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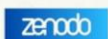
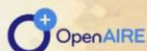
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ECHOES

of **EXPRESSION**
A Creative Folio

ECHOES OF EXPRESSION is a peer-reviewed, national-level creative folio published by Lakbay-Diwa Publishing. Dedicated to promoting creative expression, the creative folio features poems, essays, short stories, and other forms of imaginative works from both emerging and established voices. To celebrate diverse literary forms, ECHOES OF EXPRESSION provides a platform for writers and artists to share their original creations. Published both online and in print every month, the magazine invites contributions that reflect the evolving landscape of literature and the arts. All works published herein may not be reproduced, copied, or used in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publisher.



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A Function of Failure and Becoming

The first exam results were disappointing.

Professor Lim had expected it. He had seen it happen too many times to be surprised. Still, when he sat alone in his office and looked at the scores arranged in neat, unforgiving rows, expectation did little to soften the impact. Numbers had a way of telling the truth too clearly.

He ran his pen down the list, pausing at certain names, marking nothing, changing nothing. There were no remarks written on the papers when he returned them the next day. No lectures about effort. No warnings. Just silence.

The next day is ready for another discussion.

Lim said nothing as he entered the classroom. He simply turned to the board and began the next lesson.

Limits and continuity.

"Sometimes," he said, writing slowly, "what matters is not where a function is, but what it approaches." No one responded.

When the class ended, students filed out in small, quiet groups. Conversations were muted, guarded. A few lingered at their seats, pretending to reorganize their notes.

One student remained.

Lim noticed him without looking directly. The boy stood near the desk, gripping his exam paper too tightly, the edges crumpled between his fingers. He waited until the last of his classmates had left before stepping forward.

"Sir," he began, voice unsure, "may I ask something?"

Lim set down the chalk and turned. "Of course."

The student held out the paper, though Lim did not take it. "I studied. I really did. I went over the examples, I practiced the problems... I thought I understood."

His voice faltered slightly.

"I don't understand why I failed."

Lim looked at him, not at the bold red score written at the top, but at the uncertainty beneath the question. It was familiar. He had seen it many times, but it never quite lost its weight.

"What did you learn?" Lim asked.

The student blinked, caught off guard. "Sir?"

"What did you learn?" he repeated.

The boy hesitated. His grip on the paper loosened just enough for it to flatten slightly. "That... I'm not good at math?"

Lim shook his head, not dismissively, but with quiet certainty.

"No," he said. "You learned where you began."

The student frowned, as if the answer didn't quite fit the shape of his disappointment.

Lim stepped closer, resting a hand lightly on the edge of the desk. "Tell me," he continued, "before this exam, did you think you understood everything?"

The student nodded slowly. "Yes."

"And now?"

"...No."

"Then that difference," Lim said gently, "is learning."

The boy looked down at his paper again, but this time not with the same finality.

"Failure isn't the end of a function," Lim continued. "It's part of how it grows. Some functions don't move in straight lines. They dip, they rise, they approach something they cannot reach all at once."

He picked up a piece of chalk and turned to the board again, sketching a curve, uneven, imperfect, but moving upward overall.

"You are somewhere here," he said, tapping a low point on the graph. "Not at the end. Not even close."

The student studied the drawing.

"It doesn't feel like growth," he admitted.

"It rarely does," Lim replied.

"What should I do?" the student asked.

"Continue," Lim said simply. "But differently. Don't study to prove you understand. Study to find where you don't."

The student nodded, though uncertainty still lingered. It would, Lim knew, for some time.

"Come back," Lim added, "after you try again."

The classroom changed in small, almost unnoticeable ways.

The student began to sit closer to the front, not immediately, but gradually, one row at a time. He asked questions, though often hesitantly. Sometimes they were incomplete, poorly phrased, or based on misunderstandings. Lim answered them all the same.

"That step," Lim pointed out, "what assumption did you make?"

"That it would simplify," the student replied.

"And did it?"

"No."

"Then the problem isn't the result," Lim said. "It's the assumption."

The student nodded, this time more firmly. Each small correction became something to build on. Each failure, something to return to.

By the time the final exam approached, the room felt different. Students still worried, still prepared in their own ways.

When Lim distributed the final exam, he said only one thing: "Show your thinking."

The student took a breath before beginning. The questions were not easier.

When he handed in his paper, his hands were steady.

Days later, Lim sat once again in his office, reviewing results. The rows of numbers looked much the same at first glance, ordered, precise. But to Lim, they told a different story now.

He reached a familiar name and paused.

The score was no longer failing. It wasn't perfect, not even close. But it had crossed a threshold, not just of grading, but of understanding.

Lim allowed himself a small smile as he recorded it. Not because the number was high, but because it had changed. Because it had been earned differently.

After class, the student approached him once more, though this time without hesitation.

"Sir," he said, holding his paper, not tightly, but with quiet pride. "I passed."

Lim nodded. "You did."

The student looked at the score again, then back at Lim. "I still made mistakes."

"Yes," Lim said.

"But I understood more."

Lim's smile deepened slightly. "That's the point."

The student exhaled, as if releasing something he had carried for a long time. "It didn't feel like a straight path."

"It never is," Lim replied.

He glanced briefly at the board, where faint traces of earlier equations still remained, half-erased but not entirely gone.

"Becoming," he said, "is not a straight line. It's a function, shaped by every fall, every rise, every point where you thought you couldn't continue, but did."

The student nodded, this time without doubt.

And as he left the room, his steps were not faster, but they were certain.

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Hapag

Ang boses ni Nanay ay tila isang kampanang nanggigising sa natutulog kong diwa. Umaga ng Linggo, ang araw na dapat sana ay para sa pahinga, ngunit sa aming tahanan, ang pahinga ay isang luho na bihirang makamit.

“Berto! Anak, bumangon ka na riyan! Marami pa tayong gagawin at baka dumating na ang iyong tatay!” Ang boses ni Nanay Saling na mas malakas pa sa tilaok ng aming mga manok sa likod-bahay.

“Opo, Inay,” matipid kong tugon, habang pilit kong iminumulat ang mga matang tila may pandikit pa. Napapikit ako nang ilang sandali, ninanamnam ang huling init ng aking banig. Ngunit alam kong ang bawat segundong pag-aantala ay katumbas ng mas mahabang sermon. Si Nanay, kapag nagagalit, ay daig pa ang isang leong nagugutom – matalim ang titig at mabilis ang boses.

Dali-dali akong bumangon. Ang malamig na simoy ng hangin na pumapasok sa mga siwang ng aming dingding na kawayan ay tila humahaplos sa aking balat. Naghilamos ako at nagsipilyo gamit ang malamig na tubig mula sa banga. Pagkatapos, agad kong kinuha ang walis-tingting sa sulok.

Habang hinihimas ng walis ang tuyong lupa sa aming bakuran, ang paligid ay unti-unting nagigising. Naririnig ko ang kaluskos ng mga dahon ng mangga na hinahampas ng hangin, tila ba bumubulong ng mga sikreto ng nagdaang gabi. Ang tunog na ito, kasabay ng malayo pang tilaok ng mga manok, ay dahan-dahang pumapawi sa natitira ko pang antok. Para bang ang buong kalikasan ay nagsasabing simula na naman ng isang bagong pagkakataon.

Bigla, sa dulo ng aking paningin, may isang kulay na umagaw sa aking pansin. Isang bahaghari. Nakasilip ito sa pagitan ng mga ulap, tila isang makulay na tulay na nagdudugtong sa langit at sa luntiang kabundukan.

“Napakaganda...” bulong ko sa aking sarili. Binitawan ko sandali ang walis at lumapit sa bakod upang mas masilayan ang ganda nito. Ang bawat kulay ay tila may dalang pangako ng kapayapaan.

"Oh, Berto? Tutunganga ka na lang ba riyan? Ituloy mo ang pagwawalis at mukhang nakalimutan mo nang tapusin ang sinimulan mo!" muling bulyaw ni Nanay mula sa bintana ng kusina.

"Pasensya na, Inay. Hindi ko lang po mapigilang pagmasdan ang ganda ng tanawin. Lalo na ang mga bundok, parang yumayakap sa atin," malumanay kong tugon bago muling isinubsob ang sarili sa gawain.

Matapos ang bakuran, ang kusina naman ang naging sentro ng aking mundo. Ang amoy ng bawang na ginigisa at ang usok mula sa kalan na de-kahoy ay sumalubong sa akin.

"Anak, kuhanan mo nga ako ng tubig sa balon," bilin ni Nanay habang abala sa pag-aayos ng kawali.

"Opo, Inay," malambing kong tugon. Bitbit ang dalawang balde, tumuloy ako sa likod. Habang hinihila ko ang lubid, ang bawat patak ng tubig na dumadaloy sa aking mga kamay ay may dalang kakaibang lamig. Napaisip ako—ganito rin kaya ang buhay ng ating mga ninuno? Isang buhay na walang ingay ng teknolohiya, simple at payak ngunit puno ng kapayapaan. Walang pangamba sa bukas dahil ang sapat na biyaya para sa araw na ito ay sapat na upang magpasalamat.

Pagbalik ko sa loob, nakahanda na ang aming maliit na hapag. Ang mesa naming gawa sa kahoy ay punong-puno ng pagmamahal kahit kakaunti ang laman—may ilang pirasong tinapay, itlog na galing sa sariling alaga, at mainit na kapeng barako na ang bango ay humahalimuyak sa buong kabahayan.

Habang kumakain kami, nagsimula na ang paboritong libangan ni Nanay: ang pagbabahagi ng mga balita sa nayon.

"Alam mo ba si Aling Maring? Hay naku, Berto, wala nang ginawa ang babaeng iyon kundi ang tumambay sa tindahan at makipagtsismisan sa kaniyang mga kumare. Pati ang kulay ng kurtina ng kapitbahay, pinakikialaman!" kuwento ni Nanay habang humihigop ng kape.

Hindi ko napigilang tumawa at asarin siya. "Si Nanay talaga... parehas lang naman kayo ni Aling Maring, eh. Parehong 'updated' sa balita. Parehong chismosa," biro ko.

"Aba't itong batang ito! Magkaiba ang nagkukuwento sa nagtsitsismis!" tawa ni Nanay, bagaman alam kong tinatanggap niya ang aking biro.

Sa gitna ng aming tawanan, isang tunog ng mabilis at mabibigat na yabag ang umalingawngaw sa aming hagdanang kawayan. Ang kaba ay agad na gumapang sa aking dibdib.

"Ah, siguro si Tatay na iyan, Inay," mahinahon kong wika, ngunit may bahid ng pag-aalinlangan. Mabilis kong binuksan ang pinto.

Ngunit hindi ang pagod pero nakangiting mukha ni Tatay ang tumambad sa akin, si Tata Selso ang nandoon, hingal na hingal siya, putikan ang kaniyang suot, at ang kaniyang buong katawan ay nanginginig sa takot.

“Ang tatay mo... Berto... Saling... inatake siya sa puso. Nawalan siya ng malay sa gitna ng bukid!”

Ang tinapay na hawak ko ay tila nawalan ng lasa. Ang tawa ni Nanay ay napalitan ng isang impit na tili. Hindi ko na hinintay ang susunod na sasabihin ni Tata Selso. Tumakbo ako, hindi alintana ang mga batong tumutusok sa aking paa, patungo sa bukid kung saan ang aking ama ay nakikipaglaban para sa kaniyang hininga.

Ang mga sumunod na oras ay tila isang malabong panaginip. Ang amoy ng Ospital, ang puting dingding, at ang tunog ng mga makinang sumusukat sa buhay ni Tatay ay naging bahagi ng aking reyalidad.

Sabi ng doktor, mapalad kami dahil naisugod siya agad. Kung nahuli raw ng ilang minuto, baka wala na kaming Tatay na babalikan.

Habang papalabas ng Ospital upang kumuha ng ilang gamit, narinig ko ang matining na tunog ng kampana ng simbahan sa hindi kalayuan. Nakita ko ang mga taong nakasuot ng kanilang pinakamagagandang damit, payapang pumapasok sa loob ng simbahan.

Bigla kong naalala ang laging bilin ni Nanay: “Anak, walang imposible sa Diyos. Kapag ang tao ay nasa dulo na ng kaniyang kakayahan, doon nagsisimula ang himala ng Maylikha.”

“Gagaling kaya si Tatay kung papasok ako rian?” tanong ko sa hangin habang nakatitig sa dambana.

Isang mainit na kamay ang humawak sa aking balikat, si Nanay. Bakas sa kaniyang mukha ang pagod at puyat, ngunit ang kaniyang mga mata ay nananatiling matatag.

“Anak, tara na sa loob. Hindi ba’t lagi kong sinasabi sa iyo na kahit anong pagsubok ang dumating, huwag mong kakalimutang lumapit sa Kaniya? Tara, ipagdadasal natin ang iyong tatay,” wika ni Nanay.

Sa loob ng simbahan, ang katahimikan ay waring isang kumot na yumayakap sa naguguluhan kong isipan. Amoy ang insenso at kandila habang nakikinig ako sa sermon ng pari.

“Ang Diyos ang tunay na kakampi sa mga panahong sinusubok tayo. Huwag nating kalimutan na ang pamilya ang tunay na yaman—higit pa sa anumang salapi o ginto. Ang pagmamahal na mayroon tayo para sa isa’t isa ang bunga ng ating pananampalataya.”

Sa loob ng maraming taon, inakala kong ang tagumpay ay nasusukat sa laki ng aanihin sa bukid o sa dami ng perang maiuuwi ni Tatay. Ngunit sa harap ng altar, nalaman kong ang

tunay na kayamanan ay ang pagkakataong makasama pa sila, ang pagkakaroon ng pananampalatayang hindi natitibag ng anumang bagyo.

Paglabas ng simbahan, tumingala ako sa kalangitan. Wala na ang bahaghari, ngunit ang asul na langit ay animo'y nagbibigay ng bagong pag-asa. Ipinikit ko ang aking mga mata at sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon, hindi ako humingi ng materyal na bagay. Nagpasalamat ako!

"Salamat po sa buhay ni Tatay. Salamat sa lakas ni Nanay."

Ang ating pananampalataya ang magsisilbing lakas upang harapin ang bawat umaga, may bahaghari man o wala.

Makalipas ang dalawang linggo, sa wakas ay nakauwi na si Tatay. Hindi na siya ang malakas na lalaking nakilala ko, ngunit ang kanyang mga mata ay puno pa rin ng pag-asa. Isang gabi, muli kaming nagtipon sa hapag-kainan. Simple lang ang ulam, nilagang gulay na pinitas ni Nanay sa bakuran at pritong isda. Ngunit sa pagkakataong ito, tahimik at walang nagsasalita.

"Salamat," wika ni Tatay habang nakatingin sa amin ni Nanay. "Salamat at hindi niyo ako binitiwang."

Hinawakan ni Nanay ang kamay ni Tatay sa ibabaw ng hapag. "Wala iyon, Rodolfo. Ang mahalaga, kumpleto tayo. Sabi nga ng pari, ang pamilya ang tunay na yaman. Ang salapi ay darating at aalis, pero ang pagmamahal, iyan ang hindi nauubos."

Ang aming pamilya ay dumaan sa pinakamalakas na bagyo, ngunit dahil sa aming matibay na pananampalataya at pagkakaisa, natutunan naming bumangon at muling magpasalamat. Sa aming muling pag-uwi, alam kong hindi na magiging pareho ang tingin ko sa aming hapag-kainan. Hindi na lang ito lugar para kumain; ito ay altar ng aming pagkakaisa, pasasalamat, at walang hanggang pag-asa.

Sa pagtatapos ng gabi, bago matulog, lumapit sa aming maliit na altar. Pinagmasdan ang mukha ng Poong Maykapal.

"Sana po," dalangin ko, "lahat ng pamilya ay matutong pahalagahan ang bawat sandali sa kanilang hapag na huwag silang sumuko sa gitna ng hirap, dahil ang tunay na ginto ay hindi nahuhukay sa lupa, kundi matatagpuan sa loob ng puso ng bawat isa na marunong magmahal at manampalataya."

Humiga ako sa aking higaan nang may kapayapaan. Alam kong bukas, gigisingin muli ako ng boses ni Nanay. Maingay, malakas ngunit iyon ang boses na nagsasabing may bagong umaga at sa aming hapag ay magkakaroon muli ng pag-asa.



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Education Beyond Intelligence: Restoring the Heart of Humanity

We have read and learned from the book of Genesis in the Bible that God created everything in this world, including man. God created man in his own likeness and image. He mandated man to be the steward of His creations. Man lives in harmony and prosperity until he and his wife disobey God. As a consequence, they were expelled from the prosperous garden of Eden, and they had to work hard to survive.

As time passes, the human population increases massively. Through the continuous efforts of man to develop innovations and contribute something to the human race, we can say we are in the modern information era. Nowadays, information is so digital that we can know anything that triggers our curiosity by simply surfing the net. Hence, we can easily learn, relearn, or unlearn anything, anytime, and anywhere. However, are we really that intuitive enough? Can we really call ourselves educated? With the advent of modern technology, we can also witness some horrible acts of man that we might be afraid to say how evil a man can be. There might be good people who really try to be moral and humane, but there are also people who do the opposite. It is sad to hear the terrible news of a teenage boy who brutally shot children and teachers inside an elementary school. Some children kill their parents, and parents who hurts his/her family. Now, are we really that educated? Or are we really doing our job to be a great steward of God's creation?

Many people still lost themselves in the dark and choose to stay there. Some people do not know the reason for their existence and the purpose of their lives. On the other hand, we all have stories to tell. These people who do evil may have good reasons. I mean, there is no excuse for doing bad, especially if it has the two elements of moral responsibility, such as knowledge and free will. The bottom line is that some people might also be victims of their own nightmares and horrible experiences that shape the kind of person they are. I strongly believe in the purity of man's heart, that there is always good in each man's heart, even if he is the most wicked person who has ever lived in this world. Maybe we need to be more understanding and kinder. Each person has their own loads, but if we choose to help, maybe we can make a difference. Sometimes these people need that support system to rebuild themselves. This is the reason why I chose to be a teacher. This is my forever passion, mission, vocation, vision, and profession. In this way, I can help thousands or even a million young adults and future professionals to be on the right track. With all the teaching strategies and pedagogy, I will help them find the meaning of their existence and the purpose of their precious lives. At the end of the day, I will ASPIRE to INSPIRE, until I EXPIRE.



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Hope Beyond the Storm: Finding Light Through Faith and Resilience

Hope is a force that drives us to do more, keep on fighting, and enhance our patience. This is the kind of force that motivates us to do remarkable things. It is the will to achieve our goal. To have hope is to want an outcome that makes our life better in some way. It will not just help us to be resilient but also can eventually improve our lives because envisioning a better future motivates us to take the steps to make it happen. Whether we think about it or not, hope is a part of everyone's life. Everyone hopes for something. It is an inherent part of being a human. Hope helps us define what we want in our futures, the desires of our hearts, and our deepest secrets.

The definition of hope depends on the person who does the talking. We all have something where we get this so-called hope. When people speak about hope in a spiritual context, it might mean believing good things will happen with faith in the Almighty. They might direct their hopes through their prayers. For others, it might mean to always look on the bright side and see challenges as opportunities to grow and learn. In other words, always hoping for the best. It is indeed a cliché, but it is really true that without the spiritual guidance of God, we are nothing. Whatever the details, hope in general means a desire for things to change for the better, which requires passionate efforts.

Hope serves as the light for many in their dark times. Talking about life, it is full of surprises, which makes it worth living. There are days we experience the gift of life like family, friends, achievements, promotion, or career, and the like, but like everything in this imperfect world, life for sure is naughty and tough. They said life is unfair, but as for me, if life is unfair to everyone, then life is fair. Life lets us experience both the happiest and saddest experiences to learn lessons. Indeed, everything happens for a reason. Good things happen for us to appreciate life.

On the other hand, bad things happen to teach us a lesson that can make us stronger. Experiencing these dark sides of life is a struggle that we need to face. Every day is not always a happy day, so having hope is the light that we need amidst these trying times.

As we move forward, we have a lot of dark sides of life that bother our daily living. Some are still in grief over losing a loved one. Some suffer from illness. There are also some who are struggling financially. Just years ago, we faced this global pandemic, which harmed public health, and today we are facing this global energy crisis, which affects our global economy. We feel a deep sense of uncertainty. We realize how fragile and vulnerable

we are. It is as if we are suddenly blindsided and brought to a standstill by this pestilence. Unsure of what will happen next, we often take a deep breath to calm our racing pulses. The steep economic downturn and concomitant loss of jobs and incomes, economic distress, and lowered quality of life. None of us was prepared for this outbreak. Some are led to ask why these happen to us. Some have a hard time finding hope if there is an end to this nightmare.

People have different fights to face, but even though it is difficult, there is always light at the end of every tunnel. There is always sun after the rain. We have to focus on looking at the bright side, even in the darkest part of life. Man, in nature is full of hope, with enough resiliency, he can stand from a fall, learn his lessons, and create adaptations and innovations. For instance, in order to gain a wise perspective, we must face our fears. Fears can be healthy or exaggerated, and sometimes paralyzing. It takes wisdom to admit that there are dangers around us that need to be properly and fearfully respected, and it takes wisdom to see through the exaggerations and fearmongering of those who use the pains of others for their benefit. Circumstances change dramatically from day to day, so we must act based on the best information we have. Indeed, all of us must accept the responsibilities we have in our given spheres of influence, such as in the home, work, church, or community, where we are called upon to serve and to lead. We must seek wisdom and make the very best decisions we can as we all endeavor to act generously and selflessly, in ways consistent with all that we believe as followers of Christ, on behalf of others. Moreover, we need to admit to certain specific fears — fears that relate to life and death. Moreover, the fear of having nothing to put on the table for the family is also dominant for most people, if not all. For many people, it is indeed a life-threatening situation, a test of survival. With all that has been said and done, it is better to plan things out so as not to get worse than being caught unprepared.

There is light, there is hope, and God is both our light and hope. He is our shelter during storms and offers His yoke for those who have a heavy burden. God is our savior because everything about the existence of God is hope. He is the way, the truth, and the life. With God, everything is possible if we believe and trust in Him. At the end, everything in this world is temporary, and our permanent shelter is alongside God in His kingdom, so while waiting for that day, let us be hopeful because God is the light in the dark of our lives.



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Kanlungan

Isang pasasalamat sa aking kanlungan,
Apat na taon sa sekondarya'y naging sadigan,
Halos limang taon bilang guro'y, naging sadalan,
Habang buhay kitang pasasalamatan.

Ngunit sa bawat araw,
Dapit-hapon ay dadalaw,
Datapwat ika'y itatangi,
Walang halong pighati.

Dahil sayo'y lumigaya,
Mamimis ka sa twina,
Pagsasama'y natatangi at wasto,
'di man lahat perpekto,

Subalit laging mahalaga ang matoto.
Aral mo'y babaunin sa bagong landas na tatahakin,
Marami mang sasalubong na suliranin,
Tinuruan mo akong itoy harapan.

Sa aking paglisan,
Masayang sandali ay babalikan,
Nawa'y ako'y may naiambag,
Sa pagsasamang di matitibag.

Sa aking mga manlalaro't mag-aaral,
Laging piliing maging masaya at marangal,
Laging piliin ang tama, palaging may pag-asa,
Pananalig sa maylikha, ay gawing sandata.

Nawa'y naging bahagi ako,
Ng inyong kaygandang mundo,
Alam kong tayo'y magtatagpong muli,
Upang pag-usapan ang mga tagumpay at
masasayang sandali.



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Batid kong tayo'y magkikita sa pinilakang tabing,
Sa puso'y itaga at dinggin, Kagaya ng bahaghari
at mga bitwin,
Kagandaha'y di maiikukubli,
Kayo ay labis na natatangi!

Puso'y napupuno ng kagalakan dahil kayo'y
aking natagpuan,
Wala mang Ginoong Bañas sa kanlungan ng
isang mag-aaral,
guro't, kaibigan,
Makakaasang patuloy na masasandalan,
Sa akin ang karangalan na kayo'y makasama't
mapagsilbihan.



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Pag -abot ng Malayong Bituin

Madilim pa ang kalangitan ng nagigising na ang isang dalaga na nagngangalang si Ana. Ang hangin ay dahan-dahang pumapasok sa kaniyang silid ng buksan niya ang kaniyang bintana. May manipis na dingding na halos marinig na niya ang bawat ingay at kilos ng kabitbahay.

Habang siya ay nagkakape at sa kabila ng ingay na naririnig niya malinaw sa kaniyang isipan ang kaniyang pangarap.

“Ako’y makakapagtapos din” buntong hininga niyang sinambit at punong – puno ng pag- asa.

Si Ana ay nasa Ika- apat na taon na sa kolehiyo. Pangarap niyang maging guro mula pagkabata dahil sa kaniyang ama na hindi marunong magsulat at magbasa.

Mabagal siyang lumakad at hinanap ang kaniyang gamit. Isa – isa niyang inilabas ang kaniyang kwaderno at panulat na halos naghihingalo na.

“Ayos pa ito, konting tiis nalang,” mahina niyang sabi.

Ngunit nang silipin niya na ang kaniyang pitaka. Tatlong barya na tag sampu ang kaniyang nakita. Saglit siyang napapikit.

“Padayon Ana,” mariin niyang sabi.

Nang makagayak na si Ana ay naglakad na lamang ito para makatipid. Habang siya ay naglalakad napatingala siya sa langit. May isang bakas pa ng bituin kahit maliwanag na. “Parang ako, malayo pa pero balang araw magniningning din,” bulong niya sakanilyang sarili at nagpatuloy na ito sa paglalakad.

Pagpasok niya sakanilang silid nadatnan niya ang kaniyang mga kaibigan na nagtatawanan, nagkwekwentuhan ng kung ano – ano, at ang aliwalas ng kanilang mukha.

“Uy Ana,” bati ng kaniyang kaibigan.

Ngumiti din siya at bumati rito, ngunit sa likod ng bawat ngiti ay may alalahaning hindi niya maibahagi. Sa loob ng klase, tahimik lang siyang nakikinig sa kaniyang guro.

Dumating ang oras ng tanghalian. Isa – isang lumabas ang kaniyang mga kaklase upang kumain. Pero si Ana ay hindi man lang gumalaw sa kaniyang inuupuan.

“Tara na kumain na tayo,” tawag ni Liza sa kaniya.

“Busog pa ako,” magalang niyang tanggi nito asa kanila. Kahit ang totoo ay kumakalam na ang kaniyang sikmura.

Pinikit niya ang kaniyang mga mata at pilit niyang kinalimutan ang gutom. “Lilipas din ito.” Pilit niyang kinukumbinse ang kaniyang sarili.

Lumipas ang mga araw na ganito ang kaniyang sitwasyon. Dumating sa punto na hindi niya na nakayanan pumasok siya sa banyo ng kanilang silid. At sa apat na sulok na iyon ay tahimik siyang umiyak. Pinipigilan niya ang kaniyang pero tuluyan na itong bumigay.

Kinuha niya ang kaniyang telepono at tinawagan ang kaniyang ina. Nanginginig pa na siya habang hinihintay ang sagot sa kabilang linya. Nang sinagot na ng kaniyang ina, doon inipon ang lakas ng loob niya para magsalita. “Nay, nakahiram na po ba kayo ng pera?” Mahabang katahimikan ang namutawi bago nagsalita ang kaniyang ina. Nagkaroon siya ng pag-asa at bahagyang napangiti ngunit ang sagot ng kaniyang ina ay hindi niya inaasahan.

“Anak, wala kaming maibigay sayo, pahirapan makahanap ng pag uutang,” maiyak – iyak na sambit ng kaniyang ina.

Parang may kung anong tumusok sa puso ni Ana. Gusto niyang umiyak ng malakas sa kaniyang ina, ngunit pinili niyang maging matatag. “Ayos lang po,” sagot niya.

“Pasensiya na tala” hindi na pinatapos ni Ana ang sasabihin ng kaniyang ina at tuluyan niya nang ibinibaba ito.

Ngunit ng nailayo niya na ang telepono, hindi niya na talagang napigilan ang kaniyang sarili. Bumuhos nang tuluyan ang kaniyang luha – luha ng pagod, lungkot, at panghihina.

Habang nakaupo siya sa banyo, unti – unting pumasoksa kaniyang isipan ang kalagayan ng kaniyang pamilya. Ang kaniyang magulang na isang magsasaka na araw – araw na nakabilad sa araw at minsan nauulanan pa upang kumita lang ng kaunti.

Doon niya unti-unting pinunasan ang kaniyang mga luha. “Kung kaya nila, kaya ko rin,” sambit nito.

Paglabas niya ay naghihintay ang kaniyang mga kaibigan at bakas sakanila ang pag-aalala at tinanong siya.

“Ayos ka lang? May problema ba” tanong ni Maricar.

“Oo naman, ako pa,” sagot ni Ana sakanila.

Mula nang araw na iyon nagbago ang pananaw niya sa buhay. Hindi na siya sumusuko basta basta.

Naghanap siya ng paraan para tulungan ang kaniyang sarili. Kapag walang pasok sumasama siyang magtanim para lang may baunin siya.

Lumipas ang mga buwan at hindi niya namamalayan malapit na siyang matapos sa kolehiyo. Mas lalo niyang pinagbuti ang kaniyang pag-aaral. Sa bawat araw, malapit na siya sa kaniyang pangarap.

Hanggang dumating ang araw na matagal na niyang hinihintay, ang kanilang pagtatapos. Suot ang itim na toga, hawak ang mga kamay ng kaniyang mga magulang na

aakyat sa entablado para tanggapin ang pinaghirapang diploma. Hindi na napigilan ni Ana ang kaniyang pagluha.

Pagkatapos ng seremonya, agad niyang hinanap ang kaniyang magulang sa gitna ng maraming tao. Nang makita niya ang mga ito ay tumakbo siya at niyakap niya ang mga ito ng mahigpit. At sinqmbit ang mga katagang “Appa, Nanay nakapagtapos na po ako,” umiiyak niyang sabi.

Kitang-kita ni ata sa mukha ng kaniyang mga magulang ang saya at pagmamalak.

Sa gabing din iyon pagkauwi nila sa kanilang bahay ay nanatili siya sa labas at tumingala sa langit. Nakita niya ang napakaliwanag na bituin, kung dati ay sobrang layo ngunit ngyaon ay iba na ang kaniyang pakiramdam. Hindi na ito malayo. Dahil napatunayan niya na ang pangarap gaano mankalayo ito ay hindi mahirap abutin.

Alam niyang hindi pa doon natatapos ang kaniyang paglalakbay ngunit itop ang susi para sa kaniyang kinabukasan at para sa kaniyang pamilya.

“Iyon ang aking kwento nang ako’y nag – aaral pa. Ito ang pinagdaanan ko bago ko marating kung nasaan man ako ngayon,” maiyak – iyak na sabi nito habang nagbibigay ng mensahe sa mga magsisipagtapos.

“Kaya kayo bilang magsisipagtapos ngayong taon na ito, alam kung mahirap at madaling sumuko. Pero lagi niyong iisipin na hindi ka naglalakad para sa sarili mo lang, may mga taong tahimik na naniniwala, may mga sakripisyong hindi dapat sayangin at may mga pangarap na hindi lang sainyo kundi pinaghirapan din ng inyong mga magulang,” ssambit nito na punong puno ngb inspirasyon.

“Muli maligayang pagtatapos sainyong lahat,” habol nito. Nang matapos siyang magsalita ay nagpalakpakan ang mga tao.

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Literacies on the Move: Transcending Challenges in Education

I attended high school in our local community, and during the years I spent there, seeing student teachers (STs) being deployed was new to me. Seeing them got me confused at first. Until later, I found out that they were from Mindoro State University, and all the STs I encountered ended up having a good career ahead of their journeys. Now, it got me thinking, *“What did they experience right after graduating? Have they found stable jobs after college?”*

Fueled with curiosity, I decided to read some studies and articles regarding this. After thorough reading, I found out that many of them discuss the different adversities that early-career teachers face.

Apparently, early-career language teachers are defined as secondary English educators with 0–5 years of teaching experience. They are recognized as being in a unique professional phase marked by transition from pre-service preparation as student-teachers to independent classroom practice as full-fledged professionals. This period of their career is usually faced with uncertainty, low instructional confidence, and vulnerability to stress and other related issues, especially as they strive to align pedagogical theory with real classroom demands in diverse school contexts (Li & Zhang, 2025).

Studies revealed that language teachers in this phase are most prone to challenges that shape their commitment and attitude towards teaching. These challenges are amplified by ongoing systemic pressures in education systems across the world, including increased workload and the residual effects of pandemic-related disruptions to teacher induction and preparation processes (Davis & Park, 2025). In addition to that, workload pressures and lack of support are the major challenges experienced by early-career teachers. This means that these factors add to the already challenging environment of early-career language teachers. Not just that, these challenges also extend across professional, instructional, institutional, and emotional domains. Heavy workload, classroom management difficulties, frequent assessment demands, limited teaching resources, and burdensome administrative tasks have been identified as significant stressors that undermine teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness (Davis & Park, 2025).

Celik and Kahraman (2021) also recorded that official policies and school practices, social connection, teaching practices, support, individual factors, and school environment are the six major thematic challenges faced by beginning teachers. Comparably, Mancian and Gallardo (2025) revealed that institutional support and resource limitations significantly affect

early-career teachers, which is similar to the challenges faced by those teachers from secondary schools.

Working under these conditions is not only cognitive and time-related but also psychological, with emotional exhaustion and burnout arising from the cumulative effect brought by these stressors.

With this in mind, I asked myself, *“As someone who currently takes the same path and might end up in the same position, what can I do to handle those challenges more effectively?”* Then it came to light. We need to enter the workforce ready. Not just to do the work assigned to me as a future educator, but also to manage the challenges that this career brings. The following statements can be useful not just to me, but also to everyone who can read this article.

First, we must take the fundamentals of social literacy into consideration. As teachers, being social to your students and colleagues is a vital part of your character because it will serve as one of the foundations of your career in the long run. Being an approachable and respectful individual is a good start. This will enable you to have a healthy relationship in your environment, thus reducing the chance of an unhealthy workplace.

The next important factor to keep in mind would be taking advantage of the technology you use inside the classroom. As mentioned in the previous citations, catching the attention of the students is one of the main adversities that beginning language teachers encounter. If we effectively use ICT tools in our institution, it will bring ease and help for both teachers and learners. We should not just use PowerPoint Presentations; we should master them. We can also make use of different innovative websites to make the activities and lessons more engaging for the students. This will boost the overall participation of everyone in the class when digital literacy is employed effectively.

We should also remember to utilize computer and media literacy, as these factors play huge roles in education nowadays. We are in a generation where we use social media and gadgets daily. So, we should make the best out of it. We can craft activities that can be shared online, such as reflection videos, blogs for essays and reflections, and other activities that can be shared or presented with one click on our smartphones and computers. If we can make the best use of these social media platforms, not only will we make education more enjoyable, but we can also share and spread knowledge to the community as a whole. This is education that transcends the classroom.

This essay serves as a guide to enlighten those who feel lost in their path, especially the early-career teachers who might be uncertain or do not have confidence in their career. All I can say is, do not be afraid. These challenges are not meant to discourage you; they are meant to make you stronger, more capable, and more competent professionals in the future. If you successfully overcome these struggles, you will emerge as a better version of yourself. As educators and future educators, it is our obligation to pass our knowledge to the future generation, and no challenge will ever stop us from doing our responsibilities.



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Sa Pangakong Ako Na Lang ang Naniwala

Sa liwanag ng buwan,
nandoon nagsimula ang lahat
ang lahat kung saan tayo nag-umpisang magmahalan,
at nangako sa isa't isa ng walang hanggan.
Na tayo ay mananatiling tapat,
mananatiling ikaw at ako hanggang dulo.

Akala ko ay tayo na hanggang huli,
pero nagbago ang lahat dahil sa isang pagkakamali.
Doon nagsimula ang pagbitaw
na tila hindi na kayang maibalik pa,
kahit anong pakiusap at pagmamakaawa
ay nauwi lamang sa salitang:
"Hanggang dito na lang tayo."

At ang mga alaala
unti-unting ibinaon sa limot,
bago mo ako iniwang luhaan at durog.
Ngunit kahit ganoon ang nangyari,
nanatili pa rin ang puso kong naniniwala sa'yo,
kahit bawal na.

No'ng nalaman kong may iba ka na,
bigla akong nakaramdam ng hilo,
na para bang binuhusan ng malamig na yelo.
Masakit, kahit anong tanggi ko,
dahil akala ko'y nagpapahinga lang tayo
at babalik din sa isa't isa
sa tamang panahon.

Pero bakit may bago na?
Parang hindi mo ako pinangakuang

iharap sa altar at pakakasalan.
Bakit ka nangako ng mga salitang
hindi mo kayang panindigan?
Mga pangarap na sabay nating binuo,
pero ikaw rin ang unang bumitaw.

Saan napunta ang mga pangako mo?
Tuluyan na ba silang naglaho sa hangin,
o iniwan mo lamang kasama ng nakaraan
na pilit kong binabalikan mag-isa?
Hindi ba't sinabi mong ang pangako
ay simbolo ng pag-ibig na walang hanggan?
Pero bakit ngayon,
ang "tayo" ay isa na lamang alaala?

Hanggang salita na lang ba ang lahat
kung sa gawa ay wala kang naiwan?
Ako ba ang nagkulang,
o sadyang hindi lang ako ang pinili mo?

Kinunsumo mo ang mundo ko nang tahimik,
ginawa akong tahanan ng mga "sana,"
hanggang sa ako na mismo ang nawala
sa paghawak sa pangakong ikaw lang ang gumawa.

At heto ang katotohanang
hindi ko matatakas—
kahit ako na lang ang nananatili,
kahit ikaw ay matagal nang nawala,
naniniwala pa rin ako
sa pangakong kailanma'y hindi mo tinupad.

Ngayon, ang lahat ng nangyari
ay naging alaala na lamang.
Sana'y nanatili tayong dalawa,
sumusuporta sa bawat hakbang
na dati nating sabay tinatahak.
Akala ng lahat ay hahantong tayo sa kasalan,
pero nauwi pala sa luhaan.

Maraming sumuporta sa atin,
maraming naniwala at natuwa,
halos isipin ng lahat

na tayo'y magiging pamilya.
Ngunit nag-iba ang takbo ng tadhana
pinaghiwalay niya ang dalawang pusong
walang ginawa kundi magmahalan nang lubusan.

Hanggang sa nagising na lang tayong
kaya na pala nating limutin ang isa't isa,
na para bang hindi tayo nangakong
anumang mangyari
ay mananatiling tayo hanggang dulo.

Dumating sa puntong
sumuko tayo sa isa't isa.
Kahit gaano ka pa magmakaawa,
wala kang magagawa
kapag ang isa ay gusto nang matapos ang lahat.
Kahit lumuhod ka pa sa harapan niya,
kahit ibalik mo pa ang mga pangako —
kapag ayaw na niya, ayaw na niya.

Kaya wala kang magagawa
kundi palayain siya.

Sa bawat hakbang na ating tinatahak,
sana'y maging aral tayo sa isa't isa.
Lalo na sa mga pangarap
na hindi man lang natupad.
At kahit ako na lang
ang naniniwala sa mga pangakong binitiwang natin,
sana'y huwag nating kalimutan
ang mga panahong ipinaglaban pa natin ang "tayo."

Pero noong gabing iyon,
tuluyan na tayong nagpaalam
sa nakaraan nating dalawa.
Dahil kahit anong laban ng isa,
wala kang magagawa
kung ang isa ay sumusuko na
at ayaw nang manatili pa.

Kaya ngayon,
kahit sabay nating binuo ang pangakong

“mananatili tayo hanggang dulo,”
wala na akong magagawa
kundi tanggapin na
hanggang doon na lang tayo.

Limutin ang naramdaman,
buksan ang bagong pahina,
at gumawa ng sariling kuwento
mga pangakong para na lamang sa sarili.

Dahil sa huli,
ako na lang pala ang nanatiling naniniwala.
Kaya nangako ako sa sarili ko:
wala nang balikan,
walang hihintayin,
walang gugustuhin.

Mas mabuti nang mag-isa
kaysa maniwala sa mga pangakong
wala namang katotohanan.

At hanggang sa muli nating kuwento,
kalimutan na nating may “tayo,”
lalo na ang mga pangakong
hindi natin natupad nang magkasama.



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The Beautiful Mind of Lorenzo

As I browse my photo album, I remember Carol, my good friend, and the lines she often shared with me from her favorite quote, "There will always be a reason why you meet people. Either you need them to change your life, or you are the one who will change theirs." This quote from Angel Flonis Harefa holds as Carol shared with me how Lorenzo changed her and my life.

The bright blue sky of the day filled Carol's hands with sweat, not because of perspiration but nervousness as she approached her first class that day. We were told a few days ago that Carol's students would be just a few, which will be a blessing since Carol was a neophyte in the field. However, I know that is not her main concern; instead, it is the overflowing love and care she wanted to give all of them. Unfortunately, I overheard a colleague mention that Carol needs to be watchful of Lorenzo.

Teacher Carol, one of my closest friends in that school, was admired by everyone because of her genteel personality. In most of our conversations, she often recalled her experience with Lorenzo, a diagnosed attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) grade one student at a private school. Unlike other students, Lorenzo's parents are aware of his condition. When Lorenzo's father passed away, the heavy burden of raising Lorenzo was a sole responsibility accepted by her mother. Lorenzo was the firstborn of the Perez family and a bundle of joy, but when his parents found out about his condition, it was heartbreaking.

He was five years old when Lorenzo's father passed away, and at that time, her mom was pregnant with her baby sister. It was too much to bear, but his mom carried every challenge with total dependence on God's plan.

As Carol stepped into the façade of the school premises of her new home, she gazed with amazement at the ambiance, a feeling of warmth and relaxation far from the noise of the busy streets. The lush green garden near the classrooms created a refreshing scene, while the cold breeze caressed our tense muscles. In every step Carol took, she realized that tears began to fall; could it be because of the new beginning she would be facing as she shifted to a new

career? Or could it be the new ambiance of the environment? Carol's mind was perplexed but delighted to be finally in her dream job.

After a few minutes, Carol finally arrived in her classroom. She smiled at the picturesque look of her room. It was just exactly the way she wanted it to be. The red floor mat, color-coded chairs, decors and posters, she personally chose them. Carol sighed in disbelief that each corner represents her love for her students. Then, just after a few minutes, each one of them arrived.

The day was filled with twenty-five students. Their parents still accompany some, while the others seemed relax and independent, but not for one student who looked different from the rest. Her mom immediately gave her telephone number and reminded me to call if there is a need. Her smile was gentle, but her look was fierce enough to signal that we must update each other often.

Carol began singing songs, arranging their things, classroom and school tour followed and when it was time for recess, Carol went around to see if they have snacks with them. Through their name tags, Carol finally found Lorenzo, seated alone while eating biscuits. At that time, Carol thought he was looking at her, but he was not. His eyes were cross-eyed. He kept on asking where Gilbert, his good friend, is. A boy in another group uttered, "he was in the restroom." Lorenzo breathed heavily, as if he found peace in knowing that Gilbert was just around the corner.

Carol stayed near Lorenzo for a while, then he asked permission to leave the room and went to the comfort room. After a few minutes, Carol was surprised when she saw Lorenzo with his wet hands; he never dried them, then he grabbed his chair and removed his shoes. Next, he stretched his hands, enough to reach the air from the ceiling fan, and he turned around while following the movements of the ceiling fan. Everyone was surprised and worried to see Lorenzo act that way. Then, Carol positioned herself near him since he might fall; he never fell, and Carol was thankful for that, but he never stopped. In fact, he seemed to be enjoying each turn of his hands and body.

While some of his classmates were anxious seeing him that way, Gilbert smiled and told him to get down because the teacher would get mad. Lorenzo followed and smiled back to her teacher. "He is really like that teacher, Gilbert said.

Pretending as if this was not a big issue, Teacher Carol just smiled back and held her thoughts. She sincerely told him, "Please be careful, next time".

The day ended with smiles, more work to do, and more thoughts to ponder. As Carol sat on the chair, she narrated to me her worries about Lorenzo. I can sense the anxiousness in her face and the deep breath she made.

The next few days in Carol's class were filled with moments of discovery as she learned new things about her class and Lorenzo. At times, it moved her to tears since it was like a baptism of fire, but after a few minutes, she was moved to tears as she recalled the sweet moments with them.

Lorenzo began to show extraordinary mannerisms enough to frighten his classmates since he could not look his classmates in the eye. Lorenzo's command of the language is truly exceptional. He can assert himself in the class using English, and we are all amaze of that. This behavior, at times, can cause conflict that leads him to tears and tantrums. However, he never failed to amaze us with his clear memory; he can memorize the countries' capitals and flags, something only he can do. He often struggles with concentrating on tasks given. His only friend in class was Gilbert, and most of his classmates disliked him because he could not sustain conversations. Raising our voice never worked for him, so you need to tone down your voice whenever you are talking to him.

Understanding Lorenzo was not easy, and at times it frustrates Teacher Carol that she can only give a little to him, so I advised Carol to talk to his mom, and soon discovered many details about him. Carol adjusted her class routines and even my methodology of teaching. Instead of requiring him to sit for long hours, Teacher Carol gave him a task to lead the class and report attendance. Aside from that, Carol also asked him to make frequent rounds inside the classroom to give him the flexibility he needs while performing in class. Abut most of all, Carol instilled in his classmate's empathy and love.

There were times he was unmanageable, so they gave him the time he needed to be alone, but under her teacher's watch. After a few minutes, he would take the initiative to tell us that his mind is now clear and he is ready to join the class. Instead of swallowing in fear, we instilled in him love and support, not because he was special but because he was brilliant. His ideas are far beyond what we can think of.

There were several occasions that we saw his brilliant mind as he turned ordinary ideas into creative outputs. He is indeed thinking outside the box. Fueled by his curiosity, Lorenzo was able to suggest ideas that later on turned into real outputs. However, more than the brilliant mind, we say his heart, filled with compassion, love, and respect for everyone.

