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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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Wisdom in Every Page, Pride in Every Word



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Sa Likod ng Pangarap

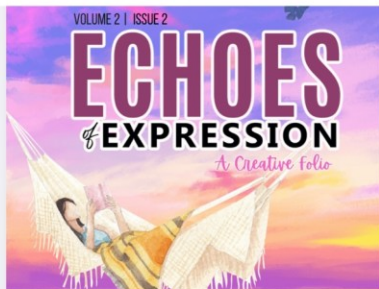
Sa isang payak na baryo sa Biliran, namumuhay ang pamilyang Cruz. Si Mang Rey, ang ama, ang nag-iisang may hanapbuhay nagtratrabaho bilang driver ng truck sa isang ahensya ng pamahalaan. Si Aling Risa, ang ina, ay nag-aaral sa lungsod upang makamit ang pangarap niyang maging accountant. May pitong anak ang mag-asawa limang babae at dalawang lalaki.

Si Jelly, ang panganay, ay bata pa lamang nang siya ang katuwang ng ama sa pagbabantay sa mga nakababatang kapatid. Tuwing umaga, bago pumasok sa eskwela ang mga bunso, siya na ang nagluluto ng simpleng almusal at nag-aalaga sa kanila. "Huwag kayong mag-alala, tatay. Aayusin ko lahat habang wala ka," palaging sambit ni Jelly habang pinagmamasdan ang kanyang mga kapatid na naglalaro sa bakuran.

Apat na taon ang lumipas. Sa lungsod, bawat gabi ay punô ng sakripisyo si Aling Risa. Naglalakad siya ng mahahabang daan mula dorm patungo sa paaralan, bitbit ang pangarap ng pamilya. Sa baryo, ramdam ng pamilyang Cruz, ang kakulangan: bihirang makatikim ng masasarap na pagkain at ang panonood ng TV ay pribilehiyo lamang sa bahay ng kapitbahay. Ngunit sa kabila ng hirap, nanatili silang matatag at nanalangin araw-araw, humihingi ng gabay at lakas upang mapagtagumpayan ang bawat pagsubok.

Sa wakas, nakapagtapos si Aling Risa sa kursong Accountancy at nakapasok sa trabaho. Unti-unti, nagbago ang buhay ng pamilya. Napuno ang kanilang simpleng tahanan ng masaganang pagkain paminsan-minsan, at ang mga anak ay nagkaroon ng pagkakataong mag-aral nang maayos. Pinag-aral nila ang lahat ng anak sa kolehiyo. Nang si Jelly ay nakapagtapos at naging guro, siya rin ang katuwang ng kanyang mga magulang sa pagpapalaral ng mga nakababatang kapatid. Sa pamamagitan ng panalangin at tiyaga, nakamit nila ang tagumpay at kaginhawaan sa buhay.

Ngunit sa edad na 31, dumating ang malaking hamon sa buhay ni Jelly. Nakilala niya si Dan, isang mabuting lalaki na mas bata sa kanya ng walong taon at wala pang hanapbuhay. Nagdesisyon silang magpakasal. Nang malaman ito ni Mang Rey, hindi niya natanggap ang balita. "Jelly, hindi ka pa handa! Bata pa siya at wala pang trabaho!" sigaw niya. Kasabay ng ama, nag-alinlangan din si Aling Risa. Ngunit kahit gaano man katindi ang galit at pag-aalinlangan ng mga magulang, pinili ni Jelly na sundin ang kanyang puso at nanalangin sa Diyos upang gabayan sila.



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Tatlong taon ang lumipas. Nagkaroon sila ng anak, si Dan Jr., na nagdala ng bagong sigla sa pamilya. Unti-unti ring nagbago ang damdamin ni Mang Rey at ng iba pang miyembro ng pamilya. Nakita nila ang kabutihan at pagmamahal ni Dan sa pamilya at sa anak, at ang sipag at dedikasyon ni Jelly bilang asawa at ina. Dahil dito, unti-unti silang nagbalikan, nagyakap, at nagkapatawaran.

Sa huli, doon namin naintindihan na ang tunay na yaman ng pamilya ay wala sa pera o gamit. Nasa bawat yakap, sakripisyo, at pagtanggap ito sa isa't isa at siyempre, sa pagkapit sa panalangin. Basta't sama-sama at nagmamahalan, laging may liwanag na naghihintay sa dulo ng bawat paghihirap.



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Hindi Ko Lamang Itinuturo ang Wika: Ipinapamana Ko Ito

Sa bawat araw na ako'y pumasok sa silid-aralan sa kolehiyo, dala ko ang malinaw na paninindigan: ang wikang Filipino ay higit pa sa isang asignatura. Ito ay buhay, pamana, at kasangkapan ng kritikal na pag-iisip. Para sa akin, ang pagtuturo nito ay hindi lamang pagbibigay kaalaman kundi paghuhubog ng kamalayan sa sarili, sa kapwa, at sa lipunang kanilang ginagalawan.

Ang mga mag-aaral sa kolehiyo ay nasa yugto ng pagbuo ng malalim na kamalayan sa mundo at sa kanilang sarili. Hinaharap nila ang masalimuot na akademikong talakayan, panlipunang usapin, at digital na espasyo na kadalasan ay pinapangibabawan ng banyagang wika. Sa ganitong konteksto, ang wikang Filipino ay nagiging mahalaga bilang daluyan ng malinaw at makabuluhang pag-unawa sa mga isyung may direktang kaugnayan sa kanilang karanasan at sa lipunang Pilipino.

Sa aking pagtuturo, ang Filipino ay hindi lamang midyum ng komunikasyon kundi wika ng pagninilay at pagsusuri. Sa pamamagitan ng pagsulat ng sanaysay, kritikal na pagbasa ng teksto, at makabuluhang talakayan, natututo ang mga mag-aaral na ang Filipino ay may kakayahang magpahayag ng malalim na ideya at malinaw na argumento. Unti-unti, naipapawi ang paniniwalang ang sariling wika ay limitado lamang sa impormal o pang-araw-araw na gamit.

Mahalaga rin na pahalagahan ang tinig ng mag-aaral. Ang kanilang pananaw, tanong, at karanasan ang nagbibigay buhay sa diskursong akademiko. Sa pakikinig sa kanila, nagiging malinaw na ang wika ay natututo sa paggamit at sa ugnay nito sa totoong karanasan, hindi lamang sa memorisasyon ng tuntunin. Dito nagiging buhay ang Filipino patuloy na hinuhubog ng kasalukuyan ngunit hindi nalilimutan ang pinagmulan.

Hindi ko itinuturo ang wikang Filipino bilang obligasyon lamang. Ipinapamana ko ito bilang pundasyon ng pagka Pilipino at bilang kasangkapan ng responsableng pakikilahok sa lipunan. Sa bawat mag-aaral na natututong magsulat at mag-isip sa sariling wika, may naitataguyod na mas malalim na pag-unawa sa sarili at kapwa.

Sa huli, ang pagtuturo ng Filipino sa kolehiyo ay higit pa sa akademikong tungkulin; ito ay paghahanda sa pagiging propesyunal at mamamayan. Hangga't may gurong handang magpamana at may kabataang handang tumanggap, mananatiling buhay ang wikang Filipino hindi lamang sa silid-aralan kundi sa patuloy na daloy ng kaisipan at pagkilos ng lipunang Pilipino.



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Lihim na Pagtingin

Sa bawat araw, ikaw ang nais matanaw,
Sa madilim kong mundo, ikaw ang umilaw.
Sa bawat kisap ng matang nagkukunwari,
May damdaming lihim na pilit ikinikubli.

Minsan ako'y naiinis tuwing ika'y nariyan,
Ngunit hinahanap ka kapag 'di masilayan.
Ganito pala pakiramdam kapag umiibig,
Hindi namamalayang sa iyo'y nakatitig.

Hindi man masambit ang salitang 'tangi,"
Sa tingin pa lamang, pag-ibig ay nagwawagi.
May ngiti kang payak na aking ninanakaw,
Ikaw ang pangrap na 'di ko maisigaw.

Sabi nila'y huwag basta-bastang mahulog,
Ngunit paanong iiwas kung damdami'y tulog?
Hindi naman marahil mali ang ibigin ka,
Ang sakit lamang ay may iniibig kang iba.

Kahit palihim ka lamang na tinitingnan,
Puso ko'y tumitibok nang walang hanggan.
Salamat at naging inspirasyon kita,
Sa pagpapatuloy ng aking kabanata.

Hindi man ako ang wakas ng iyong daan,
Ako'y nagpapasalamat sa sandaling hiram.
Kung saan ang pag-ibig ay natutong maghintay,
At ang damdamin ay piniling maging tunay.

Sa paglayo mo, hindi kita hahabulin,
Sapagkat ang mahal ay marunong umunawa rin.
Kung ikaw man ay masaya sa piling ng iba,
Tahimik kong tatanggapin para ako'y payapa.

At kung sa dulo ng panahong naglalakbay,
Ako man ay muling matutong umibig at mabuhay,
Ang lihim na pagtinging minsang itinago,
Ay magiging alaala at aral ng aking puso.



