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migrante
melbourne

ISSUE 6

News, Views and Analysis from Migrante Melbourne

BATINGAW; BELL; HERALD; The New Voice of Filipino Migrants in Australia



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Editorial

by George Kotsakis
Chairperson - Migrante Melbourne



Must we cross this old and decaying bridge once more?

Another year has gone by and not a word as to the hope of having a good life. Reflecting on past events, as we spent our days struggling and making ends meet, as we maneuver past obstacles that are thrown our way, we once again cross this bridge, a hole-riddled bridge, with nuts and bolts decaying, and ready to collapse at any moment. The years have gnawed at the very fabric that holds this bridge together. Its pillars are corroding.

Yet men will have to cross this bridge because it appears to be the only bridge. We delude ourselves into believing that this crossing will carry us through. If this bridge were new and wrapped with hope, we might think that our aspiration for a better life will be answered in the crossing of this bridge. History has shown that this is not the case.

When the big landlord holds bigger and bigger parcels of land and refuses to yield control and ownership; when peasants are forced to submit to the will of the feudal lord for existence; when the bureaucrat capitalist cloaked in political power continues to appropriate business corruptly for their benefit; when big foreign capital intrudes, dominates and enforces its will upon the nation; they are trying to frame a picture that without them, this bridge will not exist and that no prosperity can be achieved without their benevolent interference.

Such pillars have brought nothing but misery to the greater part of society. Yet men have no other choice but cross this 'bridge of oppression', in lamentation and in great contempt.

Society has been crying out loud that this bridge does not fulfill our hopes and aspirations. When the ethos of want, greed and self-enrichment overrides the good of the many for the indulgence of the few, then this bridge is a menace and must be destroyed.

Rather than demolish this bridge, some 'social engineers' have sought to downplay the danger. They have put forward schemes and partial solutions to prop up and brace the failing 'bridge'. Temporary and superficial solutions are offered, which can buckle at the slightest pressure and thus aggravate present miseries. Yet these engineers still try in vain to resurrect the impossibility. For them, it is good to be on the other side - the side of the 1% of the world's population. That portion seemingly controls the fate of this world. Or has it?

Those that have proposed to demolish the existing bridge to build a better and modern social bridge are ridiculed. They were presented as criminals,

putschists, terrorists to be hunted down and without any place in history or society. These contrary social engineers are found wanting to justify themselves, even if history and the current of social discontent have made the present bridge no longer sustainable.

We can only look back and revisit history. A newer 'bridge of life and progress' from its young age is already proving itself adequate and sustainable. Yet the adamant, self-indulgent, self-centered elitist deny the success of this model portraying this new 'bridge' as a bridge of misery to the many and benefiting only the few. Those that have crossed the new bridge have contradicted such claim, thus the status quo has spent enormous energy protecting its position in society even if the rest of the world be put in danger. As the old builders inculcate in the minds of men that there is no other bridge that can bring a better life to many, the old bridge has become an incurable plague. Like a deadly virus, the culture of laissez faire needs to bleed society to its core so it can live. My question is - what becomes of the virus when the host is dead? It cannot sustain itself. The old bridge cannot stand forever. Indeed, the bridge is rapidly decaying away. It has to crumble for progress to follow.

The workers of the world make history. They are the movers and shapers of society. Without the working class, the bridge as it stands today cannot sustain itself; yet those that control the capital seem to think that they are the 'bridge'. A new bridge is in the threshold. In its short existence it has already provided meaning and purpose to many. History's spiral of change can only produce as such.

This year, as in other years, the struggle will again be intense as the old bridge tries its very best to stand. As the contradiction between those few that have the most wealth against those that have nothing but a threadbare existence intensifies, we are left with no other choice but to persuade the downtrodden, the oppressed, and the makers of history that an alternative is worth the pain of birth.

Must we cross this old, decaying, failing bridge once more? Must we demolish the old and build a new one? Or must we just cross this old bridge hoping it will stand the test of time as we patch, brace and fortify the rule of the few rather than the rule of the many that creates the history of man?

It is time to change. There is no other time but now. It is time to unite as we struggle to bring about a better society. The foundation has already been laid. We must now put the other sections of the bridge together to fulfill and enjoy the fruits of our aspirations.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Migrante Cultural Group holds Christmas Carolling



Migrante Cultural Group singing Christmas carols at one of the household families

Members of the Migrante Melbourne worked on strengthening their ties among themselves and the community by organising a 'Christmas Carolling' held last December 2006.

