

ART AND SOCIAL ACTION

An Interview with Joe Bataan

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Tyrone Nagai

Tyrone Nagai: So this is Joe Bataan's *Afro-Filipino*. [Tyrone hands Joe Bataan the *Afro-Filipino* album.] Back in 1975 you wrote "Ordinary Guy (Afro-Filipino)." So, talk about your inspiration for writing that song and coming out with this album.

Joe Bataan: I was with Salsoul Records, this record company I started, and I had to choose a name for an album, and you have to understand, growing up in East Harlem, I was sort of like thrown in a mix of a melting pot where there were Latinos, there were Blacks, growing up in Spanish Harlem. And, I was sort of like a loner because I was an only child, so I had to decide who I was, because people took it for granted that I was Latino, you know.

I had to learn the language growing up in the streets. Most of my friends were Latino. And of course, there were Blacks in the neighborhood also. So, growing up we were never confronted with the racism of today, you know, growing up in East Harlem. I just fitted in. Everyone accepted me. And everybody knew my name, Bataan. But, people always thought of me as a Latino. They probably thought Bataan was a Latino name. Something . . .

TN: Something Spanish?

JB: Something foreign, you know, to the ear. So they just took it for granted, and that was that. So when I was starting in my career, and I decided I have to name the album something, I said, "But what should I name it?" And I thought about it, and I said, "Well, what am I?" I said, "Well, I'm Black and I'm Filipino." And I said, "Everybody else goes into this nationalistic thing about who they are and I haven't. Maybe it's time for me to say something because if there are my fellow countrymen out there somewhere, they should know." And I really was thinking like this as a young man. And, I said, "They should be proud of me."

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You know, not being arrogant, but the way I was thinking was “wow,” and I thought about my father and how he grew up in Harlem as a minority because there weren’t many Filipinos at all. So I said, “Well, how can I identify myself because I’m not really a pure this or a pure that.” I said, “Well, I’m Afro and I’m Filipino, so I decided to call the album *Afro-Filipino*.”

And, he [my father] said, “Don’t put the Joe in there. Put Bataan.” And, Bataan is really my first name. Joe is not my name. And, when I thought about it, ’cause I had asked my father, you know, why’d you name me Bataan? He said, “Well, if you would have been a girl, we were going to name you Corregidor.” [Laughs] So thank God, you know, I wasn’t a girl. [Chuckles] Filipinos laugh about that all the time. But, he had to explain the meaning of Bataan. So, since that time I’ve gotten different definitions. But, my father says it comes from the Oriental dictionary, and it means “youth,” “youth conquers all.” And, he was a chef-cook, so he used to bake my birthday cakes, and the whole neighborhood would come out to see these cakes he made, and he had my name up there. He was very proud of me. Bataan, you know, and anybody that wanted to know what Bataan meant we were trying to make it public, but we were a minority.

So I named that album *Afro-Filipino*, and I said let’s see what happens being that I’m getting exposure. Maybe it’ll go around and maybe, you know, I’ll have another audience. And lo and behold, it took almost thirty-something years before it was really recognized full force that I was part Filipino, and that this album has survived since then, you know.

And, it’s a song I’ve recorded seven different ways, “Ordinary Guy.” And, I decided to put “Afro- Filipino” in there to identify my heritage. And, that’s what I did, and I think it was a great move on my part, you know, because when I think about it, I’m really proud. I say people weren’t identifying themselves as Filipinos back then. So, I said, “Hey, I could have been one of the first to openly declare, hey, I’m Filipino. What about it, you know?” And that’s how this came about. It didn’t hurt that we had some success with the album with some of these other songs. [Laughs]

TN: So a few years later, you come out with *Mestizo*.

JB: This was recorded in 1979. You have to understand that Joe Bataan . . . when I start to write my story I had to put on different parts of my life, you know. So like how would you start to write a book on my life because it encompasses so many different chapters and different things that happened in my life? So I got it down to ten parts. This was an important part because it was almost in the middle of my career.

After having had some success, I was sort of the radical that was the one of the first to ever leave Fania Records. And when I did, I found myself alone, without a company, and not knowing what direction I was gonna go to. So I got

in touch with these gentlemen who didn't know anything about music. And I built this company called Salsoul Records. This was my second album. We had some success with *Salsoul 1*, but this particular album was during the disco era.

