

**Open Field Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC)
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific**

Ursa Major Suite at Cal Poly Pomona University
(3801 West Temple Ave., Pomona, California 91768)
Friday, August 21, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

**Testimony on Philippine Government Misappropriation of Land of American Citizens
(Epidemic of Land Grabbing)
by CEO of National Asian American Coalition, Faith Bautista**

I am the CEO and President of one of the largest pan-Asian American advocacy organizations in the US. We are also the most prominent Asian American proponent of home ownership in America and work closely with thousands of generally small and medium sized Asian American businesses such as the Island Pacific Supermarkets.

I am here to represent the Belisario family and the Belisarios of the world that reside in the US. There are thousands of these families who are U.S. citizens and are in effect subsidizing the Philippine government and its corrupt officials and cronies who continue to misappropriate property titles from Philippine-American citizens. I wish to give a personal example. and also wish to disclose that I am a domestic partner of one of the victims. The example I wish to describe is the Belisario family who now resides as citizens in the US, including my boyfriend.

Here is the tale that could happen only in a foreign nation where corruption is considered the usual law of the land. Forty four (44) properties of the Belisario family were illegally seized by the Philippine government or those acting as its agent. For example, titles were transferred from the legitimate owners to non-legitimate owners often without any documentation.

The Belisario family's mother and father died in the Philippines and their five sons and daughters moved to the US more than thirty years ago. These five children have spent at least two years each in the Philippines unsuccessfully seeking to regain their illegally seized land and properties.

I have a complete list of these properties and the records that demonstrate that they own the property and that the properties were illegally seized. I am providing it to the committee today. Some of the property was illegally seized through illegal use of eminent domain powers. There is even evidence that the Philippine government admits to some of the illegal seizures and the millions of dollars (hundreds of millions of pesos) due the Belisario family. For example, a bank in the Philippines has some of the documents but will not release the documents. This is apparently due to orders of the Philippine government or those who contend that they are acting under the authority of the Philippine government.

I am unclear that the estimated twenty to thirty million dollars due the Belisario family will ever be repaid. And, I am unsure how the US government can ever make the Philippine government compensate families such as the Belisarios. However, I have the following recommendations which could benefit many thousands of Filipino American families in the US.

First, every Filipino American who believes their property was illegally seized at any time over the since the Philippines became independent in 1946 should be able to provide a simple form to the Secretary of the Treasury Jacob Lew documenting their grievance and setting forth the amount due to them.

Second, the Secretary of the Treasury shall be granted the authority to request directly from the President of the Philippines that the Philippine government promptly and comprehensively respond to each complaint filed by an American Citizen.

Third, from funding from the billions of dollars each year that the US provides to the Philippines in various subsidies, the Philippine government shall jointly with the Secretary of the Treasury and leading Filipino American community organizations appoint an independent auditor or special monitor to examine each claim and provide prompt reports with a specific resolution. This is a method the US Secretary of the Treasury is very familiar. That is, Treasury frequently uses special monitors to examine records of major banks as they relate, for example, to improper foreclosures.

Since I have personally worked and met with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chair of the Federal Reserve and the US Comptroller of the Currency, I would be happy to offer further suggestions to this committee and to appropriate federal government officials. I am also prepared, at my own personal expense, to assist any Independent Special Monitor in developing effective auditing mechanisms. I estimate that this could result in billions of dollars, or hundreds of billions of Pesos being returned to hard working Filipino American citizens.