

POWER *to the* STUDENTS

BETTER FACILITIES PLEASE

CUIT BUDGET CUT

STOP RED TAGGING

DEFEND ACADEMIC freedom

HEED THE CALLS OF THE STUDENTS!
#STUDENTSAPACES

HANDS OFF STUDENT Journalists

NO 4.0 5.0 STUDENT LEFT BEHIND

Camposano has to boost his term. Grassroots engagement is step one

For years, the UP Visayas have been yearning for a leader who understands their concerns. Now, disillusionment prevails as faith wanes in the efficacy of a self-proclaimed pro-people and pro-student chancellor.

In October last year, Chancellor Clement Camposano was selected anew to lead the University. His reappointment was met with mixed response from the UP Visayas community, with some—mostly his colleagues—praising and congratulating him, while others ragged and scoffed at his reappointment.

In his first bid for the chancellorship, Camposano promised in his six-paged 5-point agenda to build on strength in teaching, research, and public service, deepen engagement with the communities, lead meaningful change in education, defend and promote diversity and inclusion in the campuses, and reinvigorate democratic governance in the university. However, his leadership, at times, left a bitter taste in the mouth to some—especially the students he was expected to serve first.

We cannot forget: in October 2021, just one year after his successful bid for the chancellorship, Camposano received and hosted the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)—the same agency that red-tagged progressive student leaders and groups—inside the University in a dialogue. This move by the Chancellor was heavily criticized by students and unions, as they saw it as a threat to the security and academic freedom of the University community.

Furthermore, Camposano refused to sign a statement drafted by the UP Visayas University Student Council and the All UP Academic Employees Union-Iloilo, which condemned the NTF-ELCAC, called for an end to future engagements with the agency, and demanded the repeal of the Anti-Terrorism Law, because, to him, it is “not the call of the university.”

As a further point, while Camposano is quick to post seemingly progressive statements on social media, the UPV Committee on the Protection of Academic Freedom and Human Rights has yet to be institutionalized. Additionally, no official statement has been issued denouncing the UP-AFP Declaration of Cooperation, despite the fact that UP Diliman's University Council has already taken a stand on the matter.



Despite the Chancellor's active presence on Facebook, his efforts seem to fall short of genuine grassroots engagement.

In the face of pressing social and political issues, such as the looming threat of Charter Change and the PUV Modernization Program under the Marcos Administration, Camposano's silence is deafening. While students and other members of the UPV community take to the streets to voice their dissent and stand in solidarity with the marginalized, the Chancellor remains conspicuously absent.

On his second bid, Camposano stood firm in his belief that the vision he articulated at the beginning of his tenure remains as relevant today as it was then. Thus, he submitted his original Vision Paper, albeit with a few “strategic” adjustments.

One year after his reappointment, the Chancellor has taken steps to realize his vision for the University. However, despite the Chancellor's active presence on Facebook, his efforts seem to fall short of genuine grassroots engagement.

On top of this, Camposano's 5-point agenda is nothing short of distant aspiration unless he takes decisive action to address the specific and general demands of the students because if he is reluctant to engage with the students and heed their calls, his efforts to make UPV a world-class institution of higher learning is far out of reach.

Since students are the lifeblood of any university, effective leadership within should be defined by a readiness to pay attention to and adjust to their demands, particularly during times of crisis and when students' safety and well-being are at stake. The Chancellor's obstinate refusal to acknowledge and respond to the legitimate concerns of the student body may mean a troubling lack of responsiveness and empathy on his part.

The Chancellor's view of academic freedom is debatable on this matter. While academic freedom does encompass the autonomy of faculty members in their teaching and research endeavors, it is not an absolute license to disregard students' welfare. Academic freedom should be exercised responsibly with due consideration for the welfare of the broader community inside the university.

While it is true that faculty members may have the autonomy to make decisions about academic matters within their classrooms, the overarching responsibility of the university administration, headed by the Chancellor, is to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment for all students and faculty.

By now, Camposano must already realize that the student body and the sector's decision to abstain from openly endorsing a nominee for the position of UP Visayas chancellor is a reflection of the disillusionment and discontent in his leadership from those very students and sectors who once fervently supported his bid for the position back in 2020.

Likewise, there is no better lesson in the value of neutrality and complacency than being confronted with the consequences of inaction. Camposano's neutrality and silence in the face where injustice, oppression, and societal problems plague the very community he is expected to serve, he inadvertently contributes to the perpetuation of these problems.

As its crisis of credibility deepens, it is imperative — for the University, for higher education, and for the nation itself — that the University, through Camposano's leadership, do what it can to rescue the very foundation upon which the institution stands.

Lastly, while his 5-point agenda may have laid a promising roadmap for the University's future, it is evident that the students and sectors' current needs and demands cannot be overlooked. He must now recognize the urgency of these demands—the first step is to sit with the students and sectors to revisit these demands.*

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Following incidents of theft, harassment

UPV enhances security measures with expanded CCTV network

> Phil Liam **Nono**, Mikhaela **dela Cruz**

As part of its ongoing efforts to bolster security measures, the University of the Philippines Visayas has expanded its existing Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance network by installing additional cameras throughout the campus.

The newly installed CCTV cameras supplement the current surveillance system, providing broader coverage of areas deemed strategic by the Security Service Force (SSF) and significantly contributing to ensuring nighttime safety on campus by operating round-the-clock and promptly detecting and addressing incidents.

While not providing 360-degree coverage due to the fixed 90-degree angle coverage of the cameras, Raymund Gemarino, chief of SSF, suggests that the CCTV system has still been effective in detecting and addressing incidents on campus. Instances have been documented where lost items were successfully recovered, and individuals involved in theft cases were identified with the assistance of CCTV footage.

Notably, the system is centralized, with control vested solely in the hands of the SSF, and access to footage is only allowed through a formal request process through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration. This centralized approach allows swift response mechanisms in intrusion or other security breaches.

"The recent cases of violence and assault on and around the campus have made the environment of the university feel unsafe, especially for those who prefer to go and do things alone or for those who stay out late at night because of schoolwork or events," commented Joena Bautista, a BS in Statistics student.

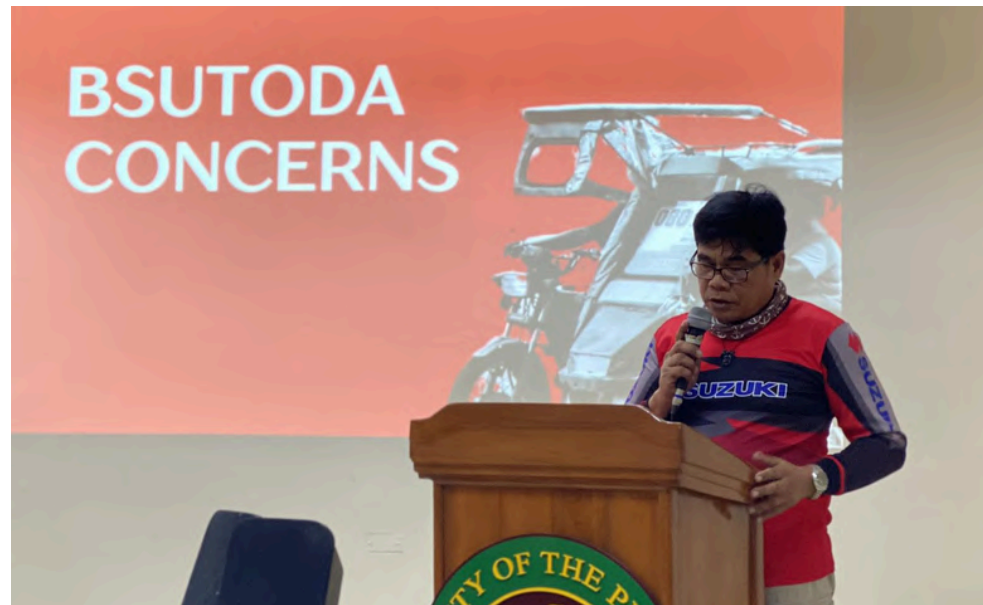
In addition, they have also expressed how the additional CCTV can provide a stronger sense of security and assurance on campus.

"I believe that the additional CCTVs will make you feel safer or more secure on campus. Places that are hard to reach [corners, tight places, and unreachable spaces] can now be observed and seen," Adelline Sumagaysay of BA in Psychology said.

Antonette Tubungan, a BSBA (Marketing) student, emphasized the need for CCTVs to be installed in the College Union Building (CUB), Teaching and Learning Resource Center (TLRC), and hallways of academic buildings to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff.

According to Bautista, having CCTVs provides crucial security benefits amidst ongoing safety issues on campus and in the surrounding town. She highlighted that these cameras can enhance protection for students, staff, and workers while also aiding in identifying perpetrators of violence and ensuring their lawful punishment.

Moving forward, Gemarino stated UPV SSF remains committed to regularly evaluating and improving its security infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of its constituents by leveraging technology and implementing strategic measures. ✨



VOICES OF CONCERN. BSUTODA President Roberyo Labanon voices the organization's concerns over UPV's plan to open a PUJ route on the Miagao campus during the Town Hall Meeting.

CAMPUS COMMUNITY

UPV admin to open route for PUJ inside the university, deems tricycles 'not suitable' for campus topography

> Rey Mark **Paran**

The UP Visayas administration on Wednesday, September 25, announced that it will only permit four-wheeled public utility vehicles inside the university to transport passengers to and from the UP Visayas academic zone.

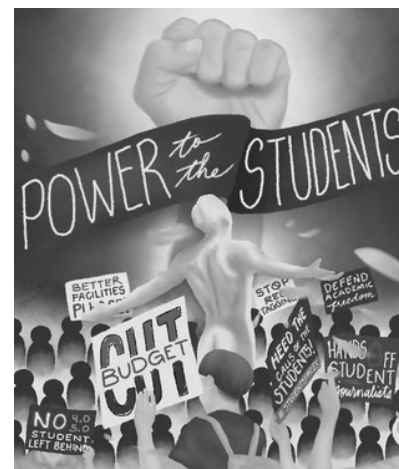
The plan was revealed by Ms. Melany Calcaben, head of the Administrative and Transportation Section of the Campus Development and Maintenance Office (CDMO) during the Town Hall Meeting organized by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration to discuss transportation, stray animals, and waste management concerns in UPV at the Conference Room, New Administration Building.

"The UPV New Academic Zone is connected to the new route for public transit, which is being made possible by the University of the Philippines Visayas. Tricycles operating on that route run in extremely high danger of collision due to the steep elevation. Therefore, the University decided to only permit 4-wheeled public utility vehicles to transport passengers to and from the new academic zone after consulting with its [...] staff and campus administrator," the presentation reads.

Based on the initial route plan, the proposed route is a loop route inside the university that has a jump off point at the New Administration Building and will transport passengers to the School of Technology Building, Philippine Genome Center, Regional Research Center, dormitory and staff houses, and the Main Library.

The administration cited the actual route survey and said that the existing route, operated by BSUTODA, is not suitable for tricycles as it "jeopardizes the safety of the passengers due to the topographic condition of the university."

According to the UPV admin, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) recommended the UPV Miagao Campus Loop with 10 PUJ Class 1 units and calculated that each to have 16 trips each day based on the 2022-2023 enrollment data. ✨



About the cover.

More than a protest, the 2024 National Students' Day Mass Walkout at UP Visayas reflects the unwavering commitment of the student body to defend their rights, amplify marginalized voices, and demand accountability from institutions of power.

At its core, the Student Walkout served as the unbreakable link between education and activism; the enduring fight for accessible, quality education, and the broader struggle for social justice. It speaks that student movements are not isolated acts of defiance but part of a larger, historical continuum of resistance against oppression.

Illustration by: *Nathania Oh*

STRUGGLES | IN-DEPTH

System Failure

Students pay price as University fails to address WiFi, study spaces problems

> Rey Mark **Paran**

Two years after returning to campus, University of the Philippines Visayas students are still scrambling for something as basic as reliable internet connection and study spaces on campus. Despite the admin's promises to provide conducive learning spaces, the conditions have only worsened, leaving students with no option but to pay the price – literally.

STRUGGLING WITH WIFI ACCESS

WiFi connections can only be accessible to certain parts of the campus, and frustration among the students has become more common as internet connectivity problems persist mostly at night when students are doing their academic work.

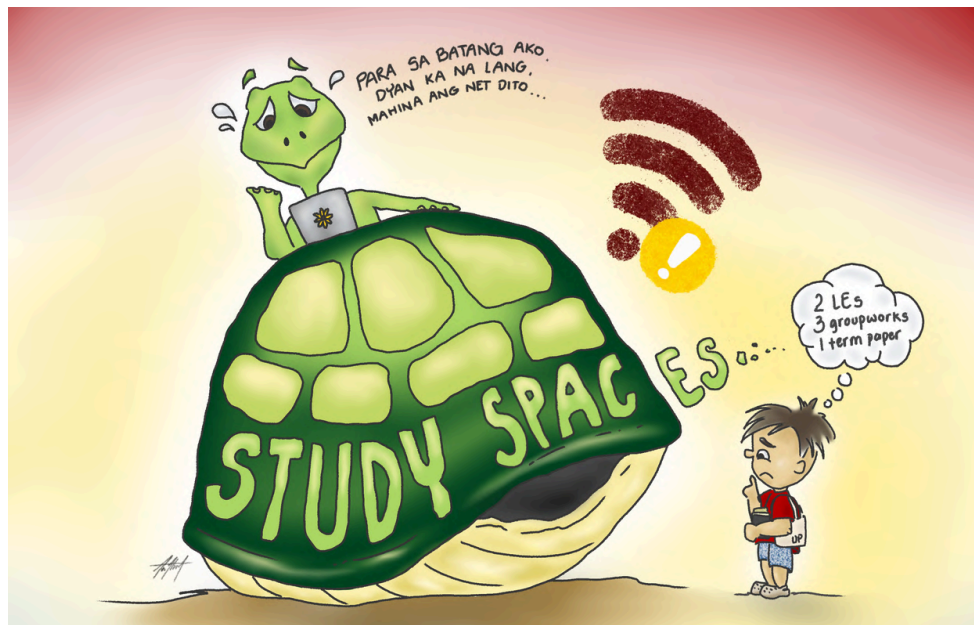
Monique Bactong, a statistics senior who currently resides in Balay Madyaas is frustrated with the slow and intermittent WiFi connection because it hinders her ability to do her schoolworks in the dormitory. She, like many other on-campus dormitory residents, relies on the school's internet connection to study and complete assignments.

Eunice Tayone, a sophomore of BA in Communication and Media Studies currently residing in Balay Apitong aired her frustrations with their dormitory's WiFi connection.

"Actually, yung internet sa Balay Apitong madalas nawawala-wala, and may ilang parts ng dorm na hindi talaga naaabot ng WiFi. So the students have to go out of their rooms at magtambay sa study area just to finish their requirements."

Students who live off campus are just as disappointed. Rodney Arnolf Opu-an, a BS in Biology junior who boards a dormitory outside the campus, said he often goes to university study spaces, especially when there's a wide gap between his first and following class.

"Malimit akong pumupunta sa student spaces lalong-lalo na kapag malalaki ang oras na pagitan ng mga klase ko. Nakikikonek ako sa WiFi ng unibersidad at kadalasan ay nag-aaral ako o di kaya ay gumagawa ng mga school requirements," said Opu-an.



While he acknowledged the strong wifi connectivity in some of the study spaces inside the university, there were still instances of intermittent or lost connection.

ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY MEANS INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

Engr. Rico Hortillo, IT Officer I of the Data and Information Systems Program (DISP) at UP Visayas, attributed the intermittent Wi-Fi connection to the limited number of access points in the campus and partly due to the old network equipment and fiber optic infrastructure. Engr. Hortillo added that since there are many more students on campus this semester, Wi-Fi usage has become overloaded.

He added that the multiple reports of WiFi outages, especially from dormitory areas inside the campus, was because of equipment overload, thus underscoring the need to be not just equipment upgrade but internet infrastructure upgrade as a whole.

[Kapag] naimplement namin ang fiber optic upgrade and additional WiFi sa mga dorms, pero if same pa rin, problem pa rin yun sa amin. Wala pa man schedule, but may plan man ang UP System to upgrade the bandwidth per [constituent unit], but this time, wala pa naman balita," Engr. Hortillo added.

STUDENTS PAY THE PRICE

In addition to the campus' internet connectivity issues, students have also expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of available study and co-working spaces on campus, especially during nighttime hours, forcing some to seek and pay for study hubs off-campus.

Tayone shared that when the internet goes down, students are left with no choice but to seek alternatives off-campus. "Although we try to save money, we usually spend around three to four hours at the study hub, which costs 30 pesos per hour—amounting to 90 to 120 pesos each time," she explained.