And it was at a time when rap music hadn't been heard of. I was running a community center in East Harlem. And the kids were dancing on the floor and clapping their hands, but they had no name for this new phenomenon that was about to sweep the country and the world. And lo and behold, when I saw the kids performing, I asked them what it was, and they said it was nothing. We rap and we clap, you know, but they had no name for it. So when I got the song right, I originally had Jekyll and Hyde, who became CEOs of Motown, to record the song, but apparently they must've thought I didn't know anything, and I was down on my luck at that particular time. I rented a studio on credit at RCA, and I invited them down to record, and I was going to use my own financial backing. They didn't show up. You know, it was probably a blessing for me. They left me flat with the bill, the whole thing. I went into the bathroom. I started to practice the song myself, and I wrote some of the words in there and the music. And I performed the song myself and of course I'm thirty-nine years old at this time, which is pretty up in age for a rapper, you know. I wasn't really a rapper.

But, the kids started to look and they danced. They didn't make any faces, and I said, "Well, I might have something here." And I recorded the song and then everybody seemed to get excited. And of course, I brought the record to . . . I forget the guy's name . . . Luigi, one of the disco producers at that time, and he had a young man in the back. He said, "We want the young man to listen to the song," so I said, "I don't want any young kid listening to my song. What's he going tell me? I've been in the business." . . . He says, "Hey, we listen to everything he says." So it turned out the guy's name is Larry Levan.

He became internationally famous as a DJ, and he heard the song and the first five bars he started jumping up and down on the tables, and the producers started to get excited. They said, "Ok, ok, what do you want?" I said, "I want some advance money," you know. That's the way I thought. "Well, we don't give advances," they said. I said goodbye. I took my record and started to walk out the door. They said, "Wait a minute." I said, "Forget it. I heard that before," and Larry chased me down the stairs. Then he said, "Please bring the record to my club." And at the time, I had no idea what the Garage was, but it was the most famous disco nightclub in the world because of their sound system and because of what Larry played. All celebrities would go to hear him and to see what he played. He played my record and in the first week we sold over twenty thousand records, unheard of at that time without having radio play, and then everybody started calling Joe Bataan. And the rest was history. It still remains one of the biggest hits that I've ever recorded. It still sells in Europe. It sold well over three million records. It was the record of the year in France. It was number one in Belgium, number two in Germany. I battled Sugar Hill Gang around the world for first and second spot.

The only difficulty we had was getting it played in the United States. Apparently they were against anything that was rap in the early goings-on. England refused to play it because they wanted part of my publishing of which I refused to give them. And it wasn't until thirty-some years later that I returned to England and asked them and all is forgiven now, you know. So despite all of that, Joe Bataan has survived. And through the grace of God, I'm appearing and playing around the world. So it's not a bad story.

TN: I want to ask you about a couple of other songs in particular. For example, you recorded "Young, Gifted, and Brown," and it kind of echoes Nina Simone's song "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black."

JB: It's exactly that. When they had that I thought there was a need for the brown-skin person, right? When they talk about black, of course we think about the color being dark, and of course I wanted to project what I thought I was and other people out there. And I never even had any inkling that it would make an impact on a lot of people because La Raza, Filipinos, and a lot of Third World people who are of that pigmentation were sort of proud to hear that song 'cause they identified with it. But I had no idea what I was really doing. I know I was talking about myself, but never knowing the impact that song would have on a lot of the other people, and that's how the song was recorded.

TN: Looking at your whole body of work, it seems like you were influenced by things that were going on around you like the Civil Rights Movement, activism by the Young Lords, the Vietnam War, and even the Cold War. So in "Peace, Friendship, Solidarity" you dedicate the song to "the people of East Berlin and those struggling all over the world." I'm curious as to why you have that introduction to that song.

JB: Well, you know, some people will say I was ahead of the curve. I was not exactly ahead of the curve. I read a lot. I was always sort of up to date with current events and history. I love history. As far as music is concerned, I started to compare and put my location into my music, so if I was going to travel to a distant part of the world, why not use some of that history of whatever I was doing to coincide with my music and what I'm doing. So each day brought something on that was new.

