



THE Blue Quill

AUG2020-APRIL2021 VOL. LXXII ISSUE NO.1



Cover by 12-St. Monica

Duterte Signs Anti-Terror Bill into Law

by Rynna Estacio

President Rodrigo Duterte signed into law a highly controversial bill that aims to broaden the country's anti-terrorism campaign.

It was signed just days before it was effective as law.

Republic Act No. 11479, or the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, seeks to strengthen the Human Security Act of 2007, giving more surveillance powers to government forces. It criminalizes incitement of terrorism "by means of speeches, proclamations, writings, emblems, banners or other representations." Under the law, suspected terrorists can be jailed up to 24 days without a warrant.

The new law also authorizes the Anti-Money Laundering Council to freeze assets and bank accounts of individuals or groups tagged as terrorists.



Photo by Karl Norman Alonzo/Presidential Photo

Executive secretary Salvador Medialdea and presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the president signed the bill in its entirety. Roque said the president signed the measure after thoroughly reviewing the provisions with his legal team.

Lawmakers opposed to the bill, saying it will worsen the state of human rights in the country.

The new measure also met intense opposition from several sectors when Duterte certified it as urgent and as the House of Representatives deliberated the controversial measure.

Over 250 organizations, including the country's top schools, urged President Duterte to veto the anti-terrorism bill.

National Security adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., National Intelligence Coordinating Agency director general Alex Montenegro and Interior secretary Eduardo Año assured the public that the measure carried enough safeguards to discourage abuse by law enforcers.

Unlike the Human Security Act, the current anti-terrorism law has a provision that allows the state to tackle foreign fighters more effectively, Esperon said.

OFWs in Saudi Arabia sell their blood to survive

by Sofia Martinez

Midway during the prolonged global lockdown, it was reported that several

isolated overseas Filipino workers who are residing in Saudi Arabia have reportedly resorted to selling and donating their blood in order to buy basic necessities. The workers used to be employed in a restaurant which was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As stated by "24 Oras reporter" JP Soriano that the OFWs sold their blood in exchange for 500 Riyal or around P6,600.

One of the OFWs expressed that along with everybody else, they do not have enough funds to be able to buy basic necessities. Majority had to resort to selling their blood in order to buy meals. Almost

all of the reported OFWs are also awaiting unpaid wages by their employers.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs – Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs or the DFA-OUMWA, Sauda Arabia has the most number of stranded Filipinos in need of repatriation at 88,000. They are currently working on getting the OFWs home within two to three months.

"The biggest problem in Saudi Arabia is Riyadh alone is bigger than the Philippines," DFA-OUMWA undersecretary Sarah Arriola said. "So it's very difficult for our foreign service post to respond

Pope Francis backs civil unions for LGBTQ+ couples

by Rynna Estacio

Pope Francis has become the first leader of the Roman Catholic Church to support same-sex civil unions.

His comments came in an interview in a feature-length documentary film, Francesco, which premiered at the Rome Film Festival.

The film, which includes interviews with the pontiff, tackles issues that mean the most to the pope, including the environment, migration, poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

"What we have to create is a civil union law," he said. "That way they are legally covered."

to the need of our OFWs because of the sheer size, the lockdowns, and also the lack of manpower. And, unfortunately, our POLO office has been shut down because there are 16 infected of COVID-19

This is not the first time that stranded OFWs had to donate their blood in order to get funds. In 2016, Senator Cynthia Villar raised the suggestion for the government to put up a blood money fund for OFWs who may need it in the future.

She quoted, "We give funds for repatriation, legal assistance, why not give funds for blood money? This is an emergency. I'm not saying the government will



Photo by Gregorio Borja/AP Photos

The statements represent a break from the Church's teachings and his strongest comments yet on the issue.

Nonetheless, Francis's comments do not, in any way, alter the Catholic doctrine, but represent a remarkable turn for a church that has fought against LGBT legal rights — with past popes calling same-sex unions invalid and deviant.

The pope did not express any openness to extending marriage to same-sex couples, but said "Homosexuals have a right to be a part of the family. They are children of God and have a right to a family," in his interview with Evgeny Afineevsky. "Nobody should be thrown out, or be made miserable because of it."

As pope, he never publicly endorsed civil unions for same-sex couples, although he endorsed such legal arrangements when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. He also sought to support the church's LGBT followers in his public statements since he was elected pope in March 2013.

shoulder everything, but there should at least be a contribution from the government." Upon asked where the money will be sourced, Villar said perhaps it may be included in the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Senator Richard J. Gordon, chairman and CEO of the Philippine Red Cross, stressed the need for blood donors because the country faces a shortage of blood supply, which could place the lives of patients, including accident victims, at risk.

"We need your help. Amid the ongoing Covid-19 crisis in our country, there are

il unions for same-sex couples, although he endorsed such legal arrangements when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. He also sought to support the church's LGBT followers in his public statements since he was elected pope in March 2013.

The Ozanne Foundation, which advocates for LGBT equality in religious settings, said "This will bring hope to millions of lesbian and gay couples around the world, and will enable them to know that they have the pope's blessing to be in a family, and indeed to have a right to a family."

On the other hand, conservative critics within the church hierarchy, who have for years accused Francis of diluting church doctrine, saw the remarks as a reversal of church teaching. Some have publicly attacked him, even accusing him of heresy.

persons in hospitals now who are badly in need of blood transfusions like cancer patients, accident victims, people with blood disorders, mothers who are giving birth, and so many others, and with a limited supply of blood nationwide, we are in danger of running out," he said.

As of now, this is still an on-going issue and appropriate course of action should be taken. Our fellow Filipinos in Saudi Arabia are living in scarcity and one way to help them is to inform others of their current situation or reach out to the officials whom you know that can assist them.

Appreciating Creator Culture

By Angela Faith Dizon

You just finished the first module for the day and decided to jump straight into the hourly break. Engulfed in comfy clothes, the light breeze of the fan and imagination, a hasty scroll through the Internet was the go-to relaxation stop. Until the #walangpasok topic fell in the Trending Tab and the spiral of never-ending information oblivion and emotional intensity finally began. Leaving the other modules untouched for another day.

The World Wide Web—both a curse and a gift humanity had to offer. It's a portal with anything of everything to discover. An inevitable invention designed for new ways of general life wasting and virtual barbarism towards strangers because the outside world became too hot to handle. Since then, quarantine has tested the Internet now more than ever. Content has been limited so people have to rely on their funny little brains and thoughts to entertain or annoy. Though since social media's one great superpower is relatability, it could never go out of style! Especially in the first half of self-isolation when people had to let go of their steam and find ways to cope. Ranging from fan art of little crew mates annihilating each other on a spaceship to figuring out what Alden Richards is doing in his free time, it's indescribably easy to find something you would enjoy. And it's definitely easier to give random people a platform of fame and numbers.

Social media influencers—a term used loosely for people in the Internet with a significantly large following. They can also be used as essential tools for idiotic controversy but we focus on the former.



