

Front News

Supreme Court repeals disqualification case vs Poe

March 13, 2016

By: Yashika F. Torib

The Supreme Court (SC) has finally ruled in the disqualification case filed by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) against presidential aspirant Senator Grace Poe.

Nine out of six justices voted in favor of Poe, thus, allowing her to continue running for president.

In its 47-page main decision, the SC said that there is “more than sufficient evidence” that Poe is a natural-born Filipino under domestic and international laws – laws that do not warrant discrimination against foundlings.

It also agreed that she has met the 10-year residency requirement for presidential candidates.

The justices who voted in favor of the senator includes Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, newly-appointed Associate Justice Benjamin Caguioa, case ponente Jose Perez, Presbitero Velasco Jr., Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Bersamin, Jose Mendoza, Marvic Leonen, and Francis Jardeleza.

The six others who voted against Poe are Antonio Carpio, Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Mariano del Castillo, Arturo Brion, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, and Bienvenido Reyes.

Justice Del Castillo asserts Poe’s lack of residency requirement

Despite the higher court issuing its final verdict for Poe last March 8, Justice Mariano del Castillo, who voted against Poe, contends that the senator lacks the 10-year residency requirement for presidential candidate.

Del Castillo’s 70-page Dissenting Opinion rejects the 9-6 ruling of the Supreme Court and rejects Poe’s defense of honest mistake when she declared “six years and six months” of residency in her 2012 Certificate of Candidacy for senator. Considering such case is equivalent to Poe lacking the 10-year residency requirement for presidency as she is short of six months.

The said justice disputed Poe's claim of honest mistake by stating in his Dissenting Opinion that her declaration was "shrouded in doubt."

Del Castillo noted that Poe was maintaining her house in the U.S., which she bought in 1992, and bought a new one in 2008 – three years after she declared intention to remain in the Philippines.

He added that Poe's stay in the Philippines from May 24, 2005 was not considered permanent and could not be included in counting her length of residency because she only arrived with a Balikbayan Visa, allowing her to stay in the country for only a year.

"It was merely temporary," del Castillo writes. "At most, her stay in the Philippines would only be for one year (under RA 6768). This only proves that her stay was not impressed with *animus manendi*, i.e. the intent to remain in or at the domicile of choice for an indefinite period of time."

He further believes that Poe only renounced her US citizenship simply to meet the requirements for appointment as chairperson of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

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Editorial

Grace Poe decision: New turn in Philippine Polls?

A new favorable ruling for first-term senator Grace Poe could play a critical role in upcoming polls.

The Philippine Supreme Court ruled on March 8, 2016 that Poe is eligible to run for president, thereby removing a key uncertainty in the country's national elections in May, with a 9-6 vote.

The decision reverses the election commission's earlier decision to disqualify her for failing to meet citizenship and residency requirements.

The COMELEC, however, said that it will abide by the high court's decision, and will mull over seeking appeal.

If the ruling holds up, Poe, still a forerunner in the presidential race, would be in a strong position to emerge as the next leader of Southeast Asia's second most populous nation.

The most recent poll by independent group Pulse Asia showed Poe continued to lead despite a slight dip in her numbers following the election commission's decision, coming in at 26 percent, with the current vice-president Jejomar Binay catching up in a statistical tie with her at 25 percent. Meanwhile, southern city mayor Rodrigo Duterte and ex-interior minister Manuel Roxas, current President Benigno Aquino III's handpicked successor, are both tied at 21 percent.

Theodore Te, spokesman for the Supreme Court, confirmed that the text of the main ruling and the opinions of the judges would be released shortly.

Poe's opponents have already said they would seek an appeal of the decision, particularly since it was a close one that could be reversed following reconsideration.

Poe's meteoric rise in popularity and Supreme Court decision may see exponential gains as a result, some say.