At the particular time of "Peace, Friendship, Solidarity," I was asked to go to East Berlin with Angela Davis. At the time, I was discouraged to go with her because of her involvement in Civil Rights and what was going on at that time, and they were fearful that I might get blackballed and labeled as a communist. Of course I didn't adhere to that after I had done the concert at Shea stadium. I got my plane ticket from their organization, the Young Workers Party, and I

went. I got four guys, five guys to travel with me, and we represented the music from America. My idea was to spread the name and the music. Nothing to do with politics. But lo and behold, I did find out that some of the politics that were involved enhanced my knowledge of the situation around the world.

And what I found out with my arguments with a lot of the students who went on that trip with me is that there was a lot of sentiment around the world that was different than how we thought here in the United States, you know. And the one thing that I got back from a lot of people that were struggling is that they were upset with America's involvement in foreign soils. You know, that became a hot topic, because I had never thought about it that way because I had never traveled.

But now when I think about it I can understand to a degree, you know. Cuba had a blockade during that time, and they were crying for technology. They were still living with iceboxes. They didn't have refrigeration. When they drank beer and other drinks, it was lukewarm. The same thing held true for East Berlin. When I crossed Checkpoint Charlie going from West Berlin into East Berlin, the color changed. And as I described that, it was the best description I could have given for entering one country that was two different worlds. We left the West where we saw Technicolor similar to what we see here in the States. When we went to the East zone, everything became gray and dull. And that's what it was. It was the same thing with the people.

When I did get to the other side, in talking with the inhabitants, there was a strange feeling because there were no old people. They were all young, and when I asked, they said, "Hitler got rid of everybody that was old. He said we're the next generation." "Well," I said, "how do you greet me with open arms?" And they said, "Because racism is outlawed here."

You know of course the highlight of the afternoon was my Afro. They had never seen Afros in East Berlin. And everybody would come in the street and tell me. I was a celebrity before they even knew who I was, you know. And of course I did "Peace, Friendship, Solidarity" for the GDR [German Democratic Republic], at that time, and Angela Davis, and I included the words *Frieden, Friendship, Solidarität, Mira, Družby, Solidarnosti*. And I translated it into different languages. It was just like the highlight of the whole festival. Until this day, people remember that song. They say it's really appropriate now. It was just recently at Yoshi's they had me sing that song. A lot of people haven't heard that song, you know. But they say it holds true, the words and what I sang about then is appropriate now.

TN: So you have a lot of Chicano fans, and you have a song called "Chicana Girl" where you reference Chicano Park in San Diego.

JB: Right. As I said, Joe Bataan has been ahead of the curve. When I thought about it, and had to come up with the song, it's an old song, just like "Ordinary

Guy,” and I said, “Well, let me put the word *Chicana* in there because here’s an audience that’s in love with me, and I need to do something in turn for them.” So, I guess what I’m guilty of is that a lot of cultures don’t think about what I think about in terms of another culture, and I might be a first to do something. So “Chicana Lady” was sort of like a first. And I started to change the words from “A Special Girl” into “Chicana Lady,” and it took a while, but the song has gradually caught on, and La Raza is just in love with it, you know, with a lot of my songs that I do.

So my love affair with them started maybe forty-some years ago, and what is ironic about Chicanos, Mexicans, and La Raza is that they are a very supportive audience. They are very loyal. If they were my fan forty years ago, they passed it on, from one generation to the next, and my fans might be six years old all the way up to ninety. La Raza. So, to them I and my family really owe a lot, and what I try to do is, when I come to California mostly, I try to share, and as a performer, I’ve gotten better at that, you know, so I’ve been accused that when I perform, it’s like their uncle on stage talking to the family, you know.

TN: I want to change it up for a minute. How did your parents meet and get together in New York City?

JB: Yeah. Well, I guess it was strange, and I’m still trying to figure it out. My mother came from Newport News, Virginia, and she settled in Harlem. And my father came from the Philippines, in Manila, through San Diego, across [the] country to Harlem. He worked there and apparently they met, and I was conceived on a raining Sunday morning in 1942. And he always remarked, you know, [*in his father’s voice*] “You see, yeah,” he says, “I had to take your dighties and when you did it, I had to put it in my pocket.” [*Normal voice*] “You know,” he said, “because there was no place to throw it in the garbage.” So that was sort of like a joke back then, because they didn’t have Pampers, you know, so to see him as a new father taking the diaper and putting it in his pocket and hide it while he was in the hospital, you know, is really funny. But I remember those stories when he told me.

