



Unang Labas!

By: **Chiqui Kat Pineda-Azimi**

Tuloy po kayo! Ahhh...the trademark Pinoy welcome known the world over to be words of hospitality and graciousness. It is music to my now homogenized, Canadianized ears. Like a mug of spicy soothing *salabat* calming a scratchy throat in winter: *Tuloy po kayo!*



Like the bitter-sweet aroma of bubbling *chocolaté* wafting over from the fire stove in the corner, ready to be poured into my white *tasa*, oily churros sprinkled with sugar glistening on the side: *Tuloy po kayo!* It is the special concoctions from Manang Letty's kitchen...warm, Filipino, completely staffed kitchen...loudly beeping microwave oven...wait...microwave oven???

OY! my messy kitchen! And with the last few beeps signaling that my nuked cup of hot water for my Nescafe instant coffee is ready, I am yanked back to the reality of my Canadian life with its dishwasher waiting to be unloaded, its sink brimming with dirty pots and pans, its marble countertops dotted with crumbs, remnants of last night's Pizza Pizza delivery dinner.

Tuloy po kayo! and welcome to my North American nightmare. Ok. I am clearly exaggerating for effect but to the uninitiated, spoiled former indios-feeling-like-illustrados

folk (aren't we all?) this endless attempt at acclimatization to the über Western way of life is akin to one's worst nightmare on Elm Street, yes, the one off of Highway 401. I bravely confess that mine lasted for seven years. I am not ashamed to say that it took me seven long years to finally sing Oh, Canada without feeling like an impostor, seven long years with the only thing that kept me from going totally insane was the fantasy of going back home to the Philippines...one day...one day soon...I'd tell myself daydreaming over the sink, looking at the red maple trees outside my window while images of Boracay and Cafe Ysabel and Glorietta helped ease the pain and just when I was decidedly ready to throw in the towel and catch the next flight out, my little melodrama is rudely interrupted by my BFF (best friend forever) Marge Mella coming over for her regular visit, you know, to make sure I haven't made *bigti* in the laundry room or anything like that.

You're going to love this community center, Kat! she gushes in my cluttered living room over tea and pecan pie she just discovered at Costco. My BFF, always on to something, always trying her best to save me from my misery, I fondly thought. I was just glad that she had great taste, be they in dessert or stores or friends.

You're going to love this community center and you're going to love the person behind it even more!

"Oh, yeah?" I said as skeptical as one gets all day long buried in chores with nothing but mindless tv to keep you company along with the three whiny kids under 5.

So what's so special about this person

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Presidents Message

By: **Consolacion Ching Quejas**

Congratulations to the editorial staff for this maiden issue of the Kalayaan Centre Newsletter. It's been some time since this idea of a medium, among others, to promote our existence, has been planned. I'm happy it's finally off the ground. Thanks to our VP for Programs Administration, Ed Frondoza, for pushing the idea into reality. This, along with the monthly activities lined up, will make 2009 a busy year. On top of these, the approved funding of our project, "Happy Seniors for a Happy Community" by the New Horizons for Seniors Program that will last a whole year from February 16, 2009 to February 15, 2010, will put all of us on our toes.



Happy Seniors for a Happy Community includes a variety of activities that involve not only seniors but also the youth. The project will showcase their histrionic and musical talents, highlight their skills, wisdom and experience, encouraging values transference thru peer support and mentoring. Organizing a zarzuela (indigenous Philippine musical play) will take most of the time of the participants in the project where seniors and the youth can celebrate and showcase their artistic talents together and contribute to the cultural development of the community as well. In between rehearsals, there will be dialogues, seminars and work-

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UNANG LABAS

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in this center, you say?

She's a woman.

Ok.

She's a lawyer.

So.

She's a multi-awardee citizen including the 2003 Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Medal for Community Service.

Right.

She's 84 years old.

(Silence)

An 84 year old multi-awardee woman lawyer, chairing a Filipino community in Mississauga, Ontario in big, brave, developed nation called Canada in the Northern Americas? Now this I've got to see, I said to myself. Marge continues her pitch:

And they just bought the center in Orbitor.

And they need people to help in fundraising activities.

And there's going to be a grand open house celebration in a couple of months that I'm organizing for them.

You in?

So they need our help, huh? I give her a raised eyebrow.

Come with me for a quick peek, Kat.

What have you got to lose?

