

COMMUNITY  
CONFERENCES

## COMMUNITY CONFERENCES

### A Brief Introduction

Sariling Gawa views the community conferences within the conference project as one of its most important components. Through these community conferences, community participation in the project was established and guaranteed. The community conferences provided Sariling Gawa with a wealth of realistic information on the issues and concerns facing Filipino youths in various communities of Hawaii. These conferences became good opportunities for many community members to speak out and share their experiences and observations about the Filipino young adults in their neighborhoods. Such gatherings were effective vehicles in building long lasting and trustworthy contacts and future resources throughout Hawaii. Closely associated with the community conferences was that the quality of the main conference and other subsequent activities was dependent upon the effective implementation of the preliminary conferences within each community.

Initial recruitment of community conference organizers and liaisons was done via the old faithful U.S. postal service. After commitments were established and formalized, the telephone was used more frequently to maintain a close and effective working relationship between Sariling Gawa and the community conference organizers. The community liaisons were asked to form small working groups in their communities to help them recruit discussion leaders, recorders, speakers (if appropriate), deciding on a date and securing a place for the conferences. Representatives from the participating communities actually got to participate in their "own" community conferences. Sariling Gawa provided the communities with advice, contacts, and printed materials (fliers, announcements, conference packets) but the conferences were truly organized and implemented by the community people themselves.

Besides insuring an effective working relationship between Sariling Gawa and the community conference organizers, it was also necessary that a well-planned and coordinated community conference be achieved. Therefore, two Sariling Gawa members made an orientation visit to each community several weeks prior to the actual conference. In these visits, the role of Sariling Gawa in the whole project was explained and the community organizers were also updated

on recent developments involving the project. Problems that arose in the planning of the community conference were also discussed and solutions were worked out. A training session on conducting the workshops in the community conferences was also held. Issue statements were prepared by Sariling Gawa for the purpose of stimulating discussion, although such issues were not necessarily characteristic of every Filipino community in the state.

To facilitate an orderly discussion in the workshops, the Delbeq technique was used. After a dry run, Sariling Gawa members taught the method to members within the communities. The Delbeq technique as taught by Sariling Gawa, involved four simple operations: 1) group members were asked by the discussion leader to list all the issues and problems they thought were facing the Filipino youths in their communities; 2) each group member was asked by the discussion leader to enumerate the issues they had written while the recorder recorded them on the board or a large piece of paper (enumeration went on until the group exhausted their individual lists); 3) the discussion leader asked each group member to elaborate or clarify the problem each had contributed (at this point, feedback and discussion were welcomed from other group members); 4) the discussion leader asked the group members to prioritize the issues affecting Filipino youths in their communities by voting on the three most serious problems.

Other information gathered from these workshop sessions were proposed solutions to the top three issues, and the good positive things that are common in their communities. This information was then shared with all participants during the closing session of the community conferences. Filipino cultural activities (songs, dances, music and refreshments) were presented in most of the community conferences.

Participants in these community conferences were mostly Filipino young adults, but members of other ethnic groups and age brackets were also represented.

The eight community conferences were held at the following locations: Lanai, Molokai, Kona, Hilo, Kauai, Honolulu, Leeward Oahu and Waialua. These communities were selected because they have heavy concentrations of Filipinos.

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Windward Oahu (Waimanalo/Kailua/Kaneohe) was not included because of logistical problems. Maui was contacted for participation but their busy schedule in their own 75th Anniversary celebration prevented them from participating.

Examples of the issue statements and the community conference agenda are included in the next section. These are followed by presentation of the findings from each community conferences.

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(( SAMPLE ))

AGENDA

SARILING GAWA COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

Saturday, January 31, 1981

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Leeward Community College

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|---------------|--|
| 9:00 - 9:30   | Registration   |
| 9:30 - 9:45   | Opening Session - Introduction<br>Background<br>Acknowledgements   |
| 9:45 - 10:45  | Small Group Session I - Problems and Issues  |
| 10:45 - 11:00 | Break/Refreshments   |
| 11:00 - 12:00 | Small Group Session II - Review Issues/Problems<br>Possible Solutions & Recommendations<br>Good Things About the Community |
| 12:00 - 12:15 | Cultural Activity  |
| 12:15 - 1:00  | Closing Session - Presentation of Recommendations<br>Introduction to the Main Conference                                   |

- POTLUCK -

## STATEMENTS OF ISSUES

Participants were informed that the following broad issue statements were only intended as guides or thought-provoking tools. Delegates were not required to read them if they already had some clear ideas about their concerns and issues affecting Filipino youths in Hawaii.

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### Family and Values

At the heart of the Filipino culture is the family, not just parents and children but the extended family which includes grandparents, uncles, aunties, first cousins, second cousins, third cousins, etc. The extended family is where the Filipino becomes a person and also where a person becomes a Filipino. The family teaches, disciplines, controls, motivates, comforts and loves. It is a place where praise is shared, secrets kept, shame is dreaded and hardships endured -- together.

This may seem quite familiar to you, especially if you grew up in the Philippines. But what about in Hawaii? Is the extended family alive in Hawaii?

