

ETHNIC IDENTITY: GROWING UP AS A FILIPINO  
IN AN URBAN SETTING

Presented by Mr. William Domingo

"My name is William Domingo. I was born and raised in Kalihi Valley. I'm a second generation Filipino, the middle of three kids. I have an older brother who is a methodist minister and a younger sister who is married and has two kids. My mom is a seamstress and my dad is a retired bookkeeper.

"I said that we live in Kalihi -- not exactly what you might consider urban. But we did have indoor plumbing and a T.V. Kalihi is a beautiful place, all green, quiet with a calming breeze blowing down through the valley. Everyone says Kalihi is a tough place -- that's because they don't live there. I've lived there all my life and it's pretty mellow.

"I'm supposed to talk about ethnic identity. Well, I've always known that I was Filipino, my folks are Filipino so I assumed that me and my brother and sister were Filipino also. We also went to Aldersgate Methodist church every Sunday and practically everyone there was Filipino. We all kind of looked the same and had good fun so I had no problems with being Filipino. I could understand Ilokano but I couldn't speak it except for swear words and one word in particular that puzzled me about my identity. The word is Manong. It means older brother or a term of respect for a male person older than you. That's what I used to call my brother, Manong Sammy. I used to tag along with him and he didn't want me calling him 'Manong' Sammy in front of his friends. I was really confused, at that time, I didn't know what 'manong' meant. I thought it was part of his name. Come to think of it, I didn't hear other kids doing it. But it was natural for me to do it. That was one of the first things that hit me about my identity.

"Another thing I want to touch upon is education. My dad came from the Philippines in 1930 to work in a plantation. He went to school and graduated from Farrington High School. He was 30 years old and went on to the University of Hawaii and got his B.A. in Accounting. During those times, it was hard, he couldn't become an accountant. All the firms were run by Chinese, Japanese, Haoles. He couldn't get the experience working in a firm and to become a

certified public accountant. So he worked for the Federal government as a bookkeeper with the Navy Exchange. A couple of months ago, I asked him how much he was making when he retired. He said something like \$50 to \$500 a month.

"The education part is really stressed in our family. We came home, my parents spoke Ilokano to each other and I understood it. We go to church where there's a lot of Filipinos. It's comfortable seeing a lot Filipinos around and listening to the language -- Ilokano. At home, they said, 'Concentrate on your studies, try to speak proper English. Don't speak da kine and stuff la dat. That's not going to get you anywhere.'

"So aside from correcting us in pidgin English, they didn't really stress speaking Ilokano. We understood and we answered in English. You second generation folks, you relate to that.

"When I went to school it was a different situation especially in high school. There's this thing called 'tracking.' You take a battery testing and from this testing they determine what level you will be. Section I was all the 'lolos' and Section V was 'college-bound.' And because of my test score, I was always in the upper section. I was put in the college-bound section. Looking around the classroom, there were a lot of times there would be maybe one other Filipino in the whole class. So most of my friend in high school were Japanese or Chinese. Looking back, there weren't any Filipino teachers. There was no role model, the counselor was either Japanese or Haole. Nobody I could relate to.

"The other thing that struck me in high school was all this discrimination against Filipinos. Reflecting on the role play we did about the locals and immigrants at Farrington, that really happened when I was there. There is one section of the school where Filipinos hang out. And they take up the whole hallway. I've seen local kids walking down and picking fights with them. And the whole thing blows up. As for me, looking at that, 'Hey, I'm Filipino, too, but if people are gonna treat Filipinos like that -- if the Filipinos are gonna be talked about that way -- hey, they carry knives, they wear tight pants, they slick down their hair, people don't like them, then I'm not going to have any part of that.'

"First of all, I thought of myself as a local. I was Filipino but every-time somebody asked me, I'd always preface it by saying, 'I'm a local Filipino.' So that it's different. Everybody knows local means alright. You wear baggy pants, you are laid back. So that was the real conflict for me because these guys were Filipino and I was Filipino, too and they were getting the short end of the stick. I wasn't going to be a part of the discrimination also.

"As far as discrimination, I never really felt that much personally except one time at my Japanese friend's house. His grandmother, old Japanese lady, looked at me and said, 'Filipino, eh?' That was really insulting to be at the house. After high school, I was stuck in that same hole. Trying not to look Filipino, trying to be as local as possible.

"Then at the university, the first year or so, I was just floating around, didn't know what to take. I was taking a lot of courses. One thing that struck me on the floor during registration, 'Hey, maybe I'll take an Ilokano class. I heard this all my life, I kind of know the language and I need language credits anyway, so why don't I try this.' From then on, it was like a turn around. I got into Ilokano class. You met Manang Precy (yesterday), she was my teacher. In that class, I met a lot of Filipinos. The first time in class, there's a whole bunch of Filipinos. People from the Philippines, Guam and also local Filipinos. I got to talking with them, 'Hey, what's happening, why did you take this class.' They'd say, 'I want to know about Filipino language and my culture.' I found myself saying the same thing. But I was actually there for the credits because it was a language requirement. It would be easy for me to pass it by. But it wasn't gonna be that way.

"From the Ilokano class, I met some other people who were involved in Operation Manong. In Operation Manong, we tutor newly arrived immigrants in various intermediate and high schools. I worked there because again it paid \$200 a month. When you're going to school, that's good money. That's the impression I got into. When I got there, it was a totally different experience. Working with the immigrant kids and seeing there really is a need. I was looking around and saying, 'Gee, there are 50 kids in this class, there's only one



teacher who has headaches all the time. We have books that we try to teach the kids.' There's a partition across this thing and I had to take care of one class with Korean, Samoans and Filipinos in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. I didn't have a teaching certificate and I said, 'Gee, these kids are really getting screwed. What can I do about it.' This local consciousness will always be there.

