

## 20161111 **Ferrer Conversation**

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The Ferrers, Uncle Joe and Auntie Mila, parents of my cousin Eve, who lives with us at Le Château Rideau sur l'Île Lulu, are visiting for a week. In the morning today, Uncle Joe and I head walking out of the house, Auntie Mila handing Uncle Joe 60 Canadian dollars. Uncle and Auntie shuttle back and forth from Los Angeles, where their son, my cousin, Jojo, lives, and to Toronto, where their daughter, my cousin, Chuchi, lives, and to the Philippines, their primary home.

Uncle Joe and I start walking at the nearby Rideau Place to view the new house there with the intriguing sculpture on their yard, a grey stone sphere on a grey stone box. Then we turn into Rideau Drive. We talk about Amerindians. I mention that before whites came to North America, there were over 500 Amerindian tribes with corresponding languages. I tell him that I am not just "white" as I also study Asian languages and cultures. Uncle Joe, like my mother, comes from a very Americanized generation, unlike mine, which is more nationalistic and indigenous.

We segue to the Vikings. The Ferrers have bought me a green softcover book called *A Brief History of the Vikings* by Jonathan Clements, from their tour of Steveston Village on our Lulu Island, B.C. I tell Uncle Joe that there were Viking settlements on the East Coast of North America centuries before Columbus. But they died out, mysteriously. Or maybe, those Vikings there were assimilated by surrounding Amerindians. The Viking colonies were called Vinland.

Uncle Joe asks about my trips to Asia, besides the Philippines. I have been to Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea. I mention that many Koreans embrace Christianity, but many are also *irreligious*. My passport is stamped with about 9 entries into Japan. Bomb explosions in Bali and Thailand do not really deter tourists, I mention. I spent 3 weeks in Bali.

Uncle Joe hints that history is not a good subject. I agree that history is too subjective and overly romanticized. He mentions that during Philippine President Corazón Aquino's term, there were about 9 coup attempts. Records try to hide American involvement.

The Germans were jealous of the Jews in World War II. People are

always jealous of the rich and educated. The German civilians were ignorant in their compliance with their military. Millions of Jews died because of jealousy.

Uncle Joe mentions that his grandson Drew believes the Moon Landings were fake. I think so too, because the technology in the 1960's was too primitive. People then and now do not have proper radiation shielding. In the 1960's, the American administration was anticipating World War III, so they wanted to stage some kind of major human achievement, the Moon Landings. Whites were "first" on the Moon. It was the biggest lie of that millennium.

Nowadays, people target putting crewed missions to Mars by the 2030's. But still, people do not have proper radiation shielding. I believe that eventually people may make *honest* crewed missions to the Moon and Mars, but it may be a very long time from now.

Uncle Joe wonders why it is important to land on different moons and planets. Space colonization will be important because all the eggs are in one basket, I iterate. Humankind needs more baskets. The Earth as one basket is vulnerable from a major cataclysm.

A strange thought from Uncle Joe is that he does not think it is important to know about life *outside* Earth. Maybe, he disbelieves in *aliens*. I think it is *very* important to know whether the Earth is *not* alone as far as life, intelligent or not, is concerned. He says all that is important is local Earth problems and people's belief in God. I retort by asking whether he is not curious about people beyond Earth and *their* belief in God.

We both reach the ice cream parlour Dairy Queen. Lynne, the tall, stocky blonde whose parents came from Sweden, is the cashier. Rosana, the Filipino waitress there, delivers Uncle Joe's poutine and small cherry sundae, and my poutine and small chocolate ice cream. The cherry topping is missing from Uncle's sundae, so I ask Rosana to put it. Incidentally, Rosana says she did not have the time to wipe the table, but I hint that it is still relatively clean. She comes back with Uncle's small cherry sundae *with* the cherry topping.

We start talking about Japanese during World War II. He mentions the massacres and *comfort women*. He knows that I, like his nephew Bobong in the Philippines, is a sympathizer of the Japanese. I tell him a little about Japanese philosophy, especially their love of sacred silence,

unlike boisterous American ways.