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Malayang Konstitusyon

*(a chronological study guide in familiarizing the 1987
Philippine Constitution Article 1-10)*

Unang hinanap ni Juan,
Lugar na kanyang palalagian,
Hinanap niya ang kanyang teritoryo,
Lugar na sakop ng kanyang pamumuno

Dapat payapa ang teritoryo,
kaya'y isinulat ni Juan ang kanyang polisiya't prinsipyo.
Subalit hindi lamang prinsipyo mayroon ang tao,
Maging matapang! Lahat may karapatan!

Ngunit sino ba ang may boses sa lipunan?
Malamang lahat tayong mga mamamayan.
Sa grupo may liderato, sa estado dapat may gobyerno!
Pero paano? Dapat tayong bumoto!

Sino ang ibubuto? Unahin natin mga kinatawan ng bawat pangkat,
upang lahat ay umangat!
Isunod ang dalawangpo't apat na pantas sa paggawa ng batas,
Hindi pwedi lahat mamuno, kailangan may isang taong tagapagganap.
Isunod ang mga tagapagbasa ng batas! Ang tatlong pangkat na ito ay
bigyan ng pantay na kapangyarihan at katungkulan.

Gagawa tayo ng hiwalay na sangay na gobyerno,
Upang mga gawain ng mga kawani ay nagagawa ng tama't sigurado!
Hindi serbisyong nasyonal lamang,
kailangan ang tulong ng mga lokal na pamahalaan,
ito'y masisiguradong bawat suliranin ay matutugunan.



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teacHERO

Not all heroes wear polished shoes
some tread in scuffed leather, soles worn through,
pacing rooms where headlines bloom
into lessons lighting tomorrow's room.

Barefoot strides, yet deeply shod
in ink-stained quests (the news' nod).
Whose footprints trace the world's new beat?
The chalk-dust sage... who makes currents meet.

They press their palms to raw, unformed clay
shaping edges where young minds will sway;
each finger's mark a line of grace,
turning rough stone into polished face.

Years will pass, and voices grown
will stand with strength not once their own;
in every truth they choose to speak
lives the guide who shaped the meek.



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Silence After the Waves

It was dark, yet the dazzling lights of the beach resort made the place more exciting. The moon shone brightly, and the stars glimmered above, making the sea look even more captivating. People roamed barefoot on the ivory-colored sand. I could hear the loud laughter of vacationers, the cheers of tinkling liquor glasses, and music moving in rhythm with the dancers. The sea breeze was calm and refreshing, while the waves rolled endlessly.

As the night grew late, the noise slowly faded. Programs ended, and some guests returned to their rooms.

“Let’s get back to our room now,” Daddy said.

We went straight to our room since it was almost midnight. The room was small but enough for four.

“Time to sleep now, little angels,” Mom said, kissing our foreheads.

I was no longer a child. I was already eighteen, and my brother was sixteen. Daddy also bade us goodnight and kissed our foreheads. I closed my eyes and covered myself with a blanket. I tried hard to sleep but failed. I glanced at my parents and my brother. They were already fast asleep. I checked my phone. It was already past three in the morning. I thought of stepping outside to feel the air and calm myself. Quietness might help me sleep. I wore my slippers, brought my phone, and quietly went out.

The resort was silent now. Only the waves could be heard. Though the sky was still dark, the resort lights stretched toward the sea. Wanting to unwind, I walked slowly toward the shoreline. The breeze felt soothing and cool. I forgot to bring a sweater, so I hugged myself as I strolled along the shore. I put my headset on, and listened to mellow music.

No one else was outside. As I continued walking, I accidentally stumbled over an empty liquor bottle.

“Ouch! What was that?” I muttered as I stood up and wiped my shorts.

I remembered the earlier drinking and laughter, but strangely, the area looked clean. No trash in sight. I checked my phone again. It was already 3:50 a.m.

“It’s time to sleep now, Samantha,” I told myself as I removed my headset.

I turned back toward our room when I suddenly heard a banging sound. I looked around and noticed a small tent near the shore. Curious, I slowly walked toward it. The sound grew louder and more consistent. Though it was dark, I saw a man outside the tent, wearing black, squatting on the sand, clutching a bag as if it were precious. He repeatedly banged steel scissors against an empty liquor bottle.

Something felt wrong. I stared at him, uneasy. Fear crept in, and I decided to return to our room. As I turned around, I stepped on something again and fell.

“Ouch!”

Another liquor bottle lay beneath my foot. I picked myself up and reached for my phone, which had fallen to the sand.

“What are you doing here?” the man asked in a husky voice.

I turned around. He stared at me intensely. I was terrified. I couldn’t speak. My heartbeat raced, and the breeze felt colder. I froze as he stood up and suddenly ran toward me.

I opened my eyes. The moon was shining brightly, and the stars were slowly fading. The sky looked peaceful and beautiful. I felt something rough beneath my skin. As I pushed myself up, I realized I had been sleeping on the sand.

Confused, I searched for my phone, but it was gone. I started walking along the shore. Some vacationers had already woken up. My parents must be looking for me. I headed toward our room when I heard sudden shout.

“A dead body here!”

I stopped. The sun was beginning to rise. People rushed toward the small tent. My curiosity pulled me there too.

“It’s a girl!” a blonde woman exclaimed.

People kept murmuring and asking what happened. I squeezed through the crowd and saw her. She lay on the sand, almost naked. Blood stained her stomach, and wounds covered her arms and legs. Her hair was unevenly cut, leaving her nearly bald. Her face was pale and her shirt and shorts looked familiar.

“She’s too young,” someone whispered.

A man called the police, and minutes later, police officers arrived and blocked the area. Crime investigators followed shortly after.

“Gab, where are you going?” a woman shouted.

I turned and saw my younger brother running toward the crowd. Mom followed him anxiously.

"There's a dead body, Mom," Gab said.

"What? A dead body? Where's your sister?" Mom asked.

"She was already gone when I woke up," Gab replied.

I stepped forward. "Mom! I'm here. I just couldn't sleep."

She didn't hear me. They went straight to the crowd. I followed closely.

"Excuse me," Mom said as she pushed forward.

"Gab... is that your sister's shirt?" Mom asked, her voice trembling.

"Oh my God... Gab... it's Samantha!" she screamed.

I froze. The girl was me. Stabbed. Wounded. Nearly naked. My blonde hair cut. I felt nothing. I watched as Mom clung to my body, crying, while police tried to pull her away. Gab ran to call Daddy. When he arrived, he shook with grief. Beside my body lay my phone, headset, bottle, tent, and steel scissors.

Then I remembered.

"I said, what are you doing here?" the man demanded, holding the scissors.

"I... I just wanted to unwind. I couldn't sleep," I answered, trembling.

"Have you seen me before?" he asked.

"No," I whispered.

He dropped his bag. A bundle of blonde hair fell out. Mad, he ran toward me. I felt the scissors stab my stomach. Blood flowed. The stars and moon faded, and everything turned black.

"Daddy? Mommy? Gab?" I called softly.

I watched my family crumble in grief. I tried to hug them but my arms passed through them. I was scared. Then, a gentle wind blew. Near the tent, a girl in white stood smiling at me.



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**Lost in Translation, Found in Language: The Power
of Speaking Another Tongue**

Language isn't just words - it's how we see ourselves, connect with others, and claim our place in the world. In Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue" and Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "Interpreter of Maladies," characters wrestling with a second language reveal the raw push-pull of feeling lost and finding yourself.

Amy Tan gets real about her mom's "broken" English, calling it a warm, intimate way of sharing thoughts that outsiders dismiss as flawed. She shares stories like her mom dealing with doctors who ignored her until Tan stepped in with "proper" English, showing how language can shut doors or open them wide. Tan bridges her polished school English and her home lingo - what linguists call interlanguage - using personal anecdotes to make you feel that split between public judgment and private closeness.

On the other hand, Jhumpa Lahiri's tale follows Mr. Kapasi, a tour guide who decodes patients' words by day and misreads emotions on a trip with the Das family. Mrs. Das spills her secrets to him, hoping he'll "interpret" her guilt like a doctor, but cultural gaps and unspoken vibes leave them both hanging. Through Mr. Kapasi's inner thoughts and sharp details of India's heat and monkeys chasing crumbs, Lahiri nails how second-language chats can spark empathy or just more loneliness.

Both pieces hit on alienation from folks who don't get your words, the identity shuffle of switching tongues, and how fumbling through language can actually empower you to speak your truth. Tan shows non-standard English thriving in family bonds despite society's shade; Lahiri exposes how interpretation fails across cultures, yet hints at deeper understanding.

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Beyond the Spark: Why True Love Was Worth the Wait

*"For the **man** who proved my father right: the best things take time."*

I've always been a believer in fairy tales. Even as a young girl, I held onto the idea that a princess would eventually find her prince, or that a simple girl's life could be transformed just by finding someone who truly saw her. I took my father's words to heart: that love isn't something to be rushed. If it's real, it will wait for its own perfect timing. Because of that, I skipped the high school romances, trusting that my parents' "old-fashioned" wisdom held a deeper truth. Looking back, I'm so glad I did.

