

FROM BAGUIO CITY TO SURABAYA, INDONESIA IN PURSUIT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY MARIA ELENA G. BALLETA

Despite my fear of travelling alone, I embarked on a journey to Surabaya, Indonesia. The opportunity to attend the Global Internationalization Training and Workshop for International Office Staff at the Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS) campus, was not just a career breakthrough for me, but a life-changing experience that enriched both my professional skills and personal growth. The training was designed to enhance the competencies of international office staff of the higher educational institutions (HEIs) in managing their internationalization efforts through developing strategies that can be directly implemented. Hence, the event attracted diverse delegates from China, Indonesia and the Philippines.



ITS Rector Dr. Bambang Pramujati and ITS Global Engagement Director Dr. Maria Anityasari welcome participants of the Global Internationalization Training and Workshop for IOS.

The training and workshop spanned three days, from July 9 to 11, 2024. On day one, we were welcomed by the ITS Rector Bambang Pramujati, ST., M.Sc.Eng., Ph. D. Next, the Director of ITS Global Engagement, Assoc. Prof. Maria Anityasari, Ph.D., said **“Internationalization is not a competition, but a collaboration.”** This definition of internationalization set the tone for the whole workshop. The topics ranged from the history and internationalization journey of ITS including its challenges and achievements to the development of international strategies.

During the latter part of Day 1, we had an interactive session and the chance to share our perspectives on the global challenges in our own context, the organizational structure of our respective international offices, as well as our internationalization strategies. The discussions were dynamic and captivating, which fueled our eagerness and pushed us to explore and adopt the best internationalization practices presented by ITS and the other delegates. The next sessions were geared toward the urgency for World University Rankings in enhancing the HEI’s global reputation through visibility by means of website, social media presence, participating in international education exhibitions (APAIE, NAFSA, EAIE, QS APPLE, EURIE), and promotional materials.

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Day 2 of the Global Internationalization Training and Workshop for IOS with all the participants.

Day two featured the relevance of managing international partnership, specifically in establishing and sustaining it. To be able to manage the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of international partnerships, the ITS Partnership Division talked about the use of information technology in managing the international office. The next session emphasized the internationalization for lecturers wherein ITS shared their training, workshops, and programs in support of their faculty for increased opportunities for research collaboration, mobility, and teaching with international partners. The discussion on the internationalization for the non-academic staff followed.



Participants don their formal or traditional attire on Day 2

ITS International Office's strategy is **"Know the potency, empower them the right way,"** which implies that their employees play a crucial role in the organization.



Their immense support for the upgrading of their staff is overwhelming. They hold a series of workshops and in-house trainings for their liaison officers to fasten their internationalization efforts. In addition, they have the Outbound Mobility Staff (OSM) program, which was designed to broaden their experience abroad, get international exposure, strengthen relations with other staff in partner universities and institution in ASEAN. The day concluded with a networking dinner which allowed us to meet the other participants and the ITS management and staff. For the dinner, we were asked to wear either formal attire or traditional clothing, and I was proud to wear the traditional Kalinga wrap-around skirt (*Kain*) with matching earrings and necklace.

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On the last day, the first topic “Internationalization at Home” was focused on ITS students. The ITS Global Engagement Office shared their practices, programs, and strategies in preparing their students for internationalization opportunities. Thereafter, we were divided into groups to visit one ITS unit/department per group. My group was assigned to visit the Quality Assurance Office. We had a very engaging discussion with the Head of QA Office, Prof. Dr. Aulia Siti Aisjah.

The next session showcased ITS’ procedures, guidelines, and programs in managing inbound international students. The highlights of this session were the different scholarships, and several activities offered to international students. ITS believes that utilizing hospitality is an effective strategy in increasing international engagement.

The topic on “Developing Short Program,” inspired us to also develop short programs in our respective HEIs for our international students. The last session was on the testimonies of the ITS student volunteers’ amazing journey that demonstrated their commitment, positive attitude, teamwork and strong work ethic towards the internationalization initiatives of ITS.



Our group visiting the ITS Quality Assurance Office

Rector Pramujati gave his concluding remarks to officially end the training. This was followed by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with six Philippine institutions to officiate future partnerships.



The delegates of the workshop on Day 3.