Though whether their content be good or bad does not matter as long as they fit the criteria of being attractive, the attention would come rushing in. At least, that was when the bar was set too low. This quarantine was filled to the brim with weird timelines of horrendous events that cannot be escaped easily. Isolation has given people room for thoughts and realizations that were needed to keep at bay. Plus, trending topics like WW3 popping up unexpectedly to mess with everyone's head, the people have had a rough year. Conveniently though, this is also where the new era of social media influencers began popping out like popcorn on a hot kettle! Bringing more to the plate than ever.

You might have seen their names hanging around the virtual world, ranging from Auntie Julie to Gen Z's on TikTok, good vibes have been radiating through the screen while being morally and politically engaged. Disguised in satire entertainment, these influencers have been using their platforms to spread awareness in certain topical issues all while sprinkling fun as they pass by. A genius move to make people care for what's happening in the world. Modern problems require modern

solutions! Never in my life have I seen myself liking people like these as much. Never have I thought the bar of becoming an Influencer would heighten to this day. They've offered tips, opinions and engaged in discussions that would fuel minds while setting boundaries for opinions of your own. And get this... some of them even know how to take constructive criticism! This generation has given spotlight to people who actually deserve it. Well, most of them at least. The timeline has definitely been a good distraction and source of information in times of crisis, if you ignore the little bugs along the way.

Since then, relatability skyrocketed, memes blew up and political arguments ensued. The amount of support these influencers received reminds us to choose who we see fit deserving of the spotlight. In the end, we thank the Internet for giving us entertainment to help with our sanity. It's a place to feel part of something bigger than yourself. A place to find relatable memes and relieve stress after a day's hard work. Though remember kids, excessive use might stun your personality and make you blind.

Keeping Up With the Student Council

by Hannah Fenella Bacosa and Sophia Kaila Mindalano

Being a leader isn't easy. It isn't a role that anyone could fulfill. It takes a lot of courage, patience, dedication, and guts to be one.

The Student Council 2020-2021 were chosen because the students believe that they are responsible and are capable to carry out their tasks. Now that we are currently confined in our homes because of the global pandemic, we are working with the new normal, they continue to thrive and try to help as much as they can.

They may not show it, but it won't be surprising if they are also having a hard time coping up with the current situation; they are still human after all.

With a lot of school works on their plate, how exactly are they handling that ad being a student council officer at the same time? So we decided to ask them questions about how they are handling this school year, which is completely different from our prior ones, as student council officers.

What's it like to manage students during the new normal?

It feels like a bigger responsibility for us. It is very challenging considering that this is the first time learning is done through this set-up therefore, we do not have existing experiences on how to handle the student body this way. However, we still strive to produce projects for everyone. Since we are unable to monitor the discipline and well-being of the Scholasticans because of lack of communication and interaction, the cooperation of everyone is very important and much more needed during this time. We trust that everyone will still practice and embody our school's virtues.

What are the tasks given to you?

We want the presence of the Student Council to be visible which is why we are encouraged to plan activities that can be done in this online set-up and are beneficial for both the student body and faculty.

What are your future plans for S.Y 2020-2021?

As much as possible, we want to fulfill our promise of service to Scholasticans. Even if our situation limits what we can do, we see to it that we find alternatives for the activities we used to do during the face to face classes. Thankfully, we have the social media platforms which are very effective at this moment. Most Scholasticans are active in the social world which is why we maximize its uses. We use our accounts to keep the students updated with the latest announcements & activities. We recently launched the inter-section poster making competition called Post-IT. Students can expect that this will be held every time there are celebrations. We also led the program of the celebration of Teacher's day. We will soon launch more projects that everyone can enjoy. Expect that these will be done virtually, of course. We assure you that we are trying our best to give you our best service! More than ours, your support and patience are

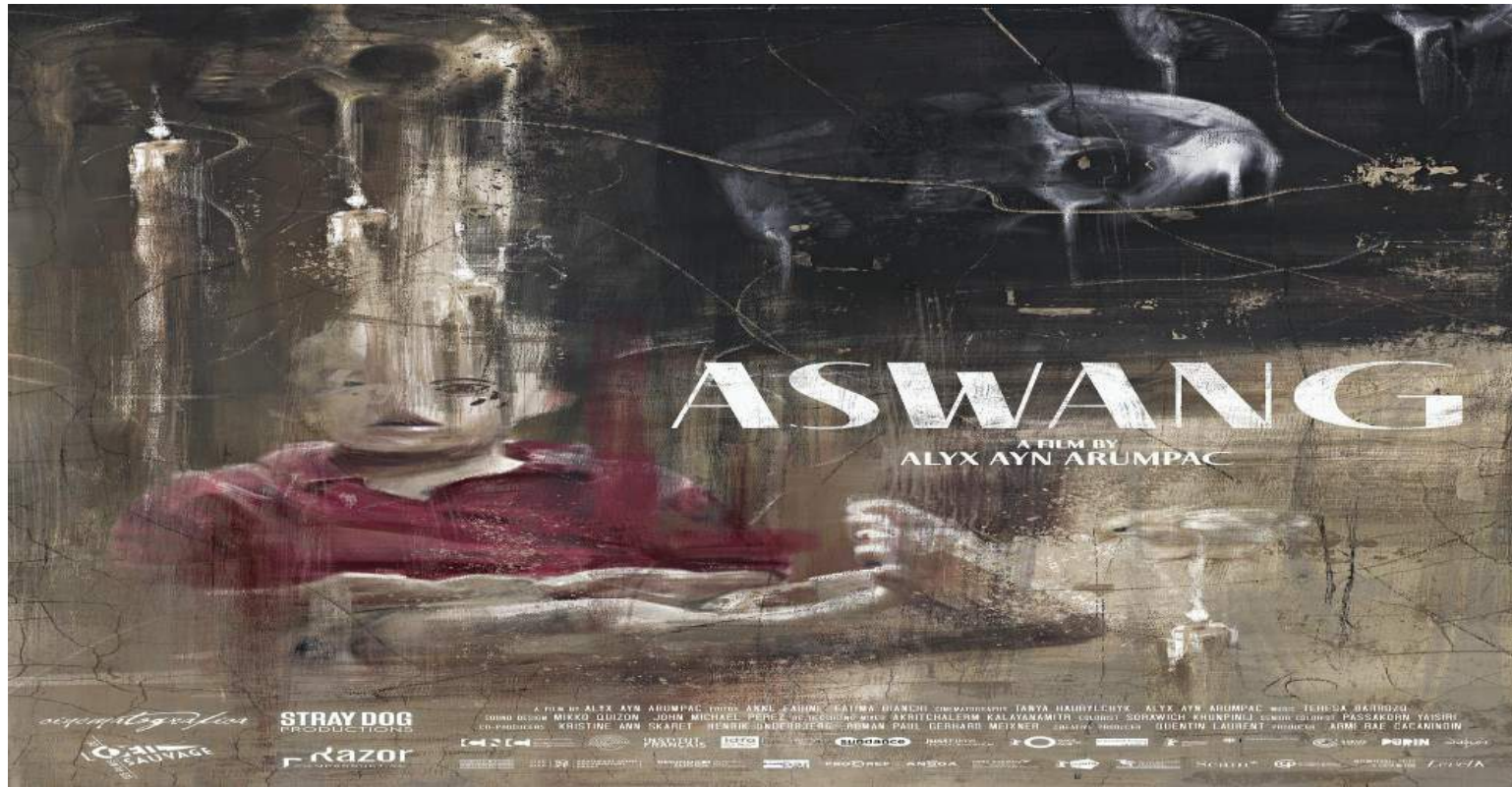
essential for us to carry out these plans.

