



the university

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EDITORIAL

## Payaso sa Halalan

Basahin sa Pahina 28





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MARC NELSON FERNANDEZ

## UNIVERSITY

## Global Breakthroughs

In the highly competitive world of higher education, thousands of universities strive for excellence through international rankings. In 2024, Urdaneta City University made its international debut with two global institutional rankings—the World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI) and the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings.

For 59 years, UCU has steadfastly championed its commitment to academic excellence, fostering growth and innovation within the community. Now, the university is reaching even higher—expanding horizons, creating new opportunities, and opening doors to even greater possibilities for discovery.

Participation in international rankings like WURI and UI GreenMetric is more than a quest for prestige—it is a catalyst for growth. These frameworks benchmark universities against global standards, fostering accountability, visibility, and partnerships. For UCU, its rankings debut signals readiness to collaborate with leading institutions, attract world-class talent, and align its programs with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such recognition amplifies the university's role in shaping globally competitive graduates equipped to tackle 21st-century challenges.

Even the best efforts falter without sustained momentum. To endure, the University must continuously empower the faculty and students to pioneer innovative solutions for humanity's most urgent human and environmental challenges.

UCU's entrance into global rankings like WURI and UI GreenMetric is not just a recognition but an opportunity to strengthen its position.



**These rankings prove the university's efforts, but they also expose the areas for more development. Continued participation ensures that UCU stays proactive, adapting to the evolving global competency of higher education.**

However, rankings alone are not enough. UCU's real progress lies in its impact on students, faculty, and the university community as a whole. Rankings will remain “rankings” unless the university

use it as an advantage to make evident improvements in the quality of education, research outputs, and the overall student experiences. UCU must plan to deepen further its global research collaborations, ensuring its advancements are both breakthroughs and relevant worldwide.

The influence of these rankings is also beyond recognition; they play a crucial role in attracting talent. With a higher global standing, UCU can encourage future students, faculty, and researchers that it is a place for opportunity and creative growth. This culture of attracting bright minds ensures that UCU remains competitive and continues to thrive, even globally.

By looking ahead, UCU's future will depend on the collective effort of its community. Every student, faculty member, staff, and partner must support its mission. These stepping stones will require continued innovation, but with the foundation already laid, UCU is well-positioned to redefine success on the larger scale. Together, UCU will shape a future of excellence, sustainability, and impact.



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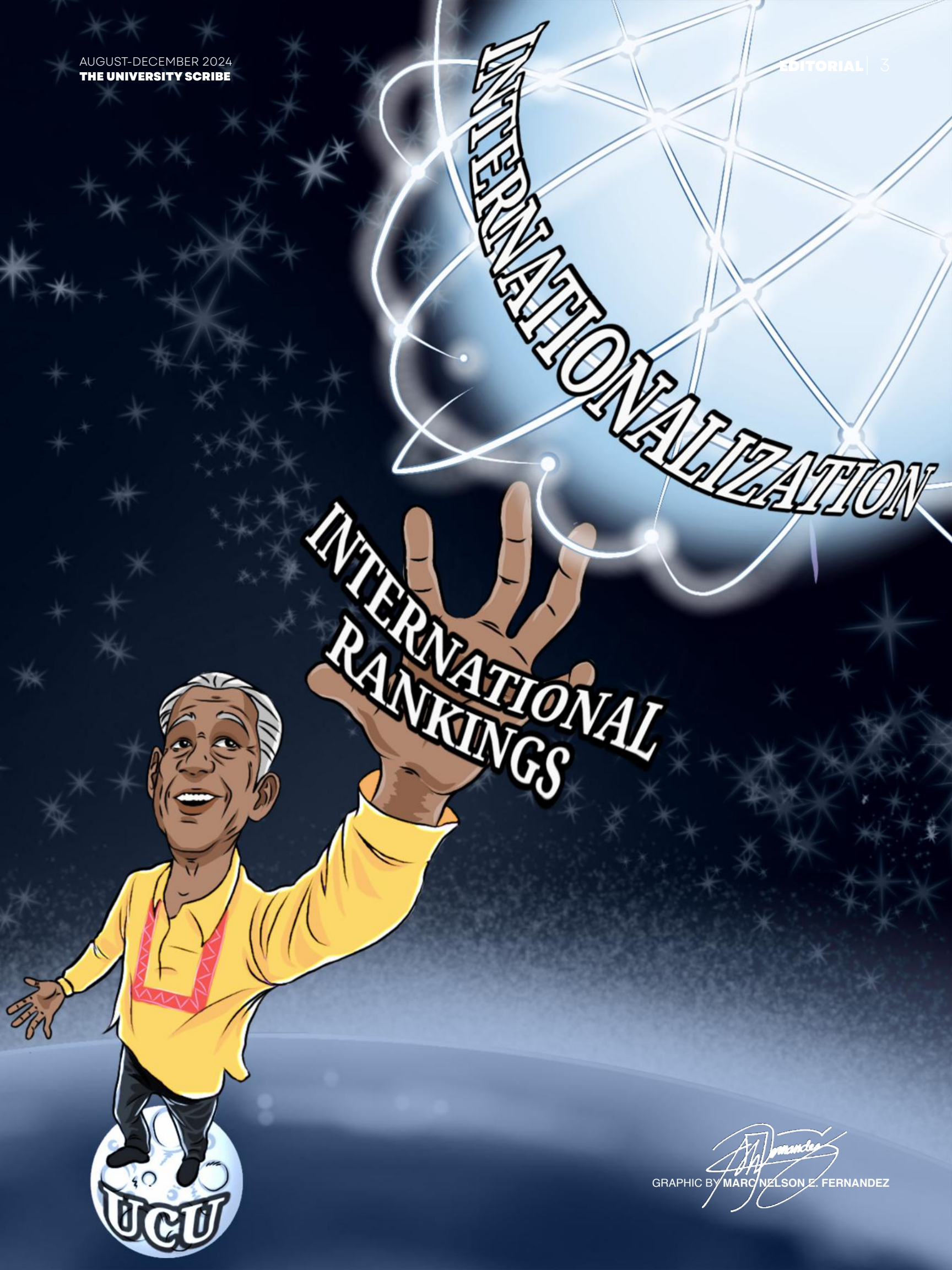
PAGE 18 Vaporise: A Dangerous Puff Away



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▲ **Global Recognition.** CHED directors and UCU administrators recognize the key university personnel who played significant roles in the institution's international rankings. (Photo by Dr. Sonny Soriano)

# UCU debuts in Int'l Rankings, earns Global Acclaims

■ BY CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO & JERMAINE E. ELECCION

**U**rdaneta City University (UCU) has debuted in global university rankings, placing 361st out of 1,477 universities worldwide in the 2024 UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and 281st overall among the top 300 innovative universities in the 2024 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI).

WURI assesses the innovativeness, implementability, and impact of research, projects, extensions and programs of universities, while UI GreenMetric measures how a university responds to a green environment.

UCU garnered major accolades from the recent UI GreenMetric, including rankings in Setting and Infrastructure, Water, Energy & Climate Change, Transportation, Waste, and Education & Research.

As for the WURI rankings, the institution clinched various awards in the categories of

Support for Global Resilience, Industrial Application, and Innovation in Promotion.

Dr. Sonny Soriano, Director for External Affairs and Linkages, shared that the decision to pursue international rankings was driven by the university's desire to gain visibility and recognition from other institutions worldwide.

*"What inspires us to go here in international ranking dahil 'uy existing kami.' Noong una, kapag nage-email kami sa iba't ibang universities, tatanungin ka kung anong rank mo sa international,"* said Soriano.

*"That is a motivation factor sa'kin kasi hindi tayo masyadong nire-recognize kasi wala tayong ranking, and there are lots of things to prove and tell to all the world that UCU is existing in the globe,"* he added, reflecting on the early struggles of gaining recognition and the challenge in linking with other universities.

He then explained that

UCU's newfound international standing has opened up more opportunities for partnerships, collaborations, and academic competitions.

*"Mas marami nang mga invitations ngayon ng mga competitions, partnerships with paper presentations, and everything."*

But future improvements, Joanne Lorraine L. Puga, one of the writers and researchers, highlighted the importance of investing in research and development within the university, particularly when it comes to supporting faculty and student-led research projects.

*"Sana ma-improve pa ang research culture sa University, lalo na sa pagpondo sa mga faculty and student researches may malaking potensyal para sa patent at implementation sa school o sa community,"* said Puga.

*"Kasi 'yung culture of innovation, it needs full-blown dedication, time, and expertise sa research para mapunan natin*

*yung lackings ng community at makapag-introduce tayo ng mas mahusay at epektibong mga pamamaraan sa pag-address ng concerns,"* she added.

For Lorenzo Jose Bandong, University Student Council president, the student body plays a crucial role in helping the institution rise higher in the national rankings.

*"Kung magtutulungan ang lahat na magsikap sa kanilang academics at makapag-produce ng makabago at makabuluhang research, magiging malaking bahagi tayo sa pagpapakita ng kalidad ng edukasyon dito,"* said the leader of the studentry.

Soriano shared that the university plans to participate in four additional international rankings in 2025: Applied Higher Education Rankings, Times Higher Education - Impact Rankings, QS Asia Rankings, and Times Higher Education - World University Rankings.#



# Student camp redefines Leadership, integrates SDGs

■ BY AGNES L. CABUSORA & CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

**U**rdaneta City University's new leadership initiative, "GAcaDemy," launched the three-day camp at the University Gymnasium, September 12-14, 2024.

The camp initiated by the Gender and Development Office (GAD), in collaboration with the Center for Student Leadership and Development, is a certificate course anchored with GAD and United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thirty-two pioneering student leaders immersed in understanding the SDGs, leadership and spiritual awakening, parliamentary procedures, basic life approaches, and event hosting.

With the theme, "Accelerating Progress Through Excellent Leadership," campers were grouped into five inspired by the movie "Divergent," which emphasized unity amidst diversity.

External Affairs and Linkages Director Dr. Sonny Soriano urged the campers to be part of the solution to achieve a more just and sustainable world by 2023.

"SDGs is not a call, but it is a voice and call to action," encouraging them to seek partnerships outside the university in establishing initiatives to take action in



▲ **Great Leaders Know How to Listen.** Student leaders, organized into diverse teams, collaboratively develop and implement unique strategies to foster and maintain strong collaboration throughout the duration of the camp experience. (Photo by Jermaine L. Eleccion)

addressing global challenges.

Also, Center of Community Development and Extension Services (CCDES) Director Dr. Jerry C. Dichoso equipped the campers with a spiritual talk about the essential values leaders must uphold including discipline, respect, and obedience.

University Student Council (USC) Adviser Jeffrey M. Caoile introduced the art of event hosting, emphasizing effective public speaking is a valuable skill a leader must possess while Dr. Nhorly U. Domenden, Director of the Center for Student Leadership and Development (CSLD), tackled the structured processes within an assembly highlighting

etiquette that leaders should attain.

Meanwhile, Director of UCU Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Office (DRRM) John Leonard Caluag demonstrated basic life support techniques like cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) together with Engr. Dennis M. Pascua, Head of the Engineering Management and Auxillary Services (EMAS), who introduced essential safety tips in terms of electrical wirings.

Moreover, campers strengthened camaraderie and strategic thinking through team-building exercises and an amazing race, enhancing their collaboration, endurance, and

resilience.

In his keynote speech, Domenden emphasized the acronym "MOTIVATE CHANGE" which stands for Message, Optimize Resources, Technique, Interest, Values, Attitude, Talk and Test, Engage, Comprehend, Harmonization, Action, Nibble and Nudge, Goal, and Empower People.

Domenden highlighted, "The most important message is your story, and the most important resource is yourself"

The top-performing groups—Candor, Amity, Erudite, Abnegation, and Dauntless—secured first to fifth place respectively. #



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MARIEL B. BUTUAN, RN  
Top 9 - Philippine Nurses  
Licensure Examination  
(November 2024)

**NURSING REBORN.** With the reinstatement of the BS Nursing Program at the University, first-year students diligently study to become the next generation of healthcare professionals. (Photo by Karol Ken Jairo A. Cachero)

## Nursing program reopens, produces Topnotcher

■ BY CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

**A**fter nearly three years of halting the admission for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), the Urdaneta City University (UCU) has completed its inspection from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to reopen the program beginning Academic Year 2024-2025.