The newly formed and organised Cultural Group rendered various Christmas songs to Filipino and non-Filipino families. The group was highly appreciated and encouraged specially when they had a purpose and a goal to help others in distressed.

The group aimed to raise funds to support the maintenance of Migrante Shelter in the Philippines for the distressed Migrant Filipino workers and their families.

Lack of job opportunities and basic social infrastructure has driven Filipinos to seek work overseas to support the basic needs of their families. At least 3000 Filipinos each day leave the country to find work.

Suffering the oppressive conditions of family separations, abusive employer, racial insults, unpaid wages, death, false accusation, overwork, ignored, unsupported from the very country that drove them away yet extract from

them the very essence of their life, migrants are the unsung heroes.

They have become the pillar of the Philippine economy.

An estimated 10 million Filipinos are working and living in 186 countries around the world. At least 10 billion US dollars in remittance are financing the copper of the Philippine to maintain an extravagant debt burden made since Marcos and up to the present.

The Filipino migrant have become a pariah that must stay away to survive because nothing better awaits them in the homeland.

The integrated approach of Migrante Shelter consists of crisis intervention for distressed migrant workers and their families, awareness-building, legal support, temporary accommodation and advocacy for migrant workers' & well-being.

Part of the raised carolling fund was also shared to the victims of recent typhoon '*Reming*' and landslide in Bicol.



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Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

NEWS ROUNDUP



Declaration of Human Rights marks its 58th anniversary

A joint celebration to commemorate the International Human Rights Day was organized by The Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA), Migrante Melbourne and Gabriela Australia, held at Apex Park, Altona, Victoria on the 10th of December 2006.

More than 50 members, friends and supporters from different organisations and unions attended the event to mark the 58th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The celebration went on despite of the hot weather condition with the top 40 degrees temperature.

Rose Cerdeña ordained Minister from the Uniting Church led the ecumenical service.

PASA and Migrante Melbourne Secretary, Reyvi Mariñas, extended his message. He mentioned the rights and freedoms that set forth in the Declaration such as non-discrimination; freedom and movement and association; right to education; the right to asylum; and the freedom of thought, opinion and expression.

“These rights and freedoms are of particular significant to all of us who believe in the universality of human rights of every person. The right set out in the Declaration are nowadays never been observed and



have been constantly violated by the Government, who were meant to uphold the very rights of its own people”, Mariñas said.

There have been more than 700 victims of extra-judicial and political killings in the Philippines since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took power in January 2001. Until now, none of the perpetrators have been convicted and families of victims have not met justice.

Mariñas also added that in Australia, our rights to a decent wage and better working conditions are affected by the Howard government’s implementation of Industrial Relations (IR) Laws.

The Migrante Cultural Group rendered Filipino songs then “salo-salo” of yummy Filipino and Australian food and BBQ followed. There were also kite flying and parlor games.

Discover seven and half ways to save water

By Reyvi Mariñas

With ongoing dry conditions expected to continue, Stage 3 water restrictions were enforced on 1 January 2007 by the metropolitan water businesses to help manage Melbourne's water use.

There are so many things that we can do in and around our house to save water. Things that do not cost a lot of money can make a big difference.

In this first edition of 'Our Community', we discover seven and a half ways of saving water:

1. Install a rainwater tank and connect it to your toilet, laundry and garden hose.

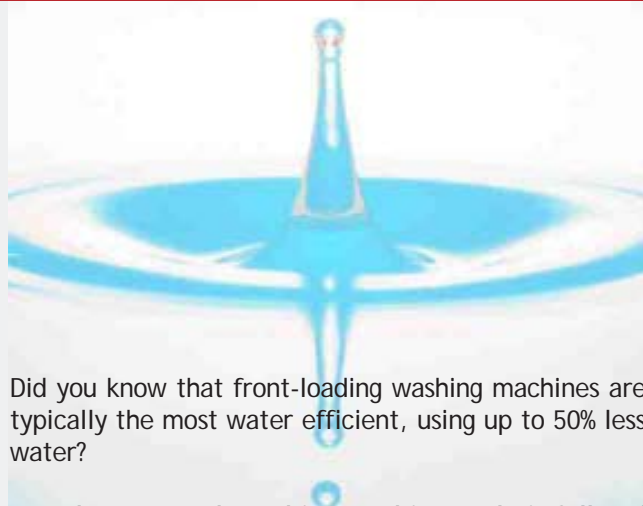
Tanks are available in various sizes and styles - and you may qualify for a Water Smart Gardens and Homes Rebate on the purchase costs (Please see 'Water Smart Gardens and Homes Rebate' at Our Water website: www.ourwater.vic.gov.au for more details).