Liwayen Torres, a junior Political Science student boarding in Barangay Malagyan, echoed similar frustrations.

"Yung nagdaang buwan, very mahina ang Globe tapos Globe ang gamit namin, tapos wala din kaming signal doon," she shared. When connectivity issues persist, Torres often resorts to nearby study hubs, where expenses can reach up to 250 pesos a day, including food.

"Gusto ko sana sa TLRC kaso madaming tao at mahina rin yung WiFi doon kaya umuwi ako with the hope na pwede akong gumawa sa boarding house, kaso mahina din kaya ayun nag-study hub nalang kahit sobrang gastos," she added.

ON HOPES AND ACTION

While we can only hope for the immediate actions, the situation calls for a more comprehensive and expedited resolution to alleviate the ongoing challenges faced by the UP Visayas students. The persisting issues of wifi connectivity and the lack of enough study spaces reflect systemic shortcomings that demand urgent attention and proactive measures.

The planned upgrades and initiatives to bolster internet connectivity signify a step in the right direction, but a comprehensive overhaul of the infrastructure remains imperative for sustainable solutions.

For many students, the unreliable internet and limited campus study spaces have forced them to seek alternatives off-campus, such as study hubs, adding to their financial burdens. Spending money on these hubs, often at a cost of hundreds of pesos per visit, has become an unfortunate necessity for students struggling to meet academic requirements in the face of these challenges.

As Bactong hopes to graduate at the end of the second semester, she calls for immediate action to this problem in the university.

"Sana mabigyan ito ng priority at maayos as soon as possible dahil nagiging cause ito ng delay sa productivity ng mga estudyante, lalong-lalo na sa pagcomply ng mga requirements. Ang madalas na connectivity issues ay nagiging hadlang sa pagkakaroon ng isang conducive learning environment at the comfort of our own dorms," Bactong stressed. ✨

This is an updated version of the story published on Pagbutlak on February 14, 2024.



ASSEMBLED. Student Regent Francesa Duran presided over the selection of the 45th University Student Council of UP Visayas in a face-to-face setup, a first after the pandemic.

ON REPRESENTATION

Despite struggle, USC convenes; Quilantang selected as new chairperson

> Losel Rose Palma

For the first time since the pandemic, the University of the Philippines Visayas University Student Council (UPV USC) convened for a face-to-face convention to select the 45th UPV USC Chairperson, other officers, and committee heads. The event took place last October 9, 2024 at the Conference Room of the New Administration Building, UP Visayas Miagao Campus.

The convention was presided over by 41st Student Regent Francesca Duran and was attended by UPV USC officers, local college councils, and representatives from various university publications.

Outgoing UPV USC Chairperson Thea Dayata presented the Unit Situationer Report, highlighting pressing issues faced by students and organizations, such as the lack of student spaces, the lengthy bureaucratic processes for space usage, and the lack of financial autonomy for student publications and councils.

Councilor Samantha Faye Herbolario echoed these concerns, reflecting on discussions from the recent 57th Convention of the General Assembly of Student Councils (GASC) in Tacloban City. She pointed out that the UP-AFP Agreement poses a threat to the university community.

The convention culminated in the election of new officers, with Councilor Anton Mathew Quilantang named the 45th UPV USC Chairperson. Peter Daniel Panes was elected Vice Chairperson, Sarah Mae Embac as Secretary-General, and Anro Emmanuel Alquiza as Finance Officer and Sports Chairperson. Committee heads for Gender, Research, Health, and Environmental Concerns were also appointed.

The convention concluded with the oath-taking of the newly elected 45th UPV USC officers, officiated by Professor Huyong, marking a historic milestone as the first face-to-face convention since the pandemic. ✨

the struggle

14

out of 17 USC officers are currently in position

The School of Technology (SoTech) still lacks two USC councilors, while the College of Management (CM) lacks one. A special election is expected to fill the three vacant positions; however, SoTech has decided not to conduct a special election.

LEADERSHIP

UPV's Gadong takes oath as new UP Faculty Regent

> Stephanie Juntilla



PHOTO COURTESY | Philippine Collegian

Prof. Early Sol Gadong officially assumed the role as the 28th Faculty Regent of the University of the Philippines (UP) on January 6 at the Board of Regents (BOR) Room in Quezon Hall, UP Diliman.

Hailing from UP Visayas, Gadong is a faculty member of the Division of Professional Education, College of Arts and Sciences, and UP High School in Iloilo. A committed educator and advocate, she served as president of the All UP Academic Employees Union-Iloilo Chapter from 2017 to 2022, where she championed the welfare and rights of UP faculty and staff.

During the ceremony, UP President Angelo Jimenez administered the oath of office and welcomed Gadong to the Board of Regents. Outgoing Faculty Regent Carl Ramota also attended the event and shared words of encouragement as Gadong steps into her new leadership role.

Prof. Gadong's leadership platform, "Kaayohan para sa Tanan," emphasizes wellness, inclusivity, and the well-being of UP faculty. Among her initiatives are expanding the university's eHOPE hospitalization program, introducing research leave for faculty, and extending bereavement leave to LGBTQIA+ faculty members. She also advocates for stronger support systems and equitable policies across all UP campuses.

The ceremony was attended by prominent figures from the UP community, including

union leaders, faculty, staff, and representatives from various UP campuses. The gathering also highlighted ongoing calls for worker regularization, decent wages, and an end to campus commercialization.

In her message, Gadong expressed gratitude to her supporters and predecessors, particularly Ramota, for their contributions to faculty welfare and academic freedom. She vowed to uphold the principles of service-oriented leadership while addressing the pressing concerns of the UP faculty during her term, which runs until December 2026.

Gadong bested other five candidates in the UP Faculty Regent system-wide election held last November 20-21, 2024 after garnering 1,935 votes. ✨

SECTORS' VOICE

'Lupa, pagkain, hindi bala!'

Sectoral reps slam civil-military operations, demand end to militarization in countryside

> Phil Liam Nono

Amidst rising military presence in rural areas, students and sectoral representatives gathered at the CFOS AV Hall, UP Visayas Miagao Campus for the annual BUGTAW: A Sectoral Conference on October 17. The event, part of the UP Visayas University Student Council's observance of this year's Peasant Month, aimed to address the pressing issues faced by peasants and Indigenous communities.

The conference featured a lineup of speakers, including Prof. Elmer Jover from the Division of Social Sciences, Arlie Bosque of the Defend Panay Network and Kabataan Partylist, Melbert Balbon, spokesperson for PAMALAKAYA-Panay, and Lucia Capaducio, Chairperson of PAMANGGAS.

In his address, Professor Jover lambasted the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2020, arguing that it has been weaponized to suppress dissent, instilling fear and disunity rather than ensuring security. He condemned Executive Order 70's "whole-of-nation approach," labeling it a "whole-of-government bureaucracy" that fails to involve the public effectively.

Jover highlighted the militarization of rural areas and the weaponization of laws against peasant groups, referencing the 2018 Memorandum Order 32, which increased military presence in Negros under the guise of anti-drug operations. This initiative led to the Guihulngan Massacre and other killings on the island.

Echoing these concerns, Arlie Bosque focused on the impact of militarization on the Tumandok Indigenous communities in Panay. He pointed to the Jalaur Mega Dam Project as a significant threat, resulting in land loss, environmental destruction, and disrupted livelihoods while escalating military presence that restricts cultural practices of the IPs.

Bosque reprehended the Tumandok 9 massacre and emphasized that similar assaults on Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities have been reported, highlighting a broader trend of violence.

"Dapat nating i-recognize na kayang iligtas ng mga Tumandok ang sarili nila, but the most we can do is join their campaigns and expose the issues they face. In this way, we can help them win their fight," Bosque urged.

Melbert Balbon addressed the challenges faced by fisherfolks, revealing the effects of fishing restrictions. He explained that low catch rates from the southwest monsoon and the Visayan Sea fishing ban make it difficult for them to sustain their livelihoods.

Balbon slammed the government's inadequate response to these issues, noting that instead of providing necessary subsidies, the state has intensified civil-military operations, imposed curfews, and engaged in red-tagging of progressive groups.

Furthermore, he cited a recent alert from PAMALAKAYA Panay regarding the profiling and intrusion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) targeting fishers in Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo.

Lucia Capaducio also denounced the CMOs for their intimidation tactics that disrupt farmers' routines. She underscored that communities such as Igaras, Miagao, Janiuay, and Capiz—where mass movements of farmers are active—are subjected to aggressive military operations, further marginalizing those already vulnerable.

During the concluding open forum, Capaducio and Balbon emphasized the stark disparity in living conditions between different communities, noting that while some enjoy full meals, farmers and fisherfolk struggle daily to make ends meet while facing the added threat of being targeted by state forces for their activism.

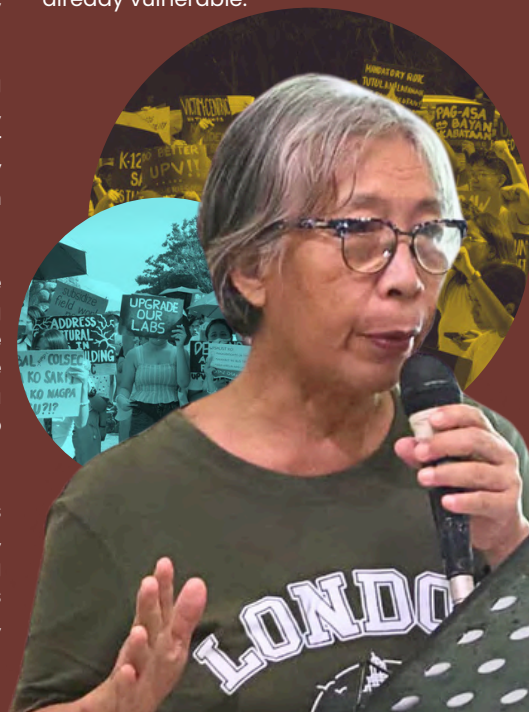
The panel collectively called for the repeal of the Anti-Terror Law and the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), asserting that these measures are often weaponized by the state to suppress dissent among peasant workers.

The conference highlighted the urgent need for solidarity and action to combat the militarization of rural areas and protect the rights of farmers and Indigenous peoples. ✨

Wala man gapangayo ang mga IP sang mga dam, ang ginapangayo kay pagkaon. Ang mga projects na mga ini kay para lamang sa kaayuhan sang mga negosyante kag sa pagpalapad sang land use conversion. Wala bulig ang dam para sa mga mangunguma.



REPRESSION. Sectoral Representatives shed light on the ongoing threat of security due to heightened militarization in the countryside.



TOP STORY

'UPV admin, tugunan ang mga isyu sa pamantasan!'

600 students walkout of classes to protest admin inaction on students' concerns

> AJ Palma

University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) marked the National Students' Day (NSD) 2024 with the first major post-pandemic student walkout, November 15, 2024. The movement, spearheaded by the NSD Committee, highlighted the growing frustrations and demands of the student body.

The event began with the arrival of a SOTECH (School of Technology) bus, signaling the official start of the walkout. From the bus waiting area, SOTECH students rallied and called on their peers to join, marching to the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). In the CAS park, chants for solidarity echoed as the SOTECH student body fetched CAS students to join the movement.

The march progressed at the Tomas Fonacier Hall, where students demanded better treatment from the UPV administration. Cries of "Do better, UPV!" encapsulated the discontent brewing among the student body.

The walkout continued to the College Union Building (CUB), with leaders calling on more students to rally. The movement then swept through the College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (CFOS), where several issues took center stage.

Ella Alleno, CFOS Student Council Chairperson, voiced the need to revive reading breaks and reject policies perceived as anti-student, including the UP-AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) cooperation.

"Nararapat lamang na dinigin nila ang ating mga hinaing," Alleno asserted, urging the administration to prioritize students' welfare.

CFOS became a platform for opposing mandatory ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) programs, drawing loud support from the gathered students. USC Chairperson Anton Quilantang echoed these sentiments, appealing for decisive action from the UPV administration.

The protest advanced to the College of Management grounds, where USC Councilor Liwayen Torres reiterated demands for the university to address pressing student issues.

In front of the New Administration Building, the students intensified their calls for change. Ciania Belle Gloria delivered a stirring address, criticizing the administration's inaction over several semesters.

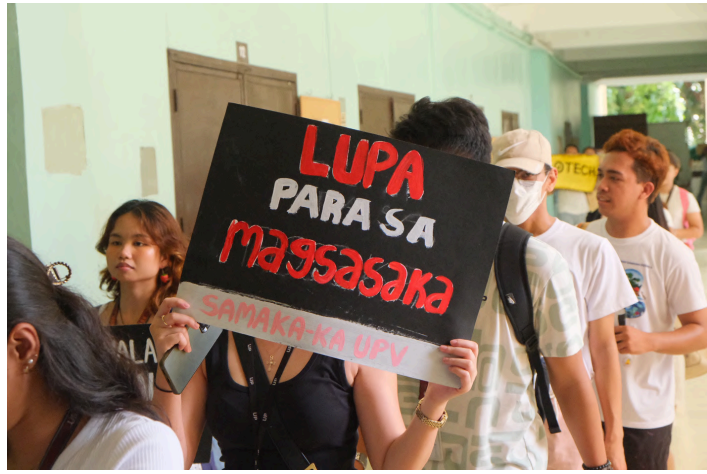
"Ilang semestre na, ilang akademikong taon na nagbibingi-bingihan ang administrasyon sa kanilang aircon na mga opisina," she said, contrasting the struggles of students with the comfort of the university's leadership.

Gloria demanded accountability on issues such as the jeepney phaseout and Charter Change, as well as better support for faculty. She called for one representative from each organization to strengthen the collective voice of the movement.

Quilantang described the walkout as a historic show of solidarity, mourning the absence of the chancellor, who was reportedly "busy at the moment" despite requests for an online dialogue. ✨



STUDENT POWER. In a call for accountability and demand for better treatment, UPV students walked out from their classes to be part of the "collective voice of the movement."



It's the sectors' voice, too

The sound drowned out the familiar noise of stressed students scrambling for seats in unventilated rooms and the frustrated cries over slow internet, grueling commute or lab equipment shared among far too many hands. And it was none other than the sound of resistance—exposing the broader repressive systems and policies behind the struggles of not just the students, but of the faculty and the larger sectoral masses.

In this fight for quality education, the students are not alone in the struggle but stand in solidarity with the faculty and workers who are the backbone of the university community. They battle against precarious working conditions of low wages, job insecurity, and the lack of tenure, while also enduring the institutional neglect of their rightful demands for salary grade adjustments, promotion opportunities, regularization, and mental health support.



RAISED FIST. Ciana Belle Gloria, NSD 2024 Committee head lead the flock of students in front of the New Administration Building to register and forward students' demand to the Office of the Chancellor. With banners raised, students called on better conditions not just for students, but also for the different sectors working inside the university.



PROFILE

Adora Faye de Vera

Defying the limits of hope

> Francis Marie Lapingcao

"Kahit sa pangatlong ikot, isa ang amoy ng rehas - amoy tibay at dugo ng pagpupumiglas" — from the song "Adora" by Tao ng Bandang Oriang

The strength forged from struggle remains, even after Adora Faye de Vera's third confinement at the age of 69. She was illegally arrested four times as a political prisoner under the administration of two Marcoses. The court has dismissed her case, affirmed her innocence, yet compounded the injustices she endured. For Adora, there is no place to retreat, only to carry on—just as countless Filipino women before her have shown in the ongoing struggle for a just and lasting peace.

QUALITATIVE LEAPS

Adora, born from a middle-class family, is a bright student who studied at Philippine Science High School. Even back then, she was already advocating for students' rights and welfare, clamoring for better facilities in their university. Their campaign did not go unnoticed— their school administration took action to resolve their clamor.

For all that, while clamoring for additional facilities, it was unforeseen to come at the expense of an urban poor community near their school. She could not, in good conscience, allow homes to be demolished for a mere construction of an additional building.

The juxtaposition between the urban poor community and their condition marked the first leap of her political awakening. Adora affirmed, "Kasi sa school napaka privileged namin, may mga allowances kami, libre ang books. Napakataas ng standard ng skwelahan tapos ilang hakbang paglabas, nandoon na ang mga bata na hindi makapagskwela."

She consequently joined the barricades. They fathomed that the issue of demolition is not confined to the case of their school— demolitions were occurring throughout Quezon City. She visited urban poor communities to further learn about their struggles. In those times, she volunteered to teach literacy and numeracy to children who could not afford to acquire formal education.