Beyond the theoretical knowledge gained through this training was the connections built with some of the participants and the management and staff of the ITS Global Engagement Office. I had the privilege to collaborate with professionals from diverse backgrounds. I gained new insights and formed friendships beyond geographical borders. Reflecting on my journey, I am profoundly grateful to the UPB administration for giving me the opportunity to have participated in this transformative training and workshop, which is a defining moment in my career development and personal journey. ***

DE LIMA SHARES LESSONS TO UPB GRADS, URGES THEM TO BE “Hope of change for the better”

BY LEIA FIDELIS GISELA CASTRO-MARGATE



“Today on your graduation day, I am celebrating the first month of my unconditional freedom.”

Human rights defender and former senator, Atty. Leila M. De Lima shared this personal note with the University of the Philippines Baguio graduating class of 2024 during the Baccalaureate Program on July 24, 2024 at the Baguio Convention Center.

De Lima was finally acquitted in the last of the trumped-up drug charges against her on June 24, 2024. This, after spending more than six years in jail at the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame. “Nothing beats being free and happy once again with my loved ones” she said. Freedom has also now allowed her now to take on invitations to speak, saying the occasion to speak in UP Baguio is very special for her.

She said what led to her incarceration was her choice of serving the country. The same choice which she posed before the graduating class as a challenge: to leave the country or to serve the country. “You don’t have to make the decision now, today is a day of celebration,” she added.

She then shared **five lessons** to the graduating class.

Lesson 1: “No matter how you feel isolated or lonely in your choices, you are never alone.” She said defeat only comes when you start believing that you are alone.

Lesson 2: “Every human life matters.” She said during the Duterte Drug war this obvious lesson was something a lot of people seemed to have forgotten. “We need to be reminded that every life is sacred,” she added.

Lesson 3: “A single person can always make a difference, no matter the odds.” De Lima referred to this as the Tiananmen Man’s moment, a reference to the unknown protester who bravely stood in front of military tanks after the Tiananmen Square Massacre in China. “Do not forget to go against the tide of public opinion. Your voice matters,” she added.

Lesson 4: “There is hope for this country.” De Lima said this might seem counterintuitive at this moment and given our country’s history, but she added that the same congress that crucified her is now the same one trying former President Rodrigo Duterte.

“Things will change for the better,” she said. “You should know by now that change will be slow, it will not be revolutionary or cathartic. It will not be instantaneous. Social change will not happen overnight. We build it brick by brick in a process called democracy.”

“The key to change is what we see today,” De Lima said referring to the graduates as she added the final lesson.

Lesson 5: “The hope of change for the better largely lies in the choices that the best and brightest of our people will make. The choices that you will make tomorrow.”

In making this choice, she told the graduating class that they might regret choosing to stay and serving the country decades down the road. But if they leave, then that would be a bigger problem.

“If you do choose to stay, just remember the lessons we have today. You will make a difference,” De Lima said in closing as she reaffirmed her commitment to her choice of serving the country. ***

Even Typhoon Carina can't stop UP Baguio

Leni Robredo inspires at 22nd Commencement Exercises

BY OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Despite the formidable challenges posed by Typhoon Carina, the University of the Philippines Baguio successfully held its 22nd Commencement Exercises on July 24, 2024, at the Baguio Convention and Cultural Center. This event, marked by both adversity and triumph, featured a powerful graduation speech from the esteemed guest speaker, Atty. Maria Leonor “Leni” Gerona Robredo.

In her commencement address, the former Vice President of the Philippines, stated, **“We root for your successes and for the fulfillment of your dreams. But we also keep faith that in working towards the direction of your dreams, you will never forget what it means to have a UP education—to live with honor and excellence—offering your heart to the Filipino every single day. Tumaya sa inyo ang sambayanang Pilipino. At bilang sukli, tinatawag kayo na habambuhay na magbalik-tanaw sa kabutihang loob na ito.”**



She added, **“Sa pamamagitan ng tapat at mahusay na paglilingkod. Higit pa rito na mananatili kayong mulat at anumang landas ang inyong tahakin magiging aktibo kayo sa unti-unting pag-ayos ng sistemang nagpapahirap sa mga kababayan natin. Na lagi't lagi pipiliin at mamahalin ninyo ang sambayanan. Lalo na sa mga sandaling pinakamahirap itong panindigan. Inihanda kayo ng UP para sa habambuhay na tungkulin na ito. Alam kong hindi n'yo bibiguin ang sambayanang Pilipino.”**

