



The Matrix: A Myth or Reality

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"What if the Prophecy is true? What if tomorrow this war could be over? Isn't that worth dying for? Isn't that worth fighting for?" These are thought provoking questions posed by Morpheus in the movie -- the Matrix.¹

Launched in 1999, the Matrix was a futuristic science fiction about humanity's fight for survival against a malevolent cyber-intelligence ruling Mother Earth. Without solar energy to support the system of oppression and exploitation, human bodies were immersed in a dark liquid to be fed through the system as a power source. But since human beings were dying in mass proportion, a program called the Matrix was developed to serve as a mental stimulus to keep human beings alive. Hence the Matrix was a visual representation of life unwittingly fooling the human minds that they were actually living in the real world.

The liberators headed by Morpheus and Trinity have been fighting the oppressive system of the Matrix while waiting for the One by the person of Neo, who was destined to set them free as foretold by the Oracle. In the end, Keanu Reeves as Neo discovered the truth that he was the chosen one and after some unforgettable fighting scenes that led to his death and resurrection, the protagonist finally won against the evil forces.

The struggle continues in Matrix II-Reloaded where Neo and the rest of his troops continue fighting the machines that have enslaved the human race in Matrix I. Now, more humans are waking-up out of the Matrix and attempting to live in the real world called the Zion city, the last frontier of human resistance. At the end of the story, Neo saved the life of his beloved Trinity as the third chapter of the Matrix trilogy continues to unfold.

The movie became a phenomenal box office hit in the Philippines and in other parts of the globe. It has been the subject of public discussions on matters related to theology, philosophy, science and technology. Even Br. Armin Luistro FSC, Brother Visitor and DLSU System President-Designate for 2004, cited the Matrix in his welcome address during the first general assembly of the faculty members for SY 2003-2004 held at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel where we witnessed the turn-over ceremony of the De La Salle University presidential mace and medal to Dr. Carmelita Quebengco as interim president of the DLSU system. Inspired by Brother Luistro's speech invoking the Lasallian family to search the truth that will set us free, this article was written by the author.

In retrospect, the Matrix reveals an inner truth about the coming age of war in what they call the *'third wave'* or a post-industrial society. According to Alvin Toffler, information technology along with telecommunication will become the vital elements of future conflicts in winning wars.² Surely, microchips, cameras and computers will provide valuable input in developing military and business strategies. Hence whoever controls information technology and telecommunication holds the key to rule the world.

In this sense, the matrix is a microcosm of a bigger social reality about humanity's struggle for survival amidst the thriving culture of war and violence, hyper-consumerism and materialism in the light of globalization. Basically, globalization is a social phenomenon that is rapidly breaking down national barriers towards a new international economic order. Although globalization presents humankind with opportunities for development, the integrative process could end up in a situation of greater dependence of poor nations to a few rich nations, rather than the ideal interdependent world.³ P 3-4

inside

Editorial	P 2
CORRUPTION - An Age-Old Malady in Philippine Society	P 5
Will You Survive the RED Challenge?	P 6
COSCA and KALAKASAN Sponsor Domestic Violence Confab at DLSU	P 7
COSCA, TRED & CSO Organize Children's Rights Forum	P 8
SCSA Holds Advocacy Training on Youth and Children's Issues and Concerns	P 9
Lasallians Attend Usapang "R" Forum	P 10
COSCA, TRED, SC & FDC Sponsor CHA-CHA Forum	P 11-13
A Continuing Recurrence of Rebellion	P 14-15
Masarap ... hindiin maintindihan ang Ssarap	P 16
Personal Reflections: Relstri & Relsfor Students	P 16-19

"Elite globalization is clearly the greatest and most comprehensive challenge to humanity now and beyond the year 2000.

Ultimately elite globalization is the manifestation of a diseased consciousness.

A diseased consciousness is too much attached to its lower sense of self, to materialism, to meaningless consumption, to vanity, to power"

Perlas (1997)

Editorial

The Philippines needs an effective and efficient government. We recall People Power I when we ousted former President Marcos in February 1986 to end his twenty-year dictatorial regime through peaceful means. The whole world was watching when Ms. Corazon Aquino became our new president delivering her famous campaign slogan, "*Tama na! Sobra na! Palitan na!*" which basically reflect the general sentiments of the people at that time against the poor governance of the Marcoses. And by ratifying the 1987 Philippine Constitution, we were able to restore our lost dignity, freedom and democracy to our land.

After 16 years, history repeat itself when former President Joseph Estrada faced the same problem of poor governance with the loss of moral ascendancy to lead the nation that led to his downfall through People Power II in January 2001. Again, we proclaimed Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as our new president with the hope of getting rid of graft and corruption in the government as well as achieve national economic recovery.

Two years later, however, the mutinous soldiers who stormed and occupied the Oakwood Premier Hotel in Makati City last July 27, 2003 at 3 a.m. asking President Arroyo and the generals to resign surprised us. And while the government was able to resolve peacefully the failed mutiny, the issue still remains that there is the prevalence of graft and corruption in the government, particularly in the hierarchy of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Worst still, even First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo did not escape from the graft and corruption charges being exposed by the opposition camp led by Senator Panfilo Lacson. Indeed, national election is fast approaching as traditional politicians start accusing each other again in order to gain popularity by grabbing the limelight.

If we have something to learn from our Philippine history, it is the resilience and unwavering commitment of the Filipino people to aspire for good governance. That's why we tend to change our government more often and yet, nothing happens since the leaders we have entrusted to bring us out from the yoke of poverty and powerlessness did not change the way we do things. Concretely, we haven't change our present economic policies that only serve the interests of the elite composed of big businessmen and foreign investors under the pretext of free market ideology in the light of globalization. In fact, there are moves in the Congress for a Charter Change to repeal Article XII of the Philippine Constitution thereby, remove the remaining barriers to trade liberalization and foreign investments. On the contrary, we should work towards agro-industrialization aimed at wiping out mass poverty and not on the basis of the World Bank's deregulation formula. We need to implement genuine agrarian reform program to redress the issues of social inequity and growing insurgency in the countryside. A strong agrarian society will serve as the foundation of our Philippine industrialization that will enhance the productive capacity of the Filipinos towards self-sufficient and self-reliant communities. Moreover, we need to protect our Philippine natural resources and the environment against unsustainable development practices. The Mindanao armed conflict and the growing insurgency in the countryside can be resolved if the military will stop using the issue to justify the modernization of the AFP.

Apparently, there are opportunities and threats that will significantly affect the development of our nation. First is the National Election. It is an opportunity for us to elect a new breed of leaders with unblemished credibility and integrity committed to the task of nation building especially in improving the quality of life of the Filipino poor. But election can also be considered a threat since this may signal the return to power of traditional politicians, the probability of massive cheating, the unreliability of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the restlessness of some elements in the Armed Forces of the Philippines as well as the apathy and cynicism of many citizens to actively participate in the electoral process.

As good Christians and citizens of the Republic, the Lasallian Family should work for a clean, honest, orderly and peaceful national election. Unknown to many, there are around 21M youth comprising 63% of the voting population of today and it is imperative that they be given proper guidance as first time voters and as good citizens. In this regard, the De La Salle University should work closely with the Church and civil society groups, and of course, the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) and the Parish Pastoral Councils for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). We should assist in the Voter's Education of our 12,000 Lasallian students and the grassroots communities we are serving through our outreach programs especially the children and women who are the most vulnerable sectors. We should defend our freedom and democracy against military adventurism and other dissident armed groups.

Secondly, the ongoing debates concerning Charter Change either through a Constitutional Assembly or Constitutional Convention is something that the general public should be watching for. Whatever the process that may be adopted by the Philippine Congress, the Filipinos have the right to know especially when it comes to its economic and socio-political implications to our country. We should protect our national economic sovereignty against the adverse impact of elite globalization while at the same time, work towards social and structural reforms that will get rid of graft and corruption; give more power to Regions and Local Government; and ensure the timely, effective and efficient delivery of basic social services for the empowerment of the people.

