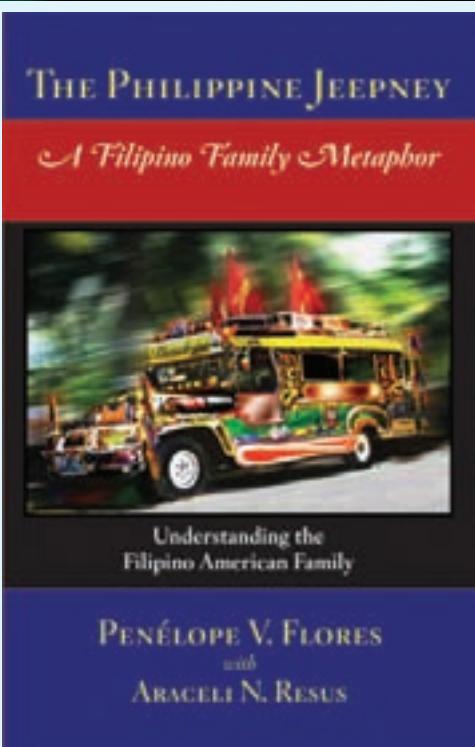


## Linda Nietes, Proprietor Philippine Expressions Bookshop Of Activism, Books & Fil-Am Roots

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO  
AJPress



AJPress Photo by Nickee de Leon



The word “activist” is often used to refer to someone who is in protest or dissent over political matters, but activism can take a wide range of forms, and not just concerning politics. Activism, in a general sense, can be described as intentional action to bring about change.

In the recent past, a phrase has been used to describe another form of activism which has nothing to do with protest or confrontation. Transformational activism is the idea that people need to transform on the inside as well on the outside in order to create any meaningful change in the world. An example is encouraging choices to live in racially diverse communities. Such communities may literally “transform” communities by opening the minds of residents to new ideas, new cultures, new historical perspectives, and a broader view of life that ultimately can benefit social relations.

A great example of transformational activism is what Filipino American Linda Nietes has been so passionately committed to –cultural activism. For the past 37 years, Linda has dedicated her life to promoting and preserving our Filipino culture through literature.

Through her online bookstore, Philippine Expressions Bookshop, Linda has generated awareness and love for Filipino literature all over North America.

“Sometimes, I take the liberty of describing myself as a cultural (not political) activist because of what I do .. it was how a dozen or so clients had described me, not just here in the US but also back when I was in Manila. The label has been with me for the last thirty-seven years. People with enough perception do not have to be told. I guess they notice my worth to the community, and how I have worked very hard to make a difference in the cultural field. And after 37 years, I feel I have really earned this title and people will forgive me for making it part of my bragging rights,” said Linda with a smile.

Born in Antique and raised in Manila, Linda Nietes wants Filipinos to appreciate and discover their roots by making available to them noteworthy Filipino literature. Here, Linda shares her own roots with Asian Journal.

“My training was on stock and bonds with the world’s biggest stock brokers in the early sixties. This company no longer exists. It was recently purchased by a big conglomerate. I worked for them in Hong Kong (one of the few Pinays in HK at that time) and I was appointed as Operations Manager of their Manila Office when they opened their Regional Office in Asia in the late sixties. However, martial law came in 1972 and the question kept nagging me .. what can I do for my country at a time of crisis? Since I am a Filipiniana bibliophile from way back, I just reinvented myself to become a bookseller specializing on Filipiniana publications. This was at the time when the Philippines needed a specialty bookshop, in order to encourage authors to continue writing despite martial law censorship. And it was the time to GROW READERS for the moribund book publishing industry in the Philippines. It was also the right time to bring the snob appeal of beauti-

ful but expensive Filipiniana coffee table books to the attention of Forbes Park, Makati, where my first bookshop, Casalinda Bookshop, was located,” Linda relates.

In 1984, Linda moved to the US and tended a bookstore in Beverly Hills. But constant rain inundated LA in 1992 and the bookstore soon became a casualty. That eventually moved Linda to establish the first specialty bookshop on the Philippines in the US, Philippine Expressions. The mail-order bookshop has served the FilAm community by being a home for Philippine writings in the US, in the same manner that Casalinda Bookshop in Forbes Park provided a home for such writings in the Philippines.

In 1989, Linda started the annual Authors’ Night where books and their respective authors are celebrated and presented to the FilAm community in Los Angeles. For the past few years, it’s been held on the eve of the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, where Linda always made sure Philippine Expressions has a booth to promote Filipino literature.

This year marks Linda’s 25 years of service to the Fil Am community and 37 years of trail-blazing and cultural activism. “Authors’ Night is part of a year-long celebration of our 25th Anniversary, and a community outreach program in collaboration with the Philippine Consulate General of Los Angeles. It will be held on Friday, April 24 from 5:30-9pm at the Rizal Hall of the Philippine Consulate, 2600 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90010. Admission is free but there’s limited seating so, interested readers may call me at (310) 514-9139 or email linda\_nietes@sbcglobal.net,” Linda said. “From April 25-26, everyone is invited to visit our Booth # 427, Dickson Plaza Mid, Zone D, at the LA Times Festival of Books, UCLA Campus where Filipino American authors will be booksigning,” she added.

Linda is inspired by a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

“Sometimes, I take the liberty of describing myself as a cultural (not political) activist because of what I do .. it was how a dozen or so clients had described me, not just here in the US but also back when I was in Manila. The label has been with me for the last thirty-seven years. People with enough perception do not have to be told. I guess they notice my worth to the community, and how I have worked very hard to make a difference in the cultural field. And after 37 years, I feel I have really earned this title and people will forgive me for making it part of my bragging rights.”

Publisher’s Note

**Fine  
Print**

“The Bookshop dedicated to Filipino-Americans in search of their roots.” This is Philippine Expressions Bookshop’s main thrust. Linda Nietes, proprietor of the bookstore with a sublime mission, is indeed a fine woman -- a cultural activist, an exemplary member of the Filipino-American community in Southern California and a most deserving individual to be featured in this week’s issue of The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine. ☐