They had successfully defended the land even until the first year of Martial Law. They even got a moratorium from the city mayor to stop the demolition of other communities. But the conflict got tighter, the local residents eventually got evicted. The construction of the additional building pushed through. There were no more residents who were supposed to inhabit the area, in the place where the malls Vertis and Trinoma now stand.

She became more radicalized by the harsh realities outside of her school. Adora had two choices: to continue pursuing her bourgeois career aspirations or to do political work to mobilize people against many forms of social injustices in the country. Her condition, especially in the peak of martial law, gave her one: to join the struggle of the toiling masses.

PERSISTING UNDER THE SHACKLES OF MARCOS SR.'S ADMINISTRATION

During the pronouncement of Martial Law, organizations and even gathering as a group was prohibited. How could they resist without breaking through anti-democratic regulations? It was an automatic decision for her to go underground and continue her political work as an activist. She became a member of MAKIBAKA, a nationalist revolutionary women's organization founded in April 1970.

"Simple lang naman ang ginagawa namin noon. May mga lightning rallies just to show na hindi tulog ang mga tao eh. Na hindi basta-bastang magagawa na legal yung gusto nilang gawing violence."

In one of the lightning rallies, she was arrested for displaying propaganda posters. She was still seventeen years old at that time so she could not be jailed. She was only placed under house arrest, where her dad was required to report to Camp Aguinaldo every two weeks. Breaking through from military intimidations, she managed to escape at their home and continued organizing underground.

Three years later, she was abducted while doing organizing work in Southern Luzon. She was transferred to a safe house and was raped by military men whose aim was to extract information. For almost nine months, she remained a desaparecida— was subjected to brutal torture and rape, until she was surfaced only to be in prison again after five years, this time with a price on her head for reporting the torture to the Amnesty International.

Standing her ground, in 1986, she was among the ten plaintiffs from Samahan ng mga Detainee Laban sa Diktadura (SELDA) to file a lawsuit at the U.S District Court in Hawaii against Marcos Sr. in pursuit to get justice from the human rights abuses in his administration. The U.S court ruled that the former dictator was guilty for the violations and is liable for his damages.

FIGHTING BEYOND HOPE

When asked how she was able to continue being involved in the mass movement, her answer is simple— people's struggle is dialectical. There is conflict, hence there is resistance. Most importantly, because she has nothing to lose.

"Alam mo kasi, if you have a sense of history, makikita mo na ang Filipino people, mula't sapul ay lumalaban. Kaya lumaban nga sila eh. Ilang beses rin naman tayong nanalo. Tapos matatalo ulit. Mananalo na naman, matatalo, mananalo." Adora explained.



She hopes to pass this legacy to the current and next generation of nationalist Filipinos. "Tinortyur na ako, muntik na akong pinatay. Nadisappear na yung asawa ko. Pati yung tatay ko nakulong. Bakit pa ba ako titigil?" she added, affirming her resolve to continue fighting amidst the state-sponsored violence she endured.

On her third arrest, where she was imprisoned in a special security facility at the penthouse of the AFP Medical Center, a high-ranking military officer approached her and offered that if she recanted her statement and apologized to Marcos, she would be released.

She questioned and refused, "Samantalang ganon, sinira niya na ang pamilya namin. Ang anak ko itinakbo ng family ko— natakot. Hindi niya ako nakilala. Nagkakilala kami malaki na siya. Natakot sila dahil wanted nga ako, dahil inexpose ko ang pag torture sa akin. Tapos may mga nagsasabi sa akin na bawiin ko daw ang pag expose ko. Bakit ko babawin?"

Adora observed that we have but one life to live. One day it will end, may it be through anything that is not expected. The crucial question remains: what role have we done in attaining genuine liberation? Which side of history were we supporting before our death?

PERILS ON THE PATH TO FREEDOM

Adora is now staying in Manila under a therapy because her health conditions worsened during her fourth stay in prison in Iloilo, where she was brought far away from her home. Most of her time is spent on writing. However, up to now, she is still red-tagged in Iloilo.

When asked how she coped with the risks of being an activist, she explained that danger is omnipresent and being silent does not exempt anyone from safety.

"Alam mo noong nakulong ako, yung second arrest, nandoon ako sa loob ng safe house. May nakita ako doon na hinuli na hindi aktibista, napag-initan lang ng mga military. At tsaka ngayon, nakita natin yung mga tintokhang. Hindi naman mga pusher, kundi mga user lang— pinapatay. Ibig sabihin kahit nasaan ka, nandiyan ang danger. So kung tatahimik ka lang, hindi guarantee na hindi ka maano. Imbes na manahimik ka, magtago, matakot, humarap ka nalang. Diba? Isa lang buhay natin eh, sasayangin pa ba natin sa takot?" Adora stated.

MOVING FORWARD

Adora is optimistic with the new generations of activists to come and hopes for them to fight and gain enough courage especially with the current situation's heightened militarization and historical revisionism.

While she acknowledges that standing for what is right is a simple thing to do, it often brings danger to one's life. Yet, to live in fear is what the oppressors want in the first place— for us to bow down and cower. And so if we submit to their will, we have no political gains that would free us from the chains of systematic abuses.

She manifested, "Kahit mamatay ka pa, kahit matortyur ka pa, hindi ka nag-iisa eh, madaming ibang ginagawa na ganun eh. At kung tinortyur ka na nga, dapat ka bang susuko? Dapat nga lalo kang tumatapatang."

She challenges the youth of today to continually integrate in the basic masses— in the factories, urban poor communities, and peasantry. Most especially, to break from individualistic tendencies — the tendency to look only for ourselves with little regard to others.

"Ang Pilipinas ay isang community na sa mahabang panahon ay tulong-tulong— bayanihan. Pero totoo yun eh, nagtutulong tulong ang mga Pilipina. Wag nating balewalain yun. Gawin nating positive ang pagtutulungan para ang lipunan ay magbabago, para ang lipunan ay mas maging mabuting lipunan para sa lahat." Adora said.

According to Karapatan, there are 755 political prisoners as of June 2024, 145 of which are women, awaiting acquittal from false charges under the country's delayed due process. Despite the release of some, just like Adora, none of the perpetrators of these crimes are held accountable.

During these undeniably tough times in our history, learning this testimony from Adora reminds us to fortify ourselves in the struggle and continue to fight—to carry on even beyond the bounds of hope. ✨



If you have a sense of history, makikita mo na ang Filipino people, mula't sapul ay lumalaban. Ilang beses rin naman tayong nanalo. Tapos matatalo ulit. Mananalo na naman, matatalo, mananalo.

KAMPUS

PERVERTING THE PH EDUOK SYSTEM

> Phil Liam Nono

The promise of free education has always been a fragile dream for many Filipinos, where the odds were often stacked against them by the crushing burden of tuition fees. In 2017, this dream seemed closer to reality when Republic Act 10931, known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act or more colloquially as the "Free Tuition Law," was signed into law. For many families, it felt like a long-awaited lifeline, a chance to break free from the financial chains and give their children the opportunity to pursue a dream that once felt too distant.

While the rules had changed, it remained just as unforgiving. In the end, not everyone would make it to the end, and for some, the stakes are still too high.

MANY ARE CALLED, FEW ARE CHOSEN

Before its passage, access to free or subsidized education was available, but only to a fortunate few who managed to navigate the labyrinth of policies that kept many hopefuls at bay. Take the University of the Philippines (UP), for instance, which prides itself on welcoming students from all walks of life, especially those unable to fully pay the matriculation fees. We turn to the infamous Socialized Tuition and Financial Assistance Program (STFAP), which tied tuition rates to household income assessments.

STFAP was later replaced by the Socialized Tuition System (STS), which somewhat simplified the paperwork burden of its predecessor but ultimately retained the same bureaucratic complexities that made the process confusing and inaccessible for many. While these programs did indeed provide full-ride tertiary education to some students, they also placed others into a hierarchy that seemed to assign a price tag to their education—and their dreams.

The prospect of free tuition ignited a spark in many students. It is a chance to follow their passion without the looming dread of financial strain. However, they may have heard stories of the challenges that came with accessing this newfound opportunity, especially at prestigious institutions like UP.

The challenge was clear. Providing free education on paper was one thing, but making it accessible to all was another. It's a high-stakes game where not everyone walks away a winner.

MORE PLAYERS, LIMITED SPACE

State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), including UP, faced an overwhelming surge of students applying for admission, but the resources needed to accommodate them did not grow at the same pace. Many institutions soon found themselves struggling with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient facilities, and limited student services. As the number of students seeking free education grew, so did the strain on these schools.

UP offers a stark example. In 2023 alone, UP witnessed over 100,000 students taking its College Admission Test (UPCAT). Yet only around 15,000 slots were available, meaning a mere 15 out of every 100 applicants were accepted. The growing demand for spots has not been met with an increase in capacity, leaving many hopefuls, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, facing the same uncertainties that existed before the Free Tuition Law.

Across the country, students applying to SUCs have voiced frustrations over limited slots and a competitive process that makes the dream of free education feel more like a gamble. Student applicants are left grappling with the reality that the promise of free education may not translate into tangible opportunities for all.

THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS

Adding to this challenge is the looming threat of budget cuts. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has approved a budget of P122.16 billion for SUCs in the 2025 National Expenditure Program (NEP), down from 2024's P128.23 billion.

For UP alone, the proposed budget for 2025 would be slashed by P2.08 billion, the biggest in over a decade, a decrease that would cripple not only the university's operational capacity but also its ability to support students financially and uphold academic standards. UP's sprawling system includes multiple degree-granting units, research facilities, teaching hospitals, and specialized campuses across Diliman, Manila, Los Baños, Visayas, Mindanao, Baguio, Cebu, and the Open University.

The challenges do not stop there. Affordability becomes subjective when it is compounded by the rising cost of living, making it increasingly difficult for families to support their children's education. For many, the cost of lodging, transportation, and daily necessities adds layers of financial stress that are not directly alleviated by the tuition fees waiver alone.

REWRITING THE RULES, REDEFINING THE PLAYING FIELD

The conversation around this issue is ongoing and often heated, especially during times when topics like the 'UP Burgis' controversy dominate public discourse. However, addressing the scarcity of free education requires more than rhetoric. The state's constitutional mandate to prioritize education must be backed by sustained investment and comprehensive changes, amidst the worsening learning crisis.

At the heart of this struggle is a simple truth: without continued investment, free education remains an illusion for many. The danger of repeating history, where only a select few benefit while the majority are left behind, is very real.

And in this game of chance, the house always wins unless the system is rebuilt to serve everyone.

THE ENDGAME: WILL 'FREE EDUCATION' TRULY BE FREE?

As the country looks ahead, the question remains: will the promise of free education hold? It is imperative that we continue to advocate to ensure that the dream of being a true "Iskolar ng Bayan" is not just a distant aspiration but a reachable reality for all. Ultimately, the promise of free education is at risk of becoming just that—a promise.

Until the rules are rewritten, the harsh truth is that when you play the game of free education, you either win or risk being left behind. The middle ground often means having to pay for your education.

It's not just about increasing admission slots, it's about building classrooms, upgrading facilities, hiring more faculty, and expanding student support services to create an environment where every student can thrive. Policymakers must also rethink financial assistance programs to consider the hidden costs that disrupt access to a truly free education.*

When you play the game of free education, you either win or risk being left behind. The middle ground often means having to pay for your education.

Fast Facts

P2.08-B

budget cut of UP System in 2025

UP Budget as per GAA

2025	P22.69-B	8.3% decrease
2024	P.24.77-B	2.1% increase
2023	P.24.26-B	20.2% increase

Free Higher Education Program

2024	P2.14-B	P2.19-B
2025		

P57-million increase

UP's Capital Outlay Budget

2022	2.59B
2023	1.72B
2024	3.1B
2025	451.5M

86% decline from last year's CO and a 13-year low

BANWA

Whose lives are worth saving?

A dive into Miagao Healthcare gap

> Francis Marie Lapingcao

Siegfred Paul Magbanua, a resident in Miagao, vividly recalls the challenges with his family in accessing medical treatment. His father passed away after being hospitalized for a month, with his diagnosis, Pott's Disease, becoming clear along with other complications only after his death.

1 *healthcare worker for every*
5k *Miagao residents*

He lives in Malagyan, a barangay located within the Poblacion area. His home is relatively advantageous since he can easily access the nearest healthcare facilities. The Miagao Municipal Rural Health Unit and the University of the Philippines Infirmary are the only general clinics available in Miagao.

While the Miagao RHU caters to the public residents of Miagao, UPV prioritizes the UPV Community. Hospitals are nonexistent— they must travel to Guimbal, a neighboring municipality, especially for more specialized care.

In a 2020 census from Philippine Statistics Authority, Miagao boasts a population of 68,000 people with 119 barangays. Henceforth, there is one health worker for every 5,000 residents. It is far-fetched from the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO) that signifies that there must be 4.45 health workers for every 1,000 residents to ensure sufficient healthcare services.

Despite being the municipality with the biggest number of barangays, totaling 119, in the Philippines, the absence of a hospital and the current health worker-population ratio show how disproportionate it is to cater to the healthcare needs of the Miagaonons.

The struggles of Siegfred are not an isolated case to most of the population in Miagao. The reality is in consonance with the order of the Republic Act No. 11223, supposedly mandating the government to ensure that Filipinos must attain the healthcare they need anytime they prefer, without getting any barriers that are out of their control.

Accessing basic healthcare services has been a struggle in the rural areas because of socioeconomic, if not systemic, barriers.

For urban areas in Iloilo like in Iloilo City, it relatively enjoys quicker access to a wide range of healthcare services from specialists, hospitals, and to more equipped facilities. The differences are blatantly glaring.

GUIMBAL HOSPITAL AS A STOPGAP ON THE CLINICS' PRECARIOUS CONDITIONS

The general clinics in Miagao cater only to general medicine, hence they can only accommodate common illnesses.

In Miagao Rural Health Center, there are 6 doctors and 9 healthcare staff. In UPV HSU, there are 6 doctors and 7 healthcare staff. Both health centers can't cater to higher level care. People travel to the city for more specialized treatment, a case in point for Siegfred himself who travels from Miagao to Iloilo City to seek treatment on his heart issues.

"There are ambulances that could take the patients to the neighboring town hospitals," he shared. "However, they are not fully equipped for a lot of emergency situations. In other grave cases, the neighboring hospitals send the patients to other hospitals in the city for more intensive care."

Miagao Rural Health Unit (RHU) provides essential but limited services such as animal bite treatment, dental and medical care, basic surgeries, and prenatal care. Similarly, the UPV Infirmary extends its reach providing preventive care and laboratory services, yet its limitations are evident; adding the fact that it usually prioritizes the UPV Community only.

15 *healthcare workers in Miagao RHU*
9 doctors, 6 healthcare staff

13 *healthcare workers in UPV HSU*
6 doctors, 7 healthcare staff

THE SHORTFALL TO THE LOGISTICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS WITH SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

During a disease outbreak like dengue, Siegfred observed that the Rep. Pedro G. Trono Memorial Hospital in Guimbal could get overcrowded. It provides inpatient care from Guimbal, Igbaras, Tubungan, Tigbauan, Miagao, and even San Joaquin.

Those with chronic conditions, the elderly, and the children are the most vulnerable in this kind of healthcare system.

As they resort to Guimbal Hospital for intensive care, Siegfred's father and his caretaker, who happens to be his aunt, were still uncomfortable in the hospital of Guimbal because of the lack of utilities and equipment.

The collective emotional strain of Siegfred's family due to discomfort and delays, even in the hospital of Guimbal, is a manifestation of a larger systemic issue in rural health care across Iloilo.

Even if facilities exist, it does not accordingly accommodate the influx of patients or provide the necessary care especially on complicated illnesses. Henceforth, the hospital in Guimbal only became a stopgap and not the solution to the problem.

Accessing health care is not only a problem of access, but the quality of care it can offer once people reach these facilities.

Accessing health care is not only a problem of access, but the quality of care it can offer once people reach these facilities.

Siegfred affirmed that he is constantly facing frustrations every time he seeks medical care. There is a constant uncertainty whether their efforts, especially the amount of money taken out, in visiting the clinic or even the hospital will get positive outcomes on their conditions or merely complicate their health challenges.

PRIVATIZATION OF HEALTHCARE BECOMES UNFAVORABLE

Even if the consultation is free in public clinics, the recommended medicines for further treatment or maintenance are not. The cost associated with preventive care and primary care most often impedes the people for further medication.

Even for middle-income families, they resort to debt from any person they can approach especially if it requires long-term medical treatments.

"Coming from a lower-middle-class family, hospital bills, medicines, etcetera, are expensive for us – sometimes making us borrow money from other people. I have observed that it is extremely hard for the elderly.