Robredo's speech resonated deeply with the graduates and attendees, who responded with resounding applause. Despite the disruptions caused by the typhoon, the ceremony proceeded smoothly, thanks to the meticulous planning and coordination of the Graduation Committee, the Media and Public Relations Office, and the unwavering support of the UPB community. The resilience displayed by everyone involved was a fitting tribute to the graduates' journey and the challenges they have overcome. ***

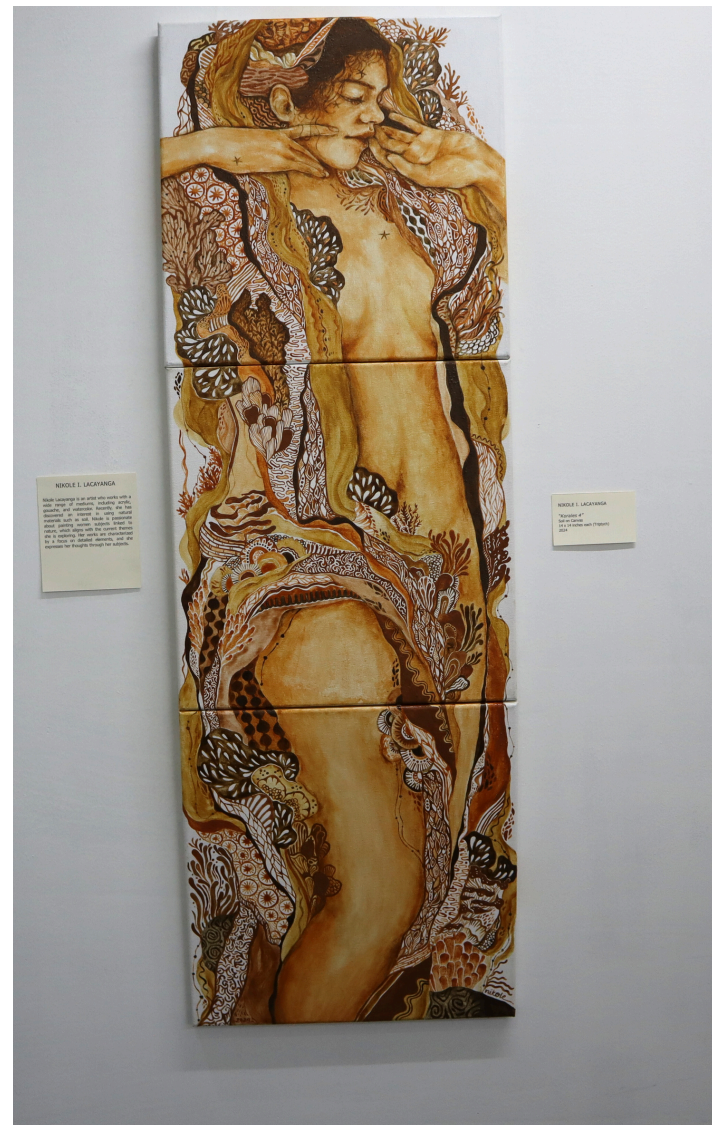
The 12th Darnay Demetillo Artist Award

BY JOSEPH ANDREW A. CARVAJAL



Artworks of Nikole Lacayanga

In the morning of July 22, 2024, the nominees for the 12th Darnay Demetillo Artist Award (DDAA) were recognized in an awarding ceremony held at the Darnay Demetillo Art Space at the College of Arts and Communication. The nominees were incoming FA juniors Aldrin Joseph Elbangcol, Jessember Placido, Jiro Santos, Ana Katrina Boadilla, and incoming FA senior Nikole Lacayanga. During the event, the nominees were given Certificates of Recognition. Present to hand them the certificates were UPB Chancellor Joel Addawe, CAC Dean Jimmy Fong, and DLLA Chair Jandy Carvajal.



Artwork of Nikole Lacayanga



From left, Dean Jimmy Fong, Nikole Lacayanga, Chancellor Joel M. Addawe and Prof. Jandy Carvajal

The 12th recipient of the Darnay Demetillo Artist Award is Nikole Lacayanga, whose use of soil as painting medium the jurors found noteworthy. She received a Certificate of Recognition and cash award. She also received a box full of quality art materials, gifted by Gloria Orden, friend and mentee of Sir Darnay.