The US-educated Poe, who flip-flopped on her citizenship, from American, to Philippine, is a former pre-school teacher, is the adopted daughter of one of the country's most famous movie couple Fernando Poe Jr (and Susan Rocas), who mostly played as a defender of the poor, where about a fourth of 100 million-odd Filipinos wallow in poverty.

Some say her popularity leans on her father's. Others say she's rumored to be an illegitimate daughter of the late strongman President Ferdinand Marcos. While still others say that she will just carry on with the same-old, same-old pro-elite, pro-US policies of incumbent President Benigno Aquino III, being allegedly, as well, favored by the elite (big business and intellectuals).

Aquino's successor, as those before him, will grapple with the seemingly accelerated poverty, corruption, Marxist, and Muslim insurgencies -- persistent problems facing a country that is devoid of a national political will, a people that still needs a great deal of independent thinking reversed to being contently numb, just listening to the infinite political campaign of empty rhetorics, that after being elected, have a way of instantly evaporating into thin air.

In the final analysis, any elected leader of any State, simply lies in the power of the narrative, or, a well-oiled PR machine (propaganda), or, even, as history proves, a rigged election, for that matter.

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Straight Talk

By Ed Libranda

US-CHINA TENSIONS IN WEST PHILIPPINE SEA

The growing tensions between the United States and China have escalated with the show of force by the United States Navy with the deployment of battleships in the South China Sea, also known as the West Philippine Sea.

Whatever actions that may be orchestrated by countries contesting control over the disputed islands will only heighten the controversy between two superpowers, United States and China.

The Philippines will always be at a loss, whether we win in our desire to enforce UNCLOS with the International Arbitration. China can always assert its force in a tiny nation like the Philippines. Retiring Department of Foreign Affairs secretary Albert del Rosario, in a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry and US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter in January 2016, secured a commitment of defense from the United States.

"If you take a look at the matter closely, it's the US sending the most advanced aircraft and military vessels to the South China Sea," Fu Ying, China parliament spokeswoman, told reporters. The US Navy Times reported the "small armada" dispatched to the South China Sea included two destroyers, two cruisers and the Japan-based US 7th Fleet command ship Blue Ridge.

Officials in the Philippine government, notably the spokesperson of the DFA, are not alarmed by the rift and even maintained a "lets wait and see" attitude. Is it because of our utmost dependence on US to rightfully protect us from any intrusion of a bullying power like China, which has shown its impunity by reclaiming areas in the disputed Spratly Islands chain in the South China Sea.

The US stressed that it will not allow China to control the South China Sea.

Both countries have visibly shown its defense build-up. The Philippines, for one, has EDCA to allow US to maintain its presence in our country with constant visits of US battleships and nuclear powered US Pacific Fleet at Subic Bay, and the combined RP-US military exercise.

Neither the US or China will ever flex its muscles, with the constant expansionism of "militarization" by China, and the continuing patrol of US warships in the international waters and maintain status quo among claimants in the South China Sea.

US will continue to enforce freedom of navigation in the waters through which about US\$5 trillion (\$7.4) of trade is shipped each year.

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News at a Glance

Filipino businessman denies links to money laundering scheme

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A Filipino businessman, one of six people under investigation for the alleged laundering of \$81 million dollars thought to have been stolen from the U.S. account of Bangladesh's central bank, on Friday asked authorities to unfreeze his bank accounts, denying involvement in the scheme.

William S. Go, petitioned the Court of Appeals to reconsider a March 1 freeze order issued at the request of the Anti-Money Laundering Council. He said one account under his name and another under the name of his company, Centurytex Trading, at a branch of the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. were bogus and his signature had been forged.

TV5, Philippine Star sponsor Cebu Presidential Debate

As the election campaign heats up and the issues start to come together on what is at stake for the nation, the Filipino people turn its attention to the forthcoming "Cebu Face-Off" among the leading "presidentiables". TV5 together with the Philippine Star will host this second presidential debate on March 20, 2016 at the Performing Arts Hall at the University of the Philippines campus in Cebu ..

