tortured severely for god only knows how long. He sounded like a beast tired from running, tired from living, with a mind devastated, shattered and crushed, a body ripped and broken, and a spirit lost, as he tried with each remaining last breath to speak to me, he uttered desperately:

“I have to go back to Cambodia...my spirit...my spirit...I have to get my spirit back...I have to go back... I have to go back ...I have to go back ...”

This same message of dread troubled my mind for several years, haunting me at night before I slept, and terrifying me as I wondered whether or not my protector was alive or dead.

After the call, I stood in front of the phone trembling, shaking in panic. Then I wept in fear. In that instant I realized that no man, no matter how strong and true, could fight the evil in this world. I learned in that single most painful moment that evil couldn't be fought with fire. You cannot fight evil with evil.

I spent the entire weekend in Sterling, Massachusetts staring at the beautiful serene lake from my deck, catatonic and afraid. Then I packed my things to go back to reality. I headed for Connecticut where I had two other places of residence, the Bedford Suites where I worked and the home of my Jewish in-laws located at 60 Ocean Drive East in Stamford City, a fabulous neighbourhood where Faye Dunnaway lived, along with Harry Connick Jr. This gorgeous house was located right on the beach facing the Long Island sound. I drove straight to my in-laws' home. The phone rang as I walked into their large living room. I ran to get it. It was Marcus. He was still alive.

This is how our brief conversation went that bloody afternoon, a day that would change the way I see the world.

"I failed," he said, fighting for breath.

"Don't let them do this to you," I cried.

"You cannot continue like this," I said.

"Kill yourself! End it! It is finished. Kill yourself!" I insisted as every tear that fell from my eyes stabbed my heart over and over again.

I was dying. Dear God, I was dying. I was dying with this man who once upon a time vowed to protect me until the end of eternity.

"Kill yourself!" I demanded again.

He whispered, "Promise me... that if I get out... you will sit with me and toast to a glass of champagne while we watch the sun go down. Promise me this..."

"Yes..." I answered, sobbing in tears.

“Then... that is enough for me... to want to live,” he uttered, catching his breath.

That was the last time I heard from the Marcus I once knew. He had fallen. He was gone. I heard nothing for many years, no news whatsoever. He simply vanished. To this day I don't know why the people who took Marcus allowed him to call me while they kept him prisoner and tortured him. A year later I searched for an answer, seeking the help of a kind man who owns one of the top law firms in the country. As far as I am concerned, he was not only the best Defence Secretary this country has ever had, but he was also one of our most outstanding military generals. He is currently one of our most imperious senators. After a few months of research and inquiry he called me to his law office in Makati City where we had a meeting in private for several hours. He tried to explain to me what had happened to Marcus. But the more he told me about the way of the world, the drug cartels, the underground, the espionage, the less I understood.

After many years, Marcus re-surfaced back into our reality. He was no longer human. He had lost his soul.

One evening, he called me and we spoke for over an hour. He was very sad. In the background I could hear the song by John Denver, “I'm Sorry” which he said he played to remember our past.

The song said, “I'm sorry for all the things I didn't say. And more than anything else, I'm sorry for myself because you're not here with me...”

That night he said, there was a time in his life when he could have chosen my path. But he took another road and for that he was sorry.

I asked him, “How did you know I wasn't going to betray you? I could have sold you...”

“Mi amor,” he said. “There is only one flaw you have in this life of yours. Money is not that important to you.”

He told me I was the only thing that made him human and that I was the only pure thing he had ever known in his life. He added that he was glad I took a separate path.

“At least one of us is free,” he said. “At least one of us is happy.”

In tears I recall this memory with unbearable pain in my heart. This conversation was over ten years ago - another lifetime ago.

I would like to add in this book that while Marcus was detained I lived with a man named James Ryan for eight years. But Marcus still made sure to do a background check on James before we lived together. He had a way of eternally meddling in my personal affairs. This was his way of protecting me. James was born with three golden spoons in his mouth. He stood six feet tall and everyone said he looked like Kevin Costner. He graduated with a degree in literature from Boston University, a catholic school, which meant according to him that “by the time he finished his studies, he was fully prepared for the 16th century.”

I was told that James’ father Dr. John Ryan was knighted by the Pope. Heaven only knows how many millions of dollars he must have donated to the Vatican Church to get this prestigious honor. Didn’t Al Pacino in *The Godfather* donate ten million US dollars to the Vatican Church to be anointed a knight of the Vatican? I wonder what the going rate is these days?

James and I lived for two years in one of his family’s homes, a large villa located at 367 Ocean Drive West in Stamford, Connecticut, the other side of the town from where my Jewish in-laws lived. This affluent neighbourhood on the coast is called Shippan Point. The Jews lived on the east side of Shippan and the WASPs (white Anglo Saxon Protestants) and the Catholics resided on the west side. The

Ryan mansion sat on around three acres of sprawling green lawns situated right on the beach near the mansion of the famous artist and model for Rolex, Helen Frankenthaler, and adjacent to the mansion of Faye Dunaway. James told me that Faye became fat because she loved to bake. I don't want to begin counting the bedrooms to this huge house but I will try to give you some description. It had a dumb elevator. The kitchen had a heater to warm plates during the winter. There was a long, long hall where they kept their China, most of which was from Tiffany's. The house was decorated with exquisite furniture and artwork purchased from auctions at Christy's and Sotheby's in New York. And this particular house was their summer home. James called it the barn.

The large dining room had a rug that Dr. John Ryan purchased from Christy's over 30 years ago for US\$25,000. Dr. Ryan once gave his wife a 25-carat perfect diamond.

It was probably at this time in my life that I came to understand completely that money doesn't buy happiness. This family consisted of the most miserable people I have ever known. James had six siblings. Almost every member of that family was so unhappy, finding reasons to complain, complain, complain. Many of them, including James, his brother Michael and Mrs. Ryan were serious alcoholics. I should add here that every spouse of the Ryan children was given pre-nuptial agreements prior to their marriage, which Dr. and Mrs. Ryan insisted upon. Eventually I realized if this is what money did to people, I didn't want any of it. I didn't want to be afflicted by the same curse that made these people so joyless.

My mother-in law Barbara Ivler, mother of my first husband, treated me and loved me like her own daughter from the moment we met. The only difference between her and my natural mother is that the latter carried me in her womb for nine months.

Barbara said, "My Darling, James would have been the perfect man for you if he had been raised by a Jewish mother."

I totally agree with her, of course.

James and I lived in the large mansion for two years with my two sons, Jason and Colby, until one day I decided to go back to the Philippines. James followed. One evening he and I were dining in a restaurant in Manila. Marcus walked in like a ghost from my past. From a distance, he stared at me silently as he took a seat where he could see the two of us. I stared back. James was entirely clueless as to what was happening. Marcus and I can communicate using a sign language we have developed. Silently, he summoned me to follow him to a private area of the restaurant where we could talk.

"That man you're with has never done anything in his life that could prepare him for someone like you," he declared.

"No man alive is prepared for someone like me," I said.

"That's not true," he protested.