CHED issued the Certificate Of Program Compliance (COPC) to offer the said program in accordance with Republic Act (RA) no. 7722, known as Higher Education Act of 1994 and as

per Commission en banc (CEB) Resolution No. 506-2024.

The Nursing Department began accepting applications a month after the start of the academic year, offering a limited number of 160 slots for BSN aspirants.

However, due to the limited number of available slots, the program made a waiting list, providing applicants with a chance to secure a spot should openings arise.

Alexa Faith Gerale, among the BSN enrollees, and a shiftee from BS Psychology expressed her worries due to the rigorous

screening process.

*“Excited at the same time kinakabahan and nago-overthink agad kung makakapasa ba,”* Gerale said.

To be considered for admission, students must first pass the UCU College Admission Test, the BSN Entrance Examination, and an interview. Only those who will pass the three phases will proceed to the enrollment process.

As for Matt Weiser Paulmino, also a BSN enrollee, shared his mixed emotions regarding the limited slots and

the large number of applicants.

*“Mixed emotions po since andaming applicants and nakakakaba po na baka hindi makapasa dahil limited slots lang po ang ino-offer po ng UCU,”* said the president of Florence Nightingale Club - UCU Chapter

Despite these concerns, Paulmino remains motivated to pursue nursing at UCU, citing the institution's impressive track record of producing topnotchers.

Gerale, on the other hand, was drawn to UCU for  
(See page 9)

## Crim students' top at Reg'l Congress

■ BY CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

**C**riminology students from Urdaneta City University (UCU) College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE) dominated the 5th Regional Criminal Justice Students' Congress, securing 22 medals—including 10 gold—against 19 competing institutions in Region 1.

Held November 22–23, 2024, at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) in Candon City, the event spotlighted the theme “Navigating the Future: Criminal Justice in the Age of Technology and Transformation.”

UCU's CCJE delegation showcased excellence across

academic, athletic, and technical categories. Their 10 gold medals spanned Essay Writing, Extemporaneous Speech, Karate'Do Individual Kata, Kumite, Tug of War, and Sack Race.

Seven silver accolades included Karate'Do Team Kata, Criminology Got Talent, and team combat events, while five bronze wins featured Handcuffing Techniques, Research Presentation, and Poster and Slogan contests.

The congress, focused on integrating technology into criminal justice education, emphasized hands-on skills like forensic technology and digital crime prevention, aligning with global shifts in criminal justice practices.#

## Research Congress Promote Ethics, Equity

■ BY PERRY DWYANE D. OBEDOZA

**E**thical research practices, gender equity, and the role of technological innovation in a globalized world took center stage at Urdaneta City University's (UCU) annual College Cluster and University Student Research Congress held last October 2–4.

31 student studies tackled global challenges across disciplines under the theme “Research in a Globalized World: Ethical Considerations, Gender Equity, and Technological Innovation.”

Dr. Josephine Lambinico, Vice President for Academic Affairs, stressed that “research does not end after the final defense—it is a cycle we must complete up to the utilization of findings.”

Further, the congress showcased research spanning cultural preservation, social justice, and sustainable development. Topics included LGBTQIA+ experiences in the criminal justice system, mental health impacts on families, and indigenous communities' well-being amid tourism.

The event reaffirmed UCU's role in transformative research, showcasing ethical, gender-sensitive, and innovative studies that drive lasting societal impact.#



## PACE Conference 2024: UCU undergrads tackle Media Ethics, Gender Dynamics in e-commerce

■ BY ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

**E**leven Bachelor of Arts in Communication students from Urdaneta City University's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) presented groundbreaking research at the national Communication and Media Studies Conference (CMSC) and Pace of the Future Student Camp (PFSC), held October 18–19, 2024.

The event, hosted by the Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE), drew delegates from universities across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Lawrence O. De Vera, Wynonna V. Villafañá, and Tristan P. Pescador explored "Communication Marketing Approaches' Influence on Online Buyers."

Crystal Mae A. Miguel, Justine Lyka C. Ordinario, Judylyn C. Sator, and Kimberly

Mae C. Remeterio examined "Boss or Sis: Communication Selling Techniques of Male and Female Online Sellers."

Marjay Angelo C. Magno, Athena Ashley B. Perez, Angelica D. Dela Cruz, and Erika C. Tambo presented their findings on the "Communication Strategy of Various Sectors in HIV Campaign Awareness."

Their presentations showcased innovative approaches to addressing contemporary media challenges.

Centered on the theme "Humanizing Communication Ecology: Locating Values in Communication Education and Media Practice," the conference featured plenary speeches and panel discussions on ethics, technology, and societal impact in communication.



▲ **Keeping Pace with the Times.** UCU students and faculty made their presence felt at the PACE conference, contributing to the vibrant exchange of ideas in the field of communication. (Photo by Wynonna V. Villafañá)

Delegates gained insights directly applicable to their upcoming internships, with many noting the sessions' relevance to professional skill development.

PACE, a leading body in communication education, organized the two-day event to foster collaboration among students, educators, and industry experts.#

## Isyu sa Karahasan, Terorismo, tinalakay

■ NI EZEKIEL EUN S. DE CASTRO

**T**iniyak ng Urdaneta City University na ang institusyon ay ligtas sa lahat ng mag-aaral sa idinaos nitong "UCU IS SAFE: Tackling Hazing, Bullying, and Terrorism through Education

and Awareness," nitong ika-25 ng Nobyembre sa University Gymnasium.

Layunin ng programa na palakasin ang kamalayan ng mga estudyante tungkol sa mga panganib ng hazing, bullying, at terorismo sa loob at labas ng

unibersidad. Sa pamamagitan ng edukasyon at tamang impormasyon, hinihikayat ang mga mag-aaral na maging mapanuri, responsable, at handang ipagtanggol ang kanilang kapwa sa anumang uri ng pang-aabuso o banta.

Bigyang-diin din ang seguridad na naglalayong ito'y isang sama-samang responsibilidad na kailangang pagtuunan ng pansin ng bawat isa.

Ani ni Dr. Josephine S. Lambinacio, Vice President for Academic Affairs, ang pagtupad sa responsibilidad ng bawat isa ay higit pa sa kaalaman para mapanatiling ligtas ang mga estudyante sa loob at labas ng paaralan.

"As students, let's still let our minds reflect because we are accountable for what we are doing. We are no longer minors but I hope the university has already given you

knowledge and skills but the only challenge is the obligation," ika niya.

Isa sa mga binigyang-diin sa programa ay ang responsibilidad ng bawat isa na mag-ulat ng anumang insidente ng maaaring magdulot ng kapahamakan.

Ayon kay Atty. Antonio D. Rebosa, mula sa American Board from Legal Medicine, isang moral na tungkulin ang pagpapabatid ng anumang uri ng karahasan upang mapanatili ang isang ligtas at maayos na kapaligiran sa paaralan.

"Morally and ethically, you have the duty to report if only to protect the well-being of your classmates or schooling," pagpapaalala niya.

Dinaluhan ang programa ng mga estudyante upang pagtuunan ng pansin at maiwasan ang mga uri ng karahasan sa loob ng unibersidad.#



▲ **UCU IS SAFE.** Nanindigan si Atty. Rebosa na ang kamalayan ang bawat isang estudyante ang magliligtas sa kanila mula sa anumang uri ng karahasan. (Larawan ni Nathalie Gail G. Aquino)



## BAComm, humakot ng parangal sa Urduja Film Fest

■ NI NEIL VINCENT V. CORPUZ

**I**pamalas ng mga estudyante ng Bachelor of Arts in Communication (BA Comm) ang husay at galing ng Urdaneta City University (UCU) matapos nilang umani ng mga parangal ang sa kakatapos na 9th Urduja Film Festival nitong Disyembre 8 sa Lingayen, Pangasinan.

Sa naturang festival, itinampok ang iba't-ibang pelikula mula sa iba't-ibang unibersidad kabilang na ang entry ng UCU na "Iti Byahe" o "Ang Biyahe."

Tampok sa maikling pelikula ang isang lalaking nais na muling makita ang kaniyang kaisa-isang kapatid. Sa paghahanap ng kasagutan, isang babae ang tumulong sa kanya para malaman ang kinaroroonan ng kanyang kapatid.

Ayon sa produksyon, hindi naging madali ang pagbuo ng konsepto ng pelikula dahil kailangan muna nilang alamin ang tema, mga patnubay at mekanika na nakapaloob sa nasabing paligsahan.

"Nag-isip kami ng story

na connected sa theme pero kakaiba. Naisip rin namin na gawan ng plot twist ang story para makuha namin 'yong attention ng viewers,' saad ni Ericka Tambo, isa sa mga scriptwriter ng pelikula.

Ibinahagi rin ni Brandon Landingin, direktor ng "Iti Byahe," na hindi madali ang naging proseso ng pelikula. "Pinaka-challenge namin while shooting [ay] may bagyo ng halos isang linggo. Naka-ilang retake din kami sa ibang scene gawa nga ng ulan at magastos din sa pamasaha tapos own money pa gamit namin," sagot nito.

"The major problem na na-encounter namin is lack of resources and man power. Pito lang kami sa buong production, tugon naman ni Wynonna Villafania, isa sa mga tao sa likod ng pelikula.

Bagamat marami ang naging pinagdaanan ng grupo, ani nila ay hindi ito naging hadlang para huminto sa kanilang ginagawa.

Isa sa naging inspirasyon nila para magpatuloy ay upang



▲ **BIYAHENG TAGUMPAY.** Abo't-langit ang ngiti ng Brandon Films matapos nilang humakot ng mga parangal sa 9th Urduja Film Festival. (Larawan ni Wynonna V. Villafania)

itampok ang kultura at pamana ng Pangasinan.

Dahil dito, nasungkit ni Brandon Landingin ang parangal na Best Director samantalang itinanghal na Best Actress naman si Crystal Mae Miguel.

"Sobrang happy at gratitude ang naramdaman ko, hindi ko rin inexpect na mabibigyan ako ng ganitong klaseng award kasi ang daming entries tapos sakín pa binigay ang isang major award," sagot ni Miguel nang tanungin siya kung ano ang kanyang saloobin sa parangal.

Hindi rin maiwasang maging mapagpasalamat ni Tristan Pescador sa

oportunidad na natanggap niya sa siyang gumanap bilang bida ng Iti Byahe.

"After all, it is something to be proud of because I was one of that team who gave honor. Seeing yourself sa big screen ay sobrang overwhelming, but in general; seeing your teamwork na nagbunga ay something na worth to be remembered forever kasi may samahan ding nabuo dahil sa magandang kolaborasyon," pahayag nito.

Narito ang ilan pang parangal na nasungkit ng 'Iti Byahe': Dove Excellence Award, Best Editing, Best Screenplay, Best in Makeup, at Audience Choice Award.#

## UCU Students clinch Triple Victory at IT Skills Olympics 2024

■ BY CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

**S**tudents from Urdaneta City University (UCU) dominated the 13th IT Skills Olympics, securing championship titles in three competitive categories against 63 colleges and universities nationwide.

The event, held on November 22, 2024, at the University of Makati, showcased the technical prowess of UCU's College of Information and Technology Education (CITE) and College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA).

UCU's winning teams triumphed in Linux



Administration, Android Application Development (Game Category), and Digital Electronics, cementing the university's reputation as a leader in technology education.

In Linux Administration, BS Information Technology student Erwin A. Vicarme

claimed the top spot, demonstrating advanced system management skills.

While in Android Game Development, the trio of Charlene Love N. Dupitas, Cindy L. Moulic, and Emerson O. Manuel (BSIT) stood out with an innovative mobile game

application.

Also in Digital Electronics, Mark Angelo A. Bautista, BS Computer Engineering, outshined competitors with his expertise in circuit design and problem-solving.

With these accolades, UCU landed as the 1st Runner-up in the overall ranking in the tilt.