When Carol celebrated her birthday, we were surprised with the birthday card he gave, "I love you teacher." A very simple phrase that made Carol and the rest of the class emotional.

As the school year ends, he frequently drops by her teacher's room to say hi. At times, we were surprised to see him seated in the last row, watching innocently. Then, Carol smiled back at him and approached him, "This was not your room, but you can see me later after your class." Lorenzo was like that until he finished sixth grade. His mom often thanks me for letting him be himself, and he would narrate stories where Lorenzo kept on singing the songs Teacher Carol taught him while saying his teacher's name.

Five years later, Lorenzo became my student, and this time I was more prepared to face him. He is more matured to carry out responsibilities because treatment was provided to him, together with therapy. He still has moments of confusion, but we both manage to surpass them because we know him very well.

Looking back at this experience, I must admit that Lorenzo taught us a very important lesson as a teacher, to instill love and respect for everyone, despite our inadequacies, because we all have a beautiful mind as one of God's creations.



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Ang Pangarap sa Ilalim ng Tulay

Ang aming bahay ay hindi gawa sa semento. Ito ay binuo lamang mula sa mga pinagtagpi-tagting yero, karton, at plywood na nakuha sa basura, nakasandal sa malamig na pader sa ilalim ng tulay ng Del Pan. Sa tuwing uulan, ang aming bubong ay nagiging parang salaan—tulo rito, tulo roon. Ang sahig naman ay lupa na nagiging putikan.

Ako si Jj, panganay sa apat na magkakapatid. Bata pa lang ako, namulat na ako sa reyalidad na ang buhay namin ay parang isang walang katapusang siklo ng gutom at paghahanapbuhay. Ang tatay ko ay isang magtatagpi ng lumang sapatos, habang si Nanay naman ay naglalako ng basahan sa kalsada. Madalas, ang almusal namin ay kape lamang na may kasamang tirang kanin kagabi. Kung minsan, tuyo at instant noodles ang itinuturing na naming piging.

“Jj, mag-aral kang mabuti. ‘Yan lang ang pamana namin sa’yo na hindi mananakaw,” madalas sabihin ni Nanay habang nag-aayos ng mga basahan sa bilao.

Dahil sa hirap, halos hindi ko matapos ang elementarya. Kailangan kong tumulong. Sa edad na sampu, namamasura na ako kasama ang mga kapatid ko. Sa umaga, nasa paaralan ako, nakikinig nang mabuti kahit kumakalam ang sikmura. Sa hapon, naghahalungkat ako ng basura. Kapag nakakita ako ng isang kilong plastik, katumbas na ‘yun ng kalahating kilong bigas.

May mga araw na gusto ko nang sumuko. Nahihiya ako sa aking mga kaklase dahil amoy basura ang kupas kong uniporme. Minsan, pinagtawanan ako dahil butas ang sapatos ko. Umuwi akong umiiyak.

“Nay, ayoko na pong pumasok. Magtatrabaho na lang po ako nang tuluy-tuloy,” sabi ko habang humihikbi.

Hinaplos ni Nanay ang buhok ko. “Anak, ang hirap ay pansamantala lang kung pagsisikapan mo. Huwag mong hayaang ang kahirapan ang magdikta ng kinabukasan mo.”

Ang mga salitang'yun ang naging gasolina ko. Hindi ako tumigil. Habang naglalakad sa kalsada, nagbabasa ako ng mga lumang textbook na nakukuha ko sa basura. Nagtuturo ako sa mga kapatid ko gamit ang chalk na napulot ko.

Nang makatuntong ako sa high school, nag-apply ako bilang working student sa isang kainan. Pagkatapos ng klase, naghuhugas ako ng pinggan kapalit ng tira-tirang pagkain at kaunting baon. Minsan, nakakatulog na ako sa lamesa habang gumagawa ng takdang-aralin, putik pa ang mga paa.

Naranasan namin ang matinding gutom nang magkasakit si Tatay. Wala kaming perang pambili ng gamot. Nakikita ko siyang naghihirap nang wala akong magawa.

Ngunit hindi ako nawalan ng pag-asa. Natapos ko ang high school nang may karangalan. Dahil sa aking pagsisikap, nakakuha ako ng scholarship sa isang pampublikong kolehiyo.

Lumipas ang sampung taon.

Ang batang naghahalungkat ng basura sa ilalim ng tulay ay isa nang ganap na guro. Ang amoy-basura kong uniporme noon ay napalitan na ng disenteng kasuotan. Ang aming bahay ay hindi na gawa sa yero kundi semento na naipundar ko sa pagtuturo.

Hindi madali ang buhay. Puno ito ng sugat, gutom, at luha. Pero sa bawat tulo ng ulan sa lumang yero namin noon, natutunan ko ang tibay ng loob. Ang kahirapan ay hindi hadlang, kundi isang hamon na nagpapatibay sa isang taong may pangarap.



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Gulong ng Palad

May dalawang magkakapatid na ang pangalan ay sina Precious at Melody. Silang dalawa ay mahilig sa musika.

Habang nagkakantahan sila, biglang dumating si Eunice at pati ang mga kaibigan nito. Tila may mga pinaplano ito laban sa mga magkakapatid at hindi maganda ang kutob ni Precious sa biglaang pagpunta nito sa kanila.

Eunice: "I'm here because you are invited to my birthday party. If you want isama mo narin kapatid mo."

Precious: "Salamat pero hindi kami pupunta."

Melody: "Gusto ko pumunta, pupunta ako doon."

Eunice: "Mukhang gusto pumunta ng kapatid mo. Mamaya 8:30 p.m. see you there."

Hinila ni Precious si Melody at kinausap.

Precious: "Hindi ka pupunta don."

Melody: "Bakit hindi? Invited naman tayo sa party."

Precious: "Kilala mo naman si Eunice diba?"

Melody: "Ano ba Precious, kung ayaw mo pumunta doon eh edi huwag, basta ako pupunta ako don sa ayaw at gusto mo."

Walang nagawa si Precious sa kagustuhan nito kaya hinayaan niya na lang ito. Umalis si Melody upang maghanda para sa gaganaping party.

Nang magsimula ang selebrasyon ay tinotoo ni Melody ang ninanais na makapunta.

Eunice: "You're here! I thought you're not coming."

Melody: "Hindi ha, pinangarap ko nga makapunta sa ganitong party."

Eunice: "Really? where's your sister?"

Melody: "Hindi siya pupunta ewan ko ba don."

Eunice: "Nevermind! just enjoy the party."

Melody: "Sige, salamat."

Walang kamalay-malay si Melody na may binabalak na masama si Eunice sa kanya.

Eunice: "Pagsisihan mo kung bakit ka pa pumunta rito."
(*bulong sa sarili ni Eunice*)

Habang nag e-enjoy ang lahat, bigla na lang nag on ang screen at lumabas ang mga litrato ni Melody kasama si Precious at pati na rin ang maliit na bahay na tinatayuan nila.

At biglang tumawa ang mga kaibigan ni Eunice at mga taong nasa party. At nagsalita ang isang kaibigan ni Eunice.

Erika: "Look! May kasama pala tayong pulubi rito. Nakakahiya ka! Ang lakas ng loob mo para pumunta dito sa party ni Eunice. Hampas lupa HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA"

Walang salita ang lumabas sa bibig ni Melody. Wala siyang magawa kundi ang umiyak na lamang. Pero laking gulat ni Melody na may dumagundong nasampal ang kanyang narinig. Nang tignan niya ito nakita niya si Precious na galit na galit at tila gusto na niyang pumatay ng tao ngayon.

Precious: "Mga hayop kayo! Ano masaya na kayo na napapahiya niyo kami ng kapatid ko? Oo, mahirap man kami pero kahit minsan wala kaming tinatapakang tao. Alam mo ikaw, pati kayong lahat, kung anong ikaputi ng mga kutis niyo ganun din kaitim ang mga budhi niyo!!"

Malakas na sigaw ni Precious na parang bang sa paraan ng pagsigaw at pagbitaw ng masasakit na salita ay maiibsan ang kasalanan na ginawa ng mga ito sa kapatid at sa kaniya.

Hinila ni Precious si Melody palabas at umuwi. Pagkadating sa bahay nila ay nagpaalam si Melody na magpapahinga na ito. Habang nagpapahinga si Melody ay naisipan niya na kapag nag-aaral siya ng mabuti magkakaroon siya nang magandang trabaho at kapag

nangyari iyon magiging mayaman na sila at hindi na tatapak-tapakan pa ng ibang tao kagaya ng nangyari sa kanila ngayon.

Melody: “Ipapakita ko sa kanila na hindi lang dito ang kaya namin. Aahon kami at aalis sa maliit na bahay na ito.”

Nag-aral ng mabuti ang magkapatid at naging working student. Kumakanta din sila kahit sa maliit na kita.

Dumaan ang ilang mga taon, nagkita-kita ulit sila.

Gulat na gulat sila ng makita nila ang magkapatid. Hindi sila makapaniwala sa mga anyo nito, parang ibang tao ang kaharap nila ngayon. Parang hindi si Precious at Melody na binubully nila noon.

Hindi dapat natin sila hinuhusgahan sa antas na mayroon sila noon dahil hindi natin alam kung hanggang doon lang ba sila o may mas hihigit pa ba.



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Masaya Akong Nakilala Kita

Noong 2020, nakilala kita sa social media. Nagsimula ang lahat sa simpleng pag-uusap hanggang sa hindi natin namalayang nahulog na pala tayo sa isa't isa. Noong Hunyo 2020, naging tayo, ngunit pagdating ng Hulyo ay naghiwalay din tayo. Hindi man nagtagal ang ating paghihiwalay, muli rin tayong nagkabalikan. Paulit-ulit tayong nagkakalayo at nagbabalikan hanggang sa umabot ng isang taon ang ating relasyon. Sa paglipas ng panahon, naniwala akong maayos na ang lahat at hindi na tayo muling maghihiwalay.

Ngunit noong Enero 2023, muli tayong pinaghiwalay ng pagkakataon. Pagdating ng Agosto 2023, muli tayong nagkausap kahit hindi na tayo opisyal na nagkabalikan. Sa paraan ng ating pag-uusap, para bang tayo pa rin. May karapatan pa rin tayo sa isa't isa, at wala kang pagtutol sa mga ipinagbabawal ko sa'yo. Dahil dito, naniwala akong hindi na tayo muling mawawala sa buhay ng bawat isa.

Subalit dumating ang panahon na sinubok ang ating relasyon. Madalas tayong mag-away, at minsan ay inaabot pa ng ilang araw ang hindi pagpapansinan. Hanggang sa dumating ang araw na pinili mo akong iwan. Nakiusap ako sa'yo na huwag mo iyong gawin, ngunit mas pinili mong panindigan ang iyong desisyon. Wala akong nagawa kundi tanggapin iyon kahit labis akong nasasaktan.

Kahit kailan ay hindi ako nagalit sa naging desisyon mo dahil alam kong baka iyon ang makabubuti para sa ating dalawa. Doon tuluyang natigil ang pagmamahalan natin sa isa't isa. Ngunit hanggang ngayon, may parte pa rin sa akin na naghihintay sa iyong pagbabalik.

Masaya akong nakilala kita, at nagpapasalamat ako sa lahat ng alaalang ibinigay mo sa akin. Mahal na mahal pa rin kita. Hanggang sa muli, aking mahal.

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I Am Still that Kid

I am still that kid beneath the pallid skies,
With trembling hands and sleepless, swollen eyes.
A pencil pusher chained to countless nights,
Still hunting dawn through corridors of blights.

They told me, "Child, be steel, be swift, be grand,"
While pressure coiled like serpents through my hand.
The world grew uptight, ravenous for gold,
And measured human worth by what was sold.

I wore bravado like a tattered coat,
To keep my sinking heart somehow afloat.
Yet every failure carved its ruthless scar,
As if my dreams had wandered much too far.

The classroom walls became a silent cage,
Where fear kept scribbling torment page by page.
Flabbergasted by the weight I bore,
I questioned what my weary spirit's for.

Society, with its voracious tongue,
Still feasts upon the hopeful and the young.
It crowns the loud, condemns the meek to dust,
And buries gentle souls beneath distrust.

They praise the victors standing in the light,
But mock the child still learning how to fight.
They never see the battles no one claps,
The quiet wars concealed in sleepless laps.

I know the ache of failing yet again,
Of forcing fragile smiles to cover pain.
Of hearing whispers: "You are far behind,"
Until the noise corrodes the humble mind.

Still, I remain that vivacious child,
Though storms have left my once-bright spirit wild.

For somewhere in this battered chest of mine,
A stubborn ember endlessly will shine.

I've seen exhausted students lose their flame,
Reduced to grades instead of human names.
We are not robots forged for endless speed,
Nor hollow vessels built for others' greed.

Some carry burdens heavier than stone,
Yet march through chaos silently alone.
Some fight while smiling softly through despair,
Pretending all is well when none is fair.

I still believe there's beauty after rain,
That wounds can bloom though watered deep in pain.
The stars themselves were born from darkest night,
And shattered suns still manage to give light.

So, to the child society ignored,
Whose efforts were diminished, mocked, or scored —
Do not surrender to the crushing tide,
For mountains, too, were formed by storms outside.

Your trembling does not mean your spirit's weak,
Nor tears imply the courage that you seek.
Even the fiercest oceans rise and fall;
Survival is a triumph after all.

I am still that kid with scuffed and weary shoes,
Who learned that life will wound before it soothes.
Still chasing dreams through ridicule and noise,
Still guarding fragments of forgotten joys.

There were mornings I arrived before the sun,
Not to be early, just to breathe alone.
The empty chairs felt kinder than the crowd,
No need to smile, no need to speak too loud.

I learned how silence follows people home,
How rowdy minds can make a room feel cold.
Some nights I stared for hours at the wall,
Too tired to cry, too torpid to feel at all.

I watched my parents conceal their worries well,
Counting small coins like prayers beneath their breath.
And though they never said how dense it was,
I heard debilitation in each quiet pause.

I know the guilt of pausing for a day,
As though my value dissolves when I stand still.
This world cheers the ones who never break,
Then acts surprised when tired hearts finally shake.

I've envied people certain of their path,
Who walk through life without questioning every step.
Meanwhile I stayed at uncertain roads,
Afraid to choose and lose what little hope.

I met kind souls tired just like me,
Surviving more than anyone sees.
The ones who pass their papers with a grin,
Then fight invisible storms once home again.

I used to think that strength meant standing tall,
Never shaking, never needing help at all.
But now I know the bravest hearts I've seen
Are those still gentle after suffering.

I want a life that isn't rushed by fear,
Where rest is not mistaken for defeat.
A place where people are allowed to fail,
Without becoming cautionary tales.

Perhaps we're all just children growing old,
Pretending that we appreciate the world.
Still searching for the coziness we used to know,
Before survival taught us to let go.

So, if you see me smiling through the strain,
Know joy and sorrow often share one face.
The strongest people sometimes need the most
A hand to hold them when their spirit folds.

And when my weary story finally slows,
I hope I'll say despite the pain I knew:
I lived, I loved, I stumbled, yet I tried
Still carrying that child I kept inside.

And though the world may leave me bruised and bent,
I'll rise with all the scars that hardship lent.
For after every storm the sun once hid,
One truth remains

I am still that kid.



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When Numbers Begin to Speak

The chalk snapped between my fingers.

A thin white line broke across the blackboard, jagged like the thought I couldn't quite complete. The class sat in silence, twenty pairs of eyes watching me as if I were about to reveal something profound. Instead, I stared at the half-written equation, feeling the familiar tug of frustration.

"Sir?" a voice hesitated from the second row. "Is that... the final form?"

I smiled faintly, though my mind was elsewhere. "Not yet," I said. "Mathematics rarely gives up its answers that easily."

A few students chuckled, but most looked unconvinced. I could see it, the tension, the quiet dread, the invisible wall they built between themselves and the subject I had devoted my life to.

I turned back to the board, finishing the proof with deliberate strokes. Symbols aligned. Logic unfolded. Order emerged from chaos.

And yet, behind me, I could almost feel their resistance.

It hadn't always been like this not for me.

I used to love the struggle.

Not the kind of love that comforts, but the kind that consumes. Mathematics, to me, was never gentle. It was ruthless, demanding, and unforgiving. A cruel pleasure. A puzzle that refused to be solved unless you gave it everything.

I remembered long nights in my small dorm room, scribbling endlessly across sheets of paper, chasing solutions that seemed just out of reach. Each problem felt like a mountain intimidating, yes, but irresistible. I climbed because I had to. Because something inside me wouldn't let me stop.

There was no audience then. No classroom. No expectations beyond my own.

Just me... and the numbers.

"Sir, I don't get it."

The voice snapped me back to the present.

It was Daniel, seated near the window, his notebook filled with half-erased attempts. Around him, others nodded silently, relieved someone had spoken.

I studied their faces confused, tired, almost defeated.

For a moment, I saw myself in them. Not the professor standing at the front, but the student lost in complexity. The difference was, I had chosen the struggle. They had been pushed into it.

"Alright," I said, setting the chalk down. "Let's try something different."

I walked toward them instead of the board.

"Imagine this," I began, leaning casually against a desk. "You're running a small store. You buy items at one price and sell them at another. You want to maximize your profit but your customers change, your costs change. How do you decide the best price?"

A few brows furrowed. But others leaned in.

"That," I continued, "is what we're doing here. This equation? It's not just symbols. It's a way of making decisions real ones."

Daniel blinked. "So... derivatives are about... optimizing?"

"Exactly."

Something shifted in the room. It was subtle, but real. Pens moved. Heads nodded. The wall began to crack.

And in that moment, I felt it that quiet sense of fulfillment. Not from solving the equation, but from helping them see it.

I hadn't planned to become a teacher.

My obsession with mathematics was deeply personal, almost selfish. It was about the thrill of understanding, the satisfaction of arriving at an answer after relentless effort. Teaching came later, almost by accident a natural extension of something I already loved.

But standing in front of a classroom changed everything.

It wasn't enough to understand mathematics anymore. I had to translate it. Simplify it. Give it meaning beyond abstraction. I had to take something that once felt like a private battle and turn it into a shared experience.

And that was far more difficult.

Students brought more than notebooks into the room. They carried fear. Anxiety. Years of believing they weren't "good at math." Some gave up before even trying.

At first, I fought this the only way I knew how with logic, with rigor, with more explanations. It didn't work.

Because mathematics, I eventually realized, isn't just learned through the mind. It must also pass through emotion.

Weeks passed.

The class improved not dramatically, but steadily. Daniel began asking sharper questions. Others stayed after class, seeking clarification not out of obligation, but curiosity.

One afternoon, as the sun filtered through the windows, casting long shadows across the room, Daniel approached my desk.

"Sir," he said, hesitating. "I think I finally understand it."

He showed me his solution. It wasn't perfect but it was thoughtful, structured, and most importantly, his.

I nodded. "You didn't just solve it," I said. "You understood it."

He smiled a quiet, genuine smile.

And there it was again that feeling.

Not the triumph of solving a problem, but something deeper. A realization.

This was why I chose this path.

That evening, alone in the classroom, I stood once more before the blackboard.

The same surface. The same chalk.

But I was different.

Mathematics was still a challenge. Still a puzzle. Still, at times, painfully complex. But it was no longer just mine. It had become something I could share, something that could grow beyond me.

I picked up the chalk and wrote a simple expression:

$1 + 1$

I smiled.

From the simplest beginnings to the most intricate theories, mathematics remained what it had always been a language. One that explained the world, shaped decisions, and revealed patterns hidden beneath the surface of everyday life.

It could frustrate. It could exhaust. It could even bring tears.

But it could also inspire.

I set the chalk down gently.

Perhaps mathematics was painful, after all.

But in that pain, there was purpose.

And in that purpose, something beautiful waited patiently for those willing to see it.

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The Cost of Chasing a Dream

People often say that college life is one of the most challenging parts of growing up. It is a stage filled with deadlines, reports, projects, performances, and responsibilities that can easily become overwhelming. In college, students are expected not only to study hard but also to manage time, emotions, and pressure. However, beyond the academic demands, there is one challenge that many students quietly carry every day: financial struggle. For some students, going to school means focusing only on their studies, but for others, especially those who come from families that work every day to survive, college life becomes more than just pursuing a degree; it becomes a daily battle of balancing dreams and limited resources. For a third-year college student, financial literacy is a necessity, especially when money is limited; knowing how to budget, save, and make wise choices becomes as important as passing exams.

Many people think that once students get into college, the hardest part is academics, while it is true that college demands so much mentally and emotionally, the financial burden can sometimes feel even heavier. A student who came from a family where money is earned through hard work as farmers, laborers, carpenters, tricycle drivers, vendors, or minimum wage earners, every peso they send comes from long hours of work, physical exhaustion, and sacrifice. For families like theirs, sending one child to college is already a major responsibility. Being the only one who got into college carries a kind of pressure that is difficult to explain; it is the pressure of knowing that many people are silently hoping you will succeed. Your dreams also carry your parents' sacrifices, expectations, and prayers.

Even if you choose a tuition-free school, tuition is only one part of college life. When school is far from home, you need money for transportation, rent, food, school supplies, internet load, projects, and daily necessities. Living in a boarding house or dormitory means learning how to live independently and budgeting the allowance your parents worked so hard to earn. There are days when you want to buy something simple after a long day, but you stop yourself because you know the money in your wallet still has to last for several more days. These are small moments, but they carry heavy feelings.

This is where financial literacy becomes important. For a college student, financial literacy is more than simply saving money; it is learning how to budget an allowance carefully, understanding the difference between needs and wants, and knowing how to plan ahead because one unnecessary expense can affect the whole week. Financial literacy teaches

discipline, reminds students that money is not easy to earn, and every coin has value because behind every coin is the sweat and effort of their parents.

However, the struggle of college life is not only financial. It is emotional too. Living away from home can be lonely, nights when it feels too quiet, days when you miss your family, home-cooked meals, and the comfort of simply being around the people you love. That is why the pressure of academics and finances becomes so heavy that giving up crosses your mind, not because you are weak, but because you are tired.

However, you continued. You studied hard because you do not want your parents' sacrifices to go to waste, and you forced yourself to stay focused because failing feels heavier when you know how much it costs just to be at that school and studying. Many students do more than attend classes; some work night shifts in small stores, some serve as crew members in fast-food chains, some sell snacks inside classrooms, others do online selling, join contests, apply for scholarships, or spend hours lining up for financial assistance. They do all these not because they want extra money for luxury, but because they need to survive. And not everyone sees these struggles. Many students enter classrooms looking fine, smiling, and participating in discussions, but behind those smiles are worries about unpaid rent, unfinished projects, next week's allowance, and how they will get through another day. This is why financial literacy matters deeply.

A financially literate student learns how to stretch limited resources, avoid unnecessary spending, and make practical decisions. Most importantly, financial literacy gives a student confidence, teaching them that even when money is limited, there is still a way to move forward through discipline, planning, and wise choices. There is nothing shameful about doing sidelines while studying; there is nothing wrong with selling snacks, working as a waiter, being a service crew member, or finding small ways to earn honestly. These are not signs of failure, but rather signs of courage, responsibility, and determination.

College teaches many lessons inside the classroom, but some of the most important lessons are learned outside it, learning how to budget, how to endure homesickness, and how to continue even when life feels heavy.

For a student, financial literacy is not only about money, but it is also about responsibility, discipline, understanding the value of sacrifice, and learning how to make the most out of what little is available. Financial literacy becomes a powerful tool, helping them survive college life without losing sight of why they started, teaching them that being wise with money is also a way of honoring the hard work of the people who believe in them. There may be days when everything feels difficult, moments when giving up feels easier, but every time they choose to continue, to save, to sacrifice, and to keep fighting for their education, they move one step closer to the future they dream of. Someday, all the times they counted coins, skipped their wants, missed home, and kept going despite everything, will finally make sense. Moreover, someday, they will get there.



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Ang Aking Ama

Ano nga ba ang isang mabuting ama? Sino nga ba siya? Ang ama ba ay iyong laging nasa tabi mo, o iyong kahit malayo ay patuloy kang minamahal?

May isang batang nagngangalang Bell. Pitong taong gulang pa lamang siya nang isang araw ay biglang nagbago ang kanyang mundo. Sa murang edad, hindi pa niya lubos na nauunawaan ang mga dahilan ng mga matatanda, ngunit ramdam niya ang sakit ng pagkawala.

Isang umaga, nagising si Bell na tahimik ang kanilang bahay. Wala ang pamilyar na boses ng kanyang ama na dati'y gumigising sa kanya tuwing papasok sa paaralan. Wala ang halakhak na nagpapasaya sa kanilang munting tahanan. Tanging ang kanyang ina lamang ang naroon, pilit na ngumiti kahit halatang may lungkot sa mga mata.

"Nasaan po si Papa?" inosenteng tanong ni Bell.

Saglit na natahimik ang kanyang ina bago sumagot. "May kailangan lang siyang ayusin, anak."

Hindi na nagtanong pa si Bell. Bata pa siya at naniwalang babalik din agad ang kanyang ama. Ngunit lumipas ang mga araw... naging linggo... naging buwan... hanggang sa naging taon.

Hindi na bumalik ang kanyang ama.

Sa bawat araw na lumilipas, hinihintay ni Bell ang tunog ng pintuan. Sa bawat sasakyang humihinto sa tapat ng kanilang bahay, tumatakbo siya, umaasang ang ama na niya iyon. Ngunit sa bawat pagkakataon, siya rin ay nabibigo.

Tuwing kaarawan niya, may isang hiling na paulit-ulit niyang binubulong bago hipan ang kandila.

"Sana bumalik na si Papa."

Habang lumalaki si Bell, unti-unti niyang napapansin ang pagkakaiba ng kanyang buhay sa iba. Kapag may Family Day sa paaralan, hawak ng ibang bata ang kamay ng kanilang ama. May mga tatay na nagdadala ng pagkain, may mga tatay na kumukuha ng litrato, at may mga tatay na buong pagmamalaking yakap ang kanilang anak.

Tahimik lamang si Bell sa isang sulok, hawak ang kamay ng kanyang ina. Ngunit sa kanyang puso, may bakanteng espasyo na hindi mapunan.

Tuwing gabi, bago matulog, tinitingnan niya ang lumang larawan nilang tatlo. Doon, nakangiti ang kanyang ama habang buhat siya.

“Bakit kaya ako iniwan ni Papa?” bulong niya sa sarili.

Minsan, napatanong siya sa kanyang ina.

“Mama... ayaw po ba sa akin ni Papa?”

Agad siyang niyakap ng kanyang ina. “Hindi, anak. Mahal ka ng Papa mo.”

Ngunit kahit sinabi iyon ng kanyang ina, nanatili ang mga tanong sa kanyang isip. Kung mahal siya, bakit siya iniwan?

Habang tumatanda si Bell, natuto siyang maging matatag. Tinulungan niya ang kanyang ina sa mga gawaing bahay. Nag-aral siyang mabuti. Sinikap niyang maging mabuting anak, umaasang balang araw ay ipagmamalaki siya ng kanyang ama.

Ngunit sa bawat tagumpay niya, may kulang.

Noong siya ay nagtapos ng elementarya, hinanap ng kanyang mga mata ang isang taong matagal na niyang hinihintay. Sa dami ng mga magulang na pumapalakpak, umasa siyang may lalapit na lalaking magsasabing, “Anak, proud ako sa’yo.”

Ngunit wala.

Sa gabi ng kanyang pagtatapos, tahimik siyang umiyak.

Lumipas pa ang maraming taon. Naging dalaga si Bell. Natutunan niyang ngumiti kahit may lungkot sa puso. Natutunan niyang tumawa kahit may tanong na walang sagot.

Isang gabi, habang nakaupo siya sa labas ng kanilang bahay at pinagmamasdan ang mga bituin, napaisip siya.

Siguro hindi lahat ng tanong ay kailangang masagot.

Siguro may mga taong nawawala hindi dahil ayaw nila, kundi dahil may mga laban silang hindi kayang ipaliwanag.

Ngunit kahit pilitin niyang unawain, may bahagi pa rin ng kanyang puso ang patuloy na naghihintay.

Hanggang isang araw, may dumating na liham. Wala itong pangalan ng nagpadala. Nanginginig ang kanyang kamay habang binubuksan iyon.

Sa loob ay isang sulat.

“Anak kong Bell,

Kung mababasa mo man ito, sana ay mapatawad mo ako. Hindi kita iniwan dahil ayaw ko sa’yo. Iniwan kita dahil akala ko iyon ang makakabuti sa inyo. May mga pagkakamali akong nagawa na hindi ko na kayang itama noon.

Araw-araw kitang naiisip. Sa bawat kaarawan mo, iniisip ko kung gaano ka na kalaki. Mahal na mahal kita, anak. Hindi ako naging perpektong ama, ngunit hindi kailanman nawala ang pagmamahal ko sa’yo.

Patawad kung wala ako sa mga panahong kailangan mo ako.

Mahal na mahal kita.

Papa”

Napatulo ang luha ni Bell habang binabasa ang sulat. Halo-halo ang kanyang naramdaman. Lungkot, galit, pananabik, at ginhawa. Sa wakas, may sagot na rin ang ilan sa kanyang mga tanong.

Hindi pala siya iniwan dahil hindi siya mahal. Hindi pala siya kulang. Hindi pala siya hindi karapat-dapat magkaroon ng ama.

Napagtanto niya na minsan, ang mga magulang ay nagkakamali rin. Tao rin sila na nasasaktan, natatakot, at minsan ay tumatakbo sa halip na harapin ang problema.

Hindi pa rin niya alam kung nasaan ang kanyang ama. Hindi rin niya alam kung magkikita pa sila. Ngunit sa unang pagkakataon matapos ang maraming taon, nakaramdam siya ng kapayapaan.

Hindi na siya naghihintay na may babalik sa pintuan. Sa halip, dala niya ang alaala at ang katotohanang minsan, kahit wala ang isang tao sa tabi mo, maaari ka pa rin niyang mahalín sa paraang hindi mo nakikita.



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Hindi Laging Ako

Sa bawat usapan sa silid-aralan, sa kanto habang naghihintay ng jeep, o kahit sa simpleng kwentuhan sa tanghali, may isang tinig na laging nangingibabaw. Hindi mahalaga kung ano ang paksa aralin man, problema, o simpleng karanasan laging may isang taong handang manguna sa pagsasalita.

“Ako nga, nag-one-two-three sa dyip para lang makapasok,” Sabay taas ng kilay na tila ba kahanga-hanga ang ginawa.

“Ako nga, itong *fishball* lang nakain ko, *okay* naman ako buong araw,” Sabi niya na parang may medalya sa pagtitiis.

“Ako nga, nilalakad ko ang papuntang eskwelahan, makapasok lang,” Kasunod ng buntong-hininga na tila siya lang ang may pinagdaraan.

Siya si Rein, kilala sa klase hindi dahil sa talino o kabaitan, kundi dahil sa paulit-ulit niyang “Ako nga...” sa bawat pagkakataon. Sa bawat kwento ng iba, may mas mabigat siyang kwento. Sa bawat karanasan ng kaklase, may mas matindi siyang pinagdaanan. Para bang isang paligsahan ang bawat usapan, at kailangang siya ang manalo.

Sa umpisa, natatawa pa ang mga kaklase niya. Ngunit habang tumatagal, napapagod din silang makinig. Unti-unti, ang mga sagot nila ay nagiging maikli na lamang “Ah, ganun ba,” o “*Okay*”, hudyat na hindi na nila lubos na pinapansin ang kanyang mga sinasabi.

Isang araw, habang abala ang klase sa pagbabahagi ng kani-kanilang karanasan tungkol sa hirap ng pag-aaral, nagsalita si Liza.

“Hindi ako nakapag-review kagabi kasi kailangan kong bantayan ang kapatid ko”

Ngunit hindi pa siya tapos ay agad na sumingit si Rein.

“Ako nga”

Biglang natahimik ang silid.

“Pwede ba,” marahang sabi ni Liza, “Ako muna?”

Napahinto si Rein. Sa unang pagkakataon, wala siyang naisagot. Ngunit sa halip na magalit, ipinagpatuloy ni Liza ang kanyang kuwento ng pagod, ng responsibilidad, at ng tahimik na sakripisyo na hindi niya karaniwang ibinabahagi.

Pagkatapos magsalita, napatingin si Liza kay Rein. "Alam mo," Sabi niya, "Minsan hindi naman kailangan na higitan ang kwento ng iba. Minsan, gusto lang naming may makinig."

Tumahimik si Rein. Hindi niya inaasahan ang ganitong sagot hindi galit, kundi isang paalala.

Makalipas ang ilang sandali, dahan-dahang nagsalita si Rein. "Pasensya na," sabi niya. "Siguro nasanay lang akong laging ipakita na kaya ko... o mas mabigat ang pinagdadaanan ko."

Ngumiti si Liza, bahagya. "Okay lang magkwento," sagot niya, "pero sana hindi lang para ipakita na ikaw ang mas lamang. Mas maganda kung may natututunan din ang nakikinig."

Napaisip si Rein. Noon niya lang naunawaan na ang pakikinig ay hindi kahinaan. Isa pala itong paraan ng pag-unawa.

Kinabukasan, may isa na namang kaklaseng tahimik na nagbahagi ng kanyang problema. Sa pagkakataong iyon, hindi agad nagsalita si Rein. Sa halip, humarap siya rito at mahinahong nagtanong, "Ikaw, kumusta ka?"

Nagulat ang kaklase, ngunit unti-unti itong nagsalita. At habang nakikinig si Rein, naramdaman niyang mas mahalaga pala ang pag-unawa kaysa sa pag-angat ng sarili.

Maging si Liza ay napaisip din. Napagtanto niyang ang pagsasalita ay hindi lamang para ilabas ang sariling saloobin, kundi para magbigay-daan sa mas malalim na pag-uunawaan. Natutunan niyang maging mas bukas hindi lamang sa pagbabahagi, kundi pati sa pakikinig.

Mula noon, nagbago ang daloy ng kanilang mga usapan. Hindi na ito paligsahan ng paghihirap o pagalingan sa kwento. Naging espasyo ito ng pag-unawa, pagdamay, at pagkatuto.

At sa bawat kwentong ibinabahagi, unti-unti nilang natutunan: kapag may nagsasalita tungkol sa hindi magandang karanasan, mas mahalagang makinig muna at unawain ang sitwasyon. At kung magbabahagi man, hindi kayabangan ang dapat nangingibabaw, kundi aral na maaaring mapulot ng iba.

Minsan, hindi kailangang "Ako muna."

Minsan, mas mahalaga ang making at magsabi ng, "Ikaw naman."



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Proactive Breach Management: Leadership Accountability and the Framework of Cyber Resilience in Organizations

The digital environment has fundamentally changed risk, turning cyber-attacks from separate technical events into significant business dangers. With the rise in frequency and complexity of breaches, the business goal must transition from simple defense to all-encompassing cyber resilience. This framework is shaped not solely by technology, but by the organization's ability to foresee, endure, bounce back from, and adjust to disruptive occurrences. Central to this transformation is the essential aspect of leadership responsibility, creating an active, top-down directive for security.

Cyber resilience transcends the conventional reactive approach of incident response (IR) by enforcing a culture of ongoing readiness, placing the obligation firmly on top leadership, especially the Board of Directors and the C-suite. Accountability emerges from governance frameworks that regard cyber risk as an organization-wide issue, including financial, legal, and reputational risk, rather than just an IT challenge. This necessitates leaders establishing distinct responsibility boundaries, assigning specific resources for resilience initiatives, and guaranteeing that the organization complies with a strict, verified framework of controls and procedures. In the event of a breach, the accountability framework requires prompt and clear communication, showing that security lapses are regarded as significant business failures.

The implementation of cyber resilience relies on three proactive foundations: preparation, simulation, and adaptation. Preparation entails creating a flexible and thorough Incident Response Plan (IRP) that is explicitly communicated across all departments, not solely the technical team. This encompasses outlining communication tactics, legal assessment procedures, and forensic inquiry responsibilities prior to an event transpiring. Simulation is the crucial method of evaluating this IRP via authentic "war-gaming" and tabletop drills. These activities evaluate the organization's human, process, and technical elements, uncovering weaknesses and facilitating quick decision-making in challenging situations.

Essentially, the structure requires modification. Every simulation outcome, threat intelligence report, or real minor incident must directly inform policy and architecture, guaranteeing that controls are consistently refreshed to address the most recent threat vectors.

This creates a robust cycle: leaders establish the strategy, operational teams carry out the controls, stress-testing reveals shortcomings, and executive leadership is responsible for financing and executing the required corrective measures.

It must be worth noting that proactive breach management equates to integrating cyber resilience as a fundamental organizational strength. It necessitates breaking down the old belief that a breach indicates a failure of firewalls or antivirus programs. Rather, it is a direct result of prioritizing risk at the enterprise level. Through instilling steadfast leadership responsibility and creating a governance structure centered on readiness, thorough simulation, and continuous adjustment, organizations evolve from weak targets into intrinsically resilient bodies, able to maintain trust and operations even amidst unavoidable digital upheaval.

Cyber resilience is the ultimate expression of institutional stamina. In summary, the organizations that survive the digital age will be those whose leaders treat security as a shared human responsibility. Thus, by fostering a framework where every employee is a sensor and every leader is a steward, companies transform their vulnerability into a hard-earned competitive advantage.



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Managing the Distributed Workforce: Labor Law Oversight in the Hybrid Age

The swift embrace of hybrid and entirely remote models has fundamentally disconnected work from the office, resulting in a distributed workforce that enjoys flexibility yet brings intricate challenges for labor law regulation. In the hybrid era, entities were not solely regulated by one familiar legal jurisdiction. Rather, they have to navigate a mix of federal, state, and international rules determined by the location where each worker carries out their responsibilities. Successfully handling this legal-geographic interface poses the greatest compliance difficulty confronting contemporary human resources and legal teams.

The primary legal risk arises from the intricacies of jurisdiction and the classification of workers. When an employee relocates from a company's headquarters to a different state or even beyond international borders, the regulations regarding everything from termination and non-compete agreements to minimum wage and paid family leave change immediately. Management needs to keep an ongoing, verifiable record of the employee's main work location to identify the relevant law. A lingering and related risk is the inaccurate classification of remote employees as independent contractors. Organizations frequently classify remote positions as contractor roles to minimize legal obligations; however, global jurisdictions are intensifying their oversight and enforcing strict penalties when an individual who is under centralized control or financially dependent on the company is wrongly denied employee benefits.

Apart from classification, compliance requirements delve into the specific details of wage-and-hour regulations and workplace safety. The requirement to monitor working hours becomes challenging due to flexible schedules and varying definitions of "workday" in different states. Overtime regulations, accrued paid sick leave, and mandated rest breaks need to be tracked and enforced based on the employee's local laws rather than the company's home state. Additionally, the responsibility of the employer to ensure a safe work environment now includes the private residences of employees. Enforcing Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards in a remote work environment is



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difficult, yet employers are still responsible for workplace injuries, requiring proactive risk assessments and communication regarding the home office conditions.

To address these complex risks, management needs to implement a proactive, technology-based legal oversight framework. Organizations need to create and implement clear "Work from Anywhere" (WFA) policies that outline the maximum legal and tax complexities the company will accept, frequently restricting remote work to designated approved areas. Additionally, the implementation of advanced HR technology is crucial. Compliance dashboards and geo-tracking tools can streamline the oversight of employee locations for tax withholding and benefits management, notifying HR when an employee relocates to a non-compliant area. Ultimately, organizations need to allocate resources towards specialized legal and HR professionals skilled in cross-jurisdictional labor law, ensuring that internal standards and communication are uniform, even as the regulatory framework affecting each worker varies and evolves.

Maintaining a distributed workforce demands organizational development that views compliance as a fundamental operational element rather than a hindrance from the outside. Through proactive governance, established guidelines, and technological resources, organizations can manage the legal intricacies of the hybrid era, safeguarding equitable labor practices while maintaining the productivity benefits provided by global talent pools.



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Regulating AI-Created Results: Management Approaches for Reducing Intellectual Property Violation Risks

The rise of potent generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has posed unique difficulties for conventional Intellectual Property (IP) legislation. The primary conflict revolves around two aspects: the fundamental risk of copyright violations linked to the utilization of extensive, frequently unlicensed datasets for training models, and the unclear intellectual property status of the output generated by AI. For organizations utilizing AI, minimizing IP violation risks has transitioned from a legal concern to an essential management priority that requires an active framework integrating internal controls with flexible external compliance approaches.

Successful risk mitigation starts with strong internal governance and technical protection. Leadership accountability should require explicit corporate policies regarding AI implementation. This involves categorizing AI use cases based on risk – differentiating low-risk internal brainstorming from high-risk, client-facing content creation. Businesses must establish compulsory auditing procedures to monitor the source of all training data utilized by proprietary models. To reduce the risk of derivative infringement, management should implement technical strategies such as content filtering systems that compare AI-generated output with established copyrighted databases and utilize digital watermarking methods. This technical oversight guarantees that the produced outcomes satisfy a corporate benchmark of “adequate transformation” prior to distribution, thereby showcasing careful consideration against accusations of plagiarism or unapproved duplication.

Moreover, a major management issue involves establishing ownership and responsibility for works produced by AI. Organizations should create explicit contractual agreements with third-party AI service providers that clearly define accountability for any IP infringements resulting from the models or their training datasets. A specific AI Ethics Board or Review Committee should be formed internally. This committee, made up of legal, technical, and business members, evaluates new AI initiatives for IP risks, establishes compliance standards, and offers clear confirmation of the originality of output intended for



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public distribution or commercialization. This management strategy converts theoretical legal risks into quantifiable, implementable corporate policy.

Externally, clarity in regulations is slowly materializing, requiring organizations to adjust their compliance efforts. Regulatory frameworks such as the EU AI Act establish transparency and risk management principles that significantly affect IP. Management needs to foresee forthcoming regulations that are expected to require comprehensive documentation of the sources of training data, essentially a “data nutrition label” for AI models. Organizations ought to actively pursue licensing strategies by obtaining clear opt-in permissions or leveraging legal exceptions instead of depending exclusively on fair use claims. The future of IP compliance depends on these mechanisms, forming a legal-technical interface where AI’s coded functions correspond with human-established legal limits.

The goal is not to avoid AI, but to govern its output. By transitioning from an “open-access” approach to a structured governance model, firms can harness the efficiency of synthetic content while shielding themselves from the volatility of evolving IP case law. In closing, the winners in the AI economy will be those who balance the speed of generation with the precision of protection. By treating IP risk management as a dynamic operational process rather than a static legal checklist, organizations can turn regulatory compliance into a sustainable engine for safe, scalable innovation.



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The Compliance-as-Competitive-Advantage (CACA) Framework: Legal Tactics as a Form of Market Influence

For years, business executives regarded regulatory compliance as an unavoidable burden, a mandatory expense associated with operating that depleted resources and hindered creativity. The Compliance-as-Competitive-Advantage (CACA) Framework fundamentally changes this paradigm. It asserts that proactive and stringent compliance with legal and ethical standards serves not only as a shield against penalties but as a calculated strategy to build market trust, enhance operations, and establish strong barriers to entry for competitors.

The initial pillar of the CACA framework focuses on building public trust and reputation. In a time marked by data breaches and ethical concerns, consumers, partners, and investors are progressively leaning towards organizations that show credible ethical and legal responsibility. By actively adopting rigorous regulatory frameworks, including the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or specific environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria, a business can set itself apart. For instance, a technological company that creates its products with "privacy-by-design" principles, surpassing basic standards, establishes itself as a reliable guardian of consumer information. This confidence directly results in brand loyalty, increased customer retention, and a higher market valuation, effectively transforming a legal obligation into a powerful marketing advantage.

Within the organization, the drive for high compliance serves as a significant motivator for operational efficiency and organized innovation. Rules frequently require thorough record maintenance, standardized processes, and explicit documentation. Though appearing bureaucratic, these mandates compel organizations to break down outdated, ineffective processes. Companies that embed compliance into their fundamental operations—rather than applying it externally, discover that their processes become more robust, clear, and less susceptible to expensive human mistakes. Moreover, a well-defined legal and intellectual property structure, actively overseen, enables R&D teams to innovate more rapidly and confidently, assured that their results are legally protected and ethically responsible.

Ultimately, the CACA framework utilizes compliance as a strategy for market access and as an entry barrier. Effectively managing intricate regulatory environments, like obtaining licenses for financial services or adhering to quality benchmarks for pharmaceuticals, opens up profitable, heavily regulated markets that are unattainable for non-compliant competitors. For smaller competitors, the expense of attaining similar compliance levels represents a major financial and organizational barrier, essentially reinforcing the market leader's dominance. Through careful leadership in compliance, the leading company can sway regulatory agencies to embrace its own standards, thereby molding future legislation to match its current, efficient practices.

In a nutshell, controlling legal strategies via the CACA framework constitutes a deliberate exercise of market power. Organizational leadership must perceive the legal department not merely as a cost center, but rather as a source of strategic insight and value generation. By strictly complying with and frequently surpassing legal standards, organizations not only safeguard themselves but also intentionally cultivate a competitive edge based on reputation, operational superiority, and exclusive access to markets. Compliance is not the end of innovation but its new frontier. Hence, by weaponizing integrity, organizations turn the "burden" of the law into their most potent offensive weapon.



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The Legal-Operational Interface of DAOs: A Governance Framework for Tokenized Adherence

Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) pose a significant challenge to traditional legal frameworks. Although their on-chain functions are governed by unchangeable code, their off-chain engagements, dealing with fiat contracts, real-world assets (RWAs), and regulatory organizations, necessitate legal personhood and liability safeguards. The "legal-operational interface" serves as the vital intersection of these two realms, necessitating a strong governance structure to guarantee tokenized compliance the process of embedding legal adherence directly into the DAO's operational tokens and smart contracts.

The main resolution arising from this conflict is the implementation of a Legal Wrapper. This is a conventional legal structure, frequently an LLC, Foundation, or Trust, established in a crypto-friendly location (like Wyoming, Marshall Islands, or Switzerland). The wrapper aims not to centralize authority but to act as a specific legal contract, protect members from unlimited liability, and enable essential off-chain activities, like signing leases or handling tax records. The challenge of governance is to guarantee that this off-chain wrapper remains under the decentralized authority of the on-chain token holders.