During the ceremony, Fong and Addawe delivered inspirational messages. Carvajal read out the jury's message, and FA instructor Erika Jacinto relayed Maisa Demetillo's message on behalf of the Demetillo family.

This year's jurors were: Victoria Rico Costina (retired UPB professor and former colleague of Sir Darnay), Russell Anthony Angeles (visual artist and former student of Sir Darnay), and Paul David Magisa (visual artist and former student of Sir Darnay), who served as chair of the jury.

The ceremony was hosted by DLLA senior lecturer Jasmin Bayquen, who has been supportive of the FA program through the years. The event ended with the formal opening of the DDAA 2024 Exhibit, which features recent works by the five nominees, as well as those by the previous year's awardee Jemielou Delos Reyes. ***

Photos by Wyndei A. Dacay

Wheel of Time: The Enduring Spirit of the Komboys of Benguet

BY FARA MANUEL-NOLASCO

In an era where autonomous, self-driving cars are rigorously tested for road fitness, some of the oldest professions still find relevance in our AI-driven world. Among these, the role of the *Komboy*—a term for manual laborers who transport goods—remains a testament to the enduring nature of human labor. Flipping through archives of Baguio from the early 1900s, during its establishment as a highland hill station, one finds records of the earliest *komboys*, who transported supplies from the lowlands to the city. These carts, filled with produce, navigated the cliffside roads to the newly built city. Atop Baguio, the central stone market thrived as a space that welcomed farmers trading their organic produce.

Komboys have adapted to the social conditions of their environment. In the Kankana-ey song “*Komboy*,” they are depicted as middlemen, bringing produce from farmland to the sellers in the trading posts. The song is an ode to the hard work of the *komboys*, whose only capital was their bodies.

Here is a stanza from “*Komboy*,” performed by Wilson Langpawen of Berlyson Production:

“Nu en man apit di farmer, alisto kami ay en komboyen

Tapnu mabunag di nateng, enkami mantitinnulong

Nu pirmi ay masalog, mangayeng-geng di pewek

Pati langtay ay naipet ... pan-ilusot

Nu adawi pan-ieyan, en iinannaan ta adi mapalaluan awak mi ay puunuan”

Here is the translation by Racel Kary Pinas:

When the farmers begin to harvest, we hurry to load, to carry the vegetables, we help one another
Our knees tremble on the steep, slippery paths,
We squeeze through bridges, narrow and tight
But when the destination is far, we take a break,
so that our bodies, our only capital, don't give out.

“Kapag mag-aani na ang mga magsasaka, dali-dali kaming magkakarga para madala ang mga gulay, kami'y magtutulungan

Nanginginig ang mga tuhod sa mga daang padausdos

Nilulusot ang mga tulay na masisikip Pero kapag malayo ang pagdadalhan ay nagpapahinga din, para hindi mabinat ang katawang aming puhunan”



A rural komboy transporting cabbages from the farm to town in his trusty *Kimata*, a type of hand-made double basket. A screengrab from the music video, “*Komboy*,” performed by Wilson Langpawen of Berlyson Production. Source: https://youtu.be/Sc1LV_LcAM8?si=Ch8aCHs9t4MhUR2E.

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“The Komboys of La Trinidad Market”

It is no surprise that local Benguet photographer Jason Asiong chose the komboys as a subject, for they symbolize mundane persistence and, to a certain extent, serve as an allegory for pure human labor. Here are some of his photographs using film:

Stop

Look out as a pair of feet and two rubber wheels syncopated in movement swoosh past a crowd in a hurried fashion, navigating the tight and corridors of the public market. In the La Trinidad Market trading post, people have grown accustomed to the *komboys* or human-operated mechanical carts that carry goods.



“Tired” 2024.



“Kung mahal mo, dapat faithful” 2024.

Breath

In Jason’s documentary photos, the *komboys’* energetic bodies thrust forward, creating active lines that jut toward the upper right edge of the pictorial frame. The rhythmic and seemingly mechanical hurriedness of his subjects in each frame makes the viewer want to pause for a deep breath.