TN: When you were growing up, what parts of Filipino culture were you exposed to? Was it language, or food, or stories, or dances? Anything like that?

JB: Not much, not much. My father was very quiet, you know. I mean, they spoke Tagalog, I didn’t understand it for years. The only thing I ever got out was every third word, you know. Every third word, I’m sure, must have been a cuss word. [*Laughs*] I don’t want to say it on camera, but that was the first word that I learned. And his cooking, you know, we ate a lot of rice. I didn’t eat a lot of things. I was always fearful of fish, chicken, anything else. Maybe I was sixteen, seventeen years old when I started eating fish or anything else. I just wouldn’t

trust any type of fish, especially if it had bones in it. So that was me, and I don't know if that's a blessing or not. But, I'm fairly healthy, considering all those years. And, my father was very healthy, you know. He always watched what he ate. He never took any medicine, and I guess that was probably his downfall. He lived to be about eighty-four, but I'm sure he might have lived much longer if he had known about the medications that they have now. We didn't know. We were ignorant, really ignorant, especially at that time.

TN: You've described your ethnic identity as being Afro-Filipino, but culturally Puerto Rican, and I wonder how that shaped your worldview and your experiences, not in terms of being a musician, but more in terms of being a husband, a parent, a grandparent, and a youth counselor.

JB: It has its advantages because it brought a lot of knowledge. But it also had disadvantages, especially the haters. [With] any type of society that they don't consider pure, you have some sort of bias towards them or jealousy or that you don't fit in. This is no different in the Filipino community, the Latino community, any community that you want. We've had this going on since the beginning of time and history. And I'm glad that, I guess Paul, when he gave his gospel to the Gentiles, I guess that was part of that. We were accepted, and that's probably why we are here today, and we can share in all the graces of God. But I can understand that there were many, many arguments on the streets of New York, and throughout the country, "Well, what is this guy? Is he Black or is he Filipino?" "No, he's Filipino." "No, he's Black." It didn't really matter, but people took to that argument for their own personal feelings. To me, it didn't matter.

And then later on, I did devise a word in one of my albums called *Mestizo*. That was supposed to give that description of mixed blood, and I didn't think anybody would have understood what I was trying to say back then, but I think it's filtered through now, you know, the word *mestizo*. Of course, organizations like yourself and what you're involved in, and a lot of the different organizations around the world, people are starting to understand, and on a worldwide basis, that this is no longer kept in the closet. If you're mixed, so what? That's part of the game. It's all people.

And I just recently learned about the "One Drop Law." I knew nothing about that law. If you have one drop in you, you're considered to be Black, or I guess that's true for anything else, you know. But of course it's illegal now, but those types of things were held as law for so long, so you have to understand what the history of world has gone through. I'm no different. I'm just in modern times, but this has existed since the beginning of time, mostly about wars and our hatred, and everything that came out, it came out for religion and then your race. They had separation of class in South America—Zambos, Maroons—and I'm sure they have the same thing in Asian communities.

It's unfortunate, but a lot of that can be changed, and this is what I'm looking for [in] having a "Unity Day," for Asian Americans, Latinos, Third World people, where everybody of culture can come together. And having a "Unity Day," I believe that there are so many, especially the Filipino community, artists and entertainers that have not shared their success with one another and the public. If we can get a day where we can get somebody from the Black Eyed Peas to come, the guy that played, what's his name, [Ritchie] Valens, [Lou] Diamond [Phillips], a lot of these people that have come out publicly and said that they were Filipino or Asian for that matter of fact, to come and have this "Unity Day" with entertainment from around the world, we can start to build something.

When I talked about it with my friend who had been trying to start the organization after reading about the Yellow Seed and a lot of different organizations around the world, and I said, "Kilusan [Bautista] maybe we could do this, but we have to be careful of what name we use"; we're still working on it, but of course we got involved with you. Now we can see clear that we have autonomy, about women, a multicultural body. The Koreans have gotten in touch with me, the Smithsonian. I mean it's starting to happen, and there are people around the world that are starting to step up, so now, if we can bring national attention, we've already talked to some groups. They're starting to understand that there's much more to the Filipino question, to the Korean question, to all these questions that can be done. See, no longer do we have to be passive. Those days is over, we did that. I saw it with my father. A lot of things were left for the next person to do, but now it's time, before it's too late, to take our place.