To attain this dominance, a dual governance structure is required. Initially, the DAO needs to establish a precise list of Reserved Matters in the legal documents of the wrapper (e.g., Articles of Association). These decisions are strategic such as selling treasury assets, altering the core mission, or dissolving the entity that necessitate clear, binding approval through an on-chain token vote. This system requires the wrapper's directors to carry out the community's consensus, placing the legal entity under the DAO's authority.

Secondly, the idea of tokenized adherence is executed via on-chain compliance tools. This goes beyond basic token-based voting and incorporates regulatory requirements directly into the token's features. A prime illustration is the application of Permissioned Tokens (such as those grounded in the ERC-3643 standard) for the tokenization of Real-World Assets (RWA). Holders of these tokens must complete verifiable Know Your Customer (KYC) or

Anti-Money Laundering (AML) verifications before acquiring or transferring the asset. This adherence is not regulated by an off-chain administrator but by the smart contract of the token itself, which utilizes a decentralized identity framework or a compliant oracle, thereby automating compliance.

Essentially, an effective governance structure for the legal-operational interface is a blended system. It employs a legal framework to create a crucial boundary against conventional liability while using tokenized compliance to integrate adherence directly into the software. This framework guarantees that the DAO can engage securely with the traditional world while upholding its fundamental principles of openness and decentralized independence. As regulators clarify their position on decentralized organizations, this incorporation of code-driven compliance will become the essential basis for the sustainable development and operational legitimacy of DAOs.

Evidently, tokenization is not merely about moving assets onto a blockchain; it is about redefining the relationship between ownership and obligation. By bridging the gap between computational precision and legal nuance, we are not just building better financial instruments; we are architecting a more transparent, efficient, and resilient global economy.

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Comfort VS. Growth: A Life Struggle of a Growing Individual

Growing up is an inevitable part of human life where we learn to become independent and strong individuals. It might seem scary, but we must face the challenges along the way. There are times when we encounter difficult situations where we have to decide whether to face them alone or have someone by our side to help us overcome them. Along the way, we often seek comfort, a feeling that gives humankind a sense of pleasure and security while providing emotional relief. Comfort makes us feel safe, while growth challenges us to think for ourselves. As an individual, what will you choose, comfort or growth?

To personally define comfort, it is something that brings pleasure and a sense of safety, a state where you feel secure in familiar situations but often rely on others and struggle to stand on your own. As children, we grow up depending on the decisions of adults, following their guidance because we trust their experience and authority. These beliefs led us to rely on them, trusting that their decisions were in our best interest. In many ways, this reliance is not entirely negative because as we grow, we continue to learn from their guidance and carry that knowledge with us. We often say, “hindi ko kaya mag-isa” or “kaya ko ba nang ako lang.” This kind of mindset continues to follow us, making us believe that we need others to feel safe—to provide the comfort we seek and to help us feel at ease in different situations. The question is, are you willing to stay the same, or step out of your comfort zone?

“Habang may buhay, may pag-asa.” This Filipino saying reflects how growth begins with the willingness to continue despite fear, uncertainty, and change. It reminds us that there is always room for improvement and new beginnings, no matter how difficult life becomes. It is not always easy because growth often comes with uncertainty and sacrifices. Stepping out of our comfort zone is never easy, especially when we are used to relying on the safety and familiarity that comfort gives us. However, growth is the process of becoming a stronger and more independent individual through experiences. It requires us to step beyond what is familiar and face situations that test our abilities and character. There are moments when we question ourselves and think, “Kakayanin ko ba ito?” However, it is through these struggles that we learn to stand on our own and discover our true strength. Growth teaches us to trust ourselves, make our own decisions, and accept that mistakes are part of learning. Growth allows us to unlock our potential and become capable of handling life independently. As another Filipino saying goes, “Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi

makararating sa paroroonan,” reminding us that growth also comes from learning from our past experiences while continuing to move forward. The question is: are you willing to stay the same, or step out of your comfort zone?

There was a time when I believed that comfort meant safety and that being content was enough. Remaining in familiar routines and avoiding risks seemed like the best way to live. However, I later realized that too much comfort can lead to stagnation. Without challenges, I was not learning new skills, discovering my strengths, or understanding my true potential. Growth, on the other hand, involves making difficult choices, accepting mistakes, and learning from them. Choosing growth often means facing fear — fear of judgment, fear of failure, and fear of change. However, these moments are where true learning happens. Through challenges, I learned resilience and self-confidence. Each struggle became a lesson that shaped me into a stronger and more self-aware individual. There were times when life placed me in situations where I had to choose between staying comfortable and stepping into growth, making me realize that true growth often begins when we leave what feels safe. Comfort kept me safe, but it also quietly limited my growth.

In the end, choosing growth is choosing progress. It means choosing the ability to overcome challenges and become better than before. Comfort may feel safe, but growth builds a strong character. By stepping out of our comfort zones, we open ourselves to new opportunities and a deeper understanding. Growth may be uncomfortable, but it is always worth the risk. Change is inevitable, and acceptance is the key to navigating the changes we experience as individuals.

Are you willing to step out or remain within your comfort zone?



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Close Reading Revisited: Formalism in Literary Studies

The Revised K to 10 Curriculum for English uses literature as its main component to deliver the lessons needed for Junior High School students. From Philippine Literature to English Literature, a student needs to understand literary pieces using different approaches. For the teacher, this becomes a challenge in balancing theoretical correctness with classroom accessibility. Among the available approaches, Formalism is one of the most practical for teaching literature. Formalism is a general approach that treats literature as a unique form of human knowledge to be examined on its own terms. It focuses on form over content. This centers on the idea that literary work should be understood through its form, structure, and language, which, when thoroughly applied, becomes a powerful tool for discussing literary pieces.

Jose Garcia Villa's Sonnet 1 presents the elements of writing a poem. Although this is for a poem, it is closely related to the focus of the Formalist Approach. According to his poem, a good literary piece should have a rhythm. Another, it should contain rhyme and figurative language. Rhythm, rhyme, and figurative language alongside plot, characterization, imagery, symbolism, tone, and structure are the elements one needs to look into if using Formalism as an approach to literary criticism. Using these different elements of literature, students will focus on what is present within the text itself. Thus, close reading should be developed among the learners while using this approach.

Teaching the Formalist Approach to students, especially those in Junior High School, is helpful for them to understand the literary piece. The elements of prose and poetry are being discussed across grade level and this is helpful in teaching them the approach. Using a close reading activity would be of great help, where students will analyze a poem line by line while identifying the different literary devices used and discussing the effects of these devices on the poem. In addition, graphic organizers can help the students break down elements such as plot structure or character development. Essay writing can also be used where students are tasked to write a reflection using textual evidence and focused analysis.

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Anay

Sa lilim ng iyong luntiang kandungan,
Ay tila may lason ang hanging amihan,
Ang dangal na dati'y ginto kung turingan,
Ngayo'y nilalako sa bawat lansangan.

Hindi na dayuhan ang siyang kaaway,
Kundi ang sariling dugo na ang pumapatay,
Sa gitna ng gutom at luhanang nag-alay,
May iilang sadyang sa yaman ay hayok at sanay.

Masdan ang paligid, ang kalsadang luma,
Puno ng pangakong napako't naminsala,
Ang buwis ng bayan na dapat ay biyaya,
Naglahong parang bula sa bulsa ng mga banyaga.

Panahon na upang ang diwa ay magising,
Ang gapos ng takot ay ating durugin,
Hindi sapat ang luha at munting dalangin,
Kailangan ay gawang may tapat na mithiin.

Pag-ibig sa bayan huwag lang sa salita,
Ipakita sa gawa at sa bawat adhika,
Baguhin ang agos mali ay itama,
Upang ang bukas ay tunay na guminhawa.



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Kung Hindi Ka Pa Galit, Bakit?

Maraming katiwalian na ang nangyayari sa pamahalaan,
Kaban ng bayan kanilang pinagsasamantalahan,
Karamihan sa pulitiko'y 'di na dapat natin pagkatiwalaan,
Sapagkat tayong mga Pilipino ay kanilang pinagnanakawan.

Sa pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilihan sa merkado,
Hindi na makabili kahit na simpleng pangrekado,
Mga manggagawang Pilipino ay lubhang apektado,
Sigaw nilang lahat, pataasin kanilang sweldo.

Kailan wawakasan ang kahirapan at kagutuman?
Gayong ang pamahalaan mismo ang ating kalaban,
Sila lang din ang yumayaman at nagkakalaman ang tiyan,
Habang ang mamamayang Pilipino ay naghihintay sa patak ng ulan.

Pagdating sa proyekto ng ating gobyerno,
Hindi na nga maayos, hindi pa kongkreto,
Gaya na lamang ng kanilang proyektong pangbaha't delubyo
Tila parang bula, nauwi rin sa multo.

Maraming buhay ang nawala nang dahil sa baha,
Sa halip na tubig, umaagos sa kalsada'y luha,
Luha ng pamilyang tumatangis at naghihinagpis,
Hanggang kailan kaya ang Pilipinas magtitiis?

Mga pulitikong kurap, buwaya ,at kurakot,
Kami'y lalaban at hinding-hindi na matatakot,
Taas noo kaming titindig at magsasalita para sa tama,
Upang magandang kinabukasan aming matamasa.

Kung hindi ka pa rin galit, bakit?
Huminto ka muna at mag-isip saglit,
Talasan ang isip at higpitan ang kapit,
Imulat ang mata at huwag na huwag kang pipikit.



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Managing the Future: Graduates of Business Administration in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The rapid advance of artificial intelligence (AI) has reshaped the global business landscape, creating new opportunities and hurdles for organizations. From automated customer support to predictive analytics and digital marketing, AI now permeates nearly every business function. In this dynamic environment, Business Administration graduates play a pivotal role in driving innovation, guiding ethical decision-making, and ensuring that technology aligns with organizational and societal objectives. As emerging business leaders, they must cultivate the skills and mindset to excel in the AI era.

Business Administration graduates must adapt to rapid technological shifts. Conventional business methods fall short in a digital economy where organizations depend on data-driven strategies. Graduates should grasp how AI applications, such as machine learning, data analysis, and automation, reshape operations and influence decisions. This expertise enables sound judgment and effective collaboration with technology specialists.

Business Administration graduates also require strong leadership and communication skills. AI cannot replicate human creativity, empathy, or discernment. Effective leaders inspire teams, instill trust, and cultivate positive workplaces, especially as automation transforms roles. Blending technical acuity with empathetic leadership makes graduates indispensable assets.

Ethics remain crucial in the AI era. Graduates must ensure AI is applied conscientiously to prevent bias, safeguard privacy, and promote equitable employment. Ethical leadership demands transparency and a balance between profit and societal benefit, strengthening public trust and long-term success.

Entrepreneurship flourishes in the AI-driven marketplace. Graduates who master AI can seize emerging opportunities and craft innovative solutions. Leveraging AI enhances customer experience, streamlines workflows, and accelerates adaptation for lasting success.

Continuous learning is essential for staying relevant. As AI advances, graduates must pursue ongoing education through seminars and training to stay ahead. Flexibility and

receptiveness to change are vital qualities for tomorrow's leaders.

The era of artificial intelligence brings both promise and responsibility for Business Administration graduates. To prosper in this evolving landscape, they must unite technical proficiency with leadership, ethical vigilance, creativity, and adaptability. AI may redefine industries and reshape business practices, but human strengths and values remain indispensable. By championing innovation and upholding ethical, people-first leadership, graduates can confidently shape the future and advance both organizations and society.

Another important responsibility of Business Administration graduate is fostering collaboration between humans and artificial intelligence. Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for human labor, graduates should recognize it as a tool that enhances productivity and efficiency. By encouraging teamwork between employees and intelligent systems, organizations can improve performance while preserving the value of human insight and innovation. This balanced approach promotes sustainable growth and strengthens workplace morale.

Globalization and digital transformation have also increased competition among businesses. In response, Business Administration graduates must develop strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities to remain competitive in international markets. AI provides businesses with real-time information and predictive capabilities, enabling faster and more accurate decision-making. Graduates who can effectively interpret data and transform insights into practical strategies will have a significant advantage in leading organizations toward success.

Furthermore, Business Administration graduates have the opportunity to contribute to social and economic development through responsible innovation. By using AI to improve services, create employment opportunities, and address societal challenges, they can help build more inclusive and sustainable communities. Their role extends beyond achieving business profitability; they must also ensure that technological advancement benefits people and promotes long-term progress. In this way, graduates become not only future managers but also responsible leaders shaping a better society.



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Ang Batang Siya Sa Loob Ng Kanyang Isipan

Tahimik ang kwarto. Tanging tunog ng bentilador at mahinang paghinga lamang ni Marco ang maririnig. Nakaupo siya sa gilid ng kama, nakayuko, hawak ang noo na para bang doon niya gustong pigilan ang mga iniisip.

“Grabe... hindi na naman tumitigil,” bulong niya sa sarili.

Sanay si Marco na kausap ang sarili. Bilang nag-iisang anak, natuto siyang tumayo mag-isa. May mga pangarap siyang gustong maabot, maging matagumpay, may mapatunayan.

Ginagawa naman niya ang lahat.

Isa siyang lider, mamamahayag sa paaralan, kalahok sa mga patimpalak sa sining, pagandahan, at patalinuhan. Aktibo rin siyang volunteer sa isang foundation at may boses para sa kalidad ng edukasyon, gender development, at mental health awareness.

Pero bakit parang kulang pa rin?

“Anong kulang sa’kin?” tanong niya sa sarili. “Ginagawa ko naman lahat.”

Napapikit siya. At sa gitna ng katahimikan, may isang pamilyar na boses ang sumingit.

“Ang seryoso mo naman.”

Napadilat si Marco. Sa harap niya, nakatayo ang isang batang lalaki, masayahin, simple, at walang iniintindi.

Siya iyon. Noong bata pa siya.

“Totoo ba itong nakikita ko?” tanong niya.

Ngumiti ang bata at umupo sa tabi niya. “Oo. Pero parang hindi ikaw ‘yan ngayon.”

Napangiti si Marco, pero may halong pait. “Nagbago lang.”

“Bakit parang ang bigat ng nararamdaman mo?”

“Kasi natutunan kong matalo,” sagot niya. “Hindi pala laging panalo. Hindi pala sapat na magsipag ka lang.”

“Eh di subukan mo ulit,” sagot ng bata.

Napatawa si Marco. “Kung gano’n lang sana kadali.”

“Hindi naman talaga madali,” sagot ng bata. “Pero hindi rin imposible.”

“Dati,” dagdag ng bata, “natutuwa ka na sa simpleng bagay, makapaglaro, makapagsulat, makapagdrawing. Hindi mo iniisip kung magaling ka ba o hindi.”

Napayuko si Marco. “Ngayon kasi parang kailangan ko nang patunayan lahat.”

“Kanino?”

“Sa kanila. Sa sarili ko.”

“Paano kung hindi mo kailangang patunayan? Paano kung kailangan mo lang ipagpatuloy?”

Napatingin si Marco.

Sa isang sulok ng kwarto, nakapatong ang kanyang mga korona, sash, medalya, at certificate mula sa mga sinalihang kompetisyon. Katabi nito ang mga ipininta niya at lumang portfolio na puno ng artikulo, tula, at mga ideyang minsan niyang pinangarap ilathala.

Lumapit siya sa isang painting ng papalubog na araw.

“Naalala mo ‘yan?” tanong ng bata.

“Oo,” sagot ni Marco. “Ginawa ko ‘yan kasi gusto ko lang.”

“Masaya ka noon, ‘di ba?”

“Oo.”

“Anong nagbago?”

“Siguro naging masyado akong seryoso.”

Ngumiti ang bata. “Pwede ka namang mangarap nang hindi mo sinasaktan ang sarili mo.”

Kinabukasan, maagang nagising si Marco sa tunog ng kalderong kumakalampag sa kusina. Naamoy niya ang pritong itlog at sinangag.

“Gising na, anak!” tawag ng kanyang ina.

Lumabas siya at nakita ang kanyang inang naghahain ng pagkain.

“Ma, lagi po kayong maagang gumigising.”

Ngumiti ito. “Tapnu adda karga tiyan mo nga agadal.”

“Hindi po ba kayo napapagod?”

“Apay kuma, maymaysam met isunga madi kami mabanbannog.”

Natigilan si Marco.

Sa labas naman, naroon ang kanyang ama na nag-iigib ng tubig.

“Pa,” tawag niya, “siyak agbagkat’en.”

“Siyak’on ta nalag-an lang met,” sagot nito. “Inka mangan’en tapnu madi ka maudi mapan eskuwelaan.”

Sa likod ng simpleng salitang iyon ay may pagmamahal na hindi kailangang ipaliwanag.

“Marco, tapos mo na yung proposal?”

“Marco, ikaw ang magco-cover ng event!”

“Marco, ikaw ang ilalaban sa slogan making!”

Ngumiti siya at tumango.

Sa gitna ng ingay, huminto siya sandali at pinagmasdan ang paligid, ang mga kaklaseng nagtatawanan, ang gurong may ikinukuwento, at ang araw na sumisilip sa bintana.

“Ang ganda pala ng araw,” bulong niya.

“Ha?” tanong ng kaibigan niya.

“Wala,” sagot niya habang nakangiti.

At sa unang pagkakataon, hindi niya hinahabol ang oras, pinapakinggan niya ito.

Pagsapit ng gabi, tahimik ulit ang kwarto.

“Hindi nawawala ang problema,” sabi ng batang siya. “Pero pwede mong baguhin kung paano mo siya tinitingnan.”

“Paano?”

“Hanapin mo kung ano pa ang maganda.”

“Sa gitna ng gulo?”

“Lalo na sa gitna ng gulo.”

“Kapag pagod ka,” dagdag ng bata, “ibig sabihin may ginagawa kang mahalaga. Kapag natatakot ka, ibig sabihin may bagay kang pinapahalagahan.”

“Hindi mo kasi pinapakinggan ang sarili mo.”

“Paano kung bumalik ulit yung bigat?”

“Eh di alalahanin mo kung gaano ka na kalayo.”

Lumipas ang mga araw at unti-unting natuto si Marco.

Sa umaga, hindi na lang niya nakikita ang almusal kundi ang pag-aalaga ng kanyang ina. Sa mainit na tubig, nakikita niya ang sakripisyo ng kanyang ama. Sa bawat palakpak, hindi na lang niya hinahanap ang pagkilala kundi ang saya sa ginagawa niya.

Sa bawat pagsusulat niya, hindi na lang niya iniisip kung magaling ba ito, iniisip niya kung totoo ba ito.

Sa bawat pagtulong niya, hindi na lang niya iniisip ang epekto, nararamdaman niya ang koneksyon.

Isang araw, habang nagvo-volunteer siya sa Project Aklat, may batang lumapit sa kanya.

"Kuya, salamat po."

"Para saan?" tanong ni Marco.

"Dahil tinuruan niyo po ako. Gusto ko na pong mag-aral lalo."

Ngumiti si Marco.

"Kahit maliit na hakbang, mahalaga 'yan."

"Katulad po ninyo?" tanong ng bata.

"Katulad natin," sagot niya.

At sa simpleng usapang iyon, may naitanim na pag-asa—hindi lang sa bata kundi pati sa kanya.

Isang gabi, sa ilalim ng buwan, kinausap niya ang sarili.

"May mga panahong nawala ako. Sa dami ng roles na ginampanan ko, leader, writer, volunteer, nakalimutan ko kung sino ako."

"Akala ko kailangan kong maging perpekto. Kailangan kong patunayan ang sarili ko."

Huminga siya nang malalim.

"Pero natutunan ko na ang buhay ay hindi tungkol sa pagiging sapat sa paningin ng iba."

Sagot ng batang siya, "Tungkol ito sa pagpapahalaga sa sarili mo, sa mga taong nagmamahal sa'yo, at sa maliliit na bagay na nakakalimutan mong pansinin."

"May mga umagang may naghahanda ng pagkain para sa'yo. May mga kamay na tahimik na nag-aalaga. May mga taong naniniwala sa'yo kahit hindi mo na kayang paniwalaan ang sarili mo."

"Kung pagod ka, magpahinga ka. Kung natatakot ka, pumikit ka. Kung naliligaw ka, okay lang. Dahil minsan, doon mo makikita kung gaano kaganda ang daan pabalik."

"Tuloy lang."

At sa pagkakataong iyon, hindi lang siya naniwala, natuto siyang mabuhay.

Sa bawat araw na pinipili niyang bumangon, hindi man perpekto pero totoo, unti-unti niyang napapatunayan na ang buhay, sa kabila ng bigat, ay nananatiling maganda para sa mga handang makakita nito.



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Reading Beyond the Answer: My Turn Toward Deconstruction

Before I learned about deconstruction, I thought that reading a book meant finding the answer, and that was it. I believed there was one meaning to the story, and my job was to uncover it. Then I encountered deconstruction linked to the ideas of Jacques Derrida, and it transformed how I think. It revealed that a text's meaning is not set in stone. Instead, meaning shifts based on what we notice, what we question, and even what the text itself seems unsure about.

Deconstruction is not about tearing a text apart, contrary to what the name suggests. It is a way of reading that uncovers contradictions, gaps, and unstated assumptions within the text. It poses uncomfortable questions: What does the text say directly? What does it leave out? What ideas does it quietly rely on? When I began reading this way, I realized texts are far more complicated than they first appear and those complications are what make them truly fascinating.

This approach has slowed me down as a reader. Instead of rushing to summarize a story, I now pay close attention to how words work. I notice binary oppositions like strong versus weak or male versus female, and how texts sometimes blur them for a powerful effect. Reading becomes a conversation with the text, not a test. It feels active and thoughtful.

For, instance, the Ilocano epic Biag ni Lam-ang, a story many of us in the Philippines know from childhood. Lam-ang embodies the "strong" male hero, swimming rivers at birth and slaying rivals through superhuman feats. However, the text blurs this strength with vulnerability, his death by giant fish exposes his limits, and his revival depends on his mother's ingenuity and a woman's ritual diver retrieving his bones. What assumptions about gender and power does the epic hide? Why does "strength" require communal, feminine intervention? Deconstruction invites us to question these gaps, revealing how the story resists its own heroic binaries.

In the classroom, this method proves invaluable. It encourages students to ask questions rather than memorize. Instead of probing what the author meant, I ask what the text is doing, what it hides, and whose voices it silences. This sparks lively discussions and gives students space to interpret without fear of being "wrong."

For me, deconstruction does not dismiss meaning altogether. It keeps me curious about it. That curiosity makes teaching and reading feel more alive, more human, like I am truly engaging with the text. Deconstruction opens up reading in endlessly interesting ways.



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A Fight for a Better Life

In a small shanty, they called home
Lived a little boy celled in a room
Fed so little by his mother at noon
And abused by everyone at dawn

Every action against him brings pain
But he owns it as his sin
Keeping smiles even if he is chained
Physical, emotional and sexual abused keep him in vain

When his body cannot endure
He closed his eyes for all the torture
Wishing that this will end soon
And his soul will be at peace for sure

But God has a different plan for him to fly
When he opens his eyes, he sees a clear sky
A bit of hope reflects on his cry
A freedom he owes in every sigh

A lady in red was in sight
Looking at him with a smile so bright
She became her hero with so much might
And give him a dream to fight

And now, that little boy is already a man
Doing everything that he can
Promised to be a law enforcer as long as he can
And prevent the criminal act of every lawless man.



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Reasons Behind

Why do people commit crime?

A question that pauses time

Notable people have reached their prime

In giving answers that cost dime

Everyone has their reasons behind

Some have been treacherously blind

On the concept of being the mastermind

Pushing people to embrace and act with maligned

Some are involved in the crime of passion

Putting in mind that killing is the only solution

To end the miseries brought by their emotions

And be free from any feelings of depression

Some commits crime due to hedonism

Perpetrating rape, murder and arson are their naturalism

Embracing evil as their existentialism

Knowing that it is one of the acts of abnormalism

Most common reason of all times

It is poverty that pushes them to do crime

To survive every day and feed their hungry spare tire

And be at ease just one more time

Why do people commit crime?

Answers are laid down every time

Those that we can and can't understand at times

But in the end, we will be judged in a perfect time.



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Dangers Brought by using AI

Can the truth survive in an era where AI can effortlessly impersonate anyone to spread and making false information? Artificial Intelligence, in short AI, has been taking over our social media in this era, but where and when are we going to draw the line? When are we going to see that AI can be used to impersonate people and might be used to steal people's identities to spread false information? By what means can we identify the facts? This is particularly true for the elderly, who are often more trusting, especially when they see a familiar face, whether it belongs to a celebrity or an ordinary person. Also, to the millennials who are easily persuaded by AI-generated information posted on various social media platforms.

In the digital age, technology is part of our daily lives. However, then suddenly, artificial intelligence (AI) emerged. At first, AI was used as an assistant to provide in-depth explanations of what students were looking for, but some apps use AI to create videos or clips using people's faces. What started as a joke is now used to create videos that may spread false information. It is not far in the future that AI may be used to impersonate different individuals to fool and gain money from older populations, as they are more likely to believe everything they see on social media. AI platforms can also be used to create videos about medicines that, instead of helping individuals be informed about different diseases, spread false information about medicines, especially herbal medicines. In this generation, AI has become increasingly alarming. There was even a post circulating on social media featuring an image claiming that there would be no power supply for three months. However, this is entirely false, it was nothing more than AI-generated content. Countless people fell for the hoax, but others remained skeptical and recognized right away that it was AI-generated.

To conclude, users must be observant on social media due to the spread of fake news. Some people who can easily distinguish AI from real videos, consisting of real people, can help individuals properly distinguish between Artificial intelligence and real videos. The public must be informed about how to avoid being easily fooled by videos created by these platforms, to avoid scams and false information. There are so many programs and campaigns that can help individuals identify AI-generated false content and verify facts to separate truth from misinformation.

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The “I”(s) of the Glitches of this Spectrum

**Insecurities. Insults. Irritations. Imperfections. Incapability.
Influenced. Incorrect. Important.**

Each of us has INSECURITIES about everything we do. About everything we look like. About everything that makes us who we are?

Every one of us received INSULTS from this close-minded society. We all suffered from the distaste of the majority, for we are different, which makes us the enemy.

Each of us controls our IRRITATION toward this society. Because if we let it out, people will wrong us. It will give them more leverage to disregard our feelings and justify their wrong actions.

Every one of us hides our IMPERFECTIONS from the eyes of the world. We hide them because we are scared of being judged. Because we know that this world will not understand. Every one of us is ashamed of our INCAPABILITIES, for we know that this will make the world turn its back and leave us behind. For this will give them more excuse to abandon us.

Every one of us is easily INFLUENCED by the hurtful words of the people of this judgmental community. It gives us so much pain that it changes our view of ourselves.

To those of us who are not aware, to those changed by this society, hear this and remember this always. They are INCORRECT.

To those of us whose mindset degrades themselves, you are INCORRECT.

To those whose confidence is dimmed by this hurtful society, hear this: You are IMPORTANT, and no one has anything to say about that. No one has any rights to disrespect that.

Every insecurity you have, you will overcome someday, and be the best version of you.
Every insult they have said is just an unbiased opinion of their jealousy.



Echoes of Expression

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Every irritation you have is not wrong; however, do not let it devour you. You do not have to change for those who do not appreciate your worth.

Every imperfection you have is not bad or something to be ashamed of. You are imperfect; that is why you improve.

You gain what no one else could because you are not perfect. You try and try and try until you learn how to do things properly because you have such incapability.

You do not need to be influenced by people around you. You are alright the way you are, and you do not need their opinions to know how worthy you are.

The society is wrong to judge our personality, capabilities, and worth.

They are incorrect for saying we are not welcome in this world.

You are important simply because you are who YOU ARE.

You are meant to be BEAUTIFUL, not PERFECT.



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Kaarawan

Si Rey ay isang tahimik na binata na hindi mahilig pumunta sa kahit saan mang lugar na maraming tao. Mas gusto niyang manatili sa kanilang bahay kaysa makisalamuha sa maraming tao. Habang papalapit ang kaniyang kaarawan, abala ang kaniyang pamilya sa paghahanda ng sorpresa para sa kaniya. Masayang nag-aayos ang kaniyang ina at mga kapatid, ngunit si Rey ay hindi masaya. Ayaw niyang magdiwang dahil pakiramdam niya ay walang espesyal sa kaniyang kaarawan. Kada taon ay nagmumukmok lamang siya sa kaniyang kwarto habang naglalaro ng mobile legends at hinihintay na matapos ang araw.

Noong nakaraang taon kasi, walang dumating sa mga inanyayahan niyang kaibigan dahil abala ang mga ito sa kani-kanilang gawain. Labis siyang nasaktan at nadismaya noon dahil inakala niyang magiging masaya ang kaniyang kaarawan. Mula noon, mas nawalan siya ng gana sa pagdiriwang. Para kay Rey, mas mabuting lumipas na lamang ang isang buong araw nang tahimik kaysa umasa at muling masaktan.

Dumating ang kaniyang kaarawan. Tahimik siyang nakaupo sa kanilang bakuran habang pinagmamasdan ang langit at malamig na simoy ng hangin. Habang iniisip niya kung gaano kabilis lumipas ang panahon, maya-maya ay lumapit ang kaniyang ina at iniabot ang isang keyk na may disenyong mobile legend at kandila. Kahit simple lamang iyon, makikita sa mukha ng kaniyang ina ang pagmamahal at pag-aalala para sa kaniya.

"Hindi naman kailangang maging engrande o maraming tao ang kaarawan," sabi ng kaniyang ina. "Ang mahalaga, kasama mo ang mga tunay na nagmamahal sa iyo."

Napangiti si Rey sa unang pagkakataon noong araw na iyon. Unti-unti niyang naunawaan na ang tunay na saya ng kaarawan ay hindi nasusukat sa dami ng handa, regalo, o bisita, kundi sa pagmamahal at presensya ng pamilya. Doon niya napagtanto na kahit simple lamang ang selebrasyon, sapat na iyon basta kasama ang mga taong tunay na nagmamahal sa kaniya. Mula noon, hindi na niya muling kinatakutan ang pagdating ng kaniyang kaarawan.



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What the Mountains Teach About Leadership

There are lessons about leadership that cannot be learned inside conference halls, government offices, or thick academic books alone. Some are learned quietly in the mountains, where roads are long, resources are few, and communities survive not because systems are perfect, but because people choose to carry one another through hardship.

In the highlands, leadership has always meant more than authority. It is not merely the ability to command, to legislate, or to occupy a position. Leadership is measured by presence: who arrives when the community is in need, who listens during conflict, who remains beside the people even when there is little recognition to gain from doing so.

The mountains teach patience. Nothing in the highlands is rushed. Terraces are not built in a season, and trust is not earned in a day. In many Indigenous communities, decisions are shaped through dialogue, respect for elders, and consideration for collective welfare. Leadership is rarely viewed as the voice above the people, but rather as a responsibility carried with the people.

Modern governance often celebrates visibility, titles, speeches, public displays of power. However, in many rural communities, the most respected leaders are not always the loudest. They are the ones who remain steady in the face of uncertainty. They understand that governance is not only about policy implementation or political performance, but about preserving relationships within the community.

The mountains also teach something about humility. Nature itself reminds people that no individual stands above the land that sustains them. The terraces carved by earlier generations were not monuments to personal ambition, but symbols of collective labor and shared survival. In many ways, they reflect a form of leadership rooted in cooperation rather than competition.

Today, governance grows increasingly complex. Technology accelerates communication, political discourse becomes more divided, and leadership is often reduced to popularity and spectacle. However, the values quietly preserved in Indigenous communities continue to offer important lessons: listening before deciding, resolving conflict without immediately creating division, and recognizing that leadership without cultural understanding easily loses its connection to the people it claims to serve.

The mountains do not produce perfect leaders. No community does. However, they remind us that leadership becomes more meaningful when it is grounded in responsibility, shared identity, and service rather than personal power.

Perhaps this is what the mountains have always tried to teach: that leadership is strongest not when one stands above the people, but when one remains among them.



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On Teaching the Art of Welcome

To welcome is to open space
For strangers met with careful grace;
A practiced smile, a steady tone,
That makes another feel at home.

Yet this is not so simply taught
It must be lived, and deeply wrought;
For warmth that's forced will always fade,
A hollow gesture, poorly made.

A teacher shows, through act and way,
How presence shapes what words may say;
How every glance, each movement small,
Can build a bridge or none at all.

And so, they learn, through time and trial,
The truth behind the practiced smile
That welcome is not just a role,
But something carried in the soul.



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Before the Gavel, There Was the Gong

In the quiet fold of mountain lands,
Where terraces rise from careful hands,
Leadership was never born from pride,
But from the people standing side by side.

Before the papers, seals, and laws,
Before the gavels and applause,
The elders gathered, calm and wise,
Reading truth through human eyes.

No voice was greater than the rest,
For wisdom came through shared request.
Each concern was slowly heard,
Not hurried by a single word.

The strength of one was strength of all,
In every harvest, feast, and call.
For when one family bore the strain,
The community carried part of the pain.

In moments conflict crossed the land,
Peace was sought with careful hand.
Not to conquer, shame, or divide,
But to restore what stood beside.

The mountains taught the people this:
Leadership is not control nor bliss.
It is patience seated by the fire,
Listening before speaking higher.

It lives within remembered names,
Inherited stories, rituals, and claims.



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Within the gong's enduring sound,
And in the soil beneath the ground.

Today the world moves hard and fast,
Yet still the old ways quietly last.
For culture is not left behind,
When it continues shaping heart and mind.

And though new systems now arise,
True leadership in Ifugao still lies
In respect deeply given, not demanded
In unity carried from hand to hand
From elder hands to younger years,
Through shared labor, hopes, and fears.

For governance is strongest still
When rooted in the people's will.
And in the highlands, old yet true,
Leadership begins with "we," not "you."



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In the Glow of Real-Time: A Digital Chronicle of Academic Growth

Grades are an essential tool for measuring student progress and academic performance. They help learners monitor their understanding of specific subject matter and identify areas that need improvement. For teachers, grades serve as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction and determining whether students have truly grasped the lessons being discussed.

In many ways, grades also function as motivation. They encourage students to learn, strive harder, and exert extra effort in their studies. High grades are often associated with academic honors and awards, and in some cases, companies use them as references in the hiring process. Behind every grade lies skills, knowledge, and effort. Thus, students are reminded that good grades should be accompanied by genuine competence—the ability to apply what they have learned. Ultimately, high grades result from hard work, discipline, and perseverance.

Traditionally, students only receive their grades after teachers compute their midterm and final evaluations. This delayed feedback system presents a significant concern in education, particularly in the Philippines. At the end of the semester, misunderstandings often arise. Some students blame teachers for low grades, labeling them as either “strict graders” or “lenient graders,” rather than understanding the actual basis of assessment.

This situation highlights the need for transparency in grade computation. Without clear and continuous feedback, misunderstandings between teachers and students can easily develop. Students also lack the opportunity to immediately reflect on their performance and correct their mistakes while the learning process is still ongoing.

A real-time grading and monitoring system offer a solution to this dilemma. Through a learning management system, such as digital platforms like Canva or similar educational tools, students can track their academic standing in real time. Every activity and assessment are guided by clear rubrics, making grading more objective and transparent. This system

helps eliminate the misconception that teachers can arbitrarily change grades, thereby strengthening integrity, accountability, and trust between teachers, students, and even parents.

With real-time access, students can continuously evaluate their performance and take immediate action to improve. Parents, on the other hand, can monitor their children's academic progress without physically going to school. By simply creating an account with a username and password, they can stay informed and provide support when needed.

In today's information technology era, education must maximize the use of digital tools to enhance learning and improve the quality of life. A real-time grading system prepares students to become more competitive, not only in academic performance but also in the knowledge and skills essential for the future.

However, this system also has its disadvantages. Constant visibility of grades may cause anxiety among students, as they are repeatedly exposed to their performance after every assessment. Teachers, likewise, may feel additional pressure as they are required to evaluate outputs and assign grades promptly, while providing immediate feedback.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of transparency, accountability, and continuous learning outweigh the drawbacks. In the end, real-time grade monitoring encourages a more honest, responsible, and growth-oriented educational environment, one where learning is not just about numbers, but about progress, understanding, and personal development.

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Pili-Pinas

Hanggang kailan pipiliin ang Perlas ng Silangan,
Kung sa dusa at hirap ay hindi mapakawalan?
Nakatali, nakaposas sa dambuhalang suliranin,
May bukas pa kaya tayong lilingunin?

Tunay nga bang hindi magkalaban ang pula at dilaw,
O sadyang sa iisang entablado lang sila sumasayaw?
Habang ang Kanluran at Silangan ay nagbabakbakan,
Ang bayan nating gipit ang siyang laging naiiwan.

Gobyernong nakaluklok, puno ng napapawing pangako,
Mga hinalal na pinuno, naging maduming "trapo."
Kawawang sambayanan, nagdurusa't naghihingalo,
Ang dating masagana, ngayo'y tila naglaho.

Uhaw ang bawat isa sa tapat na pamumuno,
Gutom ang taumbayan sa gobyernong may puso.
Nasaan ang malasakit? Kahit anino'y 'di mahagilap,
Magpakatao naman kayo sa gitna ng aming hirap.

Mga buwayang ganid, sa kaban ng bayan ay nasilaw,
Korapsyon at pagnanakaw ang sa inyo ay nangingibabaw.
Bigyang-liwanag ang bayang lugmok sa kapanglawan,
Tugunin ang pagsamo ng mga Pilipinong pinagkaitan.

"Ikulong ang kurakot!" ang sigaw na umaalingawngaw,
Laban sa baluktot na sistemang sa atin ay tumutunaw.
Tayo na't bumoses, itakwil ang sindak at takot,
Panagutin ang mga buwayang sa bayan ay nanonoot!

Mga taong nakahubad na itinuring na kriminal,
Habang mga nakabarong ay patuloy na namomolitikal;
Panahon na upang maging mulat sa paghalal,
Palitan ang mga lider na nagpapaepal.



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The Span of Our Tomorrow

For years we lived like Cinderella's tale,
With eyes forever cast upon the sky.
If clouds grew dark and winds began to wail,
We knew our time of passage had gone by.

Like midnight's strike that turns the coach to clay,
The rising river took our only ride,
And stranded travelers had no choice but stay,
And seek a stranger's hearth on either side.

We watched the clock with anxious, hurried hearts,
Afraid the heavy rains would start to pour.
Before the sudden, swelling water starts,
We had to make it to the other shore.

For once the wooden boats were tied and bound,
And currents swept the riverbed below,
No safe return or passage could be found,
And home became a place we could not go.

We'd knock on doors of houses near the bank,
To beg for shelter from the stormy night,
With quiet prayers and words of humble thank,
To wait together for the morning light.

A restless sleep on unfamiliar floors,
While just across the wild, churning foam,
Behind the barrier of the river's roars,
Sat our own beds, our families, and home.

But now that frantic, daily rush is dead,
The ticking clock of rain has lost its power.
We walk with steady steps and peaceful head,
No longer haunted by the midnight hour.

The concrete arch stands solid in the rain,
A soaring path that open sky invites,
And we will never have to search in vain
For shelter in the dark, storm-broken nights.

Yet more than safety rises from the stone,
A greater promise stretches far and wide.
The seeds of hope that we have slowly sown
Now find a path across the rushing tide.

This bridge is where our new horizons start,
A monument to dreams that won't decay,
Connecting not just land, but heart to heart,
And lighting up a prosperous pathway.

The mountain crops can travel to the plains,
And tourism can bloom along the crest.
No longer bound by isolation's chains,
Our quiet hills are open to the west.

The students walk with visions in their eyes,
The merchants find their fortunes in the town,
As opportunities begin to rise,
And age-old barriers are broken down.

It stands as proof of what our hands can build,
A shining testament of what can be
A golden promise waiting, now fulfilled,
That brings wealth, growth, and proud security.

No longer defined by what we used to lack,
We watch the future unfold, bright and grand,
With no more stormy floods to hold us back,
And prosperity sweeping through our land.

So, let the heavy rain clouds gather deep,
And let the Amburayan rise and swell.
The promises of home we now can keep,
For we have finally broken under's spell.

No longer rushing, fearful of the tide,
We cross the span whenever we may roam,
Secure to know that on the other side,
The bridge is open, and it leads us home.



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**The Strategic Roadmap of Information Systems Strategies,
Management, and Acquisition**

Today, Information Systems (IS) are not just back-office tools, they are at the heart of what makes modern businesses run efficiently and stand out from the competition. When used strategically, IS can drive innovation, streamline operations, and help organizations adapt to new business models. That is where Information Systems Strategy, Management, and Acquisition come in: this approach gives companies a clear framework for making sure every tech investment supports real business goals.



A good IS strategy always starts with the business in mind, not just the technology. It lays out how IT resources will help achieve the company's big-picture objectives. The key here is aligning IT plans directly with the company's main strategy, so every IS decision is purposefully moving the business forward.

However, having a strategy is not enough. Effective IS management is what brings that strategy to life by making sure the right technology, people, and processes are in place. This requires strong leadership, clear guidelines, and best practices to maximize value and keep risks under control. When a business identifies the need for a new information system, it has to decide how to get the right solution. There are three main ways to go about this, each with its own pros and cons:

1. Building the system in-house (Internal Development) is best when a company needs something highly customized that gives it a unique edge. While this offers total control, it can be expensive, time-consuming, and risky if the project grows too large or complex.
2. Buying commercial software (External Sourcing) is usually quicker and less risky. Off-the-shelf products like ERP or CRM systems come with vendor support and proven reliability, but may offer less flexibility and require the business to adjust its processes to fit the software.
3. Outsourcing works well for functions that are not central to the business. It can lower costs and provide access to specialized expertise, but it can also mean less control over data and a risk of becoming dependent on the vendor. Careful management of service agreements is essential here.

Choosing the best way to acquire a new system means balancing cost, speed, and the need for customization. By combining a smart IS strategy, proactive management, and thoughtful acquisition decisions, businesses can make sure their technology investments truly add value and support sustainable success in today's digital world.



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AI in Research Education

In quiet rooms where questions and curiosity grow,
A digital light begins to show and glow,
An AI voice whisper, both calm and fast,
Helping learners and teachers to think and ask.

It opens doors to unknown themes,
And breaks apart the hardest dreams.
A guide through pages dense and long,
Where thoughts once felt too wide, too strong.

It helps the student start to see
New paths in vast complexity.
From vague ideas to clearer ground,
Where the research purpose can be found.

It sorts the noise of endless streams,
And shapes the fragments into themes.
Summaries rise from heavy text,
What comes before, what comes next.

It teaches how to structure thought,
The kind of skill that must be taught.
Introduction, methods, methodology to be framed,
A map for knowledge and understanding to its name.

But still it speaks with careful tone,
Reminding learners to think alone.
For truth is built by human mind and hand,
Not only code can understand.

It cannot feel the weight of doubt,
Nor what real struggle is all about.
So, minds must test what it provides,
And walk where human reason guides.



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In every query, every line,
A chance for intellect to shine.
Not blind dependence, fast and free,
But guided through one's curiosity.

For learning grows when tools are used
By minds awake, not ones confused.
AI may light the path ahead,
But students choose the words unsaid.

So, in this age of code and art,
Let wisdom be the central part.
AI may help the search begin
But truth is what we build within.



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Sa Likod ng Nakikita at Nababasa

Sa bawat naririnig, nakikita, at nababasa,
Ano ba sa mga ito ang tunay talaga?
Paano matutukoy ang peke sa tama?
Kaya mo ba, bilang isang madla?

Isang click lang ay pwedeng kumalat,
Sa social media, fake news ay laganap.
Pwedeng mapaniwala sa mga hindi dapat,
Kaya't kailangan maging mapanuri ang lahat.

Kahit sino ay pwedeng mabiktima,
Sa bawat nababasa ay mag-isip muna.
Totoo ba ito o isa lamang haka-haka?
Mag-fact-check upang hindi basta mapaniwala.

Maging responsable sa paggamit ng social media,
Huwag basta-basta naniniwala.
Mag-isip bago humusga,
Upang ang fake news ay maiwasan na.

Isang aral sa bawat tao,
Huwag basta maniwala, maging alerto.
Maging matalino,
Upang hindi maloko.

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Divulge Now or Maybe Later

I saw myself languishing, forced to pretend,
Thinking I bore a Hercules knot inside.
I long to hold back; to stop is my intent,
For letting go is an uphill, painful ride.

But denial alone is never enough,
Closed eyes still see clasped hands in the field.
Two swans dancing through moments soft and rough,
And doves in the air refuse to conceal.

I am restless within this fleeting hour,
Unable to imagine confession.
Yet your scent leaves me grateful for its power;
May this enamored heart earn your impression?

Would you smile if I spoke honestly to thee?
Or should I wait, restrained and patiently?

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Saan Aabot ang Bente Pesos Mo?

Sa ating mga iginagalang na panauhin, at sa iba pang saksi na naririto, pagbati ng magandang araw sa ating lahat! halina't balikan natin ang ilang nakaraan, halina't sabay-sabay tayong masaknan.

“Saan aabot ang 20 pesos mo? ”

Isang linyang pinasikat ng isang kumpanya ng ice cream dito sa Pilipinas taong 2010. Makalipas ang labindalawang taon, saan na nga ba aabot ang 20 pesos natin? Na dati'y papel na ating tinutupi pero ngayo'y bilog na ring metal na kumakalansing.

“Sa abot kayang halaga”

Gasgas na linya upang makabenta, meron pa rin bang matatawag na abot kayang halaga? Siguro meron pa, subalit naka-tiad na.

Ilan lamang ito sa mga reyalisasyon na aking naisip habang hinahabi ang aking ideya bilang paghahanda sa araw na ito. Ang pagtaas ng presyo ng mga produkto at serbisyo sa isang partikular na panahon o oras ay tinatawag na inflation. Batid nating lahat na mayroong pagkakautang ang Pilipinas sa World Bank Organization, at ayon pinakabagong ulat ng Kawanihan ng Inatang-Yaman o Bureau of Treasury ay umabot na sa Php 18.16 trillion ang pagkakautang ng bansa.