Explain 'fake account,' RCBC chief tells branch manager

MANILA – The president of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) has asked a branch manager of one of its banks linked to an \$81-million money-laundering transaction to explain the alleged fake bank account used in the scheme.

Atty. Francis Lim, lawyer of RCBC president and CEO Lorenzo Tan, said Atty. Ferdinand Topacio, lawyer of RCBC Jupiter branch Maia Santos-Deguito, should tell his client to explain the accusation of Mr. William Go of Centurytex Trading that she opened an account without Go's knowledge.

Go's alleged account, along with several others, was supposedly used to funnel "dirty money" into the Philippine financial system before being laundered in casinos.

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Entertainment

KRIS AQUINO TO LEAVE ABS-CBN MARCH 29, 2016

The move is not to transfer to other network but to take time off from showbiz for the sake of her health and to take care of her children Josh and Bimby. "Our relationship as a family started October 28, 1996 and it will soon end this March 23, 2016. A total of 10,354 days working for ABS-CBN, my life's most fulfilling professional journey because of your love, acceptance, and loyalty. Just like all of you, I love my family. My most valuable life destiny is to be Mama to Kuya Josh and Bimby; and to be a loving, selfless sister to Ate Pinky, Noy, and Viel: a bunso who doesn't give them constant worry because of my health and safety.

I'm not putting a time frame, but with my type of work, it's realistic to accept by leaving ABS-CBN I'll be replaced and soon forgotten... My sons and I will travel, we'll move to our new home, and I'll eat healthy, sleep early, exercise regularly, and live quiet – everything to make sure Kuya Josh and Bimb have a healthy mother. This isn't goodbye — this is I hope you'll miss me and I hope to see you again, soon. My not so healthy heart wants to thank all of your for your love, for me, my family and my work. I'll be back with a 100% healthy heart so I can love all of you even more and for much longer." graph. Click here to add your own text and edit me. It's easy.

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Sports

2016 PBA Commissioner's Cup Preview: San Miguel Beermen vs Rain or Shine Elastopainters

ROS beat SMB in the elims of the 2015-2016 PHL Cup, but the Beermen rebounded in a big way in the semifinals, defeating ROS and booting the Painters out, 4-2, int heir best-of-7 series. It was a particularly painful defeat for ROS since there were a couple of contests where they led big only to see the Beermen rally in the final period. Without a doubt, ROS knows they can hang and bang with SMB, but in this their first match this conference, will be a repeat of that stinging loss, or will the Painters achieve a measure of vengeance?

SMB was locked in a tight battle in its last game, dealing MER their first loss of the conference. Tyler Wilkerson and June Mar Fajardo made life tough in the middle for MER's Arinze Onuaku, while Marcio Lassiter, Alex Cabagnot, and Gabby Espinas all combined to do really well also.

They will have to do some adjustments here, though, as ROS will parade new import Mo Charlo, who is advertised as a wide-bodied banger.

Speaking of Charlo, he comes in to replace the somewhat ineffective Antoine Wright. The 6'8 Charlo brings a colorful resume that includes stops in Uruguay, Japan, and the NBA D-League. ROS hopes Charlo can complement the Painters' other good frontliners, namely JR Quiñahan, Beau Belga, and Raymond Almazan. ROS is coming off an impressive blowout win over NLX, and that should give them great momentum heading into this pivotal tussle with the Beermen.

SMB needs a win here to get solo second and distance themselves from GIN and MAH, while ROS wants to begin moving to the top half of the standings. A loss here will keep ROS mired in the bottom six.

1. SMB: TERRIFIC TYLER

Tyler Wilkerson has been nothing but amazing for SMB. The former KBL import has been a match-up nightmare. He can score around the basket, but he has also proven to be quite deadly from beyond the arc? I mean, how do you guard that, right? I guess you try your best to NOT let him get the ball because when he does, all you can do is pray he has an off night.

vs MER: 27pts, 10rebs, 2asts, 2blks, 1stl, 2 triples.