2. Install a water efficient showerhead. Save up to 20,000 litres of shower water a year.

3. Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth and shaving. Save 4,000 litres of water a year (if you brush for 3 minutes). Instead, use a glass of water to rinse your mouth. And remember to turn off the tap while shaving, and save up to 3,500 litres per year.

4. Install a dual-flush toilet. If you don't already have one, install a dual-flush toilet - for a family of four, this can save over 35,000 litres a year. Depending on your toilet, a cheaper option is to place a brick or filled water bottle in the toilet cistern to use less water.

5. If you're buying a new washing machine, make sure it has at least a four-star water efficiency rating.



Did you know that front-loading washing machines are typically the most water efficient, using up to 50% less water?

6. Make sure each washing machine cycle is full and use an economy setting. Washing machines use about 120 litres of water per load. You can reduce this amount by adjusting the water level to suit the size of the load of washing.

7. Look for water efficient rating labels when buying new appliances. Remember...the more stars, the more water efficient.

And a half. Halve your shower time and save 8% of your water

Our water is precious and we need to make saving water a permanent way of life to secure our water supplies for future generations.

Reference: <http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au>

Get Involved!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

I would like to:

- become a member of Migrant Melbourne
- be updated with information from Migrant Melbourne
- donate to Migrant Melbourne



Migrante Melbourne is a voluntary community organisation of Filipino and Filipino-Australian migrants and workers promoting and upholding their welfare, human rights and workers' rights. It also deepens members' awareness of the root reasons of the Filipino hegira to over 180 countries and settlement issues in their adopted homelands.

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

**SEND TO PO BOX 606, LAVERTON VIC 3028 or
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VALENTINES SPECIAL

WHAT IS LOVE REALLY?

By Reyvi Mariñas



“I think that ‘pag-ibig’ is more of a romantic concept exhibited in strong feelings of desire or love for the other.”

As Valentine’s Day looms, I find myself asking what love really means. Most people say that you can only feel it, but it is difficult to pin down what it is. Whilst for others, love could be a temporary imbalance of chemicals in the brain. Still for some optimists, love is the answer to all the problems in life.

In this short article, I would like to investigate the different meanings of love according to its various traditions and origins throughout history. In order to do this, I ask a number of people to unpack the mystery behind this “thing” called love.

There are several themes that I discover during the course of this exercise. One of the interesting themes is the difference between love based on ‘emotion’ and love based on ‘pleasure’. Stephanie Rabusa, a Post-Graduate Student at the University of Melbourne, describes the difference between ‘pag-ibig’ (pleasure/romantic) and ‘pagmamahal’ (emotional/spiritual).

“I think that ‘pag-ibig’ is more of a romantic concept exhibited in strong feelings of desire or love for the other. This is when you feel passionate about something. ‘Pagmamahal’, on the other hand, despite its usual meaning of ‘valuable’ is something that goes beyond passion and desire. It is the sort of unconditional love and care given by parents to their children or a husband to an ailing wife and vice versa. It is a kind of love that diminishes the boundaries between people and allows the unity of souls”, she explains.

Indeed, the early Greeks were the first to pioneer the idea

of love “based not on disinterest but virtuous restraint of sexual desire”. This idea initially stems from the Platonic tradition that love is a desire for beauty - a value that transcends the particularities of the physical body. For Plato, the love of beauty culminates in the love of philosophy, the subject that pursues the highest capacity of men’s thinking as exemplified by the affection between Socrates and his young male pupils (in particular with Alcibiades) in Plato’s book *The Symposium*.

Danny Fernandez, the Vice-Chairperson of Migrante Melbourne, in fact, echoes what the early Greeks exemplify as the relationship between love and beauty. He observes: “A friend somehow attracts our attention if they provide a relief in our circumstantial emotional state. General terms of loving and liking may well be attributed as well to ones own perception of beauty. A piece of art will be judged accordingly on the merit of choices more so on the selection of other subjects.”