Pause

Donna Haraway famously claimed that we are all cyborgs—a mix of human and machine. This strange synergy is observed as *komboys* intuitively navigate the network of market stalls while conscientiously transporting goods entrusted by clients. Their improvised carts, made of wooden slats and makeshift wheels, are moving extensions of their bodies, enhancing their strength beyond natural limits.



“27” 2024.

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Diary of an Extended Student

BY CHRISTIAN AQUINO

Man, I hate family parties.

The faint haze of cigarette smoke wafted in as I entered the gate. The boys huddled with their nicotine-laden breath. "When are you bringing home your girl with you?" they asked. With girlfriends, wives, and kids, it was only to be expected that they would probe me with such questions.

I could almost hear their unspoken thoughts, "Ah, the gay kid has come home." Looking at me with a smirk on their faces, they offered a puff. But without saying a word, I gave them a wistful smile and a wave.

Their cigarette invaded my senses. I hated it. Its smoke curled into my nostrils, gnawing at my insides. The smell reminded me of the last stick of cigarette I kissed over a year ago. I hurried inside, weaving past the loud uncles.

The living room was dimly lit, casting long shadows over the aunties and wine glasses. I saw my mom. I sat among them but my mind was elsewhere, lost in the glow of my phone as I read a novel.

Two chapters into reading and I lifted my head. I glanced around, grabbed a can of soda, and took in the scene.

Conversations filled the air—everyone was either gossiping about a family member that was not around, or discussing business ventures they dream of launching soon, or places they plan to go to in the coming years.

I felt small. The conversations overwhelmed me. It felt as if I had been transported back to my childhood closet. My dad noticed my distant stare and offered me tequila. With all my strength and by God's grace, I declined. I took a plate of biscuits and cake instead.



Family Dinner by Zuperia on Canva (Free image for Canva for Education)

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The aunties kept talking. How great their stories.

Kuya Amos just got into Canada, kuya Mik in New Zealand, ate Yan in North Carolina, and kuya Jo in Japan. Ate Dhana's going to be a doctor. Pauline's in another hospital. Genamie's in a prestigious accounting firm. Jalen plays basketball for Michigan, his white coaches love him! Yanissa's going to be a statistics professor in Detroit. Kuya Alvin's taking over the chicken farm.

Then, it hit me why I felt small. I was left alone. The only kid my age on a brief vacation in Ilocos, soon to return to Baguio, trying so hard to get that Bachelor's degree.

The room buzzed with my cousins who were at the party boasting about their achievements, while others were not at the party because they were too busy making achievements.

It was as if everyone was moving forward and I am just frozen in time. The overachiever Chan... has not achieved a single thing in the past couple of months. Years.

My own sense of inadequacy grew and I felt even smaller.

You see.

I am, myself, a record-breaker of sorts. Stopped my studies for two years—because madness claimed me—and now, six—going seven—years later, I'm still in college. My university loves me so much, they can't let me go.

And there I was, silent.

Then out of thin air, someone asked, "So, kailan graduation, Chan?"

"December, tita," I said.

I paused. Weirdly enough, hope sparked within me? A question that could have paralyzed me,

that could have pressured me and brought me to tears, suddenly, pointed me to God's goodness.

"December, tita," I repeated with confidence. As if everything was unfolding as God intended. As if I were certain that by the end of the year, my thesis would have been defended and bound. As if I knew where I was going and what I would be doing by January.

A strange peace settled in my heart. I continued talking to her. This is a woman I used to hate. A lot. But I looked into her eyes, and despite the riches she has, I saw pain. And for the first time, I connected to her.

God can be funny sometimes.

Ate Lyn on the other side of the table has not stopped. She was still deep in her gossiping. Something about her mother-in-law's luxurious lifestyle? Yea. So, uh, I needed a moment to myself and stepped out onto the balcony.

Looking down at the river, I heard the water splashing against the walls. I let my eyes span the distant hills, a single star was beaming from above. I prayed:

"Creation declares Your glory, O God. How beautiful the work of Your hands.

The moon and the stars, You have set in motion. But here I am. Look at me. All I see in me, God, is failure. My past sins have caused me this. My disobedience has led myself astray. I was cast off forever as I chose the lusts of this world.