Stats: 35.8ppg, 12.5rpg, 1.5apg, 3.0bpg, 3.5 triples per game, 48.3 3pt%, 50.0 FG%

2. SMB: POUNDED IN THE PAINT?

SMB was outscored in the paint by MER in their last game. That shouldn't happen again, but that's easier said than done against a team like ROS that's loaded at the 4 and 5 spots. Bring in new import Mo Charlo, and the Beermen may really have their work cut out for them protecting the rim. Pts in the Paint: MER 58, SMB 32

3. SMB: GARBAGE INTO GOLD

SMB is near the top in terms of 2nd chance points and points off turnovers. In short, this team isn't just deep in all positions. They're also very good at turning garbage into gold. If they can use their edge in size to the hilt for those offensive boards and at the same time force some turnovers, the Beermen may be able to run away with their fourth win of the conference.

SMB stats:

2nd chance pts – 15.8ppg (#2)

Pts off TOs – 19.8ppg (#3)

Opponent's TOs – 16.8 topg (#4)

4. ROS: BACK-UP POWER

Bench play was big in ROS's win over NLX. It helps, of course, to have guys like Almazan, Cruz, and Chan coming off the pine. They'll need that bench depth in this game, especially since the Beermen have one of the deepest rosters in the league. If coach Yeng Guiao's second unit can be productive, there's a good chance the Painters can pull off a W.

Last Game Bench Pts: ROS 70, NLX 30

Jewel Ponferada – 15pts, 2stls

Raymond Almazan – 14pts, 1blk

Jericho Cruz – 12pts, 5rebs, 2asts

Jeff Chan – 12pts, 6rebs, 2asts, 2 triples

5. ROS: MO COMES TO TOWN

Just who is Mo Charlo? He's not exactly NBA-grade, but he has been a reasonable effective import in a number of countries, including Japan and Uruguay. He certainly brings a lot of size (He is 6'8.), and should add more athleticism to the Painters' frontline. As long as he can mute or match the production of Tyler Wilkerson, Charlo should be a great addition to the Painters.

Stats in Uruguay: 18.3ppg, 7.0rpg, 1.0apg, 1.3spg

Stats in Japan (BJ League): 18.4ppg, 8.5rpg, 3.6apg, 1.5spg

6. ROS: BRICK BY BORING BRICK

ROS is currently the worst FG shooting team in the league, throwing up one brick after another. They aren't really the worst in 2pt FGs or 3pt FGs, but they're pretty bad in both. Much of that is due to Antoine Wright's low FG% when he was still this team's import, so having a new reinforcement should change their numbers somewhat. Hopefully, it'll be for the better.

ROS Stats:

FG% – 42.9% (#12)

2pt% – 47.9% (#8)

3pt% – 34.6% (#8)

7. KEY MATCH-UP: MARCIO LASSITER X JERICHO CRUZ

Lassiter has reached the level where he is mentioned in the "Best SG of the PBA" conversation, while Cruz has become a breakout star for coach Yeng Guiao. This match-up will be quite interesting as Lassiter can heat up quickly like a microwave, while Cruz is more attuned to attacking the basket.

Lassiter last game: 10pts, 3rebs, 2asts, 2 triples, 4/11 FGs

Cruz last game: 12pts, 5rebs, 2asts, 1stl, 6/11 FGs

Lassiter stats: 15.8ppg, 3.8rpg, 3.3apg, 3.3 triples per game, 44.8 3pt%, 48.9 FG%

Cruz stats: 13.2ppg, 2.6rpg, 2.2apg, 1.2 triple per game, 40.0 3pt%, 52.6 FG%

Tourism

The Angono Petroglyphs Stone Art Exhibit Circa 3000 B.C

By Randy V. Urlanda

Manila Bureau Chief Correspondent

Angono, an idyllic lakeshore town of more than 100,000 inhabitants in the province of Rizal that is better known for its dynamic community of painters, is living up to its name as the nation's repository of its pre-historic artistic legacy.