Good question, Marge. I've already lost everything anyway. Let's review the list, shall we: my youthful, carefree, worry-free, freedom-filled days in good old Pinas gone - check!; my youthful physique, perpetually energized and pumped-up personality gone - check! my youth with no hopes of it ever coming back - double check! Besides, maybe this 84-year old dynamo can teach me a survival tip or two. Let's go!

We entered the office of Ching Quejas, President of Kalayaan Centre and she said three beautiful words I haven't heard in a long while to us: *Tuloy po kayo!* along with a warm hug and a motherly kiss on the cheek from an almost diminutive lady who could very well be my grandmother and I.Was.Smitten. From that moment on I was officially welcomed as one of Centre's volunteers assisting in

caregiver/seniors/valentine programs, attending free workshops on photography/skincare/leadership and basically sharing my God-given (hidden, festering-just-a-while-back) talents in fundraising activities.

So was my initiation into this hub nestled in a sprawling one-story building three years ago, ushered into a world where *Tuloy po kayo!* isn't just a meaningless statement but a way of being: welcoming, inclusive, compassionately caring for the welfare of others while offering a vehicle for one to give back to the community. In the seven long years of my struggle to belong to this new environment called Toronto, it was the very first time that I felt genuinely and warmly welcomed into a place that felt more and more like a home away from home, welcomed by no less than a woman who may be tiny in build but a giant in accomplishment and in Spirit.

But this is not an article on Mama Ching, I could almost hear VP Ed saying. This is a piece about Kalayaan Centre for the maiden voyage of the Centre's first-ever newsletter. My initial assignment was to outline what Kalayaan Centre is all about, its mission, vision, what this place can offer etc. etc. etc. But I thought to myself that 1) it is simple enough to get all this generic information from a website (www.kccc.ca) and 2) what better way to share about the center from my own experience? Besides, is there any separating the two? Ching Quejas has become synonymous to KCCC and KCCC means Kalayaan Cultural Community Center, *Mama Ching* for short.

Mama Ching's mothering persona, her strong, cougar-like style of caring and overseeing her pack is legendary. I am drawn to the center mainly because of this but I also keep coming back because of the distinctly Filipino activities offered such as the musical activity i.e. Rondalla Group, karaoke night and line dancing, the Tagalog class, folk dances and music. I am a proud witness to the volunteers' bayanihan style of coming together - be it in sharing of specialties fellowship and creative, fun activities like the Walkathon and the Halloween Bash. These keep the

center alive and in turn, it keeps the spirit of volunteerism and community alive, stuff I have learned I need in order to have a more balanced existence in a world where it is so easy to get lost and sometimes confused in the myriad twists and turns of multiculturalism where one finds herself longing for the sounds and smells of home. I can honestly say that it has kept my spirits alive. Case in point: I am writing this during the after-math of a severe flu outbreak in our home. Truth be told, with myself and three kids ravaged by the flu virus in the span of two weeks this can wreak major havoc to the system. It is a normal occurrence for one to be moving about in the world devoid of one's working mind - pretty much like a zombie. But when the phone rang at exactly 4:15PM this afternoon, caller ID announcing Kalayaan Centre and hearing Mama Ching's voice on the other end of the line:

Chiqui, Neng (as she fondly calls her volunteers/her "angels") would you be so kind as to help us with the Zarsuela/play offering for the month of October or November? You see we are blest to receive a grant from the government for this and I was wondering if you could help in the event?

As I listen to her slightly raspy but compelling voice, I could feel the warmth return to my bones; as I hear her request for this for the benefit of that, I know the beat is getting stronger in my heart and just like that, my mind is working again. Without any hesitation, I smile and say:

I'm IN. Oh and Mama Ching, tuloy po kayo! You know Kalayaan Centre's causes are always welcome here in my ever grateful heart.

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Kathreen Pineda-Azimi (a.k.a Chiqui Pineda) has been a living the Great Canadian Adventure for almost a decade. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the University of the Philippines but chose to follow the beat of her own drum and became a singer and recording artists right after graduation. She now lives in Brampton with the love of her life (a.k.a husband) three precious mini-monsters (a.k.a kids), laundry baskets that are never empty and a pink mug that is always half full!