How are you going about balancing SC duties with academics?

Now this is not a new question! Before we filed our candidacy for the SCO, we are very much aware about this. And even though proper time management sounds too common to answer, it really is the key! We won't deny that we do encounter difficulties especially with the adjustments at hand but we are learning and discovering a pace comfortable for us to do our tasks. We discipline ourselves in providing time spaces for academic works and SCO duties. We are also very thankful to receive guidance from our moderator & from one another.

And lastly, words of encouragement from our honorable Student Council!

During troubled times, it is easy to cave in and lose hope. Nowadays, most of us are facing setbacks; may it be with adjusting to the new normal, or having difficulties with our internet connections. But once in a while, it's necessary to reward yourself and take a good rest after a long and tiring day. It is a must to make your health a priority and despite all the requirements and quizzes to take, keep in mind that all of these are great opportunities for us to learn and to know where to improve. Do not hesitate to ask for help and guidance whenever you experience a hard time in understanding the lessons and keep in mind that it is okay to make mistakes because it is part of the process, experience, and learning. Always manage and balance your time and don't forget to follow the school's motto, Ora et Labora. Remember, this is not a competition on who can adjust first! We must focus on ourselves- who we want to be at the end of the academic year and the ways on how we can achieve that. Remember the DDS that we should aspire to be- Disciplined, Determined and Supportive. You are doing better than you think you are. WE CAN DO IT!



Aswang Film: The Monsters Amongst Us

by Aiyana Gutierrez

“Aswang” is an umbrella term for the various shape-shifting evil spirits in our Filipino folklore, such as vampires, ghouls, and witches. These myths were created in order to frighten children, and have led to the creation of wild stories meant to taunt and shock them.

The Aswang Film is not, however, about the mythological shape-shifting spirits from our childhood. It is, instead, the first ever Filipino made and produced documentary film on Duterte’s bloody campaign against drugs.

Made available worldwide through Vimeo from July 11, 2020 at 11:00 p.m. until 11:59 p.m. the next day, Aswang became an instant hit, quickly becoming the top trend in the Philippines on Twitter.

Directed by Alyx Ayn Arumpac, an independent documentary filmmaker from the Philippines, Aswang is as heart-breaking, gruesome, and real as it can get.

Instead of portraying the extra judicial killings in our country as one would an action film, the director chose to focus on the raw emotions of the people who have been affected by it. Instead of showing the point of view of policemen and politicians, the director chose to highlight the atrocities that have been happening to our fellow countrymen and shine a light on the gory effects of the Drug war. Leaning away from facts, statistics, and numbers, she chose to rely on emotions and eliciting feelings of empathy and hopelessness from the viewers.

This documentary was purposefully created in a way that it gave off the illusion of being purely fictional. The very beginning of it appears to be an introduction to a horror or suspense film, instead of a documentary. Some parts even showed mangled dead bodies dumped on the streets, seemingly positioned to look like it came from a set for a film. But they weren’t. Everything shown was real. It’s pure, bloody, and filled with hollow decay. The film paints a vivid picture of the horrors of our society. It is not a film that is meant to bring hope. Instead of perpetuating the constant narrative of the Filipino people’s resiliency like the media constantly does, Arumpac chose to show only the heavy truth— that Filipinos too have a breaking point.

They focus on simple people: a child, a mother, a brother, and a woman. But if you look closely, you’ll see that they are all in search of a single thing— justice. The child whose parents are in prison and whose best friend is in the cemetery, the mother whose son was wrongly killed and framed, the mission-

ary brother who believes in Duterte but wants justice for his murdered sibling, and the woman who was illegally detained in a secret room along with a dozen other people for ransom. All of them demand justice, and yet, even with all those who manage to survive and return, no one bothers to listen to them. No one wants to tell their story, and so people turn blind eyes. People have been conditioned so well to see only what they want to see, that instead of looking directly into the killers eyes and demanding justice, they choose to focus on the bodies rotting in the streets.

“A chick placed on top of a casket means the killer runs loose. When justice is unlikely, the chick supposedly knocks on the killer’s conscience. But the aswang would never heed to the knocking of even a thousand chicks.”

As you go on with the film, you’ll

slowly realize that the longer you’re watching, the more people are shown dying. It seems like a correlation to Duterte’s regime, and how the longer he holds power over our country and is in office, the more people are executed and abducted.

Thousands of Filipinos are being killed, and thousands more are disappearing on the daily. And yet, the cries of their loved ones and the cries of their families and friends are left unheard. The knocking, pounding, and striking of thousands of chicks are rendered useless, falling only upon deaf ears.

With all the fatalities and disappearances that we constantly see in the news, it becomes all too easy to forget that these people are not just statistics, numbers, or body counts, but that they are all human. With this, we are painful-

A Day in the Life

by Ana Mikaela Gopez

How are you doing?

It’s crazy how much has changed in what feels like something less than a month. Just when you thought life couldn’t wear you out even more, what with the explosion of Mt. Taal seeming to be the definitive moment of 2020 for us back in January, and the amount of things that we gradually lose interest in as time flies by. Remember when you’d go to Tiktok just for fun and be bombarded with the Renegade dance done by seven different creators and scroll through content that either left you astounded or unimpressed? (There is no in between.) Remember when the “fake news” that circulated in the web about an outbreak in Wuhan, China felt like the least of your worries? Everything from several months ago tastes like Dalgona coffee and feels so... warm. Having a

purpose seemed so incredibly easy then, when you think about it.

It feels like the biggest question for us all is, “What are you doing?” We wake up, take a look at the screen, do our morning rituals, face the screen as we study, do what else we have to do off-screen (and eventually realize that no, we’d actually have to use our devices to get it done, too), spend our spare time also in front of our phone because there isn’t anything else as entertaining to do at the moment, maybe take a nap, check our phones again upon waking up, do whatever else we must do (and probably bringing the thing with us since every single moment feels too dull without it), and then sleep. The cycle goes on. It’s not that we can be blamed though. Everything else is out of reach and we are doing all that we can. This kind of thing has taken over our lives that we sometimes fail to care much about what else is going on outside the comfort of our homes. It’s not that the world had stopped spinning; it’s just that ours felt like it’s moving a bit slower than before. That said, being quarantined and having limited options is, strangely enough, not

ly reminded of the harsh reality that the people who are wrongfully killed, the people who are murdered and kidnapped and held against their will for ransom, are human. They too have lives, they too have families, and they too are just as human as we are.

