

SPEECH: ASPIRATIONS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Presented by Atty. Ronnie Menor

"In the past sessions you have attended workshops on leadership training, immigration, community involvement and how we can develop skills to make Hawaii a better society. My topic tonight deals with simple issues we've all heard about very often. And basically these are the issues on how do we build aspirations or what we might call goals. Secondly, how can we make these goals work for us by getting involved in the community. In talking about these goals, aspirations and community involvement, I'd like to talk about them in terms of my own experience and due to the fact that I, too, am a young Filipino who for many years has tried to find himself, and right now would like to make a bigger contribution to Hawaii in general and of course to my own people.

"First of all in talking about aspirations and goals, look at all the successful people in our society, the people who have made it quite far. The one thing these people always seem to have as opposed to those who seem not to be anywhere, are goals or aspirations. Now how do you get those goals or aspirations that give us directions in life. I'd like to stress that the way for us to get those kinds of aspirations and goals is for us to really begin to appreciate the admirable ways or to value even more what we do now everyday. All of us have been going to school, we've been told many times education is important to us. But let me tell you why education is important. First of all, education is important because it increases our knowledge of other people and about our laws. We cannot go out and judge people in our society unless we have a greater knowledge of what other people think and do, and what our institutions here in Hawaii mean. It makes no sense to talk about government and politics unless we become actively aware enough to know what to say at all.

"The first thing about education is to work through it instead of fooling around and playing basketball, although those things are important. Let's try and build a greater knowledge about the world and about other people.

"Secondly, how can we make an impact on our society after we have realized that we've got to develop our skills. How do we help, for example,

a young person, say a troubled student, if we ourselves are troubled and we don't have the skills to teach them or counsel them about other subjects and about different jobs and behaviors. So education is really important. You really have to think about that. It helps you develop skills and helps you choose particular occupations.

"Now that can be very heavy, you say, what's it all about if we can't decide what we want to do? Let me tell you how much we want out of education. To find what we want to do and know more about education...and I'm not talking about the professionals...I'm talking about every occupation that you think you may be suited for, let's value that, let's appreciate our skills. Finally, the most important thing, education is going to help us to build self-confidence. This is the key. We young Filipinos hold the future of Hawaii. Come out of this meeting and realize that we have a responsibility not only to ourselves but to our own Filipino people. If we create a good start for our people, if we can come away from school thinking independently, not having anybody push us around or any politician speaking to our people and saying you go this way and I'll go that way without thinking on our own two feet, then we'll never get anywhere. I think that the fact that you are here today and that you are here to talk about issues, and that you are going to school, indicates that you are working to take that step to independent thinking and being assertive in our society at large. I can tell you that all these things I can say to you now because I lived through them by going to school. I, too, acquired self-confidence going to the university, traveling away to the mainland, going to law school, having to compete not only with the Japanese or other orientals but also people from the mainland. For those of you who may be discouraged about school, I tell you now, stick with it because then you'll know you'll be able to break that old stereotype that us Filipinos cannot accomplish and do much here in our society.

"Lastly, I'd like to call upon community involvement once again. It will be no good for us to just stick among ourselves. Say we made it, we've become professionals; for us not to go out into the community is a mistake. Too many of us oftentimes, we make it big but we forget about our people. Well, let's not do that, let's have a fresh start. Let's use our education and go back to the communities and, for one thing, learn about all the decision making bodies that we may be going to influence. Let's also recognize

that we also live in a multi-racial society. We've been talking a lot about cultural pride and that's good. Let's all be proud about being Filipino. But let us also realize that we live in a state, a society that is comprised of people of different racial groups. And that they all will be willing to work with us as long as we can demonstrate to them that we've got the skills to manage to get along and suggest to them that what you might want to do in addition to working with your own Filipino groups, perhaps get together with some of the other ethnic groups in schools and the community to share experiences to make them realize that we're willing to cooperate and that we are willing to assert ourselves in the society at large. Again, understand the decision making process, build your self confidence, and develop those skills you need. That's how we're going to make a better society. You've got a great thing going. Stay with Sariling Gawa. Keep working with it. I hope you go back into the community after you're done to influence communities to get things done effectively and immediately. Thank you."

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*To be a Filipino in Hawaii means to get involved in the community, retain our culture, adjust to the new environments, mingle with every other ethnic group, help fellow Filipinos, help new immigrants and be a truly dedicated Filipino.*

*(Waipahu delegate, Age 16)*

SPEECH: COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY --  
THE WAIALUA EXPERIENCE  
Presented by Mr. Isabelo Palalay.

