

OPINION & FEATURES

Nurturing our own

AMIDST the political turmoil and outrage caused by the now infamous constituent assembly, amid the chaos being caused by the onset of the presidential campaigns, representatives from various sectors in the Philippines converged in Boston, Massachusetts for the 2024 Gawad Kalinga Global Summit 2009. The summit ran from June 12 -14, working towards a single-minded and altruistic goal—"A World Without Poverty."

Prominent figures as Vice-President Noli de Castro, Philippine Daily Inquirer's Conrad de Quiros, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, GK Champion Tony Meloto and GK Builder Dylan Wilk took time from their hectic schedule to discuss possible solutions to fight the never-ending battle against poverty in the Philippines. Even Cambridge Vice-Mayor Sam Snyder, in behalf of the City of Cambridge, gave his full support. "The city of Cambridge supports the GK global summit to unveil the GK vision of 2024 of poverty eradication. What a noble goal that is, to discuss



Vice President Noli de Castro gets introduced to some of the delegates by GK executive director Luis Quiñena. AJPress photo by Momar Visaya

and think about it and chat strategies on how to do it. The two countries (Philippines and US) have a special relationship. There are 3 million Filipino-Americans residing in the United States, about 100 percent of them are gainfully employed.

They participate in all facets of American life and strengthen the bond between our countries. I believe that sponsoring this kind of activity livens our community and creates avenues for a better world," Snyder said.

"We launch GK as a global movement, to bring Filipinos out of poverty, slum after slum, town after town. Based on our experience, it is possible that we can get the Philippines out of Third World without having to depend on foreign aid, depend on too much funding, we have the land, resources and talent," were the words of GK Champion Tony Meloto, urging Fil-Ams to contribute to the effort.

"The difference between a rich and poor country is the citizens' love for the country.

If we love our country, we will bring it out of the Third World even before 2024. We believe by 2010, we can do that because of our partners, our target now is to get land for 5 million families by 2024," he further said.

An impossible feat, it may seem, especially since Fil-Ams are going through tough times with the economic recession as well. If we think about the miracle of the five loaves and two fish that fed a multitude in the Bible, we would probably come to an unlikely yet valid conclusion—more than the miracle itself, the resources possibly came from what little people had that they volunteered to share that day—an act that turned meagerness into a veritable feast. (AJPress)

EDITORIAL

Erasing Ateneo

IN the Penguin Classics edition of *Noli Me Tangere* (2006), translator Harold Augenbraum renders the title of the seventh chapter, "*Idilio en una azotea*," as "Idyll on a terrace." I think I can understand why; the meaning of "azotea" would still be transparent to a Filipino reader today, but to the international audience of Penguin-reading English readers, it would

be opaque. "Terrace," on the other hand, falls trippingly off the tongue.

But something else is lost too, when Juan Crisostomo Ibarra and Maria Clara de los Santos meet for the first time since the young gentleman's return from seven years of study in Europe. In the famous balcony scene ("balcony," in fact, is how Leon Ma. Guerrero, translator of the popular 1961 edition of the *Noli*, renders "azotea"), the two lovers exchange gigabytes of information without saying a word, through what Augenbraum, a Latino expert in the United States and the executive director of the National Book Foundation, describes as "the language of their eyes." But they also talk, both teasingly and in earnest.

At one point, Maria Clara responds to Ibarra's effusive declaration ("Could I ever forget you?")

with a modest recollection ("Unlike you, I haven't traveled.") She then says: "We were still children; your mother would take us to swim in that creek in the shade of the sugarcane. So many flowers and plants grew on the banks, and you would recite their names to me in Latin and Castilian, since you had already begun your studies at the *atheneum*."

Atheneum? Surely Rizal meant Ateneo? Just to be sure, I checked. "Athenaeum," in the New American Oxford Dictionary that comes bundled on Macs, is first defined as a noun "used in the names of libraries or institutions for literary or scientific study," and then as a noun "used in the titles of periodicals concerned with literature, science and art."

In the wonderful, if sometimes wrongheaded, *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary, two senses are also recognized: "a building or room in which books, periodicals, and newspapers are kept for use" or "a literary or scientific association."

