

BAYANIHAN

"Bayanihan" literally means, "**being a bayan (village)**," and is thus used to refer to a spirit of communal unity and cooperation.

A newsletter of the Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago (FACGC) ©

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“One day our Rizal Center in Chicago will be restored to the entrust of the community.

One day it will be open to the entire community, and remain accountable to it. It will be physically accessible. It will contain resources for all: from a library of books, recordings, walls of artwork, artifacts. Spaces for Filipinx/a/o community organizations to hold business and events, arts spaces, kali/eskrima spaces, Tagalog, Ilokano and Philippine and pre-Philippine language spaces. Something that will serve the Filipinx/a/o community in Chicago and the Midwest. Something Rizal would actually be proud of. **One day.”**

by: Sarahlynn Pablo - sarahlynnpablo.com

One Day is an excerpt from an article written by Sarahlynn Pablo in 2018, the second year of the lawsuit filed against the illegal take over of the Rizal Center .

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Photo captions: (Top) the state of the parquet wood flooring on 9/12/22. (Lower left) Larry Leopoldo intricately puts back one wood tile at a time. (Lower right) Bayanihan volunteers: (L-R) Chris Saroza, Larry Leopoldo, Bobby Luna, Sally Richmond, and Donald Pactol point to the fully restored flooring on 12/6/22.

“I see the potential.”

By Larry Leopoldo

Like many other people who have seen the photo of the damaged parquet flooring in the first issue of the Bayanihan Newsletter, I had a visceral reaction to the picture of the dilapidated dance floor in the auditorium. (Continued on next page)

(Continuation)

But unlike most people, I said to my wife when we saw it, "Hey, I know how to fix that." I have a few occupations, and being a handyman is one of them.

I saw that Tita Sally was looking for volunteers and that FACGC was raising funds. I thought, well, why not contribute with my skills and experience, and skip the middleman?

Anyway, it took longer than I expected, but with the help of Tita Sally and young volunteer Chris Saroza, as well as a few others, we were able to repair the damage and fix some other areas of the floor that had been in disrepair for many years.

My vision for the Rizal Center is to have a space that can be utilized for our community. Believe it or not, I have worked in many dozens of venues and event spaces, not as a handyman but as a caterer. Naturally, I see a huge potential for the general use of the Rizal Center, in that regard, but also as a kind of geographic glue for our Filipino American community.

There exists in this building a long and colorful and memorable history of our community in Chicago. There is

no other place like it. And while many might see the flaws and the blemishes, I see the potential.

When we were working on the floor and cleaning

the edges of the broken wood parquet tiles, we ended up with a huge pile of dirt. But somehow all that dirt we had scraped off between the lines of the wood pieces had meaning.

- LARRY LEOPOLDO

"And while many might see the flaws and the blemishes, I see the potential."



Larry Leopoldo, our master carpenter, presents the beautifully fixed parquet flooring of the auditorium.

They represented, albeit in a gross way, all the people, the many thousands of people who have performed, dined, met, sang, danced, etc. in this auditorium. If only this dirt could talk, it would have many stories to tell.

My first hope is to get the auditorium in great shape. I hope others will come out and volunteer. Volunteering makes you feel good about life. Fixing the place up doesn't take a lot of skills, it's mostly about elbow grease and realizing that this is for us, Filipinos and Filipino Americans. **All of us!**

Larry Leopoldo is a member of CIRCA Pintig and the Filipino American Historical Society of Chicago. Born and raised in Chicago, he is a co-owner of Leopoldo Catering and a Contractor. He has a B.A. in English Literature (DePaul University) and has adapted fiction by Bienvenido Santos and Jose Rizal for the stage, and self-published "The Mysteries of the VERM", a sci-fi/fantasy novel on Amazon.

Volunteers see opportunities and solidarity

As we enter the New Year, the Rizal Center has been through challenges but also welcoming new opportunities.

Currently, the members of FACGC Board and the Bayanihan volunteer corps have been working hard to spruce up the Center and prepare exciting opportunities to bring in new and old generations of Filipinos to once again use the space.



