

# RP Politics: Family Affair

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In 1898, **Emilio Aguinaldo** declared the Philippines an independent and sovereign state and became this nation's first president. A century plus three years later, his cousin, **Gloria M. Arroyo**, rose to the same position when **Joseph Ejercito Estrada** was toppled from power through the event known as People Power II. As it happened, Erap, too, was Gloria's relative. In fact, in a complicated and Byzantine manner, almost all of our former leaders were related to one another, in one way or the other. Allow me to extrapolate.

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Emilio Aguinaldo's first cousin's, General Baldomero Aguinaldo, great-grandson was **Cesar E.A. Virata**, the first and only Prime Minister of the Republic of the Philippines.

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The Virata family, through marriage, is connected with the Acuña family. One Acuña married a scion of the Roxas family. The product of this marriage was former **President Manuel A. Roxas**, whose son **Gerry Roxas** was a former Senator and whose grandson, **Mar Roxas III** was a Trade and Industry secretary and currently a Senator of the Republic.

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Also, due to his dalliance with Juanita McIlvain, former Miss Universe **Margarita "Margie" Moran Floirendo** just happens to be President Roxas' granddaughter.

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"President Manuel Roxas' wife, Trinidad de Leon, was the daughter of former **Senator Ceferino de Leon**. Sen. De Leon's brother, Jose, married **Dona Narcisa "Sisang" Buencamino**, one of the most successful movie magnates in her time. Narcisa's first cousin's son was Philip Buencamino, who married Nene Quezon, daughter of **President Manuel Luis Quezon**.

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Further, another scion of the Roxas family was Margarita Roxas, whose marriage to Antonio de Ayala produced Trinidad de Ayala. Trinidad later married Jacobo Zobel and started the legendary **Zobel De Ayala family**.

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Some of the minor branches of the Zobel de Ayala family married into the other aristocratic families of Manila. The **Aranetas, Ayalas, Elizaldes, Prietos**, and more. Through the Roxas family's connection with the Aranetas, former Tourism Secretary and beauty queen **Gemma Cruz-Araneta** is also related to Pres. Roxas.

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It must also be remembered that Gemma Cruz's paternal great-grandmother was Dona Maria Rizal, the sister of our national hero, **Jose P. Rizal**.

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Gemma Cruz's mother, Carmen, remarried Mr. Angel Nakpil, the nephew of **Julio Nakpil**, composer of a version of the Philippine National Anthem, who in turn was the husband of **Gregoria De Jesus**, the "Muse of the Katipunan."

Gregoria de Jesus was also the widow of Katipunan founder **Andres Bonifacio**. Similarly, two of Gemma's first cousins, Paz and Maria Cruz Banaad, married Bienvenido and Roberto Laurel, respectively, relatives of former **Vice-President Salvador "Doy" Laurel**, son of **President Jose P. Laurel**.

Two branches of the Araneta family further married presidential daughters; the first one being **Juan Miguel Arroyo**, whose second cousins are Aranetas. He married then **Ms. Gloria M. Macapagal**, daughter of **President Diosdado Macapagal**. Of course, GMA is now the country's Chief Executive. The second to marry a presidential daughter was Gregggy Araneta who married Irene Romualdez Marcos, the youngest child of **President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos** and **Imelda Romualdez**. The Araneta-Marcos marriage further stretches our already complicated family connections.

A maternal grandfather of Marcos, Don Fructuoso Edralin, was a cousin of **Gen. Antonio Luna** and his brother the Filipino national artist, **Juan Luna**. Juan Luna in turn married Paz Pardo de Tavera, of a rich and powerful Spanish-Filipino family.

Ferdinand Marcos' grandfather's sister, Crispina Marcos, married Hilario Valdez. Their daughter, Angela Valdez, married **Ambassador Narciso Ramos**, father of **Fidel V. Ramos**, also a President of the Republic. Narciso Ramos, after becoming a widower, married Alfonsita Lucero, whose father's maternal family, the Birondos of Argao, Cebu, married into the **Almendras family** of Cebu and Davao.

Alfonsita's fourth cousin, William Birondo, married Kukit Tecala, whose uncle, Pedro Tecala Sr., married Sofronia Almendras. Two of Sofronia's siblings married into political families. Her brother, Paulo Almendras, married Elisea Durano, the daughter of Demetrio Durano and progenitor of the **Durano family** that has ruled Danao and Sogod, Cebu for many years. A prominent member of the Durano family is **Ace Durano**, a former representative and now Tourism Secretary.