The IT Skills Olympics, a prestigious annual event, tests participants' technical knowledge, creativity, and adaptability in fast-paced challenges aligned with industry demands.#

▲ **TECH TRIUMPH.** CITE and CEA celebrate their impressive achievement as 1st runner-up in the 13th IT Skills Olympics. (Photo from CITE)





**HEALTHCARE FOR FREE.** UCU personnel and students flock at the grand medical mission, seeking essential healthcare services. (Photo by Karol Ken Jairo A. Cachero)

## Free Healthcare Services roll out in KALINGA-led Medical Mission

■ BY MELYRA D. ESQUERRA

**F**aculty, staff, and students of Urdaneta City University (UCU) received free healthcare and legal services during the “KALINGA” Grand Medical Mission on October 22, 2024, at the UCU Gymnasium.

The event, spearheaded by KALINGA Partylist Representative Irene Gay F. Saulog, aimed to bridge gaps in accessible healthcare for marginalized communities.

The initiative offered medical check-ups with free medicine, dental extractions, eye exams with reading glasses, legal consultations, lab tests, and wellness services like haircuts and massages. Families of UCU employees were also eligible for the no-cost care.

The partylist, which advocates for health, education, and livelihood equity, organized the mission alongside UCU’s Office of External Affairs and Linkages. Urban poor communities and educators—the partylist’s primary constituencies—were prioritized.

“Kasama niyo po ang Kalinga Partylist [upang] inyong maabot ang inyong mga pangarap, kasi paano natin maabot ang ating pangarap kung tayo ay may sakit? Kaya kapag may time, checkup, checkup din po tayo,” said Saulod.#

## BSNEd Alumna named among PHs’ Most Outstanding Students

■ BY AGNES L. CABUSORA

**J**elai Marie R. Bancifra, a graduate of Bachelor in Special Needs Education, earned as one of the 17 Most Outstanding Students in the Philippines during the 17th Anniversary of Carl E. Balita Review Center (CBRC).

The cum laude of Urdaneta City University initiated an advocacy, entitled: “Abaka: Project Gabay Basa Tungo sa Pag-asa,” focusing on the quality of education among students with disabilities.

“I saw the capabilities and abilities that these children with special needs have to prove that they can also have rights in quality education despite their disabilities. And I do believe that the only future worth building includes everyone,” she said on her entry in the CBRC.

### ‘Pag-asa sa Ilalim ng Barangay Outpost’

During her graduation speech, she walked to memory lane how she started her dream to help the children with special needs.

She mentioned that every afternoon on her walk home, she noticed a little girl sitting at a barangay outpost. During a community event focused on children with special needs, she approached the girl and learned that she wished to receive an education like other children.

For her, this is the starting point of her advocacy.

“Sa pagtatapos ng aming interbyu, tumatak sa isip ko ang mga katagang ‘sana sa susunod na taon, makapag-aral na siya pa-pa (school),” she narrated.

Because of this experience, Bancifra became

eager to learn the pedagogies and human rights, joining non-government organizations and attending seminars to have deeper knowledge to plan how to help the children with special needs like the one she saw in the barangay outpost.

She started her advocacy using Marungko booklets to teach children who have reading difficulties.

For Jelai, her initiative led her to embody transcendence—a core value of UCU rooted in selflessness, compassion, and prioritizing others before oneself.

“Nang dahil sa experience na ito, pinagtibay ako na gawin ang mga bagay at iappreciate ang meron at kung ano lang ang kaya ko.”

### Continuing the Dream

Right now, Bancifra continues her initiative as a community organizer at P3PWD - Komunidad ng Pamilya, Pasyente at Persons With Disabilities.

CBRC gave her a full scholarship to review for her Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers.

Aside from being a latin honor, Bancifra received Proficiency in Teaching Award and Leadership Award (College Level) last July.#



### Nursing Program reopens, produces... from page 4

its free tuition and high-quality education, most specifically its quality of teaching.

### PNLE records high rating

During the November Philippine Nurses Licensure Examination (PNLE), Mariel Butuhan garnered a 90.80% rating, placing 9th topnotcher in the country.

In a social media post, Butuhan revealed that her motivation to excel in the board exam stemmed from her desire to teach and inspire others, particularly students who might consider themselves “ordinary or average.”

“My greatest motivation to top the board exam was having the confidence and the opportunity to teach—to inspire all students, particularly ordinary and average students just like me,” Butuhan said.

Reflecting on her exam experience, Butuhan humorously shared how forgetting key terminologies made her feel disheartened.

“After the exam, I felt defeated, akala ko babagsak ako sa NP 3 - actually, ready na ako mag-conditional Exam sa May 2025 at that moment - well, makalimutan mo ba naman kung ano ang Short-Acting/Rapid Acting Insulin!” the topnotcher joked.

In addition to the university’s newly produced topnotcher, UCU obtained a 92.59% institutional passing rate for first-time takers.

The institution produced 176 licensed nurses, achieving an overall institutional passing rate of 85.01%.#



TRUTH DWELLER

# Philippine Politics is a Laughing Stock

■ CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

Editor-in-Chief | BS Psychology

**I**n retrospect, political families with flawed records have been toppling each other every election time like a game, each fighting to seize the people's wealth. But it's not the first rodeo. The Philippines has a history of turning each election into a high-stakes game of thrones, even at the local level. And the real losers are the voters, who seem to fall into the same traps set by these politicians.

Don't get me wrong. I do not intend to put our country in a bad light—I am a proud Filipino, after all. It's just that, I am dismayed and saddened that my beloved country has already been plagued by leaders whose histories are as controversial as their promises.

But having corrupt and incompetent leaders is not the first, nor would it be the last casualty that the country would suffer. The choices of the electorate have far-reaching consequences. The nation is always stuck in damage-control mode instead of proactively preventing these nuisances in government.

Take the Marcoses and Dutertes as prime examples. Marcos promised us affordable rice at P20, while

FPRRD pledged to stamp out drugs in the country, only to be mired in controversy over extrajudicial killings. Now, his daughter, Sara Duterte, is one position away from the highest office.

Also, despite their association with the dictatorship era and the issues on war on drugs, they still managed to cling to political power, thanks to the support of BBM loyalists, Duterte Die-hard Supporters, and ignorant voter-fanatics.

Of course, who would want to vote for a leader who is clean and incorruptible anyway, when the fanatics can rally behind their idols who have shady backgrounds? The abused will always seek the comfort of their abusers, indeed.

But it all comes down to the beginning. The standard for candidates is already questionable in the first place. Candidates from the same political families, convicted criminals, those with tax evasion cases and

superficial platforms. Seriously? The quality of leaders we see every election is a colossal joke. Has our standard for good governance really sunk this low?

Yet come election time, it's no surprise to see that figures like Apollo Quiboloy joined the game as well, eyeing a Senate seat. You can bet he's already mobilizing his fanatics, ready to flood the polls and push his agenda forward. They become minions, and sadly, all the people around them become minions, too.

“

**Every now and then, once these individuals are elected, they become just another set of names in the long list of worst politicians who have done nothing but screw up everything they touch. The fact that they are even in power today is a shame for our country.**

So, I ask: how much have we learned from the past administrations? How much wiser have we become as citizens?

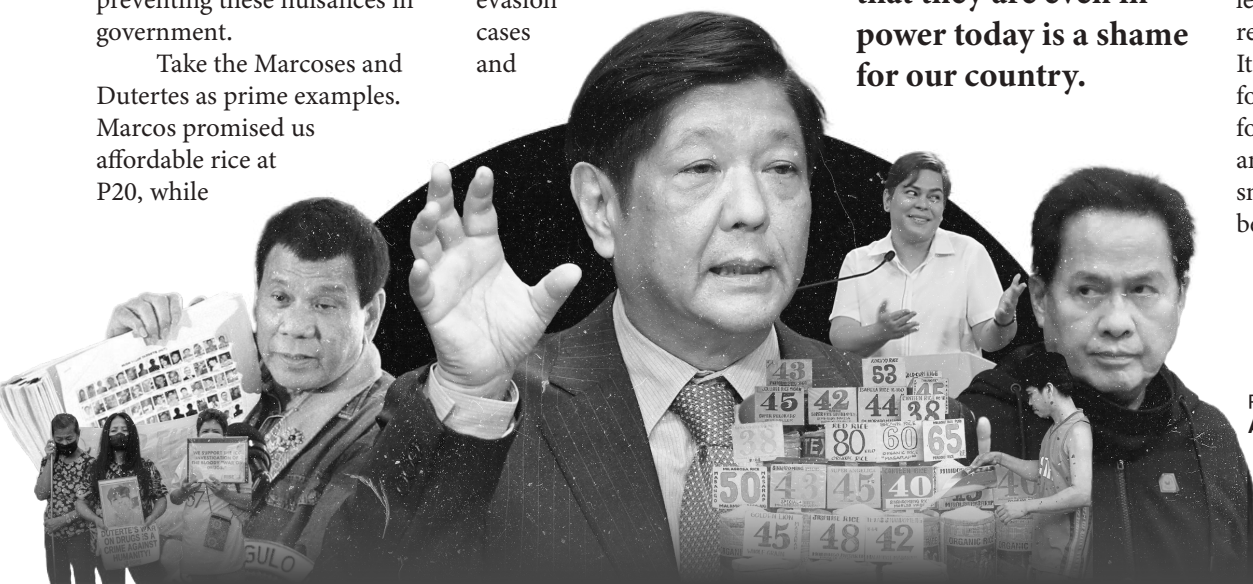
If there's one thing voters should have learned by now, it's that it's easy to get fooled by family names and promises in the heat of political battles, only to fail their constituents once they've secured power. The nation has already seen firsthand how these promises turn into empty rhetoric.

But history has shown us time and time again that loyalty to names alone guarantees nothing.

Voters must be empowered with facts, not flashy slogans or empty promises disguised as campaign ads. New leaders, with fresh perspectives and bold ideas should be prioritized over those who are simply relying on their ancestral ties to power.

Clearly, the government is getting worse and worse; hence, the voters should be better and wiser too in choosing their leaders. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. It's not just about who we vote for anymore, but why we vote for them. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations, to be smarter voters and demand a better government.

NEVER AGAIN.#

PHOTOS FROM INQUIRER.NET,  
AFP, GMA, PHILIPPINE STAR





CRITICAL EXPECTATOR

# Someone just has to say it

■ JERMAINE L. ELECCION  
Associate Editor | BSEd English

In just a few eye blinks, the Regional Higher Education Press Conference (RHEPC) will be knocking on our doors—an event that brings together capable student-journalists from around the region.

Usually, the crowd's focus is on the competing excellence of the press members, but for me, RHEPC is a reunion of university martyrs who still take pride in representing their institutions.

“

All magnify journalists' skills when competitions come, but none talk about the underinvestment institutions make in powering student pubs. Their budgets have always been a taboo in press conferences like this. Well, it's time to stir the pot.

Someone just has to say it—student journos do not receive the promises of Republic Act 7079 as they should. Keeping my silence when I am in a position to speak makes me feel like a soldier not knowing how to shoot in a war—useless.

Since the 1900s, campus journalism has shed light on schools by opening minds to fresh perspectives, delivering eye-opening news to the student body, and providing a platform for the voiceless. It has been years of unwavering news delivery, generations of non-fatigable service. Unfortunately, it seems like these acts of martyrdom are not worth paying attention to.

Dating back to 2018, the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), an alliance of college editors, categorized eight campus press freedom violations—one of which is the withholding or looting of funds. In their 2018 records, 200 out of 800 campus press freedom

violation cases were related to this. Sadly, there is no specific law to address this issue, as House Bill 1493, which aims to enhance campus journalism and press freedom by repealing R.A. 7079, did not progress.

This explains why, in 2024, when 19 student publications in Northern Samar gathered, lack of funding, equipment, and inadequate newsrooms were only a few of their many concerns. The saddening part is that their only resort is to “adapt” to the challenges that they should not be facing in the first place.

Do we still have to conform to the Filipino saying, “kapag maliit ang kumot, matutong mamaluktot”? Or should we finally strengthen our resolve to amplify this concern that, if resolved, will produce and affect future generations of journalistic catalysts?

While it's fine that adaptability is already a component in Filipinos' bloodstreams, it will never

be okay to always look on the bright side. Toxic positivity will make one anemic—a weakling for not being able to fight for change.

In the absence of protective laws, may all academic institutions adhere to Section 5 of R.A. 7079, “Funding of Student Publication,” which reads: “In no instance shall the Department of Education, Culture and Sports or the school administration concerned withhold the release of funds sourced from the savings of the appropriations of the respective schools and other sources intended for the student publication.”