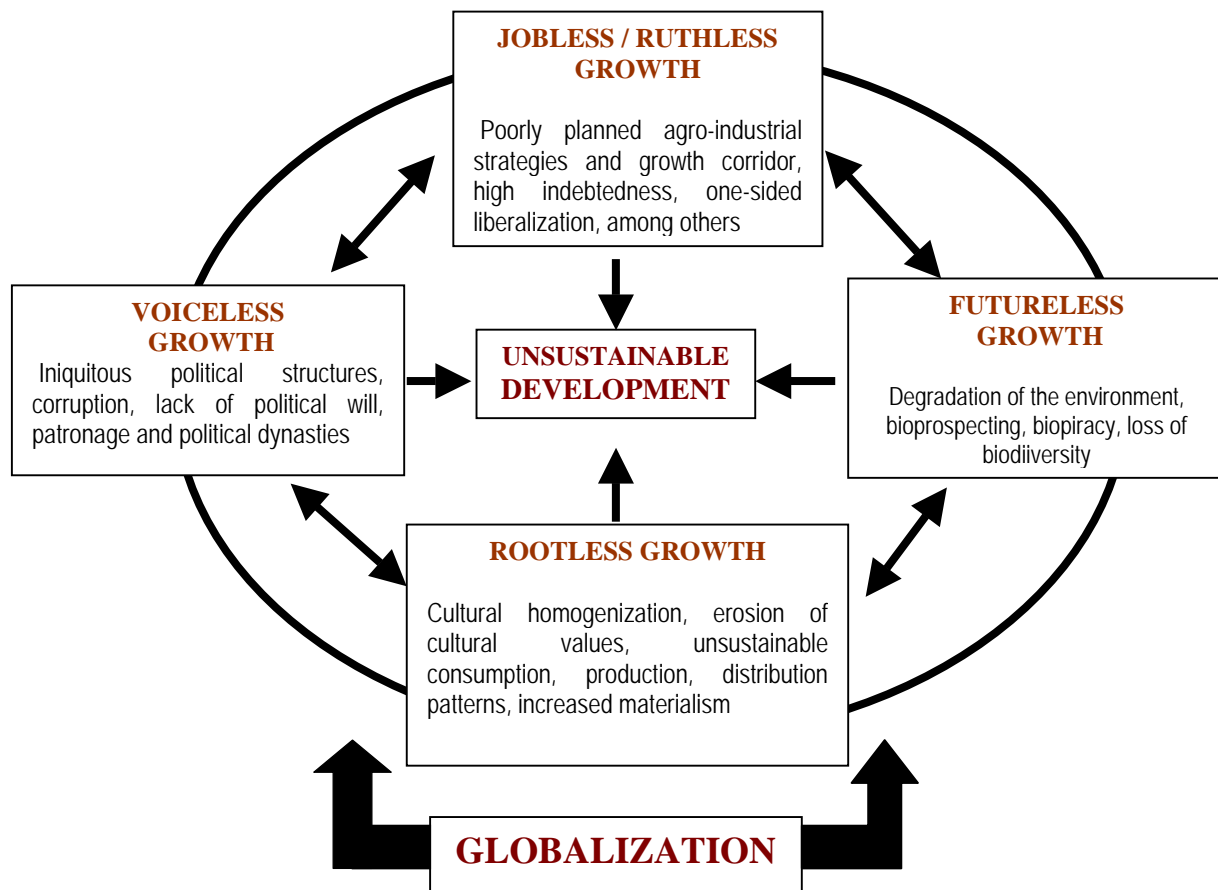
... Matrix

In the movie, the Matrix projects the visual imitation of life. Globalization in real life espouses the creation of a borderless society where there is unrestricted movement of capital, technology, goods, skills and people to facilitate the process of linking, interdependency and integration of national economies toward a new world system. The neo-liberal capitalism serves as its computer code program that made us believe there is only one path to "salvation" for all peoples around the globe regardless of nationalities, histories, customs and traditions, political beliefs and religious creed – and that path is the MARKET.⁴ The battle cry of the forces behind neo-liberal capitalism is "*Markets should be liberated for efficiency's sake!*" which calls for state's minimal intervention in the market allowing the "invisible hand" to perform its economic miracles overtime by increasing the Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation. The advocates of neo-liberal capitalism strongly believe in free trade, free competition based on the theory of comparative advantage.⁵

According to Perlas, the GATT-WTO was instrumental in the formation of this new world system by introducing global economic policies that will slowly eliminate trade barriers and territorial boundaries since these are obstructing the operations of bigger economies under the pretext of free market. Under a free market ideology, the rule of the game is survival of the fittest where only those strong players with strong organizations and wide network, professional and skilled staff, advanced technology and enormous resources will eventually emerge victorious in the cutthroat competition at the expense of the weak players.⁶ As such, corporations must become more efficient through downsizing and restructuring their work forces; government taxes and regulations need to inhibit entrepreneurial initiative to allow the "invisible hand" to perform economic miracles; the state must be downsized, assets privatized, its budget must be reduced excluding welfare programs intended for the poor; while union rights and other pro-worker legislations are ignored, if not removed.

Without state's control and regulation protecting the welfare of the disadvantaged groups, this will lead to massive poverty and unsustainable development based on the UNDP studies (see Fig. 1)

Figure 1. Range of interacting, economic, cultural, environmental and global forces leading to unsustainable development



Although this globalization of the economy assumes various forms depending on the country in which we live, its adverse impacts are already being felt worldwide as indicated by the following statistics, to wit:

- *Of the 5.7 billion people in the world, 1.5 billion are desperately poor.*
- *20% of the poorest in the world receive 1.4% of the Gross National Product (GNP) whereas 20% of the richest cream off 84.7%.*
- *More than 1 billion human beings eke out an existence on just \$1 per day, 3 billion on little more than \$2. At the same time, 358 individuals have accumulated a personal capital worth of about \$ 762 billion, an income equivalent to that of 2.35 billion poor people.*
- *Today 1 billion of the world's poor live in rural areas but by the year 2005 every second person will live in cities or towns, bringing about a growing "urbanization of poverty"*
- *Unemployment and precarious lifestyles: roughly 30% of the world's active population estimated at two and a half billion people, have no productive employment.*
- *High cost of living: whereas the world market is revered, four people out of five have no purchasing power.*
- *Hunger: one fifth of the world population suffers from hunger and three million children die from malnutrition each year.*
- *The majority of the world's poor are women. Children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups composed of indigenous people, the disabled, the elderly, refugees, migrants and the long-term unemployed are the most susceptible to poverty*
- *Violations of the right to education: attendance at school has dropped considerably especially in Africa.*
- *Violations of the right to health: the privatization of health services and attacks against the social protection systems are causing an intolerable inequality in extreme poverty.*
- *Degradation of the environment imperils the lives of present and future generations.*

Source: Manual for Promoters of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, pp.15-16

As the world's major economies remain unstable, the Philippines has been suffering from abject poverty, poor governance and environmental degradation. There are dominant forces maintaining the status quo to protect the interests of the privileged few at the expense of the majority who are living in dire poverty and social injustice. There is the prevalence of social sins, which is the root of massive poverty and structural injustice. These social sins are concretely manifested through: (a) a pyramidal structure which systematically oppresses human dignity; (b) unjust systems promoting human greed without being rectified by the concerned authorities for the common good; and (c) participation of persons allowing oppression and injustice to prevail in a male - dominated society. These three factors of social sins have resulted in unequal distribution of wealth. It has widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

In this light, the Church social teachings invoke the people of God to partake in Christ's liberating activity in the human history of salvation. Structures and injustice can still be rectified through constant dialogue, cooperation and personal reflections involving multi-stakeholders. Our strength and hope lies in Jesus Christ's redemptive power working through the Holy Spirit in the Church, within one of us as His social apostles.

As Christian achievers for God and Country, the Lasallian community is challenged to think outside the box like what Morpheus did in the Matrix in order to see social realities from the lens of Jesus Christ Himself and be able to re-discover the mission of bringing good news and liberation to the poor. But this requires openness and God's grace for the conversion of the HEAD for us to become socially aware and politically involved; conversion of the HEART for us to become morally upright and spiritually converted; conversion of the HANDS for the acquisition of one's skills; and conversion of the FEET for us to immerse and be grounded in social realities with the poor as we learn new experiences through the action-reflection social pastoral praxis.

Transforming unjust structures and oppressive system implies that we must recognize the systematic injustice that is responsible in the global and national hunger, unemployment, poverty, powerlessness, violence and environmental destruction. According to Mr. Nicanor Perlas, there is a need to tame and redirect the forces of elite globalization so that the disadvantaged sectors can be protected against countervailing forces impinging their development.⁷ The Church and Church educational institutions including the De La Salle University should enjoin the civil society in its advocacy for the promotion of sustainable development principles and practices in order to secure the needs of the present and future generations.

Furthermore, there are institutions with package of programs and social norms that formed us. These are the family, schools, media, government, business sector and even the Church, which have strongly influenced the formation of our social conscience. May we use our education, knowledge, skills and resources to liberate the oppressed from the roots of oppression and marginalization. Like Morpheus, Neo and Trinity in the Matrix, it behooves us to work towards faith that serves, a faith that does justice. The promotion of social justice is an integral part of the Church mission and an absolute requirement of personal witnessing in following Jesus as the ONE (like Neo in the story) who has died to save us from our sins and resurrected to overcome the dark forces of evil. Let us therefore become one of the liberators in bringing good news to the poor like St. John Baptist de la Salle who gave up his wealth to be of great service to his countrymen -- all for God's greater glory.