Paula Alcaraz is a member of FACGC's Communications Circle

What happened in the past has gone and now we look forward to what's to come at the Rizal Center. Something that stood out to me as I toured the Center was the potential the space can offer to the community. I imagine the Rizal Center as a safe place for individuals to come together to share stories of the memories they had at the Center, opportunities to educate the younger generation on our culture, language, and traditions, host local artists to share their work, or maybe a night just to celebrate being in community and solidarity.

I am grateful for the volunteers and donors that have supported and helped the Rizal Center thus far. As we continue on this journey, I am hopeful that we will be able to complete all the work remaining so that our doors can once again, be open back to all. ###



Christopher Saroza is a member of FACGC's Facility Circle

I began volunteering at the Rizal Center (RC) in November to revitalize it as a vibrant cultural space for the Filipino community in Chicago. I found this to be an exciting and impactful way to both support and learn more about the local culture and community.

Volunteering at RC has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I have the opportunity to meet and connect with new people and to see the physical progress that we have made particularly in the Center's main ballroom. I also have gained skills and experience in building restoration while engaging more with Filipino culture on a daily basis.

I encourage young FilAms to get involved and find impactful opportunities that align with their passion and values. The efforts to restore the Rizal Center actively contribute to a broader effort of creating a space for Filipinos in Chicago to host events and participate in activities as a community.

As a FiliAm who grew up in a mixed household, the cultural hub that the Rizal Center has the potential to become is one that I wish had existed when I first moved to Chicago five years ago. It is both exciting and fulfilling to be a part of creating something that future generations will be able to benefit from. ###

Volunteering is a family affair



The members of the Sison Family from Houston, Texas join the regular Rizal Center's volunteers for a photo op after a day's hard work: Seated (L-R) Scout Vince Sison and Rotarian Kathleen Sison, Sally Velasco-Richmond, FACGC's secretary and Bayanihan outreach and volunteer circle lead, Ester Hana*, mother of Kathleen and known cultural patron of Rizal Center, Cora Sopena, FACGC's Treasurer and Bayanihan Financial Circle lead. Standing (L-R) Abe Reciple, Eagle Scout Auggie Sison, Boy Scout Nate Sison, and Andre Ferreira, Rotary Exchange Student from Belo Horizonte, Brazil.



BOD Vedasto Diamante (RIP)

THANK YOU for your community service! *Salamat po! We dedicate our work to your undying love of our arts and culture.*

Ester Hana* remembers the efforts of the late Ved Diamanté in integrating arts and culture in the heart of FACGC's charitable mission. She says, "I have fond memories of my piano concerts initiated and organized by Ved (member of Board of Directors-Clarito Group). I appreciate his efforts in organizing **LARAWAN** (PORTRAIT) as FACGC's cultural arm in the 90's."

(*Ester Hana is an icon in the musical landscape of Chicago. She is the community's beloved cultural gem. According to Broadway.com, "Critics call Hana a phenomenal talent, singing songs in over a dozen languages including Swedish, French, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, German, Thai, English and Filipino. Her recordings feature some of her original works as well as her facility with languages and her familiarity with different musical styles including classical, folk and theater music."

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS!!!

A gift of *Home away from Home*



FACGC director Marilou Tabo receiving a generous donation from the officers of Chicago Filipino American Lions Club and We Dance for Lions NFP. (R-L) Ben Zoleta*, Dina Quiba, Vicky Fertig, Lani Lagudas, Pabs Quiba, Malou Tabo*, Marjorie Querubin*, and Yoly Zoleta (* members of FACGC's Fundraising and Development Circle.

The Fundraising and Development Circle under Malou Tabo's leadership has initiated fundraising activities that laid down FACGC's platform of accepting donations in *damayan* (*mutual aid*) fashion. In partnership with Circa Pintig, the call for "**A GIFT OF HOME AWAY FROM HOME**" was launched. To give a gift, please go to <https://circapintig.networkforgood.com/projects/172580-bayanihan-for-rizal-center>.

Malou also partnered with Chicago Filipino American Lions Club and We Dance for Lions, NFP in raising funds for the maintenance and upkeep of the Rizal Center. More gift giving opportunities will be opened to allow long time patrons of Rizal Center to leave their legacy via endowment gifts.