Aswang delivers the horrific truth of what Filipinos are going through in the most painful and gruesome way, but it is also the truest way. The myths and tales of aswangs and monsters from our childhood are myths and tales no more. They are real, they are alive, and they are closer than you would ever expect them to be.

Nariyan na ang mga aswang, at nariyan na sila sa harapan mo.

Ano ang gagawin mo?

without an advantage of sorts. After all the times being trapped in just one place for so long, our eyes permanently glued to our devices, we might have learned a couple of things we’ve never known or even care to know about until now. Perhaps some of us have learned a new hobby, too. Maybe our style has changed, maybe (and this is an oddly positive maybe), a part of us has changed and will never be the same again after this experience. And that means that something about the world that will never be the same again. This our life now—frantic yet leisurely, capricious yet constant. That’s how it’s going to be for quite a time and we’ll just have to live with it.

I genuinely believe that we’ve been asking ourselves the same question one too many times. Here’s one that we should take the time to answer: How are you doing? This is the New Normal, and that means that all of this is somehow a part of what normalcy means for us today. We’re adjusting, and we’re coping, and everything is going to be all right.

The Matter of Living

by Eina Loux Ruiz

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

This was the opening statement of a speech by Abraham Lincoln, the U.S.'s 16th president, during the Gettysburg Address. He, on the site of one of the bloodiest battles during the American Civil War, gave a speech that would be remembered for generations. In his time as president, he advocated for equal rights, continuously pushing for the end of slavery. It would be reasonable for you to believe that, since progressive views like Lincoln's existed even in the 1800's, issues of race would be a thing of the past.

But, of course, you know better. Because you remember what happened on the 25th of May 2020. You remember when an innocent black man was wrongly accused of passing a counterfeit bill, deemed suspicious because of the color of his skin. You remember the officer who knelt on his neck, and the ones who only watched on. You remember the 8 minutes and 46 seconds he was gasping for air, clinging onto his life while yelling "I can't breathe."

You remember George Floyd. His death lit a fire, sparking an outrage long in the making. Word spread across news outlets worldwide. Infographics and petitions were passed around, from viral tweets to (hopefully) your friends' Instagram stories. Amidst a pandemic, multiple people took to the streets to protest the police brutality against Black Americans. Gone were the days of turning a blind eye to social injustice— this was the Black Lives Matter movement.



But a revolution does not come without its opposition. All Lives Matter became a common rebuttal, misconstruing the movement as one that supports Black Supremacy. U.S. media framed even the most peaceful of protests as 'violent', showing images of property damage and mass looting that most often weren't caused by the real protesters. Just as previous cases were being brought to light, even more were being made. But the fight didn't end there, it never does.

Racism has long been a horrifying part of our history. Lighter skin has always been viewed as 'superior' and 'desirable'. During the colonization of various Asian, African, and Native American land, the people were treated as the lesser kind. They were made to work as slaves, servants— take care of the hard labor while their rich and often White masters reaped without return or remorse. They were mistreated, tortured, killed in their own homeland.

Such was the case in our own country, The Philippines. Though we have long been liberated and become our own nation, the mentality remains ingrained in society. Look around the billboards by EDSA, and you will see many that advertise skin whitening products. Parents tell their darker children to rub their skin with rocks, in hopes to shed off their pigment and uncover their "lightness" underneath. Pale skin has become the beauty standard, those born with it being complimented and envied. The natural beauty of the Filipino has been cast aside, in favor of milky skin

and blonde hair and small features. Those who go against this are shunned, mocked for how Filipino they look.

This is when you beg the question: "Will it stay this way forever?"

Perhaps the answer is no. Perhaps the perpetuation of racism and injustice within society and the system will forever live with us. Perhaps, even in the distant future, equality will remain a far-off dream by the oppressed. Perhaps things were meant to be this way.

But perhaps the answer is yes.

Because when a generation has had enough, when they put their foot down against the oppressors and demand change, then begins the journey to a better future. Knowing the importance of each and every life on this planet is one thing, but advocating for it marks a person who wants to see it in everyday life.

There is always a way for us to help, to spread the message. Those who hope to see a world where all can live as one know that they must start now. What you have is what you make of it, and we can make our society more beautiful than it is.

So the next time you see a petition link, click it and sign it. The next time you hear of a death caused by social injustice, spread awareness on it. When you see videos or posts advocating for the human rights of minorities, boost it. All lives cannot matter when we turn a blind eye to one. Each and every one of us deserves to live another day.

That is the matter of living.



Photo by Jacob Burdis

Success Comes From Within

by Bea Terese Elisa Reyes

Is success thoroughly about fulfilling what others anticipate from you? Is it about how vast your income every month is or how high your grades are? We all have the means to define ourselves as successful in life, but the question is when can we possibly say that we are a step closer to our definition of success?

To begin with, you should bring in a particular goal and exert the best of your ability to obtain it. Although we encounter numerous hindrances when reaching for our aspirations, these shouldn't hold us back from attaining them; and given that the world is full of opportunities, we

should take every venture that we could to be successful. Also, keep in mind that there is no limit to achieving one's aim.

Meanwhile, we all recognize that success doesn't just show up around the nook. We must have conviction and confidence to achieve its true meaning. For instance, if you want to be a writer then compose a 500-word essay every day to enhance your skills. Likewise, if you want to be a reporter, practice not just your written but also your verbal communication skills.

We all have our definition of success and it is in my perspective, as a student, that every student's main target is to gain academic success. However, several students have different actions to achieve real academic success. For instance, most students center on attaining high scores rather than comprehending the real essence of education because that is what success is for them.

While you are trying to achieve success, focus on your goals, and don't be swayed by other people's achievements. You will have your spotlight and you don't need to compete with anyone to attain what you want. We all have distinct paths to walk on and there are countless promising ways on how people prosper.

The quote by Walt Disney: "If you dream it, you can do it." Chasing your goals entails self-discipline coupled with consistency, commitment, and perseverance. It may be difficult going there, and chaotic things might happen along the way but as long as you try to thrive and continue to gain knowledge, know that it is going to be worth it in the end. Don't be afraid to take hold of your dreams, move towards your success, and be brave.

The Modern Fences of the Sampaguita

by Mary Caitlin Yambao



Indigenous people refer to people who associate themselves as a member of a distinct cultural group that traces their roots from pre-colonial times.

Similar to the blank canvas of the Philippine Jasmine, otherwise known as the Sampaguita — the national flower of the Philippines, their culture remains untainted. As their common residences were geographically distinct traditional habitats or ancestral territories, they received little to no foreign impact from several eras of colonialism, hence why they managed to sustain their customs and traditions.