Did Augenbraum think Ibarra learned the names of "so many flowers and plants" in a library?

Since some kind soul has uploaded the Berlin edition of *Noli* to Scribd, it is possible for anyone with an Internet connection, even those like me who cannot read Spanish beyond root words, to read the novel, or at least parts of it, in the original.

"*Eramos aun niños: fuimos con tu madre a bañarnos en aquel arroyo bajo la sombra de los cañaverales. En las orillas crecían muchas flores y*

plantas cuyos extraños nombres me decías en latin y en castellano, pues entonces ya estudiabas en el Ateneo."

There you go.

Augenbraum knew Rizal studied at the Ateneo; he says so himself, in his fine introduction to his own translation. Did he perhaps think that "el Ateneo" was much too local a reference for an international audience of English readers?

This seems to be the same tack favored by Guerrero, like Rizal a brilliant graduate of the school that was founded a mere two years before the hero was born (and whose 150th anniversary the Society of Jesus and its many sons and daughters celebrated only last Sunday, June 14).

His version of this part of *Noli* is not in fact a translation but a paraphrase—a limp rendering, but still a paraphrase. Guerrero wrote: "Once they had gone bathing in the river with his mother. He had already started school with the Jesuits in Manila, and had told her the Latin and Spanish names of the familiar plants and flowers on their way, but she had gone off chasing butterflies." (The eminent scholar Benedict Anderson's takedown of Guerrero's translation is worth a closer look, some time in the future.)

The translation by Ma. Soledad Lacson-Lochin (1996) substitutes "bamboo clumps" for "sugarcane," and seems like a faithful and modern-day re-writing of the original: "We went with your mother to bathe in that stream under the shade of the bamboo clumps. Along the bank grew many flowers and plants with strange-sounding names that you kept teaching me in Spanish and Latin, because by then you were studying at the Ateneo."

(I note that Locsin rendered "castellano" as "Spanish," displaying a surer touch for the way Filipino readers think. For a Filipino, "*Kastila*" means not something from Castile, but anyone from Spain.)

The Ateneo is mentioned a second time in the *Noli*, when rumors about the disturbance in San Diego town and the role of the Jesuit-trained Ibarra whirl through the friaries of Manila. One friar expostulates (Augenbraum's translation: "You see? He's a student of the Jesuits. Subversives come from the *atheneum*!")

This seems to me now like a deliberate decision on Augenbraum's part to "genericize" Ibarra's school. I find this hard to understand, because the Penguin edition has space for 278 footnotes. (Footnoting is exactly what Locsin did, introducing the Ateneo Municipal as a school that used "the most advanced methods of instruction then known in Europe," and as Rizal's alma mater.)

I raise this point, not only because I mourn the loss of what journalists call "local color" (blue and white, of course, to this alumnus), but because important context is missing. Rizal's novels were meant to provide its original readers the shock of recognition; details, such as the new and already influential school run by the Jesuits, were integrated into the narrative as signs of currency, of contemporaneity. "This is now." (Indeed, in *Fili*, Rizal carries off the uncanny trick, first practiced by Cervantes, of including real people's names—among them his brother and his brothers-in-law—in the story.)

"*El Ateneo*," in other words, was a sign of the times. (Inquirer.com)

'Trust the machine'

WHEN I go to the polling precinct in May next year, I will pick out the candidates of my choice, shade the spaces next to their names on the ballot, then drop the filled out form into a machine.

The data will be processed and a digital copy created and stored before the ballot drops into a container underneath the machine. No need to worry about "dimpled chads" on punch-card ballots, as in Florida in 2000; the system is different.

At the end of the voting day, the head of the Board of Election Inspectors will insert a key into the machine to lock it. As soon as the key is withdrawn, the machine will start its electronic data transmission to the local and main offices of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

The data will be simultaneously accessed electronically by the major political parties as well as the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas for media coverage, quick vote count or similar purposes.

Within 24 hours the results of local elections will be out. Within two days data from 82,000 machines will be processed and winners in the national race, including the new president, will be known.