In 1965, while searching for an ideal location to paint in the wilderness of nearby Binangonan town, the late National Artist for Visual Arts, Carlos "Botong" Francisco, one of Angono's illustrious sons, stumbled into what could possibly be where his aesthetic DNA, and that of the other dozen or so artists in town, has originated.

In a secluded vantage ground called Matandang Yungib (Old Cave) that lies 163 meters above sea level overlooking the vast Laguna de Bay, the wide-eyed Botong came face to face, literally, with a veritable treasure trove of rare stone engravings called petroglyphs.

Angono's primeval artworks' accidental discovery was not unusual though.

Some less obvious archaeological sites in the world were discovered by non-archaeologists like Botong. In 1940, four children in search of their dog came upon the now famous Lascaux Cave in southwestern France, which contains wall paintings believed to be more than 20,000 years old, pretty much younger than Angono's rock paintings, which were more than 1,000 years old!

Despite being called the Angono Petroglyphs, the people of the adjoining town of Binangonan also claims it to be their own, its site Matandang Yungib being within the area of Sitio Pinagpala, one of several sub-villages of Barangay Tayuman of that neighboring municipality.

Because of its highly cultural significance, Pres. Ferdinand E. Marcos declared the petroglyphs as a "National Cultural Treasure" under Presidential Decree No. 260 in August 1973.

In 1985, the Angono stone artworks were included in the "World Inventory of Rock Art" under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council on Monument and Site (ICOMOS). Having been validated as one of the oldest in the Asia-Pacific Region, the Angono petroglyphs have been listed in the "Standard Rock Site Record Files." In 1996, the World Monument Watch (WMW), a non-profit organization based in New York City, whose concerns are cultural heritage sites worldwide, included the Angono site as one of the "100 Most Endangered Sites in the World," putting it in the same league with the City of Pompeii in Italy that was buried in 79 A.D. by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Its inclusion in the list of WMW was like a much-needed shot in the arm to prolong its life further for another 1,000 years or more.

Before the start of the Angono petroglyphs preservation efforts partly funded by WMW, the site remained neglected for the last three millennia. As a result, the engraved rock drawings suffered considerably from rapid deterioration due to physical and chemical weathering, growth of algae and fungi, termite infestation and worse, defacement due to human vandalism. This could be gleaned by nicknames and modern day symbols etched alongside some of the etched drawings, possibly done by game hunters or wood gatherers who were not aware of the immense cultural value of the engraved art treasure.

Then came real estate development in the area that proved to be a boon to the site's preservation.

In the mid-1990s, a sprawling world class golf course was built around the lofty cultural heritage site. Knowing its unparalleled cultural significance, the owners donated the area to the government in 1996. Now, the stone art preservation and site development of the Angono petroglyphs are being undertaken by the National Museum, the Department of Tourism and the Antipolo Properties, Inc. (API), the donor of the land. For visitors' easy access, API also bore a 20-meter tunnel under the forested ridge that conceals the ancient cultural treasure from public view.

The narrow underground passageway could accommodate a Jeep and guests who prefer to take a shorter route from the golf course's club house. The site could also be reached via the traffic-clogged Angono-Binangonan Road or through Antipolo, which is much closer to the golf course's northeastern gate where the petroglyphs are located.

In 1998, the American Express International, through the World Monument Watch, extended financial assistance for the restoration of the rock art in the amount of \$50,000 to augment the P50 million budget the DOT had allocated for the place's initial phase of development. This included the establishment of the site conservation management program in order to preserve the rock drawings, and develop the place for cultural tourism.