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CORRUPTION – An Age-Old Malady in Philippine Society

Corruption refers to the abuse of official power mostly ascribed but not limited to public office for material reward and private gains. It is a serious age-old malady in Philippine society that plays a vital role in the vicious and insidious cycle of massive poverty and powerlessness along with other heinous crimes such as drug addiction and trafficking, money laundering and other illegal activities.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) classified corruption into two types - petty and grand. But according to Mr. Vincent Batalla, *"the individual acts of corruption are minimal although they can be both petty and grand. When corruption becomes pervasive in society, it can be said that corruption has been institutionalized."* Hence corruption becomes a way of life, a goal and outlook towards the public office.

In a 1998 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, more than 70% of respondents thought that corruption existed in government. Nearly 40% believed there was "a great deal" of corruption. The following year, Transparency International rated the Philippines as the 54th among the most corrupt countries in the world where it scored 3.6 based on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scale of 1 (high perception) to 10 (negligible perception).

The World Bank and the Ombudsman (1997) reported that the *"Philippine government was losing \$2 billion a year or a whooping \$ 48 billion in the last 20 years due to corruption, exceeding its entire foreign debt of US\$ 40.6 billion."*

Studying closely, the determinants of corruption are manifold and complex ranging from individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors. In fact, the Cross-Sectoral Study of Corruption in the Philippines published by the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus - Committee for the Evangelization of Culture revealed that the acts of corruption are products of the interplay of these perceived factors deeply rooted at the levels of individuals, family, community, institutions and society.

Individual related factors include economic needs, greed, security, cost and benefit consideration, ignorance and apathy. Institutional factors affecting decisions to engage in corruption, on the other hand, consist of bureaucratic red tape, too many discretionary powers, lack of law information and information available to the public as well as the low wages/salaries of the government and private employees. The social factors stem from a debt of gratitude to reciprocate from a personal favor granted to a person in power, social tolerance, personalism and particularism, a culture of deference to authority, materialism and poverty.

Addressing graft and corruption may significantly help solve the massive and pervasive poverty problem in the country. According to the Jesuit Evangelization Commission, any development interventions must be comprehensive, multi-level, long-term and sustainable in nature. Consequently, it has identified three levels of development interventions, to wit:

1. **Policy Reforms** advocating the review and reducing the discretionary powers of government agencies and functions to prevent abuses; stronger action against the top corrupt agencies for thorough reform; establishment of one-stop shop government centers and express lanes to lessen bureaucratic corruption; reduction of signatory requirements in government transactions; review bidding policies and practices and making official transactions known to the general public; and integration of anti-corruption curriculum at all levels of education and review privatization policies for effective debureaucratization of government services.
2. **Research Agenda** studying the creative modes and technology innovation on transparency and exposes of corruption deals; understanding the psychology of corruptible sectors (i.e., brokers, fixers, middlemen, contractors, bidders, suppliers and dealers, among others); reducing corruption at the LGU levels via understanding and addressing a decentralized and democratized culture of corruption; and documentation and promotion of heroism and best public practices in public service.
3. **Capacity-Building and Institutional Development** pursuing the establishment of a Resource Center on the culture of corruption and ways to combat them; strengthening and renewal program for Filipino families as basic institutions for cultural re-orientation and re-evangelization; renewal movements, integrity circles and citizens' watchdogs; community-based watchdogs and monitoring councils; private sector participation in monitoring government performance; information dissemination on anti-corruption laws and policies; growth sessions and heroism reinforcement seminars; effective poverty alleviation programs to help prevent corruption; improvement of justice and enforcement systems; and anti-corruption complaints and grievance center which will serve as venues for tips-ters and whistleblowers. *DLQ*

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Will You Survive The



The high demand for safe and adequate supply of blood for all patients in need of transfusion has prompted the National Voluntary Blood Services Program (NVBSP) to work closely in partnership with COSCA for a two-day Blood-letting Activity last August 13-14, 2003 held at the Yuchengco Lobby, De La Salle University in Manila.

A total of 58 blood bags equivalent to 450 ml of blood were taken from 58 qualified donors out of the 116 generous individuals who responded to the Red challenge.

According to the organizers, human blood for transfusion is the only form of treatment that cannot be manufactured by factories. That's why they need modern heroes who care enough to share their blood and spend some time to save other people's lives.

Who is the potential Blood Donor?

- One should be at least 100 lbs or 45 kg for blood donation of 250 ml and at least 110 lbs or 50 kg for blood donation of 450 ml.
- One should have a pulse rate between 60-100 beats per minute with regular rhythm.
- Blood pressure should be between 90-160 systolic and 60-100 diastolic while hemoglobin is at least 125 g/L.

Why can't some people donate blood?

Temporary Reasons: Pregnancy, acute fever, recent alcohol intake, ear/body piercing and tattooing, recent surgery

Permanent Reasons: Cancers, cardiac diseases, severe lung diseases, viral hepatitis, HIV infection, HIV infection or sexually transmitted diseases, prolonged bleeding, unexplained weight loss of more than 5 kg. over 6 months and chronic alcoholism.

To qualify, Lasallian donors have to register their names during the "Blood Donation Recruitment Week" organized by the COSCA volunteers from August 4-8, 2003 held at the Yuchengco Lobby. They were also asked to give their preferred time for blood letting.

The actual day of Blood Letting allowed the benevolent donors to fill-out the Donor's Form. Thereafter, a trained Blood Bank Physician conduct physical and medical examination check to the donor that includes weight, blood type, blood pressure, RH typing and hemoglobin level in order to determine if one is qualified donate blood.



Those Lasallians qualified to donate blood were refrained from eating heavily before blood donation. However, fluids can be taken before blood donation.

The physician asked the donors to lie down on a bed. The amount of blood to be taken from the donor would depend on his/her body weight but should never exceed 450 ml.

It will take only 5-10 minutes to actually give blood. It is expected that the volume extracted will be replenished in the body within 3 to 5 hours, with the advice to take more fluids and eat your usual balanced diet.

After taking the blood, the donors needed to rest for a while about 10 minutes allowing their body to readjust. A simple snack and a Blood Donation Record Card were given to the 58 donors by the organizers.

By the way, did you know that donating blood help reduce the risk of heart diseases? Yes! By donating blood, some iron can be removed from your body, which found to speed up oxidation of cholesterol. Some scientists suspect iron can increase damage to the arteries and thus lead to heart problems. *DLQ*

COSCA AND KALAKASAN HOLD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONEAB AT DLSU

Jana Esteban

COSCA in partnership with the Kababaihan Laban sa Karahasan (KALAKASAN) Foundation, Inc. sponsored a symposium on domestic violence entitled, *"Understanding the Psycho-Social Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence among Children"* last July 3, 2003 held at the Ariston Estrada Seminar Room. The symposium featured the developmental impact of domestic abuse and community violence on children and adolescents.

At least 25 participants attended the activity including guests from various government agencies, social welfare centers, NGOs and women's groups. Among them were the Department of Social Work – Manila, Women in Media Development, Children's Rehabilitation Center, House of Sarang, Boy's Town, the Third World Movement and the alternative lawyering group SALIGAN.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Bernadette J. Madrid, M.D., is an advocate of children's rights. She is a resident of the UP-PGH Child Pediatrics Unit, and is quite active in responding to cases of children involved in domestic violence. Her lecture took off by defining what domestic violence is (i.e., Intimate Partner Violence) and its various forms (i.e., physical aggression, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, controlling behaviors). The lecture revealed that 1 out of 3 women are battered or have experienced some sort of domestic violence, and that in most cases, children and adolescents were the most affected.

"Based on recent studies, the children who are exposed to domestic abuse also learn that violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflicts. The children grow up with violence as part of family relationships."

Dr. Madrid discussed how the psycho-social problems are manifested in children who witness such forms of violence. She reported that 40-60% of children cases showed the tendency to manifest poor social behavior and heightened posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSDs include having severe feelings of guilt and self-blame, anxiety, hyper-alertness and flashbacks.



In conclusion, the speaker stressed the important roles of responsible parenting. The community is not an external group of people but as a protective network that would serve as the surrogate family of the children affected. Positive relationships with other adults, having a mother that has reached a high level of education and parenting style are among the protective factors that could help children cope with domestic violence.

A good way to intervene in domestic violence is by building on the social services available in Philippine society today. Dr. Madrid emphasized the importance of therapy for children and adolescents who have experienced or witnessed violence at home. "Focus therapy," or specialized therapy for children, is most important. Alternative forms of therapy are also applicable (e.g., group therapy, cognitive therapy, art and movement therapy).