Some may hold that love *is* physical, i.e. that love is nothing but a physical response to another whom the agent feels physically attracted to. According to this theory, love is an extension of the chemical-biological constituents of the human creature and is explicable according to such processes.

In fact, Stephanie Rabusa also explains the physical aspect of love: “The great Arthur Schopenhauer once said that love is a product of human physiological functions. We feel love because we, as human beings, have the instinct to procreate. Thus, love and attraction are only by-products of the need to produce healthy babies”.

Another recurring theme is the problem of love between the ‘self-interested’ and the ‘desire to do good for another’. This problem reveals what May Kotsakis, Co-Chairperson of Philippines-Australia Solidarity Association (PASA), perceives about the tension between unconditional love and love as a ‘trade’.

continued next page >

Column

WHAT IS LOVE REALLY? continued...

"When you do something good for others even if it gives you pain, hardships & disappointments, without expecting a return, that is love. When we expect a return, especially of the same substance of that we gave, it is not love, it is a trade", she claims.

Kotsakis further indicates that love is more of an "action word" rather than words *per se*. As she explains: "Love cannot truly be expressed by words. Words are used only as advanced notice or announcement but the expression comes by action. Love is not blind, it is fully conscious, it is daring and it takes risks".

The dilemma between totally selfless love versus an egoistic, more self-interested love actually stems in the analysis of the human will, which is often debated amongst early Christian philosophers. For instance, St Augustine of Hippo describes "the purity of love for itself not egotistical in its selfishness but altruistic in its unselfishness". In his two classical books, *Confessions* and *The City of God*, he differentiated the eternal love (*caritas*) from material love (*cupiditas*). Material love is measured in relationship to its object, whereas eternal love is the love of God that we can be confident that there exists no fear of loss.

So the experience of love draws together several different themes and traditions. Unfortunately, they do not fit very well. That is why it is so difficult to sum-up the meaning of love in a single coherent insight. The fact of the matter is we use a single word 'love' to stand for a range of rather different experiences. The difficulty we have in saying what love really is comes from the conflict within our own experience of love itself.

Perhaps, it is important to reflect what Rabusa says in her final thoughts: "To define love and come up with one single concept is a difficult task. The meaning would depend on personal experience. Two people may have felt the same symptoms but to different degrees. To me it does not matter what the explanation is. The concept of love affects everyone and it reaches far more than the romantic". ■

Around the World with OFW's

By Dinggin Dalisay

This column will provide you with various stories of Overseas Filipinos especially the contract workers. We will also give updates on the work of Migrante Shelter, the main beneficiary of Migrante Melbourne's yearly fund raising activity the "Tipanan".

Between August and mid December 2006, Migrante Shelter's Migrant Rights and Welfare Program (MRWP) handled 256 cases of Filipino contract workers. There are more than 20 kinds of services being provided by the program ranging from counselling, referral to legal assistance, education on migrant workers rights, and group support at the host countries. MRWP also provides temporary shelter especially to Filipinos from the provinces while they are following their cases and to some, while they are being counselled.

Number of cases by nature:

Repatriation/Stranded	41	Medical assistance	2
Repatriation remains	4	Mysterious death	2
Overcharging	24	Appeal on civil case	1
Monetary claims	17	Labour court	1
Legal assistance	10	Passport referral	1
Unpaid salaries	9	House & lot problem	1
C. substitution	6	Cancellation of employment	1
Jailed	5	Refer Migrante Dubai	1
Illegal dismissal	4	Filed case in Hongkong	1
Raped	4	Financial/child support	1
Maltreatment	3	Request report	1
Undocumented	3	Return passport & documents	1
Illegal recruitment	3	Rescue	1
Illegal salary deduction	3	Failure to deploy	1
Missing	2	Blacklisting	1

Number of cases by host country:

Lebanon	39	Dubai	6	South America	3
Taiwan	3	Hong Kong	9	South Korea	1
Macau	1	Kuwait	1	U.S.A.	2
K.S.A.	12	Qatar	5	Syria	1
Palau	1	Guyana S.A.	6	Bahrain	1

(Data on some cases are still being gathered at the time of this report.)

