



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I have been observing how the Hongkong Government has caused there to be more public areas for people to recreate themselves. I, absolutely, applaud this initiative. However, I have noticed that, thus far, the Hongkong Government has not forced The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd to create an environment on the ground floor of its headquarters building so that members of the Filipina community may recreate themselves in the manner to which they have become accustomed since arriving in Hongkong. For many years, now, Filipinas have, on weekends and public holidays, parked themselves on the pavement of the ground floor of the bank's headquarters building in order to enjoy an outdoor picnic of chicken legs and chicken wings, crispy pata, fried rice, etc, et, etc. But the Filipinas have had to sit on the ground – because The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd has not seen fit to supply tables and chairs for Hongkong's army of nannies, cleaners, cooks and maids. Last Sunday, I noted that some enterprising Filipinas had brought their own, collapsible chairs on which to sit while partaking of the goodies of the picnic. It seems to me that the fourth-largest bank in the world can easily afford to pay for tables and chairs to accommodate the 10,000 or so Filipinas who congregate on holidays and weekends underneath the bank's building so that they may recreate themselves in a more civilised manner than having to sit on the hard, cold granite pavement. If the Management of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd is afraid that the Filipinas may steal the tables and chairs – a possibility that can not be ruled out, considering the number of legal actions, taken out against members of Hongkong's Filipina community – then, the tables and chairs can be made of concrete and be permanent structures on the ground floor of the bank's building. Also, My Dear Grandchild, I note that there are no facilities underneath the bank's building for the Filipinas to dispose of their spent chicken bones and wings and Styrofoam containers. After all, once the meat has been stripped clean of the chicken bones, what in the world is going to happen to the bones? If the Government of Hongkong has made it mandatory that other public areas, formerly thought to be for the exclusive use of certain huge companies, must install certain amenities for people who would like to play in these public areas, for what reason does not the Hongkong Government impose its will on The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd? The Filipinas and Filipinos, when they congregate in Central, monopolising the areas of Statue Square, the ground floor of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, in front of the public toilets, opposite the bank's headquarters building, around the Legislative Council building, and so on, give colour to Hongkong. Where else in the world can one come to listen to the sounds of these ladies, whose chattering in the heat of a Sunday afternoon is reminiscent to a cacophony of twittering birds? Their brown skins gleam in the sun as they sit in Statue Square, eating, playing cards, giving each other manicures and pedicures, selling their handicraft and so on. It is, today, traditional for tourists to come to watch this spectacle on weekends and holidays. Sooner or later, the Hongkong Government will have a Filipina Day in the same way as the former Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, introduced a holiday to commemorate the birth of Confucius.

Of course, there is a downside to all this: There are little to no facilities for the Filipinas to dispose of most of their waste. If one walks through the underpass that used to be the old Star Ferry concourse on a Sunday afternoon, one is able to see the result of the Hongkong Government's mistake in not providing sufficient facilities for the Filipinas: There are piles of garbage, lining the route. This is not the fault of the Filipinas, but the fault of a non-caring government which should have taken note of the requirements of these maids, cooks, dishwashers, nannies, etc. Of course, I suppose one could state that these Filipinas are uneducated, by our standards, that is, for the most part, but so what? Teach them! Even a dog can be taught tricks, you know! It is not in the nature of man to be dirty and if these Filipinas appear to be unkempt and dirty, it is the

fault of a government that doesn't care about them. Just because they do not pay Hongkong taxes and, very often, get into legal trouble, it does not mean that they should not be treated as human beings. Because, anatomically, they, all, have the same attributes as any other member of humankind. An accident of birth caused these people to be what they are. It is God's will that they are what they are. That being accepted, it seems to me that they should be permitted the opportunity to learn a little of the social graces while staying in the territory. Sitting on chairs may not be their thing, I appreciate that, but if they are shown the use of a chair, it is likely that they will grow to appreciate it more than sitting on the ground ... as they are being forced to do, today. While the Filipinas are in Hongkong, it is an excellent chance for them to be given a little education into the ways of the Western World.

Most of the Filipinas are Christians and Catholics, you know. Centuries ago, European and American missionaries spent time and money to teach the ignorant natives of The Philippines about God, Jesus, The Bible, and so on. Today, the descendents of those ignorant, Filipino people have landed on Hongkong shores to work in our homes, to take care of our children, clean houses, wash clothes, etc. They, for the most part, are charming people who love to chatter about nothing, sing songs, pray to their gods, and eat their chicken wings and legs in the open air. What harm could it do for institutions, such as The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, to supply these charming people with the facilities that would make them more comfortable as they sit, under the bank's building, shaded from the hot summer's sun, to do their thing? And what about supplying portable electric fans for the summer and portable kerosene heaters for the winter months? It is the duty of Hongkong's largest banking institution to permit these people to sit in the public areas of the bank and to indulge in whatever takes their fancy. It is a wonder, actually, that the ground floor of the bank at Queen's Road, Central, has never been used as a makeshift church for the Filipinas. I imagine that the sound of religious hymns would reach right up into the rafters of the bank, filling it with goodness and mercy.

Please consider this matter and, if possible, donate some time to the promotion of the education of the tens of thousands of these, mainly ignorant, temporary residents of Hongkong.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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