The symposium was capped off by an enrichment session that highlighted the experiences of each participating organization. The participants all agreed that there is a need to continue the advocacy for anti-domestic violence efforts. The seminar has thus achieved its aim of advocating the developmental impact of domestic violence on children and adolescents.

Based on recent studies, the children who are exposed to domestic abuse also learn that violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflicts. The children grow up with violence as part of family relationships. Moreover, if the perpetrator of violence in intimate relationships goes unpunished, the children adapt the mentality that violence is a way to control other people.

COSCA, TRED and CSO ORGANIZE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FORUM

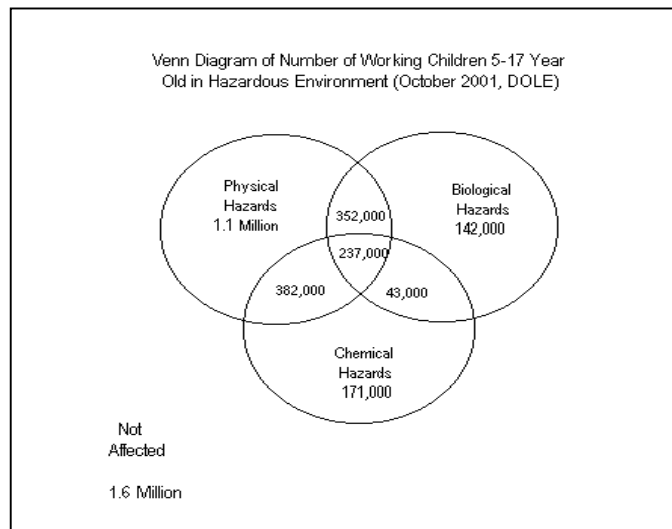
In line with the thrust of the Lasallian Brothers to promote children's rights, COSCA in partnership with the Theology and Religious Education Department (TRED) and the Council of Student Organizations (CSO) organized a "*Forum on Children's Rights*" last August 14, 2003 held at the Yuchengco Seminar Room.

At least 130 Lasallian faculty and students attended the forum aimed at increasing their social awareness on children's rights, particularly the issues of child labor in the Philippines.

The forum started with a national anthem and an opening prayer led by Ms. Norvega Pelobello. Then Mr. Ed Lucero, Relsfor Coordinator of COSCA gave the opening remarks.

Mr. Blake Sarion, the forum moderator, introduced Ms. Denia Gamboa as the first speaker from the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) who gave a National Situationer on Children. She cited the four basic rights of children such as survival rights, development rights, protection rights and participation rights. The children in need of special protection are those children on the streets, victims of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation especially those affected by HIV/AIDS, children suffering from various forms of disability, children in conflict with the law and those in situations of armed conflict, children in ethnic communities where they may suffer from both neglect and discrimination. She said the children are our future generation and it is important to protect their rights to ensure the development of our nation.

The second speaker, Ms. Teresita del Rosario of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) defined Child Labor as "*any work performed by a child that subjects the child to economic exploitation, or that is likely to be hazardous for the child or that interferes with the child's education, or that is harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*" She made a clear distinction between a child work and a child labor. According to her, a child work is work appropriate to child's age and mental capabilities while a child labor burdens the child; too heavy for child's age and capabilities. A child work is legal because it is regulated by law or governed by family/community norms and values. A child labor, on the hand, is usually forced by circumstances or by coercive individuals to work. A child is subjected to psychological, verbal or physical/sexual abuse. In general, the child's work is utilized for exploitative, subversives or clandestine operations, or disguised illegal activities. Hence a child labor is illegal because it is excluded from legislation, social security and benefits.



Based on research studies, four million (16.2%) of 2.4 million children (ranging 5-17 years old) were economically active. Of which, the highest percentage of working children came from Southern Tagalog (11.5%), followed by Central Visayas (9.7%) and Eastern Visayas (8.7%).

Furthermore, about 2.4 million working children were exposed to hazardous environment. Of those exposed, 7 out of 10 were males. It is estimated that 62% of rural working children were exposed to physical, chemical, and biological hazards than their urban counterparts which comprise 52%.

Poverty, lack of public awareness, false value system and attitude of parents and communities, tolerance and indifference - these are the five major causes of child labor according to Ms. Del Rosario.

During the open forum, Ms. Del Rosario emphasized the important roles of parents to ensure the welfare and protection of their children. Since the problem of child labor is multi-faceted, it also requires a multi-dimensional approach ranging from advocacy, education, community organizing, provision of livelihood and skills development program, policy reforms and legal protection plus other interventions that will empower poor communities involving child labor practices. In conclusion, the speaker said that the advocacy efforts against child labor require concerted efforts from the government, civil society, academe, and other sectors in order to save the children from the debilitating drudgery of hard work.

Mr. Winston Chicano, COSCA volunteer led the closing prayer for peace consistent with the theme of the forum, "*Mundong Payapa, Handog sa Bata.*" DLQ

SCSA HOLDS ADVOCACY TRAINING ON YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S ISSUES & CONCERN

The System Committee on Social Action - Advocacy Working Group launched a two-day *Advocacy Training on Youth and Children's Issues and Concerns* last August 2-3, 2003 held at the College of St. Benilde Auditorium.

The training workshop aims to develop and train at least 43 core advocates coming from the De La Salle-Manila, College of St. Benilde, De La Salle - Dasmariñas, Health and Science Campus, De La Salle - Zobel, De La Salle - Araneta including the Caucus for Poverty Reduction (CPR) which sponsored the training.

Ms. Nelca Balisado, SCSA chairperson gave the opening remarks, to be followed by Mr. Dodgie Quitangon, institutional advocacy coordinator of COSCA and chairperson of Advocacy Working Group, who provided the context and rationale why there was a need to advocate on the Children's Rights, Voter's Education and the Right to Education. Not only because it is the thrusts of the Lasallian Brothers but children and youth are the future of our nation. As such, the De La Salle University System should work towards educating its students through Voter's Education including grassroots communities it is serving. At the end of the training, it is hoped that the 43 core advocates will assist in the advocacy work pursuing the 3 major issues affecting the youth and children.

For Children's Rights, two speakers were invited - Ms. Denia Gamboa of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) who discussed the National Situationer on Children while Fiscal Alejo, on her part, shared concrete cases of child abuse and exploitation in Metro Manila.

Mr. Willy Bleza provided input on the Voter's Education but focused on the process of electoral modernization using hi-tech computers.

Senator Tessie Aquino-Oreta underscored the importance of the right of education for every Filipino and not as a privilege for a few families.

Mr. Yuri Cipriano of the District Justice and Peace Commission (DJPC) facilitated the group reflection. He presented to the group the Advocacy framework and stressed the importance of Lasallian mission and core values in doing advocacy work. The activity culminated with a Thanksgiving Mass presided by Fr. Allan Archebuche, OFM.

After dinner, the socials night enabled the participants to know each other on the personal level. It also served as community building activity among the Lasallian student leaders and staff of the different social action centers.

The second day was spent for group workshop to assist the delegates in processing and sharpening their problem solving skills based on identified issues such as children's rights, voters' education and the right to education. Ms. Cecil Sipin, consultant of CPR, facilitated the group workshop using problem tree analysis.



After lunch, Mr. Louie Montemar of CPR gave input on the Basics of Advocacy -- its definition, elements, steps and process including the identification of allies.

Mr. Quitangon facilitated the planning workshop and plenary. Then Bro. Ceci Hojilla, FSC inspired the participants with his wits and charm as he delivered his closing remarks.

After the over-all synthesis given by Mr. Quitangon, the participants were led into a candle-lighting contemplation room where Ms. Liselle Delantar of CSB and Ma. Theresa Deligan of DLSU-Dasmariñas, Cavite facilitated the closing prayer ritual and covenant signing. Each participant was given a chance to say his/her message of solidarity with the group after lighting a candle. To some participants, this event was the most unforgettable moment. *DLQ*

PAGTATALAGA SA SARILI

Kami, ang nagkakaisang Lasalyano naninindigan sa responsibilidad na ipagpatuloy ang sinimulan ng aming pundador na si San Juan Bautista De La Salle na magbigay ng pagpapahalaga sa edukasyon ng mga mahihirap na bata.

Kami ay may malalim na pananampalataya, katapatan, integridad, maalab at walang pasubaling paglilingkod. Nagpapahalaga sa buhay na marangal at malayang nagtataya ng aming buhay para sa sangnilikha.

Kami ngayon ay nagtatalaga ng aming mga sarili na maging kasangkapan sa pagtataguyod ng bansang may paggalang sa karapatang pambata lalo na sa karapatang makapag-aral. Hangad din naming ang pagkakaroon ng isang malinis at mapayapang halalan na siyang magiging gabay sa kinabukasan ng mga bata

Kasihian nawa tayo ng Panginoon. Amen Hesus.