I was nineteen when you finally walked into my life. It wasn't some cinematic moment of "butterflies" or instant sparks. There wasn't even a physical pull at first. But as the days turned into months, something deeper than attraction took root. I realized I hadn't just found a partner; I had found my soul mate.

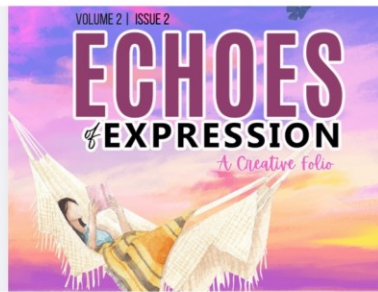
You were the brilliant math whiz, handsome, athletic, and someone who actually understood politics. I was the opposite: the loud, non-athlete who lived for literature, memorizing movie titles and writing stories I thought no one would ever care to read. Yet, somehow, we clicked. Even our "love number," 14, seemed like a sign from the universe. From the day I said "yes" to our wedding day, and even to the number on your jersey, that date has been our lucky charm.

My love for you grew in the quiet moments. I loved how you took the time to get to know my parents, traveling those long, dusty roads just for a chance at my "sweet yes." I loved our simple dates, sharing cheap meals at the university, finding joy in just being together.

I love you because you understood my world from the start. I didn't have much growing up, but you've spent our years together filling in every gap. Whether it was the red roses you "borrowed" from your neighbor's garden or the scent-sprayed letters you stayed up all night writing, you always made sure I felt special.

You've been my biggest supporter, especially when life got heavy. You never questioned my role as a breadwinner or my need to provide for my parents and siblings. Instead, you pushed me to be better, teaching me things I was afraid to try and laughing at my corniest jokes to make me feel heard.

Today, our lives are the dreams I used to read about. You've given me a home where our three children, *kuya*, *ate*, and *bunso*, can grow up safe and loved. You've been a provider



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who always puts the kids' tuition and needs above your own. You gave me the privilege of being a wife and a mother, and you've never given up on me, even when I'm difficult to deal with.

As we grow old together, I want you to know that you are my defender, my listener, and my best friend. You're the one who navigates the road when we're lost on trips, and the one who sits with me for a quiet coffee or a trip to the salon.

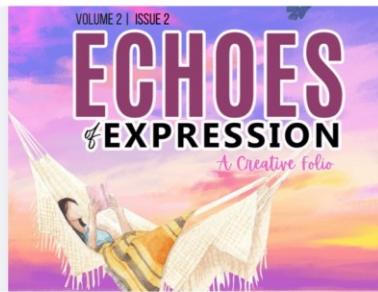
I might not be able to put a percentage on how much I love you, but you are my only "constant." Not even the legendary Allan Caidic, the charm of Dingdong Dantes, or the strength of Superman could ever come close to the "kilig" and the love you give me. They are just icons, but you, you are my reality.

You are my **home**.

This is my **heart**, offered to you

My love letter,

and our beautiful **love story**.



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CHRISTIAN JESSIE B. BALA

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An elegy for an old friend

Standing where flowers
Are already wilting,
Coffin is closed
Like chances I never opened.

Holding apologies sound too loud
In a place answers with soil.
I mistook your silence for strength,
While standing beside another life.

If time bent backward,
I would sit beside you in dark,
Listen to words
You buried inside.

But wind finishes prayer
Before I arrive.
Shadow doesn't reach graves
And it learns too late what distance costs.

Old friend,
I was not there
When they lowered you down.
Boundaries kept me standing far,
Knees shaking,
Hands empty.
Now I speak to a space
That will never answer.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18665761

Between Policy and People

There is a line
between policy and people
unwritten, unseen,
but burning in the conscience.

It does not live in law books.
It stands in the rain
and refuses to fall.

Public service is choosing right
when silence is easier.
It is carrying the many
even when the weight
presses against the ribs.

A decision is never just paper.
It has gravity.
It lands somewhere
on a roof at midnight,
in a home already fragile.

Budgets build bridges
or barriers.
Policies shelter
or erode trust.

Public office is borrowed belief.
Break that line,
and the disaster is not rain
it is doubt.

Hold it,
and governance stands.
For where law meets life,
every signature
is either a promise
or a fracture.
And history remembers.

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Governance in the Shadow of Floods

Some floods arrive with the rain. Others gather long before a single cloud form.

The first is nature at work. The second is human, shaped by the systems we build and the ones we neglect.

When rivers overflow, and cities disappear beneath rising water, disaster is often blamed on fate: acts of God, climate change, extreme weather. Yet beneath the surface lies something quieter but more persistent, years of administrative neglect layered over time. Floods are not only hydrological events; they expose the structure of governance, revealing cracks that remained unseen until pressure forced them open.

This condition may be called Phantom Institutionalism: institutions that exist in form, follow procedures, issue statements, and hold meetings, yet fail to produce meaningful outcomes. They are visible but hollow. The bureaucracy is not absent, it is spectral.

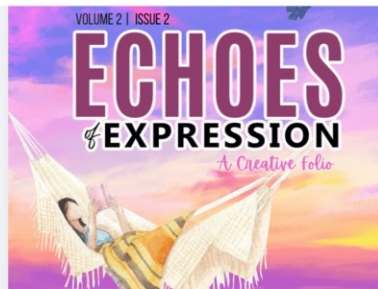
This ghost does not rattle chains. It stamps documents.

In flood governance, the phantom becomes unmistakable. Budgets are approved for dredging and drainage. Press conferences announce preparedness. Task forces are assembled, and reports are archived. Yet when the rains return, neighborhoods submerge once more. With each recurrence, a paradox sharpens: infrastructure spending increases, but vulnerability persists. This is the hydro-administrative paradox, investment rises, endurance does not.

Flood control is dispersed across public works agencies, disaster councils, environmental offices, planners, and local governments. On paper, such distribution suggests coordination. In practice, it often produces fragmentation. Mandates overlap, responsibilities blur, and accountability dissolves. When everyone shares authority, no one owns failure.

Water respects no administrative boundary. Bureaucracies insist upon them.

Procedures may be followed, yet strategy remains disconnected. Drainage systems are built while deforestation upstream continues. Floodwalls rise even as settlements expand



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along riverbanks. Zoning laws exist, yet permits are granted regardless. Each office fulfills its mandate; the system falters as a whole.

Infrastructure reassures the public. A new pumping station signals action. Concrete implies control. But without integrated watershed management and long-term planning, such measures become performance rather than protection. Under real stress, the illusion fractures.

Climate change intensifies rainfall and raises seas, but it does not create institutional weakness. It exposes it. Disaster emerges when environmental force collides with administrative fragility.

Floods will continue to arrive with rain. Whether they become catastrophes depends on institutional integrity. The most dangerous flood is not sudden water, but the slow normalization of bureaucratic drift, the steady erosion of responsibility until fragmentation feels ordinary.

And when the waters recede, one question remains: was this disaster natural or institutional?

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Pulang Bistida

SCENE 1

(In a lobby of an inn around 6:00 pm. At the center is a couch and round table. Tanya fixing herself for some time when Pauline enters without knocking.)

PAULINE

Helllooooo! Hello, hello, hello...

TANYA

Anak ng kabayo. Nakakagulat ka naman.

PAULINE

Hahahaha. Pinapunta mo kaya ako dito.

TANYA

May pinto kaya. Sana kumatok ka man lang para di ako magulat. Tingnan mo tuloy mukha ko.

PAULINE

Salamin kaya 'yong pinto. Di 'yun kinakatok. (Eyeing the whole area) In fairness, ang gara naman ng lugar na ito, besh.

TANYA

Talaga. Mayaman kaya ang daddy ko. (Eyeing the whole area)

PAULINE

Napakaswerte mo naman. Yung daddy ko simple lang. Di mayaman, pero di naman mahirap. Pero malaki ang— (laughs)

TANYA

Sira. (laughs) Besh, maganda na ba? (Turns around, flaunting the dress)

PAULINE

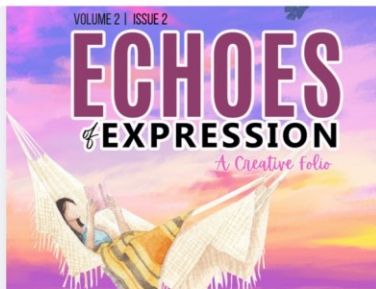
Bagong damit?

TANYA

Yeah. Bigay ni dad. 6th monthsary kasi namin.

PAULINE

(Helps fixing her hair) Ok na fesang mo, sooo pretty. Yung buhok mo na lang. Suklayin natin ulit.



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TANYA

Thank you, beshy. (Jokingly) Ano na lang kaya gagawin ko kung wala ka?

PAULINE

Tarantada! Gusto pa naman akong patayin.

TANYA

(Laughing) Joke lang po.

PAULINE

(Anxiously) Pero may kasalanan ako sayo, besh.