A newsroom to work at and equipment to work with will equate to empowered student journalists who can work more on giving better service to the student body.

Now that someone finally said it, my hope is for someone to make a move on it. #





**PEN MASTER**

# Suspended, but at what cost?

■ **ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ***DevComm Editor | BA Communication*

**T**yphoons are no mystery for the Philippines. According to PAGASA, the Philippines experiences an average of 20 typhoons annually. The country is on the Pacific Ring of Fire, making it prone to natural disasters, including devastating storms and winds.

However, due to climate change, typhoons are increasingly becoming more destructive. This year, most of Luzon took the brunt of many storms, including, but not limited to Typhoons Kristine, Leon, Marce, Nika, Ofel and Pepito.

The silver lining for many students is that typhoon season means class suspension. For a day or two, students do not have to go to school. Schools also cancel online classes because of potential power outages or poor internet connection.

For young people in school, class suspensions are a time to relax, recharge, and even galavant. For some, the typhoon is a blessing. But as convenient as class suspensions are, this is not a time for celebration.

While many students have the comfort of a home, readily available food and water, and an Internet signal, people affected by the typhoon have no choice but to cram themselves in evacuation centers and pick up the rubble that was their homes. According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Typhoons Kristine and Leon left 160 dead, 135 injured, and 25 missing.

The typhoons also did not spare people's livelihood. For instance, Typhoon Marce devastated Cotabato by hitting

its banana plantation and farmers. Not only do storms ruin lives and homes, but they are financial burdens to the country.

Students do not have control over Mother Nature's destruction. Likewise, it is unrealistic to expect safe students to risk their lives by traveling to affected areas to help, especially when someone lacks training and briefing.

However, students can take class suspension as a time to reflect and empathize with those affected by the storms. Students can reach out to friends and families struck by the typhoons. Students can also make small acts of charity, such as online donations.

Class suspensions can benefit students, but at what cost? Is this a time to celebrate, or is it a time to act?

“

**For young people in school, class suspensions are a time to relax, recharge, and even galavant. For some, the typhoon is a blessing. But as convenient as class suspensions are, this is not a time for celebration. #**



PHOTOS FROM UNSPLASH





WANDERING SOUL

# Turning Freedom into Reality for all

■ PERRY DWYANE D. OBEDOZA  
Junior Staff | BS Psychology

**T**he Philippines has made significant strides in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights, yet true freedom remains elusive.

While urban areas have implemented policies to reduce discrimination and extend benefits to same-sex partners, these changes fail to address the persistent prejudice in rural communities. Progress cannot be claimed until LGBTQIA+ individuals can live safely and authentically across all parts of society, from bustling cities to remote towns.

The fight for justice, dignity, and respect for all is necessary. Every Filipino should be invested in this cause because when one of us is oppressed, we are all diminished.

The lack of legal protections has far-reaching consequences that cannot be ignored. According to a 2024 United Nations study, 30% of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Philippines reported experiencing harassment, bullying, or discrimination in the workplace due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. This alarming statistic should serve as a call to action, yet the response has been painfully slow.

Educational institutions are no safer, with widespread reports of bullying and harassment of LGBTQIA+ students. These are not mere inconveniences but violations of basic human dignity. If our schools and workplaces are to be spaces of growth and

opportunity, LGBTQIA+ individuals must be included in that privilege.

The continued stagnation of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill is a stark reminder of how far the nation still has to go. Despite its potential to transform lives, the bill remains trapped in legislative gridlock. Senate President Francis Escudero acknowledged the ongoing delays, stating that unless proponents accept certain amendments, the bill will struggle to pass. This debate exposes a deeper reluctance within the government to fully embrace LGBTQIA+ rights.

Instead of taking a firm stance on equality, lawmakers opt for safer, diluted alternatives that fail to address fundamental issues. It is a disappointing reflection of how political hesitation perpetuates inequality.

The resistance to change is further reinforced by the influence of political and religious conservatism, which continues to stifle progress. While the rest of the world moves forward, outdated beliefs hold the Philippines back. The refusal of those in power to recognize LGBTQIA+ rights as human rights is an affront to justice. Failing to embrace diversity and inclusion not only harms marginalized groups but also weakens the nation as a whole.

True progress comes from recognizing that every individual, regardless

of gender identity or sexual orientation, contributes to the richness of society.

The path forward requires a cultural shift. The government, educational institutions, religious organizations, and families must all play a role in dismantling prejudice. A national conversation on respect, empathy, and inclusion is essential, and this transformation must be reflected in the daily actions of every Filipino.

There is hope on the horizon. The passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill would be a monumental step toward legal protection for LGBTQIA+ individuals, fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in workplaces and communities.

Protecting LGBTQIA+ Filipinos from discrimination is key to building a society that values every individual. That is the kind of country we should aspire to—a nation that celebrates differences

and uses them to propel itself forward.

The question remains: Is the Philippines ready to turn freedom into reality for all? Anything less would be a failure to reach the nation's true potential. True equality elevates everyone. A society that values and protects all its people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, is one that thrives.

“

**Freedom is undeniable, non-negotiable, and inclusive. It's time we start living like it.#**



PHOTO FROM ABS-CBN NEWS



# Tinapang Manok

## ANG PAMANAHAT INOBASYON

■ NI EZEKIEL EUN S. DE CASTRO AT ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

LITRATO NI ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

**T**inapa ang isa sa mga comfort food ng mga Pinoy. Ang pagpapausok sa pugon ang nagbibigay ng kakaibang lasang nanunuot sa laman ng isda. Pero para kay Rowena Galinato, ang tinapa ay hindi lang limitado sa galunggong o tamban.

Sa lungsod ng Urdaneta sa Pangasinan, kilala ang pamilyang Galinato sa kanilang pagtitinapa mula pa noong 1950. Mula sa ina nilang si Anita Galinato, ang tradisyon ng pagtitinapa sa ay naipasa sa mga kanyang mga anak. Bagama't ngayong nasa ikatlong

henerasyon na ang humahawak nito, hindi pa rin nagbago ang kalidad at orihinal na lasa ng kanilang tinapa.

Taong 2018 nang nagtangka si Rowena kasama ang kanyang asawa na bigyang buhay ang bagong produkto ng kanilang pamilya — ang tinapang manok. Sa kadahilanang nais nilang bumida pa sa merkado, sinubukan nilang timplahin ang kanilang eksperimentong tinapa hanggang sa makuha ang tamang lasa na aniya ay parang inasal na may smoky flavor.

Ang kanilang inobasyon ang nagbigay ng bagong panlasa sa mga taga-Urdaneta.

Bilang pangunahing kabuhayan, ginagamit ng mag-asawang Galinato ang kanilang kita para mapag-aral ang kanilang dalawang anak. Nakatulong din ang kanilang negosyo upang mabigyan ng trabaho ang mga taga-Urdaneta.

Natural na pagpreserba ng pagkain ang pagpapausok kaya naman ang tinapang manok ng mga Galinato na binansagang “Ulam ng Masa” ay umaabot mga karatig-lalawigan tulad ng Maynila,

Ilocos, Isabela, Bulacan at Abra. At hindi lang iyon, nakapag-eexport na rin sila ng kanilang signature tinapa sa USA, Canada, at Spain.

Naitampok na rin ang kakaibang tinapang manok sa iba't ibang social media sites at news outlet tulad ng “Unang Hirit.” Kaya naman, hindi kataka-taka na ang imbensyong ito ay dinarayong mga tao sa iba't-ibang lugar sa Pangasinan.

Sa kabila ng mahabang panahon ng paggawa ng tinapa, nananatili silang tapat sa kanilang layunin: ang maghatid ng mataas na kalidad na produkto sa abot-kayang halaga. Kaya sa presyong 300 pesos, matitikman na ang ng buong pamilya ang itinanghal na pinakasarp na tinapa sa buong Pangasinan.

Bukod sa kanilang dedikasyon sa kalidad, ang tagumpay ng Galinato's Tinapang Manok ay nakaugat sa kanilang pagsisikap na panatilihin buhay ang tradisyon. Sa loob ng higit 50 taon, nananatiling matatag ang negosyo sa kabila ng mga pagbabago sa panahon.

Hanggang ngayon, patuloy ang pamilyang Galinato sa paggawa ng tinapang manok sa lungsod. Sa kanilang

determinasyon at pagmamahal sa sining ng paggawa ng tinapa, patuloy nilang pinapatunayan na ang lasa at kalidad ay pwedeng magsilbing tulay para pagsamahin ang tradisyon at inobasyon.

Ang Galinato's Tinapang Manok ay hindi lamang isang negosyo, ito rin ay simbolo ng pagmamalaki ng Pangasinan — isang kwento ng pagkakaisa, tradisyon, pamilya, at tagumpay na hinding-hindi maglalaho sa panlasang Pilipino. #

### Paano Ginagawa ang Tinapang Manok ng Galinato?

Ang paggawa ng tinapang manok ay isang maingat na proseso upang matiyak ang kalidad at lasa ng bawat piraso. Narito ang kanilang proseso:

#### Paghahanda sa Pagluluto

1. Gumawa ng marinade sa pamamagitan ng paghahalo ng toyo, Sprite, asin, paminta, at oyster sauce.
2. Iuhos ang marinade sa manok at hayaan itong magbabad nang hindi bababa sa 30 minuto.

#### Pagluluto

1. Pakuluan ang manok gamit ang marinade at lutuin hanggang lumambot.
2. Alisin ang manok mula sa marinade at patuyuin ito sa bistay (sieve).
3. Kapag tuyo na ang manok, ilagay ito sa wood-fired oven upang makuha ang natatanging lasa ng tinapa.



KUHA MULA SA RNG GROUP



# KARERA NG P-POP

## Patuloy na Go Up ng Musikang Pinoy

■ NI NATHALIE GAIL G. AQUINO

LARAWAN MULA SA ABS-CBN, METRO, PRESS



**S**a makulay at malikhaing mundo ng musika sa Pilipinas, patuloy na umuusbong ang P-Pop bilang isang patunay ng talento, sipag, at pagkamalikhain ng mga Pilipino.

Sa nagdaang mga taon, nagkaroon ng malaking pagbabago sa industriya ng musika, at patuloy na sumisikat ang P-Pop. Sa pangunguna ng BINI at SB19, mas naiangat ang OPM sa panginternasyonal, patunay na kayang makipagsabayan ng mga Pilipino sa buong mundo.

Ang BINI at SB19 ay dalawang grupong namayagpag at minahal ng maraming fans, hindi lang sa Pilipinas kundi pati sa ibang bansa.

Ngunit paano nga ba sila nagsimula? Ano ang naging epekto nila sa kanilang mga tagahanga? At ano ang hinaharap ng musikang Pilipino?

### Ang Simula ng BINI at SB19

Ang SB19 ay isang boy group na binubuo nina Pablo, Josh, Stell, Ken, at Justin at pinamamahalaan ng ShowBT Philippines. Naging popular sila noong 2019 matapos mag-viral ang kanilang kanta na “Go Up.” Dahil sa kanilang husay sa pagsayaw at pagkanta, pati na rin sa paggawa ng sariling musika, nakilala sila hindi lang sa Pilipinas kundi pati na rin sa ibang bansa. Ang pagsasama ng modernong pop at kulturang Pinoy sa kanilang musika ang nagbigay sa kanila ng sariling tatak bilang isa sa mga nangungunang P-Pop groups.

Sumunod naman noong 2021 ang debut ng BINI, isang walong-miyembrong girl group na binubuo nina Aiah, Colet, Maloi, Gwen, Stacey, Mikha, Jhoanna, at Sheena, sa ilalim ng Star Hunt Academy ng ABS-CBN. Nakilala sila sa kanilang masisigla at nagbibigay-inspirasyong kanta, kaya tinawag silang “Nation’s Girl Group” ng kanilang mga fans. Sa pamamagitan ng kanilang debut song na “Born to Win,” pinatunayan nila ang kanilang talento at naging isa sa mga nangungunang P-Pop girl groups sa industriya.