"A few years ago I gave this man's father a heart attack that required a double bypass because of my big mouth. Would you like one?" I snapped.

"He's not going to last," he warned. "Like the other men in your life, you are going to chew him up and spit him out!"

"Leave him alone. At least he's human," I demanded.

But Marcus was right. Eventually, I wanted James out of my life. He was permanently drunk and gloomy like other members of his family. One day, I decided I no longer wanted to be in the presence of someone who couldn't find happiness in life. So I sat James down to have a serious talk.

"It is finished," I said. "Here, I bought you a ticket. You have to leave. You should go back to the States."

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

“We are finished. I don’t want to argue about it. You have to leave,” I explained.

Horrified, he said, “Please don’t do this. You can’t do this. What is wrong? How much do you want? Whatever it is I will give it to you. Just don’t leave me.”

“But that’s it! I don’t want anything from you. I just want you out of my life,” I answered.

“But there is nothing wrong with us,” he said. “What could possibly be the problem?”

“I’m not happy. The problem is, I will always be the better man between the two of us,” I replied.

James refused to leave. He insisted I was making the biggest mistake of my life, saying that we were still very much in love. He was right about that. He was right that I was still in love with him. But just because you’re in love with someone doesn’t mean that person is capable of making you happy. And I’m very good at self-preservation. My survival instinct will always prevail. He was determined that he would never leave. Since he was six foot tall I couldn’t force him out of the house. Marcus was somewhere in Southeast Asia. As always, he had given me a phone number where I could reach him. So I called him. I explained my situation with James and how I wanted him out of my home.

“Mi amor,” he said with an angry voice. “You tell this man I give him one week to be out of your house. If after that he is still there, then I will send two of my men in the middle of the night to get rid of him. But at such time, his welfare should no longer be your concern. If he doesn’t believe you, then put him on the goddamn phone and I will speak to him.”

That was the end of that. James left after I told him what Marcus said.

A few years after our separation, James' parents listed their summer home for sale. Michael Bolton was one of the celebrities who came to see it with his accountant and he was interested in purchasing the villa.

The real estate brochure handling the sale of the mansion described the summer home as "Splendor on the Sound". It said, "Smell the salt air as you recline in privacy on the covered patio or enjoy the panoramic view of Long Island Sound from indoors. Delight in watching the weekly sailboat races or launch a small sailboat from your own private beach and join the fun. Either way, this exquisite Mediterranean Villa, with spectacular water views, is incomparable."

"Enjoy complete privacy on the largest available property at the tip of prestigious Shippan Point. The approximately three acres of manicured lawn is studded with mature trees and gardens. As you enter the circular driveway, you are immediately struck by the breathtaking expanse of Long Island Sound before you. Hedges border on three sides, with the sea walls spanning the entire width of the property, creating a natural boundary."

James, who had been caring, loving and kind even after our separation, offered to help me financially in the years after we were separated. I have never accepted any help from him. When his parents decided to sell their mansion, which had been home to both myself and my two sons, for two years, he called me one morning.

"We are selling the barn. Do you want anything from the house?" he asked.

"No. Thank you," I said.

"You always liked the rug from the dining room. It's now worth three times the price Dad bought it for. Don't you want it? Don't you want any painting, anything? These are priceless works of art.

You must want something,” he offered.

I said, “No. I don’t want anything.”

The thing is, in all the years we were together, James thought I chose to be with him because of his family’s fortune.

And so this one evening in November 2007 - I sat at a table in Bulan next to Marcus and across from this new man, this new character in my book. As I said, I have gift of sight so I can see through the hearts of men.

I asked this new man, “You have the ability to think outside of the box, haven’t you?”

He nodded.

“Therefore you can manipulate the box,” I continued.

Again, he nodded.

We continued to talk as we waited for our food to be served.

“Are you also with the military like the men that Marcus brings here?” I asked

He said, “Yes.”

“Amazing, you seem to be too intelligent to be with the US military,” I said.

He laughed. When the food was served this new man began to eat.

“You do not eat like an American. You eat slowly like a European. You didn’t grow up in the US,” I stated.

“No, I was born abroad and lived in Iran for a few years,” he explained.

“Do you speak Farsi?” I asked.

“No I don’t speak it,” he replied.

I don’t know what was happening to me that evening but I really wanted to push this man to see how free he was. I could sense that, unlike the others in the military, this man was different. He had

a multi-dimensional mind. He was not a slave to the institution like so many other individuals like him I have known. So I pushed the conversation further on from what many people would find “acceptable behaviour.” I normally do not behave in this manner towards Filipinos, afraid that I would probably push them more into a life dedicated to confessions, communions and more parrot praying in church.

There was a function in Bulan of 75 persons that evening. I looked down at them while we ate dinner on the mezzanine. Paulie, Celeste and Carol sat at another table overhearing my conversation with these two warriors.

I looked at the new man and asked, “Where are you stationed?”
“Mindanao,” he answered.

“How long?” I inquired.

“A year,” he said.

I shifted my body and my face closer to his and touched his left hand with my right.

“What’s in Mindanao?” I asked, as I caressed the top of his left hand with my fingers. “Why would they send a military man of your intelligence and calibre there for such a long period of time?”

Marcus quickly interrupted me and declared, “Sam she’s playing you. Do not engage!”

I ignored Marcus’s remark and held this man’s hand tighter, glaring into his eyes and continued with a soft voice, “What exactly are you doing in Mindanao?”

Meanwhile, the beast inside me urged to come out in full force, excited by the cerebral game and the smell of evil this new man kept well hidden and fortified within his being. My demon wanted her self brought to this man so she could challenge his dark force and beckon his evil spirit to come forth into the light. Silently I battled

with my monster, suppressing her while she hissed inside me raging and cursing, exposing her fangs, threatening to escape and join the reality I faced.

In silence I spoke to the she-devil inside me, “Sssshhhh...calm down.” I whispered, “Calm down, my darling Lucifer...this is not your battle.”

Again, Marcus revolted and growled his words of warning, “Do not engage with her!”

“If you think Julie in Mindanao is dangerous, Marlene is by far more dangerous than that!”

Ohhhhhhhh...poor Marcus. He is like the traditional politicians in the Philippines along with the older generations of Filipinos, totally unaware that the world has changed and had left him behind. He didn't realize that Colonel Sam was enjoying the psychological intercourse as much as I. I laughed and changed the subject. I looked below at the people partying, Christians, obedient servants who go to church every Sunday parrot praying for an hour, the elite Filipinos who have absolutely no clue what happens on the other side of the coin, the other side of the life of luxury they live. My mind wandered back into time. I could see myself now in the dark distant past. I could see myself in another world sitting at the breakfast table somewhere in tra-la-la with grenades staring me in the face and M16s on the chair next to mine. How old was I then? Seventeen. I was 17 years old. Then instantly I returned to the present time. What did Marcus just say to me? I thought. He called me dangerous. I'm a mother of three. I'm an environmentalist. I've dedicated the last 11 years of my life to publishing coffee table books to defending and promoting Philippine art and culture – the “soul” of my nation. On the other hand Marcus is the last man standing from his batch in Vietnam. The rest are dead. He was the best of his kind during his

time, a true master in the art of deception and death. This man who has killed people in god knows how many countries, is dining with me in Bulan with one of the most influential men in the US military stationed in the Philippines. And he calls me dangerous? Is freedom of mind and spirit such a threat to these men? Hmmmmm...