TANYA

Kaya ba parang di maipinta mukha mo ngayon? Ano ba ginawa mo? (While looking at the mirror)

PAULINE

(Hesitant to say) Kasi...kanina. Nakita ko si Tita Susan sa school. Hinahanap ka.

TANYA

Tapos? (Unbothered)

PAULINE

(Hesitant to say) Sa taranta ko nasabi ko itong lugar.

TANYA

(Madly) Anak ng — —! Ang tanga mo, besh! Ang tanga lang.

PAULINE

(Apologetic) Pasensya na. May itatanong pa sana si Tita pero kumaripas na ako ng takbo. Di naman niya siguro mahahanap ang lugar na to, no?

TANYA

(Madly) Dapat lang! Naku! Pagnagpunta dito si mama, lagot ka talaga! Wala ka nang matatanggap mula sa akin!

PAULINE

Ayyy! Huwag nam — — (panicking) Andito na siya...

TANYA

(Panicking) Si Mama?

SCENE 2

Carl bringing a lot of gifts enter the stage.

CARL

Hello, baby. You look so pretty.

TANYA
Da — — daddy?

CARL
Are you ok? You looked tense.

TANYA
I'm just worried that I won't be pretty for you.

CARL
What nonsense. You'd always be beautiful in my eyes. Even prettier in red.

TANYA
Do you like it?

CARL
I love it! (Hugs her) Hello, Pauline.

PAULINE
Hello, Daddy! So yummy.

TANYA
Sira. Umayos ka. Daddy ko yan.

CARL
(Laughing) I have a surprise for you baby. I bought you some things. Nagpunta ako sa mall before coming here. Mga kailangan mo sa school at iba pa na magugustuhan mo.

TANYA
Wow! (Looks at the gifts with Pauline) Signature clothes, mga branded na shoes! Thank you, daddy.

CARL
Do you like it, baby?

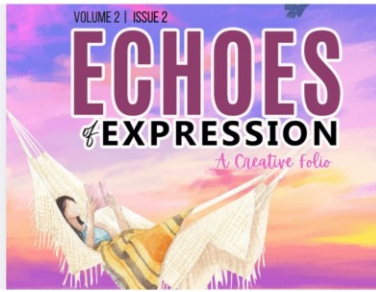
TANYA
Like it? I love it, daddy! Thank you talaga for spoiling me.

CARL
I'll buy anything for you, my baby, but I expect a great performance from you tonight.

TANYA
Siyempre naman. Humanda ka. Rawr.

CARL
You are like these material things, baby. So beautiful and must be mine.

TANYA
I am yours.



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PAULINE
(Clears throat) Pero what about me?

CARL
Makakalimutan ba kita? Ito.

PAULINE
Wow! Salamat po. Attempts to hug Carl but stopped by Tanya)

CARL
(Laughs) Shall we? I still have to shower...

TANYA
Sure, room 213. Pero hatid ko lang sa labas si beshy.

CARL
Ok. Hintayin kita sa taas. (Carl exits)

SCENE 3
Tanya and Pauline are left on the stage continuing their argument.

TANYA
Di ko pa nakakalimutan atraso mo.

PAULINE
Alam ko. Di naman siguro alam ni Tita kung saan ang lugar na ito.

TANYA
Dapat lang! Magbantay ka diyan sa labas!

PAULINE
Ha? Gagawin mo akong sekyu? Sa beauty kong 'to?

TANYA
Sira ka talaga. (Both of them are about to leave when Susan enters)

PAULINE
Diyos ko!

TANYA
Ang ing — — — (in shock) Ma?

SCENE 4
Susan enters

SUSAN
Tanya? Paul?

TANYA

Ma, ano ginagawa mo dito?

SUSAN

Kanina ko pa kayo hinahanap. Ano ang ginagawa niyo sa lugar na ito? At ano yang suot mo?

PAULINE

Tita, may study group po kami dito.

TANYA

Nadumihan yung damit ko, ma. Kaya nagpalit ako .

SUSAN

Study group? Dito sa Langit Inn?

TANYA

Oo, ma. Parents ng classmate namin ang nagmamay – ari nito . Dito na lang daw kami.

SUSAN

At nasaan sila? (Exploring the area)

PAULINE

Hmm, papunta na po yung iba.

TANYA

Kami pa ang nauna.

SUSAN

Mga sinungaling! Umamin kayo! Ano ang ginagawa niyo sa lugar na to?

TANYA

Ma, nakakahiya. Ang daming tao. Sa bahay na ako magpapaliwanag.

SUSAN

Sige. Sige. Umuwi na tayo ngayon. (Grabs Tanya's hand)

PAULINE

Tara na, Tita. Umuwi na tayo. (Distracting Susan)

SUSAN

Hali ka na.

TANYA

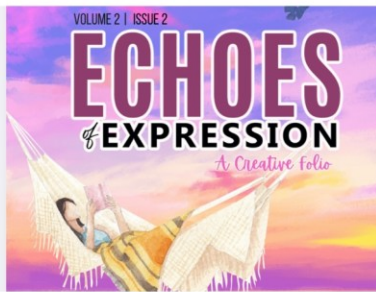
Mamaya na ako uuwi, ma.

SUSAN

At bakit? Gabi na. (Looks at her watch) Ano ba? Tara na!

TANYA

(To Pauline) Puntahan mo si Daddy. Huwag mo siyang palalabasin.



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PAULINE
Ok! (About to exit) Ahhh.

SCENE 5
Carl enters with unbuttoned polo

CARL
Babe, may kuku – (Shock to see an old love) Susan?

SUSAN
Ca- – Carlito?

TANYA
(Confused) Ma? Magkakilala kayo?

SUSAN
Umuwi na tayo. Ngayon din.
TANYA
Ma, ayoko.

CARL
Ma? Anak mo? Mama mo?

SUSAN
Sabi ko tara na.

CARL
Sandali. Mag-usap tayo. (Grabs Susan's arm)

TANYA
(Confused) Ma, anong meron?

SUSAN
Bitawan mo ako. Wala na tayong dapat pag-usapan.

CARL
Meron. (To Tanya) Tanya, I 'm sorry. Di ko alam.

SUSAN
Magkakilala kayo? Anong sorry?

TANYA
Di lang kami magkakilala, ma. Daddy ko si Carl.

SUSAN
(Confused) Da--daddy?

TANYA
Oo, ma. Sugar Daddy. Boyfriend ko, ma.

SUSAN

(Horried) Hi — hindi. Hindi! Hesus Maryosep! Nakakadiri kayo! Ang ba — baboy niyo!

TANYA

Nakakadiri? Alam kong mali ang makipag relasyon sa isang matandang may pera at asawa, pero ito lang yung paraan, ma, para makakain ako ng gusto kung pagkain, para matustusan ko yung mga material na pangangailan ko.

SUSAN

Alam kong may mga pagkukulang ako dahil hindi ko naibigay lahat ng gusto mo, pero para pumasok ka sa ganito? Wala ka bang kahihyan? Wala ka bang takot sa Diyos?

TANYA

Sawa na ako mabuhay sa hiras, Ma! Sawa na ako na puro tuyo ang ulam o itlog o sardinas o wala talaga tayong makain. Ginagawa ko ito para sa atin hindi lang para 'di na tayo masyadong mahirapan.

SUSAN

Mali pa rin! Maling — mali! Nakakadiri kayo! Ang ba — baboy ni yo!

CARL

Susan, Tanya, kumalma kayo.

SUSAN

At isa ka pa! (Slaps Carl) Ang baboy mo! Pati anak mo, pinatos

CARL

(Horried) Anong anak?

TANYA

(Horried) Anak? Hindi!!!

SUSAN

Buntis ako noong iniwan mo ako! Niloko mo ako! Sabi mo binata ka! Pero di mo sinabing may — asawa't anak ka na!

CARL

Dios ko!

TANYA

Di yan totoo. Di yan totoo!

SUSAN

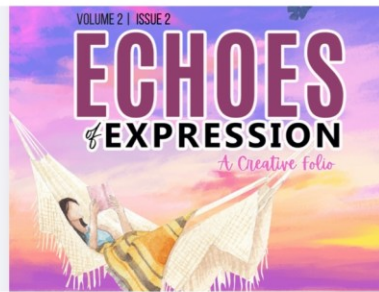
At oo, siya ang tatay mo! Ang dahilan ng mga paghihirap natin!

CARL

Susan, hindi ko alam na buntis ka noon. Patawarin mo ako. (Touches Tanya) Tanya...

TANYA

Huwag mo akong hawakan! Nandidiri ako sa sarili ko... Nandidiri ako sa sarili ko...



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SUSAN

(Faces Carlito) 'Yan ang napapala mo sa pagiging babaero mo . (To Tanya) 'Yan ang napapala mo sa pagiging materyoso.

TANYA

(In tears) Ang dumi – dumi ko...

CARL

(In tears) Patawarin niyo ako, Susan, Tanya. Hindi ko alam. Diyos ko!