In the present situation where both parents are working, where two or more families live in one house, is there enough time for the family? Are the children given proper guidance? Where do the children learn their values? Are these values the same as their parents? What does it mean to be a Filipino in Hawaii? Where can this be learned? Who guides and disciplines? What is the source that motivates the person?

Have the youth forgotten about respecting their parents and elders? How often do Filipinos say they are part Spanish, Chinese, Haole rather than Filipino? Are Filipinos sometimes ashamed of following the values and traditions of their parents? Can the school help strengthen Filipino values by making the curriculum teach students to appreciate the various cultures in Hawaii?

Education

It has been repeatedly said by our parents, forefathers, teachers and even philosophers that education is the key to succeed in life. It is believed by many people throughout the world that it is through education that we gain knowledge to help us solve our everyday problems.

In Hawaii though, it is very disappointing to note that very few Filipino-Americans pursue college or university education. Recent information available from the University of Hawaii showed that from an estimate of about 20,000 students attending the Manoa campus, only 2 percent are of Filipino background. This low representation of Filipino students is more severe at the graduate levels and professional fields. A more striking trend is that this low enrollment at Manoa has remained the same for the past ten or more years. At the community colleges however, more Filipino students are represented.

Your task then is to discuss the roots or causes of this low enrollment of Filipinos in post-secondary educational institutions. Also, talk about possible good and bad consequences of this situation. To help you in your discussion, here are some questions you may want to address:

1. Does the situation, (low representation of Filipinos in higher education) indicate that we as Filipinos are only capable of attending the community colleges, joining the military service or immediately working after high school?
2. Do we lack the mental abilities needed for college or university education?
3. Are we behind the other ethnic groups in preparing ourselves for college or university? Or, are we too poor to finance our own education?
4. Have our parents provided us with a healthy and supportive background so that we can aspire for better things in life? Or, are we simply not motivated to go beyond high school?
5. Can we blame our parents who are too busy making a living that it does not matter to them whether we go to college or not?
6. Do we have teachers in our schools that are willing to spend extra time to motivate us to study harder?
7. Have we consistently heard from our counselors that we are not "college material"?
8. Do we often find ourselves denied of the resources that would help us prepare ourselves for college?
9. Do many of our Filipino classmates drop out from schools for a variety of reasons?
10. How often do we deny our Filipino background?
11. Have we forgotten that the local born Filipino and the Philippine born Filipino are both Filipinos?
12. Are we convinced that education does not really lead us anywhere?
13. Do you think that education will open doors for Filipinos to participate fully in government, businesses, labor and employment and other institutions?

Employment

It is a fact of life that man has to work in order to acquire the basic necessities of life and survive, enjoy the social and natural environment and participate in leisure and recreational activities.

To many Filipino youths in Hawaii, the world of work has not been that promising. Quite a number of young Filipinos are faced with different levels of difficulties in acquiring a satisfying job. These difficulties are often rooted in the lack of early preparation for the job market, problems with the family and the law, and institutional practices that tend to single out or put the Filipinos and other minority groups at a disadvantaged position.

There is a little bit of truth that we Filipinos, after 75 years, have accomplished some positive gains in terms of occupying some key positions in government, education and labor. But the fact of the matter is, we as an ethnic group are still underrepresented in employment at colleges and universities, white collar, professional and administrative levels.

We are overly represented in the service-related fields and the plantation labor force. Why?

Let's face it. We all live in Hawaii. And Hawaii is not only an expensive place to live in but also, life here is based heavily on competition. We need to compete for the scarce resources to survive.

Look around you. Are we prepared to compete fully? How many of your friends have two jobs to make ends meet? How many of them are employed in temporary positions and then laid off? Do you know of your uncle or cousin who came from the Philippines with a professional degree and ends up in a job much lower or unrelated to their careers? Or, is the problem of youth employment a general problem of the state? Would the job outlook be much better off if our young people were prepared early in life about the job market and job opportunities in this state? Would the enforcement of affirmative action make a lot of difference in the future employment status of young Filipinos?



Political Concerns

"Seen but not heard." The old saying usually refers to the children. "They're around but they don't count...they aren't important." Could the saying possibly be used to describe the Filipinos in Hawaii? Could the Filipino be labeled as a child in Hawaii's political scene? A 75 year old child!

There are 125,000 Filipinos in Hawaii, roughly 10 to 12 percent of the population. Yet as an ethnic group we are grossly underrepresented in city and state government levels. How many Filipinos are in the legislature? Give up? Well, you can count them on ONE hand.

Political concerns do not deal only with the number of visible leaders but more with the consciousness of the people themselves. If they are not politically involved, are they at least politically aware -- interested enough to educate themselves on issues affecting their lives?

Even a child cries out when it feels hurt or discomfort. How does the Filipino community voice its opinions? Is there ONE strong voice in unison to be heard? Are we seen but not heard? Surely there are enough of us to be noticed but how are we viewed by legislators? By other ethnic groups?

Of course, we all work hard trying to survive in Hawaii and it's so easy to say, "I'm too busy, I don't have enough time to get involved." I ask you: How much time does it take to read the newspaper or watch the news on T.V.? How about voting? How much time does that take? Did you vote? THINK!

Isn't it time for the child in all of us to grow up?

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