I snapped back into real time and told these two lords of war, "I believe 99 percent of the population of this world is sexually frustrated."

Marcus laughed so hard and asked, "What do you think of the other one percent?"

Colonel Sam watched entertained, absorbing it all.

"Well I'm sure 99 percent are sexually frustrated. But I think the other one percent is sexually frustrated as well," I answered.

"What about you?" he asked.

"I am the exception." I declared.

I continued the psychological warfare, "I say that 99 percent of the male population on this planet is not good enough for me to use as vibrators."

Marcus, who has never admitted to anyone that we were lovers in the past, was so insulted by my declaration that he totally forgot we made a vow never to divulge the truth about our past to anyone.

He growled at me like a wolf ready to bite, threatening to sink his canine teeth deep and hard into my flesh to draw blood, "What about us?"

I laughed, sneering and staring at him, attacking his manly spirit, my eyes flashing like bolts of lightning. Lucifer inside me, still charging to come out, screamed to be free so she could inflict her utter contempt upon this unworthy man.

"We never had sex! That was foreplay!" I growled back at Marcus.

At this point rather than punching me out, this killer got up, walked downstairs and disappeared. Just as he has always done to avoid imposing physical pain upon me. Always when I would push too far, he would disappear. Unfortunately, for Marcus, this particular night Bulan was so crowded on the ground floor he could not easily leave the restaurant. So he decided to storm into the kitchen where my brother Tony the chef was in command. Marcus had no other place to vent out his frustration. Later on, Tony asked me what the hell my old friend was doing in his kitchen.

I said, "He was just looking for a good butcher's knife. That's all."

Why did I behave so badly? Because this very peculiar man's darkness was so unique, so different from the evil persona of all the other characters in this book. I could smell what he kept hidden within. I wanted to know if my instincts served me correctly. How could I possibly let Colonel Sam go without stripping his psyche naked before my eyes to see? There is a part of me that is addicted to danger just like him, wild like him. Men undress women in their minds all the time. I do the same to men, except I not only strip them of their clothing; I also dissect their psychological profile into separate compartments.

So I laid out a sexual stage for the colonel and Marcus to act upon, a theater that he was fully aware I had orchestrated to reach deeper inside his inner self. Colonel Sam didn't mind my inquisition at all. Actually, he was more than willing to play the cerebral game I laid out before us. Like I said, he is confident. This exercise, didn't concern him, it challenged him. And it was his genuine reaction to this psychological play that confirmed what I thought of him. His body language, his physical gestures, no matter how small, the way he brushed my hand ever so gently with

the very tip of his fingers, fingers that were blazing on fire, his devious smiles, his eyes flickering in the dark gazing through mine, penetrating and invading, all this conveyed his message clearly. Even his silence spoke to me like a loud scream. Thus, I received the answer to my question.

So for a short while this military man and I were left alone at a dinner table facing each other on the mezzanine of Bulan.

While Marcus was gone, I looked at the new man and to the best of my memory while staring into his eyes this is what I told him: “What I see is not what I get. You hide yourself so well. Your psyche is very complex. You can think in and out of the box at will. Therefore you can manipulate events, make things happen. You are a true politician and at the end of the day you will do what it takes to get what you want.”

I asked him, “What is your rank?”

He answered, “Commander. I am a colonel.”

Marcus returned to the table after a few minutes in better spirits. Over so many years, he has learnt to get over my tongue-lashing fast. He sat down smiling, looked at the colonel and showed him an essay I had written entitled “Inner Peace” that talks about the destruction of America’s power. The colonel read it quickly. I asked him what he thought. He said he agreed with me.

Amused, Marcus asked the colonel, “So Sam, have you ever known anyone so perfect?”

We continued to talk for hours. Over the course of the evening, Marcus repeated the same comment to the colonel three times - “Have you ever known anyone so perfect?” Each time he posed the question, I felt my stomach revolt.

“So perfect for what?” I asked myself. What is Marcus up to now?

It was after this evening, that I believe the taps into my and my partner's computers began. I had my younger son Colby, who is a hacker, check my Apple computer.

"Your computer is being hacked," he said.

I first thought maybe it was because of the short essay I wrote, "Inner Peace." But that is too petty.

During the same month I sent my essay "Inner Peace" via email to Hans, a former FBI agent. Hans' father is considered by some to be a hero in the US. David Eisenhower and Richard Nixon's secretary of state William Rogers were some of the VIPs who attended his father's funeral. Jerry Lee Lewis and Frank Sinatra held a benefit concert for his family in Indiana.

Should I tell you more about Hans? His mind and spirit are free. I believe this is why he defied the institution he once served and for that I really admire him. Now he is a writer and has sold two of his stories to Hollywood.

One day I had a brief conversation on the phone with the daughter of Imelda Marcos, Imee, about the possibility of getting a writer to document her life. After that I arranged for a meeting with Hans in Bulan at around three in the afternoon one day. I asked him if he would be interested in writing about the life story of this woman who graduated from Princeton University in the US and who has twice become a member of the Philippine House of Representatives, the eldest daughter of the late President Ferdinand Marcos. I told him that I believed the life of Imee would make a fascinating film, a film about the daughter of one of the most feared dictators Southeast Asia ever knew. After over two hours of conversation Hans told me.

"I am not captivated by the life of Imelda's daughter," he said. "I am more interested in writing about your life."

Hans has the depth and passion of an artist. I am most touched by his immense and genuine desire to ease the suffering of the poor. He has an excellent mind, which is why his insight matters to me. I wanted him to comment on what I had written. On November 17, 2007 he sent me an email giving me his opinion on “Inner Peace” which stated:

“Thanks for sharing the piece. I’ve written a few pieces along the same lines and while my approach is a little different, the concept is the same. You are “spot on” as they say in New Zealand. I have known for a long time that the devaluation of the spirit will cause implosion. There are soulless directions taken that can never be sustained. It is against the grain of our spiritual selves, plain and simple. I suppose what I cannot reconcile is the repetitious attempts by man to experience the same evolution over and over.”

Going back to Colonel Sam, it was after an argument he and I had via email that prompted me to write the essay, “Men in Boxes in the Name of Peace.”

And so I present to you the first two essays in this book, “Men in Boxes in the Name of Peace” and “Inner Peace”.

Men in Boxes in the Name of Peace

Life in the Philippines

I am a Filipino. I am a woman. My skin color is bronze because originally my forefathers came from the Malay and Polynesian race. I believe that to honor nature is to honor God. I believe that consciousness creates form and that my spirit is connected to all that is, the energy of yin and yang – good and evil. I am Buddhist. But my soul has no citizenship – my soul has no gender, no color, no race – my soul has no religion.