-END-



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SI NANAY, DAKILANG BAYANI

Simula pagkabata hanggang sa kasalukuyan
Di malilimutan, mabuting gawa ni nanay
Musmos pa lamang, pinakitang kabayanihan
Katatagan ng loob at pagmamahal na tunay

Bagamat maagang si ama ay lumisan
Hindi naging hadlang sa kanyang pangarap
Magtapos ng pag-aaral na aming naisin
Nang may maayos at positibong pagtanggap

Hirap, pagod at maraming pagtitiis
Sakripisyong walang katumbas na halaga
Kapakanan naming sadyang laging nais
Na siyang babaunin sa aming pagtanda

Mula noon hanggang ngayon
Pagkalinga'y hindi masusukat
Kabutihan naming ang tanging layon
Sa lahat ng desisyon siya'y aking kabalikat

Lubos na paghanga at tunay na pagmamahal
Ang handog sa aming dakilang ina
Sapat na kalusugan lagi naming dasal
Kasama ang suporta ng mahal naming ama

Patnubayan nawa ng mahal na Panginoon
Sa anuman landasin na aming tatahakin
At anuman pangarap na nakamtam ngayon
Alay kay nanay sa kanyang kabayanihan.



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Public Administration as a Selfless Program: A Philosophical View

The concept of Public Administration often finds itself buried under the weight of bureaucratic cynicism and the mechanics of efficiency. However, when viewed through a philosophical lens, it emerges not merely as a technical apparatus of the state, but as a profound exercise in altruistic governance. To define Public Administration as a "selfless program" is to argue that its primary ontological purpose is the sublimation of individual ambition in favor of the collective highest good. This perspective shifts the administrator's role from a mere functionary to a moral agent whose success is measured by the invisible flourishing of a community rather than personal or political gain.

At the heart of this selfless program lies the deontological commitment to service. Unlike the private sector, where the teleological end is often profit or market dominance, the administrator operates within a framework of duty that necessitates a "voiding" of the self. This aligns with the Hegelian notion of the "universal class"—civil servants who, ideally, transcend their particular interests to represent the general will. In this light, every policy implementation and budgetary allocation becomes an act of quiet sacrifice, where the administrator's ego is subordinated to the impartial application of justice and the equitable distribution of resources.

Furthermore, the "selfless" nature of this field is evidenced by the anonymity of its impact. Real public service rarely seeks the spotlight; it functions as the foundational infrastructure of social stability that remains unnoticed until it fails. This reflects a form of "secular asceticism," where the practitioner finds fulfillment in the seamless operation of social systems. When a public health initiative succeeds or a municipal grid operates without interruption, the administrator remains behind the curtain. This lack of external validation requires an internal moral compass that prioritizes the stability of the polis over the vanity of the individual.

However, characterizing Public Administration as a selfless program also invites a critique of the tensions between humanity and bureaucracy. There is a persistent danger that the "selfless" ideal can mutate into a "faceless" reality, where the human element is lost to cold algorithmic decision-making. A truly philosophical administration must balance this selflessness with phronesis, or practical wisdom. It must be selfless enough to be fair, yet



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human enough to recognize the particularities of the suffering it seeks to alleviate. The administrator must therefore be a "compassionate stoic," maintaining the objective distance required for fairness while remaining deeply attuned to the ethical weight of their decisions.

Ultimately, Public Administration serves as a modern secular ministry. It is the practical manifestation of the social contract, a tangible way in which we care for the "stranger" through institutionalized empathy. By treating administration as a selfless program, we reclaim it from the pejorative "bureaucrat" and restore it to its rightful place as a noble vocation. It is a testament to the human capacity for organized care, suggesting that our most sophisticated achievement is not the power we exert over one another, but the intricate systems we build to ensure that no member of the collective is left to face the elements alone.



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**Hibla ng Pag-ibig, Tinik
ng Pagtitiis**

May umagang pagod,
mga silid na tahimik,
mga salitang nilulunok
para hindi bumagsak ang bagyo.

May mga sumpang binitiwang
ng pusong hindi marunong magmahal,
at mga babaeng nananatili,
umaasang sisibol ang pag-ibig
mula sa paumanhing di itinanim.

Unti-unting isinusuko
ang dangal, ang tinig, ang pangarap,
iniisip na iyon ang mukha ng pag-ibig.

Kaya bago ka maglakad sa altar,
tanungin ang sarili:
handang ka bang mahalina
at hindi lang tiisin?

Sapagkat ang kasal
hindi laging engkanto
minsan, ito'y pagkapit
sa tahananang matagal ka nang
hindi tahanan.



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Braving the Weight of Expectations

Norm, when someone expects much from another without grasping the weight of walking in their shoes, including the responsibility, the relentless pressures, the heavy emotions, the erosion of sanity, and the scars of loss, recognize their courage.

Even after hitting rock bottom, resilient in the face of hardship, holding onto hope when life offers even the slightest reprieve. It is infinitely harder when others demand from you while you are drained, depleted, and isolated. The weight can demoralize, make you question your strength, and sow doubt, but still, you persist.

It's difficult when others place high expectations on you, making it feel like you must excel at everything. The truth is, that is impossible. There are struggles you cannot overcome and circumstances beyond your control.

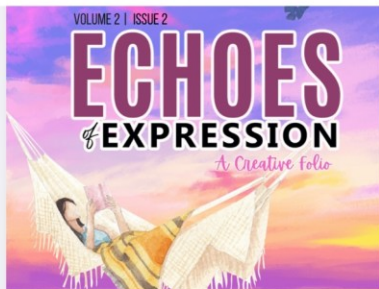
What is truly daunting, however, is the weight of expectations from the person you love. Not because you fear failure, but because you fear disappointing them, even when you've given everything you have. Even when you are exhausted, drenched in sweat, and pouring out every ounce of yourself, you keep pushing forward, hoping to make them proud even if it's only in small ways. Iyon na lang ang kaya mong gawin, at minsan, sapat na iyon.

Mahirap kapag ubos ka. It's exhausting to pour out what little remains of yourself. Yet it feels profoundly different when you are not running on empty, when giving comes easily, without resentment or compulsion, naturally and freely.

True generosity flows from love, from the heart. Every gesture, every expression carries intention and depth. You do not give because it is expected or obligatory, but because you genuinely want to. Each act becomes a reflection of your sincerity, your care, and your presence. Galing sa puso at mula sa pagmamahal.

At times, there is no choice but to summon courage under the crushing weight of expectations. They see only your strength, your achievements, yet inside, you are fracturing beneath the pressure. Bawal magpahinga, bawal mapagod, bawal magkamali, at bawal sumuko. Expectations can feel suffocating, as if the weight of the world rests entirely on your shoulders and perfection is demanded simply because it is expected.

True strength is forged from within, particularly when confronted with demands we cannot always meet, not for lack of desire, but because of the immense burden of responsibility. Resilience in life and the perseverance to face challenges we might resist are what ultimately shape and fortify us. Bearing the weight for those we love is never easy, yet it is through this struggle that we remain whole and steadfast.



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When expectations weigh heavily, it can feel as though complaining is a grave offense, as if we are not permitted to be human or to feel ungrateful for expressing our limits. Even under pressure that is overwhelming and nearly unbearable, it remains essential to rest when you are completely drained, whether by reconnecting with nature, finding joy in solitude, or engaging in the small acts that bring you peace.

Taking this time for yourself is not just permissible, it is necessary. After carrying the burden of bravery for so long, this pause becomes a gift to your own being. You deserve to slow down, to honor your limits, and to protect your mental health.

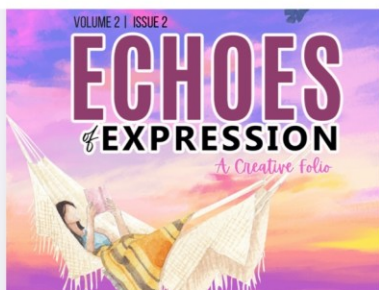
It is perfectly okay to rest when you truly feel that you need it, when exhaustion weighs heavily on you, when responsibilities feel overwhelming, and when expectations demand that you always do well and always prove your worth, even at the expense of your mental health. There are kinds of fatigue that cannot be cured by a single pause, especially the kind that leaves you completely drained.

Despite the hardship, you remain standing and willing to take risks and show strength, even when you feel alone and when it seems that no one fully understands. To others, it may look like you are managing just fine. They assume you can handle everything. But more than simply enduring, what truly helps is being motivated and encouraged to grow and improve without burning out, without rushing, and without settling for just okay.

It is through these burdens that we learn. Through the weight of life's challenges, we begin to understand responsibility more deeply. Adulthood turns out to be more difficult than we expected, sometimes feeling as though rest is not allowed. There is a kind of exhaustion that leaves you feeling like you have no choice but to keep going because you need to survive, because people depend on you, and because others expect so much from you.

Expectations have the power to shape us. They urge us to refine ourselves, to strive for growth, and to pursue continuous improvement. At their best, they serve as catalysts for inspiration. Yet expectations are rarely simple, especially when they come from those we love most. We long to prove our value, to demonstrate that we are capable, dependable, and worthy of their faith in us. Alongside this desire, however, come quiet anxieties. What if I fail them? What if I am not enough? What if I disappoint the very people who believe in me? The weight of these questions can feel immense. This choice lies within us whether to be crushed by that pressure or to allow it to refine and strengthen us.

