



INTEGRITY WATCH



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Anti-Corruption Songwriting Competition

TOP WINNERS KNOWN IN TODAY'S INTEGRITY TV SHOW



Message

As the newly-appointed Ombudsman, it is my distinct pleasure to extend my warmest greetings to all the men and women of the Office of the Ombudsman, the civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the wider public, the academe, business community, and the participating agencies through this newly launched *Integrity Watch News*.

Corruption is one of the biggest causes of poverty. A corrupt bureaucracy has never enough money, nor will, nor room, nor joy, to perform vital government services that most of all benefit the poor in the areas of jobs, physical security, education and health.

Government alone cannot wage the battle. It needs therefore, the cooperation of the general population as whistleblowers, as witnesses or simply as a party to the game of corruption who has decided to stop being such a party. Winning their active participation and commitment necessitate a channel to make them aware, understand and appreciate the anti-corruption initiatives of this Office. Thus, I congratulate the men and women behind this undertaking and thank the European Commission for the funding support of this Newsletter since it is one of the powerful tools and an effective medium of communicating anti-corruption strategies and programs.

Lastly, I call on everyone, as this banner newsletter's name implies, that we should act with *Integrity* at all times out of our own conviction and commitment which this Office strongly advocates and promotes.

MA. MERCEDITAS N. GUTIERREZ
Tanodbayan (Ombudsman)

Meet the Lady Graft Buster

MONICA FERIA

(Courtesy of Philippine Graphic, 09 January 2006)

SHE SEEMS TOO SWEET A LADY TO BE the top anti-graft *bastonero* in a country described as "one of the most corrupt in Asia."

Maria Mercedes Navarro-Gutierrez, 56, the Philippines' first female Ombudsman, is such a soft spoken and demure woman. She smiles easily and goes out of her way to be gracious to her visitors. A government lawyer for 21 years, she has apparently been too low-key for public comfort.

Gutierrez, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel until her appointment as Ombudsman last December 1, knows the questions in people's minds. More so since the most highlighted part of her 10-page resume is the fact that she was a law school classmate of the First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. Can she go after the country's tough and persistent corrupt bureaucrats and political warlords? Can she take the heat? Can she eat death threats for breakfast? Can she stand up to Malacanang? The former justice undersecretary offers no fiery defenses to her critics. She smiles and says, "Well, First Gentleman has had many classmates in his life. I think I have a good track record of fairness. I am honored by this opportunity to serve my country... let them (critics) just wait and see."

Born and raised in the Central Luzon town of Samal, Bataan, Gutierrez, Mercy to friends, first imagined herself as a teacher. She studied at the public primary school and the parochial high school, St. Catherine of Sienna Academy, where she graduated with honors.

She went to Manila to pursue a course in Elementary Education at the College of the Holy Spirit. She could have been a sterling teacher, for she topped the professional teachers exam.

"My mother, a homemaker, wanted me to be a teacher. The town's elementary school was just behind our house. She wanted me to stay in Samal, close to home. So, out of obedience, I took up Elementary Education. When I graduated and passed the exam, the superintendent of schools in Bataan already found a position and classroom for me." But something stopped her from reporting for class.

"You know, in my high school yearbook, the graduates write down their wishes. I had written down, 'To be a lawyer.' I had almost forgotten my dream. So I told my father that I wanted to go to law school.

He said, "of course!" Her mother eventually gave in, sending her off with an admonition to be careful of the boys at the Ateneo de Manila University.

The family crusade

"Idol ko father ko," she muses.

Her father is the late Rufino F. Navarro, a human rights lawyer, former vice governor and one of Bataan's most vocal anti-martial law opposition leaders.

It is when she tells the story of her father, and the life and times of dusty, conflict-ridden Bataan, that one gets a glimpse of

MEET/P2

LAURRIE LAYNE P. CRISTOBAL

THE SECOND INTEGRITY TV SHOW (Himig Dangal) under the Office of the Ombudsman-European Commission Corruption Prevention Project will showcase today the Grand Finals of the Anti-Corruption Songwriting Competition at 7:30 p.m., AFP Theater, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City and be telecast live nationwide by PTN-NBN 4.

The top ten songs and their respective songwriters and interpreters are:

1. **Mahiya Naman Kayo** by Lemuel Samblero
Interpreter: "Peter Parker" Samblero
2. **Tigilan Mo Na Yan** by Edilberto G. Reyes III, Interpreter: 9th Avenue
3. **I Am A Shield** by Ruben Lopez, Jr.
Interpreter: Reuben Laurente
4. **Ang Kailangang Gawin** by Gary Granada
Interpreter: Dong Abay
5. **Crossroads** by Christine Bendebel
Interpreter: Isha Abubakar
6. **Sabag Tayong Magpalaki ng Maganda Ngayon** by Mike Villegas
Interpreter: Myra Ruaro a.k.a. Skarlet
7. **Walang Kurap** by Gideon Marcelo
Interpreter: Jungee Marcelo and The Hood
8. **Simulan Natin** by Chona Borromeo
Interpreter: Amadeus
9. **Kahit Na** by Roberto M. David
Interpreter: Roberto M. David
10. **Tayo Nang Maglingkod Sa Bayan** by Roberto M. David
Interpreter: Kyla

This high profile musical activity is among the key activities in the communication plan for the EC-OMB Corruption Prevention Project. The music competition has encouraged 190 songwriters all over the country to put into 259 songs their messages and aspirations of having collective action between and amongst the different sectors of the society towards building a lasting culture of integrity and excellence.

According to Tanodbayan Ma. Mercedes Navarro-Gutierrez, "music especially to the Filipinos is a universal language that knows no boundaries; it cuts across as well as brings together different generations and social classes."

"Thus, we considered music as one of the most potent media in reaching a wider audience to exemplify integrity (anti-corruption) messages," she concluded.

The songwriting competition is jointly undertaken by the Office of the Ombudsman, European Commission, British Council Philippines, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng

Pilipinas, Philippine Information Agency, KATHA-Organization of Filipino Composers and the People's Television Network/National Broadcasting Network.

The ten song compositions were compiled into album and aired over the different radio stations nationwide through the support of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP).

The top songwriter will receive a cash prize of P250,000 and a free trip to London courtesy of British Council Philippines. The second and third prize winners will receive cash prize of P150,000 and P75,000, respectively.

Inter-University Debate Competition

The Integrity TV Show will also highlight the awarding of trophies to the national and regional winners of the inter-University Debate Competition.

The debate competition is also a priority activity under the EC-OMB Corruption Prevention Project being implemented in partnership with the Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University and hosts Universities/Colleges such as De La Salle University (NCR-leg), University of Baguio (Luzon-leg), Siliman University (Visayas-leg) and Ateneo de Davao (Mindanao-leg).

The winners of the regional inter-university debate competition are:

Mindanao Champion:

ATENEODE DAVAO UNIVERSITY

John Andrew Macuto, Christopher Diddiquin, Benedic Apayart

Runner-Up:

ATENEODE ZAMBOANGA UNIVERSITY
Henry Segovia, Ellery Apolinario, Alain Jardin

NCR Champion:

ATENEODE MANILA UNIVERSITY
Danielle Corpuz, Kip Oebanda, Czarina Medina

Runner-Up:

UNIVERSITY OF STO. TOMAS
John Baluyot, Eric Javeloza, Cyris Ng

Visayas Champion:

SILIMAN UNIVERSITY, Charmaine Bucol, Noel Jan Valente, Robert Jed Malayang.

Runner-Up:

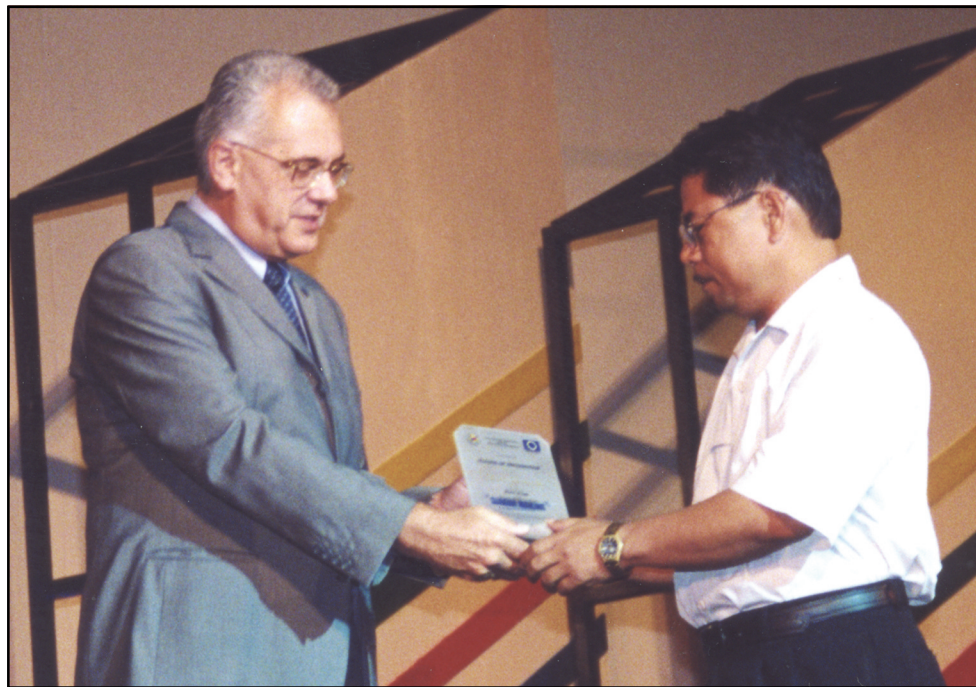
UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS, Karyna Sencio, Joselito Baena, Fel Louise Alingasa.

Luzon Champion:

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-BAGUIO, Abel Quintos, Arlene Bonifacio, Clifford Chan

Runner-Up:

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY, Marlon Bosantog, Parable Dizon, Hanz Dimatulac



Mr. Gil G. Subang, a Slogan Contest grand prize winner from National High School, Koronadal City receives award from Ambassador Jan de Kok, Head of the EC Delegation to the Philippines during the first Integrity TV Show held at the Teatro Marikina.

MEET from P1

a steely and lesser known facet of Gutierrez.

Controversy, anti-graft crusading, and even death threats were apparently things she grew up with. Public service was a cherished family value.

Her paternal grandfather was the first elected mayor of the town.

Her maternal great grandfather was the *cabeza*.

“I grew up listening to speeches about corruption, about the fight for good government. Even then the issues involved gambling and illegal activities,” she says.

“Whenever (my father) would run for office he would always emphasize stopping jueteng. Or he would say, *kung hindi mapigil, mabuti pa i-legalize na yan* (if it can't be stopped, might as well legalize it to stop corruption). I would hear him speaking about smuggling. You know, blue seal cigarettes. He would even mention names of people involved in smuggling.” When Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, he resigned his post as vice governor. All local government positions then were, extended indefinitely. If she recalls right, only two officials resigned. “That's how principled my father was,” she says.

Death threats? “Yes, we were exposed to that now and then,” she says rather stoically. At one time, the warnings became so intense and threatened harm to the whole family that her mother and siblings convinced their father to take a vacation in the US.

That was in 1984-85, when rebellion and activism was rife in Bataan as it was in Manila after the assassination of Benigno Aquino. Her father, who ran for congress as an active member of the opposition party UNIDO, had taken up the cudgels for some of those arrested and detained. There was a suspicion that some unscrupulous military men were behind the threats.

But he was back about a year later, after the Edsa revolution

ended Marcos rule; back to his lawyering and crusading politics, up to the day he passed away in 1996. He was known as 'Mr. Graft-buster in our small town. Serve your town, serve your country, serve God, he always told us.”

Government service

Gutierrez had just finished her law degree at the Ateneo de Manila University when martial law was declared. A friend of hers had pulled her into what would otherwise be a great break as a legal officer in the Office of the President, Malacanang.

When her father became very vocal against martial law, she quietly gave up her Malacanang job, transferring to the legal staff of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The job later offered her the opportunity to take up a course at the International and Development Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands. By this time, too, Gutierrez had met and married a dashing young Batangueno balikbayan, Jesus Gutierrez, who developed and manages condominium properties in Manila.

“Our properties were inherited and expanded through hardwork and loans. My assets and liabilities are open to scrutiny,” she is quick to add. When she returned from The Hague in 1983, she applied for a job as a State Counsel at the Department of Justice. “My children (three boys and a girl) were still young and the DOJ was closer to our home in Manila.”

Quiet achievements

At DOJ, she says, she was exposed to many advocates among them work on the rights of women, children and indigenous people. She worked her way up to undersecretary of justice in 2001, then acting secretary of justice from December 2003 to August 2004.

During her eight-month stint as acting secretary, she is proud of her record 1,107 resolutions on cases appealed to the department. She also lobbied relentlessly for increased salaries for government prosecutors and state counsels.

She is also considered an expert on international extradition of criminals.

From September 2004 till her appointment as Ombudsman in December 2005, she served as Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and was designated head of the Anti-Corruption Swift Action Team. Some of the lifestyle checks on officers of the Bureau of Customs, Internal Revenue and Finance emanated from her office and proper cases have been filed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Now that she's the Ombudsman, will more and better investigated cases be filed?