I tell him about China. There are about 60 million Cantonese-speakers. And most of them know also Mandarin, a *billion* people's language. Hokkien is from Fújiàn province. There is Shanghainese. There are other topolects. Mandarin is everywhere...

Then I segue to Europe. Lightly populated white countries like Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, etc. are very productive and literate with many books in their own languages. They are not like the Philippines, where people would speak Tagalog and mainly read in English.

Uncle Joe thinks it was bad that the Spanish did not try to institute universal education. With the Americans' turn, they did so with English. I tell him English does not fit the Filipino's personality. Languages are like shoes. Not all fit properly. Uncle Joe first suggests Japanese as more fitting.

I mention that only half of Filipinos know English. He retorts that maybe it is only a third nowadays because of changes in educational policies there. Many, like my Reyes cousins' children, only learn English earlier to anticipate escape from the country. I have seen, though, their very complicated Tagalog grammar homework.

I think North America is overrated. There is nothing really to see, except maybe nature. There are Disneyland etc., all contrived. North America is not like Europe with its castles, citadels, stone streets, etc.

Uncle Joe knows Panggalatok, Ilokano, Tagalog, and English. He is not unusual for a Filipino, who may know perhaps 3 or 4 languages.

Steveston Village on our Lulu Island was Japanese years ago, I tell Uncle Joe. During World War II, the properties and fishing boats of the Japanese were confiscated. And the government interned the Japanese to B.C.'s Interior. Today, many of the shops in that village are Chinese. As for curiosity, I ask Uncle if he thinks Chinese would be interned if there were a war with China. He thinks it could happen again...

I mention that the Japanese's favourite foreigners are the French, because they are so civilized.

Uncle Joe asks me what is the term for *districts* in Paris. It takes me a

while to come up with the French *arrondissements*. I say that in Tōkyō, they are *wards*. We brainstorm about country division terms as *states, provinces, cantons, prefectures, departments, territories, protectorates*, etc.

In previous visits of my Uncle Joe and Auntie Mila, I would talk about Esperanto, as years ago I went to Victoria, B.C. with them, and there we talked about it in a nice old boarding house. I feel now that Esperanto, like a Jewish language, is somewhat a *taboo* subject, much as the Tagalog Global Xenoglossia, which Uncle tries to deny in whisper. He knows this world is not just mundane...

Auntie likes looking at my art collections. I have masks from Africa, prints from Aboriginal Australia, pre-Buddhistic Japanese sculptures, different Buddhas, Picasso framed prints, a colourful Gaudí *toro* or bull, a Balinese bell, a Balinese pestle-and-mortar set, fossilized nautili, a heavy clay Mexican or Guatemalan indigenous mask, exotic wide-brimmed straw hats, a purple-and-white Thai shirt, an old violin from a neighbour's garage sale, white alabaster Greek statues from my visit to Athens, a bison clay sculpture I made in Grade 6 or 7, purple and green Philippine native woven flags or hanging scrolls, and red and green fancy cardboard stars from Bharat, and so forth.

I show my bedroom refrigerator's contents to Auntie Mila. I show her precious powdered food I obtained from the Web's Nuts.com. There are Organic Mesquite Powder, Goji Berry Powder, Pumpkin Seed Powder, Dandelion Root Powder, Ginkgo Leaf Powder, etc.

Uncle Joe and Auntie Mila have a primary home on Kamias Road in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines. It is an ancient house, reportedly moved brick by brick from an outlying province. It was used as an embassy or for some official function many decades ago. Their second house, for vacation, is at Mangaterem, Pangasinan, Philippines. The house is elevated so as to avoid some floods. There are soursop and sapodilla fruit trees around their yard.

The Philippines is the most Westernized and Christianized Asian country. However, it has a multiethnic rainbow of up to almost 200 tribes with corresponding languages, in an archipelago of over 7 500 islands. It is an interesting country.