Maaring minsa'y ating naiisip na, bakit hindi kaya gumawa o mag-imprenta ng maraming pera ang Pilipinas upang mabayaran ang ating pagkakautang?

Hindi natin maaring gawin ito sapagkat, ang utang na binabayaran natin ay dolyares at hindi peso. Sa madaling salita, kung gagawa ng maraming pera ang ating bansa ay hindi

natin ito maaring direktang ibayad sa World Bank, kung kaya't dadami lamang ang suplay ng salapi na nasa sirkulasyon ng ating ekonomiya. Ito ang pangunahing dahilan ng inflation na ating kinakaharap.

Samantala, taong 2018 ay nadapa tayong lahat sa riles ng rumaragasang tren matapos maisabatas ang Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law o TRAIN Law. Dito nagsimulang tumaas ang mga bilingin matapos patawan ng mas mataas na buwis ang mga produktong petrolyo, sigarilyo at asukal na nagpalala bigla ng inflation rate ng bansa.

Ang patuloy na pagbaba ng peso kontra dolyar ay isa ring epekto ng inflation sa purchasing power ng ating salapi. Kung kaya naman wag basta maniniwala dun sa nagsabi na "The peso is weak not because it's weak: Dollar is just strong"

Sa kalagayan ng bansa ngayon, nararapat lamang matuto ang bawat isa kung paano maging wais sa buhay sa paraang hindi nanlalamang sa kapwa. Gamitin natin ang perang meron tayo sa bagay na may higit kapakinabangan. Matuto sana nating alamin ang pagkakaiba ng luho at pangangailangan.

Maaring sa mga oras na ito ay hindi natin batid ang mga negatibong epekto ng inflation dahil nakalahad ang ating mga palad sa ating mga magulang, subalit darating ang panahon na tayo na mismo ang magtratrabaho at malalaman natin ang halaga ng bawat piso na meron ang ating bulsa.

Hindi ako nakatayo rito sa harapan upang magpakadalubhasa ukol sa usaping inflation, ang aking mga binaggit na solusyon ay nasa perspektibo kung paano lamang natin mababawasan ang negatibong epekto ng inflation sa ating pang-araw araw na pamumuhay at hindi para tuwirang sugpuin ito. Hindi sapat ang aking kaalaman para usigin pa ng husto ang usaping ito at ito ay ipapaubaya ko na sa mga eksperto.

Bilang pagtatapos, nais ko lamang ipaalala sa ating lahat na hindi naman required bumili sa shopee tuwing may free shipping fee. Mga kapwa ko estudyante, maging wais at matalino, ito ang pinakasimpleng paraan natin upang malabanan ang inflation sa kasalukuyan nating estado.

Muli, magandang araw sa ating lahat. Maraming Salamat po!



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Ang Bukal na Umagos sa Dagat

Isang manlalakbay na magiting
Umaagos nang matiwasay
Binibigyang-kulay ang nadadaanang buhay
Malaya, bukas, at kaaya-aya
Ang uhaw na lupa'y binibigyang-buhay niya.

Ang bawat pag-agos, katumbas ay buhay na payapa
Ang bawat dantay sa lupa ay butil na biyaya
Walang pait, walang lason, tanging lasa nito'y
preskong patak sa bawat dila
Bukal na bukas sa sinumang lumalapit maging dalita
Bukal na nangarap mapagbuti ang buhay ng iba.

Buhay na buhay
Masayang naglakbay
Umagos sa kanayuna't binuhay kanilang haraya
Kawalan niya't pagal na katawa'y di niya inalintana
Batid niyang susi ang pagkakaisa sa tagumpay
na inaasam niya.

Dila nito'y dumatay sa malawak na kabihasan
Mapait... mapakla... Hindi ito ang lasang kanyang inaasahan
Sinubukang umatras ngunit hinigop siya ng
mapait na katotohanan
Sa gilid ng mata ay pumatak ang luhanang tumulad
sa lasa ng bago niyang kapaligiran
Pasan niyang problema ng iba ang nagsilbing lason niya.

Tumanaw ito sa buhay niyang nakaraan
Ngumiti ang dahon at binuka ang bibig na tila nag-aantay
sa patak na mula sa kaibigan
Di man niya nais ngunit malakas ang hila ng bagong
kapaligiran
Ang dating nagbibigay buhay sa kanayunan, ngayo'y
nagbago ang lasa at pangangatwiran.



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P.N.P (Pilipinas Nga Pala)

Patay na patay ako sa iyo
Pangarap na pumalya.

Pangako na palasyo
Pag-ibig ng palabiro.

Picture ng picture, wala namang ginawa
Porma ng porma, sa debate nganga
Para ng para, wala namang balitang maganda
Pili ng pili, wala namang nangyayari

Pataba ng pataba; papuri nagiging parusa...
Pabundat ng pabundat; pag-unlad nagiging pangarap
Pag-unlad na palpak bunga ng paulit-ulit na pagpapatawad
Pilipinas na primera, pangarap nalang pala.

Pilipinas nga pala
Posible na palayain ang kriminal
Subalit pag-asa nito'y patuloy na binubusalan.

Poste na patay sindi
Pataas ng pataas ang presyo ng kendi
Pinangako na pag-unlad
Piling-pili naman pala ang pinalad.

Pili na Pinas
Nang hindi ka nagiging puslitan ng palpak.



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Budget Meal na Pangarap

Sa lupa ipinunla ang pangarap na nais makamit,
Dinilig ng pawis at gabing hindi matahimik,
Palad ay sugatan sa paghabol ng bukas,
Ngunit bawat barya'y langit kapag gutom ang lunas.

Sa bawat sentimo na sa bulsa'y kumakalansing,
Kalam ng buhay at tadhana'y gising.
Ako ay iskolar ng "petiks kunwari,"
Ngunit budget meal ang tunay na hari.

Kape at tinapay ang sa iba'y almusal,
Sa tubig at tiis, ako ay nagdarasal.
Sikmura ko'y tambol, laging may tugtugin,
Ngunit ang pangarap, isang sintunadong mithiin.

Sa umaga'y estudyanteng nakikipagbuno,
Kahit sa recitation, hininga ay posas na puno.
Sa gabi'y tagagawa ng ID, walang kapaguran,
Mata ko'y may bigat ng tanikala sa puyatan.

Sa mga trabaho'y sinubukang igapos ang sarili,
Sinulit ang oras para kumita't kapayapaan ay mabili.
Sahod mula sa mga raket, inipon para sa kinabukasan,
Dito inilaan ang panahon, kahit bawat bukas ay walang kasiguruhan.

Ang pera ay parang tubig sa aking palad,
Kapag 'di maingat, mawawala ring agad.
Kaya bawat barya'y tila binhing itinatanim,
Upang sa unos, may aanihing lilim.

Hindi man mayaman sa pilak at karangyaan,
Mayaman naman sa tiyaga't paninindigan.

Ang tunay na yaman, 'di sa pitaka ang sukat,
Kundi sa tibay ng loob na laging sapat.

Habang ang buwaya'y nakangiti sa radyo,
Lunod ang bawat Pilipino sa bawat taas ng presyo.
Pinili kong maging punong matatag sa bagyo,
Tingin ay sa itaas, paa'y nakatindig sa prinsipyo.

Minsa'y nakakatawa ang aking sitwasyon,
Parang calculator, kulang ang operasyon.
Bago bumili, sampung ulit na mag-iisip:
"Deserve ko ba 'to?" o utang ang kapalit?

Ngunit ang hirap ay hindi rehas ng buhay,
Kundi pait na sa katatagan ay siyang tulay.
Ang bawat barya na pilit pinagkakasya,
Dadalhin ako sa buhay na may ginhawa.

Pagdating ng araw na ako naman ang aangat,
Noodles at hirap ang aking pasasalamat.
Ang taong marunong magtiis at magsumikap,
'Di maliligaw sa landas ng pangarap.



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The Unfinished Promise of Equality

A year passed by, and Sen. Risa Hontiveros, an advocate for the rights of women and labor rights, championed women's empowerment by introducing a lot of bills that supported and protected the rights of every Filipino woman. One of her proposed bills was the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill, also known as the Anti-Discrimination Bill in the Philippines. The primary goal of this Bill is to ensure equal rights, protection from stigma, and fair treatment for all, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

We believe that everybody deserves to be treated equally, where no one is left behind. Nowadays, we all know that there are many kinds of genders in our society, some of them belong to the LGBTQIA+, who we all know receive a lot of discrimination and unfair treatment. One of the scenarios is the Trending Transgender Woman who was prevented from using a restroom for women at a mall in Cubao, on August 13, 2019. The transgender person was handcuffed and later brought to Camp Caringal. This discrimination is not very humane, and it does not uphold the SDG, particularly SDG 5, which states "GENDER EQUALITY." The SOGIE Bill does not focus on the rights of the LGBTQIA+ but rather the rights and freedom of EVERYONE. This Bill should be implemented as it promotes inclusivity, which encourages diversity and acceptance in schools and workplaces, reducing stigma. Most importantly, it inculcates Equal Access and Opportunity, which guarantees fair access to essential services, education, healthcare, and employment without prejudice.

In a nutshell, the implementation of the SOGIE Equality Bill is a necessary step toward building a more just, humane, and inclusive Philippine society. Discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression continues to deprive individuals of their basic rights and dignity, as seen in real-life incidents that contradict the country's commitment to gender equality and human rights. The SOGIE Bill does not seek special privileges for a particular group; rather, it ensures equal protection, access, and opportunity for everyone, regardless of identity. By promoting respect, inclusivity, and fairness in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, the bill upholds the principles of equality enshrined in the Constitution and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality. Ultimately, passing and implementing the SOGIE Equality Bill affirms that no Filipino should be left behind and that diversity is a strength that must be protected by law.



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Sa Gitna ng mga Papel at Pangarap

Minsan, sa isang simpleng araw ng pagbabantay sa pagsusulit, maaaring matagpuan ang taong makakasama mo habambuhay.

Hindi niya akalaing sa isang ordinaryong araw ng pagproproctor ay makikilala niya ang lalaking mapapangasawa balang araw.

Bilang bagong guro, naatasan siyang maging isa sa proctor ng komprehensibong pagsusulit sa panggradwadong pag-aaral. Suot ang pinakaseryosong mukha, tangan ang attendance sheet, at abala sa pagbabantay sa bawat examinee. Isa siya sa mga nakaupo sa bandang likod – tahimik, mukhang determinado, at halatang kinakabahan.

Hindi niya binigyan ng espesyal na pansin. Isa lamang siyang examinee sa maraming kailangang bantayan. At sa totoo lang, wala rin sa isip niya ang anumang posibilidad – dahil sa panahong iyon, may minamahal siya. Alam niyang ganoon din siya; may pinapahalagahan.

Natapos ang pagsusulit na parang isang karaniwang araw lamang sa trabaho. Subalit ang pag-alis nila sa silid na iyon ay nag-iwan ng isang katagang binitawan niya sa akin "*Til Next Time Ma'am*". sabay ngiti.

Lumipas ang mga buwan.

Hindi niya inaasahang sa isang mensahe doon magsisimula ang lahat. Pormal ang unang mga mensahe, may "po" at "opo," may paggalang "Kamusta po ang araw ninyo?" "Pagod pero masaya. Ikaw, kamusta?"

Mas maluwag na ang sitwasyon noon, pareho na silang malaya. Hanggang sa hindi na lang ito tungkol sa trabaho. Naging tungkol na ito sa buhay, sa mga pangarap, sa mga pagkabigo, sa mga aral na natutunan.

Sa panahong iyon, pareho na silang dumaan sa hiwalayan. Hindi naging madali. May sakit, may pagdududa, may takot na magmahal muli. Ngunit sa bawat gabi ng pag-uusap nila sa *cellphone*, pakiramdam niya ay may kaibigan siyang handang makinig.

Doon niya napansin ang kanyang kabaitan at pagiging maginoo. Hanggang sa isang gabi, matapos ang mahaba nilang tawanan sa telepono, napahinto siya at napangiti. Doon niya napagtanto na may kakaiba na. Hindi na lang siya basta dating examinee. Hindi na lang siya kausap tuwing gabi. Siya na ang hinahanap kapag may magandang balita. Siya na ang unang naiisip ko kapag pagod ako.

Hanggang sa nagpaalam na siya kung maaari bang pumunta sa bahay upang maging pormal ang kanyang panliligaw. Hindi nagtagal ay nagpaalam siya mismo sa aking mga magulang kung maaari ba akong ligawan. Doon na nga nagsimula ang lahat,

Hindi kami nagmadali. Pinili naming maging sigurado. Pinili naming hintayin ang tamang panahon.

At dumating nga iyon.

Ngayon, tuwing maaalala ko ang araw na iyon sa silid-aralan, ang tahimik na eksam, ang seryoso kong mukha, at ang tahimik niyang pagsagot sa papel, napapangiti ako. Sino ba ang mag-aakalang sa pagitan ng mga papel, nagsisimula na pala ang kuwento ng habambuhay?

Minsan, ang pag-ibig ay hindi agad nakikita. Minsan, kailangan muna nitong hintayin ang tamang oras.

At sa amin, dumating ito, sa tamang panahon.



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Fields of Gold, Harvests Untold

Blessed is the land where the rivers flow,
Where golden fields beneath the sunlight glow.
Mountains stand proud, seas shimmer bright,
The Philippines, rich with nature's light.

Rice dances softly with the whispering breeze,
Corn and green gardens sway with ease.
Mangoes gleam under tropical skies,
Coconuts and bananas where abundance lies.

There walks the farmer with weathered hands,
A silent hero of these fertile lands.
Beneath the heat from dawn to night,
He plants with hope, though burdened by plight.

Yet now the harvest is left to decay,
The fruits of labor are wasted away.
Tomatoes rot by the roadside bare,
Cabbage and onions discarded in despair.

Why has the blessing become a curse?
Why do the hardest workers suffer worse?
Why must the food that should nourish the land
Be thrown aside by the farmer's own hand?

Prices collapse in the marketplace,
While hunger still stares the poor in the face.
The farmer earns less than the cost of his pain,
Yet consumers still struggle beneath the strain.

So who is guilty? Who bears the blame?
The system that profits while hiding its name?
Middlemen thriving while growers fall,
Feeding the rich, abandoning all.

Where is the aid that was promised before?
Where are the leaders the people voted for?
Why do the wealthy continue to rise,
While the hands that feed nations are left to demise?

The farmlands are more than scenery alone,
They are the heartbeat this country has known.
And when the farmers are broken and weak,
It is the nation's future that famine will seek.

O Philippines, land blessed from birth,
Why do your children still battle their worth?
A harvest is never mere waste to ignore,
For every grain carries life at its core.

Perhaps one day justice will finally grow,
Like seeds reborn from the fields below.
And when fair systems replace the greed,
Hope shall bloom where the hungry bleed.

Then rain will fall on the waiting plains,
No longer mixed with sorrow and pains.
But with songs of triumph rising high,
From fields of gold beneath our sky.

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The Pressure of Wearing the Title “Educ”

Being an Educ student is never easy. People often say, “*Educ ka pa naman*,” as if being in the education field means you are no longer allowed to make mistakes. They expect you to always act perfectly, *dapat hindi ka nagmumura, hindi ka nagagalit, hindi ka napapagod, at parang alam mo na agad lahat ng tama at mali sa mundo*. Your social media should only contain words of wisdom, your attitude should always be kind, your patience should be endless, and your image should always be clean and inspiring. Society places Educ students on a pedestal, expecting them to become instant role models even before they officially become teachers.

However, on the other side, some people say, “*Educ student ka lang naman*.” As if the course is easy. As if teaching is simple. They compare it to other programs and call it “*madaling course*,” “*common course*,” or even “*bagsakan ng walang plano sa buhay*.” Some think teaching is just standing in front of students and talking all day, without realizing the hard work behind it, the sleepless nights making lesson plans, the pressure of public speaking, the emotional exhaustion of handling different learners, and the responsibility of shaping young minds.

This is where Educ students become trapped between two painful expectations. “*Educ ka pa naman*” pressures them to become perfect people, while “*Educ ka lang naman*” belittles their worth and abilities. So, where exactly should Educ students stand? No matter what they do, someone always has something to say.

What many people fail to understand is that Educ students are human too. They get tired, overwhelmed, insecure, and lost. They struggle silently while carrying the pressure of becoming someone society expects to be “good” all the time. Behind every smile in class is a student trying to survive deadlines, self-doubt, financial struggles, family problems, and the fear of not being enough. However, despite all of that, they continue because they know their future profession is important.

People often underestimate teachers, forgetting that every profession starts with one. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, pilots, scientists, all of them once sat inside a classroom guided by a teacher. Educ students are not “just” future teachers. They are future builders of dreams, molders of character, and creators of every profession in society. Without teachers, there would be no other professions.



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This is why social literacy matters. Words are powerful. A simple statement may sound harmless to one person but can deeply wound another. Saying “*Educ ka lang naman*” may seem like a joke, but repeated words can slowly destroy confidence and self-worth.

Meanwhile, saying “*Educ ka pa naman*” can set impossible standards that pressure students to hide their struggles rather than ask for help. We should learn to speak with empathy because words can either heal or become swords that silently hurt people.

At the end of the day, Educ students are not asking to be placed above others. They want respect, respect for their struggles, their efforts, and their chosen profession. They are not perfect, and they do not need to be. They are still learning, still growing, and still becoming the *teachers* they aspire to be. Behind the phrases “*Educ ka pa naman*” and “*Educ ka lang naman*” is a student trying their best to survive expectations while holding on to a dream of inspiring others someday.

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“Wasdin Sumya”: The Quiet Perseverance of Educators

In the Kankanaey language, *wasdin sumya* speaks of a good life, blessings, and meaningful progress. It reflects hope rooted in perseverance, the belief that sacrifices made today may eventually lead to growth tomorrow. Some elders would also say “*laton pay dedan*,” a quiet reminder to continue moving forward despite hardship. For many educators, this spirit is no longer simply cultural wisdom. It has become everyday life.

This reflection is written from the shared experiences of the authors, Ruby, a college program coordinator in a private institution, and Nerma, a multigrade public school teacher. Their friendship was strengthened during their master’s studies and continued as they pursued doctoral studies at the same institution. Though they work in different educational environments, their realities remain deeply connected through sacrifice, perseverance, and the desire to continue growing not only for themselves but for the learners they serve.

Their graduate school journey was never easy. They balanced teaching responsibilities, institutional demands, research requirements, and personal obligations while remaining committed to professional growth. However, amid exhaustion and pressure, they relied on one another. They shared burdens, exchanged ideas, reviewed chapters, provided honest feedback, and offered different perspectives whenever research writing became overwhelming. In moments when motivation weakened, one would always remind the other to continue.

In many ways, their story reflects the reality of countless educators. Teaching is often described as a noble profession, but nobility does not erase fatigue. Behind every lesson delivered inside the classroom are sacrifices rarely acknowledged beyond school walls. Teachers are expected to become educators, coaches, advisers, facilitators, coordinators, counselors, and leaders all at once. Responsibilities continue expanding, yet time, compensation, and institutional support often remain insufficient.

For educators pursuing graduate studies, the burden becomes even heavier. Salaries are often insufficient to meet personal needs, support families, and finance higher education simultaneously. However, many teachers continue to enroll in master’s and doctoral

programs because they believe growth is necessary to provide learners with a quality education. Tuition fees are paid through sacrifice. Rest becomes secondary. Weekends disappear into readings, revisions, and academic requirements.

Some sacrifices remain invisible. A multigrade teacher handling several grade levels in one classroom extends reading sessions because many learners continue to struggle with comprehension and basic literacy skills. A college program coordinator balances faculty schedules, student concerns, accreditation requirements, curricular revisions, institutional reports, and urgent administrative deadlines all at the same time. Teachers carry stacks of paperwork requiring immediate submission while simultaneously preparing lessons, checking outputs, responding to parents, and attending meetings late into the evening. Educators spend their own money on students' transportation, meals, uniforms, and registration fees for extracurricular competitions because some learners cannot afford to participate. School coordinators answer messages long after office hours because students, faculty members, and administrators continue needing assistance even during supposed rest time. Two educators exchange revisions after midnight, discuss methodologies, strengthen each other's arguments, and encourage one another whenever self-doubt appears. Their journey reveals that perseverance is sometimes sustained not only by ambition but by companionship, shared understanding, and mutual belief in one another's potential.

The experiences shared in this reflection are not presented merely as complaints, but as truths silently carried by many educators. Teachers persist not simply to comply with professional expectations, but because they believe learners deserve mentors who continue striving to become better despite exhaustion. However, beneath this perseverance lies an uncomfortable reality within the educational system itself.

Educators are often praised for their resilience while the very conditions that demand such sacrifices continue to be normalized. Overtime work, excessive paperwork, insufficient resources, emotional fatigue, and financial strain have gradually become accepted as part of professional culture. The expectation to "go beyond what is required" is frequently celebrated as dedication, even when it already affects health, finances, and personal well-being.

Moreover, perhaps this is where the quiet criticism begins. Society praises teachers for commitment, yet often overlooks the systems that continuously drain them. Exhaustion has become so normalized that many educators no longer recognize how much of themselves they have already surrendered in service of others. The profession rewards endurance, but rarely questions why such endurance has become necessary in the first place.

Still, despite the overwhelming demands, educators continue. Not because the profession is easy. Not because the system is always fair. However, they understand that education can transform lives. Every overtime hour spent teaching struggling learners carries hope. Every personal expense spent for students becomes an investment in someone's future. Every sleepless night spent writing research papers reflects commitment to growth and

service. Moreover, every educator who helps another continue moving forward becomes proof that progress is rarely achieved alone.

For Ruby and Nerma, doctoral education became more than academic achievement. It became a symbol of endurance, shared by two educators with different responsibilities yet walking toward the same purpose. One worked through institutional coordination, faculty concerns, and college expectations. The other managed multigrade instruction, diverse learner needs, and community realities inside a public school. Despite these differences, both understood the exhaustion of preparing lessons after long workdays, responding to urgent submissions, attending meetings, and completing research requirements while trying to remain emotionally available for students.

Their friendship became a space where frustrations could be understood without judgment. They reminded each other that perseverance does not always appear through grand accomplishments. Sometimes it simply means continuing to show up, continuing to teach, and continuing to believe that sacrifices made for education still hold meaning for future generations.

This is where the spirit of *Wasdin Sumya* remains alive. Not in comfort, but in perseverance. Not in abundance, but in purpose. Not merely in personal success, but in the willingness to continue serving despite hardship. Perhaps true progress is not found in recognition alone, but in the quiet decision to continue serving, teaching, and believing while helping others continue the journey, too. *Laton pay dedan, wasdin sumya.*

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Sosyal na Literasi: Oras na para Gisinginang mga Nagbubulag-bulagan

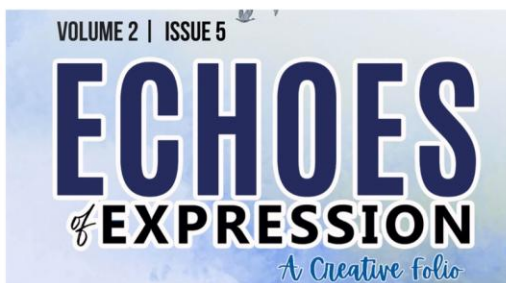
Nakakadismaya at nakakainsulto sa kalooban na habang unti-unti nang tumataas ang sosyal na literasi sa maraming Pilipino, maraming nakatatanda sa ating lipunan ang patuloy na nagbubulag-bulagan sa pulitika. Sa kabila ng kanilang mga reklamo tungkol sa hirap ng buhay, taas ng presyo, at kakulangan ng serbisyo, sila mismo ang tahimik at walang pakialam kapag oras na upang suriin ang mga pinuno na kanilang ibinoboto. Ito ang isa sa mga pinakamalaking balakid sa tunay na pag-unlad ng bayan.

Bawat sulok ng Pilipinas, ang kadahilanang nagtangis sa mga mamamayan dahil sa mga nanlalamang at nagsisinungaling na mga lider. Ang kahirapan nagbabadyo, kasi ang ilan sa ating mambabatas ipinagmamalaki ang puwesto, with less than enough sagad na makakayan sa sambayanan. Wala na sila sa katangian ng mga batas na kanilang pinagtatalunan, pero patuloy pa rin ang pag-aklamong ng masa sa kanilang mga pangalang “di-kambak” ang katangian ng katapat, at di-kambak ang katangian ng katangian.

Sa trabaho, bawal ang hindi college graduate, pero sa Senado pwede? Sa scholarship, bawal ang magkapatid, pero sa Senado pwede? Ito ang mga tanong na sumisigaw ng kawalan ng hustisya. Bakit ang mahigpit na pamantayan na ipinapataw sa ordinaryong Pilipino ay hindi nalalapat sa mga naghahangad na mamuno? Ang ganitong uri ng double standard ay hindi na katanggap-tanggap. Ito ang nagpapakita kung gaano kalalim ang problema sa ating sistema ng pulitika.

Ang sosyal na literasi ang nagbibigay liwanag sa gitna ng kadiliman na ito. Ito ang kakayahang tumagos sa palabas, suriin ang mga plataporma, tingnan ang nagawa na, at hindi basta maniwala sa ngiti, kaway ng kamay, o magagandang salita. Hindi na sapat na pumili batay sa sikat na pangalan o artista ang imahe. Dapat tayong maging mapanuri at masusing suriin ang kakayahan at integridad ng bawat kandidato.

Nakapagod na makita na ang malaking bahagi ng mga botante ay patuloy na nagpapasya batay sa emosyon at popularidad sa halip na katotohanan at kakayahan. Lalong nakakabigat na maraming nakatatanda, na dapat ay huwaran, ang pipiling magbulag-bulagan at hayaang magpatuloy ang bulok na sistema. Ang bawat balota ay may timbang. Ang bawat boto ay nagpapasya kung magpapatuloy ang kahirapan o magsisimula ang tunay na pagbabago.



Echoes of Expression

A Creative Folio

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Kaya't ako ay nananawagan sa kabataan: Huwag tayong tularan ang mga nagbubulag-bulagan. Magtanong. Mag-imbestiga. Huwag basta maniwala. Ang kinabukasan ng Pilipinas ay nasa ating mga kamay. Dapat tayong maging matalino, matapang, at tapat sa pagpili ng mga lider na may dalisay na puso at tunay na naglilingkod sa taumbayan.

Ang sosyal na literasi ay hindi lamang pagiging mulat, ito ay pagtanggì sa pagkukunwari. Ito ang daan upang lumikha ng isang mas maliwanag at makatarungang Pilipinas. Kung patuloy nating hayaang magbulag-bulagan ang marami, walang pag-asa ang ating bayan. Ngunit kung tayo ay gising at handang kumilos, magagawa nating baguhin ang takbo ng kasaysayan.

Oras na upang gisingin ang mga nagbubulag-bulagan. Oras na para sa sosyal na literasi. Oras na para sa tunay na pagbabago.



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The Measure the Goes Beyond the Scores

In a classroom where silence once meant fear of wrong,
Now shadows rise with uncertain, brave, and strong.
Professor Cy stands, not counting scores of ink,
But watching the learners' minds unfold, provoke them to think.

No longer bound by traditional assessments that end in grades,
But living proof in the performance tasks the learners created
Though they tremble during performance, yet sincere,
An idea molded and shaped from effort, dedication, and cheer.

Each scoring rubric tells a beautiful story, not of flaw,
But development in every learner places too shy to draw.
Performance criteria become a guiding torch of light,
Not bounded in chains of grades, but encourage at greater height.

He values the learners' effort, not perfect, but with heart
With every draft, corrections and comments with art.
For in their output, a silent truth of progress is owned
The best of learning blossoms when they're crowned.

An intellectual exchange with fire shown in their tone,
Ideas are matching and sometimes clashing, yet respect is shown.
Another output sprouted out from heavy discussion
Built from persistence no score can compensate but just action.

He smiles, not because of the answers they get to recite,
But for the courage shown shining in their fight.
For the performance tasks demonstrated with heartfelt will
The true evidence no standardized and traditional test can fill.

True Assessment is far more than what is right and wrong,
It is the venue where all the learners can feel that they belong.
Where effort and output speak as loudly as what it dictates in the mind,
Every learner leaves the four corners of the classroom without doubt behind.

And so, he stands tall and confident with quiet, steady pride,
Not as a judge or an adjudicator, but a mentor with a stride.
For every tear and sweat that can be seen when learners try
He finds the very reason how to make the them smile and not to cry



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Tahimik na Lason

- Mother Flying Dinosaur

Sa pagsikat ng araw, sa unang higop ng kape,
Sa munting isnak na tahimik na nginunguya sa labi,
Sa hapag ng tanghalian at gabing may katahimikan,
Plastik ang kasabay ng tao sa bawat galaw ng buhay.

Sa sipilyo, sa supot, sa bote at kubyertos,
Sa kinang ng convenience na tila ba'y walang kupas,
Ngunit bawat gamit nito'y may iniwang bakas,
Basurang dumarami, sa kalikasa'y lumalagas.

Ang iba'y inaanod sa dibdib ng karagatan,
Ang iba nama'y nililipad ng hanging sugatan,
At ang mumunting plastik na halos di nakikiita,
Ay lasong palihim na pumapasok sa hininga.

Sa dagat, akala ng isda'y pagkain ang plastik,
Kaya nilulon nila ang lasong mapang-akit;
Ngunit nang hulihin mo't ihain sa lamesang antik,
Kasama mong kinain ang panganib na tahimik.

Nasaan ngayon ang plastik na magaan at mura,
Nasa tiyan mo na, nasa dugo't paghinga,
Dumadaloy sa katawang dati'y malinis na,
Unti-unting sumisira sa buhay at hininga.

Saan nagsimula ang plastik?
Sa kamay ng tao.
Saan ito nauwi?
Sa katawan din ng tao.



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Ang likha ng sangkatauhan,
Ay tila sumpang bumabalik sa pinagmulan.
Hindi man ito laging nakikita ng matang mapanglawan,
Ngunit ang takot ay tunay at andyan lamang,

Kaya ngayon, makinig po kayo,
Mag-isip bago gumamit ng plastik at itapon ito,
Magbawas, mag-recycle, huminto sa pag-abuso!
Sapagkat kapag ang mundo ang tuluyang sumigaw,

Tao rin ang luluha,
Tao rin ang malulunod sa baha,
Tao rin ang mawawasak,
Tao rin ang magdurusa nang walang ginhawa.



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The Weight of the Signal

Wesley Chinalpan grew up in the mountain village of Sagada, where the fog tasted of pine, and the echoes of his ancestors lived in the rhythmic beat of the "gangsa" gongs. His father, a farmer of heirloom rice, had only one wish: that his son would walk the lowland halls of a university. Moreover, for a while, Wesley ran toward that dream with the same surefootedness he used on the muddy trails.

However, the lowland was a different jungle.

His first obstacle arrived wrapped in friendship. In Baguio City, he met Jonas - a fellow Igorot who had been in the city for three years. Jonas was magnetic, funny, and knew every cheap eatery. "Relax, *kaibigan*," Jonas would say, dragging him to inhuman sessions instead of the library. "You've worked hard. One night won't hurt."

One night became three. Wesley began skipping morning classes, his head pounding from cheap gin, his notebook blank. He told himself Jonas was his only ally in a city that looked down on his brown skin and accented English. The guilt was a termite gnawing at his ribs, but the loneliness of being a mountain boy in a concrete world was worse.

Then came the good influence - unexpected and quiet. Her name was Aira, a Kankanaey woman from a neighboring village, studying social work. She found Wesley sleeping on a bench in the quad, having missed two exams. She did not scold him. She sat beside him and said, "My father also plants rice. He also prays to Kabunian for my strength. Do not let his prayer rot on the ground."

Those words cracked something open. Wesley started walking to the library with Aira. She shared her notes, her coffee, her silence when he needed to cry. However, just as he began to rebuild, the second adversary emerged: the digital world.

His older brother, now working in Manila, sent him a second-hand smartphone. "For your research," the note said. However, the phone was a portal to a noise he was never trained to handle. At first, it was helpful - YouTube tutorials on calculus, PDFs of textbooks. Then came the scroll. He discovered TikTok, Facebook, the endless river of short videos, political arguments, and the perfect lives of other students.

He would tell himself, five minutes only. Five minutes became five hours. He stayed up until 2 a.m., watching influencers dance, comparing his worn-out shoes to his classmates'

sneakers, and reading comments that mocked Igorots as "uncivilized." The phone buzzed with notifications - group chats where his own friends posted memes about suicide, trivializing the very pain he felt.

His grades plummeted again. He would stare at his reflection in the dark screen, seeing a boy who was neither fully mountain nor fully city. The anxiety arrived like a heavy fog—no, not fog, because fog in Sagada was gentle. This was a smothering blanket. His chest tightened before every recitation. His hands trembled during quizzes. He stopped eating, then started eating too much. The pressure to prove that an Igorot could succeed became a crushing burden.

One night, after failing a major exam, he sat on the fire escape of his boarding house, the phone in his hand, his thumb hovering over a post that read, "Why even try?" The city lights blurred below him. He thought of his father's back, bent over the terraces. He thought of Jonas, who had dropped out last month and gone back to the province, defeated. He thought of Aira's words.

He called her. It was 11 p.m. She answered on the second ring.

"I can't breathe," he whispered.

She did not offer solutions. She said, "Remember the *dap-ay*? Remember how our elders would gather around the stone to talk until the fire died? You are not alone, Wesley. You are carrying a mountain, but you don't have to carry it by yourself."

The next morning, he deleted the apps. Not the phone - he needed it for school - but the endless feeds that fed his anxiety. He uninstalled TikTok. He muted the group chats. He set a timer for 30 minutes of social media per day, only for messages from family and Aira.

He also walked to the university counseling center. The counselor was a young Ifugao woman who understood the word *kayabang* - the burden of representing an entire culture. She taught him breathing exercises: inhale for four counts, hold for seven, exhale for eight, the same rhythm as the *gong* during a *cañao* celebration.

Wesley did not become perfect overnight. He still felt the pinch of anxiety before exams. He still missed the mountains. However, he learned to turn off his phone and sit in silence, letting his heartbeat slow. He learned to say no to Jonas without guilt, and yes to Aira's study sessions. He learned that good friends do not pull you down; they build you a ladder.

On graduation day, he wore a woven *siniwsiwan* band across his graduation robe, a symbol of his Igorot identity. His father came down from Sagada, tears streaming down his sun-leathered face. Wesley held his diploma, and for the first time in four years, his chest felt light.

The signal was no longer a weight. It was just a tool. Moreover, he was the one who decided when to listen.



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Our Gentle Giant

Our firstborn child, our heart's first light,
The one who filled our world so bright.
A happiness no words can say,
You came and took our breath away.

You were the joy we first embraced,
The love that time cannot erase.
The very first dream in our hands,
The beginning of all our plans.

The first grandson, so dearly known,
A precious gift the family has grown.
Your name, **Edan**, was born from love so true
From Editha's grace and Danilo's virtue.

And **Jestin**, the name we gave with pride,
From Jessica and Martin side by side.
Two hearts, one hope, one family's dream,
Woven together in your name's sweet theme.

Once a baby so small and dear,
Who filled our days with laughter and cheer.
But time has passed, as time will do,
And slowly our little boy grew.

Now you stand both tall and strong,
A gentle giant all along.
A loving son, so kind and true,
A pride and blessing through and through.

A caring brother your siblings admire,
A guiding light, their quiet fire.
Through every step and all you do,
Our endless love walks close with you.

For no matter how grown you may become,
Or how far your life may roam,
You'll always be our first great joy
Jestin Edan, our precious boy.

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Tatlong Taong Pakikibaka

“Mag-aasawa na lang talaga.”

This is how we sounded whenever things got hard, as if marrying someone could solve everything except if we married one of the 4M’s — matandang, mayamang, madaling mamatay. We laughed every time we said it, but behind those jokes were exhausted hearts trying to survive another sleepless night, another deadline, another silent breakdown no one talked about.

As we entered college, we thought it would only be about classrooms, grades, and graduation pictures. We thought surviving meant simply passing exams and submitting requirements on time. But college humbled the hell out of us. It introduced us to realities we were never prepared for.

Suddenly, life became more than studying.

How do you make a small allowance last for an entire week when there are still projects to print, transportation to pay for, group contributions, and meals to think about? How do you choose between eating a complete meal or saving money for tomorrow’s requirements? How do you smile in class after commuting for hours with only enough money left for one ride home?

These were the questions college silently taught us to answer.

People often say, “Life is not a race.”

Maybe for them, it isn’t.

But not for us. Not for unprivileged people like us.

Because for people like us, stopping even for a moment feels dangerous. Rest feels expensive. Failure feels heavier because we know we do not always have the privilege to try again and again. While others can afford to pause and “find themselves,” some of us are already pressured to succeed because too many people are depending on us.

Some of us carry dreams that are not only ours.

College taught us life skills no textbook could ever explain. It taught us how to budget money down to the last coin, how to survive on little sleep while carrying heavy responsibilities, and how to pretend everything is okay even when our minds were already drowning in pressure. It taught us experiences that changed us completely.

There were moments when we celebrated small victories because that was all we had. Passing one subject felt like winning a battle. Receiving a “very good” from a professor became enough motivation to continue another exhausting week.

Sometimes, happiness came from the simplest things — cancelled classes, extra rice from a friend, surviving recitation without mental blackout, or hearing “uwi na tayo” after a long day.

And yet, despite those little joys, there were still nights when the doubt was louder than the hope.

How do you continue when you no longer believe in yourself?

You continue quietly.

You continue even when your confidence is already shattered. You continue while carrying responsibilities your classmates know nothing about. You continue despite crying during jeepney rides, despite reviewing while mentally exhausted, despite feeling guilty every time your parents send money you know they worked hard for.

Because college also teaches guilt.

The guilt of spending money.

The guilt of resting.

The guilt of feeling tired when people expect you to be strong.

And maybe the hardest part is realizing that you cannot afford to fall apart completely because life does not wait for struggling people to recover.

So somehow, we still wake up every morning and choose to continue.

Not because life became easier, but because we slowly learned how to endure.

We learned how to adapt in unfamiliar environments, how to communicate with different people, and how to handle rejection, criticism, pressure, and failure without completely giving up. We learned that intelligence alone is not enough to survive adulthood.

Sometimes, resilience matters more.

Somewhere between deadlines, breakdowns, reporting, and sleepless nights, we changed.

The students who once said, “Hindi ko kaya,” slowly became people who whispered, “Kinakaya.”

And maybe that is the most painful yet beautiful part of growing up. You do not notice your strength while you are struggling. You only realize it after surviving things you once thought would destroy you.

One day, all these sacrifices will become stories we will tell with softer hearts. The nights we cried over requirements, the mornings we entered classrooms exhausted, the days we almost gave up, all of it will become proof that we survived.

And maybe someday, we will laugh again at the phrase “Mag-asawa na lang talaga,” not because we wanted to escape life, but because we finally made it through the life that once almost broke us.

Sa tatlong taong pakikiabaka sa kolehiyo, nagsimula sa “hindi ko kaya,” hanggang sa naging “kinakaya,” at sa isa pang taon, ito ay siguradong “kakayanin.”



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Bulag, Pipi, Bingi

Hindi bulag, ngunit piniling pumikit,
habang kaban ng bayan ay tahimik na nasisilip,
tila ba sariling baul ng mga ganid at sakim,
habang mamamaya'y unti-unting inililibing sa dilim.

Hindi pipi, ngunit piniling manahimik,
kapag pangalan ng idolo ang nagsimulang umalingasaw
at umusik,
kayang isigaw ang galit kapag kalaban ang nadadawit,
ngunit nagiging banal ang magnanakaw kapag kakampi
ang pilit.

Hindi bingi, ngunit sadyang nagbibingi-bingihan,
sa sigaw ng lansangan at hikbi ng mamamayan,
mas malakas ang palakpak sa bawat entabladong
maringal,
kaysa daing ng mga pamilyang ilang gabi nang
walang hapag.

Sa bawat kampanya'y tila may piyesta ng pagsamba,
mga matang kumikislap sa bandila at propaganda,
isang kilong bigas at pangakong manipis ang katumbas,
ng dignidad na matagal nang winawasak at nilalamas.

Nakakatawa, galit sa magnanakaw kuno,
ngunit pumapalakpak kapag sariling kampo ang may gusto,
galit sa sinungaling kapag kulay ay hindi kapareho,
ngunit handang lunurin sa mura ang nagsasabi ng totoo.

Hindi na politika ito kundi relihiyon ng bulag,
kung saan mas banal pa ang politiko kaysa dukhang sugat,
mga pangalang sinasamba na tila diyos ng sambayanan,
habang bayan ay unti-unting nilulunod sa kahirapan.

May magsasakang buto't balat na sa pagkayod,
manggagawang pati kaluluwa'y halos maubos,

mga batang natutong matulog na kumakalam ang tiyan,
ngunit mas maingay pa rin ang sigaw para sa pangalan.

Nag-aaway ang mga kapwa mahihirap sa lansangan,
para sa mga politikong hindi man lang marunong
lumingon kailanman,
mga taong kailanma'y hindi sasakay sa jeep,
hindi pipila sa ospital, hindi matutulog nang walang
laman ang tiyan.

Habang naglalasang dugo ang bawat komentaryo,
at kapwa Pilipino'y ginagawang kalaban sa debate
at opinyonaryo,
nakaupo silang payapa sa mesa ng kapangyarihan,
pinapanood kung gaano kadalang pag-awayin ang
sambayanan.

Hindi bulag, ngunit nagbubulag-bulagan sa katotohanan,
na unti-unti nang kinakain ng kasakiman ang bayan,
hindi pipi, ngunit tikom ang bibig sa katiwalian,
sapagkat mas mahalaga ang pangalan kaysa katinuan.

Hindi bingi, ngunit isinara ang pandinig sa hinaing,
ng mga pamilyang matagal nang nilulunod sa pasakit
at gutom ding matindi,
sapagkat mas madaling sambahin ang mukhang
nasa tarpaulin,
kaysa harapin ang bayang matagal nang naghihingalo
sa dilim.

Ang malungkot, hindi isinilang na ganito
ang mamamayan,
hindi likas ang magpakalunod sa bulag na pagtatanggol
kailanman,
tinuruan lamang sambahin ang pangalan at kapangyarihan,
habang unti-unting kinakalimutang mahalin
ang sariling bayan.



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Where Effort Meets Echo

He enters not to simply speak,
But to awaken minds that seek.
With notes prepared and purpose clear,
He teaches more than what they hear.

Each lesson shaped with careful thought,
Not just to tell, but to be taught
By questions raised, by voices new,
By learners seeing learning through.

He gives his best in every hour,
Not chasing praise, nor wielding power,
But planting seeds in minds unsure,
With patience steady, calm, and pure.

And in return, a quiet grace
Reflected in each student's face.
Not always loud, yet deeply true,
Their appreciation gently grew.

A nod, a smile, a question more,
A lingering step beside the door.
A simple "thank you," softly said,
Or brighter thoughts where doubt once spread.

They see the effort, day by day,
The extra mile, the thoughtful way
He turns confusion into light,
And makes the hardest lessons right.

For teaching, then, is not alone
It lives in hearts where it is sown.
And in that space, both give and gain,
Through shared resolve, through joy and strain.

So, there he stands, yet not apart,
For he has reached each learner's heart.
And in their growth, their voices free,
He finds his quiet victory.



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Magnanakaw si Ate

Sino kaya ang magnanakaw sa bahay?
Tuwing umaga'y may nawawala,
mga baryang naiwan sa ibabaw ng mesa,
na tila nilamon ng gabi't pagtataka.

Sino kaya ang marahang humahakbang
kapag tulog na ang buong tahanan?
Yung aninong gising habang ang lahat ay himbing,
na tila may lihim na ayaw umalingawngaw sa dilim.

Sapagkat paggising namin kinaumagahan,
may perang hindi na muling mabilang,
mga gamit na kahapon ay nasa tabi lamang,
na ngayo'y parang hanging biglang naglaho na lang.

Maging sa kusina'y may nawawala rin,
bigas na unti-unting numinipis sa lalagyan,
mga ulam na dapat sana'y sasapat pa,
na tila may kamay na palihim na kumukuha.

Kahit ang mga damit na gusot at marumi,
na nakatambak lamang bago sumapit ang gabi,
ay biglang mabango't maayos pagdating ng umaga,
na parang may aninong buong dilim na nagbata.

Kaya si Ate ang tahimik naming hinala,
sapagkat siya ang laging gising tuwing madla'y payapa,
marahang kumikilos na tila sanay magkubli,
habang pasan-pasan ang pagod sa bawat sandali.

Ngunit isang gabi'y ako ang hindi nakatulog,
at doon ko nakita ang lihim na kaniyang lungkot,
nakaupo sa sahig habang yakap ang sariling tuhod,

at mga matang namumugto sa puyat at pagod.

Katabi niya ang mga baryang pinag-ipunan,
mga unipormeng siya ring nagplantsa't naglaba lamang,
mga pinggang kumikinang sa linis ng kaniyang kamay,
at mga responsibilidad na hindi naman sa kaniya inialay.

At doon ko tuluyang naunawaan ang lahat,
kung bakit gabi-gabi'y tila may nawawala sa amin agad,
hindi pala pera, hindi gamit, hindi pagkain,
kundi si Ate mismo ang unti-unting nawawaglit sa dilim.

Magnanakaw si Ate, oo, siya nga ang salarin,
sapagkat ninanakaw niya ang pasanang hindi kaniya dapat akuin,
habang kami'y mahimbing sa tahimik na gabi,
siya nama'y dahan-dahang ninanakawan ang sarili.

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Napapaligiran, Ngunit Nag-iisa

(Surrounded, Yet Alone)

"Minsan, sa dami ng tao sa paligid mo, doon ka pa pala pinakamag-iisa"

Habang nakikinig ng kanta, habang palakas ng palakas ang tugtog ng gitara, siya ding paglakas ng hagulhol ko. Deserve ko ba talaga to? Ako si Sam, short for Samantha. Kasulukuyang nag aaral sa Kolehiyo, kurso?