STAYING with the MISSION: The Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago will continue to pursue its charitable mission as set forth in its tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) of IRS code. (<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exempt-purposes-internal-revenue-code-section-501c3>)

Home Away From Home: For more than five decades, Rizal Center played its unique role of providing Filipinx/a/os a "tambayan" (hang out), a club house, a cultural stage, a place for celebrating or a just safe space for "Kumustahan" (meet and greet). Now, this "home" is poised to realize the mission of our pioneers: to work in solidarity with Filipino Americans in promoting economic and socio-political empowerment anchored to the spirit of **bayanihan** (people working together).

Kapitbahayan and Heart Truth

Establishing goodwill in the neighborhood

Like a good neighbor, FACGC follows the Filipino value of *Kapitbahayan* (neighborly concern) in reaching out to institutions serving shared constituents.

Directors Jerry Clarito, Rizalina Velasco-Richmond, and Mae Lant gave 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin a courtesy visit last November to inform him of the recent history of FACGC and the potential programs that will benefit Asian Americans in his ward.



(L-R) Rizalina Velasco-Richmond, 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin, Jerry Clarito, Mae Lant)

The FACGC contingent shared with Alderman Martin the Asian demographics (by zip codes) in the City as the numbers suggest a need for social service organizations for Filipinos in the ward than any other Asian groups.###

Asian Alone	60618	60625	60630	60640	60646	60659	Total
Asian Indian	1,014	2015	1,225	1,130	379	3,215	8,978
Chinese	489	818	155	1,215	246	545	3,468
Filipino	2,727	3,996	2,391	985	832	1,771	12,702
Korean	395	851	378	755	649	417	3,445

(Source: American Community Survey ACS 2018-5-year estimates) Filipinos remain to be clustered in certain north side zip codes around Rizal Center. The Filipino community is a fast growing community via new incoming immigrants.

CONGRATULATIONS for a job well done!!

Congratulations to the hard work of Mae Lant and FACGC's Programs Circle for bagging the Asian Health Coalition's (AHC) partnership in implementing AHC's 2022-2023 "The Heart Truth"



Mae Lant



selected FACGC to be a partner in its 2022-2023 "The Heart Truth" program.

Mae, as a practicing nurse for more than four decades, expresses her delight in addressing the issue of heart health of our kababayans. She says,

"I am excited to undertake the work of assessing "The Heart Truth" curriculum to enhance heart health knowledge beneficial to the overall health of our kababayans"

Mae encourages kababayans to participate in the focus groups and/or individual interviews about "Heart Truth". Community based participatory research is a tool that will empower kababayans to take action about their heart health.

Participants to the focus groups or interviews will get \$75 or \$50, respectively. Please email Mae at mdlant@yahoo.com for more information. ###

MARAMING SALAMAT PO! (THANK YOU!)



FACGC BOARD MEMBERS (L-R) Willi Buhay, Cora Sopena, Carmen Estacio, Mae Lant, Jerry Clarito, Rizalina Velasco- Richmond, Malou Tabo, Norberto Luna (not in the photo - Dennis Cruz, and Thelma Bascos)

We express our gratitude to all our volunteers and donors who help us regain our footing in delivering the mandate laid down for FACGC's legitimate board by Cook County Circuit Court's ruling on August 19, 2022.

DONORS FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2022

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous	Flor Clarito	Nenette Lee	Mary Anne Santiago
Michael Aguilar	Jerry Clarito	Marjorie Llanes	Emy and Dan Santillan
Levi Aliposa	Estefania Clarito	Cielo Lopez	Clarita Santos
Frank Alvarez	Dennis Cruz	Benedicto Magahis	Jonathan Sarmiento
Sol Anderson	John Disterhoff	Conchita Manalo	Cora Sopena
Kristine Aquino	Josie Disterhoff	Angela Mascarenas	Gary Sotelo
Dante Argayoso	Carmen Estacio	Fe Mendoza	Anna Marie Tabo
Terry Balbarino	Jeanne Fontelera	Michelle Motherway	Malu Tabo
Zoilo Balbarino	Janette Garcia	Jeanne Nacpil	Nonoy Tabo
Marissa Banez	Anna Guevarra	Tiffany Nacpil	Ivy Tan
Jasper Baniquid	Hialy Gutierrez	Melissa Palma	Kristina Tendilla
Thelma Bascos	Chito Hernaez	Conrad Panganiban	Joyce Triantafilidis
Sofia Belvis	Lina Hernaez	Marina Rativo	Rizalina Velasco-Richmond
Emerita Bernales	Gloria Key	Elizabeth Reginio	Kristine Velasco
Willi Buhay	Mae Lant	Jimmi Reyes	Ryan Villoria
Adolph Cabagnat	Su Layug	Kaya Rial	
	Resurreccion Lecaroz	Therese Santiago	