Mama Ching Quejas
Passion for Service
By: E. Laraya



Call the kalayaan Centre and enjoy a few minutes of hearing the latest on what's going on. Surely, your source would be Mama Ching, current President

of the Kalayaan Centre Board of Directors. Since the centre was purchased in 2007, Mama Ching has devoted all the hours of each day of the week, to running the centre through manning the phone lines, keeping in touch with volunteers and the community at large, performing administrative work i.e. writing after event reports, reports to the board and articles for the media to keeping updated roster of reports required of charity organizations as well as planning activities, centre programs for seniors, youth, newcomers and fund raising events to meet the financial obligations of the centre. What a challenge she faces everyday. At 84 (she turns 85 on May 2), her energy has not waned nor has her abilities to communicate via the internet, lessened. A lawyer by profession, her time outside of the centre is shared with the Filipino Seniors of Missis-sauga, with whom she spend all her

Saturdays holding workshops, celebrating special events i.e. birthdays, anniversaries etc. Through her leadership in both organizations, she has been able to manage a positive bottom line profit in its financial reports

Mama Ching is a lawyer by profession and is endowed by a very spritely and creative entrepreneurial spirit which is exhibited in her day to day running of the Kalayaan centre. Her memory is exceptional which is tested by any request for contact telephone numbers or questions on information and dates of events, both past and planned for. A very proud mother to four daughters, a Lola to 7 and a grand Lola to 2 girls, she keeps abreast of family matters through email and cell phones, a great feat for a woman her age.

A very accomplished woman, she is the recipient of many awards the latest of which is includes her receiving the 2003 Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Medal Award for Community Service and the 2007 Outstanding Asian Canadian Award given by the Canadian Multicultural Council in Ontario. Mama Ching is model for all of us Filipino Canadians. Her legacy of integrity and passion for service to her fellowmen is what we need to emulate in our life.

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Evelyn Laraya-Pond is one of Mama Ching's Angels. She is a

**KALAYAAN CENTRE
 EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 2009**

President	Ching Quejas
Exec VP	Luis Carbonell
VP Prg Adm	Edgar Frondoza
Secretary	Estilita Liwag
Treasurer	Resty Del Rosario
Auditor	Nestor Perez
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- Archie Ayala
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- Ruffy Romano
- Belle Tumbokon

tireless volunteer worker and has helped the Centre secure government funding for building improvements as well as for community programs. She splits her time between Toronto and McAllen, Texas. She is a member of the Audit Committee of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.



Wikang Pilipino

Ni: Tito I. Adona

Volunteer Language Instructor



Sa kaunauahang paglalabas ng Newsletter ng Kalayaan Centre ang nagbigay buhay upang ang wikang Pilipino (Tagalog) ay mag silbing pang gising sa mga Pilipino na nakatira sa Greater Toronto Area na mayroon tayong sariling wika na dapat pagyamanin.

Kahit saan panig ng daigdig ay matatagpuan ang mga Pilipino na nakatira o nag hahanap buhay, madali silang makilala, sa kalabasang anyo sa kulay ng kanilang balat, sa laki at gilas at higit sa lahat sa pananalita nila o pag-sambit ng wikang English mayroon silang kakaibang bigkas dahil sa pananalita nila ng wikang Pilipino (Tagalog)

Sa loob ng apat na taon na aking pagtuturo ng wikang Pilipino na nakapaloob sa Adult Education ng Filipino Centre sa Toronto ay nag bukas upang makapag desinyo ng kurso upang madaling matutunan ang Pilipino(Tagalog).



Tito conducting 1st Kalayaan Centre conversational Tagalog class

Binansagan na Conversational Adult Pilipino Course ay naihandanda para sa loob ng anim (6) na pag tatagpo ang mga madadaling salita at pakikipag-usap ay matutunan na makakatulong sa komunikasyon sa mga pang araw araw na pangangailangan.

Ang nasabing kurso ay bahagi na ngayon ng programa ng Kalayaan Centre, nagsimula at malapit ng matapos ang usang klase para sa taon. Itinala na rin ang susunod na klase, dahil dito, nanawagan ako sa mga kababayan, mga kasapi ng Kalayaan na mayroong kamag-anak na gustong mag aral ng wikang Pilipino(Tagalog) na makipagtalastasan sa Centre at magpa rehistro, sa kurso ay matutunan nila ang at magamit kung uuwi sila sa Pilipinas o para maintindihan nila ang mga nag-uusap sa ating wika.

Pagyamanin natin ang wikang Pilipino (Tagalog) sabi nga ng ating pambansang bayani na si Dr. Jose Rizal, "Ang taong hindi marunong mag magmahal sa sariling wika ay mahigit pa at masahol sa isang malansang isda." Kaya mga kaibigan, dumalo at mag aaral ng wikang Pilipino(Tagalog).

KARYN MILNE
The Coordinator



As the new Coordinator for the Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre I am privileged to introduce myself to the Kalayaan Centre community.