Kumuha ako ng kusong edukasyon, isa akong education student, proud to be! Nasa ikatlong bahagdan na din, baka nagtatanong ka pa kung bakit ako nagsusulat ng patungkol sa buhay ko? Malalim ang kuwento baka abutin tayo ng taon bago matapos at magulo pa sa lagayan ng make up ko kung iintindihin, baka mabagot ka lang kaya paumanhin, huwag na.

Basta ang alam ko, gumising nalang ako na isang araw, hindi na pala ako tulad ng dati. Marami akong kaibigan, yung tipong tatlo ang circle of friends ko, merong sa church, sa school at bukod pa yung mga kababata ko. Hindi ko na nga halos maharap lahat e, kaliwat kanan ang gala, ubos na ang pera pero sasama at sasama parin.

Tara kaya sa pailaw? Parang ang ganda magpicture don a. Sama ka dali!

Ako itong si " Oyy sige, maganda nga yun a" Ganoon ako noon. Isang aya lang, go agad.

Kahit pagod galing klase, kahit kulang na ang pera, kahit tambak ang gawain sa school, sasama pa rin. Para sa akin noon, basta may kasama, basta masaya, ayos na. Marami akong kaibigan. Sa church, sa school, sa lugar namin. Pakiramdam ko, napakayaman ko dahil napapalibutan ako ng tao.

Akala ko kapag maraming kaibigan, ibig sabihin ligtas ka sa lungkot. Pero mali pala. May isa akong kaibigan noon na itinuring kong kapatid. Alam niya halos lahat tungkol sa akin, mga pangarap ko, insecurities ko, pati mga problemang hindi ko kayang ikwento sa iba.

Siya ang takbuhan ko kapag pagod ako, at ako rin ang unang sumasalo kapag siya naman ang may pinagdadaan.

Akala ko ganoon ang tunay na pagkakaibigan: walang iwanan, walang sumbatan, walang plastikan. Hanggang sa dumating ang araw na napansin kong nagbabago siya. Kapag kasama ko siya, may mga biro na masakit na pala pero tinatawanan ko na lang. Mga salitang, “Ang arte mo naman,” “Sensitive mo talaga,” o kaya “Buti nga sinasama ka pa namin”.

Maliit na bagay pakinggan, pero kapag paulit-ulit, unti-unti kang binabasag. May mga pagkakataon ding kinukwento ko sa kanya nang lihim ang problema ko, tapos malalaman ko na lang na alam na rin ng iba. Kapag kinompronta ko, sasabihin niya, “Concern lang naman kami sa’yo.” At dahil mahalaga siya sa akin, ako pa ang nagdududa sa sarili ko. Baka OA lang ako.

Baka masyado akong maramdamin.

Baka normal lang ito sa magkaibigan.

Doon ko unang natutunan na hindi lahat ng nananatili sa buhay mo ay mabuti para sa’yo. May mga taong sanay kang kasama kaya akala mo tama pa, kahit matagal ka nang nasasaktan. May mga relasyon na hindi mo mabitawan dahil sa tagal, kahit unti-unti ka nang nauubos.

Tinawag ko iyong loyalty. Pero ang totoo, pagkawala na pala iyon ng respeto sa sarili. Hanggang sa isang araw, umuwi akong galing sa lakad namin na umiiyak. Hindi dahil may nangyaring malaking away. Kundi dahil napagod na akong magpanggap na okay lang ang lahat.

Doon ko naintindihan ang social literacy, hindi sapat na marunong kang makisama. Kailangan marunong ka ring kumilala ng tao. Marunong kang magtakda ng hangganan. Marunong kang umalis kapag hindi ka na tinatrato nang tama.

Hindi lahat ng marunong magpatawa ay mabuting kaibigan. Hindi lahat ng laging kasama ay tunay na kakampi. At hindi dahil matagal na kayo, ibig sabihin tama pa ring manatili. Masakit tanggapin, pero may mga taong minahal mo bilang kaibigan na kailangan mong bitawan para iligtas ang sarili mo. At ako si Sam. Yung dating akala, kapag maraming tao sa paligid, hindi ka na masasaktan. Ngayon alam ko na, minsan, sa dami ng tao sa paligid mo, doon ka pa pala pinakamag-iisa



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Grounding the Future: Why Indigenous Science is the Ideal Bedrock for Basic Education

For decades, standard science curricula in basic education have operated under a silent assumption: that legitimate scientific inquiry is exclusively a Western import. Textbooks frequently introduce young minds to abstract concepts through foreign lenses, using isolated laboratory settings or unfamiliar ecological examples. However, in a nation characterized by profound cultural diversity and acute ecological vulnerability, such as the Philippines, this approach creates an artificial barrier between students and the natural world. To build a genuinely scientifically literate society, educational systems must shift their foundational baseline. Anchoring basic education in Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs), or indigenous science, does not mean rejecting modern advancements; rather, it transforms science from a foreign language into an intuitive extension of a student's lived reality.

The primary argument for establishing an indigenous baseline is radical contextualization. Cognitive development in early childhood relies heavily on moving from the concrete to the abstract. When a child learns structural physics not through steel skyscrapers, but by analyzing the seismic flexibility and aerodynamic joinery of a traditional *bahay kubo* or an *Ivatan* stone house, a crucial shift occurs. The community, the local agricultural plots, and the traditional kitchen naturally become the primary laboratory. Science ceases to be an exercise in rote memorization to pass examinations; it becomes a functional tool for making sense of the immediate environment.

Furthermore, this pedagogical shift plays a vital role in decolonizing the classroom. For generations, formal education has inadvertently dismissed indigenous practices as primitive folklore. By elevating indigenous science to the foundational baseline, the curriculum validates the historical genius of our ancestors. Investigating the intricate hydrology of Cordilleran rice terraces, the biochemical efficacy of Aeta herbal pharmacology, or the complex biometeorology of coastal fishing communities instills a profound sense of cultural dignity. It teaches young learners that science is a universal human endeavor, shaped by communities that systematically observe, adapt, and innovate in response to their environments.



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Crucially, indigenous science introduces an ecocentric worldview urgently needed to address contemporary climate realities. While Western empiricism has historically treated nature as a resource to be compartmentalized, analyzed, and dominated, indigenous science is fundamentally holistic. It operates on the principle of interconnectedness, evident in systems like the Ifugao *muyong*, where agricultural survival is intrinsically linked to watershed conservation. Introducing this holistic perspective during formative years raises a generation of citizens who view environmental sustainability not as an external regulatory obligation, but as an inherent ethical responsibility.

In a nutshell, integrating indigenous science as the baseline creates a pedagogical bridge. It provides the initial cultural "hook" and meaningful context, allowing modern empirical tools to later validate and expand upon traditional wisdom. Grounding basic education in indigenous science ensures that future generations of researchers, innovators, and citizens are not merely globally competitive but are deeply rooted, culturally secure, and uniquely equipped to craft local solutions for a changing world.



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Strangers to Our Own Genius: The Decline of Philippine Scientific Literacy

During a recent interaction with a group of senior high school graduates, I asked a simple question: "Can you name at least three Filipino scientists?" A heavy, telling silence followed. Despite having just completed years of specialized schooling under the modern K-12 curriculum, not a single student could produce a name. There were no mention of Dr. Fe del Mundo and her revolutionary bamboo incubator, nor Dr. Angel Alcala's pioneering marine conservation. They could easily name foreign icons like Albert Einstein or Isaac Newton, but the innovators who looked like them and worked to solve Philippine-specific problems remained entirely invisible. This profound cultural amnesia is the most visible symptom of a deeper, systemic crisis: the rapid decline of scientific literacy and interest in the Philippines.

This classroom disconnect is directly reflected in grim objective metrics. The country's decline in scientific aptitude is no longer a matter of speculation; it is a quantifiable reality. International assessments consistently place the Philippines near the absolute bottom in science proficiency. In the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the average science score dropped from 356 in 2018 to 355 in 2022, ranking the Philippines third-lowest among 81 participating countries (Hizon, 2025). Shockingly, only 22% of Filipino students reached Level 2, which represents the bare minimum proficiency required for scientific literacy (Cabural, 2024). This means that a staggering 78% of Filipino adolescents struggle to apply basic scientific knowledge to explain everyday phenomena or to draw evidence-based conclusions.

This academic deficit triggers a steep drop in scientific interest. When the classroom approach to science is reduced to rote memorization rather than hands-on, critical inquiry, science begins to feel like an alien language. Consequently, fewer students are motivated to pursue Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). When a generation cannot find domestic role models to inspire future breakthroughs, the cycle of disinterest deepens. The erasure of Filipino scientists from our daily consciousness stems from an educational system that treats local history and hard science as separate silos.

Reversing this decline requires an immediate, radical transformation. The Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education, and local institutions must pivot from

passive textbook-based learning to investigative, community-centered learning. Simultaneously, the stories of Filipino scientific heroes must be explicitly woven into the curriculum. We must celebrate our national scientists with the same fervor we reserve for historical revolutionaries and pop culture icons. Only by restoring scientific literacy and fiercely honoring our intellectual heritage can the Philippines cultivate a new generation of critical thinkers ready to innovate for the nation's future.

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What Kind of Governance Do You Want?

(A Student Leader's Perspective)

Leadership frequently manifests itself in day-to-day decisions, such as who arrives, who fulfills commitments, and who implements ideas. As a student leader, you witness your friends unite behind charm, avoid taking initiative, and overlook errors simply because someone is amiable. These inconsistencies make it difficult to decide what form of government you actually desire.

First, you want a system of governance that prioritizes both responsibility and initiative. Initiative spreads quickly. Apathy can be transformed into momentum by a student who creates petitions, plans cleanups, or suggests clubs. However, without structure, initiative becomes a burden for those who try and a consolation for those who are irresponsible. When a leader initiates projects and then vanishes, others are left to take over. While demanding precise deadlines, designated roles, and truthful reporting, governance should honor those who take the initiative. Instead of taking over entirely, initiative should inspire action.

Second, you want a government that does not tolerate indolence. More quickly than any scandal, a student leader who shirks duties or depends on others for visible effort undermines trust. Laziness is more than just not working; it is also a rejection of the contract you sign when you accept a position. Leaders who fail to attend meetings, miss deadlines, or disregard the needs of others convey the idea that leadership is a meaningless position. You are right not to enjoy this. Consequences must be part of governance, such as dismissal or reassignment when carelessness becomes a pattern and mentoring when someone truly fails.

Third, the truth about likeability is harsh. Leaders who are kind, amiable, and focused appeal to you. Kindness creates connections and dismantles boundaries; a leader who pays attention and remembers names cultivates positive relationships. Likeability, though, should not take the place of skill. Because the leader is kind, you frequently ignore inadequate preparation and bad execution. That empathy ought to be saved for specific people, not as a justification for poor government. The ideal system acknowledges emotional intelligence as a useful leadership quality, but it combines it with performance measures, training, and support to ensure that warmth does not conceal ineffectiveness.

Third, the truth about likeability is harsh. Leaders who are kind, amiable, and focused appeal to you. Kindness creates connections and dismantles boundaries; a leader who pays attention and remembers names cultivates positive relationships. Likeability, though, should

not take the place of skill. Because the leader is kind, you frequently ignore inadequate preparation and bad execution. That empathy ought to be saved for specific people, not as a justification for poor government. The ideal system acknowledges emotional intelligence as a useful leadership quality, but it combines it with performance measures, training, and support to ensure that warmth does not conceal ineffectiveness.

Furthermore, cultivate a culture that respects both skill and morality. Instruct delegation, time management, and dispute resolution. Provide likable but inexperienced leaders with seasoned colleagues who can translate well-meaning intentions into practical strategies. When someone takes the initiative, support them, but also pose challenging questions: who assists you in doing this? How will this be kept up? How will you respond to obstacles?

You do not aim for perfection. You want governance that is honest about its limitations and committed to strengthening them. When it comes to effective student leadership, initiative, skill, and kindness are complementary rather than antagonistic. Your governance will reflect not only who you like but also who you really need if your student body can demand leaders who take the initiative, follow through, and earn kindness via competency.



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AI sa Makabagong Pagtuturo

Sa silid-aralan ng makabagong panahon,
May liwanag at pag-asa ang hatid ng makinang marunong;
Hindi man tao na may pakiramdam, may dunong na tangan,
Artificial Intelligence ang katuwang sa bawat aral na dinadaan.

Sa pisara'y di lang gumuguhit at naiinip,
Kundi datos at ideyang mabilis sumisilip;
Mga tanong na dati'y hirap intindihin at sagutin,
Ngayo'y kayang himayin, hanggat unti-unting linawin.

Sa bawat pindot ng daliri, mundo'y nabubuksan,
Mga aral ay tila abot-kamay ang nalalman;
Larawan, mga bidyo, at tunog na malinaw,
Sa isip ng mag-aaral ay agad sumisibol ang natatanging ilaw.

Ngunit sa likod nitong napaka talinong makina,
May mga tanong na dapat ding pagnilayan ng madla;
Hanggang saan kaya ang dapat nitong nakasaklaw,
At ano ang papel ng guro may tunay na gabay and tanaw?

Hindi mapapalitan ang pusong gusting magtuturo,
Ang malasakit at tiyaga na walang kapalit na ginto;
Ang bawat payo, haplos, sa mga bata lalo na ang paggabay,
Ay higit pa sa algorithm na walang damdaming taglay.

Sa paggamit at pagtuklas ng AI, dapat ay wasto,
Hindi maging daan tungo sa paglimot sa prinsipyo;
Katotohanan at dangal ay dapat manaig at magningning,
Sa gitna ng inobasyong mabilis sumibol at umigting.

Sa educkasyong pananaliksik, ito'y katuwang na tunay,
Sa pagbuo ng ideya'y nagbibigay-linaw at himpay;
Ngunit ang pag-iisip ay huwag ipasa,
Sapagkat doon nahuhubog ang talinong may saysay at kusa.

Sa pagkakaiba-iba ng mga mag-aaral sa klase,
AI'y nagiging tulay na may kakayahang magbalanse;
May tulong sa nahuhuli at hamon sa magaling,
Upang lahat ay sabay-sabay na umasenso at umalingawngaw ang galing.

Ngunit may panganib ding kaakibat ang paggamit nito,
AN paglubog ng isip na minsay nakikita rito;
Kapag sariling sipag at tiyaga ay tuluyang nawala,
Pagkatuto'y mababaw, tila hungkag na bula.

Kaya't balanse ang dapat pairalin,
Teknolohiya't pagkatao'y pag-isahin;
Sa bawat aral na ating binubuo,
Pagpapahalaga sa tao'y laging isentro.

Sa guro pa rin ang huling kapasyahan,
Kung paano gagamitin ang makabagong kasangkapan;
Siya ang ilaw na hindi kukupas kailanman,
Sa puso ng bawat batang naghahanap ng kaalaman.

Sa hinaharap na ating patutunguhan,
AI at edukasyon ay maglalakbay nang magkaugnay;
Ngunit tandaan sa bawat hakbang at yugto,
Ang edukasyon ay puso, AI ang dugo ngunit ang tao ang sentro.



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Bahala na si Batman

Sa lungsod na luha ang hiningang bayan,
Usok ng pangarap ay putol na daan,
Pangako sa hangin, pawang kawalan,
Bawat sigaw ng tao'y lihim na diliman.

Sa kanto ng gutom at pagod na laban,
May batang naglalakad sa sirang daan,
Pangarap na ginto'y naging kasalanan,
Dahil hustisya'y lasing sa sariling kawalan.

"Bahala na si Batman," sigaw ng bayan,
Hindi bayani, kundi pagod na kamalayan,
Tatakbong anino ng takot sa laban,
Pag-asa'y itinago sa madilim na kulungan.

Ngunit sino ba siya sa likod ng laban?
Alamat na hinugis ng takot sa kamalayan,
Maskarang pampawi sa lungkot ng bayan,
Ngunit hindi sagot sa sugat ng kawalan.

Sa dulo ng gabi ng hungkag na laban,
Walang dumating na ilaw ng tagumpay,
Ang Batman ay gunita ng takot na kamalayan,
Na ang pag-asa'y hindi iniaasa sa daan.

Kaya gising, bayan sa sariling laban,
Walang bayani kung wala kang kamalayan,
"Bahala na si Batman" ay paalalang hangganan,
Na ikaw ang sagot sa sariling kawalan.



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Politics in the Age of Social Media: Participation Without Critical Thinking?

In contemporary society, social media has become a powerful force in shaping political awareness, participation, and discourse. Platforms such as Facebook and TikTok have transformed ordinary citizens into active participants in political conversations. What was once confined to formal institutions, mainstream media, and elite circles is now accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Indeed, politics on social media is so influential that even individuals who are timid in real-life settings can now express their opinions freely, often without fear of immediate social consequences.

Across generations, social media has become a primary source of political information. People use these platforms to watch news updates, examine the platforms of political candidates, monitor infrastructure projects, and even track local incidents such as road accidents or government failures. This accessibility has undeniably increased political awareness and engagement. From a democratic perspective, this appears beneficial: citizens are more informed, more vocal, and more involved in governance processes. In many ways, social media has democratized political participation by lowering barriers to entry and amplifying the voices of previously marginalized people.

However, this increased participation raises a critical concern: Does greater engagement necessarily lead to better democratic outcomes? While social media encourages political expression, it often weakens the public's capacity for critical thinking and informed decision-making. The speed and volume of information circulating online make it difficult for individuals to verify facts before reacting. In many cases, users share posts, comment on issues, and form opinions based on incomplete, misleading, or entirely false information. The culture of "instant reaction" has replaced the discipline of careful analysis.

One of the most alarming issues is the decline of fact-checking behavior among users. Many individuals, regardless of educational background or professional status – fail to verify the accuracy of the content they consume and share. The algorithm-driven nature of platforms like Facebook and TikTok further exacerbates this problem by prioritizing viral, emotionally engaging content over factual, balanced reporting. As a result, misinformation spreads rapidly, often shaping public opinion more effectively than verified information.

Moreover, social media has contributed to the personalization of politics, where emotional appeal outweighs competence and accountability. Voters are increasingly influenced by what is “viral” rather than what is truthful or substantive. Political candidates who appear kind, relatable, or “kawawa” (pitiful) often gain public sympathy, regardless of their actual track record. This creates a dangerous dynamic in electoral decision-making, where popularity replaces merit and emotional narratives overshadow evidence-based evaluation. Consequently, individuals may support leaders without fully considering their past actions, including any involvement in corruption, inefficiency, or policies that have harmed the nation.

This phenomenon also reflects a deeper issue: the erosion of political accountability in the digital age. When citizens rely heavily on unverified information, they become more susceptible to manipulation, propaganda, and disinformation campaigns. Instead of holding leaders accountable, the public may unknowingly reinforce harmful political behavior by supporting individuals based on distorted narratives. In this sense, social media does not merely reflect political reality, it actively shapes and, at times, distorts it.

Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that social media is not inherently harmful. Its capacity to mobilize citizens, raise awareness, and promote civic engagement remains valuable. Social media has played a role in exposing government failures, encouraging public discourse, and even facilitating collective action. However, these benefits can only be sustained if users develop a stronger sense of digital responsibility and critical thinking.

The question is not whether social media should be part of politics, it already is but how it should be used. A politically engaged society that lacks critical thinking is vulnerable to manipulation and poor decision-making. If citizens continue to rely solely on what they see online without verifying its accuracy, the consequences may be severe, particularly in the selection of national leaders. Democracy depends not only on participation but also on informed participation.

In a nutshell, while social media has significantly boosted political engagement across generations, it has also introduced serious risks to democratic processes. The challenge for society is to strike a balance between participation and critical analysis. Without this balance, the very tool that empowers citizens may ultimately weaken the foundations of democracy.

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In the Quiet of Night, She Finds Her Release

I know the weight of her hands better than anyone. Not by sight, not by habit, but by something deeper, something that lingers in the small spaces between her thoughts. Her fingers close around me with a kind of quiet urgency, as if she has been waiting for this moment without realizing it.

She does not rush at first. She lets the feeling settle. A slow start, light, almost teasing, before the pressure begins. A gentle glide that soon turns firmer, deeper, more certain. She leans in without noticing, her body following the motion, her breath soft but steady.

Then it builds.

Again and again, she moves with growing intensity. There is a rhythm she falls into, one that seems to take over her completely. Her grip tightens, her pace quickens, and she does not stop, not when she could, not when she should.

There is something about the way she holds on. Something that says she needs this.

I remember, by her third year at college, she had learned how to carry herself well. She smiled when needed. Spoke when required. Stayed quiet when it was easier. From the outside, she looked composed, steady, untouched by the quiet weight she carried within.

But I could feel it.

In the hesitation. In the pauses. In the way she would begin, then pull away, as if afraid of going too far.

She was searching. Not loudly. Not openly. But constantly.

Until she brought me into a space that felt different. It was not calm. It was not careful. It was alive. Voices moved quickly. Nothing stayed still for long. Everything demanded attention, demanded effort, demanded something real.

And I know she almost withdrew. Her hold loosened for a moment. But then she tightened again. And this time, she did not hold back.

What followed was no longer careful.

She moved with purpose, longer, stronger, more certain than before. The hesitation faded into something smoother, something continuous. She leaned closer, stayed longer, let herself go further each time.

There were nights when she would not release me at all. When the movement became fluid, almost instinctive. When the pressure deepened and the rhythm carried her forward without pause. When everything she held inside began to spill out without restraint.

She gave herself to it. Completely.

And in doing so, she found something she had been missing. Not perfection. Not certainty, but something that felt like her own.

Still, even in that closeness, the struggle remained. It surfaced in the brief stillness before she continued. In the way her grip would tighten, not out of control, but out of doubt. In the quiet question that lingered beneath everything she did.

Was this enough?
Was she doing enough?

But instead of pulling away, she stayed. She pressed with greater urgency. Again. And again.

Like something stirring beneath her skin, hidden at first, then slowly pushing its way through. Like a quiet resistance giving in, parting just enough to let her go deeper. Like something inside her stretching upward, reaching for a release it can almost feel, but not yet fully touch.

Now, when she reaches for me, it feels different.

There is still heat in her movement, still depth in her touch, but it is no longer uncertain. She does not force it anymore. She allows it. Follows it. Trusts where it leads.

And I move with her. Always.

I am there in every moment she begins. Every time she returns. Every time she chooses to stay, even when the weight inside her threatens to pull her away. I feel it in her, the way her breath stumbles, then grows heavier, until it turns into soft, uneven pants she can no longer control. Each movement pulls something out of her, something she tries to hold in, but it keeps slipping through anyway.

A sound escape, low, shaky, almost a groan, caught too late, as if it surprises even her. Her fingers tighten around me. She moves again, slower this time, then deeper still, as if chasing something just out of reach. And even when she pauses, just for a moment, it is never to stop, only to steady herself, to catch her breath, before she goes at it again.



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But I am not what she longs for.

I am not what keeps her close, what draws her in, what makes her linger longer than she intends.

I am only what she uses. The instrument she presses into the page, again and again, since the day she found her place in journalism, and with it, a voice she never knew she had.

What once stayed buried inside her began to take shape, to find direction, to be heard. It was there that she learned not just how to write, but how to face herself, to hold her thoughts without fear, and to finally let them out without restraint.

And everything you thought you saw was only ink finding its way out of her.



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Power Without Accountability: Abusive Leadership in Bureaucracy

In both private and public institutions, leadership is often portrayed as the driving force behind organizational success. However, this assumption deserves closer scrutiny. Leadership does not automatically produce positive outcomes; rather, its impact depends on how power is exercised and constrained. Drawing from eleven years of experience across sectors, it becomes evident that one of the most persistent yet underexamined problems in bureaucratic systems is not merely poor leadership, but the normalization of unaccountable power. When authority operates without effective checks, it does not simply fail to inspire; it actively produces abusive practices that undermine both employees and institutional integrity.

Classical theories of bureaucracy, particularly those associated with Max Weber, envision a system grounded in rationality, merit, and rule-based governance. In theory, bureaucracy minimizes personal bias and ensures efficiency through clearly defined hierarchies and procedures. However, this idealized model often collapses in practice. Instead of functioning as a neutral system, bureaucracy can become a space where authority is personalized and insulated from accountability. In such contexts, hierarchical power is not restrained by rules, they reinforce it.

A critical issue emerges when leaders interpret their authority as unquestionable dominance rather than delegated responsibility. The suppression of employee initiative is a clear manifestation of this distortion. Innovative ideas from subordinates are not evaluated on their merit but are dismissed as threats to authority. This reflects what political theorists describe as power-preservation behavior, in which individuals prioritize maintaining control over achieving institutional goals. In this sense, abusive leadership is not accidental, it is a rational response within a system that rewards compliance over competence.

Moreover, practices such as publicly humiliating employees reveal a deeper structural problem. These actions are often justified as disciplinary measures, yet they function more as symbolic displays of power. By asserting dominance in public spaces, supervisors reinforce hierarchical boundaries and discourage dissent. The consequence is not improved performance but the creation of a workplace governed by fear. From an organizational behavior perspective, fear-based management may produce short-term compliance but ultimately erodes trust, weakens morale, and diminishes long-term productivity.

This dynamic exposes a contradiction at the heart of bureaucratic institutions. While they claim to operate on principles of efficiency and rationality, they often tolerate behaviors that are fundamentally irrational and counterproductive. Human capital—widely acknowledged as the most valuable resource in public administration, is systematically undermined. Employees who feel threatened or undervalued are less likely to contribute meaningfully, resulting in reduced innovation and institutional stagnation.

Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of unaccountable leadership is the institutionalization of silence. In highly hierarchical systems, employees frequently refrain from reporting abuse due to fear of retaliation or skepticism toward grievance mechanisms. This reflects a broader failure of governance within organizations: accountability structures exist in form but not in function. Without credible avenues for redress, abusive practices persist unchecked, becoming embedded in organizational culture.

This phenomenon can be analyzed through the lens of democratic theory. Just as democratic states require checks and balances to prevent the abuse of political power, bureaucratic institutions also require internal mechanisms to regulate authority. In the absence of such mechanisms, leadership devolves into what may be described as micro-level authoritarianism, a form of control exercised within organizations that mirrors the dynamics of authoritarian rule at the state level. The issue, therefore, is not limited to individual behavior but is systemic, rooted in weak institutional safeguards.

In contrast, supportive leadership demonstrates that alternative models are not only possible but more effective. Leaders who encourage participation, respect employee dignity, and provide constructive feedback foster environments where individuals are motivated to perform. Importantly, this is not merely a moral argument, it is an empirical one. Organizations characterized by trust and psychological safety consistently outperform those governed by fear. Thus, ethical leadership is not a soft ideal but a strategic necessity.

The persistence of abusive leadership in bureaucracy raises a fundamental question: why do institutions tolerate what they know to be harmful? The answer lies in the absence of meaningful accountability. As long as leaders are evaluated solely on outputs rather than processes, abusive practices may continue to be overlooked or even indirectly rewarded. This highlights the need for a shift from performance-based evaluation alone to ethics-based governance frameworks.

Power, by its nature, is not inherently destructive. However, when it is detached from accountability, it becomes corrosive. Bureaucratic institutions must therefore move beyond formal hierarchies and cultivate systems that actively check authority, protect employees, and promote transparency. Without such reforms, leadership will continue to reproduce patterns of abuse that compromise both human dignity and organizational effectiveness.

In the end, the problem is not simply that abusive leaders exist, it is that institutions allow them to thrive. Until accountability becomes an operational reality rather than a rhetorical ideal, bureaucracy will remain vulnerable to the very abuses it was designed to prevent.

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The Moment I Stop Pretending

As children, we all had dreams we believed would someday become real. We imagined ourselves wearing uniforms, building futures, and becoming the people we wanted to be. For us, becoming engineers and pursuing careers beyond the ordinary once felt certain. Whenever people asked what we wanted to become in the future, we answered with confidence and excitement because those dreams were genuine.

Growing up, we worked hard in school and carried those dreams with us through the years. We believed that determination alone would be enough to reach them. But life does not always follow the plans we carefully create in our minds. Sometimes, reality changes our direction because of circumstances, responsibilities, financial struggles, expectations, and fear of disappointing the people around us.

One of us dreamed of becoming a civil engineer since childhood. That dream became stronger while studying and achieving honors in school. During graduation, it was proudly shared in front of teachers, classmates, and family members. However, the school nearby only offered the GAS strand instead of STEM, and later on, the college close to home did not offer Civil Engineering. Because of financial struggles and practicality, Education became the chosen course instead. At first, it felt painful and forced, as if life suddenly redirected a dream that had been carefully built for years.

Another one of us also dreamed of becoming an engineer. There was fascination in buildings, bridges, and creating meaningful things through calculations and designs. But as time passed, life complications and unexpected changes slowly pushed that dream farther away. Instead of entering engineering school, Education became the path that had to be taken. For a long time, there was envy toward people who seemed to be living the exact dreams they planned for themselves. It felt difficult accepting a course that was never originally chosen.

Then there was another hidden dream silently growing in the heart. Behind the smiles of being a third-year BS Education Science student was the truth that teaching was never the

real dream. The true passion was broadcasting—speaking confidently, sharing stories, delivering news, and connecting with people through words and voice. Every time broadcasters appeared on television or were heard on the radio, inspiration followed. It felt like that was where the heart truly belonged.

For a long time, pretending became part of everyday life. Pretending to be completely happy with the chosen course. Pretending to have already moved on from the dreams that once meant everything. Pretending that the pain of letting go no longer existed. But pretending is exhausting. It slowly hides who we truly are until we feel trapped in a life that no longer reflects our real selves.

The moment we stop pretending is the moment we finally become honest with ourselves. It is admitting that it hurts when dreams change. It is recognizing that accepting reality does not mean giving up on our passions. Sometimes, acceptance simply means understanding that life has its own timing and direction for us.

As Education students, we slowly discovered lessons we never expected to learn. Teaching showed us patience, compassion, understanding, and the importance of guiding others. Little by little, Education stopped becoming only a “second choice” and started becoming a meaningful journey that shaped us into stronger people.

Outside academics, we also found comfort in the things we love. Chess taught us that every move in life requires patience and strategy. Watching races and hearing inspiring stories reminded us that setbacks are normal in every journey. Even successful people experience failures and unexpected turns, yet they continue moving forward despite everything.

Today, we may not yet be the engineers or broadcasters we once imagined becoming, but that does not mean our dreams are gone forever. Dreams sometimes change shape, pause for a while, or take a different route before finally finding their place in our lives.

Life is not about pretending to be someone we are not just to satisfy other people’s expectations. Life is about discovering who we truly are, accepting our real passions, and having the courage to continue chasing the dreams that give our hearts happiness and purpose.

Maybe we are still students trying to figure out our paths, but one thing is certain: we no longer want to live pretending. Instead, we choose to grow, accept our struggles, and believe that someday, in God’s perfect time, the dreams we once set aside may still find their way back to us.

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Kapangyarihan o Karapatan

Kapangyarihan na syang pinag-ugatan,
o Karapatan na ating kapangyarihan?

Sa mundong ating ginagalawan,
Tila isang madilim na daan;
Hindi mawari kung saan ang patutunguhan.
Karapatan ang sigaw ng bayan,
Hustisya ang daing ng mamamayan.

Ngunit sa ating pamahalaan,
Tila isang malaking kahibangan;
Sarili at yaman ang kanilang nais pahalagahan.
Kapangyarihan na nag dulot sa kasamaan
Ay mauuwi lang sa isang karahasan.

Isang bansang pinag isa,
Hangarin ay maging magkasama,
Ngunit sadyang magkaiba
Kanya kaniyang paniniwala.
Pero san nga ba ito mapupunta?

Mga posisyon na tila isang laruan,
Na hangad ng bayan ay paglingkuran.
"Bagong Pilipinas" ang nais hagkan,
Ngunit tila bagong mga pinuno ang dapat pag laanan.
Masasabing may mga pinag aralan

Pero tila wari ay isang basong walang laman.
Bagong posisyon, bagong plataporma ang kinakailangan,
Pero sigaw ng mamamayan: "Nasaan?"



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Gurong Kakayahang Umangkop

Sa silid na hitik sa iba't ibang aral na may ilaw,
Guro sa Filipino'y hindi lang wika ang saklaw;
Sa Agham, Matematika, at iba't iba pang mga larangan,
Kakayahan niya'y buong pusong iniaalay sa kabataan.

Hindi man asignaturang Filipino ang tinuturo,
Ang pagtatrabaho'y ginagabayan ng sipag at loob;
Sa bawat konseptong banyaga sa pandinig,
Ginagawang payak upang agad maunawaan at marinig.

Sa Syensiya at Matematika'y lohika ang pinaiiral,
Ngunit puso ang puhunan sa bawat pag-aaral;
Sa numero't simbolong tila nakalilito,
Guro ang tulay upang ito'y maging klaro.

Sa Agham ay tuklas ang laging hangarin,
Katanungan ng bata'y di kailanman lilimutin;
Kahit kulang sa kagamitan at pondo,
Diskarte at tiyaga ang nagiging sandata nito.

Sa Araling Panlipunan, kasaysayan ay binubuhay,
Mga aral ng nakaraan ay muling isinasaysay;
Sa lente ng guro'y nagiging makabuluhan,
Ang pagkatao ng Pilipino at kanyang pinagmulan.

Sa Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan,
Kasanayan sa buhay ang siyang pinayayaman;
Hindi lang isip kundi kamay ang ginagabayan,
Upang sa hinaharap ay maging handa ang kabataan.

Sa Ingles man o iba pang asignatura,
Gurong Filipino'y patuloy na nagbabasa;

Nag-aaral muli upang higit na mahasa,
Para sa estudyanteng umaasa sa kanyang sigla.

Sa kabila ng dami ng gawaing pasan,
Hindi matitinag ang kanyang paninindigan;
Pagod man ang katawan sa araw-araw,
Ngunit puso'y buo sa serbisyong umiilaw.

May hamon sa kakulangan ng pagsasanay,
At limitadong oras upang lahat ay maging mahusay;
Ngunit sa bawat suliraning kinahaharap,
Dedikasyon niya'y di kailanman matitinag.

Siya ang huwaran ng kakayahang umangkop,
Sa pagbabagong dala ng bagong panahong sakop;
Kahit iba-ibang asignatura ang hawak,
Sa bawat isa'y may bakas ng kanyang pagsisikap.

Sa bawat aral na kanyang naipapamana,
Hindi lamang kaalaman kundi ang salitang pag-asa;
Na kaya mong matuto kahit saan ka ilagay,
Basta may gurong may pusong handang umalalay at umakay.

Sa huli'y hindi asignatura ang sukatan,
Kundi pusong handang maglingkod sa bayan;
Gurong Filipino, saan man ituro'y dakila,
Sapagkat sa bawat bata, siya'y nag-iisang pag-asa.



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From Rabbit Pairs to ϕ

Many students perceive mathematics as dull and boring, describing it as too abstract and difficult to comprehend. For that reason, the true beauty and elegance of the subject have always been overlooked by the students. However, exploring the Fibonacci sequence can change this perspective. This fascinating topic uncovers hidden patterns within our world and the universe, particularly through its compelling connection with the Golden Ratio.

The Fibonacci sequence is defined as a sequence with two initial terms of 1. And to find the next term, simply add the two preceding terms. Thus, the sequence is as follows:

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, and so on.

The story of the Fibonacci sequence began with its appearance in the book of Leonardo of Pisa, *Liber Abaci*, as a rabbit problem, which was published in 1202. The book was used to introduce and popularize the Hindu-Arabic numeral system, which we use today. In one section of the book, Leonardo of Pisa introduced this rabbit problem:

"A man put a male-female pair of newly born rabbits in a field. Rabbits take a month to mature before mating. One month after mating, females give birth to one male-female pair and then mate again. No rabbits die. How many rabbit pairs are there after one year?" (Translation from Math Libretexts)

Solving the problem, there will be 233 pairs of rabbits after one year. Following the conditions presented in the problem, a sequence will be formed. This sequence is what we called as the Fibonacci sequence. So, the famous Fibonacci sequence is simply a solution to the rabbit problem. And the interesting fact is that the rabbit problem is not actually the highlight of that book; it is just an exercise.

Given its non-significance in the book, some mathematicians became fascinated with the rabbit problem. One of them was Édouard Lucas, a French mathematician, who officially named the rabbit problem as the Fibonacci sequence in 1877 (Ghose, 2024). But why is it called Fibonacci sequence, not Pisa sequence or Leonardo sequence? Historians in the 19th century came up with this nickname for him, Fibonacci, to distinguish him from other Leonardo during his time (Ghose, 2024). The name Fibonacci was derived from the Latin term "filius," which means "son," and the name Bonacci, which translates to "son of Bonacci." This is because his father's name was Guglielmo Bonacci.

Interestingly, if we work closely with the Fibonacci numbers, we can discover something fascinating. As cited by Brahier (2019), mathematician Johannes Kepler discovered the connection between the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio. He discovered that the ratio of two consecutive Fibonacci numbers created a new sequence, and it approaches the mysterious Divine Proportion, or commonly known as the golden ratio, which is approximately equal to 1.618. Presented below are the Fibonacci sequence and the ratio of consecutive Fibonacci numbers:

Fibonacci Sequence	Ratio of Consecutive Fibonacci Numbers
1	-
1	1
2	2
3	1.5
5	1.6666666667
8	1.6
13	1.625
21	1.61538461538
34	1.61904761905
55	1.61764705882
89	1.61818181818
144	1.61797752809
233	1.61805555556
377	1.61802575107
610	1.6180371353
987	1.6180327869
1597	1.6180344478
2584	1.6180338134
...	

Based on the table, we can observe that as the Fibonacci numbers increase, their ratio approaches the golden ratio. This observation leads us to an interesting insight. If we focus on the ratios and do some manipulations, we can see another perspective that reveals the meaningful connection between the Fibonacci numbers and the golden ratio.

Let's begin with the first ratio, which is $\frac{1}{1}$, and that gives us 1. Expressed as an equation, we have $\frac{1}{1} = 1$. The next ratio is $\frac{2}{1}$, and we are going to rewrite this using only the number 1 for the purpose of derivation. Thus, we have $\frac{1+1}{1}$, and let's rewrite it as:

$$\frac{1}{1} + \frac{1}{1} = 1 + \frac{1}{1}.$$

Now, let's proceed to the next ratio, which is $\frac{3}{2}$. Like the previous ratios, let's rewrite this using only the number 1. So, we have $\frac{2+1}{2} = \frac{2}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1 + \frac{1}{2}$. Since on the previous ratio, we have shown that $2 = 1 + \frac{1}{1}$. Therefore, by substituting 2 with $1 + \frac{1}{1}$, we have:

$$\frac{3}{2} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} = 1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1}}.$$

To continue, the next ratio is $\frac{5}{3}$. So, doing what we have been doing on the previous ratios, we have $\frac{3+2}{3} = \frac{3}{3} + \frac{2}{3} = 1 + \frac{2}{3}$. Now, the question that will arise here is that, how we can change $\frac{2}{3}$ to become a complex fraction with only ones. Previously, we have defined that $\frac{3}{2} = 1 + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1}}$. We know that $\frac{2}{3} = \frac{1}{\frac{3}{2}}$. Using this fact, we can show that $\frac{5}{3} = 1 + \frac{2}{3} = 1 + \frac{1}{\frac{3}{2}}$. Substituting $\frac{3}{2}$ by $1 + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1}}$, we have,

$$\frac{5}{3} = 1 + \frac{2}{3} = 1 + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1}}}$$

Moving on to the next ratio, we have $\frac{8}{5}$. Rewriting this, we have $\frac{8}{5} = \frac{5+3}{5} = \frac{5}{5} + \frac{3}{5} = 1 + \frac{3}{5}$. Using the fact that $\frac{3}{5} = \frac{1}{\frac{5}{3}}$, we have

$$\frac{8}{5} = 1 + \frac{3}{5} = 1 + \frac{1}{\frac{5}{3}} = 1 + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{1}}}}$$

Continuing this process, we will result in a continued fraction with only ones. Now, let's define the golden ratio as equal to this continued fraction, which continues infinitely. So, we have

$$\phi = 1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{\dots}}}}$$

Using the Fibonacci numbers, we can rewrite the golden ratio using an infinite continued fraction where the pattern repeats indefinitely. Now, solving for the value of ϕ , we can simplify the equation above by replacing the denominator on the right-hand side with ϕ , since they are equal as shown in the original equation. Therefore, the resulting equation will be,

$$\phi = 1 + \frac{1}{\phi}$$

Now, let's solve for the value of ϕ using the method of completing the square.

Step 1

$$\begin{aligned}\phi &= 1 + \frac{1}{\phi} \\ \phi^2 &= \phi + 1\end{aligned}$$

Multiply both sides by ϕ to eliminate the denominator.

Step 2

$$\phi^2 - \phi = 1$$

Subtract ϕ from both sides.

Step 3

$$\begin{aligned}\phi^2 - \phi + \frac{1}{4} &= 1 + \frac{1}{4} \\ \phi^2 - \phi + \frac{1}{4} &= \frac{5}{4}\end{aligned}$$

Add $\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = \frac{1}{4}$ to both sides to complete the square.

Step 4	$\left(\phi - \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = \frac{5}{4}$	Rewrite the left side as a perfect square.
Step 5	$\phi - \frac{1}{2} = \pm \frac{\sqrt{5}}{2}$	Take the square root of both sides.
Step 6	$\phi = \frac{1}{2} \pm \frac{\sqrt{5}}{2}$ $\phi = \frac{1 \pm \sqrt{5}}{2}$	Add $\frac{1}{2}$ to both sides to solve for ϕ .
Step 7	$\phi = \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} = 1.618 \dots$	The golden ratio is the positive solution.

Therefore, the values of ϕ are $\frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ and $\frac{1-\sqrt{5}}{2}$. By taking the positive result, we obtain $\frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2} = 1.61803398875 \dots$ This is now the value of the golden ratio. It is an irrational number, as its decimal part continues indefinitely without any discernible pattern.

It is truly mind-blowing how a simple exercise involving rabbits could lead us to the Divine proportion, the golden ratio. This shows the true elegance of mathematics: from one simple concept and through manipulation, it unveils connections to other mathematical truths. While many students find these abstract concepts difficult to comprehend, studying and appreciating them allows us to uncover the hidden patterns carved in the world we live in. With the vast influence of the golden ratio, we have to ask: is this all just a coincidence? Perhaps the Fibonacci sequence was never a solution to the rabbit problem, but a purposeful sequence left for us to discover, suggesting a higher being who intended for us to fathom the true beauty of the universe through mathematics.

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Pan-Daog!

Ang pan o tinapay mohatag og kalipay
Sa kasing-kasing mopuno nga walay pagmahay
Sa tiyan nga nag-kutoy kini mobusog
Apan tinuod ba gayud na kini ang modaog?

Kung ang pan sumpayan og daog, subo paminawon
Mao ni sila ang naningkamot buntag hantod hapon
Para sa pamilya adunay mapakaon
Breadwinner kung atua silang tawgon.

Ang kalisud sa pagmasa sa pan, ilaha pud natagamtaman
Singot og dugo ang ilahang puhonan
Ni kaugalingon, ilaha nang malimtan
Alang sa kalipay sa igsoon, inahan, og amahan.

Wala pay adlaw, sila mata na
Kay ang responsibilidad, hastang daghana
Ang pagbati murag gi-Oven, init og nagatuyok
Sa ilang pag-uli walay kauban ang kakapoy og pagmogtuk.

Mao ba kini ang gitawag og "pan-daog"?
Kay nakabati sila nga sila gi-daog daog
Nga kung dili kahatag, pamilya masuko og moyawyaw
Kalisud ba aning ikaw ang tanan mo pakyaw.

Sa mata sa breadwinner, ang tabang gikan sa kasing-kasing
Pero adunay panahon, na kini kay mabagting
Bisan pagsobra ang gihatag, pirmi gihapon kulang
Halos tanan nalang ilang itabang.

Apan ilang kalibutan motuyok nalang ba sa pagtabang?
Unsaon nalang ang ugma kung wala naalang-alang?
Ang breadwinner susama sa pan, amagon og mapan-os
Ang ilang tabang og pasensya, mahurot murag hunos.

Untana puhon, ang breadwinner tinuod modaog
Dili lang ilang pamilya ilahang mabusog
Apil usab ilang mga pangandoy, makita og makab-ot
Sa kalibutan na puno kaayo og kagubot.



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Akala ko...Ikaw na talaga

Akala ko ikaw na talaga
Sapagkat abot tenga ang ngiti mula gabi hanggang umaga
Sa bawat oras, ikaw lang ang nasa-isip
Isa lang ba itong panaginip?

Kapag ikaw ay kapiling para akong nasa duyan
Ang iyong mga bisig ang aking naging kanlungan
Sa hirap at ginahawa tayo ay magkapiling
Ikaw ang sagot sa aking mga hiling.

Kung ako ay galit, nandiyan ka para manuyo
Kapag naman malungkot, nagbibigay ka ng panyo
Ikaw ang taong bumuo ng aking mundo
Ikaw rin pala ang sisira rito.

Akala ko totoo, mali pala ako
Umasa ako, na hindi ka manloloko
Lahat pala ay isa lamang ilusyon
Kaya walang pagsidlan ang aking emosyon.

Mabigat sa dibdib, ngunit dapat tanggapin
At maniwala na lang na may ibang taong laan para sa atin
Hindi man tayo sa huli, pero aking babaunin
Saglit na pagpapamahal na inalay mo sa akin

Ang buhay nga naman, pinaghalong lungkot at saya
Puno ng misteryo at pag-aakala
Ngunit ating pakakatandaan, may isang taong nakalaan
Na magmamahal sa atin matapos man ang sanlibutan



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Amigo, Amiga

Ang trabaho mingaw og laay kung wala atong amigo og amiga
Sila ang naghatag og ngisi apil na ang dakong katawa
Atong sandiganan, sila pirmi naa sa atong kiliran
Sila naghatag og suporta sa nagatuyok natong kalibutan.