LASALLIANS ATTEND USAPANG "R" FORUM

COSCA in partnership with the Kababaihan Laban sa Karahasan (KALAKASAN) Foundation, Inc. sponsored "A forum on Usapang "R"- Rights, Respect and Responsibility" last August 2, 2003 held at the Waldo Perfecto Seminar Room, De La Salle University, Manila.

More than 140 Lasallian students and volunteers attended the forum aimed at recognizing and respecting women's rights such as the right to be free from violence, abuse and harassment.

After a brief opening remarks given by Ms. Gaily Villanueva, the *Tanghalang Hulyo 23* presented a short skit concerning women's rights and responsibilities.

Two guest speakers were invited to grace the occasion. The first speaker, Ms. Rina Jimenez-David, is a respected feminist journalist of the Philippine Daily Inquirer. She shared to the Lasallian students her personal experience of being close with her son and daughter. That is why, she can openly communicate and discuss with her children on matters concerning sex and gender issues. She discovered that even her children dislike seeing their matinee idols committing immoral acts on TV screen. The traditional Filipino culture tends to consider sex as a sensitive issue and therefore, taboo to discuss in public especially to the younger generations. By breaking away from these traditional Filipino values and beliefs, this could liberate us from gender inequality especially the stereotyping of roles between a boy and a girl, a son and a daughter, which normally starts at home. She ended her lecture through an inspiring quotation, "Dance as if no one is watching, sing as if no one is listening, love as if you have never been hurt and live as if heaven is on earth."

Major Ildebrandi Usana y Novicio is a division chief of Family, Juvenile, Gender and Development Division of the Directorate for Police Community Relations of the Philippine National Office. He presented some statistics to the audience showing an increasing number of cases where women and children are victimized. He said that concerted efforts between the Philippine National Police together with the community would prevent these human rights violation to happen on women and children. A special desk on women and children was created and currently being managed by policewomen to handle cases such as domestic violence, marital rape, etc.

During the open forum, Ms. David acknowledged the important role of advertising promoting women's issues and concerns, particularly in the areas of reproductive health. However, advertising can also be a means to exploit women as sex objects. Likewise, she clarified that artificial birth control does not promote a culture of death. In fact, it breeds a culture of life when parents take care of their children through effective family planning methods. In this sense, it will ensure a better and brighter future for the succeeding generations of Filipinos.

Several reactions were solicited from the student leaders representing different colleges and student organizations of DLSU. A majority of them affirmed the need to respect women's rights vis-à-vis the need to inform the general public promoting gender equality. Ms. Carrie Loren Rosel and Mr. Dax Gapus are COSCA student volunteers who emceed the forum.

According to the organizers of KALAKASAN Foundation, they want to see behavioral change in young people of today by changing their attitudes on gender and power relations. Hence, they begin the process of transformation towards a more just, equitable and violence-free society.

It is noteworthy that an Exhibit on Violence Against Women was set-up at the Yuchengo Lobby of De La Salle University from July 30 - August 1, 2003 prior to the forum in order to instill gender awareness among Lasallian faculty and students.



*Tanghalang Hulyo 23
presenting their skit*



*Lasallian students and
volunteers*



*Exhibit on Violence
Against Women*

The overarching theme of the forum was "Youth Empowerment: Rights, Respect and Responsibility" underscoring the important roles of the youth towards building a gender-fair future. DLQ

COSCA, TRED, SC and FDC SPONSOR CHA-CHA FORUM

Current debates are once again focused on charter change, either through a Constituent Assembly where Congressmen will amend the constitution or through a Constitutional Convention where independent delegates will be elected during the May 2004 elections to spearhead the charter change possibly towards a Federal Philippine Republic.

Whatever the process that may be adopted by the Philippine Congress, the questions still remain: *"Do we really have to amend our present Constitution? Is it the right time to amend our constitution given the economic and socio-political crises our country is experiencing at this point in time?"*

It is in this context that COSCA, in partnership with the Theology and Religious Education Department (TRED), Student Council (SC) and the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), organized a *"A Public Forum on Charter Change and Its Implications on the Philippine Economic Sovereignty"* last July 29 at the William Shaw Theater.

More than 150 participants attended the forum that focused on the pros and cons of charter change aimed at increasing the level of social awareness of the Lasallian faculty and students concerning the issue. According to the organizers, it was not the intention of the forum to come up with a unified stand on charter change but to help Lasallians develop their critical thinking and personal views.

"Neo-liberal globalization has found champions in government as well as in Congress. Their agenda is not simply political reforms. The silent agenda is to remove the remaining barriers to trade liberalization and foreign investments, i.e. constitutional provisions found in Article XII of the Philippine Constitution."

The first speaker, Ms. Ana Maria R. Nemenzo, President of the Freedom from Debt Coalition, discussed charter change initiatives in the context of the current economic situation. She cited the country's total debt at US\$96.67 Billion or around PhP5.07 Trillion (as of October 2002). This year, our government allocated PhP204 Billion (23%) of our national budget to interest payments alone.

There are pressures coming from the creditors' cartel (World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank) to push through for privatization and deregulation policies. Complementing this, the World Trade Organization has also promoted trade liberalization. These are the three pillars of what is referred to as neo-liberal globalization.

Already, the privatization/deregulation sweep has covered the oil and power industries, water, capital accounts and easing restrictions in trade. Next in line is the privatization of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Social Security and Health Services. If charter change initiatives push through, then public utilities, mass media and the practice of professions may not only be privatized but may be opened up to entry of foreign interests in the country.

Neo-liberal globalization has found champions in government as well as in Congress. Their agenda is not simply political reforms. The silent agenda is to remove the remaining barriers to trade liberalization and foreign investments, i.e. constitutional provisions found in Article XII of the Philippine Constitution. These provisions provide that the national economy shall be "effectively controlled by Filipinos" who shall have exclusive right to acquire private lands or lands of the public domain. They also state that ownership of public utilities and educational institutions shall be no less than 60%, whereas mass media and the practice of professions are reserved for the Filipinos. The provisions also ensure that the land, minerals, forests, water, air and other natural resources within the national territory constitute the exclusive heritage of the Filipino nation. Hence, priority access and rights to the country's natural resources and development of the economy are safeguards accorded to Filipinos as a means of economic security and as material basis for their economic well-being and social progress.

Ms. Nemenzo stressed *“to amend our Constitution so that foreign capital can enter and exit unhampered and so that aliens own and exploit our resources, as if they are Filipinos, would be doing a grave injustice not just to the present crop of Filipinos, but to those who, if charter is changed, will be born in a country they can not even call their own”*. She then enjoined everyone to oppose any attempt to remove or water down the economic provisions of the constitution and to join the movement to defend and assert the National Patrimony and Social Justice.

The second speaker, Dr. Jose Abueva of the Citizen's Movement for a Federal Philippines and president of the Kalayaan College discussed the prospects and challenges under a proposed federal system of government. He begun his lecture by sharing to the participants that the Republic of the Philippines has worked under four Constitutions starting from the 1935 Constitution during the commonwealth period under the tutelage of the United States; the 1973 Constitution which was completed under the Martial Law and served as the legal framework for authoritarian Marcos regime; the 1986 Freedom Constitution as the transitory organic law by the revolutionary government of former Pres. Aquino until the present 1987 Constitution could be ratified by the people. All these constitutions were enacted when the country was under extraordinary situations requiring constitutional change.

Dr. Abueva cited their efforts under the *Citizen's Movement for a Federal Philippines (CMFP)* to effect social change through structural and institutional change. In brief, he cited the following constitutional reforms:



Dr. Jose Abueva speaks before the audience (photo taken by MCO)

1. Shift from Presidential to Parliamentary Government and Reform the Party System and Electoral System

The first fundamental proposal is a **horizontal structural and institutional reform** that fuses the legislative power and the executive power in the Prime Minister and Cabinet — the government of the day — that will be responsible to the Parliament. This will prevent the gridlock and buck-passing that we often experience in the presidential system, as you very well know, and make it relatively easier to change the head of government when necessary. It will also induce, with the help of proportional representation in a genuine party list system, the development of strong, program-oriented and accountable political parties, which are now non-existent.

The President as head of state will symbolize the sovereignty of the people and the unity and solidarity of our pluralistic nation, a national leader above partisan politics who can exert moral and policy influence on the government and the nation at large, as in India, Germany, and Singapore.

Parliamentary government will reduce the astronomical cost of presidential elections, which is corrupting and compromising for the elected president. It will help prevent the election of celebrities whose popularity and talents are extraneous to the tough qualifications of national political and executive leadership demanded of a head of government and prime initiator of policy and legislation. Moreover, parliamentary government ensures the timely and orderly change of the top leadership in government and thus promotes political stability; it reduces the temptation of coups in a presidential system where the president has a fixed term and may be removed only by impeachment or by people power, resulting in political instability.