What I learned throughout history, and I would learn from a teacher, there are different cultures that are coming to this country. Some have moved faster than others, and there's a reason. It's the aggressiveness. I mean don't get me wrong, it stands to reason that some cultures are slower than others, and there's probably good reason, but no longer do we have to sit around, passive, and wait for somebody else to do something, that we have to play it safe. No, it's time to set up, you know, "I'm Filipino," "Hey, I'm Korean," let's put it together, "Unity Day." We can have a day and a parade out there, just like everybody else. And this is what I want to do, and I want to do that before I check out. Kilusan is helping. I'm hoping that you're going to be involved and other people, because once we document this, and we keep talking about it, something is going to happen, because that's why Freddie Cordova said, "If you sit on history, it dies." And, he's so right. I mean, I never knew that Filipinos settled in Louisiana, back in the 1500s. I never knew that young lady that won an Olympic gold medal for swimming, from San Francisco. You know, all of this history can't be covered up anymore. It's got to be put out there in the libraries, just like Theo Gonzalves said, even though he had Joe Bataan, a study of me, there are all the people that need to be on the bookshelves, along with African Americans, and Latinos, and everybody else, and this is what I hope to do.

TN: So, Joe Bataan recorded up until the 1980s and then there was this long hiatus where there was no new music coming from you. I heard part of the story is you had some health issues, but in 2005 you came out with the new album, *Call My Name*.

JB: I didn't really have any health issues, unless you call love a health issue. That came later. My wife took me out of it. And we raised a family. I started back at work. I worked as a counselor at the Department of Juvenile Justice for twenty-five years. Of course that interfered with my playing, and I sort of like just left the scene. And, I was raising a family. Every Sunday I was at a karate match, raising my kids, hoping to get them into the Olympics. They studied *sho-tokan*. And, of course when the Olympics came in 1986, I forget what year it was, *taekwondo* was the national event, so that just knocked us out of the loop, you know. So we didn't pursue it after that. And then after that I gradually got back into music in '93 or '94 after having been away for so long. It was done partly on my behalf. I just fell out of it, you know.

Sometimes you lose touch. I wasn't involved in the loop, and it comes with a confidence level also. If you're not doing something for a while, you start to be very hesitant about getting back involved in it. Can you do it, you know? Then my voice was gone for about a year, and I had to rehearse for maybe over a year before my voice came back. And then lo and behold, I was playing in this club downtown, Varick Street. SOB's. And a young man who happened to be part Filipino, but you would have never known, you know. He looked like an Anglo. And he approached me. He says, "Hey, I got a studio and a band. I want you to sing with the band and do a recording." So of course, you get a lot of that back then, and I said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, just call me." But he did call. [*Chuckles*]

Yeah, so he had these songs that he had written. He must've studied my life and the type of music that I had done. And he sort of organized this sound around me as the vocalist before he even met me. And we went to some basement in Brooklyn. Dubbed, Deftones I think it is, something like that. And we recorded this album. So the young man had no idea what to do with the music, and I had seen that there was a record company in Spain that was starting to produce and release some of my stuff. So I said, "Why don't you call them up and maybe you can make a deal." He did. And lo and behold, they said, "If you get Joe Bataan with you, we'll take the album." So of course he called me. I made a separate contract and lo and behold *Call My Name* was released.

What's so ironic about this is that I've been in this position before. Whereas you might do something that you might think is foreign to what you normally do and it takes off. Like "Rap-O Clap-O." I was not a rapper and it became one of my biggest hits. So I had the same feeling about this album and the interviews kept coming. And I think I did no less than five hundred interviews that year around the world. It started to bring tears to my eyes because some of the press

read, “Well he’s been away for fifteen years and he’s back. And he hasn’t lost anything. And it is a great day that Joe Bataan is back.” Of course I was taken by the sentiment behind this and then I started to play. But the thing was I was being called abroad a lot to play in a lot of the countries, Spain, Italy. And the songs sort of did quite well and the album, internationally.