Another cousin of Alfonsita, Dr. Procopio Lucero, Jr., married Gliseria Gullas, sister of politicians **Jose and Eduardo Gullas**.

Still another fourth cousin of Alfonsita is Hilario Davide, Sr., whose son is **Hilario G. Davide, Jr.**, a former Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court.

A son of Paulo was former **Senator Alejandro Almendras**, whose marriage to a Bendigo of Davao City connected them to the ruling families of Davao: the **Banggoys, Palma Gils, Lizadas, Nograleses** and others. The current House of Representative Majority Leader is **Prospero "Boy" Nograles** from Davao City. Senator Almendras' brother, Josefino, married Rosita Dimataga, the sister of Leonila Dimataga, who in turn was the wife of **President Carlos P. Garcia**.

One of Sofronia's sisters was married to an Osmeña, thus linking them to the family of **President Sergio Osmeña**. Most of President Osmeña's male descendants have become senator, governor, mayor, Representative, and councilor at various points in time and his family remains the premier political dynasty of Cebu: **Tomas** is the current mayor of Cebu City; other members of the family who held or are holding political offices are Jing-Jing, Emilio "Lito", John, John-John, and many more.

President Osmeña's half-sister was **Doña Modesto Singson-Gaisano**, the matriarch of the affluent Gaisano family of Cebu City. Modesta was a progeny of Don

Pedro Gotiaoco, whose other descendants include **Atty. Augusto Go**, President of the University of Cebu and Honorary South Korean Consul; **John Gokongwei, Jr.**, a great-grandson of Don Pedro Gotiaoco and the owner of Cebu Pacific, Robinson's Mall, JG Summit, and many more; and the Sy-Gaisano family, who operate chains of shopping malls all over Visayas and Mindanao. A grandson of the brother of Don Pedro is **Andrew Gotianun**, who owns FILINVEST Group and East West Bank.

Imelda Romualdez's marriage to Marcos also brought in many famous personalities. Imelda's daughter, **Imee**, currently a member of the House of Representatives, married Tommy Manotoc, whose mother was related to a wife of Genny Lopez, whose own nephew Beaver married Jackie Estrada, daughter of **Pres. Erap Estrada**.

Her own niece, Marean Romualdez, daughter of her brother **Gov. Alfredo Romualdez**, married Thomas Pompidou, the grandson of the **French President Georges Pompidou**.

Imelda's first cousin, **Senator Danieling Romualdez**, married Pacita Gueco of Tarlac. In an ironic twist of fate, Pacita Gueco happened to be the first cousin of the **Senator Benigno Aquino Jr.**

Of course, the Aquinos themselves have allied with many political families, and a scion of the Aquino clan was **Senator Eva Estrada Kalaw**, one of the Philippines' very first female senators.

Ninoy's marriage to the heiress **Corazon Cojuangco** also allied his family to another political dynasty. Corazon Aquino, after her husband's heroic death in 1983, later became the country's first female Chief Executive. Her maternal family, the Sumulong, have also produced several lawmakers. The Cojuangco family, on the other hand, owns one of the oldest-existing haciendas in the country today, and the Cojuangcos control many of the country's business enterprises.

Two Cojuangcos, sons of Cory's cousins Ramon and Eduardo, respectively, married Rio Diaz (Charlie Cojuangco), sister of former **Miss Universe Gloria Diaz** and Gretchen Baretto (Tony Boy Cojuangco). Gretchen's sisters are Claudine and Marjorie, themselves married to actors. Cory's niece, equestrienne Mikee Cojuangco, married Dodot Jaworski, son of basketball legend and **Sen. Robert Jaworski**. Senator Jaworski, on the other hand, married Susan Bautista Revilla, daughter of **Sen. Ramon Revilla Sr.**, whose son Bong Revilla was a former governor and Senator. This connection, no doubt, extends this family tree to most of the country's movie personalities.

Clearly, this Byzantine illustration of family connection is proof of the intricacies of Philippine politics. In this short presentation we have already linked no less than 12 of our 14 Presidents, one Prime Minister, two former Miss Universe winners, several senators and many other personalities, political or otherwise. We have even connected our "Philippine Family Tree" to a former French President! Imagine what further research into the other family trees could reveal?

Philippine politics, undoubtedly, is a family affair.