Despite the senior citizen discount, we still spend up to PHP 10,000 from diapers and medicines for my grandmother, not including the PHP 2,000 from her milk alone," Siegfred manifested.

Siegfried also shared that they did all the means to seek for financial aid including approaching politicians like Mayor Richard Garin. There was also the time when he spent all his academic allowance from the Department of Science and Technology to help lessen the medical expenses of his family.

The disparity between the rich and the poor is a manifestation that healthcare in the Philippines is not accessible to most of the Filipino people, it became a privilege of the few. After all, it is commercialized. Those who can afford are the only ones who can easily access it.

Healthcare in the Philippines became a privilege of the few.

THE DEMAND FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE CONTINUES

Accessing healthcare services extends beyond whether one can acquire it regardless of the process, but also concerns how it can improve the health conditions of the Miagaonons long-term.

We cannot blame the clinics for the limitations of their facilities and services, since they are only maximizing their limited budget. Similarly, Miagaonons cannot be blamed for the dissatisfaction in seeking healthcare services. This collective hardship is rooted from the lack of budget allocated in the health sector, especially in rural areas like Miagao.

The Miagaonons can only advocate for universal access to healthcare, reducing the barriers in accessing it by the government ensuring an adequate infrastructure and health facilities among municipalities. This is closely tied to the call for a greater wage for our health workers regardless of its location, in hopes to address the shortage of health workers especially in rural areas.

Last August 2024, the Department of Budget and Management announced through a press release about the government's resolution regarding Executive Order No. 64 or Updating the Salary Schedule for Civilian Government Personnel and Authorizing Grant of an Additional Allowance and for other Purposes. It entails a salary increase of 530 pesos from the minimum salary grade of 13,000. With health workers having a minimum wage of 13,000 pesos per month under the salary grade system, it only makes it 13, 530/month today.

If we try to divide the wage increase, it only has 24 pesos increase per day. The overall wage of healthcare workers does not even reach half of the family living wage in the Philippines, as per the findings of Ibon Foundation, that is Php 1,100/per day or Php 33,000 per month.

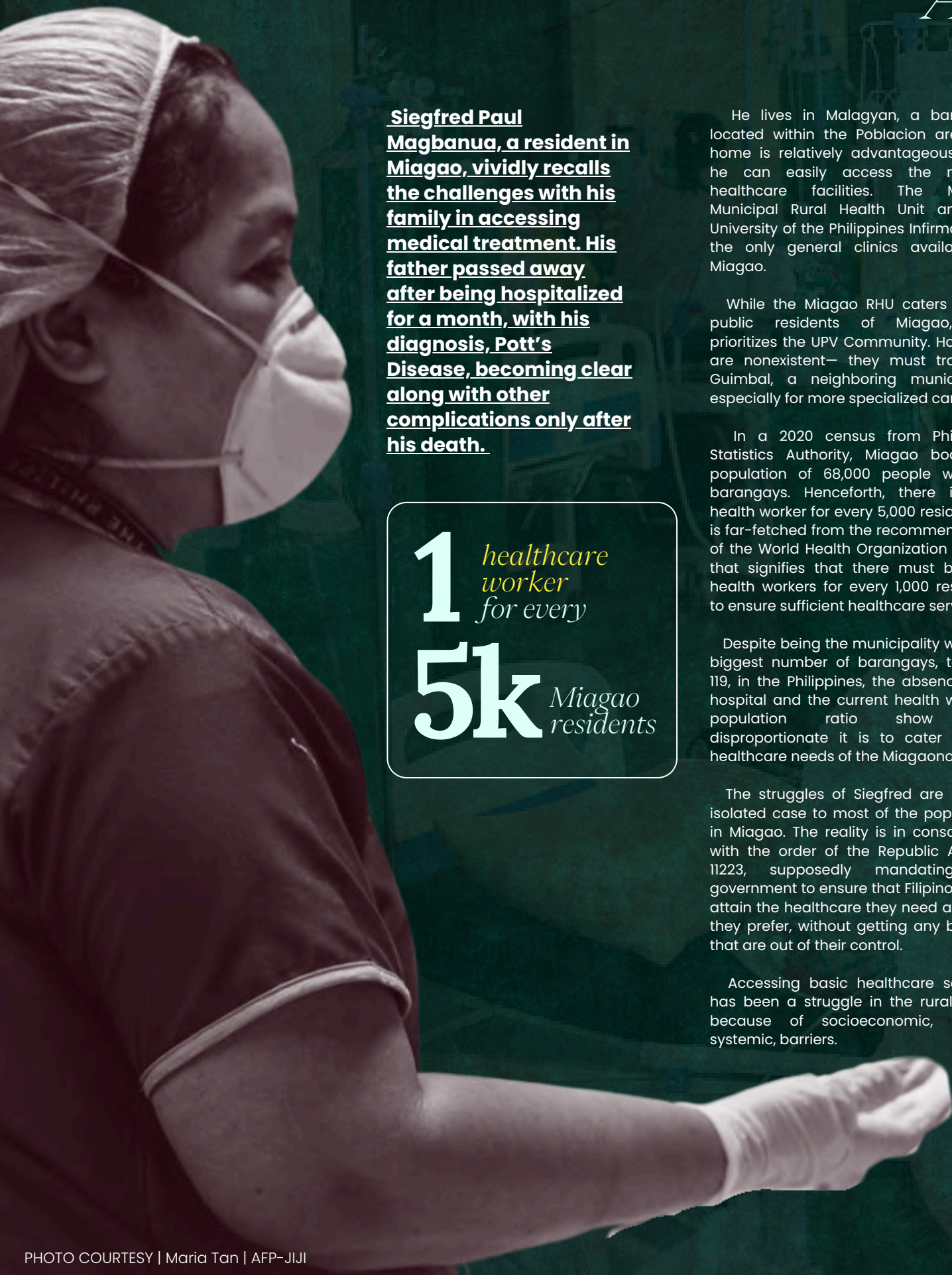
With the aforementioned concerns, establishing a general public hospital in the municipality of Miagao may be ambitious or idealistic in light of the current state, but it is merely addressing the material conditions of the municipality. A lot of systemic change, therefore, must be actively struggled: national minimum wage, free medications, establishment of more advanced health facilities, and ultimately an increase of funding to health services.

With these calls, tensions may arise as the interest of private healthcare will be in peril because of profit concerns, but in governance, the critical question remains: "for whom are we making decisions?"

Siegfred's experience encapsulates the urgent need for systemic change in healthcare provision—not just in Miagao, but across the Philippines.

Who will be left behind? Without systemic change—for as long as medicines are commercialized, for as long as there is no hospital nor enough health workers to cater 68,000 Miagaonons, the cycle of inequitable access to healthcare services continues and it will never end. The elderly, children, and those with chronic conditions will be left behind.

This is one of the fundamental human rights the people of Miagao are denied. How many more families like Siegfred must endure in the current healthcare system? †



KOLEKTIB

MULA KAMPUS PATUNGONG LANSANGAN

Pagbakas sa saliw ng pasismo sa panahon ng desperasyon

> Jerb Paras, Aleona Gardose





Minsan nang pinatunayan ng kolektibong puwersa ng masa na kaya nitong gapiin ang opresibong sistema.

Ang aktibismo ay responsibilidad ng kabataang Pilipino sa bayan— mula Diliman Commune noong dekada '70, hanggang ngayon, patuloy na umaayaw at hindi kailanman sasayaw sa tugtog ng panunupil at kasakiman ang puwersa ng sangkaestudyantehan. Sa nagbabadyang banta sa soberanya, seguridad, at lumalalang ekonomiya ng bansa, naninindigan ang mga kabataang estudyante kaagapay ng batayang sektor ng masa sa pagtutol at pagbasura sa Charter Change.

“AWITING BAGO AY NAGHIHINTAY PARA ISAYAW MO”— IINDAK KA BA?

Kamakailan, umusad na tungong Senado ang Resolution of Both Houses (RBH) No. 7 na naglalayong amyendahan ang mga partikular na probisyon sa Saligang Batas 1987, na nakasentro sa pagpapaluwag ng mga restriksyon sa ekonomiya ng bansa. Kapag tuluyang naipasa sa Senado, magbibigay daan ito upang pahintulutan ang mga dayuhan na magmay-ari ng 100% sa pampublikong serbisyo, kabilang ang kuryente, tubig, transportasyon, advertising, at maging ang sektor ng edukasyon.

BANTA SA MGA MANGGAGAWA

Mahirap umindak sa malakolonyal at malapyudal na tugtugin, kung saan ang ritmo ay nasasabay lamang ng mga dayuhang imperyalista at naghaharing-uri. Ika-apat ng Hulyo, taong 1946 nang makamtan ng Pilipinas ang kasarinlan mula sa pananakop ng mga dayuhan. Subalit, hanggang ngayon nakapailalim pa rin sa dikta ng imperyalistang kapangyarihan ang ating lipunan. Sa itatakdang pagpapaluwag sa mga restriksyon sa ekonomiya ng bansa, lalo lamang malulubog ang lokal na ekonomiya ng Pilipinas at magiging daan ito sa patuloy na pananamantala ng mga imperyalista sa mababang pasahod sa mga manggagawang Pilipino.

Ayon kay Richelle Joy Villa, miyembro ng UPV Oikos Ecological Movement, hindi makikinabang ang masang Pilipino sa pagbubukas ng ekonomiya sa mga dayuhang korporasyon. Ang maluwag na pangangasiwa ng mga imperyalistang dayuhan ay maaaring magpasara sa mga lokal na industriya sa bansa, at umabuso sa karapatan at proteksyon sa paggawa ng mga manggagawang Pilipino.

“Higit lamang na madedehado ang mga Pilipino sa probisyong magpapahintulot sa mga dayuhang korporasyon na magmay-ari at mangasiwa sa isandaang porsyento ng ating mga likas na yaman, kalupaan, at pamumuhunan. Mas palalalain nito ang krisis sa ekonomiya— maaaring magsitaasan ang mga bilihin, gasolina, at pamasaha sa pagpapaubaya sa mga dayuhan ng ating mga pampublikong serbisyo.

Ang pagkankam ng mga dayuhan sa ating likas na yaman para sa pagpapatayo ng kanilang negosyo at kalakal ay hahantong sa pagkawasak ng ating kalikasan, pagka-displace ng mga IPs, at kawalan ng lupain para sa mga magsasaka at mangbubukid. Lubos nitong sisirain ang tulay patungo sa pambansang industriyalisasyon na sana'y susuporta sa ating mga lokal na industriya at mga manggagawang Pilipino,” giit ni Villa.

BANTA SA SISTEMANG PANG-EDUKASYON

Pahihintulutan rin ng Economic Charter Change ang paghawak at pagpapatayo ng mga dayuhan sa mga institusyong pang-edukasyon sa bansa, na lalo lamang mag-uudyok sa mas kolonyal, komersyalisado, at represibong sistemang pang-edukasyon sa Pilipinas.

“Education is not for sale!”— Isa lamang si Carl Jester Caldito, kasapi ng Anakbayan UPV, sa libu-libong kabataang iskolar na tumututol sa pangangasiwa ng mga dayuhan sa mga paaralan at unibersidad sa bansa. Ayon sa kanya, hindi kailangang papasukin ang mga tanyag, global, at dayuhang unibersidad sa Pilipinas upang makasabay at maging kompetitibo sa internasyunal na lebel ang kalidad ng edukasyon sa bansa. Dagdag ni Caldito, ang lubos na kailangan natin ay isang “nationalist, scientific, at mass-oriented na edukasyon.” Isang sistemang pang-edukasyon na malaya, de-kalidad, at tumutugon sa pangangailangan ng masa.

Karamihan sa mga kolehiyo sa Pilipinas ay pribado at inaasahang dadami pa ang mga ito kapag pinayagang mamuhunan ang mga dayuhan sa pagpapatayo ng mga paaralan sa bansa. Ayon sa ulat ng NUSP, nasa mahigit Php 150,000 ang taunang matrikula ng bawat estudyante sa isang pribadong kolehiyo sa Pilipinas. Sa patuloy na pagtaas ng matrikula, tuloy-tuloy rin ang pagkilos ng sangkaestudyantehan sa pagtutol dito.

Kung ngayon pa lang ay hindi na natutustusan ng mga ordinaryong mamamayan ang mga bayarin sa matrikula sa mga pribadong unibersidad, ano pa kaya sa mga dayuhang unibersidad na papasok sa ating bansa? Sa kabila ng libreng matrikula sa mga SUCs, kinakaharap ng mga mag-aaral ang pagtaas ng renta sa dormitoryo, presyo ng pagkain, miscellaneous fees, kawalan ng scholarship, at kakulangan sa mga pasilidad katulad ng mga laboratoryo na dulot ng malawakang budget cut. Bukod pa dito, limitado ang mga SUCs sa ating bansa at kakaunti lamang ang mga estudyanteng natatanggap dahil sa kakarampot na pondo para sa edukasyon,” pahayag ni Carl Jester Caldito.

BANTA SA SEKTOR NG AGRIKULTURA AT PANGISDAAN

Maiimpluwensyahan din ng pagsasatupad ng ChaCha ang sektor ng pangangisda at agrikultura dahil sa pagpanukala ng 100% dayuhang pagmamay-ari o 100% foreign ownership na binibigyan ng pribilehiya ang mga dayuhan na mamuhunan ng kahit anong pampublikong serbisyo sa Pilipinas.

“Kapag naisabat ang 100% dayuhang pagmamay-ari, lubhang mababawasan ang lokal na produksyon. Nililimita nito ang oportunidad ng mga municipal fisherfolk, local vendors, at mga kababaihan sa fisheries industry,” giit ni Niña Fegi, miyembro ng KARATULA UPV at mag-aaral ng BS Fisheries. Para sa mga lokal na pangisdaan, hindi pantay ang pagkakataon na kanilang natatamasa. Kinakailangan nilang makipag-kompetensya sa puhunan para sa materyales at sa pagproseso—mga bagay na kung saan nakaka-angat ang mga pandayuhang negosyo.

Marami ding mga aktibista at human rights activists ang nag-aalala sa kaligtasan ng mga mangangisda dahil sa kasalukuyang pagdami ng Chinese fishing vessels sa West Visayan Sea. Tinatalang halos 240,000 kg ng isda ang ilegal na kinukuha sa karagatan ng Pilipinas araw-araw. Halos dalawang daang Chinese vessels din ang batik-batik na umaaligid sa baybayin ng Maynila. Maaring tumindi ang pandarambong ng mga dayuhan sa ating karagatan at likas na yaman kung iibahin ang Konstitusyon na pumoprotekta dito.

Ayon din kay Fegi, ang sektor ng agrikultura ay maapektuhan rin sa rebisyong ito. “Pinapalago nito ang mala-pyudal at mala-kolonyal na oryentasyon ng lipunan. Hadlang ito sa pag-unlad ng saril nating produksyon at pinahihintulutan ang pagsamantala ng lakas gawa ng mga magsasaka,” saad niya.

Batay sa pahayag ng Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, mahigit-kumulang na 14.2 milyong ektarya ang maring gawing pambayad na lupa dahil sa 100% dayuhang pagmamay-ari. Binibigyan nito ng oportunidad ang mga dayuhan na kontrolin ang pagmamay-ari ng lupa na kung saan ay mapapaalis nila ang mga taong naniniharan doon para magpatayo ng mga gusali, o taasan ang upa ng mga magsasakang nagtatrabaho dito. Kakailanganin rin ng mga magsasaka na magbayad ng halaga ng upa at mangutang sa may-ari. Dahil dito, hindi tugma ang presyo ng pananim sa halagang inutang nila— ang paulit-ulit na siklo ng pagsasamantala ng mga pesante

PATULOY TAYONG MAGTATAGPO SA LANSANGAN HANGGA'T HINDI TAYO PINAPAKINGGAN.

Minsan nang pinatunayan ng kolektibong puwersa ng masa na kaya nitong gapiin ang opresibong sistema. Mula sa mga nagdaang administrasyon, hanggang sa kasalukuyang administrasyong Marcos Jr.–Duterte, kabi-kabilaang opresiyon pa rin ang nararanasan ng batayang sektor ng masa. Kaya, patuloy ang pagpapalakas ng mga panawagan sa lansangan dahil ngayon ito lubos na kinakailangan. Hangga't hindi napapaos ang boses ng masa at hangga't hindi tumutulo ang huling patak ng pawis, dadalhin at dadalhin ng sangkaestudyantehan kasama ang masang Pilipino ang laban kontra ChaCha sa mga lansangan — mga lansangan kung saan unang ipinakita ng masa ang kolektibong puwersa na siyang nagwakas sa diktadurang Marcos.*

OVER A CUP OF ICED COFFEE

Grading the Camposano Administration

> Ciana Belle Gloria

Having spent nine semesters at UP Visayas (four of which under online classes, five face-to-face, and all nine spent under Camposano's two consecutive terms), having been both a stellar student with UNOs filling my CRS account and now a student unable to finish my units in the usual four-year timeframe, and having been an organization member and a student leader in our university's councils, I think my long and colorful stay at the university lends itself well for the task of grading the institution. Yes, against the uno, dos, tres, kwatro, and singko grading system we're all familiar with.