As there are 7,641 islands in the Philippines, with three main island groups, cultural diversity is foreseeable. The archipelago homes different cultural practices, customs, traditions, and 185 ethnolinguistic groups.

An official number for the population of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines is yet to be discovered, but it is estimated that the number ranges between 10% and 20% of the country's population. After some calculations, it is reckoned that 14-17 million of the population belongs to 134 ethnic groups, the majority of which are categorized as indigenous.

Igorot refers to any of the various ethnic groups that originate from the mountains of northern Luzon, whereas Mangyan is the generic name for the eight indigenous groups found on the island of Mindoro, while the Katawhang Lumad are indig-

enous people in the southern Mindanao region of the Philippines.

Although there are indigenous tribes that have managed to sustain their cultural expressions and historical identities despite the systematic exclusion and marginalization from political processes and economic benefit, they suffer from historical discrimination, loss of ancestral lands, displacement, destruction of traditions, and loss of identity and culture.

Nine months into the global pandemic, the reality of indigenous people remaining as some of the most neglected, least privileged, and impeded members of the society — has slowly begun to unearth.

Since 2016, 178 Lumad schools have been shut down, according to Save Our School Network (SOS). Just a year ago, The Department of Education has mandated a permanent closure of 55 schools for indigenous people in the Davao region, four months after their permits to operate were suspended for allegedly teaching "subversive and left-leaning ideologies."

The pandemic has not prevented the constant systematic exclusion of the indigenous people. In fact, news after news, the vulnerability of the situation of indigenous people are being proven to be at its worst. March to May this year, there have been 32 attacks on Lumad schools, those of which include: forced closures,

illegal arrests of students, and aerial bombings. For the indigenous youth to not be left behind, especially in the age of online learning, the government must guarantee them of their education rights.

Aside from the educational challenges that IPs are facing, they are tackling barriers that include the lack of access to health facilities, discrimination, and outright violence that have imperiled their land and livelihood. Logging, mining, and illegal construction in indigenous lands are still present amidst the lockdown and community quarantine. A few months ago, Bea Milda Ansado — a manobo tribe leader who defended their ancestral lands from mining, was shot dead in Cotabato. Additionally, there are projects being pushed that disregards the rights of affected indigenous peoples and local communities, such as the Kaliwa Dam.

These instances act as modern fences that contribute to their further marginalization, as the government's decisions and plans do not take into consideration the susceptibility of indigenous communities. As to how we see the Sampaguita as the nation's pride, the country needs to welcome our indigenous people with more accepting hearts. They are the forgotten Filipinos, the untainted natives, the roots of our culture.

We shouldn't let the last remains of our original culture wither.

Beauty and the Beast

by Ashley Lugtu

#HijaAko trends as women exclaim victim blaming.

"Inviting the beast"?

Rape exists because of rapists. Period.



Many on social media joined Frankie Pangilinan as she condemned the notion that men are not solely responsible for sexual harassment. The hashtag went viral as

thousands of women tweeted their stories, shutting down the misconception that outfit is a consent. Even when not wearing revealing clothes, women may still experience sexual harassment.

Rape already existed in the 1800s when women wore frocks and several layers of clothing underneath. Rape already existed in the 1950s when women wore pleated, below-the-knee skirts. Rape has nothing to do with clothing and everything to do with rapists.

"Bago natin sila baguhin, baguhin muna natin ang sarili't pag-iisip natin. Gets mo, hija?" Tulfo repeated in a separate post in Facebook, trying to prove his point. But Pangilinan still got him there.

Rape is rape. Save your explanation: it doesn't matter. Our ears are closed for nonsense excuses, as your ears and mind are also closed whenever a woman cries out. If you think that rape ends with the violence, then you are mistaken. Imagine living a life, breathing, but feel empty and dead inside, caged and chained in the dark past and unable to move forward, for the experience is hard to forget and remembering it is the worst.

RESPECT the sex which gave you birth! No means no. Which part of NO don't rapists understand? Keep your dirty hands to your beastly selves.

EDITORIAL BOARD SY 2020-2021

Angela Faith Dizon
Editor-in-Chief

Hyacinth Singian
Associate Editor

Aiyana Gutierrez
Managing Editor

Rynna Estacio
News Editor

Eina Loux Ruiz
Features Editor

Mary Caitlin Yambao
Sports News Editor

Stefani Garcia
Literary Editor

Hannah Fenella Bacosa
Graphics Editor

Staffwriters

Abrielle Chelsea Ponce

Ana Mikaela Gopez

Sofia Martinez

Ashley Lugtu

Contributors

Bea Terese Elisa Reyes

Lia Ramiscal

Ma. Daniela Venice Taroy

Leecia Castro

Alysha Cera

Bianca Arceo

Ashley Nicdao

Sophia Kaila Mindalano

Moderator

Mr. Harold Velasco

Justice Shall be Served

by Hyacinth Singian and Caitlin Yambao

Local police confirmed that Sonya Gregorio and her son, Frank, were shot and killed by Police Corporal Jonel Nuezca in Brgy. Paniqui Purok 2, Tarlac on Sunday, December 20.

According to the investigation, Nuezca went to the Gregorios to scrutinize who was shooting boga— an improvised canon used to make noise during New Year celebrations.

The daughter of the said police was present at the scene, beside him, when he committed the crime.

For some people, the deaths of Sonya and Frank Gregorio is an 'isolated case' or an 'ordinary murder' whose suspect happens to be a policeman. However, the facts disagree with the argument that the recent passing of the Gregorios have no relation with Nuezca's profession.

Aside from the fact that the daughter of the suspect screamed 'my father is a policeman' to assert dominance moments before Frank and Sonya's death, Jonel Nuezca trespassed Gregorio territory as a policeman to arrest Frank Gregorio —for playing with 'boga'— without warrant. As a policeman, he was also allowed to carry firearms off-duty in conformity with the directive of President Duterte according to Tarlac Police Chief Police Colonel Renante Cabico in an interview with DZBB on December 21, 2020. Moreover, it states in his criminal record that he has been charged with two homicide cases in the past, which was dropped because there were insufficient evidence against him. From what is seen in the video, he did not hesitate to shoot Sonya and Frank directly to their heads—in front of his own daughter, even. He didn't even have any remorse to shoot Sonya Gregorio once more after she dropped. So, what are the odds that he couldn't have possibly done it in the past?

Those reasons are enough to reinforce the argument that his role as policeman enabled him to commit the crime.

If the filmed persecution of Sonya and Frank Gregorio hadn't gone viral, then this case might've been ignored or tagged as

another "nanlaban case" and eventually forgotten. The incident happened in broad daylight, and with witnesses—who were able to record and capture the crime that took place. This made the public question the things that the police could do at night, without bystanders nor gadgets to capture it.

Meanwhile, an image of the previous cases that were filed against Nuezca circulated the various social media platforms because of what he did. It can be seen on the photo that two homicides were dismissed due to a lack of substantial evidence. In comparison, a jobless man was arrested and jailed for stealing two cans of spam that's worth around 350 pesos. This says so much about the country's justice system. How could police walk free from two homicides when the poor can easily get imprisoned because of stealing canned goods? Are the two cans of stolen spam worth more than the two lives that were taken by Nuezca?