“All I can say at the moment is that I will try my best,” she smiles.

Q&A

You have been getting a lot of media flak over your perceived closeness to First Gentleman, do you think this will affect your work?

You know, my relationship with the First Gentleman and the President gave me this opportunity to serve. In fairness, the First Gentleman never intervened in cases before me, never tried to influence me. And I don't think that I will be influenced. The first couple knows how I work. Yes, the First Gentleman and I were classmates in law school. Of course, there's familiarity. But not so close. In law school, he was already married so he would not be with us when we went out on extra curricular activities. We just saw each other in school. After school *matagal kaming hindi nagkikita*. I was busy working, raising my children. *Matagal na ako sa Department of Justice* when the president entered politics. When Mrs. Arroyo was elected President, just think, *marami kaming classmates*. *Hindi naman lahat nabigyan ng posisyon*. Maybe they evaluated my credentials, my performance. So it was not just my being a classmate that was considered in my getting the position of undersecretary of Justice.

I don't think I have to clear up anything in this regard. I have a track record. They (my critics) just have to wait and see.

I handled a lot of cases in DOJ. No issue was ever raised as to whether I was influenced or pressured. I maintain my independence. I am always at arms length to people with cases, relatives included. And

I will maintain that stance, that attitude in my present assignment.

Are there cases in the past that are memorable to you, that may have paved the way for this job as Ombudsman?

As far as cases are concerned, they are all the same to me. Whether they involve high profile personalities or not, I always decide cases based on the evidence. So no matter who the personalities involved are, I really don't care. I study every case presented to me. We have a process. Ultimately, I'm the one deciding but I always get the recommendations from those under me.

As head of Malacañang's Anti-Corruption Swift Action Team, we conducted lifestyle checks. But we did it quietly. The complaints were filed with the Office of the Ombudsman. Some were reported in newspapers because when you file the case, media could get copies.

Also, I found out that there are already many anti-corruption initiatives being undertaken by many sectors - NGOs, civil society, foreign funders. One achievement I am proud of is that, during my term, I was able to suggest to Senator Angara, then chair of the Southeast Asian Anti-Corruption Congress that is participated in by parliamentarians, that we come up with a national action plan against corruption. This will be the start of a multi-sectoral approach. This would pave the way for a framework or national plan of action against corruption participated in by all stakeholders - executive, judicial and legislative, including constitutional bodies and local governments, as well as non-government groups. For the first time, this will happen, a framework that can serve as a road map to eradicate corruption. Media, too, is very powerful tool in fighting corruption.

What do you want to achieve during your term?

I just want to retire as a good public servant, for people to say I have done my job well, like Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide. He has a good name, a good reputation. What I appreciate about him, too, is that he is so humble despite all the love and recognition he gets. And he is very loving to his family.

What will be your priorities?

I have asked for an inventory of all cases filed here. My priority is

to expedite the resolution of cases, especially *yung masyado nang matatanda*. The inventory will reflect the time of filing, status and reasons for the delay.

What problems do you foresee?

We lack resources. We lack money. We are training prosecutors and investigators here. If we lack resources, the case build-up is weak and the gathering of evidence takes time. But if the investigators know what to do, and the prosecutors have enough training... We are getting expert trainors from abroad and we have foreign funders with us... You know we also are hiring investigators. They are not lawyers because we cannot get enough lawyers. The pay is too low.

So, for investigators, we train non-lawyers. We are getting fresh grads - cum laudes, young and idealistic.

Are there still people ready to sacrifice better jobs?

Well, I'm here, despite security concerns. I can get better pay in private practice. The satisfaction is in being able to serve, of being able to have the power and authority and use it for the common good, not for personal or narrow interests, but for the people. I think that is a noble cause. Last Christmas, I told the staff, our best gift is to be honest and dedicated. A gift to the country is a gift to God.

What is your assessment of the corruption situation?

It is one of the biggest causes of poverty. We need more infrastructure and services. But government cannot provide the money because it ends up in pockets of corrupt officials. How much do we lose? P23 billion a year. It's believable. Just look at their big houses abroad. But it's not just government officials. Private persons are involved, too. Remember, it takes two to tango. We will go after them, too.

Are you a tough lady?

Looks can be deceiving. I'm sweet outside, but firm inside. In this office I have to work harmoniously. I am smiling. But when it comes to work there should be toughness in me. I can blend toughness and sweetness.

INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW UPDATE

RAFAEL “Ritchie” HIPOLITO

ROBERT KLITGAARD, a renowned governance expert, once said that corruption is not primarily a problem of bad people, but of bad systems. Five strategic agencies, namely: the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Bureau of Customs (BOC), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Land Transportation Office (LTO) are undergoing corruption resistance review (CRR), an assessment tool that determines an agency's level of corruption resistance by looking at internal policies on customized code of conduct; gifts and benefits; recruitment, selection and movement of personnel; procurement; whistleblowing; performance management; budgeting, accounting and cash handling; transactions with external stakeholders and leadership. The review will cover the central and three (3) regional offices of the 5 agencies and is expected to be followed by the corruption vulnerability assessment (CVA). This will be carried out by a group of trained internal assessors from the agencies concerned and external assessors from Commission on

Audit (COA), Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Education (DepEd), Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), Office of the Ombudsman and Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN), a consortium of civil society organizations.

The CRR involves three (3) methodologies, namely: a) focus group discussions (FGDs)/group assessment of the above-mentioned internal policies by the agency's top management and key personnel; b) survey of employees which validates management's assessment; and c) indicators research which validates the first two methodologies. The CRR together with the CVA of the 5 agencies comprise the first phase of the Integrity Development Review (IDR) Project of the European Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman. Separate executive briefings on the IDR were given to the top management of the 5 agencies. The IDR Project in the five (5) agencies is implemented with the technical assistance of DAP and is expected to be completed by June 2006.



Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide inducts Hon. Ma. Merceditas N. Gutierrez as the first female and fourth Ombudsman of the Philippines on December 01, 2005.

ESSAY WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

Our Grand Prize Winner in the Essay Writing Contest General Public Category seems to have beginner's luck as this was her first time to join a competition.

An architect by profession, Ms. Mihilgrace M. Samonteza has been working at Marcos de Guzman Architecture Network located at Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City for the past five years. She loves her profession even if she considers it as a male-dominated field. For her, it is a joy to consider that she is not only building houses but more so building homes. Writing is her hobby and every time she has a chance, she writes letters to the editors and gives her feedback to media. If given the opportunity, she hopes to write for broadsheets opinion section.

Ms. Samonteza values her family and the people she lives and works with. Her concept of true value lies in the friendship that has developed with every person she



Mihilgrace M. Samonteza

meets. She considers her parents as her role model. Her essay speaks about her parents' example. Incidentally, her parents were to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary and had been trying to find an opportunity to write about them and dedicate an essay in a more special way. When she read the theme *“Building a Culture of Integrity and Excellence”*, she was reminded of her dad's life-long principles having

worked in the government for more than three decades.

When asked as to what should be done to eradicate graft and corruption, Ms. Samonteza believes that whatever solution to this problem requires time and effort and she firmly believes that it can be done. She remarked, *“we are a nation that is grounded on our value towards the family. It is in this unit where every solution will spring forth. It begins with each person's unwavering convictions which he would transmit to his immediate family and then to the society.”* Further, she commented that it is hard to project the condition of the country ten years from now but she hopes that an exemplary leader will emerge by then, he who will actualize the potential of this nations great wealth of values, skills and culture but she qualified that such leader can only be such a person if he is the first one to say no to corruption.

ROCHELLE S. MANUEL

A Family Legacy

Mihilgrace M. Samonteza

My father worked in the government office for thirty-seven years. He had served Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as a Supervising Bank Examiner. I was very young then at the height of his provincial assignments and I remember myself looking forward to his every return. It was initially for petty reasons of his "pasalubong" of sweets and delicacies from those provinces. But more personally it was the longing of paternal care that has been so crucial during those formative years.

His visits to rural banks from north to south of the country kept him away from us for days, sometimes for weeks and even for months. His job is to scrutinize the performances of these banks. The reports he submitted were either acquittal statements in accord to their compliance or death sentences due to the banks' malpractices and anomalies.

Even while away from the support of his family and from the security of his familiar hometown, my father had kept his principles intact. Neither separation nor pressure moved him to compromise these beliefs. To us his family, he made clear that he has kept his conscience clean. He would rather risk his safety in a far-away town than

succumb to the pressures of powerful individuals who had offered to pay him off and merit his silence over their anomalies. He would rather bring home a fewer cash than count on tainted money to inflate the household funds.

He could have juggled all the possible convincing reasons to yield to the pressures of bribery. He could have easily earned grease money by sheer blindness or mere indifference. This would have addressed my family's strains of making both ends meet for it has been far from bliss to live by mere government income. This, coupled with the pain of frequent absence, could have presented an internal pressure for my father to attempt to make it up to us by providing us a comfortable life at the expense of his painstakingly lived principles.

It has been trying years for my family having my father as the only bread-winner. My mother chose to be a full-time housewife to be able to take care of us single-handedly during my father's absence during his provincial assignments. My siblings and I had a share of tightening the belt. We precisely learned how to share. School text-

books and uniforms were handed down from the older ones to the youngest. We take care of things knowing that someone else will be using them. Being the youngest, I am either lucky to eventually inherit all their things or was unfortunate because these were already worn out.

However, even if we did not possess the material things we would have wanted for ourselves, we in turn acquired the intangible wealth that is worth much more than what money can buy: learning to value ones being more than giving in to the desire of having. We valued looking after our siblings more than pampering ourselves with our whims.

There were lessons that I only got to value as a grown-up. I remember my father assigning me to check the grocery receipts. The purchased items remain in the grocery bags until I check them one by one against the punched items. He would tell me we have to be sure that everything was encoded correctly. The lesson from this practice is beyond inventory routine. It was more so for me to realize the worth of things. This made me aware that things have their cost and thus have to be used wisely. This reinforced spending within the honest income of my father. We then have come to realize that being persons of integrity is more important than having the pleasures of the wealthy.

My mother has been supportive to all these. She did not nag for things we could possibly have if only my father earned more. Rather, she was always there for him, understanding him and bridging the whole family. She made our house a bright and cheerful home to welcome my father after a hard day's work or after a long absence. Our home was a treasury box of our childhood memories. She and my father have fused their efforts to nourish our home to be a seedbed of values.

My father had chosen the better part of inculcating to us values rather than luxuries. He has shown us his way of securing his family: earning his living through upright hard work. Our security has not been through monetary shield but rather the security of a life grounded in integrity. Amidst accusations of corruption and red tape practices in the government, we can stand tall and be assured of the fact that my father is an honest government employee.

This enlivened integrity perceived during our growing up years had provided us a firm foundation to stand up for what we believed is right. It eradicated any sense of insecurity and even the fear of failure. We gained the confidence to practice this even outside the confines of our home. We were able to remain grounded despite the whirlwind of our society.

It has been a goal of my father for us to learn from him and in turn for us to echo this in the fulfillment of our responsibilities. He has been successful in doing so as we have come to establish ourselves in our own respective professions. We kept in mind the principles we had learned from our home. I don't fear that I would be drifted by the winds of change. I have learned to guard the world inside me rather than go around carrying my world at my hand as if a formless mass at the mercy of life's hits and misses. I would not be able to go through my daily life in this way hadn't I been firmed up and strengthened in the care and discipline of my family.

We were both a family and an army. We have each other to rely on but we remain aware of the battle that has to be fought. The threats against the families are real and strong. Professionalism could have wafted away my father from quality family life. On those moments he was home and I was still a kid, he would ask me to sit on his lap to tell him how school went. When I already grew up, we instead have these exchanges over dinner time. He makes it a point to bring some special viand like lechon manok that we can share with during this togetherness. My parents have been stronger to shield threats that could befall us.

However, though they cushioned us from the blows of the society, they did not spare us from the training that is necessary. We were formed in words and in works, lessons of which I am deeply indebted to them.

This experience led me to formulate that the family is the origin and the strongest foundation in building a culture. It is from the family that every citizen is born and it is within this unit that he is formed and honed. A family that fails to establish these basic norms, has already failed in making their most effective contribution to the society. Other efforts will only come in secondary to this.

The role of the parents is essential and necessary. Their life is condensed in the examples they set before their children. It is through role modelling where a person learns the most and it is the actions of the parents that children first lay their eyes on. If there is one thing that parents should never deprive their children of: it is the necessity of a good example. The duty of the parents remains irreplaceable and it cannot be expected that institutions will take over this role. Values are taught by example, instilled through practice and reinforced in time.

...the family is the origin and the strongest foundation in building a culture.

Acquiring the criteria of discernment and the firmness of values are what children ought to inherit from their parents. Riches or social status are devoid of sense and meaning and can even be the source of corrosion if the parents fail to instill the essential attitude towards these possessions. It is very difficult to inculcate a sense of integrity among the children if malpractice is tolerated and worse, if it is fostered in the family. Living a double life cannot be hidden. Nor can this be isolated. Behavior is transmitted and absorbed by osmosis almost invisibly do they quietly infiltrate. Parents need to invest time in forming the children with a clear sense of right and wrong. However, we cannot expect the children to have this if the nature of things is regarded by parents to be mere subjective mindsets. Principles are affirmed through the decisions we make. An attitude of a 'case to case basis' and an expression of 'it depends' will only make up a weakling. Unless we go beyond a gray level, we will never get to see the blackness and whiteness of things. This is the best candidate for the trivialization of evil which negates rather than affirms the capacity of a person to adhere to an objective truth.