I grew up in Manila during the time of the Marcos regime. As a child I remember staring at city walls marred with words of protest, painted in big bold black letters screaming “*Ibagsak Imperiyalismong Amerikano!*” (Destroy American Imperialism.) and “*FM, tuta ng Kano!*” (Ferdinand Marcos, puppet of America!).

I went to college in the late 1970’s at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City where the revolt against Marcos’ tyranny began. Many young and bright students like me hoped and fought for a better Philippines despite the horror it brought. Female students marked as activists were abducted by the Philippine military. Some were never seen again. Some came back with broken souls, after being tortured, some with cigarette burns all over their bodies after being raped. They were not killed because their role was to reveal to the other students the price one must pay for freedom. Male students disappeared as well, many never to return. I was 17. Never after this was I ever to trust institutions that continued to betray the same people they are meant to serve. And as I journeyed through life, my defiance against institutions grew.

A female friend told me the story of how her younger brother, another student activist disappeared during the reign of Marcos. The family searched for her brother hopelessly for a long time. Eventually, and with thanks to the family offering a great sum of money, they found him. He had been beaten, tortured and lost in body, mind and spirit, chained to the floor on all fours like a dog, and fed like a dog for many, many months. This man has never been right since.

Not long after, my strong spirit brought me to Iligan, Mindanao during the horrible war between the Muslims and the Philippine military. I was 17 years old. It is believed by many Filipinos that Marcos instigated this war to manipulate funding from the U.S.

government. I would go to sleep at night hearing gunshots in the distance. It is estimated that over 120,000 lives were lost during that revolution. And over a hundred thousand Muslims fled to Malaysia. Many Muslim women were raped by the Philippine military. Some of these women are still alive today. I am writing this in tears, with a heavy burden in my heart. How does one summon the energy to look back into the past when it brings such horror?

As I write this, a part of me wants to lash out at the enemy and inflict upon him the same agony, with the same intensity that I once witnessed as a young woman. Part of me wants to see the enemy suffer the same extreme pain he forced on mankind. But I hold back, desperately trying with all my heart and mind, with such difficulty to temper my passion, my anger and my emotions. Those close and dear to me, who have risked my wrath by telling me to withhold my aggression, have helped me. But how does one become objective in the face of death and destruction? Who is the real enemy? I keep asking myself this over and over again. The enemy is the mind of man.

My eldest brother, Freddie Aguilar, is a music icon in Asia whose song "*Anak*" became number one in Asia and Europe and has been translated into over 42 languages. He had a concert in Malaysia during the early 80's and I went there with him. Due to the political confusion in Malaysia at the time, members of their national guard secured us and we had strict orders to remain in our hotel. Again, because of my wild spirit, I escaped my guards. I walked away from the hotel as fast as I could and eventually my feet brought me to the refugee camp where the Filipino Muslims, who had escaped the cruelty of the Philippine government, had found sanctuary. The terror and pain I saw will haunt me for the rest of my life.

I strongly believe that the cruelty and poverty the people of Mindanao have suffered since the time of Ferdinand Marcos is the result of a government-supported military presence in the area.

My brother's song "*Bayan Ko*" (My Country) helped bring down the dictatorship of Marcos. In this powerful song, he compares the Philippines to a beautiful bird locked in a cage, crying for freedom. And he sings, "*My beloved Philippines, cradle of my life, my love, my joy, my tears, my pain...I live to see you free someday.*" Countless times I have witnessed my brother put his life on the line hoping to liberate his beloved people, both Muslims and Christians, from what he said was "the tyranny of Marcos and the claws of the Eagle – America". During the people power revolution, my family believes it was General Ver who, following the orders of Marcos, sent over 15 Filipino military men to my brother's house to shoot him on sight and thereby make him pay for his subversive behaviour. My poor mother fell on her knees at the sight of these assassins, shaking, crying and praying for my brother's life, while some of these armed men surrounded her and the others searched the house. My brother escaped.

My brother describes the situation of my people, the Filipinos, through his music. Later on in my brother's musical career he composed and recorded a very beautiful and moving song entitled, "*Mindanao.*" The song calls for justice and equality for "his Muslim brothers and sisters" in Mindanao. He wrote another heart-wrenching song, entitled "*Sa Kuko ng Agila*" (By the Claws of the Eagle), that describes the Filipino people as prisoners of America. Every time I hear this song, my brother helps me see how the Filipino people are like a man held fast by the Eagle as it soars. The Eagle flies proud and high in the sky with its claws buried deep into the neck of

the Filipino. And the Filipino bleeds gently, continuously screaming for freedom. Presidential candidate Joseph Estrada, before the 1998 presidential election, turned my brother's song into a movie with the same title - as a bold statement against America. The Filipino masses loved the movie, which greatly contributed to the campaign of Estrada. He became President of the Philippines. He was ousted in 2001.

Since the end of Marcos' dictatorship, there have been three presidential elections in the Philippines. The first one was in 1992. Former military general Fidel V. Ramos won. However his rival Miriam Defensor, who is currently a senator, disputed the election results and claimed that she was cheated. The most recent presidential election was in 2004 when our current president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo claimed victory. Again, her rival the late Fernando Poe Jr., legally disputed the election results and claimed he was cheated. The only undisputed presidential election result in the Philippines since Marcos was when Joseph Estrada ran for president. He pursued a very strong anti-American Imperialism campaign. Estrada never finished his term.

I have seen so much violence since I was three years old, growing up in a violent environment, and I understand the hatred it brings. It is through my understanding of this relationship between violence and hatred that I have been able to let go of it. There is already so much pain and suffering in this world and I have vowed that I would never contribute to it. I am only an instrument in this life, guided by the higher forces of the cosmic world. I want my life to be an instrument for peace, not pain.

I am not against the individual. But I do stand against institutions that promote violence and destruction and that thereby threaten the survival of mankind.

Cultural Blindness

In the name of peace, America has waged endless wars causing death, destruction and massive environmental catastrophes on an increasing scale. In the process, it has also waged war against itself. Today America crumbles from within. America has some of the world's worst incidences of incarceration, indebtedness, violent crime, obesity, other self-created health problems, and material consumption. It is karma. Who is greatly responsible for the destruction of mankind and the world? Men in boxes.

There are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those whose minds are free and who can think outside of the box, and then there are those whose minds are institutionalized. The latter minds are contained, limited. They are boxed. They do not question. They do not think for themselves. Although there are great minds working for institutions such as the military, the church, academia, the United Nations, and other world development institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the IMF, if these minds cannot think outside of the box, their perceptions are extremely limited. This is the root cause of the political, economic, and environmental problems in the world today. Men in boxes are the minds working for and leading, self-serving if not evil institutions, charlatans posing to save mankind and the earth. But of course there are a few exceptions.

I know an American military man whose mind I admire more than he realizes. Yet I admire him even more for engaging with me in short but intense arguments. It is very rare that I find people willing to engage with me in conversations involving delicate issues. Those who know me call me by endearing names such as, “she dragon”, “she wolf”, “pit bull”, “warrior queen”, and my British bodyguard calls me “long haired Thatcher”, all for being bold and forward.