Life's challenges are never meant to be borne in solitude. Others may perceive you as strong, capable of navigating burdens alone, and presume that your trials are trivial for someone like you. Yet even the most resilient souls crave reassurance. The weight of struggle becomes far more manageable when you know you are not confronting it in isolation. There is a profound solace in the presence of those who guide without imposing, listen without judgment, offer help without condition, and most importantly, remain steadfast even in the midst of failure. True support is revealed in those who catch you when you stumble, comprehend your setbacks, and help you rise again, infused with renewed courage and belief in your potential.



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Too often, people appear only during moments of triumph. When failure arrives, judgment can feel suffocating, as though mistakes are unforgivable and weakness is unacceptable. It prompts reflection on whether their presence endures through both prosperity and adversity, or only during seasons of success.

Indeed, success is best celebrated with those who believed in us when we had little, struggled quietly, and faced uncertain outcomes. Authentic support does not appear only after victory is secured; it is most meaningful when someone chooses to stand by you in your lowest moments and remains steadfast until you achieve your highest aspirations.

braving the weight of expectations, true growth emerges when we confront adversity and challenges with courage, cultivating resilience while safeguarding our well-being. By transforming these expectations into opportunities, we not only excel but also unlock our fullest potential. Padayon.



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Local Islanders' Involvement Determines Event Success

The success or failure of an event often depends on planning and coordination, which directly affect attendees' experiences. Especially today, public reactions to events, positive or negative, are amplified by social media. Negative feedback can quickly and widely harm an event's reputation.

Cultural and religious events play a vital role in Filipino culture by showcasing heritage, stimulating the local economy, and attracting tourists. Effective event organization, especially when locals are involved, increases the event's authenticity and impact. However, the benefits of such events depend on careful planning that actively considers the needs and voices of the local community. Including locals not only prevents problems but also ensures both residents and visitors benefit, making public consultation essential to event success.

Traffic flow is one of the problems that could arise during the influx of tourists; taking a cab could be difficult, and there is a possibility of a fare and commodity price hike during the event. These are the only few aspects of the event that could affect the locals. Proper planning and mitigation could protect locals from exploitation and lessen the negative impact.

Communities would gladly contribute to the event's success if they were part of the people behind it. When they are included, suggestions are heard, and support is recognized. Locals would likely need time to participate and represent their culture. Community engagement means helping the local government plan and execute the activities it will organize. Partnership with business owners and academe; ensuring the event is culturally appropriate; volunteers providing additional human resources for the event can foster a sense of ownership; and community members leveraging local networks to increase attendance during the activities. Using local resources could reduce event costs and enhance the event's quality. In an event like the Higatangan Island festival, which happens annually in the municipality of Naval, from an observer's perspective, the locals are hands-on in conceptualizing the event; they even offer homestead accommodations on festival day to accommodate tourists, providing authentic Higatanganon hospitality and cuisine. Tourists could ride a banca, dive, and experience the genuine Higatangan adventures.

This kind of act helps the festival succeed and generate income for the community. Despite challenges during planning, local involvement, islanders' unity, and government support ensure the event runs smoothly. When locals participate and feel included, cooperation and unity emerge, making the event successful.



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Hyperregionality: Community and Identity

Preserving uniqueness

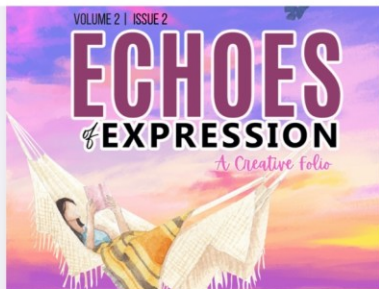
In this ever more globalized world, where common experiences and culture causes us to feel connected, in many ways it is our unique local traditions that make us who we are. Hyperregionality can be defined as a trend towards attention to the local ways and traditions peculiar to a certain region and what makes it different in the world of increasing uniformity. In this viewpoint, the authenticity of local food, art, music and dance is highlighted, and cultural identity is based on these true forms.

In maintaining the Filipino food making process, like the use of dried fish making, using banana leaves in cooking native delicacies, making sun dried “gulaman” from seaweeds, guaranteed that this unique local food making procedures will be handed down through the future generations. At the same time preserving the old native songs or the speaking of the dialect in telling stories to children is one way of keeping the identity alive.

Furthermore, in the recent trend of interconnectivity where people tend adopt more on foreign culture like the hype of the foreign food with a Filipino twist, protecting the cultural authenticity of our local cuisine is even more necessary to be actively pursued. It is not that locals will be shunning the adoption of the new technology, but it is making sure that the depth of the culture and heritage will live on.

Technology helps in many ways in preserving the authenticity of the community identity of the locals by archiving stories passed down by generations, or sharing traditional cooking method in different social media platform making the heritage be passed down to the future generations that will last beyond the time.

The acceptance and support of hyperregionality is one method of maintaining the tradition and a community identity in the diverse society making our ancestors legacy alive and celebrated.



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Community Pride

When we possess something that is ours, we tend to feel proud, and we have the feeling of belonging. This identification with other people in our society that share the same culture forms closer ties and understanding. Neighbors can be united by traditional festivals or common culinary traditions, which will help them to cooperate and support each other.

Promoting cultural authenticity does not just reinforce identity, but also makes people unite. When societies work actively at maintaining their own distinctive traditions, people have a sense of belonging to a shared inheritance. This common sense of ownership may minimize misunderstanding and prevent conflicts before they turn into a major problem. Studies in multicultural communities have revealed that those communities that are bonded culturally tend to be more resilient and in most cases are united to ensure peace.

Economic activity thrives on a stable environment which is given by peaceful communities. There is reduced conflict, more businesses flourish in the region, more tourism, and people live better lives. The case of Vigan in the Ilocos region, shows how cultural heritage investment in the form of preservation of ancestral houses and local crafts has enhanced tourism and the livelihoods of the locals. By accepting and rejoicing in our cultural diversity, we establish the bases of peace and prosperity. The commonality in traditions gives rise to mutual respect, which subsequently provides the chance of growth and well-being within the community.

Sustainability

We can support sustainability in substantive ways by magnifying what the community possesses. Ingredients used in the preparation are local and this maintains local uniqueness. This is sustainable. It also improves the economy and assists in the maintenance of local foods. The locally grown rice and native vegetables that are used in Filipino food can help to retain the flavors that are unique and at the same time provide a boost to the local farmers. The practices can be used to reduce hunger and to attract tourists interested in authentic regional food. Such interest enables local businesses to flourish and also, simultaneously cuts down carbon footprints to the advantage of the environment. Communities that buy locally grown food ingredients make sure that their cuisine and their environment stay healthy and vibrant.



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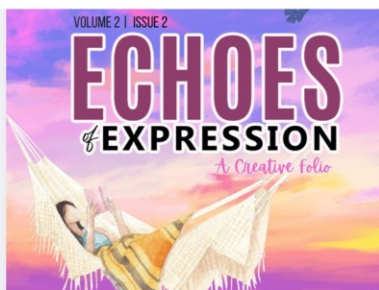
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Palamara

Ang umpisa'y maliwanag
Makulay at mahalimuyak, Paraiso.
Nagsasalita ang araw at buwan
Payak at payapa.
Tunay na daan,
Maliwanag puno ng sigla
Pagtingin sa akin na wagas
Tila di matitinag.
Bawat sandali ligaya'y nababanaag.

Nagtiwala ng buo
Naniwala sa iyong mga pangako
Na kahit anong mangyari
Di matitinag sa anomang hamon ng mundo.
Isa kang huwad,
Mga salita mo pala'y mga pahapyaw
Isang Palamara
Sa mundo kong perkperkto ikaw ay naligaw
Taksil ka ang aking hiyaw
Nang malaman kong ikaw
Ay may kaulayaw
Di pa pumili at kaibigan ko pa
Ang mang-aagaw

Sa panahon ng moderno ang pananaw
Kailangan pa ba pati ang
prinsipyo ko ay manakaw
Upang makipag kompromiso
Isang taksil na ikaw?
Sugat na ginawa
Dahil sa kasingungalingang
Binalot ng mga salita
Isang malaking pang-uuyam
Sa pagkatao ko ang iyong nagawa
Pinaniwala sa katotohanang
Lilo ang dumadakila.



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Sa aking inibig,
Nawa'y natagpuan sa piling niya
Ang tunay na pagsinta
Upang di masayang
Ang mga masasayang alaala
at panahon ipinagpalit para sa kanya.
At sinabi sa sarili,
"Ang pagpapatawad ay para sa akin,
At ito ay di ipinagkakait
Kahit sa mga tao na sayo'y
Naging malupit."



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Left on Seen

Your beauty shines upon my sight,
Like stars that guard the quiet night.
A dream I hold, both near and far,
To know you more, to walk where you are.

