

By **MANUEL L. CABALLERO**

NOW that the most expensive midterm elections are over, let's hope our political leaders will unite and start a dialogue about the real problems facing this country.

During the campaign, the Republicans made no bones that their main goal was to make sure President Barack Obama will be a one term president.

Some Democrats, on the other hand, touted the achievements of the Obama Administration during the past two years. Others stayed away from President Obama depending on the mood of the people in local areas.

Then, there was the third group, the Tea Party, composed of furious conservatives from the Republican Party. This group wants to return this country to the provisions of the U.S. Constitution, whatever they mean by that.

What are the problems of America? Why are jobs difficult to find? Why are many Americans bearish on America? Only 25 percent of Americans think the economy is good.

The much dreamed of American Dream has cracks and needs to be repaired or restored. In the past, America was the number 1 destination of immigrants from foreign countries, including the Philippines. It seems, that's no longer the case.

The American Dream refers to "a better, richer and happier life" for all Americans. But it has become a difficult dream for many Americans.

Globalization of jobs and technology shifts have left many Americans jobless. The outsourcing industry is a classic example. Last year, some 20 million Americans received unemployment benefits. Today, some 40 million Americans are on food stamps.

In some ways, the experiences of the Philippines and the United States have similarities when it comes to economic standing of its peoples and in relation to its neighbors.

The Philippines' economic dominance over its neighbors in Southeast Asia in the mid-50s is long gone. Filipino scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) used to teach its neighbors from Thailand, Taipei and Vietnam how to grow rice scientifically and abundantly. The native country used to export rice to those countries because of its excess harvests.

Nowadays, the Philippines imports rice from its neighbors. Ironically, President Benigno Aquino III, during his state visit to Vietnam last week, praised his hosts for their proficient rice farming and also reportedly said, Filipinos could study and learn from them.

There's nothing wrong with what was said. What seemed wrong was the reason for Filipinos now being the students when they used to be the teachers. Something is not right. Something went wrong through the years.

Respected writer and reporter of CNN and Time magazine Fareed Zakaria proposed a solution to America's economic woes. He wrote in Time that "America needs to shift its economy away from consumption and toward investment." American economy has always been consumer based.

Zakaria said that the best way to create good jobs in the U.S. is to create new industries and companies and to innovate within the old ones. He meant large investments in research, technology and development like in the 50s.

Despite all of the above challenges, America remains the largest market in the world. I'm bullish

on America. Like in every recession, Americans may be gloomy, but they will recover.

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "America means opportunity, freedom, power." And it should remain as such if the leaders of this country will refocus their time and efforts from too much politicking and grandstanding to rebuilding of economy.

During the weekend, Theodore C. Sorensen, who was a close adviser and counselor to John F. Kennedy for 11 years, writing words and giving voice to ideas that shaped the president's image and legacy died. He was 82.

Mr. Sorensen was best known for working with Mr. Kennedy on passages of soaring rhetoric, including the 1961 inaugural address proclaiming that "the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans" and challenging citizens: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Those two passages became popular around the world. Mr. Sorensen drew on the Bible, the Gettysburg Address and the words of Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill as he helped hone and polish that speech.

These days, one seldom hears those kinds of speeches from our leaders. We hear about taxes, government expenses, stimulus, etc. We write and read e-mails and texts.

Gone are the inspiring and essential wisdom of our earlier leaders and intellectual writers, like:

Ralph Waldo Emerson — "None of us will ever accomplish anything excellent or commanding except when he listens to this whisper which is heard by him alone."

Henry Kissinger — "All truly great achievements in history resulted from the actualization of principles, not from the clever evaluation of political conditions."

Mohandas K. Gandhi — "God is conscience."

Winston Churchill — "The only wise and safe course is to act from day to day in accordance with what one's own conscience seems to decree."

Mother Teresa — "In your service to the poor, do not give only your hands but also your hearts."

Calling all graduates of the University of the Philippines who are living in New Jersey. The UPAAA-NJ will hold its 29th general assembly and election of officers and board of trustees on Nov. 14 at the Hilton Woodbridge Hotel in Woodbridge, N.J. from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Cost is \$35 per person which includes food. For details, call Bert Peronilla at 973.736.3157 or Nardz Santos at 201.370.6425; or e-mail Nora at noraqc@comcast.net

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