But in reacting to such comments, my Buddhist seer, spiritual advisor and dear friend, Paulie Caoili comments, “She dragon is an accurate description of Marlene but that is only one personality. She has a persona with the wisdom and humility of the Dalai Lama and the compassion of a Buddhist saint.”

I am grateful to this very high-ranking American soldier for helping me grow. I would like to share an argument we had recently.

“Americans whose country has the highest rates of obesity, alcoholism, drug abuse, crime, incarceration, indebtedness, racism, cholesterol problems, materialism and militarism have become the role models for many ignorant Filipinos,” I wrote to him via email.

To which he replied: “And who has the highest rates of corruption? Where did the word “Rido” come from? Sounds like those without sin can cast the first stone.”

I answered saying: “Corruption? I wonder who gave Marcos so much power in the past. And who put other leaders into power after? Hmmm...”

He responded saying: “Are you telling me that Misuari was a pawn of the U.S.? Was Mutilan influenced by the GRP? I don’t think so. They got greedy on their own and took advantage of the people as soon as they were elected Governor. They betrayed the people.”

“You still did not answer the Rido question, how did the Americans influence such a part of your history that promotes Rido?”

I answered: “Clan wars amongst the Muslims are their issue. Cultural issues amongst these people are their own problem to settle. I may be Filipino but since I am not part of the Muslim culture and I don’t understand it then I have no right to judge it. Neither do you, neither does America. But given the involvement of America

with the rest of the world it is obviously difficult for Americans to understand and respect other people's cultures since they have not so respected those cultures in the past and since America has no culture of its own."

"You say corruption is our problem. We are a poor country. Poor partly because your country exploited us, raped us. But corruption is only an issue of money and greed, whereas no amount of money could cure the disaster that is gradually overwhelming your country, your people. And so your society, America, decays. The US is falling apart, along with the many nations it is bringing down as America falls. Why? I believe the great American military minds such as yours are responsible for the destruction of America and this planet. Men who create wars are incapable of creating peace. Institutionalized minds such as your own, pre-set, pre-conditioned, never allowed to think or question, will never understand the complexity of the world and the complexity of peace. It is so much easier to destroy than create. Men like you do not have the minds to understand the needs of mankind. And yet it is men like you who are ruling America. Men like you have greatly influenced the foreign policies of America, thus creating wars and thereby destroying the world and mankind."

I added: "Despite our great differences, I think you should still come over to my house for dinner. This way you will have the chance to strangle me since I know by now you are really pissed off at me."

His answer: "You did get something correct, I do want to strangle you, but that is the best thing about our democracy. With democracy you get to express your points of view. That makes us all individuals. In that point of view, we are all individuals and should not be lumped into groups. You are a true patriot who is not a

Muslim. I am a good man who has spent many long nights away from home trying to make life better for others. Therefore, I am not the typical “ugly American” and you are not the typical “elitist socialite”. ☺”

The last thing that I am is an “elitist socialite”. So if anyone wants to make me angry they should call me an “elitist socialite.” God, these words insult my intelligence. It is equivalent to calling me a “social parasite”. I grew up poor, went to public schools at the time when education for the poor in the Philippines was the best in the Far East. I will always belong to the poor. So, this man knows how to push psychological buttons worthy of a mental challenge. Like the Tagalog term which we love to use, “*Mapikon - talo!*” This jargon means, in a heated discussion whoever loses his cool is the loser. I welcome any healthy, intellectual argument.

And he is right. Our leaders have betrayed our people. And they continue to betray our people. Like I said, I am not a Muslim. I do not understand their culture. However I know that it is the conflicts amongst themselves that divide them. Ultimately, it will destroy them, and America will therefore be better able to “divide and conquer.” But as long as these brave and noble Muslims have one voice and are united, America will never succeed in subjugating them.

Culture is the soul of a nation. I believe that when this is damaged or lost, the inner-core of a people is harmed. A nation without culture is a nation without soul. Greed and materialism is born and consumption reigns. Many years ago Jason Moran, a friend, a British-Filipino who grew up in the U.K., came to visit the Philippines. After a series of trips to the countryside he commented,

“The people are so poor and yet so giving. They give whatever they have. And they seem so happy, yet they are so poor.” I said, “Poor in what sense? They are poor in material possessions but very

rich in matters money cannot buy. They are generous. They give from the wealth of their hearts because their soul is rich.”

Free thinker and writer Michel de Montaigne from the 16th century, French Renaissance said:

“Poverty of goods is easily cured, poverty of soul, impossible.”

The Muslim culture, as with many other cultures, is complex and little known to the rest of the world. I was born in the northern part of the Philippines where Filipino culture is very strong. As I was growing up I was taught by my elders to respect and consider other people’s cultures. But this respect and consideration is something one can understand only if they have lived in a cultured environment and experienced the depth and meaning of it; that is that culture is sacred to its adherents, to its people. Culture is something abstract to most Americans as they are detached from their distant and estranged European and other roots.

American journalist and novelist George Packer, author of *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq*, commenting on the Americans’ inability to understand other peoples and their cultures, states that what the Americans failed to do when planning for Iraq after the war was to give consideration to the history and the complexity of the social relations of the Iraqi people.

In Baghdad, two Iraqi men told Packer that the invasion of America, “...was an insult. It was not Saddam under attack, but Iraq, and they insisted that pride and patriotism prevented them from putting their destiny in the hands of another country.”

Wouldn’t Americans react in exactly the same manner to an invasion by foreign forces? How would Americans feel if Russia had invaded them? How would the people of America feel if China were to occupy the U.S. with her vast army of Chinese soldiers to impose on them the Chinese way of life, the Chinese government,

and sort out the intense social illnesses eating up the American citizens?

On reviewing George Packer's book along with another book written by Pulitzer Prize winner, Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* - Robert Westbrook, history professor at the University of Rochester in NY states:

“As ever more sophisticated roadside bombs daily shatter the American “*ihtilal*”, (Arabic word for occupation) we are finally getting some books that help us to understand and explain such cultural blindness and the disaster it helped occasion in Iraq.”

“Packer criticizes the American occupation authorities for opting for control when they should have been more concerned about legitimacy. But how can an occupying power exercise any control at all over a people eager for self-determination without threatening its legitimacy? And if it cannot exercise control, why remain as an occupying power? Indeed, why embark on a nation-building war in the first place? “

He continues:

“In the early weeks of the war in Iraq, “liberation” simply as negative freedom from restraint produced chaos and anarchy. If liberation means something more positive than this, then how is a liberator to know when liberating has become occupying? And how does one ensure that peoples as different as Americans and Iraqis will draw the distinction in the same fashion?”

Professor Westbrook asks:

“THE QUESTION that such interviews and both these books generally, raise most pointedly is whether or not an American war to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein could have been waged without being followed by an occupation that stirred Iraqi resentment and

insurgency. Is the calamity we now face a matter simply of the obvious blindness and incompetence of the Bush administration, as Packer contends? Or is there an inherent tension—which invites calamity—between national self-determination and those “humanitarian military interventions” that go beyond putting an end to extreme human rights disasters and extend to liberal-democratic state-building?”