But I gaze at the skies, I remember my God. Abounding in love, slow to anger, ever-chasing. I mourn the life that might have been, the dreams I have not achieved. But I am trying, O Lord, to believe in something better than the life I had in mind. For even if my life has crumbled into dust, and my bones ran dry, there is nothing too broken for You to restore.

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The world is as intimidating as I always feared, and in its judgment, I will always, always fail. Change me not for my own glory, but so that others may witness how You can redeem someone as broken as I am.

God, if even the rocks cry out in silence, then I too, in my pain, will proclaim who You are. Jesus, Your name will be known in this small town. This family will know the great deeds of my God."

My prayer was interrupted by the sound of children playing, running toward me. One of them approached and said, "Hi, tito Chan. I missed you." I smiled at him and remarked how much taller he had grown since I last saw him. Suddenly, I saw myself in this child.

Surrounded by pressure, family trauma, fights, shouting, and land and business disputes. With a drunkard for a mom and a dad abroad, he has no place to run, no sense of belongingness and identity.

The children left, each one saying hi as they passed. I smiled as I remember when my sisters, girl cousins, and I twirled under the moonlight, blissfully ignorant of the chaotic life awaiting us with each step into adulthood.

The sound of giggling faded, the kids chased after each other. Their faces smeared with cake icing. I saw my little self from afar, oh little Chan and the innocence he once had before life spoiled him in its harsh messiness and made him stop believing in a loving God.

Before leaving the balcony, I whispered one last prayer into the night air,

"Lord, I may feel stuck now and I don't know where to go. But when I return to this place, I will bring no silver nor gold but a story.

My story will be better than a new car, or a job abroad, or a startup business valued at millions, or

a new girlfriend, or a government office. Your name, Christ, will be the hero in my story. Even now, I see You writing it."

And in the silence of the night, God's gentle words were spoken to my inmost being, "I was with you, Chan. My heart was hurting too."

God was there. God was with me when I felt small and vulnerable and weak. God was by the door when that man forced his way into my room. God was behind me when my cousins called me gay and weird and fat and stupid-looking and ugly. God was there when I could not even dribble a basketball and I felt like I did not belong to anyone's group. God was with me when I was not cared for, when I felt no one loved me.

He was there when I rebelled against my parents and lived in lust.

When I wasted my life away and ruined all my relationships, He stayed with me. He was just there watching over me. When I got sick physically and mentally, He was waiting for me to come home.

Wherever I went, He was there. If I went up to the heavens, He was there. If I made my bed in the depths, He was there.

All those years, God was with me. He did not let my foot slip. The sun and the moon have not harmed me. I am still here though I do not deserve to be. He was with me in my coming, in my going. From the day I was born to now and forevermore.

In the half-light of the balcony, with tears still in my eyes, I gathered myself before rejoining the family party.

I walked back in. Here, the Chan who used to overtly sexualize all things. The Chan who once reveled in the haze of smoke, the burn of alcohol,

The Komboys of La Trinidad....continued from page 8



"Stripes" 2024.

Repeat

But will this repetition endure? With the threat of rationalization in public spaces—like the looming transition from community-based markets to corporatized spaces, such as the Baguio and La Trinidad public markets—the relevance of the *komboy* may be at risk. If that day comes, perhaps it is the *komboys*' humanity that we will treasure most.

Studio Au of Baguio showcased Jason Asiong's "Komboy" photo series from April to May 2024. The event, set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing urban landscape, was well-attended and received positive reviews. The exhibition served as a poignant reminder of the *komboys*' place in Baguio's history, caught between continuity and change, the real and the imagined, the photo document and social history. ***

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of crude jokes. The Chan who had once paraded his accomplishments and exploits and awards with reckless pride.

Here, in the face of everything, the Chan they once knew is no longer. I showed them the joy of having nothing but Christ alone. I see it now. How God sees success is different from how the world defines it. The cross is where my victory is. I am no longer in bondage to the temporary joys of this world, and the greatest evil, that is death, has already been defeated by Christ through the cross. The cross is my true success and freedom. My heart has found satisfaction and love in Christ alone.

And a failure? I do not see myself as such

anymore. I have a mission to do—greater than any job, any accomplishment on Earth—to make Jesus known while I am here and until I return to a family party in the future.

Until then, I shall trust and obey... and develop the best *kaldereta* recipe for potluck. ***

Thank you for reading this issue of *Ti Similla*!

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