All these years my father was able to serve both his family and his country. He has been entrusted with a home to build up and provide for. Through the corner of public office he had taken oath to serve, he fulfilled his noble profession. He lived up to the title of a public servant by fulfilling his commitment to uphold the constitution and to practice professional ethics. He kept his oath and did not allow it to be tainted. The public trust he lived up earned him the position of influence and command in the family and in his office. This made me realize how rarely trust is vested nowadays. It is because it has been becoming increasingly difficult to witness a life exemplified with integrity.

Now more than ever is the call for integrity taking a louder toll in our country. We are at the stage of questioning the very values of those in public office. So much time, money and energy is being spent in conducting tireless investigations in order to arrive at either the innocence or the guilt of those in the public office. The credibility of public officials is questioned. Their performances are frequent subjects of intense scrutiny. More widespread now is the attitude of regarding the public officials to be guilty unless proven innocent. No one seems to be perceived to be upright anymore as not to have any skeletons in his closet.

This has wounded the public trust of our nation. It has been betrayed more than once by those who are supposed to serve the others over ones self. The betrayals had inflicted a deep wound of distrust that is taking time to heal. The infection of division has already affected the very fibers of national unity.

Gone are the times when our battles are directed against foreign conquerors. We had been united more than once in order to defend our independence and be recognized as a free nation. Now the battle of our nation is internal. We consider ourselves bounded by distrust towards people who are vested with the power to serve the public. The healing of public trust has to be painstakingly pursued for only a nation who can trust their government is capable of uniting themselves towards a progressive society.

Looking around us we witness different forms of distrust. It has overshadowed both public and private realms. Ask a tax-evader, he could convincingly justify his actions as a response to corrupt officials stealing his hard-earned money. This mindset is also true towards other government collections that are supposed to be directed to a national good. The public is hesitant to trust and this is sowing disunity.

Ask those who had ran for public office and had lost, many claimed to be a victim of cheating. Ask a student who cheats in his examination, he would take false confidence in it as a means to spare him of a failing mark. These also inflict the nation by fragmenting the moral fibers of the people. It weakens the pursuit for integrity by contradicting the value of trust. Where do we begin? How can the healing process start?

The legacy of my parents' example leads me to suggest that healing rightfully begins at home. It is in instilling values in the home where we will make real progressive steps in healing our country's wounds and begin to build our country's culture. The values that I have learned in my family had

We then have come to realize that being persons of integrity is more important than having the pleasures of the wealthy.

reinforced not only trust but also empowered us to excellence. My father's example is a beacon of hope amidst public distrust and discord. If every family will be strengthened in this way, we will be transforming the whole nation's way of thinking and more importantly its way of living.

The solution is not in vesting an increase in degree and in widening the scale of government power to police nor to scrutinize the citizen's actions. Rather, investment should be done in attending to the needs of the family. The government's primary concern should be directed in making every home a suitable abode so that values can be learned and be lived.

Laws and policies should be at the service of the family's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and the essential need for education and employment. If these are upheld, the family will be strengthened and be in the position to practice the values. It enables them to receive the charge of being catalysts of a new culture.

On the contrary, if we neglect the family and negate their rights, we shall be committing a national suicide. The health of the nation lies in the strength of the family being the most basic and vital unit of the society. The government in the person of the public officials ought to re-evaluate their priorities and direct their efforts to the strengthening of the Filipino families. The reason why we are dragging in the pursuit of real progress lies greatly on the immense attention that has been directed towards the

On-the-spot

POSTER MAKING CONTEST WINNERS

DR. EDUARDO DELA CIRNA is a dentist who has been in public service at the Orani District Hospital in Bataan for the past 14 years. Born on January 27, 39 years ago in Olongapo City, Doc Doy, as he is fondly called by friends and associates, is a graduate from the Manila Central University. He started his schooling at Balic-Balic Elementary School, not in Manila, but in Olongapo City, and finished his secondary school at the Holy Rosary Parochial Institute in Orani. He is happily married to Verlie "Len" Fabian, an accounting graduate. Their marriage is blessed with two beautiful children, both girls, Cheene and Pacha.

Though a dentist by profession, Doc Doy is deeply involved in the world of art painting. His favorite medium is pastel on sandpaper. You may visit his clinic and take a glimpse of some of his artwork, including his version of the world-renowned "Mona Lisa." Doc Doy has joined various art painting



Dr. Eduardo Dela Cirna

competitions. Below are some of his many accomplishments:

- 2nd place, On-the-Spot Painting Contest in 1986 sponsored by the Templo ng Katotohanan;
- Honorable Mention in the People's Power National Poster Making Contest in 1986;
- Participant, Bagong Sibul Art Exhibit held at the Manila City Gallery;
- Participant, Mother and Child Art Exhibit - Manila City Gallery;
- Participant, Doctors Show in Manila, 1999;

Participant, Bataan Agro-Industrial Trade Fair, Balanga City, November 2004;

Participant, Healers' Hand Group Show at the Ali Mall under the auspices of the Saturday Group Art Gallery, 2005;

He co-founded the Bataan Artist Society in October 2004 and was elected president. He is also co-founder and vice president of Sining at Kultura ng Lahi ng Bataan whose aim is to promote the arts and culture of the province of Bataan. Doc Doy is also an Art Workshop Facilitator in various workshops conducted at the Bataan Learning Center, Academy of Queen Mary, Holy Rosary Parochial Institute and in some public schools. Dr. Dela Cirna is not a mere dilettante or one who dabbles in art. He is a true artist who makes no apologies for saying: "Dentistry is a profession which is financially rewarding, my source of livelihood . . . but ART is where my HEART is . . . my PASSION."

WILBERT L. CANDELARIA



Petronilo G. De Leon

PETRONILO G. DE LEON, who won the First Prize in the National Level (General Public Category) of the On-the-Spot Poster Making Contest sponsored last year by the Office of the Ombudsman in partnership with the European Council, is 47 years old. He is married to Emily Tajonera with whom he has three daughters. A native of Orani, Bataan, he was born to Cecilio A. de Leon, a fisherman, and Marita Gonzales, a housewife, on May 31, 1958 in Barangay Kaparangan.

Nilo is a high school graduate from the Bataan National School for Filipino Craftsmen, wherein 1976 he was conferred the honor of being the Best Artist of the Year. In addition to the training he received in school, he was tutored by a well-known comics illustrator in 1981. He also attended seminars and work-

shops conducted by well-known artists like Ne Miranda in order to hone his craft.

In 1977, he worked as an artist at Art Original, Inc. located at the Bataan Export Processing Zone. Later, he became a comics illustrator at the Graphic Arts & Service, Inc. in Murphy, Quezon City. No stranger to being at the top of the heap, Nilo was First Prize Winner in the Balanga City Official Logo Contest in 2001, out of 161 participants from all over the Province of Bataan. Nilo's work has been widely appreciated by the public in art exhibitions. In December 2003, he par-

ticipated in the Group Exhibition of Region 3 held at WOW Philippines in Intramuros, Manila, while from 2004 to 2005, his artwork was on display at the Group Art Exhibit of the Bataan Artist Society, of which he is a member, held at the Trade Fair in Balanga, Bataan.

Petronilo G. de Leon is an artist to watch out for. His star has shone and it is our hope that it will shine for a long, long time. We at OMB-Luzon are proud that we have somehow been a part of his claim to fame and glory.

WILBERT L. CANDELARIA



Alex P. Ordoyo

ALEX P. ORDOYO is a student of Western Visayas College of Science and Technology taking up Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology major in Architectural Drafting. He was born on August 1, 1984 from parents Eladio Ordoyo and Erlinda Ordoyo. As an artist, Alex loves painting, sketching, poster making, singing and dancing. He believes in the motto: "Always put your whole heart in what you are doing". No wonder, he won the first prize award for the Student Category of the On-the-Spot Poster Making National Competition sponsored by the European Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman held in Manila on December 9, 2005.

PHILIP C. CAMIGUING

SLOGAN MAKING CONTEST WINNERS

Clemen C. Natanauan considers herself as happily married with two healthy and cute kids. She values most her relationship with her family. She depicts the former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo as a role model. The reasons according to her are as follows: “*matapang, kita ang integridad at magaling, hindi nagpapaimpluwensya kahit pa posisyon (o siguro pera) ang nakataya.*”

She suggests that in curbing corruption in the country, there is a need to get rid of expensive elections and vote buying/selling and razing nepotism in the government. She elaborated that “*elected officials resort to graft and corruption to recover their expenses during election and amass wealth for the next elections. Elections have become expensive because of vote buying and selling. Perhaps, the*



CLEMEN C. NATANAUAN

Congress should allocate budget for subsidizing election expenses of candidates. Anti-nepotism law should be strengthened as to include harsher punishment to violators and, perhaps, incentives and

“EXCEL AND BE HONEST; LET’S BRING THE NATION TO PROGRESS”

legal immunity to complainants and prosecutors. Nepotism paralyzes the ability of elected officials to prosecute erring relatives they put in office. These relatives because of real or perceived protec-

tion get the guts to enrich themselves through graft and corruption. Societal structure and established bureaucratic system are oftentimes the culprit why we are ranking high in graft and corruption. We should get to the heart of the octopus, the core of evil instead of trying to cut off its tentacles, which after all grow again and again.”

Her perception of the country ten years from now is quite optimistic - “*a nation well aware, deeply convinced of the evils of, and fully committed to fight graft and corruption.*”

ROCHELLES.MANUEL

A third year high school student at Davao City Special National High School, fourteen year old **Charmaine May E. Egasan** has been a consistent honor student. She was born in Koronadal City in South Cotabato and grew up in Davao City where her family presently resides.

A friend to many, Charmaine's cheerfulness extends not only to family members and close friends, but likewise to her school-



SHARMAINE MAY C. EGASAN

“NOURISH INTEGRITY WITH PASSION, PROMOTE EXCELLENCE THROUGH ACTION”

mates, teachers and school officials who regard her as their "lucky charm" for bringing great honor to the school from the various accolades received from competitions entered into. Hers is a unique combination of being a math-wizard and a multi-talented artist, i.e. painting, drawing, playing the flute and guitar, dancing, acting including being a sports buff. Behind her smiles and open friendliness, this cute little girl can be a tough opponent in table tennis and taekwondo.

After meeting this girl, one would never again judge people by their size. After all, good things come in small packages.

RODOLFOM.ELMAN

Drawing inspiration from the Book of Proverbs, **Gil G. Subang** does not only write slogans for a competition... he lives them. Raised **GIL/P10**

LEGACY from P3

families. It is about time that our nation takes a meaningful pause to see where we are now and where we are headed to in the effort to heal public trust and in building our culture.

We can draft extensive studies and arrive at eloquent proposals. We can go on with endless debates. It is about time that we personally take a reflective pause and look at the very home we live in and the family we belong to. We will find that the solution resides right in our very home.

The incomparable saga of The Lord of the Rings was concluded with a sentence that is so simple and seems to be an apparent contradiction after the war and chivalry that transpired allthroughout the epic. Samwise Gamgee uttered a simple call ‘I am home.’ He was strengthened by a good home and longed for his return there. This sustained him amidst all the hardships and remained the only one not ruled over by the evil power of the ring. It is the very same story that my father lived and told.

Very true now can we say that nowhere else can a seedbed of culture be found but that of the abode of the family. The family was, and remains to be the protagonist in building a culture of integrity and excellence.

Early Sol Gadong is a Mathematics Instructor at the University of the Philippines, Miag-ao, Ilo-ilo Campus. She was born on June 17, 1963 from parents who are both members of the police force. She considers her mother as one of her major influences when it comes to principles and philosophies in life.

Through her example, she learned that money is not the most important thing in life, but protecting and maintaining a good name.



Early Sol A. Gadong

As a young instructor, she dreams of growing old as a teacher, molding young minds and making future leaders of our country. She is also a grand prize winner for the Government Category in the Essay Writing National Competition

PHILIP C. CAMIGUING

When I was a little girl, back to a time when a one-peso coin had enough value to buy something other than a stick of cigarette that will fill your stomach up, I knew where my mother kept her stash of shiny one-peso and five-peso coins. Still lacking the moral values that were supposed to keep me from doing the dishonest deed, I would creep up to her room and gingerly seize a couple of glistening coins from her collection. I would then go to the nearby store and buy a piece of candy with the fortune I just acquired. Of course I knew that what I did was wrong, hence, I would go to confession and tell the priest my grave offense. As embarrassing as it is to admit, the priest heard of my confession more than a couple of times. Now, when I look back to my seemingly innocent crime, I shake my head in shame and embarrassment. I simply comfort myself in the thought that perhaps all little children went through the same phase and I would have to learn my lesson from the misdemeanor I committed.

Perhaps I had this guilt in mind when I was having a chat with my teacher back in college. We basically shared the same views on the situation of our society and the world at large. She was more of a confidant than a mentor.

