

On My Mind
by Ruth L. Tighe

There's a saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, so here's a suggestion to the CNMI delegation that will be testifying before the U.S. Senate next month: bring pictures. Pictures of the fencing around Saipan's garment factories and barracks, emphasizing the lack of barbed wire and broken-glass-topped walls. Pictures of the barracks, showing the clean and maintained exteriors. Pictures of the barracks facilities - the kitchens, bathrooms, the sleeping rooms. Pictures of busses of workers as they exit the bus in front of Payless or JoeTen. Pictures of workers as they gather around one of the vegetable trucks, freely gathering, and purchasing foodstuffs. Pictures of the workers on a Sunday, dressed up and strolling down the street, waiting for rides to take them out for the day.

Bring enough pictures for each of the CNMI's most vocal critics. Bring pictures of more than just one or two factories, barracks. Bring enough to made a credible case. Label the time and place where each of the pictures was taken. And let the pictures speak for themselves, let the pictures be the CNMI's answer to those absurd, exaggerated, untrue depictions of the so-called plight of CNMI's garment workers that keep being regurgitated in and by the media.

Graphs, charts, statistics, reports are all very well. And they too are necessary, of course. But some things pictures do better.

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Most people are probably grateful for the rain we've been getting lately. It's good for the trees, the plants, the yard. It's good for the islands' aquifers. It's good for those who have water catchments.

But it's also cause for anger, frustration, recrimination - or it ought to be. Just think of all that water running away, flooding roads and yards, carrying silt into the lagoon, eroding the soil. Think of it soaking down through the ground, into the aquifers, to be pumped back out (which costs money) though leaky pipes (which wastes water) into storage tanks (which cost money) and then channelled into leaky pipes (which waste water) to be delivered to leaky faucets (which waste more water).

If the law still on the books, to the best of my knowledge - that all NMHC houses should be built with water catchment tanks - had ever been enforced, some of that lost water would, instead, be serving a more useful purpose. If a law were ever passed - as it should be - that all new homes should be built with water catchment systems, more of that lost water would be put to good use.

Use of home catchment systems would allow the underground aquifers to collect more "clean" water, instead of their being over-pumped to the point where salt water is brought up. And if the aquifers were given a chance to grow, that, in turn, would mean more water for everyone during dry seasons.

It's aggravating, frustrating, to read the stories about the islands' water shortages. They didn't, don't, really need to happen. All that's needed is to make water catchment systems mandatory. If auto insurance can be made mandatory - for the good of the people and for the solvency of CHC, why can't catchment systems be made mandatory for the good of the people and the solvency of CUC?

And water catchments do save water. I haven't had to add city water to my tank in months.

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re tipping fees and idea of making manufacturers responsible for disposal of their products.