"First of all, in behalf of the Waialua Filipino Community Association, we welcome you to Camp Erdman. Actually, this camp is still a part of Waialua. I have been invited to talk to you this evening about my experiences with the Waialua Filipino Community Association. The community association of which I am proud to be a part of and have been president for the last two years. Before I do so however, I wish to congratulate the organizers and leaders of this conference. I also am pleased to have this conference knowing the fact that all Filipinos in Hawaii are observing the 75th year of Filipino immigration to Hawaii.

"In order for us then to appreciate the history and background of the Waialua Filipino Community Association, and to the other hundreds of unit organizations in the state of Hawaii, I wish to reflect on these young adults 75 years ago or 30 to 40 years ago. This was the period if you recall that most of the elderly Filipinos that are here today have left their homelands for Hawaii. Not necessarily to seek glory for their names but to build and hopefully improve their economic conditions. They came from all over the Philippines realizing later that they have left behind them their roots and their families.

"Many have lived productive lives and many have made Hawaii their permanent homes. So they left their loved ones in the Philippines and therefore it is not hard to imagine how lonely their lives must have been. And out of this loneliness and emptiness and perhaps seclusion from the rest of the world, they conducted informal meetings in the plantation camps for merely socializing. In these meetings, they saw the need to get rid of vices and social ills. And their interests in organizing became real. Many organizations were formed, one of them is the Waialua Filipino Community Association.

"Within the last three years, we have had a lot of activities like the Jose Rizal program and Independence Day celebration and so forth. We also have a yearly banquet where we honor graduates of Filipino ancestry from Waialua High School. In these banquets we also recognize active members of the

community and we give scholarships amounting to \$5,000 to deserving students who are continuing their education. In addition, we honor Filipinos and non-Filipinos who have been supporting us in the community. This activity is just one way of encouraging our youths and other members of the community to pursue a good career in life and succeed.

"One of the reasons why a lot of Filipino organizations fail or do not continue to exist is that the younger generations are not willing to take up the leadership and responsibilities of seeing to it that the directions and objectives of the association are carried out to the future generations. On the other hand, the older group refuses to recognize what the younger people can do so there is a communication and generation gap. But in our community association, we are lucky to have avoided such problems. And from the time our association started out, forty years ago, until today we have had continued leadership.

"I will go over the successes and failures of community associations, in particular the Waialua Filipino Community Association. First, we fully recognize that without the support and encouragement of the members of the community, our association would be a failure. Therefore, we have taken an active role in other service organizations like the PTA, the Lions Club and many others. Secondly, we receive a great deal of support from various auspices in the community. One of which I would like to mention, the Waialua Sugar Company. The Lions Club and others are fully aware of our existence. They have never refused to help when they were asked for their support. Thirdly, as a community organization, we have established a working relationship with the religious people and clergy in the community. We have had the occasion to participate in some religious related activities and I am very proud to have participated in these activities.

"Politically, our organization has been in close contact with our legislators, senators and representatives, and the state administration. Therefore, any kind of legislation that will affect us is made known to the community. In some cases, we have acted in opposition or in agreement with key policies affecting our community. In addition to that, we have endorsed candidates who are sympathetic and have a feel for our concerns and needs. And, we are very proud that we are very successful in this endeavor. But most important of all

the things I mentioned thus far, I think the reason for Waialua to have gone this far is that they have never neglected some key principles in life, such as being honest, modest and truly and sincerely share with the community as needs arise. Nowadays, it is very hard to find leaders who can accept that they have the potentials of a good leader. People often back off as members of a community organization because they lack the self-confidence in themselves. This is the very reason that I think a conference such as this is very important because from here, your experiences with your fellow delegates from other communities to gain the knowledge and skills of being a leader, will surely be put to use when you go back to your own communities and use this leadership skill in your own organizations.

"I would like to conclude my brief remarks with a reminder of this eventful day. As Ron has said, we Filipinos have the great privilege of a deep and rich culture. And if we are only willing to uphold and nurture what we already have, we as Filipinos in the state of Hawaii will one day be a noted force in the state, be it in the political, educational and social arena. It is you, therefore, the younger people who will try to reach our goals and dreams. We are depending upon your leadership.

"Finally and personally, I have truly enjoyed the opportunities I have had with the community association. And with the years that I served I have learned a great deal about relationships among Filipinos and other communities in the group. The knowledge I have gained...I can never regain even if I have to go back to school for another twelve years.

"There are times when I think to myself. 'What are the reasons for doing these things?' You know, we have a carnival once a year. This is sponsored by the Waialua Filipino Community Association to make money for the scholarship program we have started. After meeting for months and days, when the two days of the carnival are finally over, you go home physically and mentally exhausted. You think twice about ever wanting to go back to such an event. But after two days, you regain your composure and say, 'Perhaps I have made somebody who is less fortunate than I, happier than before.'

"Thank you for inviting me to speak."

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