Fear and anger arose in the heart of many because this isn't the first time that police here in the Philippines had done something so unlawful and inhumane. They have been known to fabricate stories and plant evidence to justify their actions. Such victims of these are political prisoner Reina Mae Nacino, journalist Lady Ann Salem, Kian Delos Santos, and much more, especially those who were killed during the President's drug war campaign. Despite that, those police officers are free up to this day, while the families of those whom they killed or imprisoned are still suffering the loss of their loved ones.

Throughout the year, a lot of police officers with different violations have made it into the news headlines. After all those events, may there be a rectification or an improvement in the administration? If the police itself oppresses the citizens, then who will they trust and depend on when a crime happens? As Senator Nancy Binay said, "The people expect the police to be their defenders, not their offenders."

We are sending our deepest condolences to the Gregorio family. The heroism of the mother, Sonya, will forever remain in our minds and hearts. Justice shall be served.

#JusticeForGregorioFamily

#StopTheKillingsPH

#EndPoliceBrutalityPH

On Jeepney Phaseout

by Sofia Martinez

"If you would insist on modernization, which people cannot do at this time, and you would not allow them to work, then you are favoring the people who already have them. Those who have none would be on the losing end. What we should do is to help those who have none, so that they could catch up." This is what Vice President Leni Robredo said on her weekly AM radio program, "BISERbisyong Leni" regarding the issue of jeepney modernization.

In 2015, the Franchising and Regulatory Board of Land Transportation (LTFRB) released a government project that will bring new and cleaner jeepneys on the street and phase out the old ones that are poorly maintained. In 2017, The Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUV Modernization Program) or the "jeepney phaseout" was launched. It seeks to reduce obsolete (and almost lethal) street jeepneys, improve passenger safety, and prevent pollution by enforcing an age limit for permitted-to-operate transport vehicles. Basically, this program is not only going to regulate jeepneys that are older than 15 years, but also the buses and other public vehicles in the streets.

The government has a budget of ₱2.2 billion for the PUV modernization plan, which will be used to provide subsidy to drivers and operators who will be buying electronic jeepneys. How does this affect our country?

First off, a report from the Department of Tourism of the Philippines stated that more and more foreigners are coming to visit the country (pre-Coronavirus). With the jeepney being the main mode of transport across the country not only for Filipinos but also for visitors, it will definitely make transportation more convenient and easier. Amidst the pandemic and despite the fact that the public is not encouraged to go out yet, it would still make a difference for those who are commuting as their way of transport once we are back to normal.

On the other hand, there are public transport and jeepney drivers who would lose their vehicles either because the transportation is old, and/or they don't have the budget in order to replace or upgrade the needed materials and instalments, which may result in them also losing their jobs. The modern jeepneys will cost about ₱1.2 million to ₱1.6 million, which are payable for up to seven years. At the present moment in this pandemic, not everyone had the opportunity to continue working. Losing their only source of income without any back-up plan or whatsoever would be more challenging on their part.

Another benefit that we can get if public transport would truly be modernized is that it can lessen air pollution. In fact, in 2013 according to Climate Change Commissioner Heherson Alvarez, more than 500,000 diesel-fuelled jeepneys, buses, trucks and other vehicles in Metro Manila are responsible for about 70% of the total soot or black carbon emissions in the Philippines. The majority of us know that everyday we inhale toxic fumes from cars. For this reason, most car manufacturers are actively upgrading their goods in order to minimize harmful emissions. For a long time, jeepneys have not been modernized and they contribute greatly to pollution and, thus, replacing them with "greener" and much more environment-friendly models that will help improve the air quality of the Philippines.

This also ensures us that commuting will be easier as it will minimize traffic conditions in polluted and crowded areas.

Modernized jeepneys are also being prioritized because their older counterparts are on the lower end of the hierarchy of public transport modes, as they are believed to pose a great risk of coronavirus transmission with their passengers seated close to each other. The new vehicles that are showcased by the government promise to be more spacious and offer a bunch of other features (such as CCTVs, air-conditioned units, a PWD friendly space, etc.) that uphold safety and security. These may just be the cherry on top, but they can make a vast difference in improving the quality of commuting for the passengers.

Because of the benefits that come with it, there are also disadvantages. Many operators may go out of business. When this happens, Private businesses can take over jeepney operations. There is also a possibility that the fare price will increase and make passengers and commuters suffer more.

Since the country is still observing social distancing, quarantine, and isolation, I think it is safe to say that we should set aside the plans for the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program. Set aside because there are bigger issues and problems that we are currently facing and we should look for a solution for those dilemmas first before worrying about how to solve another one. I'd rather have the government to focus on resolving the matters of having the Covid-19 in our country.

So, is it worth it? Modernizing public utility jeepneys solves problems like road accidents, air pollution, and passenger discomfort. It is costly and the transition will affect many sectors. Certain sacrifices must be made in order to completely execute this project.

It is definite that this is a well-intended initiative, but if they wanted to push through this project with the benefit of the people in mind, shouldn't the government listen to the people first? Or is this just another phase?

Media Shutdown in the Midst of Pandemic

by Hyacinth Singian

On May 5, the country's largest broadcasting network was forced to sign off due to a cease and desist order issued by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) a day after its franchise expired. After a series of hearings, on May 10, the network was officially shutdown because the lawmakers opposed its franchise renewal in a 70 to 11 vote.

Meanwhile, foreign ownership, tax evasion, swindling, and practice of endo-contractualization were among the numerous allegations thrown at ABS-CBN before. On February 10, a quo warranto petition was filed against the media company by Solicitor General Jose Calida because of the alleged violations committed by the network. On the same day, ABS-CBN released a statement addressing the OSG's quo warranto petition wherein they clarified that they did not violate the law.

On February 24, representatives from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said that they have complied with the regulations, opposing the alleged violations thrown against the company.

According to Simplicio Cabantac, Jr., head of a unit of the BIR Large Taxpayers Service, ABS-CBN has regularly filed and paid their taxes for the past number of years.

Despite the clarification that the network did not violate the law, Cayetano said in a Facebook post after the ABS-CBN shutdown that the tax issue "is just the tip of the iceberg that sank the network".

"It wasn't the government who shut ABS-CBN down, rather it was their owner's playing fast and loose with our laws in the past decades, that made the shutdown inevitable," he added.

Meanwhile, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque claimed in a PTV4 interview on Wednesday, May 6, that the President is "completely neutral" on the issue of the media company's franchise renewal.

"The President will be neither angry nor happy. He is completely neutral. Vote as your conscience dictates," Roque said, referring to the House of Representatives'

vote on the network's franchise renewal.

However, given that the media company did not violate the law and yet their franchise was denied, the majority couldn't help but bring up President Duterte's threats in the past years regarding the network's franchise renewal, quoting personal reasons. He claimed that ABS-CBN is biased and spreads fake news about him.