Malaki ang naging epekto ng musika ng BINI at SB19 sa kanilang mga tagapakinig dahil sa kanilang makabuluhang mensahe. Ang mga kanta ng BINI tulad ng “Lagi,” “Kapit Lang,” at “Karera” ay nagbibigay ng inspirasyon tungkol sa katatagan at positibong pananaw sa buhay. Samantala, ipinakita naman ng SB19 ang kanilang husay sa pagkanta at performance sa pamamagitan ng mga kantang “Go Up,” “Mapa,” at “Alab.” Dahil dito, umabot sa milyon-milyon ang views ng kanilang mga kanta sa iba’t ibang online

platforms sa buong mundo, na nagpatibay pa lalo sa kanilang kasikatan.

### Katauhan ng P-Pop

Ang P-Pop ay nagdudulot ng malalim na koneksyon sa mga Pilipino dahil sa paggamit ng sariling wika at ng kulturang Pilipino sa kanilang musika at imahe. Bagama’t malaki ang impluwensya ng K-Pop, ang P-Pop ay nagbibigay ng sariling katauhan na mas malapit sa puso ng mga Pilipino. Hindi maikakailang malaki ang impluwensiya ng K-Pop sa mga grupong tulad ng SB19 at BINI, ngunit ang P-Pop ay may sariling tatak.

Ayon kay Nari, isang mag-aaral mula sa Urdaneta City University at isang A’TIN (SB19 fan), “Naipapakita nila kung paano ang kultura natin, tulad sa kanta ni Felip (SB19 KEN) na ‘Bulan,’ kung saan tinatalakay niya ang mga Filipino mythology. Mas pinapalakas ng P-Pop ang OPM at ang Pilipinas sa buong mundo, kaya nakakaproud sila.” Dagdag pa ni Adrienne, isang Bloom (BINI fan), “Mas malapit sa puso namin ang

kwento ng mga kanta nila. Yung mga problema nila, alam naming pinagdaanan din nating mga Pilipino.”

Ipinapakita nito na ang P-Pop ay hindi lang tungkol sa musika, ito rin ay tungkol sa komunidad, passion, at pagmamalaki sa atung kulturang Pilipino.

### Ang Kinabukasan ng P-Pop at OPM

Habang lumalawak ang P-Pop, mas nagkaroon din ng oportunidad ang iba pang lokal na artists na makilala sa global music industry. Marami ang umaasang mas dadami pa ang mga orihinal na kanta ng mga Pilipino na ipagmamalaki natin sa buong mundo.

Ang SB19 at BINI ay patunay na kaya ng mga Pilipino ang global o internasyonal na entablado. Sa bawat kanta nila, pinapalakas nila ang pagmamahal sa sariling nating musika at ipinapakita ang tunay na diwa ng pagiging Pilipino.

Ang tagumpay ng P-Pop ay hindi lang tagumpay ng mga artista kundi tagumpay ng buong Pilipinas. Habang patuloy nating sinusuportahan ang lokal na musika, mas lumalakas ang ating industriya ng OPM sa iba’t ibang bansa.

Hindi lang ito tungkol sa pagiging sikat ng P-POP kundi tungkol ito sa pagpapakita ng talento, kultura, at pagmamalaki natin bilang mga Pilipino. #





# TRASH TALK DECONSTRUCTED

■ BY MELYRA D. ESQUERRA

GRAPHICS BY LARDAIN J. CALLEJO

**H**ow do you cope with when frustration gets the best of you?

Indulging ourselves with the thought of us being right, and that others are wrong is something that floats our ego. This rush tends to lead us into crashing out—leading into waves of talking trash. As it hits, a little later we find ourselves saying: “What a loser, you suck so bad.”

We had all trash talked at one time or another—it is one of our defenses for insults or instances that causes embarrassment. But when it crosses borders, where do we draw the line?

## Self-frustration and Self-awareness

“When I trash talk, it’s not because of other people’s mistakes but because I am getting frustrated with myself,” JC, a BS Information Technology student said.

Most of the time, when people feel like they are not able to meet their own expectations, they think it’s best to put their frustrations into something or someone—even if it’s not fair or reasonable. For most people, trash talking is more of a way of externalizing their own dissatisfaction and struggles, and less of criticizing other people.

Acknowledging our own behavior is a reflection of self-awareness, and while it can provide temporary relief, it actually doesn’t address underlying issues.

## Social adaptation and conformity

“Sometimes I can’t help but talk trash, especially when I’m with people who are already used to it, I feel like I am also required to do it. It’s something that I already adapted from them, too,” said Dave from the same course.

For some reason, trash talking became a dynamic for some groups—it became an unspoken rule that is expected to be done for the group’s vibe to be maintained. It’s like, if you don’t speak your share of harmless banter, you would feel left out or like you don’t really belong at all.

Trash talking with a group, most often than not is a way to bond and display familiarity. However, it’s also important to consider how this behavior affects people in the long run because some may thrive on this energy, but some might be more sensitive, and take it to heart.

## Pleasure and Guilt

JC and Dave agreed that trash talking gives them pleasure, while also acknowledging the guilt that comes after it.

“Of course it feels nice. However, while it’s something I consider harmless, I also feel guilty at the thought of hurting someone else’s feelings,” said JC.

Trash talking can be fun in a spur of a moment, especially when it gives us enjoyment or entertainment. But the fact that guilt arises from this means we

are fully aware of the potential harm it could cause others. It can sometimes take time for the harm to accumulate, especially for those who may not feel comfortable speaking out about it or who choose to ignore it.

It’s important to note that being conscious of the underlying consequences of our actions is more important than gaining temporary happiness.

## Bend and Mend or Break and Ruin

Trash talking is a common behavior that could both increase motivation or create rivalries. No matter which one is our reason for doing it, it doesn’t change the fact that it affects people—may it be good or bad.

Words are as powerful as the sharpest sword, it cuts deep. It could break a person down, ruining them into pieces. However, we have control. It’s us who holds the power.

Don’t bend your morals just to mend your frustrations and friendships, instead bend your ego and start mending your way of handling your behavior.

Whatever reasons we have for talking trash, let’s not normalize the practice of being harsh. The next time you find yourself in a spirited exchange of banter, keep in mind: it’s all meant to be enjoyable—unless you’re up against someone who takes their trash talk far too seriously!#





# A THOUSAND CUTS

## *The Bloody Era of Modern Filipino Politics - A Movie Review*

■ BY ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

PHOTOS FROM AFP/BBC

**R**odrigo Duterte's six years of presidency was a polarizing time for many Filipinos. While some view this extreme moment in Filipino history as a necessary evil, others argue that the War on Drugs did more harm than good.

Online media played a crucial role in Duterte's rise to power. Social media spread his message to countless Filipinos, boosting his popularity among the masses, for better or worse. And for the Manila-based news site Rappler, the latter could not be more accurate.

A Thousand Cuts is a 2020 documentary directed by Ramona Diaz. The film retells what happened during President Duterte's governance, how media (mainly social and online media) played a role in rulership, and how Rappler and its founder, Maria Ressa, survived it all. The documentary follows Maria Ressa in her public life as the founder of Rappler and a journalist, as well as her private life away from the office. The film also features the perspective of other Rappler writers and political figures.

Although time has passed since the film's creation, many compelling points made throughout its 2-hour runtime are still relevant today. These points still reflect modern regimes and their attitudes towards media in countries besides the Philippines.

This review is a look into the pertinent themes brought up in the movie.

### **Politicians Are Powerful to the Point of Terror**

Ordinary people like to think they have control and power, especially since they have the right to vote. But where is that control when faced with a politician with money and influence? Figures such as President Duterte, during his presidency, ruled with an iron fist that he could command a person's life or death. And if you dislike his rhetoric, he could ban you from the Malacañang (like he did with Maria Ressa and her writer, Pia Rañada). Or worse, he could have you jailed.

"My stay last night at the NBI really made me think about what this is all about, right?" said Maria Ressa during her first arrest. "And for me, it's about two things: abuse of power and weaponization of the law."

People should step back and see that politicians are, at the very least, scary when handling their power.

Censorship and control over public voices have been around for ages. However, politicians have become more dominant in silencing unwanted opinions thanks to the internet.

So, if you have a word or two regarding the current regime, get ready for hate messages and threats to

bombard your inbox.

### **Where There is Disinformation, There is Violence**

As mentioned, politicians such as President Duterte had teams of content creators, such as Mocha Uson, who purposely created content ridiculing the opposition and fueling hate among followers. Often, disinformation spreads like wildfire on social media, and it could lead to angry comments demanding to put your head on a silver platter.

Often, these mobs use graphic threats of harassment, rape, and murder to elicit some form of submission. Disinformation clouds the mind and dehumanizes others.

### **Democracy Does Not End With a Flesh Wound but with Little Cuts**

"What we are seeing is death by a thousand cuts of our democracy," said Maria Ressa. "And it is done—think about the bleeding: little cuts to the body of politics, to the body of Philippine democracy. And when you have enough of these cuts, you are so weakened that you will die."

Problems in a country do not start with a bang. Instead, small changes, such as running questionable policies or censoring dissenting voices, are where politicians break down society.

Today, the Philippines

government is in its state because of thousands of cuts done by previous generations of politicians who have chipped away at the foundation of our democracy. At this point, we might need more than bandages to fix the problem.

### **A Message of Love**

Duterte's presidency has come and gone, but it left a lasting impact on many lives, especially those affected by the Drug War. However, the film ends with the message that love is what keeps us human, and it will help us conquer any adversaries in our way.

The documentary continues to be relevant as long as there is violence towards journalists. Censorship is a primary tactic tyrants use to control the masses and fuel hatred among one another. On the flip side, education and empathy continue to be the solution to society's illness. Viewing the lives of other journalists as humans can help us evaluate which side of history we want to stand.

A Thousand Cuts is a film that helps viewers look back on what happened during Duterte's presidency through the lens of Rappler which continuously fights for press freedom. Although Rodrigo Duterte is no longer the president, the fight for free speech is ongoing, and each journalist on the field can help heal the Philippines' thousand cuts.#





# VAPORISE

## *A Dangerous Puff Away*

■ BY CHARLES DENVER S. LIBERATO

PHOTO FROM DOMINIK KEMPF, JOHN CARORO/UNSPLASH

The Philippines faces a significant increase in vape usage, especially among youth, despite the 2022 enactment of the Vaporized Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Products Regulation Act (Republic Act No. 11900). While this legislation aims to control the vape market, concerns persist regarding its effectiveness in preventing youth access and mitigating the long-term health risks towards addiction and respiratory problems.

The surge in vaping presents a complex public health challenge. Although the law provides a regulatory framework, its enforcement and the continuous emergence of new e-cigarette products pose significant obstacles.

### Less Tar, Less Risk?

“As a non-smoker, I find vaping more appealing than cigarettes,” explains Marian, a BS Engineering student. “It provides a soothing sensation and I don’t think it is more harmful than cigarettes. Plus, I believe it’s more cost-effective in the long run.”

However, Dr. Maria Encarnita Limpin, a tobacco cessation expert and Executive Director of Action on Smoking and Health Philippines, debunked the public notion that e-cigarettes cause less harm among its users.

“*Yung sinasabi nilang less harmful or harm reduction, hindi yan bagong strategy, that has been used already even before,*” said Limpin

during a webinar series titled “*Paninigarilyo at Vape, Ihinto na! How to Protect Future Generations.*”

The tobacco industry’s promotion of vaping as a safer alternative raises serious health risks, including lung diseases, heart problems, and cancer, and should be met with skepticism due to profit motives.

### Danger in Every Puff

Lung cancer remains a major health threat in the Philippines, ranking as the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths. In 2023, the Lung Center of the Philippines reported an average of 321 daily deaths from tobacco-related diseases, underscoring the urgent need for stronger anti-smoking measures.

Meanwhile, a 2024 survey by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health revealed a growing e-cigarette trend, with 14% of Filipino youth (1.21 million) and 2% of adults (1.63 million) currently using these products.

Despite a decline in tobacco use over the past decade, e-cigarette and vape usage has surged in the Philippines, particularly among youth aged 13-15, according to the Department of Health (DOH) in May 2024. The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) revealed that 14%—or 1 in 7 students in this age group—use e-cigarettes daily, a troubling statistic given their age falls below the legal threshold for such products. Easy access plays a significant

role, with 77.1% of young users purchasing these products from local stores, kiosks, or street vendors.