There are recent incidents that are not included in the above data. On January 6, it was reported that a 28 years old Filipina from Maguindanao faces death in Kuwait for allegedly killing her seven-year old ward. A Filipina was gang raped by 17 men after she fled from an abusive employer while three other Filipino women spent their Christmas in jail, also in Kuwait. In Hong Kong on December 1, Brigilda Farinas a domestic helper was jailed for 2 years for alleged ill treatment of a five-month old child under her care.

The above cases are only a few that Migrante International was able to reach. There could be thousands of distressed Filipinos spread out in more than 180 countries around the world that we are unable to reach out. The modern day heroes of the Philippines are often abandoned and forsaken.

Reference: *Migrante International; Bulatlat & Inquirer*

VALENTINES SPECIAL

LOVE in a Globalised World

By Fe Nina Reyes



It is said that "absence makes the heart go fonder". But how would it feel to have a loved one miss you and your children's birthdays, Christmases, New Years - year after year after year?

10 million must yearn for their loved ones in this way time after time. Or at least 10 million Filipino families to be more precise.

The Philippines is a powerhouse of workers for the world's job market, providing millions of workers for a host of jobs in over 22 countries - thousands of "domestics" for Hongkong, the Middle East, shipbuilders & ship workers, tradesmen and tradeswomen (welders, fitters, boilers, metalcraftsmen), nurses, aged care assistants for Australia, the U.S., Canada, Saudi Arabia - to give but a few examples.

This phenomenon brings in the \$13billion US - estimated to rise to \$14billion US for 2007 - which helps props up a highly militarised, highly corrupt government in the Philippines and an economy wherein at least 2.9 million families at the end of 2006 had nothing to eat and suffer daily hunger, according to a survey by Social Weather Stations (SWS - a non-government polling group).

Left behind while one's loved one - husband, wife - battles it out in the great, wide lands of this international job market to keep the family back home alive - one must go through periods of anxiety, sadness, grief, longing, hope...or one perhaps accepts this stoically year after year as the inevitable reality of being a Filipino in the Philippines.

Yet contemporary English pop literature has very little to say of this kind of love. This love wherein one waits for decade after decade for the other, while the children grow up and become adults and celebrations for

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About Batingaw

Batingaw is a bi-monthly newsletter expressing views, news and analysis from Migrante Melbourne. An important aspect of developing this newsletter is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of the Philippine and Australian struggles for justice, democracy and fair-go.

Contributing to Batingaw:

Articles, photographs, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent electronically to: melbourne@migrante.org.au. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

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VALENTINES SPECIAL

birthdays, New Year, Chirstmas and family tragedies (illnesses, mishaps) and family joys (graduations, school trophies) - are missing either the mother or the father or both.

Contemporary pop lore's love - in music on radio's "top ten", urban stories, tv's "video hits", Oscar-award winning and box office move hits - is about quick couplings, momentary trysts, hasty changeovers of lovers, I-love-you-cos-you're-beautiful-and-sexy, the passing experiences of physical intimacy. Hardly about I-love-you-cos-you-keep-the-family-together-year-after-year, or about decades of endurance.

Hardly about lovers separated for 20, 30 years. Hardly about the struggle to keep families together and to keep love alive day after day, during decades of being away from each other.

Hardly about the loved one being raped or jailed, abused or hounded by their employer, driven out of lodgings and left homeless and destitute, physically assaulted, or disappeared - or dead - in a country far away as a foreign worker.

Yet this is the real love story hardly recorded in modern literature and pop lore. Very different from academia's deeply-studied love poems of John Donne or Elizabeth Barret Browning, or from the poems of Nick Joaquin or Walt Whitman.

It's the kind of story about love that must be more true than the so-called "love" in tv videos hits and films which portrays lovers fully-fed in beautiful clothes frequently hooking up after meeting in a nightclub then going straight to bed afterwards.

It's the kind of love that struggles to triumph above poverty, over decades of separation, over decades of trying to keep families together. It's the one that's the real one. Not the fictionalised triviality of everyday pop, or daily media. The kind of love story which contemporary songwriters and poets - apart from their endless tracks about momentary trysts and fleeting physical intimacies should immortalise in song, in poems, on film. Because it's about what love is truly about - this love story of 10 million families.



STOP THE KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

From 2001 when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the Philippine presidency, Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights) has documented more than 760 political killings. Of this number of victims, 298 belonged to cause-oriented organizations and the rest were civilians who have been accused of being active in or supporting the people's democratic movement.