2. Shift from Present Unitary Republic to a Federal Republic

But a shift to a parliamentary system is only one-half of the needed structural and institutional change in our form of government. The other and complementary change is from our age-old, highly centralized unitary system to a new, decentralized federal system, like that of the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, India, Malaysia, and Mexico.

Without this equally, if not more, important constitutional reform, many of the champions of the parliamentary system will keep governmental power as their customary, imperial prerogative and virtual monopoly in order to perpetuate their control and domination of national and local government and politics. As beneficiaries of a centralized national government, they are the ones who have caused the stagnation of the country and the impoverishment of many of our people who live in the regional and local communities across the archipelago.

What the country needs is a decisive paradigm shift, not only from presidential to parliamentary government but also, from the unitary to the federal system. The latter is a vertical structural and institutional reform that redistributes power, authority and resources between the federal government on one hand and the states or regional governments and their component local governments.

Furthermore, Dr. Abueva enumerated the following advantages of federalism over the unitary system, to wit: (1) Federalism will bring about peace and unity in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity especially in Mindanao through genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims; (2) Federalism will improve governance through a new division and specialization of government functions; (3) Federalism will improve governance by empowering and challenging the State and local leaders and the citizens throughout the country; (4) Federalism will hasten the country's development since there will be inter-state and regional competition in attracting domestic and foreign investments and industries, professionals and skilled workers, good teachers and scholars, artists and tourists; and (5) Federalism will enhance democracy when the middle class is expanding and poverty is decreasing and more citizens will have the opportunity and capacity to participate effectively in public affairs beyond voting in elections.

3. Optional Reform: Amend the Restrictive Provisions on the National Economy and Patrimony

The amendments will leave it to the parliament and the State Assemblies to enact laws to govern the participation of foreign capital and enterprise in the Philippines in ways that will promote economic development and modernization and benefit all our people. This will enable the Philippines to compete with neighboring countries in Asia for much needed foreign direct investments in our efforts to accelerate industrialization and socio-economic development.

Dr. Abueva concluded his lecture by saying the reforms to ensure "a Strong Republic" or democratic and progressive Nation-State includes basic structural and institutional change. This can only be done through the revision of the 1987 Constitution. Beyond, federalism and a parliamentary government, we need to reform the economic provisions in the Constitution and our electoral system, party system, and bureaucracy.

The speaker said, *"Filipinos are ready to accept the challenge of modernization and development in all aspects including democratic politics and governance. We only need the guidance of bold and imaginative civic and political leaders who trust in our capacities, for we also believe in God's grace and benevolence if we but do our utmost for the common good of our people and the national interest."*

Dr. Abueva encouraged Lasallians to embrace constitutional reform as a fundamental element in modernization and development. He added, *"Only thus can we bequeath the nation and succeeding generations a truly great and memorable legacy. In a time of deep crises and great challenge, it is our singular opportunity and destiny to transform our country and political system into a Federal Republic with a parliamentary government by 2010 at the latest."* By electing delegates to a constitutional convention during the May 2004 elections, a new constitution can be drafted in August 2004 and finish its work by May 2005.

SAMBAYANAN

Gary Granada

*Kaytagal na nating nangarap
Ng isang bansa na mapayapa't maunlad
Masigasig, masisikap
Kahusayan ay laganap
Nguni't paano at kailan matutupad?*

*Sambayanan ang maghahatid sa atin
Sa matatayog nating adhikain
Sambayanang ating ipupundar
Sa kusa at dasal, tiyaga't pagmamahal
Sambayanan ang magbubuklod sa atin
Sambayanang malaya't marangal
Panaahon nang mailuwal,
Maitatag, maitanghal
Mabuhay ang Sambayanang Federal!*

*Pagtitika at pananagutan
Bahaginan, paghaya't pagdadamayon
Kung saan ang karamihan
Ang siyang may kapangyarihang
Gampan ang kanikaniyang kakanyahan*

Sambayanan...

*Bayan ng mga Baayan, Lahi ng mga Lahi
Kami ay patnubayan sa iisang mithi
Iisang mithi*

*Sambayanan ang magbubuklod sa atin
Sambayang malaya't marangal
Panahon nang mailuwal
Maitatag, maitanghal
Mabuhay ang Sambayanan
Sambayanang Federal!*

The open forum provided a venue for the participants to raise questions concerning the topics being discussed by the resource persons.

To cap the activity, Mr. Dodgie Quitangon, institutional advocacy coordinator of COSCA briefly thanked the invited speakers, the Lasallian faculty and students. While Mr. Aikee Esmeli, vice-president of Student Council led the closing prayer.

Ms. Gaily Villanueva emceed the occasion. DLQ

A CONTINUING RECURRENCE OF REBELLION

Ma. Lourdes F. Melegrito

Have you ever wondered why some people continue to act in ways that harm their environment, even though they know that what they are doing is wrath or outrageous? Well, we often hear this remark: *"Sa mga taong nagigipit, kahit sa patalim kumakapit."* Is this response justifiable? Is this also the reason behind the act of the July 27 Mutineers? We could think of various reasons: deprivation of rights, rise of collective interests, or the best possible recourse for the players.

Different Interpretations

One of the young rebel officers insisted that *"they were not launching a coup"* but solely to tell the truth about corruption and anomalies in the military. The Social Movement Theory presupposes that individuals join groups where they could identify with - groups where political opportunities and structures are available to them. Can this be applied with the Magdalo rebels? Were the participants of Magdalo joined the rebel movement because of the available opportunity offered them - an opportunity to express their collective sentiments and interests?

It was likewise revealed by one of the rebels that the soldiers in the field suffer the most. While the high-ranking officials enjoy the perks of being a General, the soldiers endure inadequate and poor support facilities. The Deprivation Theory refers to a situation where one expects something but failed to see the realization of the expectation. There is a delivery gap, which causes frustrations and later on rebellion. So, were these soldiers felt marginalized and deprived which caused them to join the mutiny? Deprived of what? Of a comfortable life in the field? Or of decent salaries and benefits? Yet Sen. Biazon declared in the show **DEBATE** that soldiers are even more privileged than public school teachers. An ordinary soldier receives P19,000.00 as a starting fee, while a public school teacher only receives P12,000.00

Many seem to believe in the authenticity of the grievances yet condemned the act. Is this the only way to express the urgency of a collective demand? DILG Secretary Lina argued *"if the officers had only wanted to be heard, why didn't they take their problems to the media and name names instead of choosing to commit acts of error."* The Rational Choice Theory assumes that individuals all have the rational capacity necessary to choose a best course of action, no matter how complex the choice. Thus rational individuals choose one of the highest ranked feasible action available to them. Is it proper to assume that the Magdalo group was rational in their decision to proceed with the July 27 mutiny

"While most of the grievances of the junior military officers and soldiers who staged the mutiny are genuine and legitimate, the means that they have chosen was illegal and undemocratic..."

The most recent military uprising has been interpreted differently - favorably by those who sympathize with the cause, and with prejudice by those who condemn the act. So many reactions and commentaries have already been made by individuals and groups in the country, yet almost everyone seems to agree with one fact: While most of the grievances of the junior military officers and soldiers who staged the mutiny are genuine and legitimate, the means that they have chosen was illegal and undemocratic.

Chosen Strategy

The officers and soldiers involved in the July 27 mutiny attempted to create a semblance of EDSA I and II. The mutineers justified their ill-chosen strategy as the only viable alternative left to expose ineptitude and corruption in the government. But the mutiny is incomparable to EDSA I and II.

EDSA I and EDSA II were unquestionably necessary and constitutionally warranted but the mutiny was unquestionably uncalled for and definitely unconstitutional. Philippine-style democracy entitles the people to use both direct (extralegal means) and indirect forms (legal or due process) of exercising popular sovereignty. If indirect means do not function accordingly, then the recourse to direct ones would be unquestionably necessary and constitutionally warranted. These should remind us about EDSA I and II as two historic events that have become significant icons of our democracy. In the case of the mutiny however, while their end is justifiable, the means that the soldiers have chosen cannot be justified. Their grievances may be compelling enough to merit a concerted action but a mutiny is definitely not the ultimate way to expose what they believed to be a legitimate cause for significant reforms in the government.



Mutineers armed with M16 (Photo taken from *INQUIRER* dated 28 July 2003)

Now that the mutineers have returned to barracks (although a few have not done so), and investigations in Congress are underway, and an independent commission was created, it does not mean that all is well. The question of responsibility and culpability remains. Who should be held responsible for such irrational act? Should it be the soldiers whose extreme sense of "idealism" and adventurism compelled them to commit a desperate act of "madness" or those who were branded as self-regarding masterminds who exploited the soldiers's frustration with their leaders? An equally important question is how do we make them accountable for their self-professed "patriotic" act? One hundred push-ups for the soldiers or re-election for the masterminds?