He has made several threats but the most recent came before the franchise was set to expire. "Your franchise will end next year. If you expect it to be renewed, I'm sorry. I will see to it that you're out," an English translation of what President Duterte said in December 2019, addressing the broadcast giant ABS-CBN.

The media company shutdown is tantamount to the loss of income of thousands of families. According to KMU secretary-general Jerome Adonis, "It is difficult enough for Filipinos to find decent work in normal times, much more now that the country's economy is bleak with the COVID-19 crisis".

"To shut down a major media outfit and render the more than 11,000 workers jobless at a time when the country is reeling from a pandemic is the height of callousness!" Sentro said.

ABS-CBN didn't have any reason to lose its franchise rights because all the alleged violations were proven wrong. If the government truly cares for its citizens, they should've granted the media company a fresh franchise. Losing ABS-CBN is a big loss because it is the source of news and entertainment for millions of Filipinos. Especially now, in the middle of a pandemic, a reliable broadcasting network is what the citizens need.

The government should fix its priorities instead of putting all their energies against a company – shutting down the number one broadcasting network in the Philippines while facing the novel coronavirus didn't change the current situation of the country. Although there are only five months left until 2020 ends, they still don't have concrete plans when it comes to mass testing. Instead of shutting down ABS-CBN, they should've focused on developing a coronavirus vaccine.

Most importantly, they are well aware that it is difficult to look for a job in the middle of a pandemic and yet they still pushed through in revoking the media company's franchise renewal. They could've prevented the loss of livelihood of thousands of people but they still chose to turn a blind eye.

The Two

(Poem & Illustrations by: Leecia Castro)

(Extra poem construction by: Lia Ramiscal)

(Coloring by: Leecia Castro & Alysha Cera)

"You are a sinner in the eyes of god"
I know I am, but I did not deserve this
"We will make do with you"
I just stole a wallet, this cannot be true

"Feel my teeth enter your bones"
"Feel my gaze swallow you whole"

...

They sent me to a remote part of the capital where
the creatures reside
The stench of rotten flesh did not satisfy
My taste for decor and fragrance
All that was left was to test my patience

The "Kill Zone" so they call it
Seemed to not be scattered in bones
They did kill here, did they not?
So why the absence of everything but stone?

Dust caked the metal floor, and the lights flickered...
Lights? Flickering?
There were no posts for lights
No electricity, but blight

The sky was void of stars
I raised my hand to draw in a constellation
I traced my sign, Gemini
Celebrated on June eighteen
Without knowing that's when I'll last be seen

In the corners of the open cage I sat
I stayed idle for God knows how long
My last meal was animal fat
Then after that, they sang a song

A song that was supposed to summon the two
A hymn that was sung by a crew
A song made for the two
A rhyme played with bamboo

The cage was still empty, void of sound
Even the pitter-patter of the squirrels drowned
Was this the punishment?
Was the two a lie?
I'm not saying my last goodbye

With all my strength, I shook the chain door
I was not going to feed a centaur
A fairy, an ogre, whatever more
But all my cries they did ignore

Their bodies were stiffened by something behind
me
A shadow that covered my entire body
Eight feet tall, maybe nine
It sounded quite equine

"Equine? I am not a horse"
"Nor a dog, nor a boar"
"I am of what you call..."

With much hesitation I looked behind
It was of no creature I could define

Its eyelids were teeth with a tongue curled out
Its stomach opened resembling a mouth
Its fingers hardly moved like it was confined
And its jaw unhinged, landing on its side

The Eye Angel

I froze from terror, my hands still holding the door
This wasn't how I pictured angels before
It was all mouth, all teeth, all tongue
Even the halo where more teeth hung

"Feel my teeth enter your bones"
"Feel the pain of a million stones"

I ran to the other corner of the cage
Where the roots of a tree grew tall
The angel I saw had no eyes, but teeth that could kill
I was fortunate to be given a blind fille

But then I noticed something odd
Like someone staring from beyond
The angel I saw might've not seen me
But the angel I'll see will find me

"Do not run, do not hide"
"Your fate is testified"

I shut my mouth and stopped my breathing
For I felt the other one creeping
Creeping into the place I hid
Creeping into the mind I rid

The memories I wanted to forget
Came back and bit me in the neck
I was crying with no control of my body
I was shivering with no point of stopping

"Feel the memories burn like coal"
"Feel my gaze swallow you whole"

It forced me to run into the open
And there I saw the second

It had eyes scattered across its body like an infection
Its arms were mechanized in sections
Its mouth was sown by hair-like thread
And all its eyes blinked like a wave

"You are a sinner in the eyes of god"
I know I am, but I did not deserve this
"We will make do with you"
I just stole a wallet, this cannot be true

"Feel my teeth enter your bones"
"Feel my gaze swallow you whole"

And that's when I snapped
"You are no angels... You're demons!"
"Demons and nothing more!"
"Demons who I do not adore!"
"Demons of Satan! Of the devil!"

They replied with an eerie echo
"Only those who scream in terror are ones in shame"
"You know your sins and transgressions"
"So why are we to blame,"
"When it is you who puts up false accusations?"

Ephemeral

by Stefani Garcia

Stay with me for a while
 As we sit on the roof and smile.
 Eyes staring into the luminous stars
 No words spoken, as we watch from afar.

How nostalgic this moment feels,
 Which makes it seem surreal.
 Like a dream I refuse to wake from,
 The time I didn't feel numb.

As seconds turn to minutes
 Then hours pass us by,
 The universe was our limit
 But reality, we cannot defy.

Solace of the Rain

by Stefani Garcia

She sighs as she lays on her bed, staring blankly at a snow like colored wall. She sat there for hours or so she thought. Her mind drifting into a place afar with her favorite people. She reminisced those times whilst all her problems seemed to drift away as a wave of happiness and contentment overflowed within. Alas, she was happy once more, she was home. That happy feeling seemingly replaced with the feeling of loneliness as she looks around, and she's back. Lodged between four walls her heart wrenched. She warmly hugs her pillow as a tear emerge from her hazel brown eyes. Melancholy seemed to be her only source of comfort. Her silent cries drowned out as the rain poured down, crying with her. If she is you, keep your head up beautiful. You are stronger and braver than you think. Most important of all, you are loved.



Afterglow

by Stefani Garcia

As the sun set, covering the blue sky
 with hues of orange and pink,
 I look back and let out a sigh
 Then I felt my heart sink.

Thinking about what might,
 the sunshine touched my skin.
 Stood before me a magnificent sight,
 Feeling its warmth within.

“The sun sinks but then
 It still rises once more”
 As I who has been broken
 Will rise stronger than I was before.

Neverland

by Ashley Nicdao

Can I stay in the land where
 happiness remains?
 The land where no tears of mine shall
 shed.
 Escaping the pain of my heart that
 bled.
 To a place where no one else
 complains.