There's no language that bridges the divide between students, faculty, and administration better than the universal tongue of the grading system, if to settle the inevitable divide in our semantics and registers, and if to reach conclusions that make sense to all.

Projects

The administration, much like a diligent student, knows how to highlight its accomplishments and makes sure we're aware of them. You'll frequently see posts on UPV's official page about its achievements: higher rankings, new capacity-building initiatives, research projects, and partnerships with diverse partners. These announcements are usually accompanied by sleek, eye-catching publication materials, featuring the signature "certificate-handoff-and-handshake" photos, with our beloved school administrators smiling widely.

Sometimes, these celebratory posts can also be found in our Chancellor's Facebook account. And if you're really lucky, you might even catch a lesson or two from Dr. Camposano through his social media musings on Bourdieu or Goffman, applying theoretical frameworks to our current but oddly specific situations.

UP Visayas certainly knows how to broaden its horizons and work with a diverse range of partners, regardless of their background. It's so welcoming, in fact, that it even opened its doors to the RTF-ELCAC, a notorious red-tagging task force that has been endangering students and educators for years since its formation, complete with a tour back in November 2021. This was supposed to be a testament to the university's commitment in welcoming "plurality and diversity." Now we're left to wonder who else it is willing to shake hands with.

Participation, collaboration, synthesizing ideas, and group works

As someone who has worn multiple hats – an organization member, activist, and two-time student council officer – I can acknowledge that the administration, particularly the OVCAA, OVCA, and the Office of the Chancellor, has generally been supportive of student-led initiatives. I can't recall any event that was outright denied unless there were clear logistical constraints. And to his credit, Chancellor Camposano, despite his diverging political views, often emphasizes his commitment to respecting the "plurality of ideas" he has preached since his first bid for the chancellorship. So regardless of the nature of our events and his politics, he and the offices under him do place that coveted stamp of approval.

Once, I recall sitting in the cold, imposing office of the Chancellor last year as the UPV USC's People's Rights and Welfare Head alongside my co-officers—it was for a dialogue on student demands. And yes, they were "demands," a term which Camposano found too abrasive for his liking. But the real shocker came when he dismissed our request to support our initiatives against Charter Change and the Jeepney Phaseout, deeming it "intellectually dishonest" to oppose these policies when in fact he supports them. His argument? That it's "about time" for change – in the constitution, for modernization, for progress.

I would have engaged in a productive intellectual tussle as, for one, the matter of opposing the Charter Change is about the type of Charter Change being pursued, and second, the Jeepney Phaseout will quite literally massacre our drivers' and small-scale operators' franchises. But I did not have the bravado then, nor the mental preparation and the specific philosophical thinker or author to cite for that specific exchange.

Timeliness in outputs

I made mention that the higher offices do approve any sensible and well-planned event for students, but it takes so much time and struggle, I don't think they even realize it. I do have in mind my thankfulness towards the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) and Student Organizations and Activities (SOA) who tirelessly and patiently sift through student paperwork to ensure that everyone is compliant with a freaking alphabet soup of requirements just to hold a single event in school and use its venues, which are meant to be for the students, by the way: letters, permits, requests, forms, waivers, Student Participation Agreements, conformes, curriculum vitae for speakers, etc. – you get it.

Commit one mistake in this process, or encounter an unknown required form, and you'll find yourself back to square one, leaving your event in limbo. This bureaucracy often leads to delays or cancellations, hurting organizations already struggling to sustain their activities. It's especially disheartening for sociopolitical and mass orgs trying to push campaigns. Many student organizations, while juggling academic pressures, also have to fight hard to run their events, initiatives, recognition, and support efforts, particularly those in talent, arts, and competitions.

Outputs: Conditions for learning in the institution

Part of the work at the National Students' Day Working Committee, a newly formed alliance for the National Students' Day 2024, is consolidating grievances from the students through the basic units of organizations so we may strategize the best action to take, recognizing that our previous ones barely worked. We've done this through 3-4 consultations, and what we uncovered reflects the harsh reality of pursuing an education here. We're caught in a cycle of fighting for meaningful improvements, yet those changes have been incremental at best, considering the extent of what's needed.

Despite small improvements, the challenges remain significant: high costs for fieldwork and thesis projects, inadequate facilities, unsafe classrooms (especially in SOTECH), unreliable campus Wi-Fi, limited mental health support, unsupported athletes and talents, and burdensome bureaucracy. Students also face delays in class dismissals during calamities, adding unnecessary risks, while appeals for leniency are often dismissed. The removal of reading breaks went unconsulted, and now we have strong data from the UPV USC indicating the students' need for one.

What's the grade?

With all these assessments, I give the UPV Administration a generous 4.00. It's done enough to show up and be present. A 5.00 would mean it's never there at all, or that it outrightly bastardizes its functions and blatantly oppresses its students, which is truthfully not the case. In the academic parlance, it pushes for quality education and insists on academic freedom, and does not suppress at least most of its student-led events and initiatives.

However, a 4.00 also means we're desperate for more: more for ourselves as we pursue education, and for the conditions of our educators who are also affected. Ideally, we need something to make an objective case for that sweet "final grade".

It's late in the semester, and perhaps at this unfortunate point, that "something else" we need to see is the administration's response to the NSD 2024 Student Walkout; our clear message that while there are times to pursue our education to the best of our abilities, there are also times we must stand up and insist that our conditions are no longer enabling us to do so, and that we won't tolerate it any longer. We've already had enough.

It's not too late, though! A 4.00 can be turned into a passing 3.00 or a failing 5.00.

In any case, don't expect a Latin Honor. ✨



LAB DANAS

Another Day in my Lab Life

> Vladimir Amadeus Mercado

It's Monday again.

As usual, early morning hours are spent sitting in lecture classes and we're back in the game as academic weapons in action. The grind begins anew, and for many of us, it is a relentless march through the halls of a broken system (and lab equipment, too). However, don't be surprised if you ask me about my lovely—I mean, lab life—as one merely treading beyond “rainbows and sunshines.”

For a Biology student like me, stepping into laboratory classrooms almost everyday is part of the routine. Whether it's inhaling both harmless and toxic chemicals or deciphering intriguing Latin and Greek names all taped to specimens—some neatly arranged, others chaotically scattered in the white corners of the room—it's all just another day. But let us not confine the concept of “laboratory” to the realms of the Biological Sciences (BioSci) and Chemistry Department. Any room designed to provide the right conditions for conducting experiments or measurements can be considered a lab—but that's precisely where the problem begins.

The world of laboratory classrooms, even for those studying fundamentals, I suppose, is a world of wonder. I, for one, am a lab person—experiments and dissections become my thing, and laboratory reports? They're my daily bread (sometimes tasty, sometimes bland). To me, a laboratory classroom is a home; to others, it might feel like an entirely different world.

However, it's hard to call it a home, or even a wonder when Mondays greet you with poorly ventilated and tightly-spaced laboratory rooms, expired reagents, and crumbling walls that whisper tales and neglect. Even worse, the grind doesn't stop there when you have back-to-back lab sessions until Friday. One thing you need to do is just brave through room after room, sometimes at the cost of the quality of our work in the process.

The most glaring problem? Our laboratories are falling apart. One thing that is evident in almost all laboratory classrooms is the deteriorating infrastructure especially that the building has literally stood the test of time and now boast dilapidated ceilings and cabinets threaten to break free from their hinges.

Minor cracks and peeling paint mar the walls, threatening further damage if left unattended. Safety is compromised, and we are left to gamble with our wellbeing.

Moreover, ventilation—or the lack thereof—is also not giving in some energy to some of the laboratory classrooms, particularly in basement laboratory classrooms. This isn't just a comfort issue; it is a significant problem when it comes to biosafety tasks, such as microbiological experiments. In these conditions, precision is impossible. Results are compromised. Time and resources are wasted. Yet, despite these glaring issues, we're expected to churn out excellence.

On top of this, budget cuts remain a pressing issue when it comes to laboratory classrooms. They aren't just abstract numbers; they manifest in our daily struggles. From my experience, its impact is palpable, particularly in the quality and quantity of our equipment. We perform dissection experiments in the poorly ventilated Zoo Shed, carry out streaking procedures with broken glass spreaders, and attempt to extract macromolecules using expired organic solvents, often yielding little to no results.

But let's be clear: we cannot place the burden and blame on our instructors and professors, who go above and beyond to ensure we produce decent outputs despite these challenges. They, too, are acutely aware of the problem. The real culprit is the persistent, oppressive system that underfunds education, depriving us of our basic right to safe and conducive laboratory spaces.

Long-standing issues like budget cuts and the lack of administrative intervention to support our campaigns for quality laboratory facilities remain a sight too far from us to see.

Even with the administration's grand plans for a new CAS Building within the university, laboratory classrooms remain to be prioritized for repair, maintenance, and regular monitoring. If we truly aim to cement our status as the premier university in Western Visayas and the country, we cannot afford to let these facilities fall into disrepair. Things will go down in shambles if we cannot mobilize our resources better, especially that these rooms continually birth some of the future scientists of the nation. To neglect these spaces is to sabotage our potentials.

The admin must mobilize its resources strategically, because if they fail to address these urgent issues, our status as a premier institution will crumble. This is my lab life. Our lab life. ✨

POINT TO CONSIDER

Trimming the excess of bureaucracy

> Matthew Batitay

The University of the Philippines (UP) is known to be the nation's premier institution that fosters holistic learning, academic freedom, and student activism in societal matters. However, underlying solid foundations lie the traces of bureaucracy that impede the very principles and goals it strives to maintain.

Throughout the years, the authority of the school administration has been constantly challenged by the resilience and determination of the student body striving for the betterment of the university.

In the 56th Convention of the General Assembly of Student Councils (GASC) held at UPV Miagao, the adoption of the 20 resolutions addressing the different concerns of the students all throughout the UP system highlights the ongoing struggle of the students for a better society and environment.

The resolutions presented by student councils mirror the widespread concerns of the student body, challenging the bureaucratic administration's responsiveness in such a way that it advocates for a university that is both efficient and attentive to the needs of its members. The bureaucracy in UP is like a double-edged sword.

Although it can establish a structure for managing university resources and guaranteeing accountability, it may also result in delayed responsive actions due to administrative obstacles and time-consuming procedural hurdles.

Moreover, this bureaucracy also raises questions and concerns about the priorities of the administration, as these delays and inefficiencies, which impede the academic and administrative progress of the university, can be a source of frustration for the whole community. This matter must be taken into consideration since bureaucracy often carries a negative connotation, particularly when it is perceived as overly rigid, impersonal, or disconnected from the needs and concerns of the individuals it serves.

Hence, the bureaucracy must evolve in a positive light, becoming more agile and transparent, to truly serve the needs of the UP community.

That is, it should be a facilitator to empower the efforts of the students, not a barrier that will exhaust them with seemingly endless loops of protocols.

Thus, this calls for a need for change: the administration must trim the excesses of its bureaucracy. In this way, it can remain true to its ideals, wherein its procedures should be made more efficient, cutting down on tedious paperwork, and making more accessible and accountable decisions.

The administration must listen to its students since they know the issues that have emerged on the ground and take decisive steps to address their concerns, serving the academic community while still upholding its values of honor and excellence. ✨

ELLA-VATED THOUGHTS

A stained partnership

> Mariella Villodres

The inked Declaration of Cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the University of the Philippines (UP) on August 8 stirred a storm of controversy within the UP community.

Though both the AFP and the university administration framed it as a beneficial collaboration to bolster national security and advance academic growth, its underlying threats to UP's decades-long, fiercely defended academic freedom cannot be ignored.

At first glance, the declaration holds promise, as touted by the administration for its supposed benefits. Such an alliance, they claim, will align resources to influence our state security reform to be guided by academic rigor through "joint academic programs and research initiatives." Additionally, the administration claimed that it would also serve as a stepping stone to resolve the long-standing issues that have persisted between both parties. However, the shadow of red-tagging and campus militarization looms large, much like a persistent stain.

The fear is that this agreement will only exacerbate the already hostile environment against student activism and academic freedom. Allowing state forces to have a presence within UP's bounds would pave the way for vulnerabilities to dangerous allegations, smothering the university's tradition of activism.

More alarming is the nature of this declaration—one made behind closed doors and with no prior consultation. Had it not been for the AFP's careless oversight in prematurely posting the agreement on social media, the UP community would have had no awareness of the agreement's existence.

The trajectory of Jimenez's leadership is becoming much clearer, marked by an unsettling coziness with state forces. Under his reign, the voices of the constituents he serves take a backseat to outside military interests, as his administration remains silent on the restoration of the 1989 UP-DND Accord. Not even the bare minimum has been met, as his administration has yet to show signs of addressing the incessant red-tagging of UP students and faculty.

In the face of all this, the UP community remains vocal in its opposition. At the recent 57th Convention of the General Assembly of Student Councils (GASC), the clamor for the nullification of the agreement gained further momentum as student leaders and campus publications from across the UP System continued to condemn the lack of consultation and the threats posed by the agreement. Organizations such as the newly reinstated Defend UP Network vow to carry the voices of the community, determined to prevent UP from devolving into an appendage for state forces' agendas.

At UP Visayas, the stakes are even higher. Student activism, a proud tradition of the university, has been relentlessly attacked with baseless accusations, red-tagging, and state-sponsored fear tactics that have created an atmosphere of constant anxiety. Students face not only the threat of surveillance but the looming specter of police and military intrusion—threats that extend beyond campus grounds and into the community itself.

And Chancellor Camposano, a proud advocate of academic freedom, has done and said nothing about the danger of the UP-AFP Declaration of Cooperation. He stands by as students, faculty, and organizations fight tooth and nail to protect the freedoms the university claims to uphold. Instead of fortifying its defenses against state interference, the administration's complacency invites it, just like how he welcomed the NTF-ELCAC into the University on his first term as Chancellor. Anything less is a betrayal—not just of the UP community, but of the Iskos who have bled to make UP a bastion of activism and critical thought.

Now is not the time for half-measures. The UP Visayas administration must join the clamor and actively engage with students and faculty to protect the university's academic freedom. Just as the UP Diliman University Council has boldly taken a stand, it is crucial that the UP Visayas, through Camposano's leadership, does the same by demanding immediate action to nullify the UP-AFP Declaration of Cooperation.

The admin cannot afford to be a silent spectator while the academic freedom of its students and faculty hangs in the balance. We not only demand a strong and proactive stance from the admin, we expect it at the soonest possible time.

Ultimately, this Declaration of Cooperation is more than just a beneficial academic partnership—it sets a precedent for the erosion of UP's hard-won autonomy. President Jimenez, and UP Visayas Chancy too, must remember the values upon which the university was built: dissent, independence, and critical thought—the very same values that constructed barricades on the grounds of UP Diliman against Martial Law's tyranny.

May the persistent ink stain that marks their hands from signing this agreement serve as a reminder that, no matter how much they wash it, their hands are not clean. Ink may dry, but marks remain—UP must and shall always remain a bastion of activism and free thought, unstained by external forces. ✨

PHIL FACTOR

Erased in plain sight

> Phil Liam Nono

Ask someone to pinpoint Israel on a map, they would probably tell you it's somewhere along the Middle East. But ask someone to locate Palestine on that same map, many will falter. This is not just a failure of geography—it's a symptom of a deliberate erasure, shaped by a global narrative that prioritizes Israel's existence while diminishing Palestine's.

This erasure reflects Israel's broader blueprint to erase Palestinian identity, perpetuated by actions that hides apartheid under this façade of self-defense. The regime hides behind the language of survival, while pursuing a relentless campaign to wipe out an entire people.

Since Hamas-led Palestinian resistance surged against Israel over a year ago, the death toll has surpassed 40,000 Palestinians. But these aren't just numbers—they are lives cut short, families torn apart, and a community decimated. While many progressive groups call this genocide, Israel dismisses it as mere collateral damage.

Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian land calls into question its claims of self-defense. What it presents as retaliation is, in reality, a calculated upswing of genocidal violence. The devastation has now spread beyond Gaza, extending to Lebanon and Yemen, with Israeli bombings signaling an intent not just to suppress resistance, but to assert regional dominance.