DOH Health Promotion Bureau representative Armund Arguellas highlighted a staggering 110% increase in e-cigarette use among youth in just four years, rising from 11.7% in 2015 to 24.6% in 2019.

### The Starting Toll

E-cigarettes and vaping products can lead to serious health risks, including e-cigarette or vape-associated lung injury (EVALI), a severe condition that damages the lungs due to harmful substances. The Philippines recorded its first EVALI case in November 2019, involving a 16-year-old Visayan girl who used both vapes and cigarettes.

In May 2024, the Department of Health (DOH) reported the death of a 22-year-old male from a heart attack caused by severe lung injury linked to his two-year daily vaping habit. DOH Assistant Secretary Albert Domingo confirmed that the young man had no known comorbidities.

“DOH and PGH raises warning on vape as it cites first Filipino death. *Ang pinaka striking sa kasong ito ‘yung kaniyang heart attack, wala siyang risk factors maliban sa araw-araw siyang nagva-vape for the past two years bago siya atakihin sa puso,*” he revealed.

### Quitting Efforts

Dr. Leonora Fernandez, a pulmonologist and professor

at the UP College of Medicine, redefined smoking and vaping as medical disorders rather than mere habits. She characterized these as chronic, relapsing conditions known as nicotine dependence syndrome, advocating for a paradigm shift that recognizes smoking as a disease in itself, not just a risk factor.

Only 4% of smokers successfully quit, highlighting a significant gap in support for cessation. Fernandez proposed integrating smoking and vaping habits into patient interviews and recommending nicotine replacement therapies like gums and patches. These therapies can effectively manage withdrawal and cravings for up to three months post-cessation, increasing the likelihood of successful quitting and reducing the need for repeated attempts.

She advocated for a comprehensive strategy to combat tobacco use, including a ban on smoking, vaping, and vape marketing, drawing on the success of 33 other countries.

While the Philippine government faces numerous national and international concerns, the administration, in collaboration with health executives, must urgently address the continuous small puffs to safeguard the present Filipino generation. Continued disregard for this issue poses a grave risk of a significant public health crisis, the consequences of which may prove devastating and difficult to vaporize. #



# A Cure for PCOS

■ BY ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

PHOTO FROM ZACK MINOR/UNSPLASH

**I**t was amid the COVID-19 pandemic when UCU student Wynonna first experienced changes in her body. Like many people during unpredictable times, Wynonna found comfort through eating. But besides her sudden increased appetite, she also noticed irregularities in her menstrual cycle.

After consulting her OB-GYNE and receiving an ultrasound, the results answered her suspicions: she was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome.

Polycystic ovarian syndrome, also known as PCOS, is a hormonal disorder that affects more than just the reproductive system of child-bearing women. PCOS causes a range of symptoms, such as irregular periods, weight gain, excessive hair growth, and follicles developing within the ovaries. As of right now, the cause of PCOS is not fully known.

According to Dr. Ebby Eunika Rebugio, an obstetrician and gynecologist from Urdaneta City, PCOS usually affects 1 in 10 women of reproductive age. However, many Filipinos are unaware of the disease and its impact on women's health.

The lack of awareness regarding PCOS has led many women to be shy or afraid of getting a proper diagnosis, often relying on self-medication. While there is no definite cure for PCOS, treatment such as medication and lifestyle changes can help minimize the long-term complications associated with PCOS. Yet how

do you start treating patients when they do not know that they are sick in the first place?

## Why Many Are Scared to Visit Their Doctor

PCOS is one of the most common hormonal disorders that affect women at a reproductive age. Symptoms vary from person to person. To qualify for PCOS, a patient must exhibit two out of the three criteria:

1. Irregular or infrequent periods.
2. Signs of high levels of "male hormones" (such as high levels of testosterone levels in blood tests.)
3. Ultrasounds show polycystic ovaries.

People with PCOS are more than likely to develop other chronic disorders, such as type 2 diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension, high cholesterol, and endometrial cancer. Likewise, PCOS can affect a person's mental health and body image.

Dr. Rebugio said, "Just by hearing the word 'cyst', they [the patients] would correlate it to a malignant one or of the cancerous type, and that would necessitate them to undergo surgery and various treatments. However, PCOS per se are not actual cysts but rather are small immature follicles that failed to develop due to hormonal imbalance."

Another symptom that many women dread is infertility. "The first thing you think about when you are not yet fully

aware is, 'Will I be able to have a child?' Wynonna said. "That was one of my biggest fears... But when I learned there were still possibilities, that I only need to change my lifestyle and take care of myself, I saw a light and knew it was still possible."

Treatment for PCOS varies from woman to woman. Medical practitioners will prescribe combinations of medications and lifestyle changes based on the prevailing symptoms. In her case, the doctor prescribed Wynonna a combination of contraceptive pills to control her hormones and medication to lower her blood sugar.

Besides the physical side effects of PCOS, the disease can also cause emotional and mental distress to women. Depending on your health provider, they may suggest a psychiatric check up since PCOS can go hand-in-hand with other mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety.

## Can Awareness Be the Key to Treatment?

According to Dr. Rebugio, "PCOS, if left untreated, would lead to other disorders, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and endometrial cancer. Hence, awareness, early consultation, and timely treatment would prevent these complications."

Although there is no one-size-fits-all cure for PCOS, many women can find hope in numbers.

By bringing awareness to the chronic illness, more people can realize the impact of PCOS on the daily lives of those struggling with its symptoms.

Signs of PCOS can manifest as early as a woman's adolescence years. Filipino women can benefit through educational interventions and other measures, such as awareness regarding the symptoms, etiology, age of onset, and PCOS-related health care services.

There is still plenty of research needed to find a true cure for PCOS. But the future for women with PCOS is not as bleak as many once thought it would be. Many women have had successful pregnancies and are living long and healthy lives. Women like Wynonna continue to fulfill their dreams without being hindered by their symptoms.

Treatment starts through detection, and that is how a person can overcome their disease in the first place. And by bringing awareness to this disease, more women will come forward looking for that detection they otherwise would not know they need.#



# DOUBLE DOWN

## The Odds and Stakes of Online Casino

■ BY CRISTINE A. JANOR

GRAPHICS FROM FREEPIK

**C**arlo\*, an aspiring civil engineer, received a scholarship to study at the Urdaneta City University. Determined to uplift his family from poverty, he initially focused diligently on his studies. However, the allure of easy money through an online casino quickly consumed him. He began skipping classes and eventually lost his scholarship, plunging his family back into financial hardship.

Carlo's story is unfortunately not unique. Many young adults are turning to online casinos as a potential solution to the financial pressures of college life. This concerning trend highlights the dangerous allure of quick money, which can lead students down a perilous path of addiction and financial ruin.

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) regulates gambling in the country, overseeing both land-based and online casinos while promoting responsible gaming. However, the rapid proliferation of illegal online casinos operating through social media platforms presents a significant challenge to its regulatory efforts.

Online casino platforms take advantage of young people and use technology as a fertile ground for the industry's growth. At the same time, many people now see gambling as a normal and acceptable form of entertainment, even though it's risky.

According to a PAGCOR report in July 2024, 5,793 illegal

online gambling platforms were blocked in the past two years, yet approximately 1,954 continue to operate.

However, gambling will never leave the Philippines. Despite the banning and illegalizing of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of Philippine Online Gaming Corporations (POGOs), many Filipinos are still placing their bets on the authorized gaming platforms, becoming more accessible through smartphones.

### Social Reels, Gambling Deals

Some students shared their experiences with online casinos, including the odds and stakes they encountered.

\*Pia, an education student, saw a reel for an online betting site on Facebook. She clicked on it, and since then, she has seen many more ads like it on her socials. *"Andaming lumalabas na reels tungkol diyan. Medyo nacurious na nga ako... Ngayon, minsan na lang ako humingi ng baon sa pamilya ko dahil may extra income na ako."*

Carlo admitted that he was enticed by streamers who claimed he could win as much as a million pesos with just small amounts. So he used his thriftiness to finance his growing habit. *"Less gastos kasi pdf ang handouts namin. Sa pagkain, isang kanin at isang gulay lang, solb na. At kung maaga naman ang uwian, lakad lang talaga nang malala,"* he recalled.

*"Super fan ako NBA at Mobile Legends. Kaya kapag*

*may mga laro ang favorite teams ko, tumatalpak talaga ako. May times na pumapaldo ako nang malaki, solid na nga 'yong 10k. Pero kapag talo, iniisip ko na lang na learning fee lang ito. Mindset ba mindset,"* \*Mickey, a tourism student, shared.

PAGCOR Assistant Vice President Jessa Fernandez noted that many influencers utilize their social media platforms to promote and encourage netizens to try their luck at online casinos.

*"Maraming influencers ang gumagamit ng platforms nila such as Facebook, Tiktok, Youtube to encourage prospective players to try their luck in illegal platforms, so pino-promote po nila ang websites or isang laro like 'wheels of whatever' kahit walang lisensya sa PAGCOR,"* she said.

### The False Promise of the Reward System

Online gambling can be incredibly deceptive, offering the illusion of easy riches with just a click. However, this allure often masks a dangerous reality. The promise of instant wealth can quickly shatter, leading to devastating financial losses and severe mental health consequences.

Famous influencer and beauty pageant contestant Lars Pacheco revealed that her online gambling addiction started with small bets. Driven by the thrill of winning, she couldn't stop playing and eventually lost 5 million pesos.

Young people, with their access to funds, are at risk of excessive gambling, which

can have severe long-term psychological consequences. Research emphasizes the need for comprehensive gambling addiction prevention programs for students. Education, counseling, and digital resources are essential for preventing gambling addiction among students.

The government has enacted laws against online gambling, including penalties under Presidential Decree No. 1602. While these laws are a start, consistent enforcement is crucial. To truly address this growing problem, public pressure and testimonies from those affected by gambling addiction are vital.

"I've met evil in the form of gambling," Pacheco said. *"Quit this evil now. Hindi pa huli ang lahat para sa 'you - for you to start over. Mas importante ang pamilya mo, mas importante ang sarili mo. Makakabawi ka ulit, makakabangon ka ulit, kung titigil ka na ngayon."*#

\*Sources who spoke on condition of anonymity are not identified in this article.







# LOST IN SPACE HOW FOMO DISRUPTS PEACE OF MIND

■ BY MELYRA D. ESQUERRA

GRAPHICS BY LARDAIN J. CALLEJO

**W**hile you're alone, and you're mindlessly scrolling through your social media, you suddenly stumble on a series of pictures and videos of your friends or family living it up to the fullest without you. Instantly, questions gush down your mind: "Why didn't they invite me? Did they forget I exist?" Before you know it, your thoughts start spiraling downward—scrolling through their profiles, trying to piece together what went wrong.

This is what we call FOMO or the fear of missing out. It's become a part of our lives, tied directly to how we see ourselves. When everyone else seems to be having more fun, living better lives, it can take a real toll on your mental and emotional health. Whether it's seeing loved ones enjoying themselves or even strangers online living their "perfect" lives, it's easy to feel left behind and wonder, "Why isn't that me?"

In a world of hustle and bustle, missing out on a thing is a hard thing. The digital age is a time where social events happen simultaneously—which had us grappling into a lot of informations at one time. Most of the people experience a nagging sense of unease when we see friends sharing their latest adventures on social media. This feeling often leads to a constant need to check notifications and updates, driven by the fear of missing out on something exciting or important.

This pervasive anxiety is commonly referred to as FOMO or the fear of missing

out. According to the study of Gupta & Sharma (2021), FOMO is a unique term introduced in 2004 to describe a phenomenon observed on social networking sites. It includes two processes; firstly, perception of missing out, followed up with a compulsive behavior to maintain these social connections.

## What are the effects of FOMO?

FOMO is a genuine emotion that leads to real world consequences. Statistics reveal that many individuals experience negative feelings associated with FOMO.

A survey by Farhad Taheer revealed that 39% of the respondents report feeling envious, 30% experience jealousy, and 21% feel sad or disappointed, while only 29% say they feel happiness. Interestingly, the same report indicates that millennials are beginning to view envy and jealousy in a more positive light, using these feelings as motivation for constructive actions such as making purchases or planning trips.