Cosmic Forces, Great Military Men and America’s Wars

Money and power corrupt as, more often than not, those with wealth and power do not also have inner wisdom and sensitivity. This leaves their understandings and actions unbalanced. Without this balance, without inner peace, they are unable to see that they not only do not have the right to impose, but that they are incapable of imposing their will on others. In the absence of inner wisdom and sensitivity, conceit takes root, it grows then rules and so can corruption prevail.

Yin and Yang are opposite forces of energy with equal intensity that are forever intertwined. They co-exist. When one outweighs the other, a price is paid. The same negative and positive energy one puts out is the same energy one must receive. The cosmic force is the ultimate force. The cosmic force is the final justice. The actions of mankind have become ever more powerful and destructive and so mother earth and nature are increasingly damaged and destroyed. The most powerful nations on earth have proven their impotence to balance these countervailing forces. Subsequently, over time these same nations have suffered from the uncontrolled conceit of wealth and power losing their connection to their spirit and soul, forgetting that peace and harmony are things money cannot buy. Thus, their societies also decay from within.

Now it is America's turn to suffer the strains of world leadership. Unfortunately, America's society and people, as well as the natural life of the world, are paying the price for their leaders' unbalanced actions. Economically, America is in long-term decay. It is estimated that by the year 2020 China and Asia's entire gross domestic product will reach 43% of the world's total production. In comparison, America and all of Europe combined are estimated to contribute only 38% of the world's future total output! The forces of nature will call the conceit and corruption of America to account and the karmic debt will be paid.

The sun rises, and life and light emerge from the east. When the sun god turns his back on earth, darkness cloaks the earth from the west. Darkness, which in eastern philosophy symbolizes death, begins from the west; Yin and Yang - West and East. I wonder how these two opposing forces have affected the evolution of the earth and mankind. Is not our challenge on earth to ensure that these opposing forces are balanced?

British national Stephen Pollard, Principal Economist for the Asian Development Bank said:

“The white man has floundered over America as gilled fish without water. The land was never his to hold in the first place. All shadows of men are beyond their imagining, all imagining beyond their making. So suffers the conceit of mankind.”

How many more brave American soldiers will die on the battlefields created by America? How many more civilians will perish along with them before America learns what is best for its own people as well as for the rest of mankind? Is it really too late for change? No, I believe there are many, many brave and great American minds – minds that are free, that continue to question and challenge their institutions. Collectively I believe they have the

power to alter the future of their people, as well as earth, for the better.

Others believe America is a great power. And sadly, many Filipinos believe this is true and so they walk around looking and talking like American clones, parroting the Americans. My people don't realize that America suffers, and to such an extent, from the world's most dangerous social sicknesses. Filipinos must learn that we cannot look to America to solve our problems as America has worse issues to contend with. The level of incarceration in this so-called great nation is the highest in the world. At the end of 2006, 7.2 million Americans were either in jail, on probation or on parole. During the first quarter of 2008, more than 1 in 100 American adults were incarcerated. An estimated 13 million Americans are alcoholics. Twenty-five to forty percent of all patients in the U.S., not in maternity or intensive care - are being treated for alcohol related problems. The total annual cost of alcohol-related problems in America is \$175.9 billion dollars! Untreated alcohol problems cost an estimated \$184.6 billion dollars a year in health care, criminal and business costs as well as resulting in 100,000 deaths. Concerning drug problems, 60% of the world's illegal drug market is in the U.S.A. An estimated 6 million Americans use Cocaine. An estimated half a million Americans use Heroin. Approximately one third of Americans between the ages of 20 to 40 have used illegal drugs, once in the past year and almost half of the Americans entering the military have used illegal drugs once in the past year. With regard to America's intense eating disorders, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about six out of 10 Americans are either over-weight or obese!

In August 2007, Hamid Varzi of the International Herald Tribune, the global edition of the New York Times wrote:

“The U.S. economy, once the envy of the world, is now viewed across the globe with suspicion. America has become shackled by an immovable mountain of debt that endangers its prosperity and threatens to bring the rest of the world economy crashing down with it.”

During the term of former President Clinton, his administration brought down the level of America’s international debt through wise economic management. But today America is the most indebted country in the world, thanks to Bush. Michael Hodges author of the Grandfather’s Economic Report, published in the U.S. as a public service reports:

“America has become more a debt ‘junkie’ — than ever before with total debt of \$53 Trillion — and the highest debt ratio in history. That’s \$175,154 per man, woman and child — or \$700,616 per family of 4, \$33,781 more debt per family than last year.”

Hamid Varzi adds:

“The United States borrows a whopping \$2.5 billion daily from abroad to service its burgeoning debt. In order to continue borrowing at reasonable interest rates America needs to retain credibility with its overseas creditors, especially Far Eastern nations running huge trade surpluses. A cessation of foreign lending would force the Fed to raise interest rates to attract money, precipitating a collapse of the already weak housing market and pushing the economy into recession.¹

This is why the Chinese, in particular, have threatened to retaliate against proposed U.S. trade sanctions by reducing their \$1.3 trillion in dollar holdings.”

1 Reader please note that this essay was written in early June, 2008, four months prior to the collapse of the American housing, financial, credit and banking markets.

Despite all this borrowed money pouring into the country daily, the standard of America's educational system is declining, the gap between rich and poor has risen, 50 million Americans are without health insurance, infrastructure crumbles, their manufacturing base is down 60 percent since the Second World War, the dollar is shrinking in value and now America has the lowest consumer-saving rate since the depths of the Great Depression! Today, more than one million homes have been foreclosed, the highest rate in the history of the U.S.!

America's soaring debt is a bombshell ready to explode. At the level it is now, the U.S. is unable to sustain its financial state. During the past 25 years America has gone from being the world's greatest creditor to today's greatest debtor! When Bush started his term in 2000, it was projected that the U.S. would have a budgetary surplus for the next decade of an estimated \$5 trillion. Five years later the surplus of America was entirely gone and the yearly fiscal deficit was at a record high, the worst financial reversal in the history of the U.S. Isn't it clear that Bush on behalf of the entire Republican Party in the U.S. is partly responsible for America's financial downfall, the death of many, many lives as well as the world's current environmental disaster?

Materialism, greed and consumption are depleting the world's natural resources. Commenting on the issues of global warming, on April 13, 2008, Canadian journalist Jim Miles writing for Al Bawaba newspaper, which covers the Middle East, states:

"The latter comment leads back to the real source of the problem, that of too many people demanding way too much of the earth's resources and the U.S. is by far the biggest culprit in this. If everyone lived at the economic consumptive level of the U.S., we

would require up to nine more earths (depending on source) in order to sustain that lifestyle...”

There are an estimated 32 million people in Kenya and an estimated 300 million in the United States of America. Although a very poor country, Kenya is not a burden to the world since it consumes so little. The real threat to the world’s environment is America. The U.S. consumes 320 times more resources than Kenya does!