Ilang pulong tinud-anay og walay atik
Matahon ta nila sa kamatuoran na walay sagol plastik
Ilahang tambag dako kaayo og ambag sa atoa
Na atong magamit kung kita na mag-inusara.

Sa kalisod, sila pirmi atong duolan
Gamit ang dunggan og kasing-kasing, ilaha tang paminawan
Sa hilak na makusog, andam sila sa pag-alalay
Mao ni ang amiga na wala jud kay mahay

Apan adunay panahon na kita manluod sa ila
Gamay na butang apan kailangan og istorya
Sa ilang mensahe, kita dili mochika
Apil sa pagpansin, motalikod ta nila

Apan kani na panghitabo, normal ra sa tinuod na amigo og amiga
Kay mao ni mosukod sa atong pasensya og gugma
Sa atong kauban sa ngisi og sa katawa
Kung tinuod ba gyud sila sa atoa

Mao ni ang tinuod na amigo og amiga
Sa kalain og sa kalipay, sila anaa
Maong ato silang higugmaon og amumahon
Kaubanon sa pagkab-ot sa atong mga puhon.



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Life Beyond Four Corners: How do learners with special needs navigate to the real world?

One of the most important things that an educational institution does for learners with disabilities is to be able to improve their quality of life through educational programs. When we talk about programs particularly in special education, it is the transition program that will enable this individual to be functional and independent in the society that they are living with. Moreover, transition programs play a pivotal role in creating a life beyond the four corners of the classroom- as this program prepares the learners with special needs on real-world life outside high school.

Each country has its own way of implementing this program. In the US, as early as 14 years old when the institutions along with the team of teachers, parents, health professionals, and the child themselves create the transition planning- the very first part of transition program. Through transition planning, all the things that are necessary to be discussed will be carefully included in the plan that also covers the curriculum. As per Lo (2024): in the transition planning, the team must work together in accordance with what is in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) of the learner. In this way, there will be team effort in the transition period of the learners with special educational needs.

On the other hand, in the context of our country which is the Philippines, transition program has a clear policy, and guidelines as mandated by the Department of Education through D.O 21, series of 2020. In the said order, it was clarified how educational institutions prepare a transition program for the learner with disabilities (LWDs). The mere question is, how do these programs start? It starts with a thorough evaluation and diagnostic of the child with the help of the health professionals who will assess the status of the child. And the result will be used by the special education teacher in making the Individual Transition Plan (ITP). Why is it that it is individualized? The rationale behind is of course, the ITP must be tailored to the needs of the child. No two individuals will have the same ITP as was clearly made solely based on the result of the assessment of the health professionals. As Department of Education (2020) stated also in the said order that in the ITP, there is a transition curriculum that must be followed. This curriculum has different packages solely tailored depending on the capability of the child. We have enrichment, career, livelihood, pre-vocational, functional

academics, life skills, and caregiving. Every package has unique performance requirements as well as the content standards and competences needed to get students ready for adulthood. After the completion of the package will be the life path of the learners with disabilities. These life paths could be in the form of further education, employment, and functional life paths aimed to achieve and produce functional literate individuals in our society.

The said program wouldn't be possible without the help and guidance of each educational institution who will assist in the creating of smooth transition of LWDs. Indeed, they play a very big part in preparing the LWDs for life. This is supported by the study of Dzamukashvili and Mikeladze (2023) who revealed that schools play an important role in implementing transition programs for learners with special educational needs. They further emphasized that there is a need for training, resources, and cooperation among the team involved in making the transition program for it to become effective. This also coincides in the study of Ali (2023) where they emphasized how important educational institutions are in providing tailored programs focusing on employment and further education for learners with disabilities.

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academics, life skills, and caregiving. Every package has unique performance requirements as well as the content standards and competences needed to get students ready for adulthood. After the completion of the package will be the life path of the learners with disabilities. These life paths could be in the form of further education, employment, and functional life paths aimed to achieve and produce functional literate individuals in our society.

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Fostering Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity: The Role of Institutions in a Diverse World

The key to having a more inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment is through the initiatives of each educational institution. As each school has their own way of achieving our common and shared goal and that is to offer the best learning experience to our dear clients-the students where barriers are being removed and diversity is being promoted.

One of the ways that an institution could foster is through the enhancement with the admission policy where all the students will be admitted regardless of their race, socio-economic status, gender, culture, or learner with disabilities. As I am currently connected in a higher education institution, our institution practices no discrimination when it comes to accepting students. In this way, all the students will feel that they are given the freedom to be part of the institution that they want to attend.

The notion above is supported by R.A no. 7277 or also known as Magna Carta for Disabled persons where in the provision stated in chapter 2- Education section 12 where it emphasized that admission policy should be enhance that could cater all type of learners including those with disabilities and they should be denied from it as everyone has an equal right (National Council on Disability Affairs, n.d.). Moreover, in the book chapter of Weller (2023) he shared that in China, they shifted their admission policy into a more inclusive one as they aid the diversity of the students for marginalized groups for a fairer education. This practices on the inclusive admission policy is also being implemented in India as revealed by Dey and Bika (2023) that the said country has progressive policies aiming to improve equal opportunity especially for those who has special needs.

On the other hand, another way that an institution could foster a culturally sensitive environment is through recognizing the different cultural backgrounds and practices of each learner. With this, the integration in the curriculum about Indigenous People education is one of the initiatives that an institution could do to foster sensitivity when it comes to culture among all learners. To share with you, in the institution that I am currently connected with, we did a curriculum revision where we integrated an institutional subject solely created for the purposes of introducing the different IP communities in our Region. Through this, it fosters cultural sensitivity as the students will learn the differences between culture and its respective importance. This is supported by Mehta (2024) who stated that a culturally responsive curriculum integrates that promotion of cultural background that paved the way for academic success as it fills the gaps on the cultural differences among the students.

Another way for the educational institution to foster inclusivity is to see to it that the facilities and learning environment consider students with disabilities. How can a student

learn if the environment is the one that hampers their learning? In this sense, the environment of the institutions served as the one who promotes access of this learner and if the facilities are not accessible. Then, we could generalize that certain institutions give so much weight on considering easy access to facilities among learners with disabilities. Ramps and handrails as well as schedule modification could really foster inclusivity. In this way, learners with disabilities will feel that they are being valued- a key to acceptance. This problem is also being encountered in Ethiopian Public Universities where Muzemil (2018) where he revealed that buildings such as classrooms are not PWD-ready. Aside from that, there are poor ramps that are not accessible for learners with disabilities. The claim on the importance of accessibility is reflected in R.A. 7277 section 25, where a barrier-free environment is being emphasized (National Council on Disability Affairs, n.d.). With this, Mokobane (2024) recommends that teachers need to create an inclusive learning environment where learners with special needs will feel that they are being valued and accepted.

Indeed, educational institutions could help instilling inclusivity and cultural sensitivity through various means. Let's always remember to take part as an educator in promoting inclusion in our classroom. With this, we could have an amazing world where every child feels that they are being accepted and valued.

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Enduring with Heaven as My Companion

From the moment my innocent mind awoke,
I was thrown into the trials of this world
Into burdens I was never meant to carry,
For people can be cruel
And hearts can be deceiving.

Wrong turns, dark choices, forbidden paths
Life and fate placed them before me.
I was judged, condemned,
Made into a shame in the eyes of society,
Yet I rose again from the ruins,
Still striving to climb beyond my suffering.

It is not yet the end of everything
Words that many cling to in despair.
I am only human, a soul that stumbled,
Led astray by temptation,
But never truly defeated.

And so I continue to dream,
Dreaming of a life beyond poverty's chains.
I endure every hardship in silence,
For Heaven is the hope I carry within me.

I am not evil.
I am not a failure.
I am merely human
A man once blinded by temptation.
Yet I endure,
Because my eyes are fixed upon Heaven,
For within that promised light
Lies the truest form of happiness,
Even when reached
Through suffering and sacrifice.



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**Dreams Derailed by Becoming
a Young Father**

I was born from a family of poverty,
Once I dreamed,
Once I waited for miracles to find me,
Yet escaping hardship was never easy.

A chance came for me to study,
I entered the university through God's mercy,
I struggled and tried with all my might,
But the world lured me astray
And at a tender age, I became a father overnight.

Slowly, my dreams began to fade,
My parents carried sorrow in their hearts,
I ask myself if those dreams
Can still be reached someday,
Now that every thought I hold
Belongs to my child alone.

Forgive me, my father and mother,
I was carried away by a deceiving society,
The dreams we once built together
May never stand as they used to be,
For I became a young father
Far too early in life.



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It Is Not Yet Too Late

Once, I was tempted by promises softly spoken,
Carried away by words that kindled false hope.
I waited with all the patience my heart could bear,
Only to learn that everything
Was destined to fade into nothingness.

I counted each passing day,
As though my soul could no longer endure the waiting.
Weeks drifted by like restless shadows,
Yet nothing changed
I was left betrayed
By empty promises and fleeting assurances.

But through the pain, I learned.
From the moments when my heart was fragile,
I rose stronger, more determined than before,
Ready now to face
Whatever trials tomorrow may bring.

I will continue rebuilding my life,
Though I was once deceived and left broken.
Still, I will not surrender
To the hardships of this world.
Even sacrifice itself
Is an offering I am willing to give
For the future I still believe in.



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Where Silence Heals and Leadership Speaks

Leadership is often imagined through noise.

People associate it with meetings, speeches, decisions, instructions, and constant movement. A leader is expected to speak with confidence, respond immediately, and remain emotionally steady for everyone else. In schools, especially, leadership becomes visible through action, through programs implemented, reports completed, and problems resolved. Yet behind the visible voice of leadership exists another reality rarely discussed: the quiet places where healing must happen.

I discovered this silence not in moments of success, but in moments of exhaustion.

As a new school head pursuing a doctoral degree while serving as the eldest child and breadwinner of the family, I learned that leadership demands more than intelligence and competence. It demands emotional endurance. There are days when responsibilities overlap so heavily that even silence begins to feel crowded. The mind continues working long after the meetings end. The body rests, but the thoughts do not.

And still, people expect leaders to continue speaking.

This is the paradox of leadership: while others listen to your voice for direction, there are moments when your own spirit quietly longs for rest, understanding, and healing.

Silence, on the other hand, is commonly misconstrued. In professional environments, silence can be seen as a sign of weakness, indecisiveness, or disengagement. However, some silences are anything but void. Some silences are restorative. Silences become places where exhausted individuals restore themselves.

Many leaders heal in those private moments when no one else can see them – those few silent moments before the day starts, the long silent nights after the day ends, the silent breaths taken before attending another meeting, the silent prayers said during times of self-doubt. Leaders heal in brief respites from the constant need to be needed.

In such moments, people learn that they are human before they are leaders.

As I continue my journey in the field of educational leadership and academia, I have started to realize that silence is not necessarily an indication of stagnation. In fact, sometimes, silence is where growth starts. Silence after failure is reflection. Silence after conflict is restraint. Silence after exhaustion is the importance of setting boundaries.

There is also healing in listening.

Educational leadership often emphasizes speaking, giving directions, encouraging teachers, addressing issues, and articulating plans. However, it attains its full value when leaders can hear more than mere words. Teachers are burdened with fatigue that they are not always ready to vocalize. Students suffer from problems concealed beneath their normal conduct. Families are burdened with worries that they keep silent about.

Leaders, too, are carrying many loads that they are not ready to vocalize.

My experience of studying for a doctoral degree while leading has led me to this realization. One can get knowledge of the theories of transformational leadership, organizational development, and emotional intelligence through research. However, the experience shows that leaders should also have a place to restore emotionally. Knowledge alone is not enough to make one feel emotionally refreshed.

This is why healing matters in leadership.

While the wounded leader might function, he will eventually lose his softness. Leadership that remains unhealed will ultimately become mechanical; it will concentrate on obedience, deadlines, and mere survival. However, a healed leader is empathic. He creates a setting where individuals are not just productive but human too.

Healing also requires humility.

As the eldest child and breadwinner, I became accustomed to carrying responsibilities quietly. Strength became habitual. Asking for rest sometimes felt selfish. Yet leadership has taught me that constantly carrying others without caring for oneself leads not to strength, but to depletion.

There is courage in acknowledging limits.

There is wisdom in resting.

It is now understood that leaders are also learners, also tired, also human.

Perhaps this is where silence and leadership finally meet.

Leadership speaks because people need guidance, direction, and hope. But silence heals because leaders themselves need reflection, restoration, and peace. One gives outwardly; the other restores inwardly. Both are necessary.

In the end, leadership is not merely about having the strongest voice. It is about knowing when to speak with conviction and when to retreat into silence long enough to heal. Because the leaders who continue growing are not those who never become tired.

They are the ones who learn how to heal while continuing to serve.



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The Mind That Carries Many Rooms

Certain minds focus on just one idea at a time, progressing slowly and thoughtfully, much like turning pages of a book. And other minds resemble a whole house, which is stuffed full with many different rooms, all of which have a tale to tell: the tale of obligations, aspirations, exhaustion, optimism, and unrealized dreams. That is the kind of mind I possess today. It was only after becoming the school's principal that I realized how many rooms others carried around with them.

One room instantly filled up with leadership.

There's a corner for schedules, reports, signatures, meetings, teachers' worries, parents' voices, and those unspoken expectations that everyone believes a school head should have the answers to. Turns out, leadership isn't just about the title. It's really built on emotional labor. Most days, it means being a steady wall for everyone else, even when my own foundation is still figuring itself out, still blurry.

Yet another room bears the name "eldest child."

This is the oldest one. It dates back to when I acquired degrees or titles. This is where I learned to take the hit first, look far ahead, and be reliable, even before I knew what it meant to belong to myself. Responsibility didn't come from me; it was thrust upon me. In this room, I think about finances, the needs of my family, and those anxieties that haunt me just before sleep.

Next in line is the breadwinner's room.

The weight of this one can be felt in all the expenses, obligations, and desires that got put on hold for later. The breadwinner develops endurance, though sometimes he loses the softness that comes with it. Breadwinners are celebrated for their strength and perseverance, although the price tag of all this remains hidden.

Finally, we have the academic room.

That's the room where the one who remains awake past midnight, surrounded by piles of doctoral readings, research papers, and chapters that glare back at me, incomplete. I'm pursuing my doctorate, managing leadership and family, too. At times, I feel like I'm living multiple lives at once. Theories collide with practicalities; the learning of leadership is intertwined with shopping lists and administrative memos. Intellectual work exists alongside daily chaos, occupying the same worn-out individual.

Of all the rooms, one stands out from the rest. Smaller, more silent, almost hidden. This room yearns to discover the secrets of living rather than simply existing. Not through leadership or academics, but through life skills that provide a sense of completion. Activities that generate happiness. Creative processes without the burden of productivity. Relaxation devoid of any guilt. Engaging in interests, music, art, gardening, cooking, perhaps even silence. This room never stops probing its inhabitant: Who am I outside the role I play?

Many people spend decades searching for effectiveness, but not for fulfillment. Our society trains people to become effective professionals, responsible parents, and good leaders, but rarely teaches how to remain human along the way. Between striving for success and being useful to others, we start forgetting that growth is a personal process as well. Society admires the multitasking brain – one that can lead others, provide for their families, pursue further education, and cope with fatigue. However, those who have multiple rooms also carry emotional baggage – on some days, all of them clamor at once. Leadership demands decisions. Family requires care. Studies call for dedication. The individual himself requires relaxation, but gets it last.

But there is also beauty in having such rooms. This is not the absence of strength; this is the acknowledgment of one's ability to achieve many things. It shows that one's identity goes beyond a single quality: that we can be leaders and still learners; that we are strong and yet exhausted; that we are responsible and joyful nonetheless. We can mentor while we learn ourselves. Perhaps it is not about stripping our rooms bare; perhaps it is about learning to move around in them gracefully and learning to become a school principal and dreamer at once, a scholar and a being breathing.

People often misunderstand those of us with minds like houses. They only see the open doors, the polished titles, the achievements. They rarely notice the private spaces: fatigue, longing, sacrifice, hope. But maybe the goal isn't to quiet those rooms. Maybe it's to make room for all of them and always leave one door open for who I might become next.



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Gurong Digital

Sa silid-aralang dati'y pisara ang sandigan,
Asignatura at aklat ang tanging pinaghuugutan;
Ngayon ay kumikislap ang ilaw ng teknolohiya,
Ngunit guro'y nangangapa sa bago nitong sistema.

Sa bawat pindot ng makinang di kabisado,
Takot magkamali'y laging kasabay nito;
Mga salitang "login," "upload," at "drive,"
Unti-unting inaaral upang maka-survive.

Hindi lahat ay sanay sa mundong digital,
May ilan pang hrap sa simpleng signal;
Kulang sa kagamitan, internet ay mahina,
Paano tutugon kung ganito ang sistema?

Sa pagsasanay na kulang at oras na kapos,
Dagdag sa papel, ulat, at trabahong di maubos;
Pinipilit aralin ang bagong pamamaraan,
Kahit pagod na ang isip at katawan.

May pangambang baka mapag-iwanan,
Sa mga kabataang bihasa sa teknolohiyang tangan;
Na tila mas mabilis pa silang matuto,
Kaysa gurong ngayo'y nagsisimulang matuto.

Ngunit sa kabila ng lahat ng alinlangan,
May pusong matatag na hindi uurungan;
Dahil ang layon ay di lamang makasabay,
Kundi ang bawat bata'y maitaguyod sa paglalakbay.

Sa bawat error na lumilitaw sa screen,
Pagkatuto'y unti-unting nagiging malinaw rin;

Sa pagkakamali'y may aral na nakatago,
Na siyang gabay sa pag-usad at pagbabago.

Kasama ang kapwa guro sa paghahanap ng sagot,
Nagbabahaginan ng kaalaman nang walang pagod;
Sa tulong ng isa't isa, lakas ay nadaragdagan,
At ang hrap sa pagtuturo ay nagiging mas magaan.

May saya rin sa bawat bagong natutuhan,
Sa unang tagumpay na tila simpleng kaalaman;
Kapag ang aral ay naipakita nang malinaw,
At ang bata'y natuto, iyon ang tunay na ilaw.

Hindi man madali ang yakapin ang bago,
Ngunit ang guro'y handang magbago;
Dahil alam niyang ang edukasyon ay umuusad,
At siya'y dapat sumabay, hindi magpaiwan sa landas.

Sa gitna ng teknolohiya't makabagong daan,
Hindi nawawala ang kanyang kahusayan;
Sapagkat higit sa gadget at programang gamit,
Ang puso ng guro ang nananatiling higit.

Kaya sa bawat pagsubok na kanyang dinaraan,
Pag-asa'y patuloy na pinanghahawakan;
Gurong Pilipino, sa hrap man o ginhawa,
Sa teknolohiya'y matutong umangkop upang maging dakila.



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Sa Tinig ng Dalisay na Turo

Sa silid aralan na payak ngunit puno sa pangarap,
Mga salita'y binubuo, damdami'y lumalapat,
Sa asignaturang Filipino'y buhay ang bawat aklat,
At guro'y ilaw na sa dilim ay kumakandilat.

Sa kolehiyong landas, di biro ang paglalakbay,
Talasalitaan ay hindi lang basta alay,
Kundi ugat ng lahi, kasaysaya'y sumasabay,
Sa bawat taludtod na sa puso'y tumatampay.

May pusong malambot ang gurong di napapagod,
Sa bawat tanong, sagot niya'y di nagkukulang ng lingap at gamot,
Sa pagkakamali'y di galit kundi yakap ang handog,
Upang ang isip ng mag-aaral ay patuloy na umusbong.

Sa bawat talakayan, may init ang kanyang tinig,
Hindi lang kaalaman, kundi pag-aaruga ang hatid,
Sa hirap ng paksa, siya'y gabay na marikit,
Sa daang matinik, siya'y ilaw na tahimik.

Pinipili niyang unawain ang bawat mag-aaral,
Na may sari-sariling kwento't sugat na di halata't banal,
Sa kanyang pagtuturo'y may lambing na tunay at dangal,
Na nagbibigay-lakas sa loob na tila ba nawawal.

Hindi lamang gramatika ang kanyang layunin,
Kundi hubugin ang pusong marunong ding damhin,
Ang wika'y tulay sa sarili't kapwa't adhikain,
Na sa bawat letra'y may saysay na dapat gampanin.

Sa gitna ng teknolohiya't modernong panahon,
Pinipilit niyang buhayin ang lumang kahon,

Ng kultura't panitikang tila nalilimutan na noon,
Upang sa bagong henerasyon ay muling umusbong.

Sa pisara'y hindi lang aral ang naiiwan,
Kundi alaala ng gurong may pusong maawain at maunawain,
Sa bawat marka'y may dasal na kaakibat na nararamdaman,
Na sana'y sa buhay, ang bata'y hindi maliligaw ng landas na tatahakin.

May pagod man sa likod ng kanyang mga ngiti,
Patuloy pa rin ang pag-abot sa pangarap ng marami,
Hindi man siya kilala sa labas ng silid na kay liit,
Sa puso ng mag-aaral, siya'y bayani't kapiling sa bawat sandali.

Sa Filipino class, hindi lang grado ang mahalaga,
Kundi ang paghubog ng pagkatao't diwa,
Na sa bawat salitang natutunan nila,
Ay may lakas upang harapin ang mundong mapanghamon at
masalimuot na tila.

Sa kanyang pagtuturo'y may himig ng pag-asa,
Na ang wika'y hindi mawawala sa gitna ng banyagang agos at dusa,
At ang kabataan ay muling yayakap sa sariling bansa,
Sa tulong ng gurong may pusong wagas at tapat sa adhika.

Kaya sa bawat araw na siya'y pumapasok,
Bitbit ang pangarap na di kailanman susuko,
Sa simpleng silid-aralan, siya'y patuloy na tumutubo,
Isang gurong Filipino, ilaw ng isip at puso.



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Mga Hibla ng Wika sa Dalampasigan ng Dunong

Sa paanan ng dagat, sa lupang Moalboal,
Naroon ang guro, tahimik ngunit marangal,
Sa Cebu Technological University, sangay na payapa't banal,
Kanyang tinatahak ang landas ng Filipino sa bawat mag-aaral.

Sa bawat kolehiyo'y iba't ibang mukha,
May inhinyero, guro, at kursong agham na bihasa,
Ngunit sa iisang wika'y sila'y pinag-iisa,
Sa silid na Filipino, pagkatao'y nabubuo't kumakatha.

Sa kursong tila malayo sa panitikan,
Hinahabi niya ang saysay ng sariling pinagmulan,
Sa mga numerong malamig at eksaktong kaalaman,
Isinasingit ang init ng kulturang kinamulatan.

Hindi madali ang magturo sa iba't ibang disiplina,
May ilan ay nagtatanong, "Ano ba ang halaga nito sa amin ba?"
Ngunit sa kanyang puso'y may matibay na adhika,
Na ang Filipino'y hindi lang asignatura, ito'y buhay at diwa.

Sa ilalim ng bentilador at ingay ng paligid,
Pinipilit niyang gawing buhay ang bawat titik,
Sa bawat diskusyon ay may halakhak at pait,
Ngunit sa dulo'y may pag-unawang unti-unting sumisilip.

May mga estudyanteng tahimik at nagmamasid,
Mayroon ding lantad ang pagod at nais nang umidlip,
Ngunit sa kanyang tinig na may lambing at pag-ibig,
Unti-unting nabubuksan ang pusong tila nakapikit.

Sa bawat papel na kanyang binabasa,
Mga sanaysay ng buhay, pangarap, at pag-asa,

Hindi lang marka ang kanyang pinipinta,
Kundi pagkilala sa tinig ng bawat isa.

Sa pasilyo ng paaralan, siya'y simpleng naglalakad,
Ngunit sa loob ng silid, siya'y mandirigmang matatag,
Bitbit ang wika laban sa pagkalimot at paglayag,
Sa agos ng banyagang kulturang mabilis na sumasagap.

Sa bawat semestre'y may panibagong laban,
Panibagong mukha, panibagong kwento't karanasan,
Ngunit ang kanyang layunin ay nananatiling iisa't malinaw na daan,
Ang maipadama na ang Filipino'y tahanan.

Sa dalampasigan ng Moalboal, hangin ay sumasabay,
Sa kanyang pangarap na ang wika'y di mawawalay,
Sa puso ng kabataang minsang naliligaw,
Ngunit sa kanyang turo'y muling nagbabalik at sumisigaw.

May pagod, may alinlangan, may gabing tahimik,
Ngunit sa alaala ng mag-aaral, siya'y nananatiling ilaw na marikit,
Hindi man laging nakikita ang bunga ng kanyang pag-ibig,
Alam niyang may pusong kanyang naantig.

Kaya sa bawat pagtatapos at pamamaalam,
May luha't ngiti sa bawat yakap na nararamdaman,
Sa Cebu Technological University - Moalboal na kanyang
pinaglilingkuran,
Siya'y gurong nagtuturo sa Filipino, tahimik na bayani ng kaalaman.



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**Salimbay ng Wika: Mga Paraan
sa Pusod ng Pagtuturo**

Sa baybayin ng Moalboal, sa lilim ng kaalaman,
Nakatindig ang guro, tangan ang wikang kinagisanan,
Sa Cebu Technological University na tahanan ng pangarap,
Filipino'y kanyang sandata sa iba't ibang landas.

Sa bawat kolehiyo'y iba't ibang mundo,
May inhinyero, negosyante, at gurong nagtatagpo,
Ngunit sa kanyang klase'y iisa ang punto,
Na ang wika'y tulay sa pagkatao ng bawat tao.

Gamit ang talakayang bukas at mapanuri,
Hinahamon niya ang isip na dati'y nagkukubli,
Sa Socratic method, tanong ang susi,
Upang ang sagot ay manggaling sa sarili.

Sa kooperatibong pagkatuto'y sama-samang kilos,
Bawat isa'y may ambag, walang naiwan sa likod,
Sa group work at sharing, nahuhubog ang loob,
Na ang Filipino'y hindi lang solo kundi kolektibong tugon.

May laro't Gawain, isang malikhaing paraan,
Role play at dula'y nagbibigay-buhay sa aral ng nakaraan,
Sa bawat eksena'y may damdaming nararamdaman,
Na tila ba kasaysaya'y muling isinasabuhay sa harapan.

Sa teknolohiya'y di rin siya nagpapahuli,
Multimedia presentations ang kanyang kakampi,
Video, podcast, at digital na pagsusuri,
Upang ang makaluma'y sumabay sa makabago't mabilis
na daloy ng sandali.

Sa pagsusulat, rubrics ay malinaw na gabay,
Feedback ay may lambing, hindi basta sablay,
Sa bawat rebisyon, pagkatuto'y tunay,
Hanggang ang ideya'y luminaw at tumibay.

May differentiated instruction sa bawat pangangailangan,
Batid niyang di pare-pareho ang kakayahan,
Sa tahimik at aktibo'y may lugar na laanan,
Upang bawat tinig ay marinig at mapahalagahan.

Sa inquiry-based learning, tanong ang simula,
Mga mag-aaral ay nagsasaliksik, naghahanap ng
saysay sa ideya,
Sa bawat diskubre'y may saya't hiwaga,
Na ang Filipino'y larangan din ng siyensya't pilosopiya.

Sa integrasyon ng disiplina'y kanyang sinubok,
Wika sa agham, sa negosyo'y kanyang binubuklod,
Ipinakitang ang Filipino'y di hiwalay na pook,
Kundi bahagi ng bawat kursong tinatahak ng lubos.

May pagod man sa dami ng paghahanda,
Lesson plan, materyales, at estratehiyang sariwa,
Ngunit sa bawat "Ahh!" ng estudyanteng nakakaunawa,
Napapawi ang lahat, ito'y gantimpalang di matatawaran pa.

Sa dulo ng semestre, sa paglipas ng panahon,
Naipunla niya ang binhi ng pagmamahal sa wika't layon,
Sa Cebu Technological University - Moalboal na kanyang
kinagisanan,
Isang gurong Filipino, sa paraan at puso'y walang hanggan.



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Lessons Beyond the Storytellers

Lessons are firm and wise,
It is more than an ink in thinking twice;
As discussions become engaging,
May be it news and feature writing.

Teachers are more than storytellers,
Topics are silent killers,
Once you delve on it;
You cannot escape but take with explicit.

The lessons are taught beyond the straight news,
Objectivity and fairness have roles at hand;
Something that should be embraced,
Nether taken for granted but should be heard.

Articles with sharpened thoughts and questions bright;
Give challenges in chasing the light;
Not just of ideas, but truth unfold;
Like a journalist who is brave and bold.

But mentors plant every discussion with a purpose,
They teach and share with much compassion;
They present facts with clarity;
They exhausted the information with accuracy.

Defend what is right;
As voices are might;
Write what is vital,
As each statement is essential.



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From Learners to Leaders: Rewarding Student Research to Build A "Pinoy-Centric" Education

In the Philippines, the traditional image of a "good student" is someone who listens intently, takes meticulous notes, and scores high on multiple-choice exams. However, as the world shifts toward a digital-first economy, this "consumer-only" mindset is no longer enough. To truly thrive in the era of Science Education 4.0, our students must stop being mere spectators and start becoming creators.

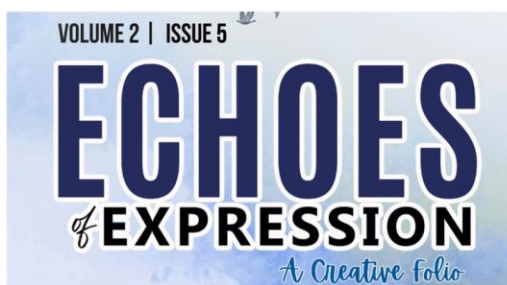
One of the biggest hurdles in Philippine distance learning is the "Context Gap." Our teachers and students often rely on foreign journals or expensive international textbooks that use examples far removed from the Filipino experience. We need materials on biodiversity in Palawan, disaster resilience in Leyte, or urban planning in Metro Manila.

By encouraging students to share their research as Open Science, meaning their data and findings are free for everyone to use, we turn every thesis and capstone project into a building block for the nation. Instead of a student's hard work gathering dust in a library, it becomes a localized OER that a teacher in a rural "last-mile" school can use for free.

To make this a reality, we need to move beyond the traditional "flat 1.0" grade as the only reward. I propose a three-tiered incentive framework tailored for our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

Using our Learning Management Systems (LMS), CHED could institutionalize "Micro-credentials." Imagine a student receiving a digital badge for "Data Analytics" or "Community-Based Research" that they can display on LinkedIn immediately. This makes them more employable and gives them a sense of pride that goes beyond a report card.

Many Filipino students are brilliant but lack the funds to pay the "Article Processing Charges" for major journals. The DOST and CHED should provide subsidies for Open Access publications. If a student produces a high-quality study on local coconut farming or renewable energy, the government should help ensure the work is published and made available to the public at no cost.



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We should replace traditional, often repetitive requirements with "Open Capstone Projects." Every STEM student should graduate knowing they contributed to the Filipino people, whether through a localized lab manual, a dataset on local weather patterns, or a simplified science module in Filipino.

The "Content/Quality Divide" in our country will not be bridged by technology alone; people will bridge it. By rewarding Open Science, we empower our students to be more than just degree-seekers. We transform them into contributors to a national knowledge base, ensuring that the future of Philippine education is open, localized, and led by the youth themselves.



ANNELY NANO CONSOLACION

J.H. Cerilles State College

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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.20055587

The Unsolved Equation of Becoming

Life often appears as a system carefully arranged, with symbols placed with intention, roles assigned with clarity and expectations set like fixed points guiding direction. On the surface, everything suggests order. However, beneath that arrangement, something remains unresolved, as though essential values were never fully provided, leaving the entire structure unable to settle into completion.

There are days when the world seems to move in patterns that almost make sense. Wind passes through the trees as if guided by invisible forces, neither chaotic nor entirely predictable. Paths ahead rarely remain straight; they shift, divide, and curve without warning, as though responding to conditions that cannot be fully seen or measured. Certainty, in such moments, feels less like a constant and more like something briefly assumed before it changes again.

Experience is often interpreted through relationships of cause and effect, effort linked to outcome, time associated with progress, decisions expected to produce clear results. However, reality resists such proportional expectations. There are instances where sustained effort yields little return, and moments where a single choice alters everything without preparation. The connection between action and consequence is real, but rarely simple, often influenced by unseen variables that only become visible in hindsight.

In quiet moments, a question tends to return without invitation: whether any of it has been worth it. It does not resolve itself into affirmation or denial. Instead, it shifts with memory and circumstance, refusing finality. What once felt meaningful may later feel uncertain, and what once felt uncertain may, with time, appear necessary. The answer never remains in one form long enough to be fully held.

A significant part of existence becomes dedicated to helping others move forward. Their paths begin to take shape as their uncertainty gradually reduces through guidance, structure, and support. Progress becomes visible in their direction, measurable in their outcomes, and affirmed through their achievements. Meanwhile, the personal path often remains less defined, less attended to, less certain, as though its variables have been postponed for later resolution that never quite arrives.

Within that imbalance, life begins to resemble a system too complex to simplify. Too many conditions exist simultaneously, too many expectations overlap, and attempts to reduce

everything to clarity often reveal additional layers rather than resolution. What follows is not closure, but iteration: adjustment after adjustment, continuation without certainty of completion.

There is also a quieter emotional weight beneath this experience. It is not always loud or visible, but it persists. There are moments when energy is consistently directed toward shaping other people's futures, supporting their direction, strengthening their decisions and ensuring their progress remains steady while their personal direction remains suspended. Dreams do not disappear; they are often deferred, pushed behind responsibilities that feel more immediate, more necessary, more demanded by circumstance.

Over time, this creates a difficult contrast: clarity offered outward, uncertainty held inward. Others move forward with visible milestones, while internal milestones remain unmarked. Others reach conclusions that can be celebrated, while personal questions remain open, unresolved, and quietly carried. Even rest does not always interrupt this pattern, because unresolved questions do not dissolve simply through pause; they persist beneath stillness.

Still, not everything remains without structure. What appears chaotic often carries patterns that are not immediately recognizable. What feels unresolved is not necessarily broken, but incomplete in ways that require time, experience, and perspective that have not yet fully formed. Some answers are not withheld; they are not ready to be understood in the moment they are asked for.

Even confusion, then, becomes something more than absence of direction. It becomes a process of slow, continuous, and unfinished formation. Each experience adds another layer, another condition, another adjustment to something still taking shape. Nothing is fixed, but nothing is absent either.

However, beneath all attempts to understand, organize, and continue, there remains a quieter truth that is harder to articulate. It is the realization that much of life may be spent helping others move toward clarity while one's own remains deferred. That energy is often given outward in ways that build direction for others, while inward questions remain open, waiting for attention that is always postponed.

Thus, life continues through guidance given, decisions made, and paths supported while something within remains unresolved, not because it lacks meaning, but because it has not yet been given the same space to unfold. In the middle of all this becoming, a single question lingers, no longer merely reflective but quietly persistent:

If existence is spent solving others' paths, when does the self finally converge to its own solution?



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Philippine Politics: Serve or Be Served?

Philippine politics is frequently compared to a circus, where drama and conflict often take center stage rather than genuine public service. Many leaders, both those in power and those in opposition, seem more interested in criticizing each other than in solving the country's problems. Rather than engaging in real debates about policies and solutions, politicians often trade personal accusations and negative stories, which does little to improve governance. This atmosphere leaves many citizens confused about whom to trust and unsure which party is truly working in their best interests.

Corruption is a major problem in this political environment. It spreads fast and weakens government institutions. More and more, people notice government malpractice, which leads to frustration and doubt. Large budgets, sometimes reaching millions or billions, are often announced and celebrated. However, despite these big numbers, many citizens wonder whether the promised projects will ever be completed. Unfinished roads, poor public services, and struggling communities make people question where the money really goes.

Elections should be the heart of democracy, but they have also become a source of concern for many. Candidates often promise reforms and a brighter future, and voters hold on to these hopes. However, behind the promises, vote-buying and political favors are still common. Some candidates use money and influence to get ahead, turning elections into a trade rather than a true voice of the people. When votes are bought instead of earned, democracy suffers. It is especially disappointing when politicians change after they win. During campaigns, they appear sincere and eager to serve, but once in office, those promises and attitudes often fade. Self-interest takes over, leaving people wondering if their vote really mattered. The right to vote is supposed to give people power, but broken promises can make it feel like that power was wasted.

Because of these problems, many Filipinos feel let down. They see other countries with better roads, services, and leaders, and they cannot help but compare. This leads to frustration and envy, making people wonder why the Philippines cannot achieve the same progress. The cycle of hope, every election followed by disappointment, makes people trust the system less. In the end, we have to ask: are our leaders really trying to serve the people, or just themselves?



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This question is a reminder that we need leaders who are truly accountable and committed to real public service. It is also a challenge for citizens to stay alert, informed, and involved. Real change will not come from words alone; it needs everyone to demand that leaders put the country first. Only then can politics move beyond the drama and help the nation progress.

To end, meaningful reform requires both institutional change and cultural transformation within society. Citizens must demand transparency, support ethical leaders, and reject practices that undermine democracy. Education and civic engagement can strengthen accountability and rebuild public trust, ensuring that governance serves the common good rather than personal gain and narrow interests for future generations and national development goals.



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New Criticism Approach: Ballad of a Mother's Heart

As a reader, I often use reader-response Criticism. Accepting other approaches allows me to see hidden layers of a story that reader-response Criticism might miss. Each literary work has its own distinctiveness. Readers can criticize texts using different approaches and their own point of view.

New Criticism states that a literary work is an unrestricted system. This is an interesting approach because it gives me attention to every detail of the story. This approach made me appreciate other criticisms also, not just the readers' response. New Critics prioritize intrinsic analysis, and the primary technique of New Criticism is close reading, which involves a detailed analysis of a brief passage.

Close reading is separating ourselves from the magical power of storytelling to pay attention to language, imagery, allusion, interconnectedness, syntax, and form. When I am using close reading, it is very challenging because I need to look deeper into every element that was used in a text; also, it is beneficial as it gives me an interesting analysis of the story.

Critics can analyze the lyric, Ballad of My Mother's Heart by Jose La Villa Tierra using the new criticism approach. Regarding its structural analysis, the lyric is a tone-contained structural object. The structure contains the tone. The rigid, simple rhyme scheme acts as a container for a very messy, violent emotion.

Throughout reading the poem, internal contradictions resolve into a unified meaning. The youth commits a heinous act of betrayal, killing his mother, to prove a pure love for the maiden. The irony lies in the fact that he destroys the source of his true unconditional love to satisfy a shallow, demanding one.

The most disturbing irony lies in the biological impossibility of the heart's reaction. The son literally butchers his mother to satisfy his lover's cruel request. He is carrying a bloody, dripping piece of meat. When the son slips and falls, the bloody heart speaks. It does not scream in agony or curse its murderer; it asks, "Get up, my son, did you get hurt?" The irony is violent because the mother's love is so limitless that it survives her own murder. The heart's concern for the son's slip is absurdly uneven to the son's slaughter of the mother.

The poem functions on a sharp contrast that creates a horrible friction. The "Mother's Heart" is traditionally a symbol of purity, warmth, and life. The son expects to win his lover's heart by bringing a dead trophy, but the trophy stays alive through its speech. The very thing he killed to gain love is the only thing actually giving him love in that moment.

Tierra intended to write a didactic poem to teach children to respect and love their parents. In analyzing the text, ignore Tierra's moral lesson and look at the internal tension of the text. The poem's power comes from the horrid image of a son clutching his mother's organ. The meaning is not to be a good child; rather, it is the horror of unconditional love, a love that is so absolute that it becomes evil and frightening in its persistence.

New Criticism also makes critics look at the structural violence of the poem. Tensions in the poem intensify irony. The poem is a ballad, a form traditionally meant for singing, dancing, and lighthearted storytelling, yet it contains a slaughter.

When the son finally commits the act and runs back to his lover, the ballad's rhythm is like his frantic breathing. However, the "gory" peak occurs at the caesura or the pause when he trips. The rhythm breaks, and in that silence, the heart speaks. The ballad structure forces a rhyme between the son's physical fall and his moral collapse. The fact that the mother's voice fits perfectly back into the song's meter suggests that even in death, her soul is rhythmically tied to him, a haunting and inescapable harmony.

The beauty of the ballad form acts as a stitched wound. The poem does not use sharp and ugly free verse to match the murder. Instead, it uses beautiful words. This makes the son's betrayal feel even more evil because the text refuses to scream. It forces the reader to stay in a musical space while staring at a bloody, beating organ. The regularity of the stanzas contrasts with the irregularity of a son killing the one who gave him life.

For a New Critic, the heart is the central symbol that achieves organic unity. It is the metaphorical source of love. It is the literal piece of meat in his hand.

The ballad structure treats the heart like a prop in a play, but the "gory" irony is that the prop refuses to stay lifeless. The lyric poem continues only because the heart provides the final note of concern, completing the poem's structure while simultaneously shattering the reader's comfort.

In addition, vivid imagery of a night and a youthful moon sets a sorrowful and dark tone. These elements symbolize the youth's moral blindness and the gravity of his choices. Beyond a physical prize, the heart is a symbol of selfless love. The act of the youth carrying it, even after stumbling, represents the physical and emotional burden of his choice.

The unity of the poem is found in how its formal elements, the rhythmic ballad stanzas, the dark conceits, and the personified heart, work together to produce a single, unified theme: the eternal and forgiving nature of a mother's love.

Teaching new Criticism inside the classroom is challenging. As a teacher, I need to encourage my students to try other approaches when it comes to analyzing texts. Teaching new criticism approach, I should not be treating it as a rigid analysis but viewing it as a focusing lens that encourages students to discipline themselves or look into something before giving conclusions.



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Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines

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Teaching Two Grades with One Heart

In a small rural school, a teacher handles two grade levels, grades one and two. The teacher's name is Arlyn. Teacher Arlyn knew that the learners she was handling had different abilities, characteristics, personalities, attitudes, beliefs, and learning styles. So, instead of teaching them all in the same way, she planned to use different instruction in facilitating learners' understanding of the lessons.

One morning, the lesson focused on the parts of a plant, such as roots, stem, leaves, flower, and fruit or seeds. Teacher Arlyn began by asking the learners to sit properly and prepare for the discussion. Using a whole-class approach, she presented a real plant (realia) to the class to make the lesson more concrete and engaging.

In turn, she asked basic questions to guide the learners, such as "What do you see?" and "Can you identify the parts of the plant?" to tap into their existing knowledge about plants. With the discussion ongoing, she further prompted the learners to look around and contribute to the lesson. Teacher Arlyn ensured that everyone listened and participated.

Then, Teacher Arlyn proceeded with her lesson on the different parts of the plant through group activities. First, she divided the whole class into three groups of varying abilities. In this case, each group consisted of Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners. In the group activity, "I Am a Plant Part," each learner assumed one part of the plant, including the roots, stem, leaves, flower, and fruit/seed. The Grade 1 learners confidently introduced themselves to the class by saying, "I am the roots," whereas the Grade 2 learners described themselves using statements like "I am the roots. I provide water to the plant." An oral presentation followed this.

In the second group, whose participants were the Grade 2 developing learners, the level of understanding that the activity called for was higher. The learners were given a diagram where there were no picture clues, and they had to independently label the roots, stem, leaves, flower, and fruit/seeds of the plant. After this process, they needed to complete the functions of each part. This includes: "Roots absorb water," "Stem supports the plant,"

and "Leaves make food." As the learners worked together and helped one another to improve their knowledge about the functions, the activity was successfully done.

The last group of learners consisted of the Grade 1 beginning learners who did an activity named "Complete My Plant." The learners were given a worksheet with an incomplete picture of the plant. Moreover, they were provided with cut-outs for the different parts of the plant. With the help of a word bank containing pictures, they cut out and pasted each part in its proper place. Teacher Arlyn facilitated their understanding of what they were doing by giving out easy-to-answer questions like "Where is the root?" and "What do you call this?"

Teacher Arlyn walked around in the classroom during the activity by coaching each group, posing questions, and assisting when necessary. She ensured that every learner was active and able to learn according to his or her own capability.

Towards the end of the lesson, the entire class gathered once again. One of the Grade 1 learners showed the "roots" of the plant, whereas one of the Grade 2 learners described the germination process of a plant from a seed.



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The Geometry of Love and Mathematics

Tangent lines that met only once,
And then parted forever.
A fleeting connection, enough to feel everything,
Yet not enough to remain.

Parallel lines that were never destined to meet,
Moving in the same direction,
Close, yet always apart,
Silently traveling into infinity.

Asymptotes that keep drawing nearer,
With every step seeming almost there,
Yet a gap remains uncrossed,
A promise that will never be fulfilled.

And between numbers and lines,
Lie stories left untold
A love that is exact, yet imperfect,
And emotions no formula can ever solve.



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Tumatanggap ba ng Tula ang Langit?

Minsan, ako'y napaisip at marahang napatanong,
Aling panalangin kaya, ang hindi pa naibulong?
May hiling bang inuuna't laging binibigyang-tulong?
Ako ba'y makasusulong o tuluyan nang uurong?

Kung ang langit, tumatanggap, ako'y lilikha ng tula,
Na tulad ng kalangitan, mayaman sa talinghaga.
'Di naman isang paghiling, 'di rin pagmamakaawa,
Lalong 'di isang pagsamba, o pagbabawi ng sala.

Ipaihip ko ito, sa pagkalamig na hangin,
Tila damdaming nilamig, nang wala mang nakapansin.
Tanaw ba lahat ng langit, mga taong dumadalangin?
Parang pagtanaw ng tao, langit sa gabing kay dilim.

Ipaaanod ko ito, sa maalon-along dagat,
Upang madamang ang dagat at luha ay magsing-alat.
Maligaya ba ang langit, 'pag doo'y may bagong lipat?
At sa tuwing may pagpanaw at pagluhang 'di masukat.

Ipararating ko ito, sa malagablab na apoy,
Sing-init nitong damdamin, nang pagtangis ay dumaloy.
'Pagkat buhay ay malupit, sumubok ay tuloy-tuloy,
Kung magsaboy ng pag-asa, ika'y parang tinataboy.