Behind claims of targeting militants, the reality is thousands of civilians caught in the crossfire—a glaring indication of Israel's ultimate objective.

Israel's blatant disregard for international bodies like the United Nations exposes a disturbing double standard, particularly when viewed through the lens of U.S. complicity. The United States, while claiming to uphold international law, continues to sponsor Israel's war machine, protecting the aggressor rather than holding it accountable. This raises serious questions about the integrity of global institutions, where political and economic interests overshadow the moral imperative of justice.

The U.S. not only shields Israel but actively incapacitates efforts to halt the violence. When France and Britain called for a ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel, the U.S. shut them down, demonstrating how the powerful subvert international diplomacy to serve their own agenda. The international legal system, designed to prosecute war crimes, ceases to function when those meant to enforce it manipulate the rules for their own gain.

This isn't just a mockery of justice—it's an insult to the thousands of Palestinian lives lost, and to those still enduring the daily reality of living under siege in one of the world's most densely populated and deprived regions.

International entities like the UN need deep structural change if they are to serve the interests of all, not only leveraging towards the interest of the West which currently holds hegemony over global affairs. As politicians play their cynical games on their concrete surfaces, beneath the rubble lies the enduring human cost—people trapped in an unending cycle of violence and oppression.

By the growing day, Palestine's situation deteriorates. What we are witnessing is ethnic cleansing in real-time, a grim echo of the atrocities that fill our history books. What has changed is the growing global awareness, and the question we must ask ourselves now is: Will we let this awareness lead to action, or will we allow the suffering of millions to be reduced to mere words? ✨

PRESS WOES

Ilusibo pa rin ang kalayaan

> **Khyla Nicole Abuzo, Rey Mark Paran**

Ang konsepto ng kalayaan ay madalas na itinuturing na haligi ng lipunan at politika. Isa itong paniwala na nagbibigay-daan sa indibidwal na magpasya at kumilos nang malaya— isang panloob na balangkas ng ating kaalaman bilang tao. Gayunpaman, sa kabila ng angking kapangyarihan ng salitang ito, may mga sandaling kinikwestyon ang tunay na kahulugan at saklaw nito. At sa ating paghahangad ng kalayaang magpahayag, unti-unting nagiging ilusyon ang paghahangad ng kalayaan.

Tulad ng isang tanglaw sa madilim na karagatan, tungkulin ng mamamahayag na magbigay liwanag sa madilim na kasinungalingan upang ilantad ang mga katotohanan ng mundo at labanan ang mga mapanlinlang na pilit dinidiin ang kasinungalingan bilang katotohanan. Bilang mga mamamahayag, minumulat tayong maging matapang hindi lamang dahil sa ating tungkuling ipaabot ang katotohanan sa malawak na hanay ng masang umaasa sa atin bilang pangunahing balong ng impormasyon, kundi dahil kapalit ng paglalahad ng paglalahad ng katotohanan ay banta sa ating seguridad at buhay.

Ang tapang na ito ay naglalayo sa atin mula sa takot na hadlang sa pagtupad ng ating tungkulin, at ito rin ang nagbubuklod sa atin upang magkaisa at magtagumpay sa pagharap sa mga hamong dala ng pasistang rehimen.

Sa bawat hakbang na tinatahak ng isang mamamahayag, ramdam ang bigat ng responsibilidad sa kanyang mga balikat. Ngunit sa kanyang puso'y walang bakas ng takot, sapagkat itinuturing niya ang kanyang tungkulin bilang isang tagapagtaguyod ng katotohanan at katarungan.

Subalit sa likod ng mariing pagtanggap sa takot, isang buntong-hininga ang nagaganap sa bawat pagharap sa peligro. Ang buhay ng isang mamamahayag ay nakataya sa bawat balitang isinusulat, ulat na binibigkas, at kuwentong isinisiwalat. Ang pagtutulak sa isang mamamahayag na hindi dapat matakot ay isang pagpapaliit at pagbabalewala sa tunay na karanasang nararanasan sa pagganap sa kanilang tungkulin.

Sa pagsalaksak ng reaksiyunaryong estado sa mga pahirap, pasista, at anti-aktibismong mga batas, gaya na lamang ng Anti-Terrorism Law, lalong nagiging hayag ang kanilang takot at pangamba sa mga tagapagtaguyod ng progresibo at rebolusyonaryong mga ideolohiya. Sa mga represibong batas kagaya ng Anti Terror Law, mas itinuturing na kaaway ng pamahalaan ang mga kritikal sa kanilang baluktot na pamumuno.

Hindi na bago sa mga puwersa ng estado ang kultura ng pag-aresto at pagpataw ng mga gawa-gawang kaso sa mga progresibo. Ilan sa mga taktika ng estado ay ang pagtatanim ng mga ebidensya na maiuugnay sa kaso ng terorismo, kung saan sa ilalim ng Anti Terrorism Law ay may mabigat na imposisyon. Dahil dito, nagkakaroon ng chilling effect sa iba pang mamamahayag na minsang nagiging dahilan ng hindi paglathala ng mga artikulong kritikal sa pamahalaan sa takot na maging target ng pag-atake, panghaharass, paniniktik, at kung mas malala'y pagkakakulong o di kaya'y pagpatay.

Tunay nga na ang katapangan ay isa lamang sa mga katangiang dapat taglayin ng isang mamamahayag, ngunit sa kasalukuyang sosyo-politikal na klima, at sa madugong kasaysayan na pumapalibot sa relasyon ng midya at pamahalaan, ang mga mamamahayag ay hindi lamang nasasadlak, kundi nagiging tudlaan na rin ng atake.

Isang buhay na halimbawa rito ang kinahaharap ni Frenchie Mae Cumpio, dating punong patnugot ng UP Vista ng UP Tacloban College at tinahak ang pagiging community journalist sa Tacloban upang isiwalat ang mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao sa mga magsasaka at manggagawa.

Sa gitna ng dilim at panganib, ang tapang ni Frenchie Mae ay sumibol tulad ng liwanag sa madilim na gabi. Ang kaniyang pagiging hindi duwag ay hindi lamang simpleng pagpapakita ng tapang, kundi isang masalimuot na alamat ng panganib sa buhay. Isang manipestasyon na kailanma'y hindi ligtas ang mga mamamahayag sa ating bansa, bagay na taliwas sa nakasaad sa ating konstitusyon.

Minsan nang kinuwestiyon ang katapangan ng mga mamamahayag sa Pilipinas na kadalasa'y kinukumpara sa mga mamamahayag sa ibang bansa. Maraming Pilipino ang napapahanga sa mga dayuhang mamamahayag habang ang iba naman napatanong kung bakit hindi raw ito nagagawa ng mga Pilipinong mamamahayag.

Sa katunayan, matatapang ang mga Pilipinong mamamahayag. Sa mainstream media, nariyan ang mga kagaya nina Karmina Constantino, Karen Davila, at Maria Ressa. Mas marami rin namang matatapang na mga mamamahayag sa alternatibong midya na kadalasa'y nag-uulat ng mga balitang hindi nabibigyang pansin ng mainstream. Sila iyong mga mamamahayag sa kanayunan na nagrereport ng mga insidente ng land-grabbing, militarisasyon, at talamak na human rights violations sa mga katutubo at mga progresibo.

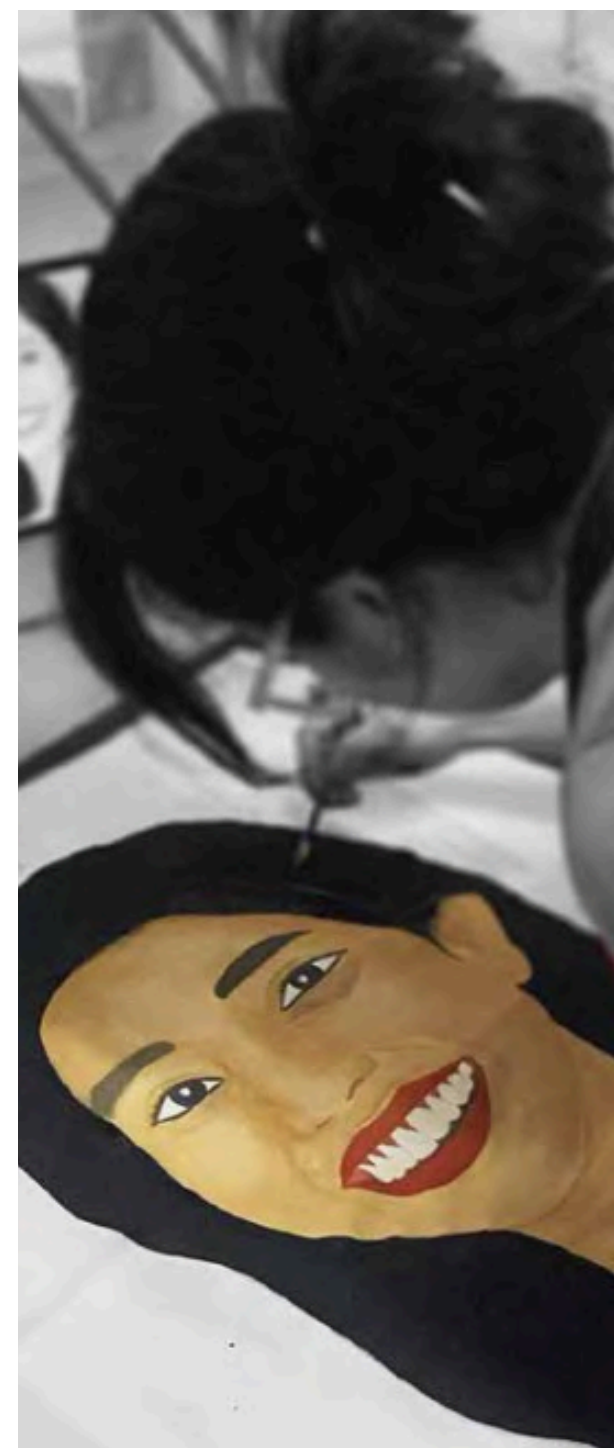
Ngunit, dahil itinuturing ng reaksiyunaryong gobyerno bilang lason ang mga progresibong manunulat, minsang nauwi sa kahindik-hindik na katapusan ang kanilang hangarin.

Minsan nama'y panandaliang nakakahon—naghihintay ng panibagong umagang bibigyan ulit ng pagkakataong makapagsalita't mapakinggan. Ganito ang katotohanan sa likod ng tapang at giting ng mga mamamahayag sa Pilipinas. Ito ang reyalidad ng mga kagaya ni Frenchie Mae.

Sa panahon ng ligalig at kawalang-siguraduhan, na tila ba'y mga bangkang pumapalaot sa galawgaw na tubig-dagat, wala ring kasiguraduhan ang buhay ng mga mamamahayag sa bansang pilit binubusalan ang mga labing mapagpalaya.

Ngunit sa kabila nito'y hindi matitinag ng matataas na alon at mapanglaw na karagatan ang nag-aalab at nagsusumikhay na damdamin ng mga mamamahayag—sa kampus, sa mainstream, at sa kanayunan.

Patuloy na mamumutawi ang katotohanan, at kalayaan sa mga pluma't bibig ng mga mamamahayag. Tunay na ilusibo ang paghahangad ng tunay na kalayaan sa pamamahayag lalo pa't ang mga nakaupo sa puwesto na dapat nagtataguyod nito ay siya pang nanggigipit sa mga mamamahayag, ngunit hangga't patuloy ang labang tinatahak ng mga kagaya ni Frenchie Mae Cumpio, patuloy din tayong magpupumiglas, magpapalakas upang tuluyang makawala sa madilim na karagatan. Aahon tayo ng may dangal kasama ng ating mga pinaglalaman dahil hinihintay tayo ng sambayanan. ✨



THE ULTIMATE TIRAK PLAYLIST

Sa “Bagong Pilipinas,” hindi pa rin nawawala ang nag-aalab na puso ng mga rebolusyunaryo. Nariyan pa rin ang mga kantang naging sandata ng iilan upang palakasin ang diwang makabayan sa tunggalian ng masang-api at ng kawalan ng nakabubuhay na sahod, inekwalidad, at iba pang sistemikong suliranin ng lipunang Pilipino.

> Kobe Patrick **Serinas**



Music has never been just music. It transcended mere sound.

It is a language, a medium for communication, inspiration, and catalyzing change.

Sa Pilipinas, ang musika bilang sangkap ng rebolusyon ay hindi na bago. Sa kasagsagan ng Batas Militar noong dekada '70, ilang banda tulad ng The Jerks at ASIN ang nagsimulang magpabatid ng social inequality at pagkondena sa mga kahindik-hindik at nakakakilabot na gawain ng gobyerno lalo na sa panahon ng diktadurang Marcos Sr. Ang social relevance ng kanilang mga awitin, sa likod ng maraming taong nakalipas, ay nananatiling pertinente sa kasalukuyang Pilipinas.

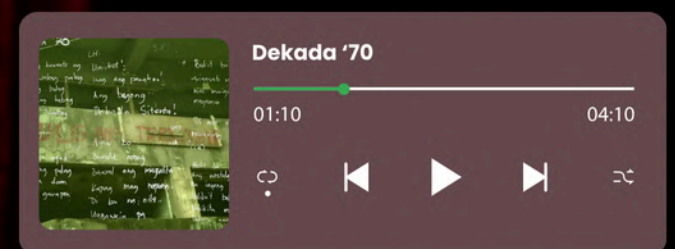
Hindi maikakaila na maraming bibig na binusalan, ginaping demokrasya, at nasayang na buhay dahil sa marimarin na pamumuno ng diktador na si Marcos Sr. Ang kanyang rihemen, kilala bilang isa sa pinakamadilim na parte ng kasaysayan ng Pilipinas, ay hindi lamang nagdulot ng maraming pinsala sa buhay, ekonomiya, at lipunan; nag-udyok rin ito ng mas pinalakas na puwersa ng mamamayan sa pamamagitan ng militansyang pakikipagrebolusyon laban sa lumalalang kapit ng imperyalismo sa bansa, kawalan ng pagkakapantay-pantay at labis na kahirapan ng mga magsasaka at manggagawang bukid dahil sa pyudalismong pinaiiiral ng mga ganid na panginoong maylupa, at sa mga naghaharing-uri na mas pinapaboran ang mga kapitalista at dayuhang mamumuhunan.

Sa “Bagong Pilipinas,” hindi pa rin nawawala ang nag-aalab na puso ng mga rebolusyunaryo. Nariyan pa rin ang mga kantang naging sandata ng iilan upang palakasin ang diwang makabayan sa tunggalian ng masang-api at ng kawalan ng nakabubuhay na sahod, inekwalidad, at iba pang sistemikong suliranin ng lipunang Pilipino. Ang mga bandang Musikangbayan, The Axel Pinpin Propaganda Machine, Pordalab, The Prolets, The General Strike, Plagpul, at iba pang solo artists ay patuloy na nagbibigay ng tinig at nagpapalabas ng mga awiting sumasalamin sa kasalukuyang kalagayan ng lipunan.

Hindi maikakaila na isang makapangyarihang instrumento ang paggamit ng musika sa mga usapin ukol sa mga kaganapan sa ating lipunan dahil ito ay nakaka-engganyo, at isang uri ng sining na taos-pusong iniintindi ng karamihan sa mga tagapakinig.

Kapag ang mga awitin, rebolusyon, at diwa ng nasyonalismo ay nagsama, makiki-indak ka ba sa saliw ng musika?

A THROWBACK WE DON'T WANT: ZILD'S DEKADA '70



Isang miyembro ng bandang IV of Spades, si Zild Benitez, o mas kilala sa screen name na Zild, ay naglabas ng isang synth-pop masterpiece matapos ang mga kaganapan sa 2022 Presidential Elections. Ang awiting ito, sa pandinig ng isang casual listener na walang political and social awareness, ay maaaring gamitin for aesthetic purposes sa kanilang IG stories o kaya'y TikTok videos.

Sa likod ng pagpapamalas ng mang-aawit ng galing sa paglikha ng catchy earworm na awitin, ay isang mensaheng hindi lang napapanahon, kundi isa ring nakakakilabot na pagkakataon para sa mga Pilipino.

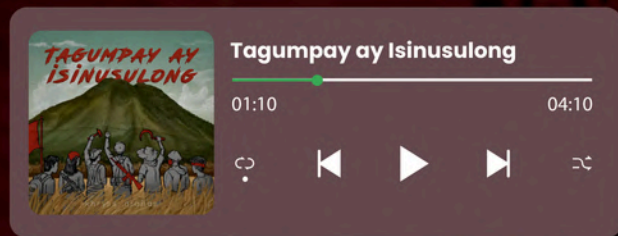
Isang trip down to memory lane ang unang bahagi ng kanta dahil tila'y nagkukwento ang mang-aawit sa mga tagapakinig tungkol sa mga pangyayaring naganap noong dekada '70 – isang madilim na yugto ng kasaysayan ng Pilipinas sa pamumuno ng diktador na si Marcos Sr.