The Filipino nation must commemorate the innate artistry of the original inhabitants of the place by leaving behind some of their impressions of their primeval lifestyle 3,000 years ago. While prehistoric people in other parts of the world painted their history on cave walls, our ancestors made it double more enduring by chronicling theirs on rock etchings.

Even then, we already knew how to preserve our cultural heritage, even in symbols, that could endure the test of time. Now, it is up to us to maintain them so that they could be passed on to our future generations.

These antediluvian rock drawings were etched by ancient artists during the late Neolithic period on an uneven vertical wall of volcanic tuff protected from the elements by a wide stone overhang and shielded from the outside world by a densely forested ridge.

As we all know, it is customary now to put vital fragments of contemporary history inside stainless steel time capsules that are usually buried with the cornerstone of a new building for future generations to know about us. Along this line, pre-historic people also left behind tools, bones, pottery, and artworks before writing was invented more than 3,000 years ago, for the present civilization to learn from our Jurassic ancestors.

Altogether, 127 figural carvings of man-like, frog-like and lizard-like figures were engraved by Angono's prehistoric artists on the rough wall of the secluded rock shelter that dates back to the Third Millennium B.C. Measuring 63 meters wide, eight meters deep and five meters high, the rock pictures are believed to be the oldest known artworks in the Philippines, and one among the oldest surviving examples of rock engravings in Asia.

The word petroglyph was derived from the French word petroglyphe – Greek *petra* (rock) and *glyphe* (a carving). Generally, the figures have a circular or dome-like head on top of a V-shaped torso. The engravings are distributed on a horizontal plane on the 63-meter wide rock wall.

An archaeological excavation team headed by the late Dr. Jesus T. Peralta of the National Museum went to the site immediately after Botong Francisco found them 48 years ago. There,

the group unearthed fragments of earthenware and obsidian (volcanic glass) flakes on the rock shelter's sandy floor. These artifacts suggested they were made during a period prior to the Neolithic Age or the introduction of metals in the archipelago.

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Community News

Texas Gawad Kalinga sponsors dinner fundraising, April 23, 2016

Texas Gawad Kalinga will sponsor a dinner dance fundraising with DJ Egay on Saturday, April 23, 2016 at the San Lorenzo Ruis de Manila Community Center, 16411 West Bellfort St., Sugar Land, Texas 77498. The cost of the ticket is \$30.

Proceeds of the event will benefit Gawad Kalinga projects in the Philippines.

For more info, pls call the following:

CAROL - 713-907-8047;

JUN 832-274-2341;

ALEX 713-471-5159,

and MARIE 713-732-0738

FILIPINO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AT ROCKETS GAMES

- APRIL 7, 2016

The Filipino Young Professionals (FYP) will participate during the Filipino Heritage Night during the Rockets game, Thursday, April 7, 2016 at the Toyota Center at 1510 Polk St., Houston, TX 77002. The performance is set between 7pm - 10pm.

Support the FYP participation by buying tickets and cheer on the FYP Culutral Performers as they perform at the Toyota Center with the Houston Rockets playing against Phoenix Suns.

HOUSTON ROYAL OAKS LEO CLUB INDUCTS NEW OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

HOUSTON - The Houston Royal Oaks Club of Houston, sponsor of the Houston Royal Oaks Leo Club held their induction of officers and members, Saturday, March 12, 2016 at the Grace United Church of Christ, 8515 Broadwulf Drive, Houston, Texas 77072.

Lion Minette Chiu, Leo Advisor, called to order the ceremony, and Lion Annette Wierschem gave the invocation while Leo President Ahmed Emara enjoined the Leos, Lions and guests to recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. All Leos then recited the Leo Pledge.