“Ma'am, I don't understand,” I started. “If I am greatly bothered by the handful of coins that I dishonestly took from my mother's purse, how is it possible for our public officials to steal millions of the people's hard-earned tax money and still be able to sleep on their ergonomically designed, sweet-smelling, surot-free beds at night?”

Her short answer to my supposedly rhetorical question amazingly contained a world of reason that I have yet to fully comprehend.

“Well, it gets easier.”

Indeed, have we evolved to become a breed of people who woke up to a culture of graft and corruption that it's suddenly become the norm? Have we developed that sense of crooked philosophy to believe that since everybody's doing it, then there must be nothing wrong if we did it too? Have we diluted ourselves into becoming a society where everybody steals from everybody else that nobody is actually going to believe you if you said you weren't?

Early one morning, I was doing some of my usual tasks in the office while discussing certain things with a young colleague when our division's messenger came and handed us our pay slips. This piece of paper contained the salary we were supposed to receive every week, our incentives, and, of course, the part which took up most of the space in that little slip of paper --- salary deductions. From GSIS payments to PhilHealth contributions to amount withheld for taxes.

Being a neophyte to the world of employment and pay slips and salary deductions, my officemate couldn't help but blurt out, “Ano ba 'yan. Ang laki naman ng binabayaran nating tax. Parang tayo na yata ang nagpapaaral sa Pilipinas!” (This is unfair. We're paying too large a sum for our taxes. It seems like we're sending the entire Philippines to school!)

I simply chuckled at her reaction.

I personally do not feel bad about paying my taxes. I mean, it was other people's taxes that subsidized a vital chunk of my education, it was other people's taxes that paid for my mother's monthly salary, and it was other people's taxes that funded the monthly pension that my family receives on account of my deceased father. I basically lived off other people's taxes. So it only made sense, in the century-old Filipino tradition of utang na loob, that I should be able to give a little something back too. I felt like I definitely owe it to the Filipino taxpayers.

Besides, employees like us can never get away from punctually paying our taxes. Though I'd like to think it's because we are honest citizens, it's actually because we are not left with much of a choice. Tax payments are calculated for us and are deducted from our salary every month, without missing a beat. Running away from it is obviously not an option whether we liked it or not. Just a few weeks ago, however, something that

FIGHTING/P9

Fighting the Battle of Corruption From Within

By Early Sol A. Gadong

“Desiring your health which is also ours, and seeking the best means of restoring it, I shall do with you what the ancients did with their sick; they brought them to the steps of the temple that all who came to invoke the god might stop to suggest a remedy... I shall lift a portion of the bandage which hides the disease, sacrificing all to the truth, even my personal pride, for as a son of yours I am not exempt from your defects and weaknesses.”

-Jose Rizal, Filipino National Hero

In dedicating his novel, Noli Me Tangere, to his beloved country

Everywhere we look and almost all the time, we are bombarded with scary facts and figures telling us how someday, most of the plant and animal species we now know will become extinct and will be seen only in the browned leaves of forgotten textbooks or on the glossy pages of the National Geographic. Today, in our very own society, a certain breed of humans is also facing the daunting threat of extinction --- the honest Filipino.

Apparently, this breed is becoming much harder to find and more elusive to contain. Sadly, the spirit of common decency is now but a mere flicker dimming in the hearts of the blessed few.

Graft and corruption is indeed the cancer that mercilessly devours the very core of our society. With the advancements in science and technology, cures for some of the cancers of the human body have been discovered and are now used to save the lives of many ailing victims. Unfortunately, we are yet to find a cure for the disease that further cripples our already weak nation.

“*The quest for riches darkens the sense of right and wrong.*”

-Antiphanes, ancient Greek dramatist

When we come to think of it, corruption dates back to the biblical story of creation. We all know how the serpent corrupted Adam and Eve into taking the forbidden fruit even with God's strict orders against it. Adam and Eve's desire for things beyond their need proved to be their demise. And so the pattern continues with our country's government.

Our Constitution is the “God” that tells us what we may and may not partake in. Power, wealth and fame corrupt us into devouring the forbidden.

The Songwriting Finalists



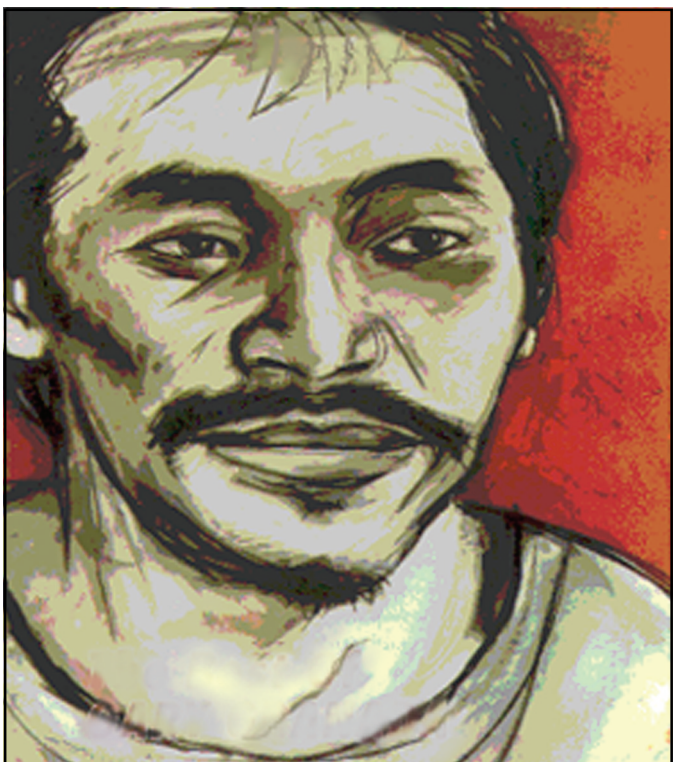
ROBERTO “ROBERT” M. DAVID

Title : *Kahit Na*

Title : *Tayo Nang Maglingkod sa Bayan*

One of the most sought-after Gospel music composer-artist- producers in the industry, Robert David has found his niche as a dependable provider of singable, simple yet enjoyable songs. He has an interesting testimony about his life-changing encounter with the Almighty, as well as a distinctive preaching style as a renowned evangelist and church worker. Robert already has a faithful following among the listening Christian Community in the Philippines—the result years of hard work and perseverance.

Robert’s “Puhunan” was a Grand Prize Winner of the 1993 LIKHAWIT MUSIC FESTIVAL.



GARY GRANADA

Title : *Ang Kailangang Gawin*

Gary Granada is a name synonymous to musical excellence in Filipino music. Critics recognize him as a poet-songwriter and an excellent musical performer. His two decades of songwriting would mark him as probably the most prolific Filipino songwriter in this century. His achievements as performing artist and pioneering producer attest to his musical expertise. A native of Maco, Davao, he has successfully captured national acclaim and attention, and he continues to venture into varied musical genre from ‘Pinoy folk’ to rock ‘n roll.

Gary’s music awards are numerous. The most recent major award was for the song “*Mabuti Pa Sila*”, grand prize awardee in the 1998 Metropop Song Festival. He also won the 1988 KBP Musicfest with the social-conscience-stirring *Bahay*, and again the 1984 Metropop for the song “*Salamat, Salamat Musika*”. In 1989, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Songwriting Contest awarded the top prize to his *Earthkeeper*.

Gary is maintaining his Manila office, *Infomatrix Media Planners*, through which concert bookings and media assignments for him are coursed. The same office manages *Backdoor Records*, where he continues to produce his own works and the works of musicians involved in social and developmental work.



CHONA “MAYUMI” BORROMEO

Title : *Simulan Natin*

An aficionado of jazz music, Mayumi is not only a versatile and unique singer but she is a very prolific songwriter and composer. Her song “Narito Lang Ako” won the “highly commended song award” in the 2004 ABS-CBN Himig Handog Song Writing Competition. She is currently a member of FILSCAP.

Mayumi was also a “10-week Champion and Grand Champion” at the Tanghalan ng Kampeon back in 1993. And she’s currently singing with the group Acoustic Anthology and Amadeus.

She has done numerous shows and gigs in most of the high star hotels and bars in Manila. With more than 100+ songs in her files, she’s currently recording and still writing more of her own songs.



RUBEN P. LOPEZ, JR.

Title : *I am a Shield*

Ruben P. Lopez Jr. began writing songs when he was 14 years old. It all started when Arnel De Pano encouraged youth members of the Kamuning First United Methodist Church to write songs for the church. Under Arnel’s guidance, a pool of young songwriters emerged, penning lyrics to original Filipino praise and worship songs.

2001 was the year when Sonnyman won a finalists’ spot in the Metropop Song Festival, sponsored by GMA 7. His entry is the song entitled “I Am Light”, interpreted by Dianne Dela Fuente. It is a song about staying steadfast in the midst of hardship. Now, he joins the songwriting competition with a song entitled “I Am A Shield”, to be interpreted by Reuben Laurente and arranged by Sonny’s childhood best friend, Kahlil Refuerzo and his brother Erle Refuerzo. “I Am A Shield” is a song about choosing to stay incorruptible even if the entire world is corrupt.



GIDEON “JUNGEE” MARCELO

Title : *Walang Kurap*

A Grand Prize winner of the Metropop Songfest, Gideon “Jungee” Marcelo received numerous local and international awards as composers.

Jungee has been involved in the following organizations:

- *Papuri Music Ministry (FEBC Phils.) - artistic director
- *Greenhills Christian Fellowship – worship & music team member
- *Philippine Team (World Hiphop Dance Competition) – Head Coach
- *Hiphop Organization of the Philippines – chairman
- *FILSCAP – member
- *Katha (Composers’ Guild of the Phils.) – member
- *Association of Fitness Professionals of the Phils. – presenter / lecturer
- *U.P. College of Human Kinetics, Streetdance Club–honorary chairman
- *Gold’s Gym Philippines – fitness instructor
- *Pinnacle Health Pointe – fitness instructor
- *702 DZAS Radio – broadcaster
- *CBN Asia / 700 Club – talkshow host
- *Jam for the Bread – jinglewriter

About the Song:

Dual meaning – “kurap” as in literal tagalog translation of blink or wink of an eye “kurap” as in tagalized pronunciation of corrupt Suhestiyon ng awitin ay huwag nang hayaan pang masimulan ang isang akto ng kompromiso na magbibigay daan lamang sa malaking pinsala sa kaduluduluhan. Isang kindat ng pananamantala, isang halik ng pagtataksil, isang tapik na simula ng away... isang kurap ng pangyayaring hindi na natin maibabalik at tuluyang pagsisisihan.

Walang Kurap, Walang Kurapsyon.



CHRISTINE D. BENDEBEL

(a.k.a Warren D. Christie)

Title : *Crossroads*

HER CLAIM TO FAME ARE THE SONGS “Urong-Sulong” and “Kung Maibabalik Ko Lang.” She has written more than a hundred songs that reveal a range of musical genre and a diverse style. At least 90 of her creations have been published and sung by the country’s premier artists. Two of her songs were translated to Mandarin and one of them landed on the MTV Taiwan Top 10 Chart. She had five honorable mentions in the U.S. Billboard Songwriting Contest. She was a finalist in the Sing Young Songwriting Competition held in 2004. She emerged as the Grand Prize winner in the 1996 Philippine International Songwriting Competition, besting 14 other songwriters from U.S., Europe and Asia.

With these accomplishments to her credit, Christine has proven that she truly loves her craft. After almost two decades in the music business, her desire to hone her artistry and contribute to the improvement of the music industry has not waned a bit. As a testament to this, she is currently involved in the music licensing business administering the catalogue of fellow composers. She has always been an advocate of songwriters’ intellectual property rights.

“CROSSROADS” was born out of her yearning to be a part of an album that would showcase integrity, selflessness and honesty. The idea that a song can be a catalyst towards building an honorable culture has stimulated her to create such a passionate and heartfelt composition.



EDU REYES

Title : *Tigilan Mo Na Yan*

He is probably one of the youngest Filipino composers who has successfully entered the professional league – At 20, Edu Reyes already has one album to his credit. Of the 13 songs in the album of 9th Avenue, he composed twelve – a significant feat considering he has had no professional training in music and songwriting.

Choosing to defer his education at the University of the Philippines College of Music, Edu has decided to use his creative energies in the mainstream music industry and earn some so can help send his younger sister to school.

Edu is the son of music lover Edilberto Reyes Jr. and former Vicor music executive Rosalina Reyes.

He dreams of one day conducting his own musical composition while a full orchestra is playing it. His strong faith in God will surely lead him to achieve his dreams.



MIKE VILLEGAS

Title : *Sabay Tayong Magpalaki ng Maganda Ngayon*

One of the most respected musicians and composers in the Philippine music industry, Mike Villegas has been on a tear since helping form Color It Red in 1992 at the ripe old age of 19. He started playing professionally at 17 while studying at the University of the Philippines, doing session work for artists such as Susan Fernandez-Magno, Lolita Carbon, and Noel Cabangon’s Buklod. After scoring a hit with the song “Paglisan” with his then band Color It Red, Mike went on to write and produce for other artists such as Cacai Velasquez, Jet Pangan and Sugar Hiccup. At 23, he helped form the rock outfit Rizal Underground as lead guitarist and composer, with whom he released the hits Sabado Nights, “Yan Naman” and “Bilanggo”. He’s currently a resident composer at advertising music supplier Hit Productions, and plays guitar with singer Aiza Seguerra, as well.