Zild's vocals hauntingly retells the events of the past, which is a perfect build-up to the blasting and rebellious production on the chorus; "Umiiikot lang ang panahon / ang bagong dekada sitenta!" Zild made the listeners experience the 70s Philippines through his song—the 70s during the Marcos dictatorship where human rights abuses were happening callously, corruption was at an immensely high peak, and speaking up is merely an option because calling out the government can be a cause of your untimely demise.

Zild gave us this experience through a song, while at the same time recognizing that the Dekada '70 is happening again because a Marcos is once again seated in the highest government office—in the throne.

Ang awitin ay isang iyak, sumbat, at poot — all in one. likot at iikot lang ang panahon, ang mga nangyari ay maulit lang nang maulit kung patuloy ang pagbubulag-bulagan.

THE SPIRIT OF ACTIVISM: KHRYS ARAÑAS' TAGUMPAY AY ISINUSULONG



Known for his progressive and tibak anthems, Khriss Arañas gives a glimmer of hope for change in Tagumpay ay Isinusulong.

Sa likod ng magandang tinig at emosyon sa pag-awit ni Khriss ay isang mensahe na hindi dapat kalimutan. Lahat ng tinatamasa sa kasalukuyan ay dahil sa patuloy na pakikibaka at paglaban ng mga progresibo at mga rebolusyonaryo. Ang awitin ay hindi nagkulang sa pagbibigay-pugay sa mga makabagong bayani ng bayan. Nagsisilbing paalala ang awit na ang laban ay malayo pa sa tapos — na hangga't ang mga naghaharing — uri ay mas inuuna ang pansariling interes, ang pakikidigma tungo sa tunay na kalayaan ay mainam — isang obligasyon na pupunan ng mga nasasadlak.

Ngunit saan nga ba lulugar ang aktibismo kung patuloy na hindi dinidinig ng gobyerno ang mga sigaw at hinaing ng mga masang-api? Kung patuloy ang militarisasyon at mangmamasaker sa mga pesante't indigenous people sa kanayunan? Kung ang sahod ng mga manggagawa ay hindi na nakabubuhay sa gitna ng lumalalang krisis pang-ekonomiya? Kung saan ang edukasyon ay ginagawang commodity upang makalikha ng murang lakas-paggawa na pakikinabangan lamang ng ibang bansa? Kung ang mga progresibo at rebolusyonaryo ay patuloy na pinapatahimik, hinaharass, at pinapatay?

Ang sagot: sa lansangan, sa eskwelahan, sa pabrika't pagawaan, sa sakahan, sa kalunsuran, sa kanayunan—kung saan naroroon ang masang pinagsadlakan at pinamamalupitan. Dahil ayon nga sa kanta, "Pagkakaisa ng masa ang pinagmulan ng pwersa."

Aside from being a symbolism of hope and persistent activism, the song is also reflective of the daily struggles and aspirations of the progressives and revolutionaries to shed light on the injustices that the masa face daily. Salamin ang kanta sa mga pinagdaan ng mga kagaya nina Jhed Tamano, Jonila Castro, Eco Dangla, at Jak Tiong na mga environment defenders na in-abduct ng puwersa ng estado, Dexter Capuyan at Bazoo de Jesus na mga Cordillera activists na hanggang ngayon ay pinaghahanap pa rin, ni Teacher Chad Booc, ni Frenchie Mae Cumpio at ng buong Tacloban 5 na nakakulong pa rin dahil sa mga gawa-gawang kaso, at iba pang patuloy na nakararanas ng pang-aatake mula sa puwersa ng estado.



Saan nga ba lulugar ang aktibismo kung patuloy na hindi dinidinig ng gobyerno ang mga sigaw at hinaing ng mga masang-api?

Ang sagot: sa lansangan, sa eskwelahan, sa pabrika't pagawaan, sa sakahan, sa kalunsuran, sa kanayunan—kung saan naroroon ang masang pinagsadlakan at pinamamalupitan.



Contemporary P-Pop has become prominent in recent years with the rise of various groups such as BGYO, SB19, BINI, and ALAMAT. These groups earned a tremendous amount of fans in just a few years, and with their influence, impact, and fame caused by their talents and visuals, having a progressive and meaningful song is a cherry on top.

Sa kolaborasyong ito ng musical duo na Ben&Ben at P-Pop group na SB19, naisilang ang kantang maaaring awitin, sayawin, at gamitin bilang isang mensahe ng pakikibaka at rebolusyon tungo sa pagbabagong panlipunan. Perhaps, the song's most powerful moment is the repetition of the three-word refrain heard throughout the song's duration; "Nagsisilbi ka dapat..." which is a poignant reminder to those in power—that they should serve the people and not perpetrators of atrocities and injustices. It resonates as the masses' call for accountability and responsibility to prioritize the welfare of the marginalized and address systemic inequalities.

However, this line may pertain as well to the common citizens to serve the people and community and establish a strong sense of nationalism. Matagal ng napatunayan na sa kolektibong aksiyon ng masa, mas epektibo ang boses at pagkilos—na kaya nitong baguhin at gapiin ang opresibong sistema upang makamit ang pagbabagong hinahangad. Ika nga ni Mao Zedong, "the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history."

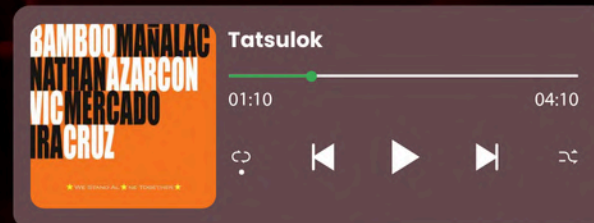
Ben&Ben and SB19 are two of today's biggest Pinoy acts, and it is such a refreshing take to see big mainstream artists become politically aware—which some artists are scared to do.

"Kapangyarihan" is a reminder that the true power lies within the mass line, and those who sit in government should serve these masses, not their own interest. Ngunit, mahalaga rin bilang bahagi ng linyang masa na kilalanin at igiit ang ating likas na kapangyarihan—kapangyarihan hindi ipinagkaloob sa atin ng ninuman, kahit ng institusyong ating kinabibilangan, bagkus, ito ay likas sa ating kolektibong pagkakakilanlan.

Sa kasalukuyang panahon, buhay pa rin ang diwa ng musikang sinimulan ng mga progresibong mang-aawit noong 90s. Lantad man o hindi ang mensaheng rebo na ipinapahiwatig ng mga makabagong artista ng bayan, patuloy na magiging tudlaan ang musika ng nag-aalab na diwa ng mamamayang makabayan.

Ang musika ay isang plataporma. It has managed to evolve and stood the test of time upang maging patuloy na instrumento sa pagpapalaganap ng kamalayan at pagbunyag ng mga panlalapastangan sa likod ng opresyon, militarization, land-grabbing, commercialization, development aggression, kurapsyon, at patayang tinataguyod ng estado. Tulay ang musika sa patuloy na paglaban para sa pagbabago. Ang ingay na dala nito ay boses ng lipunan, hindi magpapasindak, at tinatanggihan ang pagpapatahimik ng mga maniniil. ✨

BALIKTARIN ANG TATSULOK



Kilala mo ba si Totoy? Kawawa naman siya. Mistulang bata na naipit sa gyera... Is there a more popular song in Pinoy tibaks than the infamous triangle? Originally released as a folk song by the band Buklod in 1991, Tatsulok moved its mountain with the Bamboo version in 2007. Pero hindi naman ito tungkol sa kung sino ang mas magaling na umawit, o kung ano ang mas sumikat na bersyon. Ito ay tungkol sa herarkiya na bumabatik sa lipunan—isang modelong nagpapakita ng tunggalian at dibisyon sa pagitan ng mga social classes sa kapitalistang mundo.

Nevertheless, it is the song's message that stood the test of time. Because indeed, opresibo ang tatsulok. Ang istruktura nito ay nakabatay sa kawalan ng katarungang panlipunan na inuugatan ng gutom, diskriminasyon, at karahasan.

The song asserts the presence of a tatsulok in the society, and the need for it to be dismantled because as long as the ones who are on the top are self-serving, justice will remain elusive for the poor, perpetuating endless chaos. And as long as the root causes of poverty remain unresolved, more and more people will choose to wage revolutions striving for systemic change to establish a just and equitable society.

We have seen instances of tatsulok firsthand. In Duterte's drug, we've witnessed how the poor and vulnerable were relentlessly targeted, victimized, and subjected to brutal death while those who are true culprits revel in impunity, getting plump with their fortune and power while laying on their opulent thrones.

I GOT THE POWER: BEN&BEN, SB19'S KAPANGYARIHAN



RETROSPECTION

The parable that is General Education in the University

or malacademia at UP Visayas

This essay was delivered as Prof. Tomasito Talledo's retirement lecture at the UPV Little Theater, UPV Iloilo City Campus on December 6, 2023

FIRST PART | TALES OF MIRRORS: THOSE LIES THAT CONVEY TRUTH

I am more fascinated with the telling of fantastic tales; I am enamored with tales that fired imaginations rather than of clinical and cold expositions and conclusions. Playing long the role of a facilitator in the heavy traffic of outrageous ideas, out-of-place opinions, and naughty stupidities inside the classroom for almost four decades in the University, I observed that what grip the attention of learners are fascinating tales or extraordinary stories. I have not fully grasped the reason why, but I suspect this attentiveness is an aspect of our human penchant in the collective psyche of our ancestors who long ago gathered around the warmth of fire to listen to tales. Luckily, we inherited such attentiveness.

In my experience as one who handled General Education (GE) subjects, the teaching and learning moments commence at the beginning of an unexpected story, that is, when teachers and learners are surprised and found joy in rapt attention. What is GE after all if not an adventure of imagination into unfamiliar space and time sans the agonizing burden of the “logy” (or the focus object of study)? I found the nature of our GE courses in the University as more idiographic than nomothetic, not that scientific but more of poetics, less absolutely stated but more intuitively hinted.

Indulge me now with your patience while I try to unpack the nature of our GE courses as I share The Three Tales of Mirrors in this Lecture. These tales serve as sort of a carrying vessel that I prepared for us to cross the treacherous river of meaning-making and stock-taking. These stories are our metaphorical ferry of Kharon, the boatman who brings woeful souls to their deserved location.



What is GE after all if not an adventure of imagination into unfamiliar space and time sans the agonizing burden of the “logy” (or the focus object of study)?



First Story: “The Broken Mirror” from the Snow Queen Tales collected by Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time there was a troll, the vilest troll of them all; he was called the devil. One day he was particularly pleased with himself, for he had invented a mirror which has strange power of being able to make anything good or beautiful that it reflected appear horrid; and all that was evil and worthless seem attractive and worthwhile. The most beautiful landscape looked like spinach; and the kindest and most honorable people looked repulsive or ridiculous.

“It’s a very amusing mirror,” said the devil. But the most amusing part of it all was if a good or a kind thought passed through anyone’s mind the most horrible grin would appear on the face of the mirror. It was so entertaining that the devil himself laughed out loud. All the little trolls who went to the troll school, where the devil was headmaster, said that a miracle had taken place. Now for the first time one could see what humanity and the world really looked like.”

At last, they decided to fly up to heaven to poke fun of the angels and God Himself. All together they carried the mirror and flew up higher and higher. The nearer they came to heaven, the harder the mirror laughed, so that the trolls could hardly hold onto it; still, they flew higher and higher: upward toward God and the angels, then the mirror shook so violently from laughter that they lost their grasp; it fell and broke into hundreds of millions of billions and some odd pieces.

Some of the splinters were as tiny as grains of sand and just as light, so that they were spread by the winds all over the world. When a sliver like that entered someone’s eye it stayed there; and the person, forever after, would see the world distorted, and only be able to see the faults, and not the virtues, of everyone around her, since even the tiniest fragment contained all the evil qualities of the whole mirror. If a splinter enters someone’s heart — oh, that was the most terrible of all — that heart would turn to ice!

I am amazed of this story from Andersen’s Russian religious tales since it alerts me of the strong inclination to consider knowledge earned in the University as some sort of capital investment with expected fat returns in the future. I also came to observe that learners and teachers seem obsessed with accumulation and preparation for some safe future career thus sidelined the surprising joy of living precariously, nay, dangerously. Why, had we not heard the saying that “the secret of greatest enjoyment from life is to live dangerously” by Friedrich Nietzsche? Aversion to risks, fear of failures, avoiding the road less traveled is the loudest whisper we heard. It was and is the hidden module before, during and after pandemic.

Not only the loudest whisper but the pernicious fragments of that broken mirror lodged in the eyes of the many including myself. Thus, appearances were inverted as in camera obscura and had us perceiving the good or beautiful as horrid or terrible. Now in our current academic culture, excellence is equated with collected certificates of recognition and honor is equated with capturing the top rank, while the unhurried and quiet contemplation is considered as failure of indolence.



Now in our current academic culture, excellence is equated with collected certificates of recognition and honor is equated with capturing the top rank, while the unhurried and quiet contemplation is considered as failure of indolence.



Second Story: “The Mirror of Erised” from Sorcerer’s Stone by J.K. Rowling in Shawn E. Klein’s “The Mirror of Erised: Why We Should Heed Dumbledore’s Warning”

The boy character Harry Potter accidentally discovers the Mirror of Erised in an unused classroom at Hogwarts. He notices the Mirror’s odd inscription: “Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi.” [Trans. “I show not your face but your heart’s desire.”] This is no ordinary mirror—a little surprise in a world where cars can fly, and portraits talk. When Harry looks into it, he does not see his own reflection, but instead the images of his dead mother and father smiling back at him, even waving. He immediately looks around the room, but his parents are not there; they are only in the Mirror.

The schoolmaster Dumbledore reveals to Harry what the powers of the Mirror of Erised are: “This mirror will give us neither knowledge nor truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible.” He goes on to warn Harry that “it doesn’t do to dwell in dreams and forget to live.” While we might be able to learn something from looking in the Mirror—perhaps something important and shocking—we cannot pursue or satisfy our worthwhile desires in the Mirror.

Still the Mirror does offer us one truth—it shows us what we deeply and desperately desire. While our lives should not be spent just in desire-satisfaction— as the Mirror of Erised illustrates for us—we do have desires that are worthwhile to pursue and satisfy. The desire for self-improvement and for non-oppressive happy relationships is also a significant part of life.

The pivot of the story lies in understanding the palindrome, that is, a phrase that reads the same backward as forward as a model of reference. Often than not when learner and teacher meet for their regular class session, both soon tumbled into swirl of the banal, the taken-for-granted encounter with boring everydayness of life. The regular rhythm of the routine, those predictable interpersonal relations in the academe, and the placid state of our salary account in the Land Bank became the Mirror of Erised. As mirror it does not reflect that we are disagreeable examples to others but shows instead our desire as likeable creatures in the University. Again "this mirror gives us neither knowledge nor truth." More likely knowledge and truth as learner and teacher lie outside the construction of ourselves in the everyday life because everyday life is the deathbed of our passions. And my fear is glancing at our joie de vivre, the exuberant life of our mind is already attached to a monitoring device inside an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Passion dies when honest audacity is wickedly discouraged but slavish obeisance is rewarded. Passion dies in the mad pursuit of high metrics of performance. Passion dies when recognitions and positions granted presume the acquisition of wisdom.



Passion dies in the mad pursuit of high metrics of performance.



Third story: "Place without Mirrors" by Tomas Talledo from Songs of War Patriots and other poems

In a faraway place, so far you can imagine, farther than imagination, there are no mirrors. There are no mirrors in this place though people had been laboring to have one. Though extraordinary artistry was resorted to, but no mirror or its equivalent was ever produced. Not even shiny metals, crystals, clear water not wood reflect the images of people. No object can report back what faces of people look like. Everyone has invisible reflection.

This is the place without mirrors.

All hopes not lost though because one can see herself but not her reflection in the eyes of another person.

In unprepared way, only in unconscious moment one can have a glimpse of oneself in the pupils of another person's eyes. But so many do not like this moment, in fact, nearly all hate this revealing chance.

And they refused to talk about it to anyone. A few were brave enough to report what they saw in another person's eyes. But what they saw, they say in bits and parts of words like "foolish" "unfair" "distorted" "cruel". No one wants to disclose the frank picture.

There's a long wait to comprehend this revelation. In the flood of questioning, the tentative but consoling hint that emerged is that perhaps what one saw wasn't an image of herself as such but as another person sees her. Thus, there is no rest in the place without mirrors.

