



## *Razor's Edge*

By  
**Joe Mari Mercader**  
*Executive Editor*  
FILIPINO TIMES  
*New York-New Jersey*

*Joe Mari Mercader . . .*

# *There's More Than Meets The Eye In GMA's Shameless Dinner Splurges Abroad*

**NEW YORK, NY Aug 17 (PinoyGlobal)** - If we are scandalized by the \$20,000 dinner party at exotic Le Cerqui restaurant in New York for Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her gang of international jetsetters, and before that the shindig at Bobby Van's Steakhouse in Washington D.C. that cost \$15,000, get a load of the public record from the Commission on Audit, revealing the actual galactic figure she squandered on travels in and outside of the country.

The government coughed out the galactic mind boggling figure of P2.7 billion, practically going more than double from the original allocation of P1.1 billion for the entire period of 2003 to 2008 for presidential gallivanting or travels if you will. Most of them have not been justified or accounted for by Malacanang. For the year 2008 alone, GMA spent the staggering amount of P722 million against a congressional allocation of only P244 million showing an over expense of P478 million.

Her travel expense in 2003 was P332 million, up from a budget of only P72 million earmarked by Congress. In fact, since her incumbency starting in 2003 up to the present the pattern is palpably clear – they incrementally increased the travel expenses without let-up every single year. This is criminal abuse of discretion because in some or most instances she did the taboo of filling up the difference from her emergency funds, which clearly violates the law.

This is because her entourage consisting of carpetbaggers included children, grandchildren, nannies, cabinet members, solons, security personnel, Palace staff, media crew and what have you who lived it up by bringing their spouses and who knows maybe their lovers, to boot. This assertion is within the realm of probability considering her unconscionable propensity to splurge taxpayers' money.

But the intriguing part is how can she allow this brazen extravagance at the expense of our people's money when prudence dictates that the head of state of a Third World country live within the limits of our economic resources or financial, capability given that our dollar reserves are acutely depleted already. Ask the Banko Central Ng Pilipinas.

The question is why? Her spokesperson on economic matters, a certain Gary Olivar, said she has not overshot her budget for foreign travels. He claims that she had 'budget room' for the 10 months that are left of her incumbency. Wow, Kapal muks!

He further argued that there is no price tag on the pledges of investments, potential employment for workers and stay of execution of overseas Filipino workers that gained from such trips. Hey, what is this? Does this intellectual pigmy think the entire nation is composed of idiots like the chaotic opposition?

Gary, what is your excuse that Malacanang dropped the idea of buying a presidential Boeing jet only after the brouhaha erupted about GMA wanting to buy a plane complete with the facilities and amenities of Air Force One, that America can easily afford but the Philippines cannot, and which would have cost over a billion pesos. Are you guys in the Palace living in the Paradise of Eden that everything is possible in your eyes?

Of course, the nation is happy that Gloria backtracked on this, otherwise it would have been fireworks of the magnitude of World War II if she went through with this option. The public would have raised Cain believe you me, Gary. And please, quit that childish recrimination that those castigating the president on these valid issues, should pay heed to Michael Jackson who said, "Look at the man in the mirror." That's a flat cliché now. Are you telling the kettle to look if it is less black than the pot? Forget it, buddy! Nobody is buying it!

Furthermore, Gary, Gloria does not have to personally woo foreign investors by traveling to their lairs abroad when she can just send the Trade Secretary. This will not entail a huge budget as when it is the president who is traveling. If we want something pertaining to agriculture abroad, then tap the Secretary of Agriculture, and so on. These officials can entice entrepreneurs abroad more effectively because they

are experts in their respective fields. She can also order ambassadors abroad to do such chores.

As for employment for Filipinos in foreign countries, the Labor Secretary should be competent to do the job, and the travel budget would be comparatively miniscule. Regarding stays of execution of Filipinos sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia or other Middle East countries, I doubt if our president will be listened to by those infidels.

Former Pres. Fidel V. Ramos was shedding crocodile tears asking the Singapore government to give the late Flor Contemplacion even just a couple of days of stay before they hung her, because of new evidence unearthed that established her innocence. But they told him "Go f... yourself. We have been calling you for seven years to do something while the case was pending, but you preferred to shack up with your paramour to satiate your geriatric erotic desires." (I would much rather watch the animals on National Geographic than to picture the skeletal Fidel panting in bed with a girl!)

So pleeeeee, Gary, don't task our mental faculties with your simplistic rationalization for so glaring an indiscretion on the part of our head of state in traveling abroad to live the Life of Riley.