Lion Emee Nisnisan, zone chair of Lions District 2S2 and immediate past president Leo Helber Anderson gave the opening remarks. Lion Minette Chiu, District Leo Advisor and Leo Advisory Committee inducted the new officers and members. The new officers are: Leo Ahmed Emara, president; Leo Helbert Anderson, vice president for outreach; Leo Ana Baleva, vice president for education; Leo Jai Mai Marks, Secretary and Treasurer; Leo Bethel Garriel, membership director; Leo Brendan Garriel, tail twister. Past presidents of the Houston Royal Oaks Leo Club are: Lion Joy Nisnisan (charter president); Lion Jasmine Emara; Leo Mara Nisnisan, and Leo Helbert Andersen. Members are: Leo Steven Okoronkwo; Leo Maxine Sencil; Leo AJ Adriatico; Leo Cassandra Schaeffer; Leo Annaliza Suerte; Leo Marisa Garcia; Leo Tatiana Okoronkwo; Leo Hanna Sencil; Leo Addisen Schaeffer; Leo Kathleen Kae Dela Rosa, and Leo Christine Wierschem.

The Leo Club Advisory Committee is composed of the following: Lion Minette Chiu, advisor; Lion Niesan Emara, co-advisor; Lion Emee Nisnisan, advisory panel, and Lion Annette Wierschem and Lion Amy Alidon..

Immigration

Clinton and Sanders clash on immigration at Miami debate

Hillary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders clashed vividly over immigration reform and deportations during a contentious debate in Miami on Wednesday night. The two Democrats made aggressive appeals to Hispanic voters while also presenting themselves as the strongest candidate against Donald J. Trump, the Republican front-runner, in the general election.

Clinton, bruised by her surprise loss in the Michigan primary a day earlier, relentlessly attacked Sanders for opposing a 2007 bill that would have created a path to citizenship for millions of immigrants in the country illegally. Aiming her remarks at the large Hispanic audience watching on Univision, a Spanish-language sponsor of the debate, Clinton portrayed herself as a defender of immigrant parents and children and argued that Sanders was not a fighter on the issue. "We had Republican support," Clinton said. "We had a president willing to sign it. I voted for that bill. Senator Sanders voted against it."

She refused to let up when Sanders explained that he thought the guest worker provisions in the bill were "akin to slavery." Clinton argued that she, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and Hispanic groups would never have supported such a bill. Her broadsides finally became too much for Sanders when she accused him of supporting "vigilantes known as Minutemen who were taking up outposts along the border to hunt down immigrants."

"No, I do not support vigilantes — that is a horrific statement, an unfair statement to make," Sanders said. "Madam Secretary, I will match my record against yours any day of the week."

In their final debate before major primaries in Florida, Ohio and other states Tuesday, the two Democrats were a study in contrasts as they made stark appeals to the demographic groups that they have come to prize. Clinton stuck to her promise to "knock down barriers" in employment and housing and to champion criminal justice reform and Social Security, hoping these priorities would inspire Hispanics, African-Americans and senior citizens and deliver her landslide victories in Florida and North Carolina.

Sanders' rallying cries against the "rigged economy" and "establishment politics" were aimed at liberals, young people, working-class white voters and independents who could be decisive for him in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri, his top targets next week.

The Democratic debate, the eighth since October, came just three days after the candidates' last face-off in Flint, Michigan, and less than 24 hours after Sanders was declared the winner of that state's primary. His unexpected victory infused the Sanders campaign with excitement and fundraising momentum: He was on track to raise \$5 million in online donations in the ensuing 24 hours.

Yet it was too early to know if Sanders could parlay Michigan into even bigger upset wins in Ohio and Illinois, where Clinton has had double-digit leads in polls (as she did in Michigan). Still, he projected self-confidence and optimism and fought back hard against Clinton's attacks on immigration issues.

"Secretary Clinton prevailed upon the governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer, who wanted to do the right thing and provide driver's licenses to those who were undocumented," Sanders said. "She said, 'Don't do it,' and New York state still does not do it." He also noted that he had supported allowing children from war-torn Central American countries to enter the United States and asserted that Clinton's view was "send them back."