Reflecting on my long stay in the University, I originally fashioned this story. My experiences with the University more often appear to resemble the place without mirror. A place without mirror since the acquisition and transmission of knowledge that really matter necessitates the peeling-off of self-importance as cheap illusion. So many and that includes myself are predisposed to quickly avoid and to dismiss that which shatters the sense of self-importance, our self-conceit. Yet such quick dismissal is but a reflex act of self-preservation, the avoidance of hurts and pains. But when nastiness out of that shattering pain bursts forth from the pit of human hurts, no life affirming knowledge can be expected, no openness for real learning, no General Education can happen.

And woe to the vengeful but I am of the view that the nutritious ingredients of General Education can only be savored in the magnanimity of one's character. Lest we forget the ancient insight: hurting wounds are entrances of wisdom; hurting wounds are receptacles of the sublime. Torments though taste bitter are true fruits of the Tree of Life.



When nastiness out of that shattering pain bursts forth from the pit of human hurts, no life affirming knowledge can be expected, no openness for real learning, no General Education can happen.

SECOND PART | THE EROSION OF GENERAL EDUCATION AS ACADEMIC OFFERING

The three tales of mirrors were to me the telling kernel of the General Education in the University, but its significance can only be grasped in the manner of a camera obscura, that is, what is upside down is put right side up. For enough time must pass for my experiences to get distilled and to invest tough efforts to seriously reflect and self-criticize. I maybe the anchor of what transpires inside the classroom as an umpire, yet I can only do so much. If my wish is for education be lively then the atmosphere of engaging restlessness must be where students teach me, and my ego is open to learn from them. Alas, this is easier supposed than done if my personal idols are anxious self-preservation and careerism.

I was not hesitant to eat humble pie, as figure of speech goes, for I chose the road of audacity as a teacher-activist, as part of our university's academic union, and to speak in public about urgent issues that bedevil our society. And I was affirmed having been red-tagged just few years ago, but under trying time, I considered that as my purple badge of courage.

True, courage is an important stock at time of crisis and the capacity to perceive the larger panorama of events as not to get bogged down by pettifoggery. The cultivation of broadness of vision is one of the goals of UP's General Education Program. And to consider the developmental stages of the General Education course offerings as learners and spreaders of knowledge in the University, we would be modestly conscious of our subject position. It is assuring to subdue our misplaced know-it-all arrogance if we are aware where are we coming from.

The General Education as constellation of course offerings in the University were formalized by President Vicente Sinco sometime in 1958. In considering the General Education, President Sinco wanted to address "the restrictive compartmentalization of knowledge and intellectual pursuits," as "to arrest the danger of community and national disintegration" through "formation of the ideal citizen of democracy." These were words from his pompous speech warning against uninhibited pursuit of specializations. But I reread Sinco differently, spoken within the historical context of the Cold War in the 1950s, his "ideal citizen of democracy" accentuated the ideological division then between the Iron Curtain and the distinction between regimes of "Communist Totalitarianism" and "Democracy". It is as if UP General Education was some sort of vaccine that will immunize students and teachers from enticements of technically oriented Socialist-Communist thoughts. And the injections of 63-units Humanist courses in the curriculum was a must to be the "ideal citizen of democracy".

The Great Books Program constituted the large part of the General Education syllabus. These are compilations of thoughts by Western thinkers exemplified in the 54-volume set edited by Robert Maynard and Mortimer Adler and published by Hutchins as Great Books of the Western World. The thoughts selected are staggering: from Plato to Aquinas to Darwin and Marx. An intimate acquaintance with these ideas supposedly shapes a learner to be a well-rounded "Renaissance person" yet there were no representatives from Asia and Africa nor from women. Such absence or neglect or blindness is symptomatic of an Orientalist cultivation of citizens in the University. Today's realization of that predicament emphasizes that Filipino learners drink from Western spring of intellect because as a people we failed to dig up the well of our own.



I chose the road of audacity as a teacher-activist, as part of our university's academic union, and to speak in public about urgent issues that bedevil our society

But toward 1960s up to early 1970s, when the global movements of decolonization burst forth, the colonized societies such as Algeria, Congo, Indonesia, Vietnam, and others strongly registered anti-imperialist nationalism for independence. The winds of change came to be storms of upheavals in both theory and in praxis. Armed liberation movements and counter consciousness initiatives were founded. Guerilla fronts were opened, and active critical appraisals of socio-historical orthodoxies were undertaken. Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Ernesto Guevara's Radical writings on guerilla warfare, politics, and revolution (collected, various dates) and Amado Guerrero's *Philippine Society and Revolution* (1971) belonged to this genre of critical appraisals. Amusing but true for it is recognizable that crisis situations led to questionings that provoked creativity in ideas and actions. Ancient Greeks called this *peripeteia* – which for me is a charming reversal of circumstances.

Alas, it was exciting time in the University of the Philippines. The beleaguered nationalism of Claro M. Recto, Lorenzo Tañada and Jose P. Laurel came to have a ready audience. Outside and inside classrooms there was electric enthusiasm to question prescribed textbooks, to discuss topics outside the syllabus and search-to-study materials critical of Anglo-Saxon textual canons. In a published book of Jose Maria Sison's collected writings, he included an interesting exhibit: Joema wrote a complaint letter to former UPV Chancellor Dionisia A. Rola, who was then Chair of English Department, UP Diliman. Rola as Chair imposed to include in Departmental syllabus formalist essays that emphasized form rather than content. However, Joema as an Instructor saw it as Rola's surreptitious favoring her religious denominational taste inside a secular university. Nationalist content of knowledge over prescribed form was the great expectation. For by that time, the total of number of units for students to earn credit was 42 in the General Education -- an arena of struggle between what was old and what was new.

The latest but most wily tinkering of the General Education Program in my estimate was under Alfredo E. Pascual, 2011 to 2017. The number of GE units was left to the discretion of the University Council for each autonomous unit to finally decide. Since I attended several conferences that arrived at consensus, the trenchant debates moved around on the reformulation of the Program's goals, on the favored medium of instruction and on the prescribed number of units in the student's study plan. Those were specific and technical matters which sounded like some scholastic arguments in Church Councils and uselessly ate up a lot of time. It was wily since there was no frank admission by the factotums of the Pascual Administration to cut-to-fit the University's curriculum to suit the metrics of international academic accreditation. The end goal really is for the University to occupy a high ranking in reputable published surveys with such obsession that exceeds human devotion to a golden calf. Submission to international standard to produce appropriate brain workers as demanded by the global market of labor weighs heavily on further on the erosion of General Education into 21 or 27 units now. No longer the University qualifies as critic of Philippine society in the by-words of presidencies under Francisco A. Nemenzo, Sr. and Salvador P. Lopez – but now it is like a factory since Alfredo Pascual (the former Secretary of Trade and Industry of Marcos, Jr.) is one unabashed mediocre man of commerce.

After four decades of observation and service, I can say that given the proclivities of mice and men and women reigning as academic authorities in the University, the robust spirit of General Education somehow goes into imperceptible erosion. It undergoes erosion since its institutional self-understanding resembles that of a monstrous Artificial Intelligence (AI) operating as devourer of souls. And this erosion stays unnoticed, misunderstood, and perfunctorily dismissed by us who are so enmeshed with our self-conceits. That is why General Education cannot not mirror our faults, our wounds, our pains as solemn learners and spreaders of knowledge in the University. Hence it was shown: *Quod Erat Demonstrandum* (Q.E.D.).



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THIRD PART | THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLE

When I finally savored the kernel of General Education of the University, I no longer take the Program simply as a bundle of courses with number of hours to spend inside the classroom nor number of units for students to earn to graduate. For me it was and still is a horn of plenty overflowing with potentials and promises to enliven the life of the mind and to stir up valuable deeds. Those urgent affairs of the world outside are brought inside the classroom as examples and those disputed opinions held inside are verified in the real-life conditions. That UP as the National University must put up with the meager allocation from the national government was confirmed when in years past Miag-ao Campus experienced water crisis yet without long-term solution until today. The blabber about climate change is so loud in official agenda, yet buildings in the campus are still without rain-water catchments facilities. This seems to be not only a case of insufficient public funding but of poor strategic thinking. If the link between the expectation to produce knowledge for the nation and the practical nittygritty requisites to meet such expectation is missing, then critical thinking skills from General Education is indeed wanting. Ah, UP may be weighed by its detractors then or now and found the institution wanting. As a retiring servant of the University, however, I am not bothered at all only if UP is truly the University of the People.

U.P. is not the University of its Presidents, not of its Vice-Presidents, not of its Chancellors, not of its Vice-Chancellors, not of its College Deans. Pomposity makes no University. Like hungry ghosts these functionaries come and go while the University does not really relish arrivals nor departures. What stays are those ideals founded on common commitment to intellectual honesty, readiness to sacrifice the self, and *Wagas Na Pag-ibig Sa Tinubuang Lupa*. Ang mga matatag na Iskolar ng Bayan are also not bothered in my view where ever they found themselves: they remain steadfast and true inside warm familial homes, in corporate boardroom, in foreign shores, in the barricade or in the guerilla front because the Alma Mater nurtured them bilang magiging na mga Anak ng Bayan. In closing, allow me now to confess my undying love of the University, the University that nourished my ideals -- the University of the People. ✨



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BALIK-TANAW SA ALINGAWNGAW

> Renalyn Bico



“Nag-aaral ka lang naman...”

Sino bang estudyante ang hindi pa narinig iyang linya na iyan? Kesyo nag-aaral lang naman daw tayo, pero hanggang aral lang ba talaga? Kung ganoon lang, bakit parang mas mahirap pa ito kaysa sa trabaho?

Bilang estudyante, ano nga ba ang silbi natin sa lipunan? Pang-silid-aralan lang ba tayo, o may ambag din tayo sa mas malawak na mundo? Kasi kung ako ang tatanungin kung ano ang ibig sabihin ng “estudyante,” ang isasagot ko talaga ay “baon.” Aminin niyo, isa iyan sa mga dahilan kung bakit natin pinipilit bumangon araw-araw. Wala kasing baon kung maghihilata lang buong araw!

Kaya kahit mahirap bumangon, gigising pa rin ako. Maliligo kung may oras pero madalas, wala. Magbibihis, at minsan, lalaktawan pa ang almusal para hindi mahuli sa klase. Ilang minuto rin akong maglalakad papunta sa building namin – na parang ginawa talaga para sa cardio workout. Napakalayo naman kasi ng AS building!

Habang papalapit ang Nobyembre, usap-usapan na naman ang usapin tungkol sa National Students’ Day. Taon-taon naman ito, pero ngayon, may narinig akong may gaganaping walkout. Aba, interesting! Literal bang walkout? Parang sa mga dramatic na eksena sa relasyon? O mas malala, iyong tipong lalabas nang walang dahilan sa klase? Ewan! Pero gusto ko sumali. Sabi nga nila, curiosity kills.

Hala! Late na ako! Mamaya ko na ‘to iisipin... tatakbo na lang muna ako!

Nobyembre 15, 2024. Isang mahalagang araw sa kasaysayan ng sangka-estudyantehan—National Students’ Day. Pero hindi lang ito basta ordinaryong selebrasyon na may pa-banda at libreng meryenda gaya ng mga alam nating normal na pagdirirwang, dahil sa araw ding ito ginanap ang sinasabing “walkout” sa UP Visayas (UPV) Miagao Campus, na susundan pa ng mas malaking mobilisasyon sa lungsod ng Iloilo.

Habang nagtitipon ang mga estudyante sa College Union Building (CUB) Mushrooms, dahil sa itsura nitong parang set ng Super Mario), ramdam ang pananabik at determinasyon. Syempre, gusto ko rin makisali, hindi lang dahil sa FOMO, pero dahil gusto kong malaman kung paano nga ba ang isang tunay na walkout. Literal ba ito? Tipong babangon lang, lalabas ng pinto, at magpapahangin? O baka naman walk out sa klase tapos walk in sa Vineyard?

Pero hindi, seryoso ang laban. Bitbit ang plakard at panawagan, dahan-dahan naming pinuno ang kampus. Mula sa CUB, naghintay kami sa mga estudyanteng bumaba mula sa School of Technology (SoTech), saka kami sabay-sabay na nagmartsa patungo sa iba’t ibang gusali – College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (CFOS), hanggang sa College of Management (CM).

Habang lumalakad, napa-isip ako! Ang lawak pala talaga ng kampus! Parang naging healthy living ako bigla sa palakad-lakad kanina pa! Pero walang kapaguran, dahil dala namin ang panawagan para sa dekalidad na edukasyon, mas maayos na pasilidad, sapat na espasyo para sa mga mag-aaral, at siyempre, ang pinaka-importante – ang pagbabalik ng reading break! Na alam kong kailangan talaga nating lahat.

Pero higit sa pagod, mas nakakagulat ang kung gaano kami karami – mahigit 600 na mga estudyante ang sumama! Hindi ko inakala na ganito karami ang gustong ipahayag ang kanilang hinaing. Nakakaiyak! Seryoso! Ito ang unang beses kong sumali sa ganitong aktibidad, at hindi ko inakala na ganito ito kalakas.

Pagdating sa New Admin Building, doon namin mas binigyang diin ang aming mga panawagan. Umasa kaming mas madidinig kami. Pero eto na nga, parang nasa pelikula lang kami – may plot twist! Wala si Chancellor Camposano dahil nasa Tawi-Tawi siya para sa isang kumperensya. Mabuti na lang, tinanggap ng Officer-in-Charge na si Professor Agustin Huyong ang dokumentong naglalaman ng aming mga kahilingan.

Pero hindi pa tapos ang laban! Matapos ang walkout sa UPV, nagtungo kami sa lungsod ng Iloilo upang makiisa sa iba pang grupo tulad ng GABRIELA-Panay, Kabataan Partylist, ANAKBAYAN-Panay, at iba pang estudyante mula sa iba’t ibang unibersidad. Walang pagod, walang atrasan!

Mula West Visayas State University (WVSU) hanggang Iloilo Provincial Capitol, mas lumakas ang aming panawagan laban sa pagbawas ng badyet sa edukasyon, ang pagpipilit na gawing mandatory ang ROTC, at ang presensya ng militar sa mga paaralan.

Ramdam ko ang pagod – pero mas matindi ang apoy ng laban sa puso ko. Hindi ito para sa akin lang, kundi para sa bawat estudyanteng nangangarap ng maayos at makatarungang edukasyon.

At habang sumisigaw kami ng “Happy National Students’ Day!” bago matapos ang gabi, bitbit namin ang pag-asang sana, sa wakas, may makikinig.

Syempre, hindi naman agad-agad may epekto. Dumaan ang Disyembre. Dumaan ang bagong taon. Tila dumaan lang sa tenga ng administrasyon ang hinaing ng mga estudyante.

Tahimik.

Walang imik.

Parang isang batang nagtatago matapos pagalitan ng mga magulang. Parang walang pakialam sa sigaw ng mga estudyanteng naghihintay ng sagot.

Hanggang sa... dumating ang Enero 23, 2025.

Naglabas ng memorandum ang opisina ng Chancellor, nakatuon sa University Student Council (USC), mga College Student Councils, at iba’t ibang student organizations. Sa wakas, may tugon! Hindi man perpekto, pero may pinagmulan ang alingawngaw ng ating mga panawagan.

Isa sa mga napag-usapan? Student spaces! Hindi sapat ang TLRC para sa dami ng estudyante – lalo na kung palaging puno ito. At kung ang library ay isang pugad ng mga naghahabol ng deadlines, hindi ba dapat may sapat na espasyo para sa pag-aaral at pahinga ng mga estudyante?

Sa puntong ito, isang bagay ang malinaw. Ang sama-samang pagkilos ay may epekto.

Sino ba nagsabi na ang pagiging estudyante ay pag-upo lang sa silya at pagpasa ng exam? Ang pagiging estudyante ay higit pa sa baon, kahit aminado tayong isa ito sa rason, pero higit sa lahat, tayo rin ay boses ng pagbabago.

Ang ating mga sigaw ay hindi lamang alingawngaw na mawawala sa hangin. Ito ay apoy na hindi basta mamamatay. Kahit gaano kahirap, magpapatuloy tayo.

Dahil ang laban na ito ay hindi lang para sa atin, kundi para sa mas maraming susunod pang estudyante – sa mga susunod pang mga iskolar ng bayan.

Kapag dumating man ang oras na tayo ay madinig ng lubusan, hindi lang ito simpleng tugon, dahil ito ay isang tagumpay ng kolektibong pagkilos.

Tama nga si Nora Aunor – may himala! At ang himalang ito? Tayo mismo ang lumikha.