For we are strangers, not yet near,
So I reached out with hope sincere.
Through messages my heart had learned,
Yet all you gave me back just "Seen."

How sharp the pain my soul has known,
That with such ease, you left me lone.
Though in the night my hopes take wing,
Your silence makes my heart still sting.

Yet still I dream, though dim the flame,
That someday you might feel the same.
And what is "Seen" may one day be,
The start of love, your heart to me.



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Binhing Inani ng Liwanag

Sa kubong payak ako'y isinilang,
Sa hapag na madalas ay kulang ang laman;
Ama kong magsasaka't dagat ang tahanan,
Pawis ang puhunan sa bawat umaga't hapon.
Sa hirap ng buhay ako'y namulat noon,
Na ang dangal ay bunga ng sipag at panahon.

Ngunit isang araw ang ilaw ay pumanaw,
Haligi ng tahanan tuluyang naparam;
Kami'y iniwan sa unos ng kahirapan,
Ate'y naglako upang may kaning ulam.
Noo'y aking nakita sa gitna ng dilim,
Edukasyon pala ang tanglaw ng mithiin.

Kaya sa pagitan ng pagod at aral,
Ako'y naghanapbuhay upang di mapagal;
Tindera sa araw, guro pagsapit ng dilim,
Mga batang tinuruan naging lakas ko rin.
Sa lamparang kupas gabi'y nilalabanan,
Determinasyon ang aking sandigan.

May mga nagsabing ako'y mabibigo,
Na ang hirap ay habambuhay na tatamo;
Ngunit puso ko'y kumapit sa Maykapal,
Na ang bukas ay di hawak ng salita ninuman.
Luha'y naging ulan sa lupang tigang,
Hanggang pangarap ay unti-unting sumilang.

Lumipas ang taon himala'y nakita,
Putik sa paa'y napalitan ng toga;
Kolehiyo't masteral ay aking nakamit,
Hanggang doktorado'y tuluyang nasapit.
Edukasyon ang naging aking sandata,
Sa laban ng buhay at hamon ng tadhana.

Ngayo'y nakatayo sa harap ng paaralan,
Humuhubog ng isip at dangal ng kabataan;
Sa bawat mata'y aking natatanaw
Ang batang ako na minsang nangarap.
Ang kahirapan ay simula lamang pala,
Ang liwanag ay ani ng tiyaga at tiwala.



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Bunga ng Paghamak

Tinawanan n'yo akong parang lupang tigang,
na walang sisibol na pangarap.
Bawat salitang inihagis n'yo,
ginawa kong binhing itinanim
sa dibdib kong hinamak.

Habang kayo'y nasisilong sa lilim,
ako'y nagbungkal sa ilalim ng araw;
ang pawis ko'y naging ulang
dumilig sa pangarap na pilit n'yong tinutuyot.

Ngayon, narito ako,
ang bungang minsan n'yong hinamak,
ngayo'y hinog sa pagsisikap.
Ang mga batong ipinukol n'yo,
naging haliging sumuporta sa aking pag-angat.

Kaya salamat sa paghamak,
sa init ng inyong salita,
ako ang naging gintong
pinanday ng kahirapan.



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Tanglaw sa Gitna ng Unos

Sa unos ng buhay at dilim ng langit,
di ka lumisan ni minsan nagalit;
Tahimik na lakas sa aking panig,
sa pusong sugatan ikaw ang kapit.

Sa bawat pagsubok na dumarating,
ikaw ang muog sa damdaming ginig;
Sa tinig mong banayad hapdi'y napapawi,
parang ilaw kang gabay sa gabi.

Kung ako'y nadapa sa landas na bato,
ikaw ang kamay na agad sumalo;
Init ng paglingap wari'y sinag-araw,
sa aking pagbangon pag-asa'y sumibol.

Hindi sa salita ang iyong katapatan,
kundi sa gawa mong walang hangganan;
Sa bawat sandali'y di nagmamaliw,
pagkalinga mo'y mananatiling aliw.

Huwarang kaibigan, handog ng Maykapal,
tanglaw sa dilim at gabay sa hirap;
Sa lahat ng yugto ng buhay kong landas,
ikaw ang kasama hanggang wakas.



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Rurok na Hinubog ng Luha

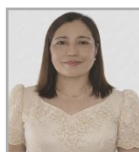
Sinabi nilang ako'y babagsak,
pinagtawanan ang pangarap kong mataas.
Sa likod ng ngiti, may bulong na matalim;
sa likod ng palad, may matang
naghihintay sa aking pagdilim.

Ako'y nadapa, ni isang kamay
walang umalalay;
tanging katahimikan ang yumakap,
singlamig ng gabing walang bituin.

Ngunit mula sa abo, ako'y tumindig,
ginawang hagdan ang bawat pangungutya,
at batong ipinukol,
itinayo kong lakas at paninindigan.

Ngayon, mula sa rurok,
naroon pa rin silang mapait,
walang pagbabago ang tingin at puso.
Ngunit wala na akong galit.

Sapagkat sa bundok ng katahimikan
natagpuan ko ang tunay na halaga:
tagumpay na pinanday,
hindi ng palakpak ng iba,
kundi ng apoy ng sariling luha,
luha na inakay
ng Poong Maykapal.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18899478

An Bilin ni Inay

Sayo ka adlaw, naimdan ko si Inay ngan namimingaw.
Nanlilimpyo san kanya marigsok ngan mga daan nga butang,
An kanya buhok nga busag, tigaman san kanya kaarog
Naimdan ko an pera ka tuig san kanya kakurian.

Sa kanya pangahimo, haglarom an kanya mga mata ngan bayhon.
Kada adlaw naiimdan ko an kamasurub-on;
Nasugad siya “ini nga piyano saim ko ihahatag;
An kobyertos ngan pilak kan im Manay ko ibibilin;
An lingkuran ngan aparador kan im Insi naangay;
Sugad sini an pagbarahin san ditoy ko na yaman.

Gin pirit ko magin malipayon an kanya masurob-on ng abayhon,
Ginsarihan ko magpatawa, para malipay siya;
Pero san ako mga mata, may nabubug-os nga mga luha
nga diri ko mapudngan ngan magbasol!

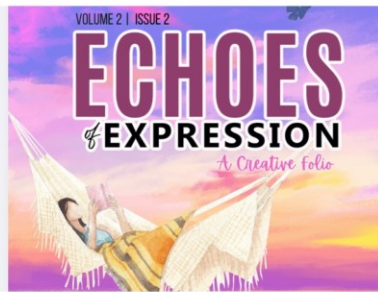
Naiisip ko an ako iroy, an makalolooy.
Mala gud babayaan na kami kay yaon na habilin,
Imbis nga malipay sa pamana nga bilin;
Sa kasingkasing ko inabat ak sin kamingaw.

Nagtangis ak nga mala ak bata nga ditoy,
Hinangkop ak kan Inay ngan nagsugad “An karuyag ko konta,

“Inay, Ako ko ikaw pahahalipayon ngan diri ak naruyag maimdan ka nga
masurub-on!”

O! Inay ko! Nano im naisip nga pagturungaon ini nga ditoy nga imo
kayamanan ibibilin sa amon?

“Wara gad!” baton ni Inay. “Tingali tawagon na ak san Ginoo, maupay
nga hibaruan niyo an tugon ko.”



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“Adto nga pinggan, iton nga aparador, mga lingkuran ihahatag ko sa iyo
puto nga bugto.”

Gin papangaro ko sa Diyos nga an pamana ko, ikaw.
Aanhon ko iton nga piyano kon Ikaw mamamatay nga diri
makatakin sa imo lubnganan?
An karuyag ko ikaw, Inay mabuhi ka.

Ibibilin ko sa iba an ngatanan nga ato yaman,
Kay diri ka matupngan sa kalibutan,
Kay ikaw, O Inay ko, ikaw an wara kapareho.



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Lakbay ng Guro

Guro apat na titik na kaagapay
Sila'y matatawag na pangalawang nanay
Nagbibigay gabay tungo sa tagumpay
Sa mga kabataan nagbibigay kulay.

Sila ang simula ng lahat ng karunungan
Ang lahat ng aral ay kanyang isinisiwalat
Sa mga kabataang puno ng pangarap
Nagsisilbing tulay sa pagitan ng mga kulay.

Kulay na minsa'y madilim ngunit
Madalas ay may liwanag sa dilim
Liwanag na gumagabay tungo sa tagumpay
Mga guro na nagsisilbing tulay ng buhay.

Hindi madali ang kanilang tinatahak
Puno ng pagsubok ang kanilang yapak
Dugo't pawis ang kanilang nilalagak
Minsan nagiging sanhi ng pahamak.

Mga gurong walang sawang nagtuturo
Upang kabataan ay tumino't matuto
Sakripisyo nilay lubos lubos
Na minsan ay dahilan ng kanilang pagkaupos.

Salamat sa mga guro na walang sawa sa pagtuturo
Ang inyong sipag tiyaga at pagsasakripisyo
Bibitbitin ko sa aking puso ang iyong mga turo
Kaya naman, salamat sa inyo aking mga guro.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18899988

Ang Hanap Kong Landas

Nais kong layuan ang mga nambubulag,
Upang sa masama, sa kanila ay makailag.
Ito Ang nararapat na wag maging bulag,
Sa mundo na puno ng mga makamandag.