"That is something that is not fair about what I said," Clinton said. "I did say we needed to be very concerned about little children coming to this country on their own, very often, many of

them not making it, and when they got here, they needed, as I have argued for, legal counsel, due process, to make a decision."

Both candidates, who consistently praise President Barack Obama on most issues, vowed to end the mass deportations of his administration. "He is wrong on this issue of deportation," Sanders said. Clinton said simply that she did not "have the same policy as the current administration."

Clinton projected steeliness throughout the debate and did not seem fazed by her loss in Michigan, taking comfort in her accumulation of more of the delegates needed to win the Democratic nomination: She has a steadily growing lead over Sanders in spite of his successes, because her margins of victory have been greater.

Yet Clinton was careful to show that she was not taking the nomination for granted, even pushing back against a question from one moderator about whether she had gotten ahead of herself in assuming she had all but beaten Sanders.

"I'm continuing to work hard for every single vote across our country," Clinton said. "I was pleased that I got 100,000 more votes last night than my opponent, and more delegates."

Pressed on what she had done wrong in Michigan, she shrugged off the loss. "It was a very close race," she said. "We've had some of those — I've won some, I've lost some. But, you know, I was very pleased by the overall outcome last night." She noted that she had won the Mississippi primary and picked up more delegates than Sanders.

Both candidates sought to position themselves as the most formidable challenger to Trump, who has reasserted himself as the leading Republican candidate after winning Michigan and two other states Tuesday. Clinton argued that Trump was promoting "un-American views" and promised to "take every opportunity to criticize" him. Later, she mocked his centerpiece proposal to build "a very tall wall, right, a beautiful, tall wall, the most beautiful tall wall, better than the Great Wall of China," which "he would somehow magically get the Mexican government to pay for."

Sanders mentioned polls that showed him beating Trump in theoretical matchups for the general election. He also argued that he could convince Democratic Party leaders and elected officials that "Bernie Sanders is the strongest candidate to defeat Donald Trump."

But Clinton and Sanders both sidestepped a direct question about whether they thought Trump was a racist, given his hostile comments about Mexicans and Muslims and his initial reluctance to disavow the support of the former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

Clinton instead described her long history of calling out Trump and criticizing his remarks, noting that at one point she had said "basta," the Spanish word for "enough." She added, "People can draw their own conclusions about him."

Sanders said he was confident that Americans would not elect Trump and pointed out that Trump had been a leading skeptic of whether Obama was born in the United States and eligible to be president. Sanders noted that no one had challenged him over the fact that his own father was born in Poland.

"Nobody has ever asked me for my birth certificate," Sanders said. "Maybe that has to do with the color of my skin."

Both Democrats saw the debate on Univision as a major opportunity to reach Latino voters not only in Florida but also in Arizona, California, Illinois and other states with large Hispanic populations that will hold major primaries in the coming months. The debate moderators introduced the two candidates in Spanish, and a young mariachi singer, Sebastien de la Cruz, sang the national anthem before the debate shifted largely to English for the candidates, neither of whom is fluent in Spanish.

While Clinton is widely known and admired among Hispanic voters, Sanders is still introducing himself and trying to draw attention to his policy proposals, such as going beyond Obama's use of executive authority and issuing new orders to protect young immigrants and their parents from deportation.

Clinton shares many of his immigration ideas, but advisers to Sanders believe that he has a more electrifying message: that Hispanics and others are struggling because of a lack of economic and political justice in America.

One of the most vivid moments of the debate came when a moderator, Jorge Ramos, pressed Clinton on whether she would drop out of the presidential race if she were indicted on charges related to her use of a private email server as secretary of state. At first she ignored the question, but when the moderators followed up, she dismissed it curtly. "Oh, for goodness — that is not going to happen," she said. "I am not even answering that question." (By Patrick Healy and Amy Chizick, 2016 New York Times)