Is the United States really a great nation? Does a country with such grim, dangerous and extensive social problems have the right to dictate to other nations how affairs should be run and how they should live their lives? Is this because of greed and materialism along with ignorance and sheer conceit? And in this process of decay is America determined to bring the rest of the world down with it?

During the first two world wars that America substantially contributed to, an estimated 25 million soldiers were slaughtered on the battlefields. Over 65 million civilians are also said to have perished. No one knows the real count. But the amount of lives that were brutally lost is an astounding number. In our time, millions more have died through America’s wars. Three million Asians died during the Vietnam War. From Korea to Grenada, Chile, to what was Yugoslavia, to Somalia, and now Iraq and Afghanistan; millions more have died as America continues to wage its wars causing havoc and chaos all over the world. I believe the “greatness of America” originated from its immense economic and military might. But along with her greatness has the U.S. also succeeded in making the last century the bloodiest in history?

Americas “war on drugs” is not only costing the country billions of dollars causing more casualties in different parts of the world, but in the mainland U.S. this war is also responsible for

the incarceration of millions of American citizens, the majority of whom are black. The current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken hundreds of thousands of lives including American soldiers, many so young. These wars are not only costing many, many precious lives but at the same time they are causing massive environmental disaster. It is estimated that these “dishonorable wars” in Afghanistan and Iraq will ultimately cost the American taxpayers 3.5 trillion dollars. Imagine the immeasurable destruction that America can and will unleash on the earth and on mankind. Isn't this action beyond crime? Isn't it clear that great America has inflicted the greatest harm to mankind and the earth? Are all of humanity under threat and the planet earth under threat, by America?

There is nothing moral in war. War is a crime. Can it be justified by separating it from ignorant “faith,” vital economic interest and conceited ideology? The US Government has camouflaged its wars as a moral obligation and marketed wars as humanitarian actions. “American military humanism” is a self-righteous, self-serving form of armed conflict. The American people have been taught to believe that this “militarism” has good intentions: democracy, free trade and a moral mission that would bring peace and justice to the world.

I would like to quote the most eminent American humorist Mark Twain commenting on the relationship between the Philippines and America who said:

“...here are a people who have suffered for three centuries. We can make them as free as ourselves, give them a government and country of their own, put a miniature of the American constitution afloat in the Pacific, start a brand new republic to take its place among the free nations of the world. It seemed to me a great task to which we had addressed ourselves.”

“But I have thought some more, since then, and I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem.”

Mark Twain Home, an Anti-Imperialist, New York Herald [New York,
10/15/1900]

This was the year 1900. If the powers of America had listened to this great artist, the world would be very different today. But then as an artist, the mind of Mark Twain was free. It was not boxed. It was not limited. And he was not to be listened to by boxed minds.

Criticizing the actions of America and Spain after the brutal murder of the Filipino national hero Jose Rizal in Luneta Park, Reverend Herbert S. Bigelow, February 12, 1899 at the Cincinnati Congregational Church as part of his long sermon said:

“Our right to control the Filipinos is no better than Spain’s right, unless might makes right. If Spain committed a crime in shooting Rizal, then, before God we are criminals. The fact that we believe ourselves able to govern the islands better than Spain, or better than the Filipino people themselves, does not change the moral status of the question a hair’s breathe. If the conqueror is justified in conquering because he has implicit faith in himself, then there never was an unrighteous war. If national conceit, backed up by superior forces is sufficient justification for a war of conquest, then there is no such thing as right in this world and no safety whatever for any man’s liberty who has not the power to defend it by brute strength. If our right to shoot down Filipinos is be sustained by the necessities of trade and our own good opinion of ourselves, then our patriotism is only a maudlin sentiment and our Christian professions are a shameless mockery.”

He ended his message with this:

“Oh God! That we should have lived to see fair America, mad with visions of world-kingdoms and their glory, kneeling at the feet of him whom to serve is greed, and hate and hell and death.”

The Reverend and Mark Twain were men with great intellect, depth and vision – only possible outside of the box. If only such men were the leaders of America, then the world today would be a very different place indeed.

The earth unravels and the world is falling apart because of the acts of evil men, men who have access to great military powers, men who promote greed and who hunger for more power. Of these men, of those who rule America, many of them may have been great warriors. They were, some still are, military men with great minds and strong spirit, men who commanded and who can command large armies of soldiers. Some of these men of power have won many battles on foreign fields. But they have never confronted and conquered the most difficult battle of all; that is the battle within them. They have no inner peace. They have no balance. How can such men bring balance and harmony to the world when they cannot achieve this for themselves?

Lao Tzu, father of Taoism wrote:

“He who controls others may be powerful, but he who has mastered himself is mightier still.”

It is the institutionalized minds of great military men that have seriously manipulated and influenced the actions of America. These are the men partly responsible for war. They may have had good intentions but since their minds are locked up in boxes, can they possibly know the reality of the world? Who are the true powers that really control the politics of America?

It is not just senators and congressmen that influence the core of the American political structure. What if the US army and other US military factions are instruments, pawns to higher powers herding them into battle in the name of the propaganda that makes it their moral obligation to make war? And since these men, these soldiers, these warriors have minds contained in boxes; will most of them stop to question or think? Or will most of them only obey blindly? What if one camp of America's government is setting the stage to create an excuse for war? Many Filipinos believe that Marcos in the past staged disasters and bombings in the Philippines to justify his dictatorship. Is it then possible that America has instigated and staged its own wars?

Some of the former US generals, military men of great minds but institutionalized, are some of the powers in the U.S. political hierarchy today who are responsible for sending armies of men into battle, armies of men whose minds are also limited and boxed. So follows the destruction of the world and of America.

I believe that there are separate groups that control the complex political structure within America and these factions are not necessarily working for the same goal, as each group primarily serves its own goals.

Tim Weiner is a reporter for the New York Times. He has received the Pulitzer Prize for his efforts on secret national security programs and has spent the last 20 years writing about the American intelligence network. He has traveled to several countries including Afghanistan as a journalist to personally investigate the operations of the CIA. He has written a book entitled, "*Legacy of Ashes*" which is about the history of the CIA.

Tim Weiner asks, "Is the CIA still a dependable source of information for the US after it delivered wrong information to

George W. Bush with regard to the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?”

Was the agency really unaware of the truth? In 2004, Bush criticized the agency publicly and stated, “They are just guessing.” He said this with regard to the very crucial information that became America’s false rationale for waging the war against Iraq and that decided the fate of so many, many lives. Today, after hundreds of thousands of deaths, most of the world knows that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. So why are there still 160 thousand US troops deployed there? Why can’t these institutionalized minds have the courage and humility to accept they made a grave mistake and get their men and women in uniform out of there? And so the complex powers that govern the US continue to betray their own people as well as the rest of mankind. I wonder what the truth is. Why is America really so interested in Iraq? Is this really a humanitarian reason? Or is it because of resources and the profits to be gained from the business of war through arms and reconstruction?