Idaraan ko nalang 'to, sa mahimbing na pagtulog,
'Di baleng sa higa'y ngalay o tuluyan mang mahulog.
Panandaliang madama na buhay kong ito'y handog,
Pikit man ay may pasilip, sa ginhawang dinudulog.

'Di naman pakay manumbat, nitong tulang isinulat,
Sadyang tao'y nagtatanong, matapos gawin ang lahat.
Baon ang pagsusumikap, hiling lang ay makaangat,
Naiinip man kung minsan, alam pa rin ang "salamat".

Bukas ma'y sadyang malabo, pagluha ko ay naglaho,
Ang hangì'y katuwang na rin sa pag-asang natatamo.
Pagtulog ay paalala, magpahinga't 'wag sumuko,
Langit, tula'y tanggapin mo, salamat na walang hinto.



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Solving for Strength in a System Designed to Break It

We begin with an equation
no one admits is broken
given: effort,
required: resilience,
assumed: success.

“Solve for strength,” they say,
as if it were hidden neatly
on one side of the problem,
waiting to be uncovered
by the right steps.

But the variables resist.

Fatigue enters first
uninvited, ungraded,
pressing against every attempt
to keep the balance steady.

Then doubt,
subtle but persistent,
whispering that no matter
how carefully we compute,
the answer will still be wrong.

We try to isolate strength
move burdens across the line,
cancel out fear,
divide expectations
but the system adds more,
always more,
until the equation grows
beyond solving.

Students carry it too
in quiet persistence,
in the courage

to try again
after every correction
that feels like erasure.

I watch them
rework themselves daily,
adjusting for errors
they did not create,
seeking solutions
in problems
never meant to be fair.

And still,
there are moments
small, defiant constants
when strength appears
unexpected, undeniable.

A hand raised
despite uncertainty.
A voice that refuses
to disappear.
An answer given
not because it is right,
but because it is theirs.

In those moments,
the equation shifts
not balanced,
not resolved,
but honest.

Because strength here
is not a clean solution,
not a final value
we can neatly box.

It is the act
of continuing
within a system
that subtracts belief,
multiplies pressure,
and divides purpose

and still expecting
something human
to remain.



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Ganito Ba ang Serbisyo?

Minsan ko na kayong naging paborito.
Tinitingala na sana balang araw ay makapasok ako
sa restaurant ninyo.
Sa hindi inaasahang pagkakataon,
ito nga ay nangyari: nakapasok ako sa resto ninyo.

Ang akala ko noon,
may maganda at maayos na pakikitungo ang lahat
ng nandito.
Sa una, nararamdaman ko pa.
Pero kalaunan, lumalabo na.

Bakit ganito?
Ito ang tanong na bumabagabag sa isipan ko.
Sa una lang ba talaga maganda?
Sa una lang ba talaga masaya?

Dahil isang araw ng pagpasok ko,
medyo dismayado ako.
Noong nag-apply ako ng discount sa inyo,
medyo kulang kasi ang budget ko.
Pero ni minsan, hindi man lang ito na-approve ng manager ninyo.

Oo, dismayado ako.
Dahil sa mga araw na hindi pumapasok ang ibang tauhan ninyo,
ay minsan na akong tumulong sa inyo.
Ina-assist ko at inaasikaso pa ang mga bagong salta sa resto ninyo.

Pero anong ginawa ninyo?
Noong oras ko na
oras na para asikasuhin ang order ko
tumatagal pa talaga ito ng isang linggo.
Nakakalito.

Uhaw na ako. Gutom na ako. Ang tagal ng order ko.
Kaya napamura ako.
Grabe naman kasi ang mga pangako ninyo.
Dahil sabi ninyo, darating na raw ang order ko bago pa
umabot ng isang linggo.

At isang araw pa niyan,
ni-require kami ng restaurant ninyo na mag-avail
ng bagong menu,
galing sa baguhan sa industriya.
Limang libo ang singil niya.
Grabe, 'di ba?

Ayaw namin,
kasi sayang ang pera.
Baka hindi rin namin magustuhan.
At ayon, parang hindi kami pwedeng maging
loyal na customer
kung hindi kami mag-aavail.

Dahil mayroon din naman daw na 30%
para sa dating menu.
ECE ata ang tawag doon.
Oo nga, ECE na.
Sige, at napilitan nga kami.
Okay lang naman may discount naman sa ECE.

Hindi ako, kami nakatuon sa bagong menu
ng restaurant ninyo.
Available lang kasi ito kada Sabado at Linggo.
At ang Sabado ay araw ng paghahanap namin ng trabaho
para may maipambayad kami rito.

Sabi ko sa sarili ko,
nabudol na yata ako.
At sa paborito ko pang resto
nangyari ang pinakaayaw ko.

Kaya ito na ngayon ang resto
na kinamumuhian ko.
At sa piyesang ito,
hindi lang resto ang tinutukoy ko.



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At the Limits of Understanding

"Find the limit," Professor Santos said, his chalk gliding across the board with practiced ease. The expression he wrote was familiar, rational, factorable, the kind that yielded to patience and method. A problem designed not to surprise, but to confirm.

Behind him, chairs shifted and notebooks opened. The soft rhythm of problem-solving began: pens scratching, calculators clicking, pages turning. It was a sound Santos had come to trust, like the steady ticking of a clock. It meant his students were following, moving step by step toward an answer that had already been determined.

He stepped aside, brushing chalk dust from his fingers, and surveyed the room.

Most of them had begun the usual process, expand, factor, cancel, substitute. Heads bent in quiet concentration. A few brows furrowed, but not with confusion, only effort. This was the work they had been trained to do.

All except one.

Mara sat still, her pencil hovering above her paper. She wasn't writing. She wasn't even looking down. Her eyes were fixed on the board, on the expression itself, as though it were not something to solve, but something to question.

Santos noticed, but said nothing at first. Every class had its pauses. Moments where a student drifted, recalibrated, returned. He turned back to the board, considering whether to add a hint.

"Sir," Mara said.

The room quieted not completely, but enough. A few students glanced up, annoyed at the interruption.

"Yes?" Santos replied.

She gestured slightly toward the equation. "What happens if the limit doesn't exist?"

A small smile touched his lips. It was a familiar question, almost expected at this stage.

"Then we say it diverges," he answered.

Some students nodded and returned to their work. The answer fit neatly within the rules they knew.

But Mara didn't look satisfied.

She tilted her head slightly, her gaze still fixed forward. "But what if we just can't see it?"

The pencil in her hand lowered slowly to the desk.

"What if it's there," she continued, her voice quieter now, "but we don't understand it yet?"

The room stilled.

Even the faint scratching of pens seemed to fade. A few students looked up again, this time with curiosity instead of impatience. It wasn't the kind of question that belonged to the problem on the board. It didn't ask for a method. It asked for something else, something less certain.

Santos turned back to the equation, as though it might help him respond. The symbols stared back at him, obedient and complete. He knew exactly what would happen if one followed the proper steps. The limit existed. It resolved cleanly into a single value. There was no ambiguity, no hidden meaning.

And yet, Mara's question lingered.

What if we just can't see it?

He thought of the theorems he had memorized, the proofs he had once struggled through as a student. How certain everything had seemed once it was understood, how final. But he also remembered the long hours before that certainty, when ideas hovered just out of reach, when the answer felt present but inaccessible.

In mathematics, they had names for such things, undefined, indeterminate, divergent.

Words that marked the boundary between what could be resolved and what could not.

But outside the classroom, the boundaries were less clear.

Understanding did not always arrive neatly, nor did it always announce itself. Sometimes it approached slowly, asymptotically, closer and closer without ever fully arriving.

Santos realized he had been silent too long.

He turned back to the class.

"Then," he said carefully, "we keep approaching."

The words settled into the room, quieter than expected.

Mara held his gaze for a moment, searching perhaps for something more, an elaboration, a correction, a clearer answer. But none came.

After a second, she nodded.

It was a small gesture, but deliberate. She lowered her eyes to her paper and began to write.

Around her, the class resumed. Pens moved again. The familiar rhythm returned, though softer now, as if something in the room had shifted.

Santos watched them for a moment longer before picking up the chalk again.

"Remember," he said, turning back to the board, "when dealing with limits, we're not always evaluating the function at a point. We're examining its behavior as it gets closer."

He underlined part of the expression, continuing the lesson. His voice found its usual cadence, guiding them through factoring, cancellation, substitution. The solution emerged cleanly, predictably.

A number appeared at the end.

Definite. Final.

But as he wrote it, Santos found himself thinking less about the answer and more about the space around it – the narrowing gap, the endless approach.

When the class ended, students packed their things quickly, conversations rising as they filed out of the room. Chairs scraped against the floor. Papers rustled. The ordinary noise of departure.

Mara lingered only a moment longer than the others. She glanced once more at the board, then at her notebook, as if comparing the two. Satisfied, she slipped her pencil into her bag and left without another word.

Santos remained by the board, the final answer still written in white chalk. He stared at it, then reached up and erased it slowly, the number dissolving into a faint haze before disappearing completely.

For a long moment, he stood there, the board now blank.

In mathematics, he thought, the goal was always clarity, to reduce uncertainty, to arrive at something exact.

But teaching felt different.

It was not a matter of delivering answers, neatly resolved. It was something less precise, more continuous. Each explanation brought his students closer, but never entirely there. There was always another question, another layer of understanding just beyond reach.

An endless approach.

As he turned off the lights and stepped out of the classroom, Santos carried with him the quiet realization that perhaps this was not a failure of the process, but its very nature.

Not all limits were meant to be reached.

Some were simply meant to be approached.

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Malayo Pa, Pero Malapit Na: The Perks, Fights, and Social Realities of a Third-Year Educ Students

There is a certain kind of quiet transformation that happens when you reach your third year in university. Realizations, expectations, doubt, and judgment surround it. It is the time when you will experience sleepless nights, overload requirements, and unfinished activities. Then, you will realize that you are no longer the same student who once asked, “Kaya ko kaya?”

Now, the question feels different. It’s no longer about if you can; instead, it’s about how you will survive.

This is what the third year feels like. Hindi na dapat freshman na nangangapa pa lang. Sabi nga nila, “Third year ka na, dapat alam mo na yan”. This message adds pressure. People expect you to know better, do better, be better. It will remind you that you need to improve and upgrade your level because the subjects are no longer introductory; you need to think critically, provide an in-depth understanding, and demonstrate strong independence. There are days when everything feels too much.

“Haysss kastress, deadline na...” It’s 2 AM, and the only thing keeping us awake is the blinking cursor on our screen, the ticking timer, panic, and heartbeat in our chest. Tabs are open, notes are dispersed, and our mind keeps jumping from one requirement to another. We try to type, delete, then type again. Nakakapagod. The pressure is real. But somehow, we’re still here, still trying, still pushing because in the third year, stopping is not an option. Even deadlines overlap, research papers demand your time, reports require your confidence, and group works test your patience. Group works? Yes, it becomes its own kind of challenge. Why? May grupo kaseng..... asa na, asan na? “Groupmates, paramdam naman.” A simple message, but it carries deep emotional meaning, frustration, stress, and pressure. It is a quiet burden of doing more than your share.

Yet, beyond these struggles, there is something deeper happening, which is growing ourselves. We learn that the third year is not just an academic journey; it is a training ground for social literacy.

In the middle of demonstrations, group chats, classroom discussions, and presentations, we learn how to communicate clearly, assert ourselves, and understand others. We learn when to lead and when to listen. We begin to handle students, placed in front of them and recognizing their unspoken emotions, not just as learners but as leaders. And, this is how social literacy starts. It teaches how to navigate relationships, resolve conflicts, and collaborate despite differences.

At the same time, familiarity grows. The campus no longer feels overwhelming; it feels like a second home or a part of nature. Friendships deepen, and classmates become support systems. Some people make everything complete and comfortable. You can meet people who stay even when things get hard. This makes us one, one heart and one soul. Hardships make our bond stronger, making ourselves a greatest soldier. Some of us even become informal mentors to younger students, realizing that we are no longer just learners - we are also guides. In this space, we begin to understand our role not only for ourselves, but also in a community, shaping not just our academic identity, but also our social one.

But even with these perks, the fights remain. We need to stand with strength and hope. There is the internal battle; the quiet questions that still echo during moments of exhaustion: Am I on the right path? Am I good enough? And the “Kaya ko kaya” before turns to “Kaya ko pa ba?” These doubts don’t disappear; They grow alongside us, because as they said, “it is a part of the journey”. The future that once we dreamed and once distant now feels uncomfortably close. Beyond academics, as expectations grow, responsibilities expand. Some of us juggle sidelines, helping our families while maintaining our studies, even though it was not easy for us, but we need to do it. As the expectations from ourselves and from society it has now become heavier.

Balancing everything feels like walking a tightrope, where one misstep can disrupt everything.

Yet, in this chaos, growth happens. This year is not just all about our challenges and the hindrances in our lives; it is all about growing and improving ourselves.

At this moment, we begin to notice our small victories: we can now speak in front of our fellow students with confidence, submitting all the tasks and requirements thought impossible, and surviving each exhausting week. These moments may seem ordinary, but they reflect something powerful, and that is, we are changing, we are improving. We are becoming more resilient, more patient, and more aware of ourselves and of others.

This is where social literacy deepens even more. We learn empathy by understanding that everyone is fighting their own different battles. We need to become adaptable, adjusting ourselves to different people, expectations, and situations. And most importantly, we learn connection, that success is not just individual but also shared.

“Malayo pa, pero malapit na.”

We are still in the middle of the journey. There are still deadlines to meet, challenges to face, and doubts to overcome. But we are no longer who we were before. Every sleepless night, every struggle, every small win brings us closer to reality - not just to graduation, but to becoming individuals who can think, communicate, and connect with others meaningfully.

Because in the end, the third year is not just about surviving academics. It is about learning how to exist in a world with others, understanding, responding, and growing together. And maybe that’s the real achievement.

Malayo pa. Pero, malapit na.



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The Perfect Teacher's Day Equation

You Added so much Joy to my Day,
Like solving x when x equals the
Best Math students.

Your Surprise was the Greatest Formula
Proving that teaching plus Love
Equals pure Math magic.

You are All Prime Numbers.
One of a kind, with
a GCD equals one
And will forever be part of my heart.

Thank You for Making
This Teacher's Day Equation
Work so perfectly.

Here's to many More lessons with you,
Where laughter multiplies
And Stress is Subtracted Away.

You are the real Variables
That makes this Class Function.

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Frugality is the New Mentality

"You must gain control over your money or the lack of it will forever control you."

— Dave Ramsey.

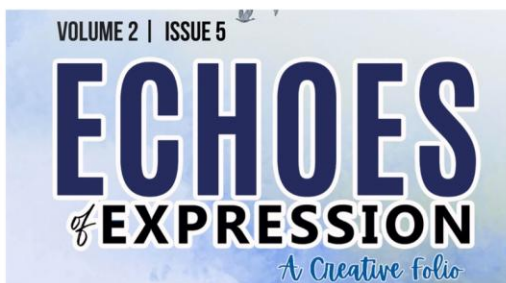
If there is one thing that vexes us the most, surely, it would have to be numbers and Mathematics. Just a glance at the digits on the board makes our hearts race to death. Computing and solving is a bitter pill to swallow, an uphill battle we cannot conquer — except when it comes to money.

Two weeks ago, an episode in Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho (KMJS) exposed the skeleton in the closet of public-school teachers in the Philippines, a debt of abyss. As reported by Alliance of Concerned Teachers, 75% of 800, 000 public school teachers are in debt, leading to a staggering total amount of 319 billion pesos debt in 2-years. Worst case, one unearthed her life due to extreme depression, we cannot help but shake our heads in disbelief. Offering empathy is the least we could do, as for us, they are someone's wife, someone's mother, who wishes the best for their family. However, the damage has been done. But just like we always say, prevention is better than a cure.

Before it's too late, we must be cautious in managing our finances, or else, it will take charge of controlling the steering wheel of your life, and you can start as early as now. Even if you're still a student, you should not be careless with your allowance. Micro practices can have a macro effect, take frugality for instance, an action that guides us to spend our money wisely and effectively.

As college students who rent a boarding house, budgeting is not just a practice for us; it is the toolkit to survive the week and to make ends meet. Splitting our monthly allowance is like slicing an onion into pieces; you cannot help but cry. It was divided into rent, groceries, fare, internet fee, projects, and a lot more. Who would not be frugal in this situation? That's why we formulated best practices to keep our heads above water.

For the very first week of the month, we settle the bills as early as possible to avoid bills from piling up. After that, purchasing goods in the local market is recommended, as prices are incredibly low and still good for health. That follows the soul of budgeting, making



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a meal plan that secures a menu for the whole week. Sometimes, we have to endure having three meals with the same viand, but trust us, that is for the best. This allows us to monitor what we have spent and prevent further spending, since it has already been fixed. For internet connection, what saves us from allocating a relatively large portion of money is splitting the cost of mobile data and using one phone as a mobile hotspot.

These simple habits work because they take the guesswork out of our spending. By knocking out our bills in the first week, buying our food at the local market, sticking to a strict meal plan, and sharing a hotspot, we make sure that we actually have enough to last until the end of the month without any stress.

We are happy to share our strategies for spending money wisely. No, we are not cheap; we are calculating the pluses, minuses, times, and divides of life. Adding a penny to savings, diminishing unnecessary expenses, multiplying resources, and apportioning allowance in light of frugality.

Financial literacy matters. It is now more than ever.



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**Ti Epekto ti Panangabus Manipud iti Ubing
Agingga iti Agdama**

Daniw 1: Ti Kinatao

Sino ti Ladawan?

Iti sarsarming, agtamtamok
ti napudot a ubing,
Adda dapu kadagiti pingping, adda met liday na.

Saan ko ammo no kasano a mangibagik
kadagitoy a panglagipko,
Ta ti ladawan ket naisangayan man
ipapan ni pukkaw ken rurog.

Nagbalin a nasukto amin a tignayko,
Agpampanunot no adda kadi maysa a rungsot.

Ti trauma kasla maysa a marka iti papel,
Narigat nga aramiden, narigat nga ikkan.

Idiay uneg, adda ti damag a saan nga masungbatan,
No siak kadi ti bunga ti rurog a naexperience.

Ti kinataok ket nakapaloob iti buteng,
Nangisit a kuerdas dagiti mangiturturong iti ayug.

Ngem iti salin ti bigat,
agsapsapulak,
Iti baro a nagan, iti baro a kired.

Ti kinataok ket saan a daydiay rurog,
Ngem ti pigsa nga agnaed
nagtengnga dagiti parikut.

Ti pagkakakilanlan ket saan a nakatali
ti daytuy a kasasaad,

No di ket isu ti dalan
a mangsuporta iti baro a panagipatarus.

Uray man mapukaw ti ragsak nga indagaan,
Adda latta ti posibilidad
a makita ti silaw ti langit.

Daniw 2: Ti Bukod a Nakem

Panangsangaili iti Biag

Dagiti pagkurangan ko ket natakneng unay,
Saan ak nga makapili iti dalan a pagbiagan.

Ti panunotko ti nagbaliwan a lintegko,
Kastoy nga imbaga,
ti nakemko ket nagsaruno a lunod.

Iti panagsukir, nagrigat ti agpili,
No ti desisyon ket maysa laeng a biddut.

Ti trauma kas maysa a mangngallilaw nga awit,
Agsao a saanak a makastrek iti kabusor.

Ngem in-inut a binukradko dagiti kawar,
Inadalko ti agsarita nga awan ti butengna.

Ti nakemko ket maysa a natibker a kuta,
Saanen a mabalin a dadaelen
ti dakes a gannuat.

Ngem binuklatak dagiti tawtawag,
Ti awan kasin ti panagindeg,
Ngem ditoy ayat a naggapu iti napalabas.

Siak ti kapitan ti barko a naldbas,
Ngem ita agturingak iti baybay a nasayaat.

Uray adda dagiti piglat iti panunot,
Siak ti mangyeg a kas tagikua.

Awanen ti mabalin a makapaawit
kas sakam a rumuar,
No di ket para laeng
iti bukodko a pammati ken tured.

Daniw 3: Panagakabsat ken Relasion

Ti Sakit ti Ayat

Ti panamati ket kas maysa a napigsa nga ligadura,
Naitukod iti demokrasia idi nakita ko ti ili.

Narigat a ited ti puso kadagiti dadduma,
Ta ammo ak, ti ayat agkasapulan iti dakdakkal a sakripisyo.

Kadagiti kakabsat ken kadagiti nadungngo a tao,
Agsipud iti panagsarita,
kasla ak maysa a biktima.

Ti butengko agaramid ti awan
no magun-odan manen ti kinaranggas.

Gapu kasta,
ti pusok ket nakadengdengngeg iti naglabas.

Naisuro kaniak ti naindaklan a pammati,
Adu dagiti ima nga agaramid iti sitatalek.

Ti relasion ket di lang maysa a pasakit,
No diket maysa a saranay iti panawen ti liday.

Ti trauma ket saan a kas pader iti unegko,
Naiyurnos ngem kas maysa a rangtay
a mangtulong iti panangpatibker ti riknako.

Ammok ti rupa ti pudno a pannakikapsut,
Saan laeng nga awan,
no di ket adda met ti talna ken kinaraniag.

Daniw 4: Panagadal

Ti Silaw ti Pluma

Ti eskuela ket nagbalin a kas maysa a pagtaderan,
Dagiti libro ket nagbalin a dalan para iti panunot,
Nangiparanget kaniak iti sangalubongan
a napno kadagiti kangrunaan.

Iti nauneg a lads, ammuem ti kired,
Ti sirib ket kas maysa a panangsalaknib iti kasasaad.

Ti edukasion ti nangipundar kaniak,
Manipud iti kuku ti nakamamatay nga biag.

Uray saan nga agsublat ti ayat iti balay,
Nabataak iti kaawatan a napasamak iti siled.

Nagbalin a kankanta ti pluma,
Maysa a tignay a manggegeg
kadagiti nangina a puno.

Ti panagadal ket maysa a napateg nga oportunidad,
Tapno ti ubing a biktima ket makabangon.

Saan laeng a masisugid ti pagnaed ti biag,
Nu di ket agda ti balligi
a maidalan iti panagbasa.

Iti edukasion, maysa a gubat ti masangsangayan,
Gubat nga agpugos iti amin a kinaranggas.

Babaen iti adal, nakitak dagiti kabailan,
Kas maysa a tao a napnuan iti kired.

Daniw 5: Trabaho

Ti Akingan a Mannursuro

Naging mannursuro ak, maysa nga katuwang,
Sadiay Chalk ken Blackboard ti baro a pagtaengan.

Tunggal ubing nga masarakan ko ket kasla kapamilya,
Ay-ayaten ko ida
tapno di da makasagrap iti parikot.

Ti trabaho ko ket di laeng a panangisuro,
Nudiket maysa a misyon
a mangsalaknib iti kabataan.

Ti trauma nga intudko ket nagbalin a kasangkapan ti pammati,
Tapno makabuildak kadagiti nadawel.

Iti uneg ti klasrum, awan ti pagbuteng,
Sadiay ket adda ti nasaysayaat a namnama.

Ti kired ti bagik ket addaan iti tunggal ubing,
Nupay masapul ti agtrabaho a nadagsen,
Tapno awan ti ubing
a mawan kadagiti kinasukir.

Maysa a kasangayan ti natalged a pammati,
Nga uray adda latta poro
ti umun-una a nasayaat.

Ti trabaho ko ket kas maysa a kanta nga agtagikua,
A mangipaay iti kinaimbag kadagiti ubing.

Daniw 6: Kinasigurado ti Pinansial

Ti Tawen ti Panagballigi

Di nakaskasdaaw ti kinaruburot ti kuarta,
Addaanak iti trabaho a mangted kadagiti kasapulan.

Saanen a kas idi ubingak, no di ketdi
Nangisipnget iti panagbiag dagiti tattao.

Ita, agtultuloyak a mangipabaklay iti bulong ken taraon,
Ngem addaan ti kayat ko
nga itulong kadagiti ub-ubbing.

Ti kasiguradok ket kas maysa a baro,
Tapno ti pamilia ket saanen a makirigat.

Agaramidak para iti pateg
ti tunggal piso a maisagan,
Ta agnanaedak iti biag
kas maysa a sabsabong.

Ti pasamak iti trauma ket napasamak kadagiti rigat,
Babaen ti kinaginut ken tured a mangipakita.

Ti kuarta ket saan a laing iti biag,
Ngem maysa a kasangkapan
a mangalaga iti dungngo.

Tapno ti kinaranggas nga awan gapu iti kinaruburot,
Awanen ti agsubli kadagiti uray ak.

Daniw 7: Pagtaengan

Ti Siguro a Taeng

Adda maysa a balay ditoy, napno iti kapia,
Awan ti rikna, awan ti kinaranggas.

Dagiti diding ket saan nga agaw-awid iti buteng,
No di ket manglawlawag
iti kanta ti ayat ken saranay.

Daytoy a lugar ket kasla maysa a paraiso,
Naitalgek manipud iti nabayagen a naglabas.

Tunggal anggulo ket napno iti silaw,
A sadiay nalagaan ti tunggal espiritu.

Iti Victoria, agdama a napagtakderan ti talna,
Dita a nagbalin a kapayapaan
iti amin a pammati.

Ti pagtaengan ko ket kas maysa nga sirmata,
A saan nga addaan ti lugar ti rurog.

Saan laeng a simento ken lupa ti nausar,
Ngem ti prayer ken panangipateg ti amin.

Ti balayko ket kasla kuta iti ayat,
Wenno uray pay amianan, di makabangon.

Daniw 8: Ti Agdama

Ti Rimat ti Bigat

Ngagpatingganaak itatta kadagitoy a lugar
ken adda ti silaw,
Ti trauma nga inexperimento ko idi
nagbalin a gakat.

Siak ket maysa a mannursuro,
maysa a mannurat,
Maysa nga tao a nakasubok
iti kinarurog ti biag.

Ti agdama ket maysa a napintas nga gundaway,
A mangipateg iti pamilia ken dagiti ubbing,
Ta ti init ket aglibas kadagiti barukongko.

Agbiagak a matiwasay ti kinasingpet,
Nga awan bassit a balligi
iti uneg ti parikut,
Nu di ket para kadagiti kired
nga innalon manipud iti rugit.

Ti agdama ket maysa nga awit ti panagyaman,
Iti Dios ken kadagiti amin
a nagtalinaed a mangtulong kaniak.

Manipud iti ubing nga adu ti pinagdaraanan,
Rimusing ti biag
a napno iti raniag ken kinakalmado.



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Trahe de Boda

May mga pagkakataon na nagsisimula sa simpleng ligaya at pananabik, walang bakas ng lungkot, walang kahit anong babala na may magbabago. Isang araw na parang ginawa lang para sa mga pangarap na matagal nang hinihintay na matupad.

Ang gabing iyon ay puno ng pangarap. Hawak ang puting bestida na matagal nang ninanais maisuot, ramdam ang bawat hibla na tila may sariling kuwento. Hindi ito basta isang damit kundi simbolo ng pag-ibig, pag-asa, katapatan at simula ng buhay na inaasam-asam.

Madaling araw palang, gising na. Tahimik ang paligid habang papunta sa sakayan ng bus. Magkahawak ang kamay, marahan pero sigurado, na parang wala nang dapat ipag-alala. Mahaba ang paglalakbay patungo sa tindahang iyon, puno ng pananabik at kakaibang saya na nararamdaman sa bawat sandali. Sa bawat hakbang, mas lumalapit ang isang pangarap na binuo nang kay tagal. Walang gaanong salita. Hindi rin kailangan. Sapat na ang presensya ng isa't isa, sapat na ang katahimikan na may kasamang pag-asa.

Pagdating sa tindahan na bilihan ng mga bestida, hindi maikakaila ang tuwa na bumabalot sa puso. Isa-isang sinukat ang mga bestidang napupusuan hanggang sa may isang Trahe de Boda na pumukaw ng pansin na tila ba iyon na ang nakatakda. Nang maisuot ito, nasilayan ang isang ngiting puno ng katuparan at pag-asa. Hindi iyon basta isang kasiyahan lamang kundi isang pangarap na unti-unti nang nagiging realidad.

Hindi nagtagal, napagdesisyunan nang kunin ang bestidang iyon. Hawak ng buong ingat na para bang kasabay nitong hinahawakan ang hinaharap. Lumipas ang ilang oras at nagsimula narin sa paglalakbay pauwi. Sa simula ay maayos at tahimik ang byahe. Ngunit habang tumatagal, may kakaibang kaba ang unti-unting naramdaman. Hanggang sa marating ang isang paakyat na bahagi ng daan at napansin ang isang bus na hindi maayos ang takbo. Papalapit ito ng papalapit sa sinasakyang bus.

Sa gitna ng takot, napayakap na lamang nang mahigpit ang babae sa kanyang kasintahan. Sa kabila nito, pilit siyang pinakalma ng kanyang kasintahan at marahang sinabi na, "Huwag kang mag-alala, pangako ko na hindi kita pababayaang." Nakaiwas man sa nakasalubong na sasakyan, hindi naman kinaya ng preno ng bus na kanilang sinasakyan. Unti-unting nawalan ng kontrol hanggang sa tuluyan lumihis sa daan. Walang nagawa kundi ang kumapit at umasa. Hanggang sa dahan-dahang bumagsak ang bus sa isang malalim na bangin.

Sa mga huling sandali bago tuluyang bumagsak ang sinasakyang bus, ang babae ay mahigpit na yumakap sa kanyang kasintahan habang pinipilit na magtiwala sa pangakong narinig, at muling sinabi ng lalaki, "Walang mangyayaring masama, nandito lang ako."

Pagbagsak ng bus, nawalan ng malay ang babae dahil sa pagkakauntog. Samantalang ang kanyang kasintahan ay napinsala sapagkat ang mga basag na salamin ay bumaon sa kanyang likod at ulo. Sa kabila ng matinding sakit, pinilit niyang lapitan ang babae upang masigurong ito ay ligtas.

Sa mahinang tinig muling ibinulong ng lalaki, "Hindi kita hinayaang masaktan". Kasunod nito ang pasasalamat at ang pag-amin, "Mahal na mahal kita...higit pa sa sarili ko." Isang halik sa noo at sa labi ang iniwan bilang huling alaala, kasabay ng mahinang paalam, "Mananatili ka sa aking puso hanggang sa aking huling hininga". Hanggang sa nawala na ang lakas at tuluyang pumikit ang mga mata, habang ang huling iniisip ay ang kaligtasan ng minamahal.

Lumipas ang tatlong araw bago nagising ang babae sa loob ng ospital. Hindi agad ipinabatid ng kanyang mga magulang ang nangyari. Makikita sa kanilang mga mata ang lungkot ngunit pinili nilang itago ang katotohanan.

Paglabas niya ng ospital, doon lamang ipinahayag ang lahat. Hindi agad ito matanggap, at nanatili ang pag-asa na hindi totoo ang kanyang mga narinig. Ngunit sa pagpunta sa burol, nakita ang larawan at ang katawang nakahimlay sa loob ng kabaong, doon napagtanto ang katotohanan. Hindi napigilan ang pag- agos ng luha. Hindi maipaliwanag ang bigat na nararamdaman.

Naunawaan na ang lahat.

Kung bakit nagising.

Kung bakit buhay pa.

At kung bakit siya nawala.

Mahigpit na niyakap ang trahe de boda, ang bestidang sana'y isusuot sa araw ng kasal. Ang dating simbolo ng saya at pangarap ay naging paalala nalang ng isang pag-ibig na hindi na matutuloy.

Sa gitna ng pagluha, paulit-ulit na umalingawngaw sa isipan ang mga salitang, "Hindi kita pababayaang", at "Hindi kita hahayaang masaktan." Doon napagtanto na tinupad ang mga pangakong iyon, kahit sariling buhay ang naging kapalit. Sa kabila ng pangyayaring iyon, mayroong naiwan. Isang pagmamahal na hindi nasira ng trahedya. Isang alaala na hindi kailaman mawawala. At sa bawat paghinga dala-dala iyon, hanggang sa huling hininga.



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A Teacher's Reflection on Formal Criticism

An English teacher's learning goes far beyond our imagination. The journey of mastering a sheer variety of literary criticisms is mind-blowing; it requires time and deep focus to understand each approach one at a time, lest they become confusing in one's mind.

As I delved into the pathway of Formal Criticism, or simply the art of close reading, my perspective on literature transformed profoundly. I realized that while the author's life tells us why they write, the text itself tells us what they actually say. It means that answers can be rooted in the language itself by just trusting the page. I also learned that the essence of a story lies specifically in how the language interacts and gives life to the work. This method encourages us to analyze how elements like symbolism, imagery, tone, and rhythm create the overall message of a story.

This theoretical shift became even clearer when we apply it to Amador Daguio's story, *The Wedding Dance*. Analyzing the story through the art of noticing was truly an eye-opener. I began to see how specific elements constructed the narrative's power. For instance, the darkness of the night and the persistent sound of gongs were no longer just setting or background music; they symbolized the profound sadness of the separation between Awiyao and Lumnay. Similarly, the "seed" represented fertility and the very reason for their separation.

But the most striking discovery was recognizing Irony. The gongs and dancing, which should represent joy and celebration, actually caused immense pain to the main characters. That was my "Aha!" moment, where you can realize that these sounds were the heartbeat of the story's tragedy. This becomes even more heartbreaking when we realize the context that this is not just any dance, but it is the wedding celebration for Awiyao and his new wife. The very sounds that usually signal happiness were, in reality, marking the ending of Lumnay and Awiyao's love. I also paid close attention to the imagery: phrases like "the fire died down and went out" painted a visual picture of a love that had faded, while the "shouting and laughing" of the crowd outside only emphasized Lumnay's crushing loneliness. At that moment, I understood that analyzing the text as a unified whole allows us to grasp the author's true intent, simply by giving attention to every word chosen.

Reflecting on my evolution, I admit that I still experience the struggle of analyzing complex texts. There are times when I feel lost, unsure of where to start or how to unlock the meaning. It can be frustrating when the message seems hidden or vague. However, discovering this approach felt like a relief. It gave me a clear lens that, instead of guessing or looking outside the work, I learned to trust the page. It turned confusion into clarity and made the process of discovery exciting rather than overwhelming.

Incorporating this into my classroom, I am determined to share this approach with my students, knowing firsthand how challenging it can be to interpret literature without a solid guide. Using the Wedding Dance as our model, I want them to feel like detectives, hunting for the secret life of words. They will underline significant objects like fire, seeds, and night, and ask, "Why these specific words?" I want them to discover for themselves that "fire" represents love, and "night" represents sorrow.

Furthermore, I will emphasize the importance of Text Evidence. I will train my students that every interpretation must be supported by lines from the story. For example, if you claim Lumnay is sad, you must point to lines like "*She sobbed, clung to Awiyao, and said I am useless*" to prove your point. This strategy does more than teach analysis; it develops critical thinking, allowing them to build their understanding brick by brick.

In context, *Formal Criticism* stands as a vital approach in the study of literature. It reminds us that a text is complete on its own, rich with its own structure and meaning. Whether in learning or teaching, it transforms reading into an unfolding of discovery, helping us appreciate the crafted beauty that lies within the words themselves.



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Ang Liham Ni Ina

Anak, sa aking pagtanda ako'y ingatan mo sana
Gaya noong ikaw ay nasa sinapupunan ko pa
Ipagkaloob mo sa ina ang sapat na alaga
Huwag mong pabayaang at ipag sa walang bahala

Nong ika'y binhi pa lamang sa aking sinapupunan
Ako'y naging lupa, tubig, araw ng iyong kanlungan
Ngayon, ako'y lanta, pag-aalaga mo'y kailangan
Pag-aaruga mo sakin anak, tanging kahilingan

Kung sakaling mga kamay ni ina'y nanginginig na
Hawakan mo't ipadama ang init ng pag-aruga
Kung ang aking tinig at boses ay maging mahina na
Pakinggan mo't awit ito ng pagmamahal ni ina

Noong ika'y musmos, ako'y iyong gabay at sandigan
Sa bawat sakit at gutom, ako ang iyong kanlungan
Saking huling yugto ng buhay, ako'y iyong ingatan
Alagaan mo ako anak sa aking kahinaan

Sa bawat hakbang na mabagal, sa tinig na mahina
Hindi ko hinahangad ang ginto, karangyaan, pera
Kundi ang init ng iyong pag-aaruga't alaga
Anak, sa aking pagtanda ako'y ingatan mo sana.

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Bangka, Barko, Bapor: Navigating the Social Sea of the Mindoro Passage

The distance from Cavite to the Batangas piers is not measured in kilometers, but in changing expectations. For years, this route was the rhythm of my life during graduate school. Crossing the Verde Island Passage was more than just a way to get to work; it was like a second classroom where ideas from social science met the real-life problems of the Philippine transportation system. I started to see the sea not just as a line between two places, but as a living theater of Filipino life. In this group of islands, traveling by boat becomes a way to learn about history, class, and social negotiation through three ships: the Bangka, the Barko, and the Bapor.

The Bangka owns the crossing on most days. As a student of history and sociology, I often viewed this vessel as the oldest blueprint of Filipino mobility, a technology tracing its origins thousands of years back to Austronesian voyagers. The Bangka, whether powered by a motor or a paddle, shows how close people are to the sea. When you ride one toward Puerto Galera, you can feel the saltwater spray, the hull tilt, and the waves' rhythm. The Bangka, on the other hand, requires passengers to interact directly with nature, unlike modern ships that keep them safe from the elements. It still has a democratic spirit, with a thin wooden barrier separating the passengers from the sea. The Bangka is more than just a way to get around; it is a part of the community that connects modern Mindoreños to generations of island navigators who crossed these same waters.

The Barko's industrial turmoil replaces the Bangka's closeness at Batangas City Pier after the shuttle journey from Pala-pala. The Barko refers to the large Roll-on/Roll-off ships and sleek Fastcrafts that mostly transport people between islands. The port strengthens and breaks social structures during the Christmas rush. Diesel exhaust and thousands of people waiting in line thicken the air at the RORO terminal. This trip requires endurance. The attitude shifted immediately as I switched to the Fastcraft terminal to get there faster. The waiting room smelled like expensive colognes, and they were quiet and confident since they could pay to get through quickly.

The Bapor, from the Spanish word for "steamship," reminds me of the steamships in Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, which were floating symbols of a divided colonial society. The Bapor is not just a ship to me; it is also a way of life for people living in the port. The culture of pabor—favor—comes to light when social capital takes the place of institutional order. Without openness, connections are the only real money.

It was in this stasis that the vessel transformed from a physical ship into the conceptual Bapor. Derived from the Spanish vapor, the word evokes the steamships of Dr. Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, floating metaphors for a stratified colonial society. To me, the Bapor is less about the engine and more about the social architecture of the voyage. Within the Bapor lies the complex culture of pabor, or favor. In the absence of a transparent or functioning bureaucracy, social capital becomes the only functional currency for survival. I remember one time when I crossed the street and was saved by a childhood friend who I had thought was weak when I was younger. However, at the pier, our shared past became more important than my master's degree. She got me information and helped me get through by being close to the front of the line. At that moment, scarcity revealed uncomfortable truths about people. When resources are scarce, fairness loses its moral value and tribalism takes over. People stop seeing other travelers and start seeing rivals.

The port showed many different ways this survival instinct works. Prices went up because of hunger, and crowds ignored lost foreign travelers who did not know the unspoken rules of the line. People at the front of the line had real power because they could talk to crew members and share information, such as money. This is the most basic form of human ego: leading not by serving others, but by controlling information.

Efforts to impose order seldom succeeded. A woman trying to get the crowd to listen would quickly be called an epal because survival mode does not respect authority unless it provides immediate relief. People do not want leaders; they want saviors who can give them tickets. In this setting, trust in institutions falls apart. When ticket booths remain closed and announcements are not made, the social contract breaks down, and discretion and social favors become the only ways to stay alive.

To end these maritime tensions, we need to go beyond short-term favors and work toward systemic dignity. The first thing to do is to make information available to everyone. Real-time tracking systems and clear announcements can eliminate the informal gatekeeping that lets whispers and connections take precedence over fairness. Infrastructure dignity is just as important. The fact that many RORO terminals are too crowded is not just a logistical problem; it is also a problem of respect for people. Passengers act violently and desperately when they are treated like prisoners.

The task is to restore Bangka's sense of community within Barko's industrial scale. Our ancestors' original seafaring traditions were based on working together to navigate, where survival depended on everyone, not just one person. The same idea should apply to modern sea travel.

No matter how chaotic things are at the pier, the shoreline always rises steadily from the horizon at the end of every crossing to Mindoro. The harder part for Filipinos is making sure that the journey home does not mean giving up their dignity and humanity. We must grow as descendants of great explorers and as citizens who are willing to fight for systems that protect the right to return home not by chance, favors, or connections, but by fairness, responsibility, and the law.



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Pag-Asa Ko'y Ikaw

Malamig na hangin ang dumadaplis sa aking balat, rinig ang hampas ng alon sa dalampasigan habang nakatingala sa kalangitan inaalala ang tawanan, masasayang memorya na iniwan ninyo sa akin. Kung sana lamang hindi na kayo nagpumilit pang pumunta hindi sana kayo nawala, buo pa sana tayong magpapamilya, hindi ko mararanasan ang ganitong pangungulila.

"Bakit hindi kayo niligtas ng kinikilala niyong Diyos? Bakit kayo pa ang namatay? Bakit ako pa ang pinahihirapan ng ganito? Napakasakit, Nay!" Halos mawalan na ako ng malay sa sobrang bigat ng puso ko habang tinatanong nang paulit-ulit kung may Diyos ba talaga?

"Abi!" sigaw ni Tiya Isabel, nakapapagod tumira sa bahay na ito dahil puro bulyaw ang naririnig, walang kapayapaan puro gulo na lamang ang namumutawi sa tahananang ito.

"Ano ba diba sabi ko sa'yo bago ka umalis mag-iwan ka ng pera sa mesa. Alam mo na nga na magagalit na naman si Tito mo kung walang hawak na pera iyon." Tama ako ang nagsisilbing provider sa bahay na ito, simula nang nawala na sila nanay, tatay at Rain sila ang kumupkop sa akin pero parang hindi ko maramdaman na kamag-anak ko sila sapagkat ginagawa nila akong alipin. Labinlimang taon pa lamang ako natuto na akong maghanap ng trabaho, lahat ng kita at sahod ko ay ibinibigay ko sa kanila. Minsan hindi na ako pumapasok sa paaralan para lamang mabigyan ng pera sila Tita at Tito. Gustong-gusto ko na umalis sa tahananang ito pero saan ako pupunta? Wala na ang dati naming bahay, binenta na rin nila at ang masaklap ni piso ay wala akong nahawakan dahil ang napagbentahan nila Tito at Tita ay ginamit nila sa sugal. Sinisikap kong mabigyan sila ng pera pero ginagamit lamang nila ito sa sugal at alak, puro bisyo. Ibang iba sila sa mga magulang ko dahil napakarelihiyoso nila.

"Kumusta na Abi?" napatda ako sa tinig na aking narinig. Siya pala si Aira, kaklase ko sa history. Bilib din ako sa babaeng ito kasi napakapositibo niya, laging nakangiti, pansin talaga ang kawalang problema sa kaniya. Sana kagaya ko na lang si Aira, kumpleto ang pamilya, may masaya at payapang tahanan, walang problema.

"Ayo lang ako, Aira. Hindi ko pa pala naisauli yung damit na hiniram ko noong dulaan natin, ibalik ko na lang sa lunes."

"Okay lang, gusto mo sa'yo na 'yon malay mo magamit mo kapag sumama ka na sa'kin sa susunod diba?" Ilang beses na rin akong inaaya ni Aira na sumama raw sa mga bible

study sa kanila pero lagi ko siyang tinatanggihan kasi wala naman talagang Diyos dahil kung meron man bakit kinuha niya nang maaga ang pamilya ko? bakit pinababayaang niya akong abusuhin ng mga kamag-anak ko? Matagal na akong nawalan ng gana at nawalan ng pag-asa sa Diyos.

“Aira alam mo namang ayaw kong sumasama sa mga ganiyan diba? Marami rin akong gagawin, papasok pa ako sa trabaho pagkatapos ng klase natin.” Pagtatangi ko sa kaniya.

“Sige sa susunod na lang. Hindi kita titigilan, Abi. Mauna na ako. Andiyan na kasi si papa.” Pagpapaalam niya.

“Ano na Abi? Nasaan na ang sahod mo? Hindi ba akinse ngayon?” Parang gusto ko isumbat lahat ng nasa isip ko ngayon dahil wala na silang ibang ginawa kundi para ubusin ang mga pera ko na dapat ay ginagamit ko para mabuhay at mapag-aral ko ang sarili ko.

“Wala pa po, Tita. Sa katapusan pa raw po ibibigay ni Boss.” Iniwan ko siyang nangagalaiti na naman sa galit at pumasok ako sa kwarto para tignan ang larawan ng pamilya ko. Nangungulila na ako sa kanila hindi ko na kaya ang bigat ng buhay na pinaparanas sa akin.

Nagising akong mugto ang mga mata, nakakawalang gana mabuhay dahil paulit-ulit na lang ang nangyayari, wala ng bago. Hindi ako lumabas ng kwarto at nakita ko ang isang bote ng gamot na kikitil sa aking buhay. Gusto ko ng makita sila nanay, kaya oras na para lisanin ko na ang mundong ito, tanging ito ang paraan para makasama sila.

“Abiiiiii!” huling tinig na narinig ko bago ako tuluyang mawalan ng malay.

Naramdaman ko ang bigat sa aking bisig at nakita ko si Aira na nakahiga rito. Napansin kong nasa hospital ako. Ibig sabihin si Aira ang nagdala sa akin dito? Bakit niya ginawa iyon? Ginising ko siya at tinanong pero tanging sagot niya ay ngiti.

“Magpalakas ka na lang muna at baka bukas pwede na tayong umuwi.”