Unfortunately for all of us, the mutiny highlighted to the whole world the vulnerability of our democratic institutions and the people whom we have entrusted to uphold the constitution and to protect the nation - - the shortcomings of the Macapagal administration in crisis management and the dangerous yet unrestrained passion of adventurism and interventionism within the military establishment. More alarmingly, the mutiny highlighted the government's incapacity to address and to make real progress in addressing the deep-rooted ills of ineptitude and corruption in the government. How the present administration tackle and handle these issues will definitely have far-reaching implications not only to the government but to the whole nation as well.

A Challenge to Redeem the Administration's Legitimacy

After the mutiny, the administration finds itself in a precarious position faced with the tough challenge of redeeming its legitimate image. To do this, the administration should seriously concern itself with two tasks: (1) applying the full force of law in dealing with the perpetrators of the mutiny and (2) taking seriously the grievances of mutineers. It is self-evident that the two tasks are not mutually exclusive and could be pursued simultaneously.

Anyone found responsible and culpable of the mutiny among the military ranks and their political conspirators should be penalized with the appropriate form of punishment. It should not be a mere 100 push-ups for guilty officers and soldiers. Stiff penalties should help put a stop to the unrestrained passion of disgruntled men in uniform. If the mutineers who engaged themselves in such an irrational opportunistic behavior that sowed chaos in the country could get away with it (just like in the past), then military adventurism will always be a constant threat to the country with officers and soldiers taking advantage of every opportunity that may be opened to them.

Professionalism in the military should be restored and reforms should be initiated to thwart military adventurism and interventionism. Obviously, the grievance mechanism within the military establishment is weak and ineffective. Hence, a reform in the system becomes urgent.

At a more fundamental level, the government should end corruption in the government not only in the military and the police but also in all its bureaucratic agencies and departments. The military usually intervenes in the political affairs of the state under various circumstances but most especially when there is ineptitude and corruption in the government.

Masarap...hindi ko maintindihan ang sssarap!!!

Che Banana

Yan sa madaling salita ay ang paglalarawan sa aking pakiramdam ngayon bilang isang ganap na dalaga... este! bilang tagapag-ugnay pala ng "Community Development" ng COSCA.

"Community Development," o anong sarap pakinggan! Nguni't ano nga ba ito? Ito ba ang sagot sa kahirapan ng lipunan?

Ang gawaing pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan o "Community Development" ay maihahalintulad sa isang mistulang balon na hindi natin masukat ang lalim, sa dami at magkakakawing-kawing na problema, hindi madali ang paglapat ng akmang pagtugon. Karaniwan din, ang mga pagtugon na ito ay binubusisi ng kapwa-manggagawa sa pag-unlad, binibigyan ng mga negatibong pantukoy tulad ng *"palliatives"*, *"dole-out"* at iba pa na kadalasan ay humahantong sa isang paghamon .. tunay nga bang may kabuluhan ang mga gawain natin dito sa pamantasan ng De La Salle para sa mga batayang sektor ng lipunang Pilipino?

Marahil ang kasagutan sa tanong na ito ay maaaring manggaling sa isang mahalagang prinsipyong gumagabay sa gawaing pag-unlad na nagsasaad na *"Start where the people are."* Ang akala ng nakakarami, ang katagang ito ay akma lamang para sa mga benepisaryo ng ating mga programa, hindi natin naiisip na tayo rin bilang manggagawa sa gawaing pag-unlad ay binibigyan din ng mahalagang payo.

Pero, nasaan nga ba tayo? Nasaan na ba ang "Com Dev" ng COSCA ?

Marahil ang kasagutan dito ay sinasalamin ng mga katagang binitawan ng isang taga-Morong, Bataan noong Agosto 2002, na nagsasaad na... *"kung ang komunidad namin ay naroroon sa isang balon na malalim, ang gawain ba ng COSCA ay ang magbaba ng isang lubid upang kami ay maka-ahon? Papaano kung may ilan sa amin ang ayaw humawak sa lubid upang makalabas? "*

Tunay ngang namangha ako sa aking narinig. Sa tradisyon ng isang tagapag-organisa ay ang aking nabigkas... *"ang gawain ko po bilang manggagawa ng COSCA ay maihahalintulad sa isang mangkok na pilit pinupuno ng tubig mula sa isang tapayan...ang gusto ninyo ay pilitin ilagay ang kabuuan ng tubig mula tapayan sa mangkok maaaring magawa ito nguni't sa proseso, maraming tubig ang tatapon."*

Sayang! Sa aking pagpunta ditto sa inyong pamayanan ay tinanggalan ko po ng laman ang aking munting mangkok ng sa gayon aymapuno ito ng laman sa pamamagitan ng pakikinig sa inyo. Subali't nais kong punuin ang aking mangkok ng tubig na sapat lamang at walang masasayang.

Ang gawain ng inyong abang lingkod ay ipagpatuloy ang gawaing sinimulan ng COSCA. Gabayan ang mga taong may mabuting kalooban at handang tumulong sa mga piling pamayanan.

Batay sa mga isinuniteng datos noong taong 2002 hanggang 2003, mayroong 105 na gawaing pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan ang isinagawa ng 55 na samahang mag-aaral dito sa DLSU-Manila. Karamihan sa mga grupong ito ay nasa *undergraduate* na kurso mula sa iba't-ibang kolehiyo ng pamantasan ng De La Salle.

Sa kabuuang bilang na 105, 74 ay tumugon sa pangangailangan ng mga institusyong pangbata (pampubliko man o pribadong ahensiya); 29 ay tumugon sa mga problema ng maralitang tagal-lungsod at komunidad na matatagpuan sa kanayunan; at mayroong 2 grupo na tumulong sa mga pamayanang naging biktima ng kalamidad. Ang mga numerong ito ay sumasalamin sa Lasalyanong konsepto ng pagtulong sa gawaing pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan. Matingkad na ipinakikita sa mga proyekto at gawaing pampamayanan ang pagtulong sa mga bata at kabataan na nangangailan ng patnubay at pagkalinga bilang bahagi sa pagtupad ng kanilang kaparapatang pangtao.

Subali't hindi dito nagtatapos ang gawaing pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan. Kinakailangan na ang lahat ng ating ginawa ay dumaan sa isang masinop at masusing pagtatasa upang makita kung ang mga ito ay makabuluhan at makatutugon sa lumalalang suliranin ng lipunan. Mula sa mga pagtatasang ito, gagawa ulit ng mga plano at hakbangin ang mga Lasalyano para sa taong 2003-2004 na hihigit pa sa mga naunang pagkilos kasama ang mga tao sa pamayanan. At sa awa ng Maykapal, ang mga gawaing matutukoy ay makatugon sa mga kondisyon na patuloy na nagpapahirap sa ating lahi.

Masarap...mahirap... may bagong pag-asa. Yan siguro ang mas akmang pantukoy sa nararamdaman ko ngayon bilang isang ganap na tao na nagpapakatao para sa isang lipunang payapa, maunlad at nakapagsasarili.

My First Community Service Experience at DLSU

Jomar Pacis

*Relstri C38, 3rd Term SY 2002-2003
under Dr. Ismael Maningas*



Community service is not a new thing to me. Back in high school, we also had the same activity. We taught at a public school in Malanday, Marikina. Each of us handled 8 students from grade 6. It was fun and enriching since the kids there were friendly, easy to handle and educated, in short -- civilized.

When I heard that our institution was just an orphanage somewhere in Padre Faura, I thought, *"Will it be as exciting and enjoyable to work with the kids the way I experienced then?"* I somehow anticipated things to run well, however when we came to the place, I was dazed in an unexpected way because the institution was small, like a regular house, with lots of kids roaming around and the place looked like a prison with barbwire attached on every corner of the area. It was definitely way out of the picture I had in mind. I said to myself, *"What the hell is this place!"* Well, I thought of the worse.

In some way, things worked and others didn't. At the beginning of the day, we proceeded with most of our plans, but we also had to adjust our schedule because a lot of kids weren't following us, wasting a lot of our precious time. In the ice breakers and games we had, a lot were not participating, so we had to push some of the kids to join. It was hard work! I felt like rolling a rock on the mountain. That was how difficult they were to handle like my little sister at home. But I understood their reasons. Most of them too were pushing us to their demands, *"Kuya, Ate, we want this, we want that!"* I guess we were all very much drained from their rowdiness and annoying insists that we fell for it. They finally settled down after.