About the Song

I wrote the song “Sabay Tayong Magpalaki Ng Maganda Ngayon” the day before the deadline, having been stumped for ideas for the theme. I then looked at the problem of corruption as the end result of many small “conveniences” which we partake in to help our days run smoother. This concept of “adding-up” is shown in another light in the second stanza, showcasing a hardworking student looking to improve her standard of living, one homework assignment at a time. I hope the message comes through, and I thank the British Council and the Office of the Ombudsman for helping tackle the problem of corruption with the healing power of music!



LEMUEL “PETER PARKER” SAMBLERO

Title : *Mahiya Naman Kayo*

He has a dual personality: Beracah the gospel rapper & Peter Parker the Kwela rapper.

By day, Lemuel is a volunteer church worker in a Christian ministry. As Beracah the gospel rapper, he has released a gospel rap album entitled “Gospel Rap, Hindi Pa Huli Ang Lahat” under Praise Inc. His second album also under Praise Inc. is soon to be released. Lemuel feels that he has a divine calling to spread the word of God through rap music. He has been to many mall shows, club and street parties, school events and church gatherings all in the name of God.

Peter Parker the Kwela Rapper was formerly known as “Madryme” the kwela rapper, but because of his childhood-like for Spiderman he is now known as “Peter Parker”.

Peter Parker is waiting for his big break. He is at a point in his career where the possibilities are endless and he hopes that things can only get better. He aspires to become a comedian actor and a famous rap artist in the future.

Phrixel Gerald S. Pimentel, first prize winner for Student Category of the Essay Writing National Competition, is a graduate of Political Science from the University of the Philippines, Cebu College. He was born on August 22, 1995 from parents Alfredo P. Pimentel and Elizabeth S. Pimentel, who are both employed as State Auditors of the Commission on Audit (COA). As a student-leader, he holds various positions in different student organizations in the campus. Aside



Phrixel Gerald S. Pimentel

from being a born leader. Phrixel is also an eloquent speaker. In fact, he was adjudged as the Best Rebuttal Speaker during the recently concluded Cebu Inter-School College Debate 2005.

PHILIP C. CAMIGUING

Building a Culture of Integrity and Excellence: Our Challenge for 2005 and Beyond

By Phrixel Gerald S. Pimentel

"Public office is a public trust. Public officers and employees shall serve with the highest degree of responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency and shall remain accountable to the people."

The above quote strikes at the very heart of the current crisis of integrity and excellence in the public service in the Philippines today. Corruption has in fact become endemic in Philippine government and politics. The recent rating that the Philippines got in the 2004 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is a testimony to this fact.¹ Worse, most Filipinos think that the worst is still to come.² The Philippines scored higher in incidences of bribery which is relatively high among other countries.³ The same survey reveals that corruption affected all spheres of Philippine society, but most especially the government and politics of this country. All these surveys prove only one thing: our country is now faced with these two challenges: first, to clean corrupt practices in the government bureaucracy and second, to build a culture of integrity and excellence.

The Philippine Experience on Corruption

The pervasiveness of corrupt practices in the Philippines is persistent in the different government agencies. To cite a few, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) investigated the widespread corruption in the health care sector wherein a culture of waste, corruption and patronage pervades the provision of health care in many local governments. Doctors, suppliers and local officials and employees interviewed by the PCIJ estimate that kickbacks from the purchase of drugs given to local officials range from 10 to 70 percent of the contract price. Another PCIJ report in 2002 revealed some of the corrupt practices in the education sector especially in the procurement of new textbooks wherein illicit commissions account for as much as 55 percent of a contract for books or supplementary learning materials. Corrupt practices are also found at every phase in construction projects of the public works sector, during planning and design, in the award of contracts, and during the construction process. An example of this would be the controversial construction of the Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard. There have been a series of lifestyle checks that were conducted by PCIJ exposing the crooked activities of some of the high echelons of the Internal Revenue sector. The research yielded a wealth of information on the grand houses and expensive vehicles of BIR officials and employees who earn only a modest income. Twenty-five officials at various levels cannot explain how they acquired their assets, including shares in businesses and companies.

In the area of public service the following kinds of activities take place: a corrupt public servant accepts gifts bestowed by a private person with the object of inducing him to give special consideration to the interests of the donor; "officials receive excessive "hospitality" from government contractors and benefits in kind, such as scholarships for the education of children at foreign universities; officials contract government business to themselves, either through front companies and "partners" or even openly to themselves as "consultants"; officials deliberately travel abroad so that they can claim per diem allowances which they set themselves at extravagant levels; political parties use the prospect of power, or of its continuation, to levy large rents on

National integrity is the sum of the integrity of each individual in the nation.

international businesses in particular, in return for government contracts which may be dressed up as a "donation" to a designated "charity" or a "hospital"; providers of public services (e.g., drivers' licenses, market stall permits, passport control) insist on payments for the services in order to speed up the process or to prevent delays".⁴ Millions of pesos can be amassed in the government coffers without being scrutinized, launder money and escape the country with clean hands, smuggle goods without being jailed, realign budget allotments into shadow and malicious deals without being unnoticed.

Essentially, there is a common thread running through these activities and that is the subordination of public interests to promote personal aims involving a violation of the norms of duty and welfare, accompanied by secrecy, betrayal, deception and a callous disregard for any consequence suffered by the public. The extent of corruption in the Philippines undermines the economic and political development of the country. The values of integrity and excellence have become so scarce to most Filipinos. There is now the urgent need to build a culture of integrity and excellence in the Philippine society as a whole and in our government and politics in particular.

Initiatives in Fighting Corruption

No country is exempted from corruption and its development varies from one country to the next. It is most prevalent in the less developed countries. Fighting corruption has now become a global trend. It is already included in the agenda among actors in the International Community. There is now the emergence of collective action and heightened consciousness among Intergovernmental Organizations and International NGOs, committed to take concrete steps and work on lessening graft and corruption. The United Nations has ratified the Convention Against Corruption recognizing the need to have an effective international legal instrument. Transparency International (TI) is devoted to combating corruption and brings civil society, business and governments together in a powerful global coalition. Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption is considered to be among the most successful anti-corruption organizations of the world. Another institution venturing in this transnational advocacy is the European Union through the European Commission. It is the Commission's firm intention to reduce corruption at all levels, no matter whether these criminal acts take place in the European Union, outside its borders or within the EU institutions themselves. Eradicating corruption is a worldwide concern and the Philippines should be at the forefront of engaging into such activities.

At the national level, there are constitutionally mandated institutions established to be the prime mover in preventing and combating corruption. There is the Office of the Ombudsman who, as protectors of the people, cooperate with all sectors of society promoting the values of integrity and efficiency and high ethical standards in the public service. Their main function is to receive and investigate complaints and prosecutes cases against

public officials and government employees. Their credibility as an effective graft-buster is manifested in the 2005 Survey of Enterprises on Corruption by the Social Weather Stations (SWS).⁵ They have received the most number of citations as a government agency which can be trusted to address complaints of corruption. There are also anti-corruption organizations accredited by the Ombudsman known as the Corruption Prevention Units (CPUs) and the Junior Graftwatch Units (JGUs) that help them fast track their investigations.

Our fight against corruption cannot succeed if the effort is just based on government institutions alone. It is a formidable task that the responsibility of eradicating it must come from the body politic most importantly the involvement of the civil society groups. An example is the Transparent and Accountable Governance (TAG), a civil society dedicated to build a counter-corruption culture with many linkages having the same line of work.

Building the Culture of Integrity and Excellence

Time is of the essence. Filipinos must start building a culture of integrity and excellence with a firm conviction to eliminate or perhaps prevent graft and corruption. This would involve all stakeholders of the society- the youth, the church, the academe, non-government organizations and interest groups, the media, government institutions and every Filipino. What is this culture of integrity and excellence?

Integrity is the foundation of character. It starts with our understanding that national integrity is the sum of the integrity of each individual in the nation. National integrity improves only as each individual improves his or her integrity. How then do individuals build a culture of integrity among themselves? To behave with integrity, is to listen to one's conscience. Our decisions and actions must be reflective of what our conscience dictates us coupled with the soundness of our morals, ethics and goodness. Our judgments and intentions must always be based on factual claims and should thus be firmly grounded on the truth. Actions like declaring our true assets and liabilities, paying the right amount of our income tax, are examples of the lasting values of honesty.

Building a culture of national excellence entails hard work. It must be in the context of an integrative national economic, political, social and cultural strategy. Competence, effectiveness, efficiency and discipline are the foundations of excellence. To put it in the national context, workers must personify these traits. The responsiveness and efficacy of national policies must embody the ideals of collective excellence.

Personally, I see an overarching need to start building a culture of integrity and excellence within myself. As a student, I have to put premium on intellectual honesty and academic excellence. I must continue to abide the rules of no cheating during examinations. I must always observe intellectual property rights in citing references. These are small things but they can be building blocks for a more authentic personal integrity and excellence. I believe in the shaping and nurturing of positive values like discipline and a strong faith in God, in collective leadership and action by showing through personal example the new culture of integrity and excellence that we want to build for our country.

Looking way forward, as citizens of this country, we must follow the rules of meritocracy and not the utang na loob system. We must not bend our laws just to accommodate the whims of someone powerful. We must not tolerate these so-called fixers to process our documents. The abuse of public office, political kickbacks, omissions, illegal gifts, tax evasion and fraud should be put to an end. All these should not be limited to the personal level. This should flourish in the national level for only change can come through collective action addressing fundamental roots of corruption and the lack of integrity and excellence.

The question is whether political will, if any will exist in our country to fight corruption. Anti-corruption initiatives should be timeless. It requires a long and arduous job to achieve a sustainable anti-corruption measures. Moreover, it should be more than just submitting a case to the courts and let justice takes its course. New set of norms must be practiced and upheld in achieving a corruption-free society. For these changes to take place, it requires reforming the public sector, improving administrative procedures by minimizing the bureaucratic red tape and opening up of government information sources along with political will and courageous leadership. We must bring back the culture of due process, accountability and transparency in the public realm.

The next question would then be, can the culture of corruption be changed? Yes indeed. It requires a combination of personal integrity with the ideals of excellence and the collective effort of the citizens. We must sensitize ourselves on the issue by becoming fully aware of the consequences extracted in corrupt activities. We must always strive hard to attain an integrated life. We must strengthen our institutions: citizenship and public ethics. Ethics that do not view our struggle against corruption as a matter of technical monitoring but rather as the construction of positive values. We need to be enamored on the feeling of enthusiasm, of believing, of passion for this extraordinary work that we are tasked with to triumph the crusade against this cancer of corruption. It is an extraordinary work because we can't just say and utter "stop corruption". We should all be willing to undergo systemic change in the judicial, administrative, and political systems. The Philippines is a great nation. We do not want the next generation of Filipinos to be obliterated from this social malaise. Our generation must build a continuing culture of integrity- an entire correspondence of honesty, truthfulness, reliability and moral uprightness; and of excellence-aiming for our best in every field of national endeavor. We must build a conception of a just and decent life for the Filipino people giving them better access to social services- health care, clean water, electricity, adequate housing, abundant food and free education by making sure that all of our country's wealth and resources shall not be wasted and just be pocketed for someone else's personal gain. Most importantly, we must paint a picture of a nation poised to do battle against the evils of corruption. These I believe should be our challenge for 2005 and beyond.

¹ 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, Philippines Falling to 102nd place from 92nd place.

² 2004 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer, the Philippines as one of the biggest pessimist countries who thinks that corruption will get a lot worse in the years to come with a rating of 54%.

³ 2004 Transparency International Bribery Index, Philippines scored between 21%-30% along with Bolivia, Albania and Russia

⁴ Transparency International (TI) Source Book 2000. Chapter 2: the Anatomy of Corruption in <http://www.transparency.org/sourcebook/02/html>.

⁵ The Office of the Ombudsman got a 24% rating in the 2005 SWS enterprise Survey on Corruption.

Masthead Winner: INTEGRITY WATCH NEWS

The masthead-Integrity Watch News and its design reflects the raison d'etre of this newsletter. Through this newsletter, in the words of former Tanodbayan Simeon V. Marcelo, "this Office seeks to reach all sectors of society, inspire positive action and involvement from stakeholders, and embolden those in the fight against corruption."

The background's varying tonal quality of the color blue signifies the intimidating, murky, and yet discernible dynamic and fluid nature of Philippine environment---social, political, economic, and cultural--- that makes it very challenging, if not almost impossible, to build a culture of integrity and excellence. The background in blue signifies the perceptive color of the sea and the sky symbolizing the depth, height, and breadth of Filipino



Rommel A. Natanauan
Tourism Operations Officer II
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life that the spirit of integrity and excellence have to penetrate in order to effectively-build a culture of integrity and excellence. For this,

the prime mover is the Office of the Ombudsman that must shine unequivocally as a watchdog. To be efficient in its function, the OMB must reach out to and effectively utilize the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the youth sector and other major sectors of society-religious, business, educational, etc. As a mobilizer and network builder, it must be able to subtly break through the oftentimes impregnable barriers of public mistrust, indifference, lethargy, and mediocrity of its even stakeholders.