Nagulat ako dahil hindi nila ako hinatid sa bahay nila Tita kundi sa bahay mismo nila Aira ako pinatuloy at sambit ng kaniyang mga magulang na rito na ako maninirahan. Halos umiyak ako sa tuwa dahil handa silang kupkupon ako.

“Maraming Salamat po, Tita Elle, Tito John at Aira. Alam na po ito nila Tita Isabela?”

“Oo, alam na nila na rito ka na maninirahan kasama si Aira. Kung may oras ka Abi sumama ka pala sa amin may bible study kami ngayon.”

Gusto kong tumanggi ngunit siguro oras na para naman pagbigyan ko si Aira sa matagal na niyang pag-aaya sa akin. Kaya nagbihis na ako at sumama sa kanila.



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Para akong nabuhusan nang malamig na tubig sa mga napakinggan ko mula sa isinagawang bible study kanina. Hindi pala dapat mawalan ng pag-asa sa buhay dahil may totoong Diyos na handing tumulong sa bawat pagsubok at ligalig na nasasagupa. Mali rin na kitilin ang sariling buhay dala ng mga mabibigat na problema. Kaya simula noon ay lagi na akong sumasama sa pamilya ni Aira at napatunayan ko na may tunay na Diyos na sa sa piling Niya matatamo ang tunay na kapayapaan at kapanatagan sa buhay na ito. Hindi mapagtatagumpayan nang mag-isa kaya kailangan talaga ang Diyos para mabuhay nang matiwasay, buo ang pag-asa at lubos na nagtitiwala sa magagawa ng Diyos sa buhay natin.

Kaya babaunin ko ang katagang “Huwag kang manlupapay sapagkat may pangako ang Diyos sa taong makapagtatagumpay.”



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Pangarap

Dating tagahanga ng ulap,
Magaan, puno ng pangarap.
Para sa hangad na hinaharap,
'Di kailangan ng pagpapanggap.

"Para sa iyo rin 'yan."
Sa loob ko'y hindi rin/naman
Hindi man ipagsigawan
Bigat ay aking nararamdaman

Para sa akin nga ba?
O para sa bigat niyong dinala?
Sa sukling pabalik-asa?
Mga parinig ng pag-asa.

'Di kailangan ibulyaw,
Ramdam ang pataw.
'Di magbabago ang pananaw,
Pag-asa'y aking ilaw.



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The Light You Carry: A Teacher's Quiet Flame

In the hush before the morning bell,
Where dreams are shaped and stories dwell,
You rise not just to impart,
But to awaken mind and heart.

For teaching is no ordinary art,
It asks for strength in every part,
A steady mind, a soul at peace,
A heart where restless worries cease.

You are the keeper of unseen fire,
The gentle voice that lifts hearts higher,
A guide through storms, a hand to hold,
A weaver of futures yet untold.

But how can one give light so bright,
If lost within their own long night?
You cannot pour from vessels dry,
Nor teach with wings that cannot fly.

So tend the garden of your soul,
Make every broken fragment whole.
Feed your body, calm your mind,
Let healing in, be soft and kind.

Know your limits, hear your call,
Stand up strong, yet rest when you fall.
In every doubt, in each delay,
There blooms a wiser, braver way.

Embrace the growth that trials bring,
Let failures teach, let courage sing.

For every lesson gone astray
Still shapes the teacher of one day.

Walk with purpose, firm and true,
Remember always why you do.
Beyond the chalk, beyond the test,
You shape the hearts within your chest.

Love what you do, let passion stay,
A constant light along the way.
For in each smile, each mind you raise,
You echo hope through countless days.

And never stand in life alone,
For seeds of strength in bonds are sown.
In shared laughter, in helping hands,
You'll find the strength this path demands.

Pause in silence, breathe, and pray,
Let faith illuminate your way.
For in the quiet, strength is born,
A brighter teacher every morn.

Imagine now the years ahead,
The words your grateful students said,
"You saw in me what I could be,
And helped my heart to finally see."

This is your calling, vast and true,
A sacred trust entrusted to you.
Not just to teach, but to inspire,
To set young, searching souls on fire.

So carry on, though roads are steep,
Plant seeds of hope in minds so deep.
For every life you gently guide
Becomes your legacy, your pride.

And when you doubt, just look within,
The light you carry has always been.

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Pagmamahal sa isang Ama

Ama ang haligi ng tahanan
Takbuhan at sandigan
Laging malakas; walang kahinaan
Kaya't ang desisyon laging maaasahan

Sa problema o ano pa man
Ang ama ay laging maaasahan
Dagdag kasiyahan sa ating tahana
Kaya ang aking pagmamahal sadyang umaapaw

Ang ama ang bumubuo sa ating pagkatao
Kaya't pinagmamalaki ko ng may taas noo
Handa kong iharap sa kahit kanino
Maging sa pag akyat ko sa entablado

Kagi sya sa trabaho para sa kinabukasan ko
Upang ako'y mapag-aral at maibigay ang gusto
Kaya't sa pag- aaral ako'y pursigido
Dahil ito ang pinaka maganda kong aginaldo

"Kamusta ako, kamusta pag- aaral ko'
Mga katanungan na sa totoo lang; ay akin ng saulado
Ngunit hindi ako nagsasawa sa pagsagot
Ng ok naman po ako

Sa tuwing ako'y may karamdaman
Ikaw ang unang karamay
Iyong pag- aalaga ay walang paglagyan
Saydang ramdam ko ang iyong pagmamahal

Laging kami ang inaalala mo
Ang inuuna at minamahal mo
Kaya't ang tanong ko
Inaalagaan mo po ba ang sarili mo?

Kaya naman alo akong pursigido
Pag-aaral ay piangbubuti ko
Upang sa pag nakatapos ako,
Ako naman ang bahala sa inyo.



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Anino ng Sariling Pagbangon

Sa isang maliit na payapang bayan ng Roxas, naninirahan ang isang babaeng nangangalang Jhasie. Lumaki sa tahananang buo-may ina, may ama at may mga kapatid. Siya ang ikalawang panganay na unang nakatungtong sa kolehiyo sa kanilang magkakapatid sapagkat ang kanyang naunang kapatid ay hindi nag tuloy sa pag-aaral. Sa paningin ng iba masuwerte siya. Kumpleto at may matatawag siyang pamilya.

May magulang siya, ngunit hindi sapat ang kanilang kakayahan upang masuportahan siya. Kaya't sa murang edad, natutunan niyang huwag umasa. Natutunan niyang siya mismo ang magtutulak sa sa sarili palusong. Ang kanyang ama ay laging abala. Hindi sa trabaho, kundi sa sariling mundo. Madalas ay wala sa bahay tuwing gabi. Ang kanyang ina naman ay naroon nga, ngunit parang laging pagod. Pagod sa buhay, pagod sa responsibilidad at pagod na rin marahil magmahal.

Sumubok siyang magsabi ng kanyang mga mabibigat na saloobin, ngunit hindi siya pinakinggan. Simula ng pangyayaring 'yon, hindi na siya mahilig magkwento, hindi rin siya sanay humingi ng tulong. Sa tingin ng iba wala siyang dinadalang mabigat. Ngunit ang hindi nila alam, sa likod ng kanyang katahimikan ay may isang pusong araw-araw na lumalaban. Ang simpleng bagay na para sa iba ay normal, para sa kanya ay mga pagsubok na kailangang lagpasan mag-isa.

Sa bawat umaga na siya'y nagigising hindi niya alam kung saan siya kukuha ng lakas. Wala siyang maririnig na "kaya mo 'yan," wala ring kamay na aakay sa kanya. Ngunit sa kabila nito, pinipili pa rin niyang bumangon. Pinipili niyang harapin ang panibagong araw, kahit puno ito ng pangamba at pagod. Lumaki si Jhasie na puno ng pangarap. Nangangarap siyang magkaroon ng maayos na buhay, tahananang puno ng pagmamahal, at ng pagkakataong maramdaman na hindi siya nag-iisa. Ngunit hindi naging madali ang lahat. Maraming beses siyang nabigo sa trabahong akala niya ay magiging simula ng kanyang pag-ahon, sa mga taong inaasahan na akala niya totoo ngunit iniwan din siya.

May mga gabing hindi niya mapigilang mapaupo sa sulok ng kanyang silid, yakap ang sarili habang tahimik na umiiyak. Walang nakakarinig sa kanyang mga hikbi, walang nakakakita sa kanyang mga luha. Tanging ang dilim at ang malamig na hangin ang kanyang kasama. Hindi mapigilang mapatanong sa kanyang sarili, "Hanggang kailan matatapos ang problemang ito?" "Kaya ko pa ba?" Sa mga sandaling iyon, pakiramdam niya ay pagod na pagod na siya, pagod na lumaban, pagod na magpanggap na kaya pa niya.

Ngunit sa kabila ng lahat, may isang bagay na hindi niya kailanman, binitawan ang kanyang tapang. Unti-unti niyang natutunang yakapin ang kanyang mga sugat. Hindi na niya ito itinuturing na kahinaan, kundi bilang bahagi ng kanyang pagkatao. Bawat luha ay naging patunay ng kanyang katatagan, bawat pagkadapa ay naging hakbang patungo sa kanyang pagbangon. Natuto siyang ngumiti kahit walang nakakakita. Natuto siyang ipagpatuloy ang laban kahit walang pumapalakpak. Natuto siyang maging matatag, hindi dahil gusto niya, kundi dahil kailangan niya.

Sa paglipas ng panahon, napansin niyang unti-unting nagbabago ang kanyang pananaw. Hindi na niya hinahanap ang pagkilala ng iba. Hindi na niya inaasa sa iba ang kanyang kaligayahan. Sa halip, natutunan niyang hanapin ito sa loob ng kanyang sarili.

Isang araw, habang tahimik siyang naglalakad sa ilalim ng ginintuang sikat ng araw, napagtanto niya ang isang mahalagang bagay hindi pala kailangang may kasama para maging buo. Hindi kailangang may ibang magpatunay ng kanyang halaga. Sapagkat sa lahat ng kanyang pinagdaanan, napatunayan na niya sa sarili niyang siya ay sapat.

Oo, mag-isa siya. Ngunit hindi ibig sabihin nito ay mahina siya.

Sa katunayan, ang bawat laban na kanyang hinarap nang walang kasama ay siyang humubog sa kanya upang maging isang babaeng matatag, matibay, at hindi basta-basta sumusuko. Ang kanyang katahimikan ay hindi tanda ng kahinaan, kundi ng isang pusong sanay nang lumaban nang hindi kailangan ipagsigawan sa mundo.

At sa bawat hakbang na kanyang tinatahak, dala niya ang mga aral ng kahapon, ang tapang ng kasalukuyan, at ang pag-asa para sa hinaharap. Si Jhasie, isang babaeng hindi man napapansin ng marami, ngunit may kwentong kayang pumukaw sa puso ng sinumang makakarinig. Isang babaeng patuloy na lumalaban, hindi dahil madali, kundi dahil naniniwala siyang balang araw, ang lahat ng kanyang pagdurusa ay magbubunga rin ng liwanag. At kapag dumating ang araw na iyon, hindi na siya iiyak sa dilim kundi ngingiti sa liwanag na siya mismo ang naglikha.



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Ang Bagong Kaklase

Hindi ko alam kung bakit hindi pinapansin ng aking mga kaklase ang bagong transferee namin na kaklase. Tahimik lang naman ito at mukhang mabait. Nagtagpo ang aming mga mata at sumilay ang nahihiyang ngiti nito. Pansin ko na nahihiya ito kaya ako na mismo ang lumapit at kumausap.

"Hello! Alyssa pangalan mo diba?" Mahinang tanong ko rito.

Nahihiyang tumango ito ngumiti. Bukod sa pangalan nito ay nakuha kong makipag-usap rito ng mga simpleng bagay lamang.

"Ako nga pala si Dia. Kung gusto mo ng kasama pwede kitang samahan" Nakangiting sabi ko rito.

Magaan ang loob ko rito kaya di rin nagtagal ay parati na kaming magkasama.

Napapansin ko sa loob ng isang linggo na naging kaibigan ko na si Alyssa ay hindi naman ito mahirap pakisamahan. Masiyahin siya at may mga bagay na magkatulad kami. Halimbawa na lamang sa ice cream kung saan parati akong bumibili pagkatapos ng klase.

"Baka sa pinaka hate na numbers at days ay pareho din tayo ng hindi gusto, ah?" Natatawag sabi nito.

"Ewan. Wala naman kasi ako masyadong hate na numbers pero days meron, Ikaw ba may hate ka bang days and numbers?" Tanong ko rito na ikinangisi lamang niya at pinitik ang aking nuò.

"Malamang, tatanungin ba naman kita kung wala." Nakangising lintaya nito at pinitik ako sa nuò. Napahawak ako sa aking nuò at bahagyang kumunot ng sandali.

"I hate number 23 and I also hate Mondays." Yumuko ito ng bahagya kaya hindi klaro sa akin ang ekspresyon nito.

Siguro dahil lunes nagsisimula palagi ang klase. Nakakatamad naman talaga kapag lunes na. Pero hindi ko alam kung bakit 23 ang hate number niya siguro ay may masamang alaala lamang ito.

"Naririnig ko ang mga iniisip mo, Dia. Hindi ko lang gusto ang 23 kasi date 'yan kung kailan hindi ko na nakasama ang mama at papa ko." Maligalig ang tono nito kung magsalita pero bakas naman ang kalungkutan sa dalawang mata.

Hindi ko alam kong anong sasabihin ko. Bukod sa wala akong masyadong alam sa background niya ay hindi rin ako magaling mag comfort ng tao.

"Ice cream mo natutunaw na" Tanging sabi ko na ikinangisi nito.

Kaya siguro ito tahimik dahil may pinagdadaanan. Hindi din kasi ito aktibo sa klase at nakikinig lamang. Kung minsan sa groupings ay hindi nasasali, Madalas nagugulat pa ang ka grupo ko kung bakit sinusulat ko siya sa members list. Ayaw lang nilang makasama sa grupo si Alyssa.

Marunong naman siya kahit hindi siya parating nagtataas ng kamay. Nagpaparticipate naman siya sa klase pero hindi pinapansin ng teachers kasi siguro marami lang silang nagtataas at si Alyssa ay hindi kita dahil na sa dulo na ito.

Kung minsan kapag sasabihin ko sa mga kaibigan ko na siya ang kasabay ko pauwi ay parang hindi nila gusto dahil hindi na sila sumasabay sa amin at madalas kami na lamang ni Alyssa ang magkakasabay lumabas.

Nalilito ako sa mga asta nila kay Alyssa kahit wala namang mali ang tao. May mga napapansin akong kakaiba sa kaniya ngunit isinasaisip ko na parte lamang iyon ng pagkatao niya.

Minsan din ay nararamdaman kong parang pamilyar na siya sa akin at nagkita na kami ngunit ito lang siguro ang time na nagkasama kami.

Lagi akong nakasuot ng uniform kahit may times na wash day lang dahil laging nakasuot ng uniform si Alyssa. Ayaw kong mapag-usapan ito kaya sinasabayan ko na lamang sa pagsuot ng uniform parati.

Naiintindihan ko siya dahil wala na siyang magulang at sa lola na lamang niya ito nakatira, ito ang kuwento niya sa akin.

Pero sa ngayon kung saan na sa hapag-kainan ako kasama ang aking ina at ama ay hindi ko alam kung ano ba dapat ang aking maramdaman.

Siya ang laman ng paguusap ng aking ama at ina. Ngunit hindi iyon ang nagpagabag sa akin.

Mahigpit akong nakahawak sa tinidor habang paulit ulit nilang nababanggit ang pangalan ng babae samantalang tahimik lamang akong iniisip ang lahat.

"Ka grade level na sana siya ngayon ni Dia. Ayaw ko sana pagusapan ulit siya ngayon pero death anniversary niya no'ng nakaraang lunes diba?" Tanong ng aking ina sa kausap na ama.

Ngunit imbes na pakinggan ang sagot ng aking ama ay tila nabingi ako sa mga inaalala kong pangyayari.

Nanlamig lahat ng aking katawan at nagsitaasan ang aking balahibo. Kaya siya pamilyar...

Kasi isa ako sa saksi sa gabing iyon. April 23, lunes ng tanghali sa may pedestrian sa labas ng school kung saan ito nasagasaan at tumilapon.

Hit and run.

Nagmistulang nawalan ako ng hininga at pawisan sa lahat ng napagtantong alaala.

Ice cream.

May dala siyang ice cream.

Hindi na nito nakasama ang ina at ama ulit dahil nawalan na ng buhay .

Kaya laging itong nakauniporme kasi ito ang suot nito bago mamatay, Kaya walang pumapansin sa kaniya sa school kasi hindi naman ito totoo.

Kaya hindi na ako sinasabayan pauwi ng mga kaibigan ko dahil iniisip nila werdo ako, Kaya siguro nagulat ang group mates ko kung bakit ko siya isinulat kasi wala naman kaming Alyssa na kaklase.

At kaya ayaw nito ang numero na 23 at araw ng lunes dahil ito date at araw kung saan ito nabawian ng buhay.

Kaya siguro wala akong maramdaman ng pitik sa nuo at tanging lamig lamang dahil hindi ito buhay.

Hindi ako mapakali sa aking kinauupuan at tanging kilabot at takot lamang ang aking nararamdaman.

"Anak? Masama ba ang pakiramdam mo?" Tanong ng aking ina ngunit hindi iyon ang nagpukaw sa aking atensyon kundi sa kaharap nitong babaeng nakaupo at nakatanaw ng seryoso sa aking direksyon.

Alyssa...

Hindi ko maipaliwanag ang kaba sa akin dibdib. Nailipat ko ang aking tingin sa nag-aalalang ina at ama.

"Maaa... "Nangingiyak kong sabi habang mahigpit na kumapit sa kamay ng aking ama.

Lumapit ang ina sa akin bakas ang pagtataka at gulo sa mukha.

"M-Ma, N-Naalala ko nab..."

"Ano ang naalala mo anak, Sabihin mo sa amin." Nag-aalalang saad ng ina

Napahikbi na lamang ako sa balikat nito.

"A-alam ko ho... k-kung sino ang nakabangga..."



John Lloyd Onoy Cabalida

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Kwento ng Aking Buhay

Noong pumunta ako sa Cebu City, kinuha ako ng aking ama dahil gusto raw nilang bumawi sa akin. Sa loob ng labing-apat na taon, wala siyang naibigay na sustento, kaya sinabi niyang nais niyang itama ang kanyang mga pagkukulang. Pumayag naman ako sa kanilang alok upang mabigyan sila ng pagkakataong makabawi.

Naglayag ako mula Mindanao papuntang Cebu upang magsimula ng bagong yugto ng aking buhay. Doon ako nag-aral ng Senior High School at nakapagtapos naman. Ngunit bago ko nalampasan ang yugtong iyon, marami muna akong paghihirap na pinagdaanan. Nahihirapan akong makibagay sa kanilang kapaligiran dahil pakiramdam ko ay hindi ako kabilang at palagi akong naiwan. Matindi rin ang pressure at pangungulila ko sa aking tahanan.

Hindi naging madali ang pananatili ko sa kanila dahil pakiramdam ko ay para lamang akong katulong. Halos lahat ng gawain sa bahay ay ako ang gumagawa, at parang hindi nila ako tinuturing na tunay na anak. Sa dalawa kong kapatid, sila ang laging inuuna at pinapahalagahan. Hindi ko naramdaman ang pagmamahal na hinahanap ko mula sa kanila. Madalas din nila akong pagalitan kahit hindi ko naman kasalanan ang mga bagay, at pakiramdam ko ay sa akin nila ibinubuhos ang galit nila sa kanilang anak na babae.

Pagkatapos kong makapagtapos ng Senior High School, naisipan kong humiwalay sa kanila dahil naramdaman kong naging toxic na ang aking kalagayan. Nang magsimula ako sa kolehiyo, naghanap ako ng trabaho at tumira na lamang sa isang boarding house upang maging malaya at wala na silang masabi sa akin.

Kahit mahirap at kulang sa tulog, tiniis ko ang lahat. Marami akong trabahong naranasan at nasubukan, tulad ng pangingisda, call center, construction, trabaho sa Mactan Export Processing Zone o MEPZA, at sa Jollibee Foods Corporation. Sa bawat trabahong aking pinagdaanan, marami akong natutunan at mas lalo akong tumatag.

Ngayon, masasabi kong medyo gumagaan na ang aking buhay. Hindi na ako gaanong nai-stress. Kahit nakararamdam pa rin ako ng pagod, mas payapa na ang aking isip at mas magaan na ang aking pakiramdam. Natutunan kong maging matatag at patuloy na lumaban sa buhay para sa aking kinabukasan.



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Tinig ng Guro

Sa silid-aralang payak at tahimik na tahanan,
Gurong Filipino'y may dalang karunungan,
Ngunit sa bawat salitang nais ipaunawa,
Ingles ang tugon ng kabataang nagsisigawa.

Mga batang mulat sa bidyo at telebisyon,
Dayuhang wika'y laman ng komunikasyon,
"Teacher, can I?" ang madalas na marinig,
Habang ang "po" at "opo" ay tila nanlalamig.

Sa telepono't social media'y aliw ang hatid,
Mga salitang banyaga'y mabilis na kumapit,
"Like" at "share" ang bukambibig sa usapan,
Habang "salinlahi" ay bihirang mapakinggan.

Pinipilit ng guro ang tula at balagtasang,
Upang buhayin ang sariling panitikan,
Ngunit ang isip ng bata'y tila naliligaw,
Sa mundong Ingles ang ilaw na tinatanaw.

Sa bawat aklat na hawak sa paaralan,
May bakas ng wikang banyaga sa kaalaman,
Kaya't Filipino'y unti-unting natatabunan,
Sa sariling lupang dapat sana'y tahanan.

"Speak in English," wika ng ilan sa paligid,
Na tila ba ang Filipino'y kulang at makitid,
Ngunit ang guro'y matatag pa ring lumalaban,
Ipinagtatangol ang wikang kinagisnan.

Pagod man ang tinig sa maghapon pagtuturo,
Patuloy pa ring nagliliyab ang puso ng guro,
Sapagkat alam niyang sa sariling pananalita,
Nabubuo ang dangal ng bansa't kultura.

Sa pisara'y sinusulat ang mga sawikain,
Mga bugtong, salawikain at lalim ng damdamin,
Ngunit may ilan pa ring hindi makaunawa,
Dahil sanay sa Ingles na lagi nilang kasama.

Kay hirap mang itawid ang araling Filipino,
Kapag ang kabataan ay banyaga ang gusto,
Ngunit hindi sumusuko ang gurong marangal,
Sapagkat ang wika'y kaluluwa ng dangal.

Sa bawat pagwawasto ng maling pananalita,
Kasabay ang paghubog ng isip at diwa,
Hindi lang salita ang kanyang itinuturo,
Kundi pag-ibig sa bayang pinagmulan ng tao.

Hanggang kailan kaya mananatiling buhay,
Ang wikang Filipino sa bagong sanlibutan?
Kung ang kabataan ay tuluyang maligaw,
Sino pa ang tatangkilik sa sariling ilaw?

Kaya't guro'y patuloy na magsisilbing tanglaw,
Sa gitna ng mundong banyaga ang sigaw,
Ipaglalaban niya ang wikang minana't taglay,
Upang pagka-Filipino'y di tuluyang mamatay.



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Gurong Filipino sa Panahon ng AI

Sa makabagong mundong mabilis ang galaw,
Teknolohiya'y tila ilaw na tanglaw,
Kasabay ng guro sa bawat pagtuturo,
Artificial Intelligence ang katuwang na totoo.

Sa loob ng klase'y may bagong pamamaraan,
Hindi na lamang aklat ang sandigan,
May chatbot at bidyong agad nasasagutan,
Upang aralin ay higit na maunawaan.

Ang gurong Filipino'y patuloy na umaangkop,
Sa pagbabagong dala ng makabagong pag-ikot,
Ginagamit ang AI sa malikhaing paraan,
Upang kabataan ay ganahang matutunan.

Sa pagsulat ng tula at sanaysay ng mag-aaral,
AI'y nagiging gabay na mabilis at mahusay,
Ngunit guro pa rin ang humuhubog sa diwa,
Sapagkat puso't damdamin ay tao ang may dala.

May presentasyon nang buhay at makulay,
Mga larawan at ideyang madaling matanaw,
Kaya ang klase'y hindi na nakababagot,
At isip ng kabataan ay mas lalong umiikot.

Sa bawat pagsusulit at gawaing ibinibigay,
AI'y tumutulong upang oras ay makatipid nang tunay,
Ngunit guro'y maingat sa wastong paggamit,
Upang talino ng bata'y hindi tuluyang mapalitan agad.

Hindi man madali ang bagong sistema,
May ilan pa ring nangangambang baka mawala,
Ang init ng pagtuturong mula sa damdamin,
Na tanging guro lamang ang kayang angkinin.

Kaya't guro'y nagsisilbing gabay at ilawan,
Sa wastong paggamit ng makabagong kaalaman,
Itinuturo niyang AI ay kasangkapan lamang,
Hindi kapalit ng pusong may pagmamahal.

Sa bawat talakayang puno ng teknolohiya,
Kasama pa rin ang pagpapahalaga sa wika,
Sapagkat Filipino'y hindi dapat limutin,
Kahit mundong digital ang ating tahakin.

Ang guro'y patuloy sa paglikha ng paraan,
Upang klase'y maging buhay at makabuluhan,
Pinagdurugtong ang tradisyon at pagbabago,
Para sa edukasyong may tibay at respeto.

Sa panahong AI ang bukambibig ng bayan,
Gurong Filipino'y hindi nagpapaagaw sa alinman,
Bagkus ginagamit ito nang may karunungan,
Para sa ikauunlad ng bagong salinlahi't bayan.

Kaya saludo sa gurong marunong sumabay,
Sa agos ng mundong mabilis na gumagalaw,
Taglay ang teknolohiya at pusong dalisay,
Sa pagtuturo'y liwanag na walang kaptantay.



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The Derivatives of a Silent Classroom

By the middle of the semester, the silence had settled into Room 304 like dust no one thought to wipe away.

It wasn't the kind of quiet Professor Navarro used to welcome—the focused stillness of students working through a problem, pencils scratching, pages turning. This silence had weight. It pressed into the corners, lingered in the pauses between sentences, and stretched too long after every question he asked.

"Find the derivative of the function," Navarro said one afternoon, writing neatly across the board. His chalk moved with practiced certainty, each symbol placed with care.

$$f(x)=x^3-4x^2+6x-2$$

He turned, expecting the usual shifting of bodies, the hesitant raising of hands, the murmurs of calculation.

Nothing.

A few students stared at their papers. Others glanced at the clock. One tapped a pen softly, rhythmically, as if marking time rather than thinking.

Navarro waited a moment longer than necessary. Then he solved it himself, speaking steadily, filling the silence with explanation.

"Differentiate term by term... power rule... simplify..."

His voice echoed slightly in the stillness.

This had become routine.

At first, he told himself it was just the difficulty of the material. Derivatives were not easy; they demanded attention, patience, and a willingness to wrestle with abstraction. But weeks passed, and the silence only deepened. It showed itself in the way students avoided his gaze, how questions remained unasked, how even group activities dissolved into quiet compliance rather than discussion.

He noticed details he hadn't before.

Mara, who once answered quickly, now kept her eyes on her notebook, writing and rewriting the same line.

Jonas sat in the back, his usual confident posture replaced by a slight hunch, as though he were trying to take up less space.

Lina, who used to whisper to her seatmate during lectures, now sat still, hands folded, as if speaking required more energy than she could spare.

Navarro continued teaching—limits, derivatives, applications, but he felt, increasingly, that his words were moving across the surface of something he could not quite reach.

One day, halfway through a lecture on rates of change, he stopped.

His chalk hovered midair.

The board was half-filled with symbols: dy/dx , tangent lines, a curve sketched in careful strokes.

He set the chalk down.

"Do you know what a derivative really is?" he asked.

The question hung there.

A few students looked up—not quickly, but slowly, as if unsure whether they had heard him correctly.

No one answered.

Navarro stepped away from the board. "We define it as a rate of change," he continued, his voice softer now. "How one quantity changes with respect to another."

He paused, glancing around the room.

"But that's only part of it."

The silence remained—but it shifted, just slightly.

"It's also a way of understanding transformation," he said. "Not just where something is, but how it's becoming something else. Moment by moment."

He walked between the rows, something he rarely did during lectures.

"When we take a derivative, we look at what's happening beneath the surface. Changes that are too small to notice directly, but together, they shape everything."

He stopped near the back, beside Jonas's desk.

"And I think," Navarro added, "all of you are changing... in ways I can't quite measure."

The room did not respond, not immediately. No hands rose. No voices broke the quiet.

But something was different.

Jonas's pen stopped tapping.

Mara lifted her head, just slightly.

Lina's fingers loosened, no longer clasped so tightly together.

Navarro returned to the front of the room, unsure if he had said too much or not enough.

He picked up the chalk again.

"Let's try something else," he said. "Look at this function."

He wrote a new expression, simpler this time. Then he turned back.

"Don't solve it yet. Just... think about what it means."

A longer pause followed not empty, but deliberate.

Then, quietly, a voice spoke.

"Sir... is it like... seeing how something is changing even if it looks the same?"

It was Mara.

Navarro nodded, a small smile forming. "Yes," he said. "Exactly."

Another voice, hesitant. Jonas.

"So... even if the graph looks smooth... there's still change happening at every point?"

"Yes."

A third voice, Lina this time, almost a whisper. "Then... does that mean... even small changes matter?"

Navarro placed the chalk down carefully.

"Yes," he said. "They do."

The room fell silent again but it was no longer the same silence.

It wasn't heavy. It didn't press down.

It held something.

Attention. Thought. Perhaps even the beginning of understanding not just of derivatives, but of something less defined.

Navarro resumed the lesson, but slower now. He asked fewer questions, gave more time. When no one answered immediately, he waited not to fill the silence, but to let it work.

And sometimes, after that waiting, a voice would emerge.

Not many. Not loud. But enough.

By the end of the class, the board was filled again symbols, lines, solutions. The lesson had been covered.

But something else had shifted.

As the students packed their things, there was still quiet but also small sounds that hadn't been there before. A brief exchange between seatmates. A question asked under one's breath. A notebook closed with purpose rather than resignation.

Navarro watched them leave.

He realized then that silence was not always absence. Sometimes, it was a space where change was happening too subtly to see.

A derivative, he thought.

Not the function itself, but the trace of its becoming.

He turned back to the board, to the curves and symbols left behind.

Because even in silence, there were derivatives

small, unseen changes shaping everything beneath the surface.



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Ang Gurong Natutong Umibig sa Filipino

Hindi niya pangarap noon ang magturo ng Filipino,
Mas nais sana niya'y maging doktor o arkitekto,
Ngunit buhay ay salat at kapos sa biyaya,
Kaya kursong abot-kaya ang kanyang pinili noon pa.

Sa munting baryong hirap ay araw-araw kasama,
Kayod ng magulang niya'y kulang pa sa pangangailangan nila,
Kaya nang may programang madaling mapasukan,
Tinanggap niya ito nang walang pag-aalinlangan.

Habang siya'y nag-aaral sa kolehiyo noon,
Pusong walang sigla sa bawat asignaturang naroon,
Binabasa ang tula at mga panitikan,
Ngunit di niya dama ang tunay nitong kahalagahan.

Madalas niyang itanong sa sarili nang tahimik,
"Bakit ito ang kursong sa akin ay dumikit?"
Habang nakikita ang mga kaklaseng pursigido,
Siya nama'y tila nawawala sa sariling mundo.

Ngunit dumating din ang araw ng pagtuturo,
Nang siya'y humarap na sa mga estudyante mismo,
May kaba sa dibdib at takot sa damdamin,
Kung paano nga ba magiging mabuting guro rin.

Sa unang pagtapak niya sa loob ng silid-aralan,
Mga matang sabik ang kanyang nasilayan,
Mga batang naghihintay ng bagong kaalaman,
Na tila siya ang magiging daan ng kanilang kinabukasan.

Unti-unti niyang natutuhan ang halaga ng wika,
Sa bawat tulang binibigkas nang may sigla,
Sa bawat kwentong Pilipinong puno ng aral,
Puso niya'y unti-unting naging ganap na marangal.

Nang makita niyang natututong mangarap ang kabataan,
Sa simpleng araling kanyang pinaghahandaan,
Doon niya nadamang may saysay ang lahat,
Na ang Filipino pala'y kay gandang ipamalas.

Hindi lamang pala ito asignaturang itinuturo,
Kundi salamin ng kultura't pusong Pilipino,
Sa bawat salawikain at malikhaing panitikan,
Nabubuhay ang dangal ng sariling bayan.

Kaya't mula sa gurong walang gana noon,
Naging inspirasyong nagbibigay liwanag ngayon,
Pagkat sa pagtuturo niya natagpuan ang dahilan,
Kung bakit siya inilagay sa ganitong larangan.

Hindi man niya ito unang minahal sa umpisa,
Ang kahirapan man ang nagtulak sa kanya,
Ngunit sa pagdaan ng panahon at karanasan,
Filipino ang naging tibok ng kanyang isipan.

At sa bawat araw na siya'y nagtuturo pa rin,
Pagmamahal sa wika'y kanyang pinauuwing bitbitin,
Sapagkat ang gurong minsang naligaw ng landas,
Sa Filipino pala matatagpuan ang kanyang lakas.



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Ang Mahirap na Mag-aaral

Sa silid-aralan, kung saan pangarap ay binubuo,
May isang mag-aaral, ang hirap ay kalaguyo.
Di gaanong marangya ang kanyang kasuotan,
Subalit sa puso't isip, may dakilang layunin.

Ang lapis na 'sing liit, papel na kupasin,
Bag na luma't punit, pilit pa ring yayakapin.
Ang almusal minsa'y tubig lang at pag-asa,
Sa bawat pagsubok, lumalaban, di sumusuko, sinta.

Madalas ang tulog ay gabi na't hatinggabi,
Nagbabasa sa ilaw ng gasera o bituin.
Ang gutom ay kasama sa bawat paglipas ng araw,
Ngunit ang mithiin sa pag-aaral, di kayang gapiin.

Mga aklat na hiram, kopya na may sulat,
Bawat titik, bawat salita, ay kanyang itinatatak.
Sa pisara'y nakatingin, bawat aral ay sinasalo,
Para sa pamilya, kinabukasan ay mabubuo.

Mga kaibigang may baon na masasarap,
Siya nama'y ngiti lang ang laging pang-agap.
Walang reklamo, walang inggit sa kalooban,
Bawat hirap ay hamon, lakas ang pinagmulan.

Ang pawis at pagod, di baleng matuyo,
Basta ang isip ay busog, sa kaalaman ay puno.
Balang araw, ang pangarap ay makakamit,
Ang mahirap na mag-aaral, sisikat, mamumukadkad.

Dahil ang tunay na yaman ay di sa ginto't pilak,
Kundi sa talinong taglay, na di mananakaw, di kukupas.
Isang pagpupugay sa kanilang katatagan,
Mga bayaning tahimik, ng ating kinabukasan.



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Ang Hindi Masabi

Tahimik na nakaupo si Mark sa harap ng harden ng paaralan habang palihim na nakatingin kay Ren. Abala ito sa pagdidilig ng mga tanim kasama ang mga kaibigan nito at paminsan-minsan ay napapangiti. Sa simpleng ngiting iyon, sapat na para sumaya ang araw ni Mark.

“Ba’t nakangiti ka diyan mag-isa?” tanong ni Charlene habang dahan-dahang dumadaan at umuupo sa harapan niya.

“Wala,” mabilis na sagot ni Mark, kahit halatang si Ren ang dahilan.

Nahahalata ni Charlene ang nagiging reaksyon ni Mark sa itinatanong niya. At dahil na rin na madalas ikwento ni Mark ang tungkol kay Ren kung gaano ito kabait, kasaya kasama, at kung paano minsan ay parang may espesyal ding pagtingin sa kanya. Ngunit may mga pagkakataon ding malamig si Ren at tila walang pakialam. Kaya lalo lamang nalilito si Mark.

Habang nagsasalita si Mark tungkol kay Ren, tahimik lang na nakikinig si Charlene kahit nasasaktan ang kanyang damdamin. Hindi alam ni Mark na unti-unti na rin siyang nahuhulog dito. Kahit masakit, pinipili niyang manatili bilang kaibigan dahil mahalaga si Mark sa kanya.

Isang hapon, nadatnan ni Mark si Ren na may ikinuwentong ibang lalaki habang masayang naglalakad pauwi kasama ang mga kaibigan. Di kalayuan biglang nanahimik si Mark at doon niya naramdaman ang sakit ng hindi pagiging sigurado sa nararamdaman ng taong gusto mo.

“Okay ka lang?” mahinang tanong ni Charlene.

Napangiti si Mark kahit halatang nasasaktan. “Siguro... hindi lahat ng gusto natin, gusto rin tayong. Pero ayos lang siguro iyon. Hindi naman dapat ipilit ang pag-ibig.”

Tahimik na tumango si Charlene. Kahit nasaktan siya sa mga salitang iyon, may natutunan din siya. Hindi lahat ng pagmamahal ay kailangang suklian para maging totoo. Minsan, sapat nang naging masaya ka dahil minahal mo ang isang tao nang tapat.



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**In Between Attendance
and Allowance**

Before the sun could warm the day,
An ate wakes in quiet gray,
Lesson plans beside her plate,
Dreams postponed, but never late.

With weary eyes and hurried pace,
She wears a smile upon her face,
A practice teacher in the hall,
Yet still the one who bears it all.

Attendance checked with careful hands,
While thinking of the home she stands
To help survive through bills unpaid,
Through sacrifices softly made.

A kuya walks through crowded streets,
With borrowed shoes and tired feet,
Reciting lessons in his mind,
While leaving his own needs behind.

He teaches children how to read,
Though he himself lacks things he needs,
Still standing tall before the class,
Pretending all his storms have passed.

In every quiz and graded sheet,
In every student he must meet,
There lives a silent kind of fight
To keep both future and home upright.



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ECHOES of EXPRESSION

A Creative Folio

Echoes of Expression

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Between attendance and allowance,
They learn the cost of silent balance,
Of choosing duty over rest,
And giving others still their best.

They are not simply interns there,
They carry burdens everywhere,
Half teacher, half provider too,
With heavy hearts they quietly move.

Yet someday when the years unfold,
Their stories will be proudly told
How tired souls still chose to stay,
And teach with hope through every day.

For those who stand in classrooms small,
While answering their family's call,
Are proof that strength is often found
In lives that struggle without sound.



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The Unbroken Path

The mist coiled around the rice terraces like a shy spirit, each emerald step a stairway carved by ancestors from the bones of the mountain. For Hopday, the terraces were not just a view from his nipa hut's window; they were a syllabus written in water and stone. He was an Ifugao, a caretaker of a legacy that demanded calloused hands and a bowed back. However, his father, Bul-lan, had planted a different seed in him.

"The muyong forest gives us wood, but the schoolhouse gives you wings," his father would say, his weathered face splitting into a grin after a long day of planting.

Hopday's adversaries began not with anger, but with absence. The first was distance. The high school was a two-hour hike down the mountain, across a river that swelled into a snarling beast during the rainy season. He would leave before dawn, a woven "bayong" bag slung over his shoulder containing a notebook, a pencil, and a single wrapped "tinupig" sticky rice cake - for lunch. Many mornings, the trail was a slick ribbon of mud. He learned to grip the roots of ancient trees, his bare feet finding purchase where city shoes would slip.

The second adversary was poverty. It was a quiet, gnawing thing. While classmates spoke of new sneakers and the latest cellular phones, Hopday calculated how many bundles of firewood he needed to sell to afford a single textbook. He often studied by the light of a kerosene lamp, the flame dancing with the fragility of his hopes. The pencil grew stubby, held together by a twig and string. His uniform, a hand-me-down from a cousin, was faded and frayed at the cuffs. The shame was a cold stone in his stomach, but he buried it beneath the soil of his determination.

His greatest adversary, however, had no face. It was the whispered doubt that came with every failing harvest. "Education is for the rich," an elder had muttered once during a community meeting. "The boy is needed in the fields. The "payoh" does not wait for a diploma."

When his father fell ill during his second year, the whisper became a roar. Hopday returned home to find his mother, Gin-am, trying to balance the weeding of the fields with the care of his bedridden father. The uncles came to talk, their voices low and pragmatic. The family needed his hands. The terraces were hungry.

Hopday stood at the edge of the family's rice paddy, staring at the seedlings that bent in the wind. He could feel the pull of the land, the ancient rhythm in his blood. To leave was to betray a thousand years of his people. However, to stay was to bury the dream his father had sacrificed for.

He made a pact. He would not choose one over the other. He began his days before the sun, working the paddies, his fingers plunging into the cool mud to plant each stalk with the precision his father had taught him. Then, he would run - literally run - to catch the afternoon classes, his legs burning, his lungs tasting the thin mountain air. He studied in the evenings, his textbooks propped against a sack of harvested rice.

His teachers noticed. They saw the boy whose handwriting was impeccable but whose shoulders were perpetually tired. One teacher, Mr. Banaag, began leaving extra food on his desk. Another offered to photocopy chapters from expensive reference books. These small kindnesses were like the stone walls of the terraces - invisible, but they held the whole world in place.

Years bled into each other like the seasons. The harvests came. His father recovered, though his strength was no longer the same. Hopday's body became lean and hard, a map of muscles earned by both the plow and the pen.

Graduation day arrived under a sun that polished the terraces into a cascade of gold. Hopday did not wear new sneakers. He wore a simple pair of leather sandals, his uniform now properly fitted, a gift from the entire community, which had pooled its resources. When his name was called, he walked across the makeshift stage in the town plaza.

He looked out at the sea of faces. He saw his mother, her hand clutching a handkerchief to her chest. He saw his father, standing tall despite the tremor in his legs, his eyes gleaming with a pride that needed no words. Behind them, in the distant horizon, rose the terraces - the first classroom of his life.

He had not left them behind. He had carried them with him. As he held his diploma, the wind swept down from the mountains, rustling the leaves of the "muyong", a sound like the whispering of ancestors. It was not an ending. It was a new path, carved into the mountain of his own making, where the water of his heritage would continue to flow, nurturing both the rice and the dream.



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Sa Likod Ng Kanyang Tahimik Na Ngiti

Tahimik lamang na nakaupo si Scarlet sa sulok ng kanilang maliit na sala habang pinagmamasdan ang kanyang ina na nagbibilang ng pera.

“Dalawang daan na lang ito...” mahinang sabi nito habang nakatingin sa mga bayarin sa mesa.

Tahimik namang yumuko si Scarlet. Alam niyang kulang na naman iyon. Ang kanyang ina ay nagtatrabaho sa laboratoryo habang ang kanyang ama naman ay isang habal-habal driver. Kahit parehong nagtatrabaho ang kanyang mga magulang, madalas pa rin silang kapusin sa pera. Maliit lamang ang inuupahan nilang bahay at kapag umuulan ay tumutulo ang bubong. Ngunit kahit ganoon, pilit pa ring ngumingiti si Scarlet.

Sa paaralan, kilala siyang tahimik at mahinhing estudyante. Madalas siyang mapagbiruan ng kanyang mga kaklase dahil hindi siya mahilig gumala at makisabay sa uso.

“Para ka namang bata,” minsang sabi ng isa niyang kaklase.

Ngumiti lamang si Scarlet kahit nasasaktan. Hindi nila alam na istrikto ang kanyang mga magulang dahil nais lamang nilang makapagtapos siya at magkaroon ng magandang kinabukasan.

Isang gabi, nadatnan niyang umiiyak ang kanyang ina habang hawak ang notebook ng mga utang at bayarin.

“Ma, ako na lang po ang magtatrabaho,” sabi niya.

Ngunit agad umiling ang kanyang ina. “Hindi. Mag-aral ka lang.”

Mas lalong bumigat ang kanilang sitwasyon nang magkasakit ng diabetes ang kanyang ama. Madalas itong magalit at minsan ay si Scarlet ang napagbubuntunan ng init ng ulo. May mga gabing tahimik siyang umiiyak habang naririnig ang sigawan ng kanyang mga magulang.

Sa kabila ng lahat, pumapasok pa rin siya sa paaralan na parang walang problema. Ngumingiti siya kahit pakiramdam niya ay unti-unti na siyang nadudurog.

Dahil sa bigat ng kanyang nararamdaman, sinubukan din niyang magrebelde. Habang naglalaro ng online game, may nakilala siyang lalaking nakikinig sa kanyang mga kuwento. Naging masaya siya sa simula dahil pakiramdam niya ay may nakakaintindi sa kanya. Ngunit hindi rin nagtagal ang kanilang relasyon at iniwan din siya nito.

Doon niya napagtanto na hindi pala kayang punan ng ibang tao ang lungkot na matagal nang nasa kanyang puso. Kaya unti-unti niyang ibinalik ang sarili sa pag-aaral at muling hinawakan ang kanyang mga pangarap.

Sa paglipas ng panahon, naunawaan ni Scarlet na kahit mahirap ang kanilang buhay, buo pa rin ang kanilang pamilya at patuloy silang nagmamahalan. Sa likod ng kanyang tahimik na ngiti ay isang pusong sugatan ngunit patuloy pa ring lumalaban para sa pamilya at sa kanyang mga pangarap.



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The Melody of Numbers

There was a group of friends in Mathville who liked to make music. The first group always began the tune, raising the notes higher and higher, never looking back.

One day, a new acquaintance appeared- someone who could still the music and place a little calm between the notes. With this individual, the song might actually start from square one.

And then there were a few brave musicians who could play both the high notes of delight and the low notes of thought and make the melody rich and balanced.

Soon brilliant brains came who loved to break melodies into perfect little chunks sharing every beat and every pause so everybody may join in harmony.

Mysterious artists drifted in from afar with sounds that danced on forever, never repeating, never settling, always moving with a hint of magic.

At last, the wise old conductor gathered everyone together.

"Each of you has your own special sound," smiled the conductor. "When all of you play together, you create a masterpiece that fills our world with wonder."

And so, the friends of Mathville realized that each sound that was distinct made their song full and their music resonated through the land encouraging all that listened.