In this role I will be fortunate enough to work with our dedicated volunteers, members, sponsors, and donors in the pursuit of attaining Kalayaan Centre's goals and objectives.

I recently left Korea where I was living and teaching English for the greater portion of 2008. Teaching in Korea gave me a valuable perspective on living in a foreign land, and a great respect for a new culture and country. I have also traveled extensively throughout South-East Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, and many places in the U.S. and Caribbean to satisfy my thirst for knowledge of different cultures.

Previous to teaching in Korea I worked for approximately 3 years with a non-profit organization where I was promoted from the role of Office Coordinator to the role of Communications and Membership Services Coordinator after the first year. During my tenure I managed national events, coordinated annual charitable golf tournaments, wrote newsletters, coordinated volunteers, maintained the organization's website, and created marketing material and initiatives, among many other things. I believe these experiences along with my many fundraising activities in a personal capacity and degree in Psychology will make me very successful in this role.

I am very pleased to be at Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre and look forward to contributing my optimal efforts to everything I take part in.

Sincerely,
Karyn, Coordinator

Presidents Message

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shops that promote meaningful learning and social experience, increase seniors' knowledge and awareness of critical social issues that affect them. There will be a seniors' weekend get-away (camping) where they will share and learn about each other's day to day lives, thus learn and develop coping skills at the same time appreciate nature. Culminating activity will be the presentation of the zarzuela at the Meadowvale Theatre in mid- November or late October. This will be quite an experience for both seniors and youth participants alike and something new the audience will enjoy.

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ACTIVITIES

Weekly

- Monday Line Dancing
Rondalla Class
Tagalog Class
- Wednesday
Tagalog Class
Ballroom Dancing
- Thursday
Ballroom Dancing
- Friday (3rd Friday of the Month)
LeJem Karaoke Night
- Saturday
CPO Folk Dance/Music
Free Medical Clinic

2009 Upcoming Events

- Mar 21 1st Annual Bowl-a-thon
Trans World Bowling
273 Glidden Road
Brampton
- Apr 17 Spring Dance
\$15 entrance
- May 9 Casino Niagara
- Jun 20 Children's Fashion Show
- Jul 24 Hawaiian Night
- Aug 15 Annual Walkathon
- Aug 29 Golf Tournament
- Sep 19 Casino Trip & Wine tasting
- Oct 30 Halloween Bash
- Nov 22 Community Connections &
Volunteer Appreciation
- Dec 31 New Year's Eve Ball



Ad space for rent!
SUPPORT
NAYON
 \$150.00/year.
 You get this space for 4 issues.
 Contact Kalayaan Centre
 T. 905-602-0923
 Email: nayon@kalayaancentre.ca

Editorial**By: Edgar Frondoza**

Mabuhay and welcome! Tuloy po kayo sa ating NAYON, the newsletter of the Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre!

This is our maiden issue. Feel at home! Meet your kababayans, old friends and new friends. Share experiences.

Why NAYON? We wanted a name that will reflect our culture and the theme of community. There were many suggestions including, Amihan, Ugnayan, Pamana, Sikat, Banaag and more. We chose the word NAYON because it means village. It reflects the Filipino values for a warm and friendly community, a community where people know each other and share common beliefs, experiences and aspirations. *Tayo ay isang Nayon!*

At NAYON, our goal is simple, to promote the Kalayaan Centre and by

doing so, to celebrate our Filipino culture. We will explore ideas, issues and opportunities and define our place in the Canadian cultural mosaic. We will provide the venue, you provide the debate.

Recently there was a debate in Toronto, on the State of the Filipino Union. We are encouraged to learn that many 2nd generation Filipino-Canadians are interested to learn about their parents language and culture. It is a big step towards discovering the Filipino Identity.

We want to hear from you. Send in your comments, suggestions and questions. Send also your donations. We intend to be self sufficient. It will not cost the Centre any cent to print, publish and circulate this newsletter. All costs will come from your ads and donations.

So, come in, enjoy and let us know how we can serve.

Maraming salamat!

NAYON

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Kalayaan Cultural Community
Centre

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Visit us at:

www.kalayaan.ca



Get into the Swing
2009 Kalayaan Centre Golf Classic
at the
Royal Ontario Golf Club

Saturday, August 29, 2009
Regular Fee \$135.00/person
Early Bird \$125.00/person (pay before Aug 1/2009)
includes loot bag, prizes and dinner
Book early and save!