Join Us in Demanding

Justice for the victims and the end of killings, abduction and harassment of human rights and community activists in the Philippines

YOUTH AND STUDENTS

Are you really seeing what you're looking at?

By Katrina Kotsakis

Welcome to the first edition of the Teen's Corner. Though, I compel you not to be fooled by the name, although I am fifteen and currently in year 10 of high school, I encourage all ages to read this article. For it will contain issues, thoughts and the world seen through my eyes.

I am here to tell you what goes on in this world, my world. I thought it should only be right to introduce myself before introducing you all to my thoughts. I am a music fanatic and live by the strings of my guitar. Many emotions get conveyed through songs that I play in the comfort of my bedroom. Within those walls I also write down and create a record of the events and emotions I come across in life.

Some may call me an artist and with that thought, I'll put to you an issue that crossed my mind more than enough times this past month. Being an artist and watching and admiring other artists who inspire me, I realized I only came to admire them by judging them; their music, writing, works and art. Without judging them I wouldn't have been able to determine whether they are good enough to be admired and if their work was to my liking.

We come across judgment every single day of our lives and without it we wouldn't be able to make the decisions that get us to where we want to be. Whether it is good judgment or bad, we still do it everyday, even without us being conscious of it.

We strike a prejudiced thought every time we see someone or something new. Judging them automatically on how they look and how they act. Without even saying a word or taking one action to better understand the situation, our minds have already created a layer of fabricated truth that we hope can relate to what we are judging.

When it is not done unconsciously it is usually done maliciously or without reason. Malicious judgment comes under the category of racism, discrimination, hatred and prejudice. The judgment that encompasses smirks and side glances on trains or as you walk past. This can either lead to strings of rumors and false stories or complete isolation and destruction of an idea that could have helped change society or at least open the minds of those who hold the restraints on society. It is this form of judgment that tears apart friends, families, governments and even nations. Starting wars or civil disputes, leaving a once meshed-together system completely separated.

Though despite the obvious chaos malicious judgment can lead to, judgment does have its place in creating balance and peace. Without it, how would we decide who our leaders would be? Before



democratic votes and elections, we are bombarded with advertising campaigns and catchy slogans trying to convince us who the better party is. We take time in deciding which would better suit us, judging whether we are voting the right party in, or keeping the worst party out.

Also, judgment ties onto our conscience. Despite the many growing opinions convincing you that the voice in your head really is a voice, it is merely you judging between right and wrong. We make these decisions everyday. We judge the time, seeing if we can beat it. We judge our peers, seeing whether we can outwit them. We judge every single aspect of our lives in a constant hope, that with our ongoing judgment, we can create or simulate a better life.

With all this said, we cannot escape judgment, whether it is us who do it, or it is us being judged. It is a part of our fate. Like many have said, when we pass on we get judged before continuing onto the afterlife. It embodies us as humans to judge our lives and determine the aspects of it that we want to change. So, take time in your decisions. Reflect and truly determine what you are judging and if it will affect you, or the lives of others because we are all in this together, interconnected and relying on each other. You may not know who you sit next to on the train, or who walks past you in the city, but in one way or another you are connected. Judging other people on trivial things will not make you a better person, it will only slow down the greatness that you could be using to make your world a better place. Believe in the greatness in others and soon you will come to realize that judgment is inevitable, but you can make it work for you.

On Student Activism and Apathy By Stephanie Rabusa

For the first part of this column I would like to introduce the topic of the so-called 'student apathy'. I will do this by outlining some of my experiences on activism and attempt to explain why students have been criticized for increasingly and allegedly sitting on the fence. I will be discussing current views and opinions on the topic on the next issue.

I first heard about the word 'apathy' when I was a freshman 10 years ago at a student council campaign at the University of the Philippines. The candidate for the chairmanship was being asked about how she would assess the level of apathy of the students at the university and what she thinks of the seemingly waning interest of students in activism.

I can't really remember now what her answer was. I didn't quite catch her answer because at that time, I was trying to think about the day when there was a big protest at the university. It was about the students' opposition on tuition fee hikes. I was in my social science class being lectured by my professor, Mr. Jocano. For a start, the small number of student protesters would meet up in front of the library and then make their way around the whole university, stopping at every classroom, urging their fellow students to join the protest.