Fear is a spectrum of various emotions, from positive to negative. It's in our way of seeing and handling situations that will help lessen the agonizing anxiety that comes along with it.

## Guilt from unhealthy thoughts

"Although I think my fear of missing out is rational, there is guilt

that comes along with it from the thought of me thinking bad things about my friends," Angela, BS Accountancy, expressed.

Risa Luna on her blog about FOMO stated that, "Much of the unhappiness we experience is due to our own irrational thoughts about situations. Guilt arises when we feel bad, not just about what we've done (or not done), but about what our actions imply about who we are."

It is known that emotions, including fear, occurs naturally as our response to certain situations. While it is something we cannot control, it is also within our capacity to compose ourselves for a better action. Moreover, fear only becomes one if we let ourselves be a captive of it.

## Is FOMO a real fear?

"For me, FOMO exists, but it's more of the fear of being judged or mislabeled rather than fear of missing out," said Irish, a psychology student.

The concept of FOMO often extends beyond just the anxiety of missing events; it can also encompass the fear of being judged or mislabeled by others.

According to Reid & Clark (2025), the emotional distress associated with FOMO often includes feelings of loneliness and anxiety, which can be intensified by the perception of being judged by others. This emotional turmoil can lead individuals

to engage in maladaptive behaviors to alleviate their fears, further complicating their social interactions and perceptions.

While traditional definitions of FOMO focus on missing out on experiences, the underlying fear of judgment and mislabeling plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals experience this phenomenon.

## Toning down Fears

Nothing a determined man can solve. Like any other situation, FOMO is something that has solutions.

"As time goes by, I realized that the right circle won't make you feel like you are missing out, [rather]-they'll fill you with the details of what you have missed," Andrea, a psychology student, expressed.

One of the ways to mend FOMO is fostering genuine connections. Rather than over analyzing situations that may or may not have happened, try committing yourself into deepening your relationships with your loved ones.

Other things you could do to cope up with FOMO includes developing self-awareness, focusing on present experiences, managing overall stress levels and anxiety, taking a digital detox, and boosting your self-esteem.

Acknowledging our fears is a huge act of displaying bravery. Meanwhile, it is also our responsibility to set our boundaries—or limit of when fear has to end, as there is nothing more scary than being stuck on the thought of the unknown. #





## Linya

NI MARC NELSON E. FERNANDEZ

Isang dagat na bughaw sa may bandang kanluran,  
Sadyang namumutiktik sa likas na kayamanan.  
Itong lahat ay sa'tin ang bawat pulo't alon,  
Ibinigay sa atin ng ating Panginoon.

Ngunit ang dapat sa'tin may pilit umaangkin.  
Bandilang kulay pula at may limang bituin,  
Sa kanila raw ito no'ng unang panahon pa,  
Ngunit walang patunay at kulang ang pruweba.

Ngunit ang pang-aangkin ay hindi pa nagtapos.  
Sa maling kwento nila'y di sila napapagod.  
Sila'y handang manakit yumurak at mang-api,  
Makuha lang ang dagat na hindi pag-aari.

Handa pang magpadala naglalakihang barko,  
Para lamang manakot ng mga Pilipino.  
Ang mga mangingisda lagi nilang punterya,  
Inuubos ang laman ng bangka at banyera.

Ang bawat pagpalaot bakit may dalang takot?  
Samu't saring pangamba kami ay binabalot,  
Tila'y anumang oras bangka nami'y lulubog,  
Sa mga barkong harang pa'no makalulusod.

Sa ating pag-aari wala bang karapatan,  
Barko laban sa bangka, ano ang aming laban?  
Wala bang magagawa kung hindi ang pagbigyan?  
Kanilang pang-aapi at mga panlalamang.

At sa aming gobyerno kami'y nakikiusap,  
Sino ang magtatanggol? Saan po maghahanap?  
Ang pang-aalipusta inyo bang nakikita?  
Kung ang sagot ay oo, kayo'y may gagawin ba?

Ang sila'y palagan di namin kahilingan.  
Nais lang sana namin na kami'y protektahan,  
Sariling lugar natin hindi maparoonan,  
Paano ang trabaho? Pa'no ang kabuhayan?

Sa mga kabataan na pag-asa ng bayan,  
Sa kanilang lahat ay halina't ipalam,  
Ano ang nangyayari do'n sa dagat kanluran,  
Kung pa'no nila tayo'y inaapak-apakan.

Ang ating karapatan ay ating ipaglaban.  
Huwag na sanang tiisin ang paglalapastangan.  
Sa atin ang sa atin tayo ay manindigan,  
West Philippine Sea'y amin ating ipagsigawan.

## Tatsulok

NI NEIL VINCENT V. CORPUZ

Baliktarin ang tatsulok  
Itama ang sistemang bulok  
Pababain ang mga gahamang nasa tuktok  
At pabagsakin ang mga kurap na nakaluklok

Mga pangakong napako' dahil sa kasakiman  
Mga mabulaklak na salita noong halalan  
Na saan nung kayo'y talagang kailangan?  
Wala! Mga duwag na animo'y nagtatagu-taguan

Inyong tandaan at huwag kalimutan  
Na hindi permanente ang inyong kapangyarihan  
Darating ang araw na bababa rin kayo sa inyong tungtungan  
Kayong mga nagpapalala sa kahirapan

## Ganid sa Tuktok

NI KYLE HENNAH V. TIONGSON

Sa loob ng Malacañang ng dangal at katarungan,  
May lihim na laban, namumuong hidwaan.  
Alyansang tawag sa sumpang 'di mawari,  
'Di katagala'y nasira, ngayon ay bali.

Kapwa may likas na pwersa at talino,  
May ipinamalas na salitang pinaniwalaan ng mga tao.  
Ngunit, kabiguap at pasakit lamang ang handog nang maupo,  
Wala nang naiambag, bumuo pa ng sigalot at gulo.

Pananagutan, sino ang mananagot sa binaling sumpa?  
Tila sila'y nagtuturuan o nagbubulag-bulagan na.  
Mga lider, mga lider na makasarili't napakasakim,  
Buwaya sa gobyerno na para lamang sa kapangyarihan at salapi



# Blooming Marigolds

BY ATHENA ASHLEY B. PEREZ

*The chilly December is no match  
For you tender affection and embrace.  
Like Indian marigolds from the South  
Your kisses are an enchanting grace.  
Warm me up this cold holiday  
Your touch will never go to waste.  
Yellow diamonds play around your neck  
Reserved for me to have a taste.*

# Tambutso't Damdamin

NI EZEKIEL EUN S. DE CASTRO

*Payapang kalsada  
Ang nagsisilbing bida,  
Walang halong pagdududa  
Sa isang masayang toda.*

*Umuugong na tambutso  
Ang maririnig tuwing alas-otso,  
Binabaybay ang gitna ng daanan  
Tungo sa magandang paradahan.*

*Halika, samahan mo ako  
Sumakay sa isang masayang areglo,  
Sumakay sa motorsiklo  
Ngunit di ako ang magmamaneho.*

*Mapayapang maglalakbay  
Kung ikaw din ang kasabay,  
Ikaw lang naman kase ang aking hinihintay  
Na sa motorsiklo'y sumakay.*

*Tatlong gulung  
Ang magsisilbing katulong  
Sa bagay na palaging pasulong  
Ngunit ang iba'y paurong.*

*Ngiti ang puhunan  
Sa takbo ng kapayapaan,  
Kasiyahan ang matutunan  
Oras na sumabay sa pupuntahan.*

*Sa paglalakbay na tila'y walang katapusan  
Di panay saya ang mararamdaman  
Tamlay sa iyong mata ay aking nasilayan  
Ramdam ang pagusad sa motorsiklong dumadaan.*

# Be the True Color You are

BY NATHALIE GAIL G. AQUINO

*You are a rainbow of colors, unique and bright.  
You are a masterpiece, a work of art, a one of a kind.  
Don't hide your true self; let your spirit take flight.  
Don't let anyone dull your shine or dim your light.*

*So let your true color show, and let your spirit soar.  
You are a dreamer, a believer, a shining star.  
So celebrate your difference, no matter what you are.  
You are enough, just as you are, forevermore.*

GRAPHICS BY LARDAIN J. CALLEJO



# WHERE SPIRITS REIGN

BY ADRIENNE GRACE B. MAGAT

GRAPHICS BY KHRISHA JANE NICOLE C. EPISTOLA

In a high-octane arena where champions collide, the spirit of grit transforms into greatness. The students of Urdaneta City University are locked in and ready to soar, fueled by passion, skill, and the relentless pursuit of victory.

Though the students come from different worlds and circumstances, they are united by a shared path and purpose. Each

college, shaped by its students, brings unique qualities that set it apart. They all have what it takes to succeed, but it's not just about skill—it's about identity: the pride they carry and the legacy they uphold.

These thrilling rivalries deserve the spotlight. They say home is where the heart is— but which court would you let hold yours?



The **Regal Ravens** from the **College of Arts and Sciences** are ingenious problem solvers, thriving even in the wildest settings. Their sharp minds embody wisdom, creativity, and intellectual curiosity, driving them to seek ingenious solutions. They navigate challenges with ease, turning obstacles into stepping stones for success. In tough competitions, they triumph in the sky, proving that strategy is just as powerful as strength.

Charging forward to victory, the **College of Engineering and Architecture's Charging Bulls** execute technical plays with unrelenting drive. Building a future where innovation is key, they design their gameplay to mark their territory. Their impressive stamina powers them through long matches, enabling them to endure and secure victory after victory.



Hail to the king of the jungle, the **Noble Lions** from the **Institute of Graduate and Advanced Studies** rule their domain with unmatched intellectual ferocity. They've put in the reps, years of intense training have forged their minds. With a killer game sense and a strategic mind, they break down complex problems like seasoned pros. They're not just playing the game; they're changing it, leaving an undeniable mark on their field.

The **Tech Titans** from the **College of Information and Technology Education** master cutting-edge innovation, effortlessly solving complex challenges — much like coding under tight deadlines. Fast but never furious, they remain composed and strategic while executing game plans. Their ability to stay calm under pressure gives them the edge to perform at their best, even in crunch time.



The **College of Hospitality and Tourism Management's Cunning Leopards** win with finesse. Fiercely competitive, they analyze the best approach before striking to ensure their victory. Graceful yet deadly, their charisma helps them dominate the game. Silent but dominant, they strike like skilled problem-solvers, finding creative solutions seamlessly and ensuring victory. Patient and perfectly timed, they make every move count.





Honed in the wild, the **College of Criminal Justice Education's Mighty Gorillas** dominate with unyielding determination. They read the game like a complex case, strategically breaking down their opponents' defenses. Their raw strength and stamina make them an indomitable force. Just as they defend the law with honor and pride, they hunt down their rivals with power as their guide.



Rising from the depths of the endless fight, the **Legal Legions** from the **College of Law** strive to uphold what is right. Their mastery of battlefield strategy mirrors a championship game, where executing plays under extreme pressure is second nature. They are adept at defense and poised for the offense. With their legions, the truth will never wane, as they dedicate their lives to making justice reign—always ready for a buzzer-beater moment in the game.

As highly intelligent predators, the **Phantom Vipers** from the **College of Pharmacy** strike with pinpoint accuracy. They carefully assess their environment before making their move, ensuring they have everything they need to capture their prey. Their quick reflexes and survival instincts translate into lightning-fast agility on the field. Their calculated moves and their sharp focus guarantee they hit their mark every time—making them a lethal force to be reckoned with.



With sharp vision and soaring ambition, the **Rising Hawks** from the **College of Business Management and Accountancy** lead with precision. Their competitive spirit fuels their dominance, enabling them to seize opportunities by spotting weaknesses in real-time. Like savvy business leaders, they maintain a competitive edge through calculated risks, rebounding from any setbacks they may face.

In the fast-paced world of sports, where every moment counts, **Wise Owls** from the **College of Teacher Education** excel in adaptability. They adjust strategies on the fly, knowing when to grab the right opportunity to exploit their opponents and hunt them down. Their sharp foresight and laser focus ensure their team stays one step ahead.