This network building is symbolized by the appendages dynamically growing from the logo and penetrating a wall that divides the logo and the main texts of the masthead.

The appendages being shown in the design as being able to break through the wall signifies that the realization of the mandate of the

OMB as the official watchdog of integrity, in general, and of the sustainability of this newsletter-INTEGRITY WATCH NEWS - and its objectives, in particular, depends on the ability of the OMB to prove its own integrity and credibility and to forge alliances.

The text "INTEGRITY" in its light blue monochromatically based upon the color of the background signifies that the virtue of integrity to prosper in the Philippines, the efforts must be rooted and built upon the strength of the Filipino nation, particularly in its culture beginning with its spiritual realm expressed in the values of religion be they Christian or Muslim to artistic, educational, socio-political and economic realms. In other words, the efforts to be effective must be grounded, culled from, and expressed through Filipino pragmatic experiences. Eventually, integrity will become the very nature of Philippine environment that provides equal access to and facilitates

the delivery of basic services especially among the poor, reinforces the stability of the Republic, boosts investors' confidence, and hastens economic recovery. As point of comparison and departure, today, as a nation, we are suffering from the ill effects of the very anti-thesis of integrity; that is, dishonesty or, shall we say, questionable integrity.

The text "WATCH" in its "red hot iron color" signifies that the task of being the watchdog of integrity and excellence in public service demands the passionate determination and sacrificial courage of a martyr. In other words, the OMB and its allies must be ready to be martyred in the performance of that noble and holy cause of fighting graft and corruption. If this happens, it is the kind of news, as in the words of former Tanodbayan Marcelo, that "inspire(s) positive action and involvement from stakeholders, and embolden(s) those in the fight against corruption."

FIGHTING from P5

I saw on the news almost convinced me to join my officemate in complaining about our taxation system. Apparently, some well-known multimillionaires were accused of tax evasion. These charges were made against them because according to the government offices concerned, these multimillionaires are paying a very minimally unjust amount on their tax returns. One of them, I noted, was even paying a lesser amount than what was being deducted from my salary for withholding taxes. Just imagine the smoke of rage-filled fury coming out of my ears and nose. Here was a person who was earning enough money to enjoy the luxury of traveling around the world ten times over. And yet I was paying more in taxes than he was. Could it mean that I was richer than him, then? Never in my wildest dreams. I couldn't even afford to buy the pair of shoes that my younger sister has wanted for so long now!

We are losing hundreds of millions of pesos yearly over these unscrupulous individuals who do not have enough civility to pay their dues honestly. This is the excuse our government gives us in order to create tax laws that hurt the already starving masses of our country because they cannot --- or opt not to --- chase after those who lavishly eat with silver spoons on their hardwood dining table while abandoning their civic duty.

"Every man is guilty of all the good he didn't do."

-Voltaire, French philosopher

If only every Filipino does what is expected of him or her as a responsible citizen of this country, then maybe the Philippines would not be holding the embarrassing dishonor of being the second most corrupt country in Asia. When we engage ourselves in a battle of words, each one trying to outdo another in lambasting our government officials, do we take time to look at ourselves and think about our own "little" corruptions? Do we think of that ream of bond paper which we took home from the office without anyone's knowledge? Do we reprimand ourselves for taking that overtime pay when all we actually do during overtime is chat about the latest showbiz intrigues with our colleagues or play solitaire on our personal computers? Do we feel the slightest guilt when we jaywalk, mindlessly throw litter anywhere, or

smoke in a non-smoking place? Of course, we do not embezzle millions of taxpayers' money, nor do we steal our countrymen's votes, nor do we instruct hit men to assassinate journalists who are only doing their job to protect the public's interest. Surely, these are mere droplets of water compared to the ocean of crimes officials in higher positions make.

But are they really? The Philippines is not experiencing the fiery pitfalls of hell because of one corrupt public official. We cannot even put the entire blame on the supposedly honorable members of the upper echelon of the political ladder.

More than seventy million Filipinos walk the face of this earth. Unfortunately, instead of seventy million Filipinos working hand in hand

to nurse our suffering nation back to the pink of health, we have seventy million Filipinos picking on the scab of our country's gaping wound. Instead of being seventy million solutions to an unrelenting problem, we have seventy million contributors to making the problem worse. Yes, as hard as it is to accept, each one of us does play a part, in one way or another, in the inevitable demise of this nation.

We as a people should be fighting corruption within ourselves. The only reason why we have an incessant list of dishonest administrators that keep on bleeding our country dry is because we are encouraging their shady acts through our own "little" crimes.

Can we really put a scale on corruption and say what we are doing is less corrupt than the deeds of our "honorable?" We are in as much position to be blamed as all our senators, congressmen, and department secretaries put together. I find this to be a bitter pill to swallow myself but sadly, nothing could be truer.

"To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society."

-Theodore Roosevelt, former American president

We do not all need to be model citizens of this country, that would be too much to ask. Each of us just needs to do our duties in the best way we can, in the most honest way possible.

Imagine if our policemen were consistent in apprehending law violators and ceased to accept *kotong*

and other forms of bribery. Imagine if our teachers continuously enriched themselves with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to more efficiently and more effectively impart learning to their students and not just breeze through their classes without even caring whether or not their students learned anything at all. Imagine if our doctors persistently bound themselves to their Hippocratic Oath and "first do no harm" instead of observed the appalling procedure of "first ask for a deposit." Imagine if our lawyers used their conscience and protected justice for the innocent instead of abused their gift of gab to manipulate the system just to win a case. Imagine if our nurses

actually took care of the thousands of ailing citizens of their homeland instead of heeding the call of greener pastures and watch over

the unwell natives of foreign soil. Imagine if our security guards, garbage collectors, salesladies, bank tellers, and government employees all performed their tasks with firm principles and not grumble about the long, exhausting hours and the low, insufficient pay. Imagine if our youth aspired to become truthful, hardworking citizens helping their country before dreaming of becoming rich, famous, or powerful, or a politician and be all three. Just imagine how wonderful it would be to live in a country with those kinds of people.

"The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home."

-Confucius, Chinese philosopher

Living in a Philippines that is free from the iron claws of the evils of corruption might mean living in a Philippines that exists only in the colorful and creative environs of our minds. But then again, if only we start within ourselves, if only we stop blaming one another and start working together, if only we try lifting each other onto our shoulders instead of dragging down those above us, we might just be able to someday, somehow, pick that lovely and almost surreal picture from our imagination and actually have it realized rather than just forever fantasize about a Utopia that can never be.

Let us stop relying too much on the youth to be the future of our fatherland. Since the time of our prophesizing national hero, many generations of youths have come

and gone. They start out to be the hope of our nation and end up to be the old, disgruntled, and immoral government officials that we curse for everything that goes wrong in this country. Let us rely on ourselves, young or once young, and be the present hope of our nation. Let us stop selling our votes so that politicians would no longer feel like they have bought our souls and our dignity. Let us stop stealing office supplies, official time, and the people's trust so that the public will stop being doubtful of our integrity. In our own little way, let us do the right thing. Maybe this will teach our leaders a lesson and likewise direct them towards the honest path. Let us stop preaching how things should be done and focus on the things that we should do. Let us stop pointing out the problem in everyone else and start looking at ourselves for the solutions that we need.

Perhaps all that our country really needs is a little help from every citizen of this nation. If we just work together, this crippled homeland of ours just might rise up again, stand tall, and prevail proudly on this earth.

Pardon me for being too melodramatic. Though I admit to being inconsiderably idealistic, I do not think I am naive. Let's just say I am young. And I believe that this is the best time to hold on to my ideals, while I still have the nerve and the youth to cling to them. I have seen what age does to ideals and dreams. I have seen how they are replaced by poor vision, wrinkles, and white hairs.

I am afraid that if I am not able to hold on to my dreams and ideals now, age might take over and replace the faith I have in my unwavering belief. The belief that someday, this foolish yet steadfast idealism that still flickers in the hearts of a few hopeful and faithful stalwarts will rid our country of hunger, poverty, and corruption.

Let us not stop believing that someday, before our time in this world is done, we will be residing in a nation that can claim freedom from the bondage of corruption. Let us not stop hoping that someday, we will be dwelling in a country whose citizens exist in peace and contentment, we will be living in a Philippines that we can all be proud of --- a Philippines that is without a doubt, a home to us Filipinos.

INTEGRITY WATCH NEWS

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Reforming AFP’s Purchasing System to Eliminate Corruption

LIKE ANY ORGANIZATION with a nationwide scope of operations, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is confronted with a gargantuan task of mobilizing a nationwide logistics force that include purchasing offices. This bloated system, before the advent of reform in the AFP, was not governed by a supply-chain management system. Most often, the decision to address the needs of soldiers in the field are done in any of the existing 93 units tasked to do the purchasing job. This offers an opportunity for corrupt practices to flourish. Compounding the issue is the reality that soldiers are not trained to be efficient businessmen but fighters out

to defend the territorial integrity of the nation. Signing Purchasing Orders are additional burdens to combat-trained commanders who would rather deal with the nitty gritty of containing enemy activities instead of pesky suppliers. However, things are not meant to stay forever. Specifically, if it has become a powerful tool in transforming warriors into destabilizers. The AFP leadership, guided by the Philippine Defense Reform program, instituted financial and procurement initiatives aimed to eliminate corruption. One of these is the institution of AFP Procurement Service (AFPPS) on April 16, 2005. Then AFP Chief of Staff General Efren

CIVIL RELATION SERVICE - AFP
Abu saw the need to centralize all procurement operation to support the logistical requirements of the entire AFP. Operational units were freed from the task of procuring their needs thus empowering them to concentrate on their core competency which is to fight the enemies of the state. Centralized procurement is one of the many reforms initiated within the 160,000 strong AFP. All procurement functions of the entire AFP is now the responsibility of a single unit, the AFPPS. It effectively trimmed down the number of personnel doing procurement related tasks, thus minimizing probable practitioners of corrupt prac-

tices. It continues to pursue the modernization programs and projects of the former Logistics Command from where it was culled. A major component of its existence is a continuing values orientation where strict policy implementation are being observed. AFPPS personnel are now toeing the policies relating to ethics, gifts, gratuities and supplier relations. One false move means automatic discharge from service, a stiff price to pay for an office-bound personnel that is often likened to sure death whenever a foot soldier miscalculates an enemy during the combat. To maximize its contribution to the dream of a corruption-free

armed forces, AFPPS continuously reengineer its policies, guidelines and systems. To ensure freedom from graft and corruption, however, the AFP leadership under Chief of Staff General Generoso Senga enjoins the business community, the NGOs and other stakeholders to actively participate in the campaign. One of the very concrete contributions would be for suppliers to stop tempting AFP personnel with rewards in their quest to do shady business with the AFP. The public can also do their share by shunning these kind of suppliers with the end in view of making them realize the negative effects of what they are doing.

A Retirement System That Has Not Attained Its Purpose

THE CHOSEN high-profile personality for this issue is a juridical person -- the Armed Forces of the Philippines Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFP-RSBS). It is featured in connection with numerous criminal cases filed against its officers before the Sandiganbayan after the Philippine Senate Blue Ribbon Committee investigation into alleged mismanagement of funds and investment portfolio of RSBS, resulted in its recommendation to cause the prosecution of RSBS officers. The cases involve allegations of mismanagement of funds, estafa, falsification of numerous official documents, and violation of the Anti-Graft Law which may have contributed to its near-bankruptcy. At this point, let me present a profile of the AFP-RSBS and its wealth as an extreme attraction to those whose vibration manifests greed and evil consciousness. The AFP-RSBS was set-up as a funding mechanism to guarantee continuous financial support to the military retirement system. It was expected to take over from the government the payment of retirement and separation benefits at a time when it becomes self-sufficient. Preceding the creation of RSBS in the early 1970s, insufficient funding was perceived as a problem so the first actuarial valuation was conducted to support the enactment of a Decree to provide for the retirement and separation benefits of the armed forces. In the creation of RSBS, Presidential Decree No. 361 provided for building up of a fund from Php 200 M seed money contribution from the national government, contributions from military personnel,

and refund of contributions to those who don't qualify for retirement benefits. The RSBS actually started its operations in 1976, two years after the Decree was enacted and five years after the first actuarial valuation was made. In the same year, its governing board was established and the initial management guidelines were drafted and approved. From 1977 to 1981, the RSBS policies and procedures were set in place, trainings were conducted, and funds invested thru an investment advisory agreement with Ayala Corporation and Bancom. Afterwards, Presidential Decree No. 1656 was issued providing for simplified computation of member's monthly contribution at 5% of basic pay, allowing RSBS fund to grow until self-sufficiency is reached, removing funding capital of Php100 million, and enjoining the refund of contributions to both separated and retired members. In 1984, the total assets of the RSBS exceeded Php 1 Billion mark as it focused on member benefit programs such as one-stop shop for refund and pension and providing 300 housing units to its members. In 1989, its management intensified investments in real estate which included North Matrix Ville, Palmera Homes, Chinatown Steel Towers, and in a long-term equity with Pepsi-Cola. It also had investment portfolio in San Miguel Corporation, PLDT, Jollibee Food Corporation, Pilipinas Hino, PCI Leasing, and Union Carbide, Philippines. In 1991, with the creation of Member Investment Assistance Department, the RSBS started issuing 4% interest on refund of contributions. Real estate investments