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Filipino American Lions Club

Dancing With Joy, Inc.

Forever Young Dance Club

Ladies for Rizal

We Dance for Lions, NFP

Arts and culture in the heart of RC's programs

(Re)Building Rizal Center (RC), Transforming Community Life: A Work-in-Progress



By Angela "Ging" Mascarenas

A **play** is unfolding within our Filipina/o/x American (FilAm) community in Chicago. It is not the sort of a Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet or a Hugo's Les Misérable, yet it is monumental and timeless just the same, at least for many of us who consider Chicago our home. It is a love story; a masterpiece-in-the-making borne out of the selflessness, generosity, dedication and labor-of-love of many community members who have offered countless hours and invaluable resources, sweat and tears included, in reclaiming the Rizal Center back for the community. After the long saga of legal battles, the Rizal Center has proverbially risen from the ashes and is poised to take center-stage once again in the heart of our community.

Play Title: To Be Determined.

Setting: Present day Chicago.

Characters: Anyone and Everyone.

The beauty of our play-in-progress is that everybody can participate. No prior experience or professional training necessary. There is a role for each one regardless of age, gender, language, economic level, religion, (dis)abilities, political persuasion, or place of birth. And the time to participate is here and now.

"Thus, whatever your role is, play it big, and do it well. Give it your all!"

Yet this is not your ordinary theatrical production. It belongs to a tradition called the Theater of the Oppressed (TOP). Unlike most theatrical traditions where there is a clear distinction between actors and spectators and the latter designate power to the dramatic characters to think and act for them, in TOP these distinctions are blurred, if not intentionally avoided.

As world-renowned TOP theorist and practitioner, Augusto Boal, states, the aesthetics of the oppressed "focuses on the action itself"; spectators delegate no power to the characters (or actors) to either act or think in their place. Rather, they assume the protagonistic role by changing the dramatic action, trying out solutions, or discussing plans for change. In other words, all are actors who write and act in their own play. And in so doing, they train themselves for real action.

Thus, the theater of the oppressed is about liberation and change. As Boal argues, the oppressed can use theater to liberate themselves by reclaiming their protagonistic roles not only in the arts but in society as well.

This is the tradition that our community arts group, CIRCA-PINTIG (CP), was founded on over 30 years ago. It is an aesthetic practice that we continue to nurture and build with everything that we do. For over three decades, we have developed our own concretization of TOP called collective historicizing. As the terms connote, our collective struggles, histories, hopes and dreams take center stage. And with every workshop or performance, we rehearse our protagonistic roles and strategies for collective action.

Thus, we call on all our community members and supporters to take part in this work-in-progress. Together, let us rebuild and transform the Rizal Center to be our safe space for training ourselves for real action as we make history and strengthen our Filipino American collective power.

In this drama, there are no small roles, only small actors. What role would you like to play? Whatever it is, play it big and do it well. Give it your all!

Angela "Ging" Mascarenas is the Co-Founder of CIRCA-Pintig and currently serves as its Community Engagement Director. She received her doctorate degree in Sociology from the University of Illinois Chicago.

Focus on community's economic development

Building the Filipino American economic development hub



By Norberto "Bobby" Luna

The pandemic which led to a significant loss of jobs over the last two years has affected both mainstream, medium and small businesses all across the United States covering all ethnicities. It is well documented that the economic downturn has resulted in dire situations for many such as homelessness. But on the other hand, it has also ignited the entrepreneurial spirit of many leading to the establishment of small businesses be it food related, retail or services.

“..the hub will shepherd new entrepreneurs through the landscape of establishing and operating a business..