With an uncanny ability to read the game, the **College of Human Sciences Alpha Wolves** master the art of anticipation, turning their rivals' weaknesses into their own strengths. They dominate by predicting their rivals' moves, and execute a strategic counter-attack. Their versatility gives them the edge in any competition, forging them into a formidable powerhouse. When the pack moves as one, victory is inevitable—because lone wolves may be strong, but together, they are unstoppable.



The roar of the crowd is deafening. From the first whistle to the final buzzer, the tension rises as these legends take the stage. Surrender is not in their vocabulary—they continue to unleash their unique strengths and bring glory to their home court. This is a game you don't want to miss—a showdown of champions among champions.#



A quick burst of speed and agility allows the **Elite Tigers** from the **Center of Technical and Vocational Program** to catch fast-moving prey. Just like their namesake, known for their wide-range hands-on expertise, they combine sharp skills with strategic thinking to outmaneuver their rivals. As adaptable and highly skilled workers, they become the backbone of the industry—the MVPs setting the pace for success.



Never back down, never what? **The College of Health Sciences' Blazing Phoenix** never gives up. They rise from the ashes, showcasing their resilience and ability to overcome adversity. They always come back stronger after each setback, refusing to be defeated. They train with focus and recover with purpose. They turn challenges into fuel for their growth. Their burning passion makes them unstoppable, no matter how tough the competition gets.



GRAPHIC BY KHRISHA JANE  
NICOLE C. EPISTOLA

## EDITORIAL

# Buffed or Nerfed?

**T**he roar of virtual battles now rivals the cheers in stadiums. Since the inception of the Mineski Pro-Gaming League in 2011, Filipino esports athletes have evolved beyond casual gamers—they are now pioneers of a digital revolution in 2024. With medals won and millions watching online, this arena demands both recognition and responsibility.

What began as a pastime in bedrooms has exploded into a cultural phenomenon. The Philippine team *Sibol* made history by clinching gold in Mobile Legends at the 2023 SEA Games, silencing skeptics who dismissed gaming as mere entertainment. Teams like Blacklist International now dominate global leagues, with their matches drawing over 1.2 million concurrent viewers during MPL Philippines Season 13. These victories aren't just personal triumphs—they're national pride, played out on digital battlegrounds.

Over 43 million Filipinos play mobile games regularly,

according to a 2023 report by the Game Developers Association of the Philippines (GDAP). Smartphones have turned jeepneys, homes, and cafes into arenas. Yet, progress is throttled by poor infrastructure: the Philippines ranked 85th globally in internet speed last year, crippling training and competition. For every young talent streaming on YouTube, there's another struggling with lag or disconnections.

The Philippine Sports Commission now recognizes esports as a medal event, but funding remains inconsistent. A 2023 bill by Senator Lito Lapid proposing dedicated esports hubs stalled in Congress. This half-hearted approach leaves athletes vulnerable. Many juggle part-time jobs to sustain careers, while others face exploitative contracts from unscrupulous teams.

Blacklist International star Johnmar "*OhMyV33nus*" Villaluna argues esports players are athletes, yet society still dismisses them as "kids playing games." His sentiment echoes

across the industry. Pros often train 12 hours daily, with no standardized healthcare or retirement plans. The lack of structure turns passion into peril—burnout, mental health struggles, and careers ending by age 25 are common.

This year, Manila hosted the Valorant Champions Tour, a testament to the country's growing clout. Filipino players are increasingly scouted by international teams, mirroring the diaspora of boxers and nurses. But without local incentives, the Philippines risks losing its brightest stars to foreign leagues.

Boxing and basketball thrive because of academies, scholarships, and clear regulations. Esports, meanwhile, grapples with scandals like 2023's Dota 2 match-fixing allegations. The absence of anti-doping policies and contract standards undermines credibility. Without accountability, the industry's potential could unravel.

“

**We firmly believe that esports is more than a game—it's a legitimate sport deserving of respect. Athletes need protection, investment, and fair opportunities. But unchecked growth invites corruption and exploitation. Sustainable progress requires collaboration.**

To the government: Prioritize laws funding training facilities, mandating fair contracts, and integrating esports into school programs. To gaming agencies: Enforce age limits, mental health support, and anti-corruption measures. Partner with telecom companies to bridge the digital divide—a critical step in a country where internet access remains unequal. The keyboard is in your hands.

PRESS START.#





LIGHT CATALYST

# Filipino Athletes remain Far from Home

■ ADRIENNE GRACE B. MAGAT  
Junior Staff | BS Psychology

In sports, victory is often a team effort—an interplay of strategy, execution, and support. Yet, for Filipino athletes, the playing field feels far from what they should be calling their own.

The Philippine women's golf team, Bianca Pagdanganan and Dottie Ardina faced significant challenges due to delays in receiving their official competition uniform during the 2024 Paris Olympics which compelled them to use non-official gear and apparel during their supposedly sentimental competition.

The Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) and the National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP) attributed these problems to logistical issues. But if it weren't for the reliance on private sponsorships, these problems could be anticipated. This merely indicates a gap in public

funding where an inadequate budget for the field of sports affects the overall well-being of the athletes, including their uniforms, travel, and equipment.

While private sponsorships play a vital role, the government has the primary responsibility for ensuring that national athletes are completely equipped for international competitions. The dependence on sponsorships to supply the Philippine delegation's uniforms suggests that the government may not have directly allocated sufficient funds to address this need.

Looking at the historic gold medalists who raised bar after bar in the Philippine sports field, Hidylyn Diaz and Carlos Yulo are the best examples. In 2019, Diaz revealed that she was struggling to fund her bid to compete in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, just before she earned her

title as a weightlifting fairy. Similarly, Yulo faced early career challenges where he lacked the necessary support and resources to excel in gymnastics, which led him to leave the country and train abroad.

Recognition came only when the title was received, but where was the support during their time of need?

We can note that President Bongbong Marcos (PBBM) embarrassedly admitted the lack of support for our Filipino athletes during the incentives awarded at Malacañang Palace in 2023. He even commended the athletes' resiliency amidst not having the support they needed. It makes him proud, but at what cost? It simply sums up the government's awareness of their own negligence.

PBBM vowed that the administration will do everything to support and bring

out the best in our athletes' talents and skills. And yet again, a 50% budget reduction for the Amateur Sports Development Program has been proposed for 2025, a significant decrease compared to the previous year's allocation.

Where did the assurance of the government go? We just keep running around in circles of broken promises.

The government's insufficient support for its athletes has been a recurring issue. Filipino athletes work hard to bring glory to our country. They continue to bring pride to the nation despite systemic government shortcomings, proving that talent thrives even amidst adversity—but how much further could they go with proper support? How much pride can we bring home if we stop romanticizing resiliency in the sports industry?#

## UCU dominates in Karate campaign

■ BY KAROL KEN JAIRO A. CACHERO

Urdaneta City University (UCU) Knights Reborn karate team claimed 39 medals across two major tournaments, cementing their rising status in collegiate sports.

The squad secured 2 golds, 6 silvers, and 4 bronzes at the 115th Baguio City Charter Invitational Karate-Do Tournament last October 20 and dominated the All Luzon

Karate Championship last November 10 with 9 golds, 11 silvers, and 7 bronzes in kumite (sparring) and kata (forms).

John Rey Valdez and Orlando Poquiz from the College of Criminal Justice Education starred as double gold medalists in both events. Princess Bea Israel and Faith Angel Musni of College of Teacher Education added silvers

in kumite, representing UCU and their home dojo, SRKOI Rosales.

Composed largely of criminology students, the Knights Reborn's 11-gold, 17-silver, 11-bronze haul in their debut season underscored their depth.

Their All Luzon victory in Bataan marked UCU's first overall championship title in karate.

With momentum from their historic run, the Knights Reborn aim to expand their campaign in 2025.#

### MOMENTOUS CHARGE.

In the fight for silver, Faith Angel Musni (blue) locks in a 2-point kick against her opponent. (Photo by Karol Ken Jairo A. Cachero)







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PAMBANSA

# Payaso sa Halalan

**P**lantsado na ang Midterm Elections sa Mayo 12, 2025. Anim na buwan na lang at pipili na naman tayo ng mga taong sa tingin natin ay karapat-dapat ng ating mga boto.

Ayon sa datos ng Commission on Elections (COMELEC), mahigit 18,000 na posisyon sa gobyerno ang pupunan mula sa mga senador hanggang sa lokal na opisyal.

At sa naganap filing ng Certificate of Candidacy (COC) nitong Oktubre, umalingawngaw ang iba't-ibang pangalan ng mga influencers, artista, at maging convicted criminals na gustong pasukin ang maduming mundo ng pulitika. For the record, nakapagluklok na ang mga Pilipino noong 2019 ng isang mambabatas na hindi alam ang job description ng isang senador at umaming kailangan niya ng "seminar" sa paggawa ng batas. Simple lang naman kasi ang minimum requirement para lumahok sa eleksyon sa anumang posisyon - marunong magbasa at magsulat. Nagmumukha tuloy mas mataas ang pamantayan sa pagkuha ng trabaho kaysa sa pamumuno ng bansa.

Reminder lang,

magluluklok ulit tayo ng mga lider ng bansa sa susunod na taon. Kaya sa mga viral personalities na nangangarap ng mas malaking plataporma sa kanilang followers, huwag na kayong dumagdag sa pagpapatawa.

Kung hahayaan nating mabulag tayo sa kasikatan, sa koneksyon, at sa impluwensya ng mga payaso sa eleksyon, malayong makita natin ang bansa na tampulan ng katatawanan sa social media at sa kalsada.



**Hindi training ground ang pulitika para paglaruan. Hindi circus ang pulitika para sa katatawanan.**

Nakumbise ng mga kaibigan at followers si Rosmar Tan, isang multimillionaire Tiktok content creator at influencer, na tumakbo bilang konsehal sa Maynila. Para sa kanila, may "tunay na pagbabago" at mas marami siyang matutulungang tao kapag nagkaroon ng posisyon.

Sa kabilang banda, ang kanyang grupong Team

Malakas kasama si Rendon Labrador ay napatawan ng persona non grata sa kanilang naging insidente sa Coron, Palawan nitong Hunyo. At nito lang Oktubre, lalo pang pinag-initan si Rosmar sa social media dahil naman sa kaniyang naging insensitive na komento patungkol sa mga nasalanta sa Bicol.

Tila gustong i-extend ng internet sensation na si Deo "Diwata" Balbuena ang kanyang Pares Overload sa kongreso sa kanyang pagtakbo bilang nominee ng Vendors Partylist. Naging instant famous lang sa social media at sa tv, papasok na agad sa pulitika? Pero siyempre, bakit nga ba hindi?

Pagiging senador naman ang gustong tahakin ni Kingdom of Jesus Christ si Pastor Apollo Quiboloy. Hindi lamang siya kilala sa aspeto ng relihiyon pero maingay din ang pangalan ng self-proclaimed "Appointed Son of God" sa patong-patong na kasong kanyang kinahaharap sa bansa at sa USA, kabilang na ang sex trafficking of children, fraud and coercion, at bulk cash smuggling. Kaya di na nagpaawat si Sen. Risa Hontiveros na sana ay magkaroon ng kaunting hiya

ang pastor.

Malaya ang bawat Pilipino upang tumakbo at magsilbi sa bayan. Ngunit kailangang magkaroon ng mas komprehensibong polisa ang COMELEC sa pagsiyasat sa mga COC ng mga kumakandidato, kabilang na ang pagdisqualify sa mga may kaso, lalo na sa human rights, at sa mga ignorante sa pamamalakad ng gobyerno.

Ang pagboto ng mga Pilipino sa darating na eleksyon ay hindi dapat nasusukat sa dami ng followers at believers. Hindi rin dapat natin i-consider ang mga personalidad na hindi marunong kilalanin ang batas ng tao at ng bansa. Piliin natin ang mga lider na may malinis na record, may angkop na kakayahan at karunungan sa kabutihang panlahat, at may integridad, hindi sa apelyido, pero sa personalidad.

Sa bandang huli, tayo pa rin ang may hawak sa tadhana ng mga kandidato. Kailangan nating pumili: mamuhay sa isang Pilipinas na nagpapairal ng katarungan at pantay-pantay na pagtrato, o kaya'y magising sa isang pamahalaan na parang isang circus, puno ng ingay at walang saysay.#

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