NIDA AVENO-GRUTA
were also intensified with MB Villar Group, Sta. Lucia Realty Development Corporation, Fil-Estate Corporation and others. In 1996, at its 20th year, RSBS had assets worth Php13.64 Billion with fund equity of Php9.43 Billion. By the year 1996, the AFP-RSBS, to put it in its proper perspective, a billionaire. Very wealthy, indeed! But wait, how is wealth to be handled? "Wealth is not something for you to dump somewhere and to crave for. It is for you to make use of for your welfare as well as others. If you spend your time by only clinging to your property without even fulfilling your obligations towards your country, your people and your religion, you may find that when the time comes for you to leave this world, you will still be plagued with worries. You will not have benefited from that wealth which you have so painstakingly collected." (Taken from the essay entitled "How To Overcome Your Difficulties" of Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda). Let's move fast forward to December 2004 when the Supreme Court declared the AFP-RSBS as a government owned or controlled corporation. With this in mind, let us find out if the wealth of AFP-RSBS was dumped somewhere and craved for. It also time for asking the questions: Is it used properly for the welfare of its members and beneficiaries? The people who have managed the AFP-RSBS Funds, did they sincerely and honestly fulfill their obligations towards the country and the people? Who have actually benefited more from the Fund, the intended beneficiaries or those

who managed and those who are in control of it? Equally important is the question: Why does RSBS still fail to attain self-sufficiency? Consider the following facts as you try to ponder on the questions. 1. In 1997, known as the time of crisis, the RSBS purchased several parcels of land in Batangas. The purchase price paid by RSBS for these transactions were considerably higher than its actual consideration. For instance, one of which has an area of 24,021 sqm. bought at a price of P4,852,242.00 when the actual consideration asked for by the vendors was P720,630.00. Another parcel of land with an area of 23,925 sqm. was purchased at a price of P4,832,850 when the actual consideration was only P598,125.00. However, in all these real estate transactions the basis for the payment of capital gains tax was the lower price. The same type of anomaly was repeated in 116 real estate transactions entered into by RSBS officers with farmers/lot owners in Tanauan, Batangas in that year. 2. In the same year, 1997, the RSBS management entered into several contracts of sale over twelve (12) parcels of land located in General Santos City but made it appear as though each sale was based on the price of P3,000.00 per square meter when in truth and in fact the lands were sold at P10,500.00 per square meter. The actual sale for each lot involved payment of P10,489,500.00 but RSBS officers made it appear that the lots were sold for only P2,997,000.00 which became the basis for payment of lower capital gains tax. 3. Still in 1997, the RSBS officers entered into contracts of sale over eleven (11) parcels of land in Iloilo with areas ranging from 7,556 square meters to 28,443 square meters per

lot. A modus operandi for reducing the amount of capital gains tax characterized these transactions. The 7,556 square meter lot was registered as sold for P2,729,920.00 although another deed of sale reflected the amount paid for it as P10,919,680.00. The biggest parcel consisting of 28,443 square meters was registered as sold for P8 Million although in another deed of sale the amount paid for the land was P32 Million. 4. In 1996, RSBS acquired four (4) parcels of land in Makiling, Laguna and made it appear that the total amount paid for the land purchased was P341,343,000.00 although the real consideration was only P91,024,800.00. The same modus operandi was utilized by RSBS officers in thirty-two (32) real estate transactions over parcels of land in Tanauan, Batangas in the same year. At the present time, RSBS admits it has not attained self-sufficiency, it is not the one who pays for the old-age pension of military retirees but the national government through the AFP Annual Budget Appropriations. It is interesting to note that the RSBS Rules and Regulations No. A-97 dated September 3, 1997, provides that the fund of RSBS or any part thereof shall be invested by its Board of Trustees as recommended by the Management Group, subject to the approval by Secretary of National Defense. The same Rules made the president of the RSBS as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The president of the RSBS is of course appointed by the Chief of Staff to head the Management Group per Circular No. 5, dated May 5, 1986. If you are wondering who was the RSBS president in 1996 and 1997, it was Brigadier General Jose Servando Ramiscal, Jr. who was previously AFP Comptroller in the mid 1980s.

The Integrity Banner

OUT OF THE 107 entries received nationwide by the Editorial Board, the Integrity Watch News by Mr. Rommel Natanauan of the Department of Tourism won the first prize in the Masthead Contest which was announced in the maiden issue of this Newsletter. Ranked second are the two entries "The Integrity Newsletter" by Mr. Jeric Limqueco from the City College of Manila and the "OMB Integrity Newsletter" by Ms. Joan D. Encarnacion of Namapa Compound, Brgy. North Fairview, Quezon City.

The judges were composed of the Honorable Tanodbayan Ma. Mercedes N. Gutierrez as Chairman of the Executive Committee and its members: Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito P. Gervacio, Jr., Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor C. Fernandez, Deputy Ombudsman for Mindanao Antonio E. Valenzuela, Deputy Ombudsman for the Military Affairs and Other Law Enforcement Offices Orlando C. Casimiro and Officer-in-Charge for OMB-Visayas Virginia P. Santiago.

GIL from P5

in a family of twelve having experienced poverty early in life, Gil believes that poverty is not a reason to commit corruption nor is it a hindrance to success. Instead, it has taught him to dream bigger and work harder. Presently the Officer-in-Charge of the Values Education Department of Koronadal National Comprehensive High School, Gil G. Subang has been in government service for the past 17 years. A part-time artist and painter, he heads the Artists' Society of Koronadal City. Educated from



GIL G. SUBANG

the public schools himself, the 51-year old Subang is a role-model for his students and children, i.e. passing on the values he not only

“SA SIMPLENG PAMUMUHAY, CORRUPTION AY KUSANG NAMAMATAY”

believes in but continually practices and believing that such a legacy is of priceless value. RODOLFOM.ELMAN

OMB-LUZON
(2nd of Two Parts)

WILBERT L. CANDELARIA

1. A potent corruption-reducing strategy is the reformation or elimination of corruption-laden structures, programs and procedures. Thus, there is a need to look at government structures, programs and procedures with analytical and critical eyes. Those which allow public servants unfettered discretion are likely sources of payoff and, therefore, fertile grounds for corruption that should be reformed. And if they cannot be reformed, they should be eliminated. There are, however, many regulatory and spending programs which have strong justifications. They need to be fixed rather than eliminated.

2. The Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States has a three-step approach which we can adopt as a device to limit corruption, to wit: (a) Recruit high caliber personnel. Hire only individuals who are not prone to corruption and misconduct. (b) Train recruits to understand the importance of personal ethics and responsibility. The organization should stress integrity in all things and should reward in-

tegrity by way of incentive. (c) Investigate complaints against corruption and misconduct of personnel promptly, aggressively and thoroughly, but fairly and objectively as well.

3. The non-organic Resident Ombudsmen of OMB-Luzon should be tapped, trained and empowered as our partners in studying the structures, programs and procedures of the government agencies or offices they belong to. They should also be utilized in the implementation of the Integrity Development Review in such agencies or offices. In this regard, however, author Susan Rose-Ackerman warns us in *Corruption and Government*, Cambridge University Press 1999, that reform should not be limited to the creation and implementation of "integrity systems." She points out that "[i]nstead, fundamental changes in the way government does business ought to be at the heart of the reform agenda. The primary goal should be to reduce the underlying incentives to pay and receive bribes, not to tighten systems of ex post control." (p. 5). She hastens to add that "[e]nforcement and monitoring are needed, but they will have little long-term impact if the basic conditions that encourage pay-offs are not reduced. If these incentives remain, the elimination of one

set of 'bad apples' will soon lead to the creation of a new group of corrupt officials and private bribe payers." (p. 6).

4. Credible reform of the civil service, of procurement practices, and of licensing and regulatory programs cannot occur without more fundamental reforms in the way public policies are made at the highest level of government.

5. According to Susan Rose-Ackerman, the order in which reforms are introduced is very important. At times, logic may have to give way to political reality. In this regard, she states - Under some conditions short-term gains can generate broad public support for more difficult further steps. Under other conditions, short-term benefits for some can produce a backlash from those seeking to maintain their initial gains. These concerns suggest two paths to durable reform. The first, which will be possible only in times of great crisis and dissatisfaction with the status quo, is a "big bang" approach in which massive changes are introduced all at once. The second involves an incremental strategy in which the steps are carefully designed to build support over time. Some short-term gains may need to be sacrificed in order to get the sequencing right. (Cor-

ruption and Government, Cambridge Press 1999, p. 223).

6. As borne out by the experience of many countries, including ours, fundamental change in the system requires commitment from the top of government and a willingness on its part to follow through the anti-corruption efforts exerted by some of its officials. And finally, since anti-corruption campaign can be, and have been, used to undermine political opposition, reformers should be very careful not to be used to stifle the same. Nominal or superficial reforms that are instituted as a vendetta against political opponents will not be credible.

In conclusion, I would like to express, on behalf of OMB-Luzon, our appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the Integrity Newsletter. We welcome the institution of this forum for comparing notes with, and sharing best practices among, OMB's area/sectoral offices, as well as other participating government agencies, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. We believe the Integrity Newsletter can provide a haven for mutual encouragement, strengthening and support for all of us united in the fight against corruption.

PEOPLE'S
GRAFTWATCH II
LAUNCHES
ANTI-GRAFT
PROJECT
WITH EU

MSGR. MELITON OSO

PEOPLE'S GRAFTWATCH of Iloilo (Ombudsman Corruption Prevention Unit), Inc. launched last February 1, 2006 the People's Participation in Graft and Corruption Prevention Project in partnership with the *European Union*.

The project which is only for one (1) year, aims to minimize graft and corruption in the Province of Iloilo City by building and/or improving the capability of church-based and other civil society organizations in corruption prevention, investigation, filing and litigation of cases as well as monitoring relating to the Lifestyle Check, IRA Watch and Procurement Watch. It will be implemented in five pilot municipalities, namely: IGBARAS, STA. BARBARA, CABATUAN, DUMANGAS and BAROTAC VIEJO, all in the Province of Iloilo.

Public fora will also be conducted in the pilot municipalities as regards to corruption prevention. At the same time, a special forum will be organized wherein a European resource person will be invited to discuss success stories and/or good practices in Europe on good governance especially on how to prevent graft and corruption. All of these aim to provide knowledge about good practices, which could be replicated, and at the same time increase the motivation and dedication levels of PGU volunteers as well as the public.

The launching was held at the Pope John Paul I Hall, Archbishop Residence in Jaro, Iloilo City and were graced by OIC, Deputy Ombudsman Virginia Palanca-Santiago, Virginnie Lafleur-Tigue of the European Union and Jaro Archbishop Angel N. Lagdameo who is also head of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

All present were the Parish Priests and presidents of the Parish Pastoral Council of the respective municipalities covered by the Project officials from the Province and City of Iloilo, the officers and members of the Association of Resident Ombudsmen of government agencies, the members of the media, PGU volunteers, PGU Project Staff and PGU Board of Trustees.

(Msgr. Meliton Oso is the Director of Social Action Center, Archdiocese, Jaro, Iloilo).

Strengthening OMB's Resident Ombudsman

(2nd of two Parts)
RAFAEL G. HIPOLITO

Training of BAC Observers

Procurement Watch, Inc. (PWI), a CSO partner of the Ombudsman leads the BAC observer training advocacy. Since the effectivity of the Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA) in 2003, they have trained 404 potential BAC observers from various NGO/CSO groups, members of the academe, professional associations and local chambers of commerce. PWI conducted twelve (12) trainings nationwide: 150 participants from Luzon, 84 from the Visayas and 170 from Mindanao. The training module is delivered by known experts in the field of public procurement. The module includes: (a) General Provisions of R.A. No. 9184 (b) Provisions on Procurement of Goods (c) Mock-bidding (d) Provisions on Procurement of Civil Works (infrastructure projects) (e) Provisions on Procurement of Consultancy Services (f) Case studies (g) Diagnostic Report Writing/E-reporting (h) Help desk (i) Code of Ethics of BAC Observers. The Asia Foundation and the World Bank are PWTs major international development partners.

Training of BAC Members of Government Agencies

On the other hand, training of members of BAC of government agencies is within the mandate of the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB). It is the highest governing body in government procurement and is mandated by law to, among others, ensure that Procuring entities regularly conduct procurement training programs and prepare a procurement operations manual for all offices and agencies of government. It is mandated to establish a sustainable training program to develop the capacity of Government procurement officers and employees, and to ensure the conduct of regular procurement training programs by the procuring entities. GPPB was created for the purpose of protecting national interest in all matters affecting public procurement, having due regard to the country's regional and international obligations. GPPB also posts listings of blacklisted suppliers and contractors and regularly updates them in its website. GPPB is currently conducting a series of Barangay training seminars in the different barangays of Quezon and Davao.