I have a business idea, where do I start?

Starting and operating a business can be a daunting task even for seasoned professionals more so with newbies having to deal with issues such as conceptualizing ideas, research, product development, marketing, capital and financial sourcing and operations in general. Some, especially with business management experience from previous jobs may be able to sail through the rough seas of owning a business. However, those who came from non business related jobs will have a difficult time navigating the requirements of entrepreneurship.

It is in this light that the Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago has thought of creating the Filipino American Economic Development Hub at the Rizal Community Center.

Primarily, the said Hub will shepherd new entrepreneurs through the landscape of establishing and operating a business. Services to be provided are free business consulting, mentoring programs, low cost training services, business plan development, capital sourcing, lending assistance, marketing and operations in general. The Hub will establish linkages to government entities as well as private service providers be it accounting, legal as well as social media education.

The Economic Development Hub will also assist nonprofit organizations not only in organizing but in the proper operation of one as well. The Center will offer workshops and training that will cover IRS registration, Illinois Attorney General Office registration and the nuances of running a nonprofit organization.

In essence, the Filipino American Economic Development Hub will develop alliances in the business and nonprofit communities via the *Bayanihan* (people working together) and *Damayan* (mutual aid) fashion to help one another in providing resources to new and established entrepreneurs.

Norberto "Bobby" Luna has an extensive experience in the business of mortgage brokering residential and commercial finance. His educational background includes an economics degree from the University of the Philippines and an MBA from the Asian Institute of Management.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are planning to launch in the coming months our following health, wellness, and recreational activities. Please email hello@rizalcenterchicago.org for more info.

Dancing: Line Dancing and Folk dancing

Exercise: Video led Tai Chi for seniors

Performing Arts: Storioke (Story telling cum karaoke)

Partners: Circa-Pintig, Mae Lant, Malou and Nonoy Tabo

Focus on capacity building

Building community capacity through information and advocacy



By Angela "Angie" Ebreo

I currently work at a university where I am paid for doing two things that I love. As a researcher, I can fulfill my eternal curiosity about the world and how it works. I'm particularly fascinated by what motivates human behavior – I am a psychologist after all. Second, as a mentor and educator of college students, I can contribute to the growth and development of youth.

"..because as a man thinks, so he is; a man who does not think for himself and allowed himself to be guided by the thought of another is like the beast led by a halter."

The older I become though, the more I've come to appreciate the wisdom that my adoptive parents' instilled in me, regarding the value of education. Recently I was thinking of a phrase my father kept saying to me when I was still in elementary school "Knowledge is power". Little did I know back then that this phrase covers one of Jose Rizal's great ideas regarding education.

It's not information or facts or "alternate facts" by themselves that can impact society. Anyone, can get on the internet these days or even their phones and google a term to find "information". But "information" needs to be analyzed using our powers of reason; not to be taken in without careful critique nor based totally on the opinions of others.

Rizal wrote " because as a man thinks, so he is; a man who does not think for himself and allowed himself to be guided by the thought of another is like the beast led by a halter."

Once critiqued, information can then be put to use, hopefully in a way that benefits family, community, and society. The information that we choose to use and the purpose the information supports is what potentially transforms us.

All that said, one way I think I can be of service to the Rizal Center is to join with others who would like to obtain information about the Filipino community in Chicago, critically examine this information in order to provide it to persons who can advocate and/or use the information for the well-being and empowerment of community. If you have interests in finding existing sources of information about community, obtaining information through participatory action "research", broadly disseminating information about the community or engaging in advocacy using information, please contact me. This isn't something I want to, or care to do, alone.

Angela "Angie" Ebreo is a former resident of Chicagoland. While living in the area, she worked at UIC's Institute for Research on Race & Public Policy and volunteered for various nonprofit organizations, including AFIRE and Asian Americans Advancing Justice. She received her doctorate in Social Psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

ANNOUNCEMENT

In partnership with the Asian Health Coalition, FACGC will be conducting focus group discussions and interviews about the heart health of Filipino Americans.

Participants to the focus groups or interviews will get \$75 or \$50, respectively. Please email Mae at mdlant@yahoo.com for more information.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. But you can do a lot to protect your heart.