Not in the States, but internationally they did very well. As a result, I went on to do a Joe Bataan tour from now, and it sort of put Joe Bataan back on the map, you know, because all of a sudden there was this interest in Joe Bataan. And then especially for a new audience that had never heard of me, it opened up doors for my old catalog. They say, “Well, who’s this guy,” you know? So I guess it’s a different market and a different generation, so I think it was a way of the Lord to say, “Ok, it’s time for you to finish your mission. Yeah, I’ll let you come back.” That’s where I am. [*Laughs*]

TN: Talk about how you became an international music star before ideas like globalization even existed. You had fans all over Latin America, you had fans in Europe, and you had fans here in the States. How did that all come about?

JB: Well, it started with “Rap-O Clap-O” even though earlier recordings were sent around the world. But it didn’t really make, um, that big an impression around the world. It was just there like any other artist that comes around. But with the advent of RCA records that had a global distribution, Joe Bataan’s name was spread around the world and “Rap-O Clap-O” did that. As a result of “Rap-O Clap-O” everyone wanted to know, what else has this guy done?

So it opened up the door, so when people found out, it was very difficult to rack my records. You see, if you don’t understand the terminology, racking your records is where they put ’em in the bins for the public to come and buy them. So one guy remarked, he said, “Where do you put Joe Bataan’s music?” So, you put them in the Latin section. He said, “Nah.” He said, “And what’ll happen to the other people that want it who are not Latin.” He said, “Well, you put ’em in the soul section.” He said, “Nah. You don’t put ’em in the soul because then the Latins are not going to know where to find him.” He said, “So where do you put ’em?” He said, “You put him in world music.” So that particular story always stuck with me, and of course when I go to the bins to look for my own stuff, I look in the Latin and the soul. And I go to world music. And that’s the story of Joe Bataan and racking. [*Chuckles*]

TN: A friend of mine of mine in San Diego, who’s a conga player, wanted me to ask you this question. How did you come up with the idea of blending soul or doo-wop music with merengue and salsa and Latin music?

JB: Well, it was just down my alley. You have to understand I wasn't a musician. When I came up from prison I didn't even know how to play an instrument. All I knew was how to sing in the hallways, and I relied on my ear. My training was done by ear. I could harmonize. I knew my thirds, my fifths. I knew my dominant chords and stuff like that from ear training but not from learning theory. That came later on. So actually my education into music was backwards, you know. I learned by ear before I knew the technical part of it. Then when I started to learn the technical part everything else started to open up for me. I didn't know if I would have had the same success if I would have went vice versa.

TN: Right. I see.

JB: But most of my music dealt with feeling, so I could do more with three chords of music than creating something that I could have done with all of the technology that they would have given me in the classroom, you know. And my ear was exceptional. I could hear things on the radio and I knew instantly if there was some validity to what it had that was going to be appealing to the masses. So when I found out that secret, I decided not to make music for myself. I had to keep the audience in mind and how they would feel, so I would test it on young people. So that was sort of my formula, to test it on the young. Then I decided that I'd let my own recommendation stay for last, you know.

And it sort of worked in the past, but a lot of the ideas that I had at that time were . . . might have been ahead of their time or just weren't ready. It's surfacing now so that's sort of like a welcoming tribute to myself because, you know, here are songs that are coming now and all of a sudden people are liking them. And at that time when I first recorded them it was foreign to a lot of people's ears, you know. So you couldn't really put a place on them. I'd like to think that if you close your eyes and you had never met me you'd be wondering who I was, you know, because people were amazed that I also play Latin music, which is exceptional when you think of the artist, especially the purists, they don't play *tipica* or Latin music the same way as one from that culture. You see, to get musicians to feel both the pulse of *clave* and then to know the back beat of soul is exceptional. To play both, you know. And I've been able to do it with a lot of the musicians that have come with me, but they had to go through a learning experience because there's a definite feel.

TN: For *Asian American Literary Review* we're trying to support a lot of up and coming writers, artists, musicians, and actors. What kind of advice do you have for young Asian, Asian American, multiracial performers who are trying to get started right now?

JB: Well, it's something that I used as a counselor with the residents that I used to supervise. Spirit. You have to have something that you believe in. There is a supreme being that is the creator of everything that is here on Earth. Health. You got to take care of your body so that you can do all the chores that are necessary in life to sustain your spirituality and your health. Knowledge. You should not let one day go by without learning something new. It's almost criminal to waste a day in the mind. So with spirit, health, and knowledge I believe that's a basis for success in life and that would be my advice to aspiring actors, musicians, Asians, Latinos, Blacks, you name it. I mean the formula works.