The World Bank is a major in-

ternational development partner of GPPB and has provided grants under the Asia Europe Meeting 2 (ASEM 2) and the Institutional Development Fund (IDF). Notable projects under the ASEM 2 and IDF include:

(a) Institutionalization of a Support Mechanism for Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Observer in Government Procurement; (b) Setting up a Government Price Monitor; (c) Training on "Detecting Fraud and Corruption in Procurement Contracts; (d) Pilot Testing of Generic Procurement Manuals; (e) Improvement of Skills in Estimating Prices and Analyzing Bid Variances for DPWH Projects; (f) Professionalization of Public Procurement Officials; (g) Downstreaming of the Professionalization of Public Procurement Officials.

Training of Procurement Monitors

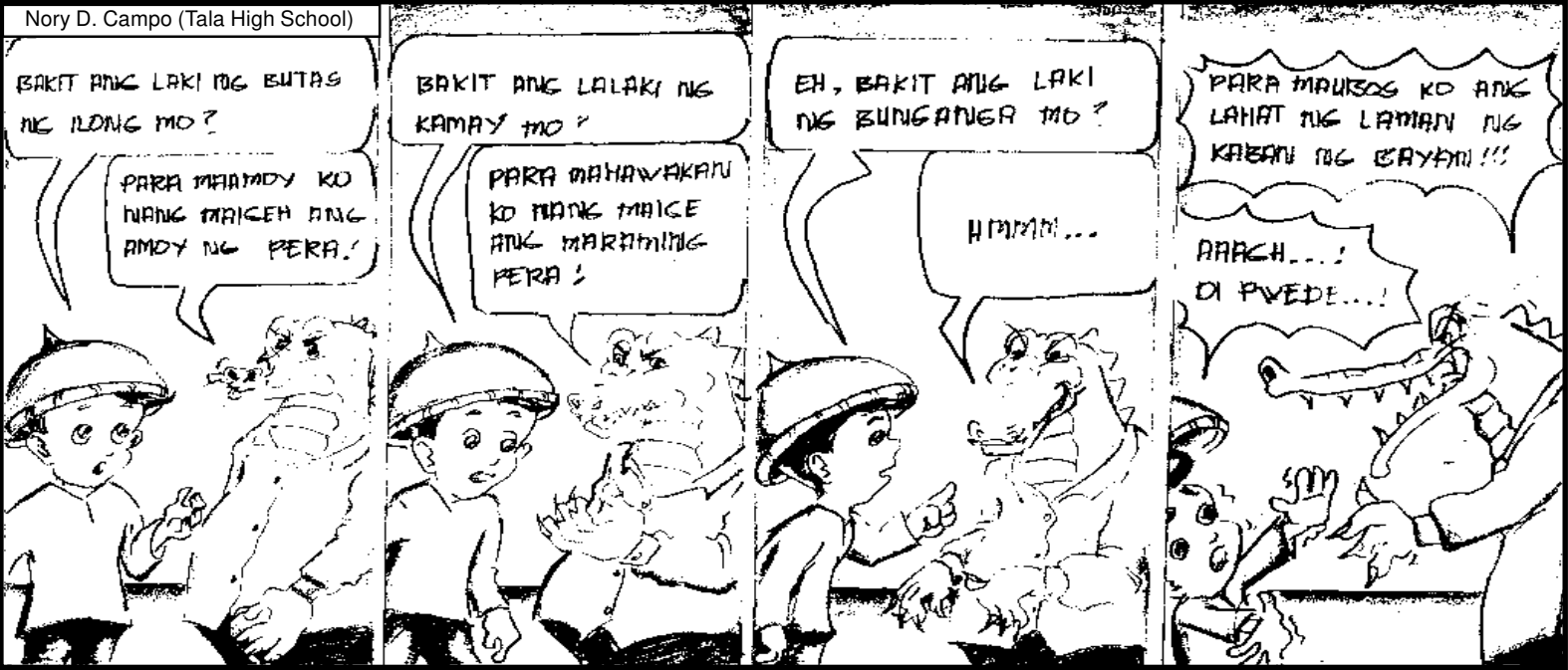
Government Watch (G-Watch), another CSO partner of the Ombudsman is the lead organization that trains procurement monitors through its Text Book Count Project. On October 9-10, 2004, the Office of the Ombudsman (OMB) conducted a Trainer's Training in Cebu for procurement monitors of OMB's Church-based CSO

partner, Barug! Pilipino. G-Watch's Textbook Count Project involves monitoring of text book deliveries in public schools nationwide, as well as detection and rectification of physical defects of textbooks due to use of standard materials and equipments. In fact, in two instances, 100,000 textbooks were rejected because of poor binding. Several defects, such as reversed page, uneven color/density and wrinkles, were found and rectified.

The Project was implemented in cooperation with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the strategic assistance of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines Network. The Project started in 2002 during the leadership of DepEd Secretary de Jesus. Now on its third cycle, the Project would extend its scope to ensure monitoring of text book deliveries to student-beneficiaries.

The accomplishments of the Textbook Count Project are as follows:

- * Prices of textbooks were reduced by 40%.
- * DepEd completed procurement process from bidding to delivery in 12 months (previous performance was 20 months or longer)
- * Delivery errors were reduced to as low as 5% on the average.



Kudos

to our new
Lawyers !

- ATTY. ROCHELLE S. MANUEL
CCB-OMB Central Office
- ATTY. ALLAN G. PANOLONG
GIB-A-OMB Central Office
- ATTY. PHILIP C. CAMIGUING
OMB-Visayas



As Tanodbayan Gutierrez signs on the Philippine Military Academy guestbook, Maj. Gen. Leopoldo L. Maligalig, PMA Superintendent, looks on.

IN FOCUS: The Public Assistance and Community Coordination Bureau (PACCB)

RUDIGER G. FALCIS II

ON JANUARY 4, 2005, the Hon. Orlando C. Casimiro, Deputy Ombudsman for MOLEO issued Office Order No. 05-001, which created the Public Assistance and Community Coordination Bureau (PACCB),

headed by Director Rudiger G. Falcis II. For its first year of operations, the PACCB showed its mettle, given the following achievements:

After less than a year since its

creation, with meager resources and a staff composed of only eight people, the Bureau had conducted about seventy lectures with different offices under our jurisdiction, with participants totalling about



Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito P. Gervacio, Jr. poses with the speakers, facilitators and participants of the Communications Planning Workshop on Corruption Prevention after the closing ceremony on January 25, 2006 held at the Fontana Leisure Parks, Clarkfield, Pampanga.

Communications Planning Workshop Held

ANTONIO J. LUGO

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN in coordination with the Philippine Information Agency and with funding support from the European Commission conducted a three-day Communications Planning Workshop from January 23-25, 2006 at the Fontana Leisure Parks, Clarkfield, Pampanga.

The main objective of the ac-

tivity was to develop a comprehensive communication strategy framework that will be translated into a Communications Plan (COMPLAN) for the Office, which will include the identified appropriate dissemination channels and specific communication strategies for each sectoral

institutional groupings for effective dissemination of the EC-OMB Corruption Prevention Project. To develop communications partnership with concerned institutions and stakeholders, the Office' participants from the different bureaus of PACPO, OMB-Proper, OMB-Luzon, OMB-Visayas, OMB-Mindanao, OMB-MOLEO, FIO and Project

Five Thousand Four Hundred Forty-Five (5,445). This is a record achievement, the highest number of lectures conducted for a single year, since the creation of Ombudsman-Military in 1990. With respect to the monitoring of implementation of penalties in administrative cases decided by OMB-MOLEO, it garnered 90% compliance in sanctions imposed for the year 2005. This covers all branches of the AFP, PNP, BFP, BJMP and all other offices under our jurisdiction.

In April 2005, the former Tanodbayan, Simeon V. Marcelo was a Guest Speaker in the Breakfast Forum of the Couples for Christ (CFC) coordinated by PACCB. Subsequently, it was agreed upon during that occasion to forge a MOA between the Office of the Ombudsman and CFC as partners in the battle against graft and corruption. In May, 2005, OMB-MOLEO conducted a training entitled "Professional Responsibility in Effective Governance," in coordination with the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG). This was participated in by High-Ranking Officers of the AFP, COA, DOJ and Ombudsman. Reaching out to the citizenry, PACCB gave a lecture on "Public Accountability and Good Governance" upon invitation by noted evangelist Bro. Bo Sanchez on October 21, 2005 at Our Lady of Grace Parish Church, Sucat, Parañaque City.

On the other hand, in line with the transparency policy of the government and as recommended by the Integrity Development Review (IDR) of this Office, flowcharts of existing procedures were conspicu-

ously displayed at the corridors of OMB-MOLEO.

For the first quarter of 2006, the Bureau continued its vigorous and aggressive corruption prevention program set in place. On February 6-10, 2006, OMB-MOLEO conducted a training for the second batch of "Professional Responsibility and Effective Governance," in coordination with the JUSMAG, attended by senior military officers belonging to the different branches of the AFP. The Honorable Tanodbayan Ma. Merceditas Navarro-Gutierrez was the Keynote Speaker on said occasion, which also served as a forum to interact with the U.S. military officers and the AFP members in attendance. Focusing our efforts on nurturing the idealism of the military, OMB-MOLEO conducted a two-day seminar for the graduating class of the Philippine Military Academy (Mandala-Class 2006) last March 14-15, 2006. The Honorable Tanodbayan gave the keynote address to the biggest graduating class in the history of the PMA, with 324 cadets who listened intently to the message delivered, emphasizing on the core values needed for a truly professionalized military.

Lastly, with respect to the issuance of clearances for all men in uniform, for the year 2005, we have issued Twenty Two Thousand Ninety Six (22,096) clearances.

Indeed, there is still a lot of work to be done, but with determination and perseverance under the able and dynamic leadership of Deputy Ombudsman Orlando C. Casimiro, the PACCB will surely reap a bountiful harvest from the humble seeds it had planted.

Task Force-PMO were joined by representatives from other government agencies, particularly the Department of Health (DOH), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine Information Agency (PIA), Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA); media partners from the Kapisanan ng mga Broadcaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), Philippine News Agency (PNA), Philippine Broadcasting System (PBS), NBN-4 and civil society organizations like the Concerned Women of the Philippines (CWP), Fellowship of Christians in the Government (FOCIG), G-Watch Ateneo and Lingkod. Mr. Tony Kwok, the Chief Adviser of the EC-OMB Corruption Prevention Project made a case presentation in Formulating Media Communication Plan: The Hongkong Experience. The afternoon session started with a powerpoint presentation and lecture on the topic The Development Framework of EC-OMB Anti-Corruption project by Assistant Ombudsman Cyril E. Ramos, PTF Project Director. The presentation dwelt on the evils of corruption and the continuing fight against it in terms of punitive and preventive measures, poverty alleviation in accordance with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, the objectives and components of the EC-OMB Corruption Prevention Project. The participants from the media and civil society or-

ganizations were more enlightened and informed about their participation in the Project during the open forum that set the tone for their enthusiastic involvement and active participation during the subsequent workshop sessions. Mr. Marcy Ballesteros of Izip Business Solutions talked about Communication Strategies to Address Corruption and shared his experiences how he helped craft some campaign against corruption during his stint with the Department of Finance. Mr. Wowie de Leon, a corporate advertising practitioner gave important pointers on effective use of slogans and other campaign materials with his lecture on Crafting Effective Messages. He also helped in analyzing and critiquing the sample slogans during the group presentations. The group dynamics of the different modules of the workshop helped a lot in fostering closer camaraderie among the participants that resulted on a pledge of their individual commitment in fighting corruption. The Honorable Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito P. Gervacio, Jr. who graced the closing ceremony gave an inspiring message to the loud applause of the audience.

Kudos to the PIA facilitators and staff, the OMB Secretariat and support services for helping make the workshop successful and a good learning activity.

BIR pursues reforms thru integrity development

LEONOR S. VILLALON-ROGERS

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), through Commissioner Jose Mario C. Buñag, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) last October 7, 2005 with other government agencies spearheaded by the Office of the Ombudsman to participate in the Program on Pursuing Reforms through Integrity Development or PRIDE.

PRIDE is a government initiative that aims to establish a culture of professionalism and integrity in the entire government; raise consciousness on corruption prevention and provide tools to improve organizational and systems integrity in the public sector. The European Commission (EC) will finance the implementation of the said initiative under its program "Improving Governance to Reduce Pov-

erty", where Corruption Prevention is a major component.

Based on the MOU, the BIR, along with the other four (4) participating agencies, namely: the Department of Public Works and Highways, Philippine National Police, Bureau of Customs and Land Transportation Office, will conduct an Integrity Development Review (IDR)

to assess the agency's level of corruption resistance, identify corruption vulnerable areas and progressively develop and implement corruption prevention measures to meet certain standards to improve organizational integrity. In the BIR, an Anti-Corruption Steering Group has already been created as early as June 7 last year. The Group, headed by Assistant Commissioner Estela

V. Sales of the Bureau's Inspection Service, has already formulated and been implementing anti-corruption programs/projects in the Bureau.

The implementation of said programs, including activities covered under the Bureau's Integrity Development Action Plan (IDAP), are expected to have further intensified with Commissioner Buñag's signing of the MOU on PRIDE.