As the crowds were nearing our classroom we could hear them chanting phrases like "*Makibaka, wag matakot!*". They eventually stopped in front of our class, their voices getting louder and fiercer. In response, my professor slammed the classroom door in their faces. Only two people in our class had the courage to get up and join them. My professor then turned to the class and said that we could join the protesters, if we want to, but remember that what they are doing is futile. I remember him saying that what they were doing only disrupts the class and is of no real concrete contribution to revolutionizing the society.

That was the first protest I have seen involving students and the first one I have

seen where students were discouraged to join the rally.

During the course of my stay at the university, I have seen many other protests and rallies. They were protesting against abuse of student rights, corruption and Visiting Forces Agreement. I have had classmates who joined farmers in their hunger strikes in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform. I have seen thousands of students mourn and protest the death of a fellow student killed by goons on school grounds. Even our parish priest would encourage students to join rallies. There were debates for every issue concerning politics and poverty. Students were very much aware of their rights and very much passionate to protect them.

Why question student apathy?

Why question student indifference when I have seen hundreds of students marching up to Mendiola Bridge, skipping their classes to protest and cry out for injustice?

Some say that student passion and fervor for activism are not anymore the same as those exhibited by the previous generation. They have said that student participation in rallies have waned since the Marcos era. Students have been criticized for not standing up for their rights and fight against poverty. I used to ask my friends the reason why they wouldn't join and the usual response would be, 'What for?'

Even when Filipino students have been allegedly lacking in active participation because of their apathy, Australian students have been showing even less enthusiasm for activism. In comparison to the Philippines, Australian student activism is a bit more laid back. In my experience, Australian students do not normally skip classes to organize and mobilize. I was pretty disappointed at how there was little involvement students had with the protest against the Voluntary Student Un-

ionism (VSU), which was implemented to effectively strip away funding and therefore many functions of the student union. The VSU was implemented by the Liberal Government to further suppress the voice of students. VSU is an attempt to influence the future university students of Australia to become more passive and apathetic by taking away the most ardent supporter of their rights - the student union.

There was also a lack of student participation in the recent 'Fill the G' protest against Individual Workplace Agreements. This is worrying since most students are either already doing part-time work or are joining the workforce in the near future. There seems to be a lack of concern about this issue. The reason might lie on the assumption that some of the students have joined their own work-related unions in the protest. This still does not excuse the fact that student representation was lacking at a time when they should be at the forefront of the protest.

Like Filipino students, Australian students have been compared to their 60s and 70s counterparts. Student activism during those years was seemingly more zealous. The generation of baby-boomers would go to the streets and protest against the Vietnam or Korean wars. They seemed to be learning more outside the classroom than inside. Why are their kids attacking social problems more sloppily? Or are they?

These questions will be discussed in the next issue. We will look at the word apathy and what it means to different people. We will look at some of the studies done by Australian Universities on their student population's alleged apathy. We will also be looking at some students' views on their own participation and the reasons why they do or don't participate. All these on part 2 of this article!

Events Calendar - Mark your Diary

10 February 2007 - Migrante Melbourne Tipanan

DETAILS:

Migrante Melbourne's "Tipanan" - A Valentine's Day fun night for the whole family

A chance to be with friends and acquaintances and a night full of fun with singing, games, raffle and dancing. 6.00 pm at Civic Hall, corner Railway Avenue and Crown Street, Laverton

06 March 2007 - Australia Asia Worker Links (AAWL) Annual General Meeting-

DETAILS:

6.00 pm at the TradesHall, corner Victoria Street and Lygon Street, Carlton South

11 March 2007 Gabriela Australia - Anniversary and International Women's Day Celebration

DETAILS:

Members and friends of Gabriela Australia will celebrate its 11th year of formation and commemorate the International Women's Day with performances, sharing and dinner. Contact Malou Logan at 0433 216548 or Christie Rivera at 0419 569656

16 March 2007 Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA) public forum

DETAILS:

A report from the delegates to the December 2006 International Conference held in Cebu, Philippines. 6.30 pm, Evatt Room, the TradesHall, corner Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton South. Call Migrante Melbourne for further information.

01 April 2007 Palm Sunday Rally

DETAILS:

Palm Sunday Rally - Highlighting various issues such as Industrial Relations; Iraq War and War on Terror; Human Rights Violations and Refugee and Indigenous Issues



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Migrante Melbourne : : PO Box 606, Laverton, VIC 3028