

Could you be deported?

I wrote a column on Saturday about getting a mortgage in the Philippines. In the comments on the column, there was a lot of talk about the debate over which is better, buying or renting property. One thing that was pointed out several times in the discussion is that as foreigners, we cannot own property in the Philippines.



Yes, there are ways to buy a house. The easiest is if you are married to a Filipina, you buy the house in her name. Foreigners can also buy Condominiums, but only a maximum of 40% of the entire Condo unit can be foreign owned. All in all, it is a good idea to keep in mind that as a foreigner, you simply cannot own real estate property in the Philippines. For years now, there has been discussion about changing the Constitution of the country to allow for foreign ownership of property, but for now it does not appear that such a change will be coming through any time soon. As Dave Starr pointed out in the conversation, if you do buy, under the conditions I described previously, if there is a marital problem or something along those lines, you stand to lose your property.

I have another consideration, though. What if you were deported? Don't blow this off, deportation of foreigners is something that happens every day. Did you know that you can be deported for simply getting angry and raising your voice at a Filipino? It's true! Let's say that you are in a restaurant and the service is poor. You lose your cool and get angry at the waitress. She can go to the Bureau of Immigration and file a complaint against you, and most likely, you will be deported! There is some kind of rule or law that says that you are not allowed to be disrespectful to a Filipino.

For me, this goes a little too far. I mean, everybody gets mad from time to time, and I feel that it should not be a deportable offense, however, this is the law, and you and I are not the ones who decide on it.

Here in Davao, there are often cases where foreigners are up for review for deportation. I know of one case where a British man in Davao was jailed for physical abuse of his girlfriend and he was nearly deported for that. Last year, a Korean was seen on the golf course yelling at his Filipino caddy, and he was deported for that. These cases seem to pop up in the news every few months or so.

What would you do if you owned a house, and ended up being deported?

For me, I feel that I have lived here long enough that I have learned to control my anger when it is present. I can also say that I have lost my cool in past years plenty of times, and was just lucky that I was not deported, or in some kind of trouble over such incidents. Now, I rarely get mad in public, though. However, you just never know what might happen!

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