It was funny and amazing how the kids suddenly altered their behavior from their monkey wacky comportment to a kind submissive sheep. After giving what they wanted, they finally began to follow our instructions and open-up to us. I guess we just had to give them a chance. I felt their comfort and started to recognize their individual differences. Everyone had a different background and the more I knew them, the more I understood their behaviors. I was also surprised because when it came to prayer time, they all looked like priests and nuns in a state of silent prayer and devotion.

The day ended and it was time for us to depart. I felt some sort of satisfaction because it was a mind-opening encounter. My high school experience was very much different from the community service I had at DLSU. This was more difficult, more challenging, more in-depth, and more enriching than ever.

"Classroom lessons are not enough to create a big impact on the individual. It should be done through experience and this is what community service brings. To bond with others and treat them as humans, learn and sympathize with our brothers and sisters, and to remove the prejudice and misconceptions in society..."

With fast paced technological progress, the world is in great peril to a cyborg era where man could lose its humanity and no less be objectified as machines. In this sense, community service help us achieved the objective of Christian Morality by exposing students to the reality of life outside the domain of our homes. It is important for students to realize that poverty and social problems are real and for them to open up, exposure to such is necessary. Classroom lessons are not enough to create a big impact on the individual. It should be done through experience and this is what community service brings. To bond with others and treat them as humans, learn and sympathize with our brothers and sisters, and to remove the prejudice and misconceptions in society are some of the knowledge the students learn under the guidance of the community service program coordinator of the university.

The community service created a big impact on my life because it helped me recognize a lot of things. All this time, I was never satisfied with what I have. I always wanted more but when I met the kids, I saw how lucky I am to own everything. I have the money to throw on food and clothing and all the necessary stuff. I have a home for shelter, yet I took them all for granted. To be honest, I am ashamed of myself because I never realized how many unfortunate individuals are looking for the luxury I already possess. This led me to recognize the social condition of poverty.



Family was one of the most important learnings I had. In the drawing activity that we gave, I saw most of the children wanted a family and looking for their parents. It was so heartbreaking to see how long they have been searching for their loved ones. It's been so long that they have been searching for a place they could call a "home". Through their drawings I felt their pain and loneliness. To be drifting in life with nobody to take care of you, to live a life surviving on your own and to enter a world of uncertainty alone is such an unhappy existence. With that, I remembered the barbwire were to prevent the children from escaping. They don't like life inside so they try to escape and find their world. It's just so sad to picture the kind of suffering they are experiencing. These realizations have taught me to appreciate each and every member of the family. This made me realize the social condition of broken families and divorce.

It's evident that most broken families stem from poor families. Most of these relationships are not married leading to immediate break-up. Of course the one who suffer most are the children. They are left with either a partner or father, worse they are left behind by both parents. This is the situation of most children at the **Kanlungan sa Erma** in Malate, Manila. I have friends too with broken families and the sorrows they have been experiencing are no different from the children.

At present, the Congress is trying to pass a resolution to allow divorce in the Philippines. If the resolution is granted, our close, caring and strong Filipino family tradition will fail, increasing further the number of cases of family separation. The Church gives importance to the family that's why it's doing all efforts to prevent this possible scenario.

"Through their drawings I felt their pain and loneliness. To be drifting in life with nobody to take care of you, to live a life surviving on your own and to enter a world of uncertainty alone is such an unhappy existence..."

Poem

Si Nena

Jerico "Kiko" Dalangin

*Ako'y si Nena
Tubong probinsiya
Napadpad sa Maynila
Napilitang magputa*

*Kung tadhana'y di naging malupit
Di sana ganito ang sinapit
Isang gabing mapait
Amain ko ako'y pinilit*

*Ako'y walang magawa
Ina'y ayaw maniwala
Kumampi siya sa Hudus!
Ako na lang ang umiwas*

*Luhaang nag-alsa balutan
Nagbakasakaling magbagong buhay
Sa Maynila'y naghanap-buhay
Serbisyo koy aking inialay*

*Kay sawing palad!
Pangarap ko'y di natupad
Makapagtapos sa pag-aaral
Aking hinangad at dinasal*

*Nawa'y maunawaan ninyo
Rilag na aking tinungo
Di ko man ginusto
Na akoy maabusos*

*Kay daming lalaki
Sa kandungan ko'y kumandili
Lahat sila'y aking napangiti
Ako nama'y nandidiri*

*Tanging pinangarap
Maiahon sa hiras
Inakay na nililingap
Pagkatao nya'y maging ganap*

*O Diyos! Dinggin mo yaring aba
Sa harap mo'y humihingi ng awa
Linisin mo puri't kaluluwa
Gabayan sa buhay na masagana...*

My Visit to Pasay City Jail and Malibay

Sarah Lyn Ng

*Relesfor A54, 1st Term SY 2003-2004
under Mr. Hernan Raymundo*

To visit a jail wasn't one of my wildest imaginations. Just the mere thought of going into the building filled with criminals makes me shiver. Imagine murderers, rapists, drug pushers and robbers combined in one unit. How will I be able to converse with them? What in the world are we going to talk about?

To be honest, the visit to Pasay City Jail was not one of my fondest experiences. Hearing what other people say about the place made it worst. And when I realized that we were going into the cell of the inmates, I didn't know what to do. But when we got there, the first thing I asked was how can 40 adults live in a small cell and sharing one bathroom. I know that these people are criminals and they shouldn't be given a hotel accommodation, but at least there should be decent facilities for them to survive.

I discovered in my interaction that the government was not allotting enough budget or any budget at all for the inmates. From ventilation, television to beddings, it was all through the collective efforts of everyone. Furthermore, food was also an issue. I could vividly recall the inmates joking that everyday they are served with "baboy." At first, I thought it was literally pork, but actually I believe they are sarcastic that the food sucks! The fish served was as small as they could imagine and longganiza would roughly be 2 inches long. It's unfortunate that corruption in the topmost levels of government affects all citizens including the inmates. Yes, criminals should be punished but a life at the Philippine jail is torture enough.



How can we say that our justice system is fine if the prison system is as worse as ever? More than half of the inmates that I met were mere suspects in their case. With the red tape and "palakasan" system rampant in our country, the justice system moves so slow that sometimes the suspect has already served more than the time of his sentence. If we could only change the system, the people in prison would not be as many. The greater the number of suspects there, the more of them having to share a small space. I believe that more than giving individuals the right to due process, proceedings and other legal matters should be done within a reasonable time.

On a different light, I observed the differences between the 2 gangs - the Batang City Jail and the Sputnik. The former was less structured and therefore, members are more relax and free. On the contrary, the latter was more hierarchical and rigid. In my interaction with the inmates, I learned that the Sputnik members follow a certain ritual or initiation rites before one can be fully accepted as a member. I began to think why some of its members fear their gang more than the Philippine government. The penalty for misconduct is equivalent to hitting similar to a fraternity's initiation. If these inmates could respect the rules set by their gangs, why can't they observe the laws of the land?

Oftentimes we judged those who have been convicted as criminals as long as they live, we don't give them a chance to redeem themselves. I admit that I am one of those people who think that way because there are numerous cases when convicts continue living their lives in the dark. We even met one who has been "in" and "out" of the jail for around three times. But I guess we have to respect them and allow them to change. If the society doesn't give them the opportunity, then what would be their future? They have made mistakes and hopefully, they have learned from them

The Malibay experience was again heartwarming because we were able to impart some help to the residents. Giving them a few clothes and goodies, I believe that we have made their lives lighter even for a day. It's hard to make change in a snap of a finger, but at least we can touch lives and hearts in a couple of occasions. To see the children's smile and to hear the people's deepest thanks makes it all worthwhile. I guess its true, we never realized the blessings bestow upon us until it's gone. Through community service program, we were given the opportunity to experience a slice of reality and hopefully, we don't forget it.

PANALANGIN PARA SA KAPAYAPAAAN

Panginoong Hesus, ang aming lipunan
ay nasasadlak sa pagkakawatak-watak
bunga ng aming pagkamakasarily
na nauwi sa kawalang katarungan at karahasan.

Kaming Iyong sambayanan
dito sa Pamantasan ng De La Salle
ay naninikluhod at sumasamo sa Iyo
na kami'y gawing daan ng pagkakasundo-sundo
katarungan at kapayapaan.

Nawa'y turuan mo kaming itaya
ang aming mga sarili at mga kakayahan
sa pagsusulong ng isang lipunang
tunay na sumasampalataya sa Diyos
may pagmamahal, pagmamalasakit
at paglilingkod sa isa't isa.



Manahan ka sa aming puso
at gawin itong pugad ng Iyong kapayapaan
upang kaisa ng Iyong lingkod
na si Juan Bautista De La Salle
maialay namin ang aming mga gawain
alang-alang sa aming bayan at sa pag-ibig sa Diyos.
AMEN.



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