This is the scenario promised by Comelec Chairman Jose Melo for Election Day 2010.



SKETCHES
Ana Marie Pamintuan

"I live and breathe for the 2010 elections," Melo told me last week.

Public anticipation of the country's first fully automated elections is tempered by fears that machines would make poll cheating faster and easier.

Melo calls it a fear of the unknown and wants it set aside. The Comelec, he said, is embarking on a voter education program that will explain the mechanics of the new voting system.

The Comelec had demanded a "99.995 percent" accuracy from the companies that participated in the bidding for the poll automation project.

When the winning consortium of Smartmatic International and Total Information Management Corp. (TIM) demonstrated its machine, it was able to detect even minor glitches in the data that was fed into it, Melo said with some amazement.

For nearly P7.2 billion in taxpayers' money—Smartmatic-TIM's project bid—the consortium should not disappoint the nation.

The last automation attempt by the Comelec cost taxpayers about P1.2 billion, and it's still costing us millions more each year just to store nearly 2,000 automated counting machines that the Mega Pacific consortium refuses to take back.

Melo likens the latest automation project to traveling by plane.

"You don't ask the pilot if the engine is working fine. You just board and fly," Melo told me. "It's the same with automation. Trust the machine."

Several countries get election results within one to three days even with manual voting. But poll fraud has not become institutionalized in those countries.

Filipinos, on the other hand, have mastered cheating in manual elections, and a new voting system, properly implemented, is a good way to put an end to the fraud.

Melo pointed out that automation could significantly reduce vote-buying. Candidates who buy votes, he said, do not blindly throw away money; they also want proof that they get what they pay for.

How is this possible? Melo explained the system: Someone who has sold his vote is given a filled out "sample ballot" by the vote buyer's henchman. The voter registers and gets his blank ballot. He goes to the voting booth and affixes his signature to the filled out sample ballot and drops this into the ballot box. Later, he turns over the blank ballot to the henchman as proof that the sample ballot was the one that was dropped into the box. This blank ballot can then be filled out and given as a "sample" to someone else who has sold his vote.

Authentic ballots for use as "samples" can be obtained, mainly by incumbent officials who are up for reelection, or who are fielding their relatives in their place. This is where vigilance is needed at Comelec offices and at the National Printing Office.

Results are harder to guarantee for national candidates. Many of these candidates in the past have complained that they were dumped by their local political leaders despite the distribution of campaign funds.

Those at the highest echelons of power, of course, need not resort to this type of cheating. They can simply switch ballot boxes or replace all the contents on the way to the canvassing center. Convivance of those tasked to guard ballot boxes—the military or police—is essential in these cases.

Keeping ballot boxes under close watch around the clock requires enormous logistics that smaller political parties do not have.

In Maguindanao in 2007, election supervisor Lintang Bedol allegedly misplaced filled out ballots, then miraculously recovered them days later.

How to deal with corruption in the Comelec is another serious challenge. A new law could help if properly enforced. Republic Act 9369, passed in January 2007 mainly to pave the way for automation, created a new crime called electoral sabotage. Anyone who adds or subtracts

votes, or tampers in other ways with a specified minimum number of votes to affect the results of elections will be sentenced to life in prison.

Melo has withdrawn the power of individual Comelec commissioners to proclaim winners at the local level—a source of corruption in the past. In 2010, every proclamation must be approved by all Comelec commissioners.

The 82,000 Smartmatic machines are not yet in the country. The machines will need to hurdle up to three tests before the elections.

Melo has moved up to November the deadline for the filing of all certificates of candidacy. This will give the Comelec time to weed out nuisance candidates at all levels, he said, as well as print ballots. The country has more than 40 million voters.

There are other challenges, such as reducing election-related violence, which is the job of the police and military, and regulating campaign finance, which is the job of the Comelec.

Melo wants to focus on one hurdle at a time—in this case, making poll automation work.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best, how would he rate the chances of the 2010 elections being credible?

"Almost 9," Melo said. "If it fails, *tapos ang demokrasya natin* (our democracy is over)." (Philstar.com)

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