Forever shall I stay,
 until my heart mends all its pains.
 Letting myself stay in the chains,
 that prevents me from reaching the
 reality of each day.

Finding happiness is what all desire,
 but can they take the risks that they
 must require?
 Neverland, a place where many
 inquire,
 in order to find what they inspire.

Shall I leave my safe haven
 Neverland,
 to face the world's unplanned?
 The reality where they can't
 understand,
 that happiness is what I demand.

The raging passion of forged Volcanoes

by Ma. Daniela Venice Taroy

ask me why,
 being his student, i am at most eager,
 much like a boy when he receives his first toy
 or a strategist when they release their first
 decoy.
 ask me why,
 in his class we hear the words
 of wisdom and absurd theories, to janus he lays
 our paths to the beginnings and the endings we would at
 night pray.
 in vulcan's name, roman god of flame,
 his fires of solicitude grew and drew us in
 like a volcano and its inexplicable beauty tinged
 with the red of scorching lava, his love from within.
 volcanoes were made from the collision of plates,
 paralleled to the fatherly love he gave
 to us mere children who in return treasured the love,
 forming an indestructible beauty that reached the
 sky,
 the formation of an unseen volcano arise.
 who is the reincarnation of the god when it is him?
 vulcan, the hardworking in greek
 the smith of the gods who threw him without regret,
 is like bacani who worked day and night to beget
 the raging passion of his forged volcanoes.

What are Days for?

by Arceo, Bianca

Alarm, pierced my ear interrupting
 my quiet slumber
 What are days for? 24 hours of
 lacking luster?
 Waking up felt mundane with no
 hidden charm
 Submissive to an infinite cycle of

routine meaning no harm
 Then again, what can I do anyway?

Mirror, I fixated myself to remain the
 same
 What are days for? A sure win game?
 A miserable puppet of fate,
 unconscious of hate
 Inside, a faint voice wanting to escape
 out of this endless wait
 Who is this dark beast inside of me?
 Will I choose to set it free?

Hue, what painting can I create with
 the complexion of my heart

Dystopia

by Ana Mikaela Gopez

I present myself to the world,
 bearing greetings and inquiries,
 as everyone around whirled
 past all of the mysteries.

Do you not see the obvious
 and wish to glimpse the
 unknown?
 For how long would you be
 oblivious
 to the reality we must not
 condone?

The people refuse to speak,
 not to answer nor to ask.
 These creatures, how truly
 meek,
 decidedly content with eternal
 dusk.

With one taking a step forward,
 the others take two steps back.
 The brave asks for just one
 word,
 and the cowardly stays off
 track.

Pray tell, what do we have to
 wager
 to take our voices back again?
 Can we still save us from the

danger
 we've personally put
 ourselves in?

Tread near the cliff, testing
 the waters,
 putting faith in nothing
 until we fall.
 Go and turn a blind eye to
 what occurs,
 until we're truly sightless
 and lose all.

These mortal bodies, we
 constantly exhaust,
 chiefly to curl up with fear
 and whimper,
 mustering the voice we all
 thought we've lost
 until something comes
 out—a whisper.

I present myself to the
 revolution,
 bearing remarks that evince
 jadedness,
 and actions begotten by
 deprivation,
 speaking up, tired of
 enduring this injustice.

What are days for? Is it a canvas
 meant for art?

I now finally see colors; yellow, blue
 and white
 Reaching the end of this pitch black
 tunnel behold, I see a light!

What are days for? A repetitive
 wretched life? An existence of
 recurring bliss? Or a journey you just
 shouldn't miss?

18 | FEATURE



AUG 2020 - APRIL 2021

Blue Quill

VOL. LXXII ISSUE NO.1

Life Goes On: Surviving the New Normal

By: Abrielle Chelsea Ponce



It's been half a year now of being in quarantine. We've been staying at our homes as much as we can, following quarantine protocols to avoid the spread of the virus, and adapting to the new normal. Because as terrifying as it sounds, no one knows when normality will be back. Nonetheless, life must go on.

What keeps us going? What makes us try again even when things seem impossible? What makes us survive life's greatest challenges? Personally, I think the promise of success through achieving our goals would be the answer.

Everyone has a goal. It may be a short-term one, like developing a positive habit, or accomplishing tasks little by little. It may also be a long-term goal such as getting your dream job, finding the right person for you, and so on.

Goals are the beginning of success. It's up to you on how you want to accomplish these. However, with the changes that are happening around us, things may appear to be a little harder. Yes, yes, rest is crucial for each one of us but of course, in moderation. Productivity is essential to reach your goals and ambitions in life. Just think about the feeling of finally having something you've wanted and worked hard for. Ah! The sweet feeling of success.

Now, here are some things that made my quarantine productive. I hope yours will be too. I know you can do it!

1. *To-Do Lists are a MUST!*

Having a to-do list will definitely boost your productivity. It maintains order and is very conducive with time management.

Ever since online classes started, this has been a huge help for me because I get to manage and prioritize my responsibilities effectively. Besides, you'll definitely feel productive after crossing out your accomplished tasks one by one.

2. *Cut off Distractions*

Have you ever experienced doing your work and then suddenly getting a distracting notification on your phone? Or trying to get your creative juices working but everything's too loud and unsettling? Distractions are a huge hindrance in focusing and achieving one's goals. Therefore, it is beneficial to have a distraction-free workspace. To quote Christopher Columbus, "By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions, one may unfailingly arrive at his chosen goal or destination."

3. *Calm Down*

The thought of being productive may seem very stressful. With that, you can try mindful meditation or physical exercises. Not only are these good for productivity but also for a healthier body. Meditation is known to help cope up with stress and anxiety. Also, it calms down the mind and increases concentration power. On the other hand, when you exercise, your body releases endorphins which reduce stress and will surely give you a mood boost.

4. *Try Something New*

If you have extra time in your hands, trying something new is definitely worth a shot. You could do some leisure activities, learn a new instrument, or discover a new hobby. This might unlock something that

you don't yet know about yourself. It is delightful that at a young age, we get to explore our own capabilities. Thus, we may be able to find our own purpose, passion, or to simply know more about who we really are. It also gives us something to look forward to in life.

5. *Take Frequent Breaks*

Breaks are essential for productivity. In fact, these reduce mental fatigue and help us to stay focused. Without these, one's mental well-being and work performance begin to suffer. So, make sure not to overwork yourself and take breaks from time to time. However, too much of these might cause negative effects. If you take ineffective breaks, you'll find it harder to focus. Hence, self-discipline is the key to find balance in these things.

6. *Eliminate Negative Thoughts*

It is indeed easier said than done but even so, there's still a lot to be optimistic for. These days, we've been through very tough times but you're still here. That's something to be grateful for, isn't it? So, don't worry, you got this!

Lastly, don't forget to reward yourself because as long as you are trying, you are deserving. To keep you going, here is a bible verse to inspire you; "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." - Hebrews 12:11

That in all things, God may be glorified!