



By MANUEL L. CABALLERO

WE are writing this in the middle of President Barack Obama's 10-day trip to four Asian countries, namely, India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan. Fresh from a big political defeat at home, President Obama's trip is aimed at re-engaging those countries diplomatically and economically.

Our question: why is the Philippines not included in the Obama trip? We don't know the answer. But Manila should not feel disappointed. Former President Bill Clinton, whose wife Hillary, Filipinos love and adore, was there earlier this week.

We wrote our column last week in the morning of Election Day. So, here's our belated commentary on the election results. Congratulations to all winners, especially the 18 winning Filipino-Americans around the country!

I wonder how the West Coast kababayans could win in mainstream polls, while here in the East Coast, say in New Jersey and even New York, most Fil-Am candidates are perennial losers? What do we need to do or learn? Perhaps, we need to consult first with Pinoy politicians in California before fielding candidates in future elections.

Since 1989 in Jersey City, I have observed (and helped) a few brave Filipino-Americans who ran for City Council, but all lost. My list starts with Joe Bunao who was virtually dragged to California by his wife many years ago after losing the elections; Flor Alcantara Reyes (formerly Medel), has retired from politics and is now an Arizona resident; Linda Mayo lost a Council race but won an election for the Education Board; Jun Florentino might shift career from real estate to politics starting in next year's elections; Greg Racelis, is he still a friend of Mrs. Cunningham, the elegant state legislator and widow of the late mayor?

Finally, we have Rolando Lavarro, a second generation Fil-Am, son of a wonderful Fil-Am couple, who ran in the last elections but also was unsuccessful. In all likelihood, he will try again next year. He is already raising campaign funds for 2011. Rolando must be doing the right thing this time.

Ador Equipado tried the New Jersey State Assembly twice but lost twice. At least, we have former Bergenfield, N.J. Mayor Bob Rivas, who is now a regular in Fil-Am gatherings. UP'an Efren Dato (formerly Fr. Efren) ran but also lost when he sought a public post in Franklin, N.J. last year.

Our latest casualty is the good-looking Paul Verzosa who was made ugly by his opponents in Union, N.J. two days before Election Day. His opponents circulated a two-page flyer with a photo of him with eyes closed (at least, the picture was colored), like a boxer who was KO'd in a 12-round bout!

Seriously, Paul was so popular that he became the sole target of what he described as last minute "black propaganda" by his political opponents. Paul shone during their debate in Union because we coached him. (Laugh!)

Moving to New York, we have writer-turned-politician Gonzalo Policarpio. He ran for U.S. Congress twice. He lost both times.

Really, I guess Fil-Am politicians in the East Coast could learn from their counterparts in the West Coast.

President Obama describes the effect of the last elections on him as “shellacking.”

I had to do a little research on the word. According to Webster's, shellacking is a slang which means “thorough or decisive defeat.” The word came from “shellac” or “shellack,” which is a kind of varnish.

So, President Obama varnished the minds of his listeners by using the slang word.

When former President George W. Bush suffered similar midterm debacle in 2006, he used the word “thumping.” It is a colloquial word in the English language which has the same meaning as shellacking.

When these politicians are running for office, they use the simplest words in the English language that could easily be understood by the largest number of people. When they are already in office and their weaknesses begin to show, they use the most unheard of words that are least understood by people. I can seem to understand that.

One of the reasons I admire former President Bill Clinton is because he is always precise with his words even in his low moment. Remember when he said on national television, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." How clearer can one go?

Seriously, it was a whopping defeat for President Obama and the Democratic Party. In burger terms, it's a whopper! It changed the balance of power in Washington. With the Republicans now the majority party in the House of Representatives in the U.S. Congress, there will be checks and balances in Washington, D.C., which is a necessary ingredient in a democracy.

Once again, the last elections demonstrated the supremacy of the voice of the people in this country. The results of poll surveys conducted before the elections and the results of the elections complemented each other. The election results confirmed the dissatisfaction and the disapproval of many Americans on the way the Obama Administration is steering the country's direction.

mcaball241@aol.com