Sa aking karera na maraming nang wawasak,
Matatag na magpapatuloy, 'di dapat bumagsak.
huwag pansinin ano mang ataki nitong uwak,
'Di dapat magpatinag, dapat buo at di wasak.

Ngayon nga'y 'di mabigat ang kaugalian ng mundo,
Dahil namulat ako at nasubukan ngang maging dehado.
Kaya Ngayon nakahanda at laging kasado,
Dapat bawat hakbang kailanga'y kabisado.

Kung akin ngang lingunin ang dulot ng ligalig,
Ang aking kahambugan at talas nitong bibig,
minsan din umasa sa lakas Ng sariling bisig,
napahamak din minsan dahil sa pusong di naaantig.

Ikinagagalak ko ang pamilya't ang aking gawa,
Sa bawat hangarin, may kilig at may natutuwa.
Ito'y 'di pagmamayabang kundi nakikita sa gawa,
Sa bawat biyaya nakabahagi din sa ibang may tuwa.

Nais ko rin linawin itong landas ng paniniwala,
Para 'di maalipin at mapabilang sa maling tala.
Lahat nga'y nariyan, hahanapin mo ang tamang dila,
dahil mamanahin Ng pamilya ang iyong paniniwala.

Ngunit tinatanong pa rin kung kaya kong lumago,
Sa salita ng Diyos, sarili'y nais dito mabilanggo.
Ito Ang pag-asa sa mundong pabago-bago,
Tunay na katahimikan sa Buhay mo ay babago.

Ang buhay ay ingatan, ang bigay ng Maykapal,
Nitong ating Bathala, kaya huwag kang hangal.
Magtuklas at hanapin ang tunay na may dangal,
Upang ang pamilya ay nasa daan na Dios Ang mag parangal.



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Ningning ng Papel

“Naa moy kanding? Ok na na, lami na kalderetang kanding!” (May kambing kayo? Ayos ‘yan, masarap ‘yan gawing kaldereta!)

Paulit-ulit na umalingawngaw ang mga salitang iyon sa isipan ni Maila habang isinusumite niya ang mga papeles para sa inaasam na promosyon. Isang promosyon na labindalawang taon na niyang hinihintay mula nang siya’y maging Teacher II. Hindi iyon luho. Hindi iyon kayabangan. Iyon ay pangarap na hinubog ng pangangailangan. Mag-isa niyang itinaguyod ang dalawa niyang anak matapos makulong ang kanyang asawa.

Sa bawat sahod na dumarating, may kaakibat na listahan ng bayarin, utang, at pangakong kailangang tuparin. Kaya’t ang promosyon ay hindi lamang titulo, ito’y pag-asa. Si Dolor, ang superintendent, ang may hawak ng kapalaran ng mga tulad niyang guro. Isang babaeng may edad na, may asawa, may mga anak, at higit sa lahat, may matibay na paninindigan o iyon ang sinasabi ng marami.

Kring... kring...

Umalingawngaw ang tunog ng kulay rosas na telepono ni Dolor. “Gusto mong magpa-promote?” “Mayroon ka bang ₱50,000 ngayon?” Iyon ang narinig ni Maila, hindi diretsahang sinabi sa kanya, ngunit malinaw na malinaw habang bahagya pa lamang siyang nakalalabas ng opisina. Lumabas siyang laylay ang balikat, parang pasan ang bigat ng buong mundo. Wala siyang kambing. Ang kambing na binanggit niya ay kambing lamang ng kapitbahay. Wala rin siyang pera kahit pambili man lamang ng kaldereta, wala.

Ngunit mas malakas ang kanyang pangarap kaysa sa kanyang hiya. Sa gabing iyon, lumuhod siya at nagdasal. Mataimtim. Tahimik. Umaasang may paraang magbubukas.

“Ma’am Berlinda,” nanginginig ang boses niya, “maaari po ba akong umutang ng dalawampung libo? Babayaran ko po sa susunod na buwan... sampung porsiyento po ang tubo.” Nakautang nga siya kasama ang kaba at pangamba. Bumalik siya sa opisina ni Dolor. Ibinigay ang kambing. Ibinigay ang pera. Lahat, upang masigurado ang promosyon.

Lumipas ang mga araw.

“Ma’am, kumusta na po ang akin?” Isang text.

Walang sagot.

Minu-minuto niyang tinitingnan ang telepono. Wala pa rin.

Nanikip ang dibdib niya. Naiisip niya ang utang. Ang kambing. Ang pangakong babayaran sa susunod na buwan. Ang mga anak niyang umaasa. Patak ng luha ang saksi, ang bumagsak sa harap ng kanyang blusa.

Nag-text siyang muli. "Kumusta na po?" Tahimik pa rin.

Makalipas ang ilang Segundo, Kring... kring... Tumawag si Ma'am Dolor.

"Hello po, Ma'am. Magandang umaga po..." "Ang ingay-ingay mo," ang galit na tugon. "Hindi ka ba marunong maghintay?" "Maghintay ka kung kailan ka ma-promote". May nakapagbigay ng mas malaking pera kaysa sa iyo, kaya siya ang mauuna."

Click. Putol ang tawag. Napahagulhol si Maila.

Parang pinagsakluban siya ng langit at lupa. Bumagsak ang pag-asa. Naubos ang lakas. Naubos ang paniniwala sa sistemang pinagsilbihan niya nang tapat.

Lumipas ang mga araw.

Naging linggo.

Naging buwan.

Naging taon.

Walang balita. Walang sagot. Walang katarungan.

"Nasa ibang dibisyon na si Ma'am Dolor," bulong ng kasamahan niya isang araw.

Gumuho ang mundo ni Maila. Wala nang pag-asa sa promosyon. Wala nang pag-asa na mabawi ang kambing at pera. Nagpupuyos siya sa galit. May sandaling nais niyang puntahan si Dolor at pagbugbugin ito.

Ngunit nanaig ang pananampalataya.

Nagdasal na lamang siya. Na sana, balang araw, may hustisyang darating para sa mga tulad niyang pobre.

Lumipas ang labing-isang taon.

Isang araw, habang nag-i-scroll sa Facebook, may nabasa siya:

FB POST:

"Inihain na ang suspension order laban kay Superintendent Dolor na tatagal ng anim na buwan..."

Napahinto si Maila. Napatitig sa screen. Napaluha.

"Panginoon," bulong niya.



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The Dreamer's Catch

She was dreamer, steadfast, hopeful and fueled by passion. In her young days, at an age where she was clueless of how the profession works, it was her dream. She had written it boldly in her graduation wish: to become a teacher. And true enough, she nailed it, she graduated with the degree she has been dreaming of for years.

After graduation, she found a teaching job in a private institution. In every lesson she delivered, there was fire, creativity, energy, and a deep desire to inspire change. She then pushed herself further, determined to become one of licensed professional teachers in her country. With the Lord's guidance and perseverance, she passed.

She believed that life would be as flawless as how she planned it, imaginative, with time-frame and full of dreams of a brighter tomorrow.

As time went by, she was encouraged to take a leap and apply to a better institution one that offered greater opportunities and a higher salary. She was determined, convinced that her dreams would fully come true once she entered that institution. She prepared tirelessly and eventually made it to what they called the "ranking".

Questions echoed in her mind: Was this my catch? Am I finally reaching my dreams?"

She waited for a call, a single call that could answer her questions. Days turned into months. Months stretched into years. But the call never came. Hoped slowly faded into sorrow, and the once-burning fire of teaching became unfamiliar in her heart.

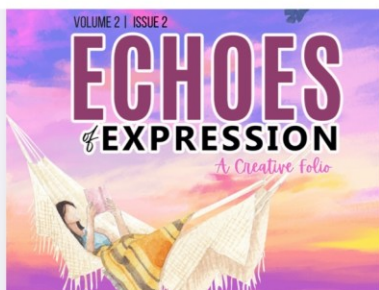
Then one ordinary day, while she was strolling inside the mall, a little girl of about four years old stood in front of her and asked

"You are my sisters' teacher, right?"

With a calm smile, she knelt and asked the little girl of what is the name of her sister.

"Her name is Becca", the little girl replied. Then, with eyes full of certainty, she added,

"You are my sister's best teacher. When I grow up, I want to transfer to my Ate's school and I want you to be my teacher too".



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Her heart trembled.

In that moment, she realized something she had almost forgotten. Her dream was never just about entering an institution or receiving a higher salary. Her true dream was to touch hearts, to change lives and to leave marks that time could never erase. Teaching was never about money, it was about passion, purpose, and love poured into every learner.

She was still hopeful to get the call to come. But now, her dreams no longer chased numbers or titles. Instead, she dreamed of catching her learner's futures, of shaping creative, critical thinkers who would rise in this new generation.

And perhaps, she finally understood:

The dream was never lost. It was already living, in the hearts she had taught.