In the book “*Legacy of Ashes*”, Tim Weiner, commenting on the future of America, states:

“No republic in history has lasted longer than 300 years, and this nation may not long endure as a great power unless it finds the eyes to see things as they are in the world. That once was the mission of the Central Intelligence Agency.”

Muslim Mindanao

I have written this article against the advice of those who are close to me. I have done this to deliver a message to the Filipino people – to show them another face of America and at the same time hoping that they would stop looking to America, or any other

country, for answers. Strategically the Philippines, is very crucial to American interests being so close to China, Indonesia and the rest of Asia. The Americans have been here since before the “Treaty of Paris” which was signed on September 3, 1783. As Mark Twain, stated, posing to liberate us from Spain, America occupied the Philippines and subjugated and oppressed the Filipino people, violating human rights. The Philippine-American War, an armed military conflict, which originated with the Filipinos struggle for independence against the U.S. occupation, lasted from 1899 to 1913. Still today the Americans have no genuine desire to ever allow the Philippines complete independence. They will never leave.

The American military are in Mindanao today, increasing in number as time passes. A few kind-hearted American men in uniform have proudly told me that what they are doing in Mindanao; that is helping the people to build schools, clinics, and other public facilities, is good for Mindanao. I asked them, “At what expense? Why has it become the job of top American military men to build schools, clinics and other public facilities in Mindanao? Isn’t that technically the duty of the US AID or the Asian Development Bank where the U.S. is a major stockholder along with Japan and whose headquarters is right here in the Philippines? And since when did America give anything for free?”

The fight for the future of the world is no longer about money or arms to expand power. Today’s fight is the fight for world survival and this means controlling natural resources.

Beyond its vital strategic location, the Philippines is also one of the top five wealthiest nations in the world in natural abundance. In marine life it is of the top three. In coral diversity, it is number one. The deepest part of the ocean lies off of Mindanao, the Philippine Deep. It is common knowledge to Filipinos that there

is oil in Mindanao. There are also gas deposits. This is why the American military is here, not to contain terrorism, but to contain the territory of Mindanao, masquerading as good Samaritans and agents of development - to build schools, medical facilities and drill wells. The truth is America's intent is to control Mindanao's natural wealth and the Philippines' strategic position. And if I were one of the minds running America today, I would seek the same end. Except, I hope I would have the wisdom and the long-term vision not to "divide, exploit, destroy and conquer" as Americans do. I hope I would unite, cooperate and help the people manage their lands like an efficient business enterprise. I would seek the humility to respect the sacrosanct Muslim culture. I would nurture the land and the sea so that the earth and its people could benefit for many generations to come. I believe this is possible. And when we believe it is possible then it is there for the making.

There has been civil unrest in Mindanao since the time of Spain. These brave and fearless Muslims have been struggling for peace and equality since the 16th century. They fought the Spaniards for almost 400 years and were never defeated. After that, they fought the American and then the Philippine military. How do you subdue a people who are unafraid to die for their freedom? Have not the Filipino Muslims in Mindanao proven to the world they will not bow to oppression? When do we learn what true liberty is? The greatest freedom of all is to give it to others.

I believe it is possible to make lasting peace with the Muslims of Mindanao. They have been so wronged for so many centuries, by Spain, by the Philippine government and the U.S. I believe it is possible to reconstruct Mindanao, if there is genuine concern from the Philippine and the US governments to do so. Japan and Europe went through a process of reconstruction after the Second

World War. It takes a long time but it is possible. Look at Japan and Europe today.

I believe that reconstruction, restoration, and people participation, to negotiate and seek consensus to a peaceful co-existence for business and trade is what is honorable to pursue. It is the right thing to do. I also believe there are some American military minds that are not just great, but exceptional. These are the minds that can go in and out of the box and can see the world through a broader perspective. The bodies may be in uniform but they are free. They have the strength of spirit, depth and true concern for humanity and the earth. Their minds have vision and they understand that their government's actions in the past have backfired on them. They understand the necessity for change. I have met a few of these great American warriors. I pray they prevail. Because I believe their minds will save their people and mine. Otherwise, I fear Mindanao will become another Afghanistan and Iraq. And the people of Mindanao - Filipinos, my own people, will be the next to be obliterated by America.

Where is the rationale for the greed of man? All we hold as wealth could dissipate in an instant. We were born with nothing. We will die with nothing. Everything around us is temporary, borrowed, including our very own life. We have this life only for a brief moment of time. All that surrounds us will disappear into nothing. At the end of our journey the material is of no value. We carry only our soul to the after life. Ultimately, my loyalty is to my soul. I wish to settle my karmic debt in this life, not create more.

Can we not work together to respect, protect and preserve all life on earth? Can we not do what is honorable, what is our duty to our souls? Can we not protect the very life that sustains our lives, the life of mother earth- our true mother?

I am neither Muslim nor Christian. What I am is a living soul hoping for peace and equality amongst the people in my beloved homeland as well as the rest of the world. Heaven help us all.

Marlene Aguilar

June 8, 2008

Dr. Ron Crocombe is an author and Professor Emeritus in Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific. He lives in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. He is a highly respected authority on all matters pertaining to the Pacific islands. He has worked as consultant for major international institutions including the United Nations, World Bank and Asian Development Bank for more than 30 years. He has lived and worked in the Pacific islands for over 50 years. He states:

“Marlene’s essay entitled, Men in Boxes in the Name of Peace” is excellent!”

Inner Peace

People without inner peace compensate for this emptiness by seeking wealth and power. But no amount of wealth and power can buy inner peace. And this is something so difficult for people in the west to understand. The west believes, and has to believe, that materialism begets happiness.

In the 16th century North America was colonized by a people who were rebelling against the strictures of British religious dictates. But these spiritual intentions were soon overtaken by man’s greed. Ever since America has grown on greed and this has come at an enormous price; that is an imbalance in society, where the lack of spirit and soul can no longer compensate for

and contain the evil of greed. This imbalance is so great that society dies from within.

I lived in the United States of America for 11 years and in that time learned to understand America and its people. One day I realized that I had learned all I needed to know about the country and the people, I understood what America was all about and I no longer wanted to live there. And I hungered to come home to the Philippines. My soul and my spirit wanted to be here.

I have learned that the weak must tolerate the strong, as the Philippines must tolerate the US. But the US must also learn to tolerate the pain of great power. With great power there can be no peace and happiness. What my people need to understand is how to tolerate great powers and what this means for us. These powers do not own our hearts, our minds, and our spirit. And they never will. I have peace within me. I may not be powerful, nor am I wealthy, but I am who I am. You, as I, can feed your soul and have peace within, despite the influences of whatever greater, foreign powers. We tolerate and we superficially appease these foreign powers. We have to. But we can be free as we feed our spirits and our souls.

The time will come when the US will destroy itself, as have all the great powers throughout history - from Persia to Greece, to Rome and to Europe and now the US. And next is China. Power builds and power is then destroyed from within. I cannot believe in wars and revolutions as solutions to our problems, because inner peace is the greater force. Inner peace is the most important force and no one can take that away.

November 5, 2007