'Operation Manong required six credits related to Philippine, Korean or Samoan culture. So I kept taking Ilokano classes. They served as credits for my language requirements and also as grades for working with Operation Manong. But also I started taking culture classes. I started taking dance classes. And I was really interested because I was thinking, 'Hey, these are pretty neat stuff.' Dance class was one thing I took when I was really little. My parents forced us to go to dance class. Of all things, I had to be the partner of my sister. After one class, I quit and vowed never to do this again. Then I saw Filipino dancing. 'Gee, what I laugh.' It's kind of a reawakening of my culture through getting involved in the arts, language and activities.

'Operation Manong led me to the Fil-Am Club of the University of Hawaii. I was in contact with the Fil-Am club when I was a freshman there. I sat in one of the meetings, I looked around and said, 'Gee, there are no locals in this thing. Where am I gonna fit in.' I looked around and I saw people from the Philippines, they were all talking Ilokano or Tagalog. I didn't feel like I could belong. So for my sophomore and junior years I never went back. Until I went to see the Gabing Pilipino, a cultural show that Fil-Am puts on every spring semester. So I was in the audience, and I was watching and thinking, 'Gee, that's pretty good stuff they're doing up there!' All this time I've been thinking Filipino students were not very articulate, they kind of were ashamed of their race and they didn't have any talent.

'But I was seeing that in the Fil-Am club, people were doing something. Students did everything themselves and this is what really got me interested. Then the following year, I got involved in Gabing Pilipino. I figured I'm not going to do the social stuff but I want to get into the cultural aspects and try to let the people know what it is like to be a Filipino, what kind



of culture we have. Then last year, through some work of faith -- I became president of Fil-Am. We were really concerned because for the past three Gabing Pilipinos, we've done culture things -- fashion shows, dances, etc. We were concerned and we wanted to put some meat into the show. 'Let's not just make a showcase, let's do something else. We should put on issues. Go to the people and say, Hey this is going to be the 75th year. What have we done, how do we feel about being Filipino. Is there an ethnic identity conflict like I went through among second generation kids that went ahead, do they see the discrimination and do they try to outright the right or be more local than the local? What happened to the Filipino family? All these people trying to get a nice home, two jobs, three families in one house, what does that do to the whole family?' I think, it's the mainstay of the Filipino culture. So we made a play. That's what really got me involved. Besides, another thing, I graduated with a B.A. in Philippine Studies.

"I always thought that college education would boost you to something so that after you graduate, the paper would say, 'Hey, give this guy a \$20,000 paying job.' It doesn't work that way. But my going into Philippines Studies was a personal thing for me. Through the Liberal Studies department, I wrote a paper that said, 'I want to get a degree in Philippine Studies because of my identity, of my culture, because I feel that I can't go on helping other people if I don't know anything about myself.' You have to resolve that conflict within you. So the Philippine Studies major helped me out. To top it off, in the summer of 1979, I got to go to the Philippines with a study tour. And it was really enlightening for me. I got to see the Philippines, see the people, but mostly, I got to meet my relatives. I was born in Hawaii and the only family I had was my mom's aunt. I didn't have any lolos, lolas, etc. I've seen them in pictures because they sent letters. Every Christmas they'd send some money. But those were only names and faces. And when I got there, I got to meet them. I was there for a week and a half with my family. And it was like I knew them all my life.

"Because of my experience with Ilokano classes and Operation Manong and Fil-Am, and Philippine Studies, I've come to grips with my life. And with the



social consciousness that I've seen in my own religious background, wanting to help people -- these two things come together for me now. When Mr. Los Banos approached us and said there is a need in the Filipino community, we need leaders, we need to help uplift the whole image of Filipinos in Hawaii.

"I'm just glad to see all of you here at the camp. As far as Filipino conferences go, I've been to a few in the past but I get this feeling that says, 'So what. What happens after this.' You come to a camp, you have fun, you have a good time, you hear all the speeches, and meet more friends, a lot of discussion.

"Last night, in the consultation meetings, some of asked us, the Sariling Gawa group, 'Who are we obligated to?' You're not obligated to us, the planning groups. The only obligation you have is to yourself, to get involved and to accomplish something. That's what I want to see happen. When we started, it was a really mixed kind of thing. But through the struggling, the late hours working at night, we got things going. And little by little we saw things happening and said, 'Hey, yeah, we're responsible for this.' And you get strokes for that. Nobody has to say, 'A, you're doing a good job.' We see stuff happening, we see the interest and it's reflected in your faces and in your attendance, and also in the responses that you've written. We really get off on that."

(Question from the audience: How do you choose between three different lifestyles. Is it wrong to choose an American or Hawaiian culture over a Filipino culture?)

"What are American values? American, apple pie...etc...everything you see. I recognize that I am local also, living in Hawaii, that's a culture. I don't know how well it's defined yet. I'm also Filipino and to deny either one is to deny myself. There's no conflict in me."

(Comment: What about respect. When you are with your friends you behave a certain way, you change into a totally different person when you are with your parents. In Hawaii, it doesn't really matter, you're expected to say sir, ma'am, and all that.)



"But you assume that I am going to change because of different things."

(Question: But how can you be two people at the same time?)

"You have to be consistent. If you go with your parents and you act like this, then you go with friends and you act like that -- you've got a problem. With my local friends, they know I'm really active in the Filipino community. And I make no bones about it. 'Hey this is Filipino and I'm proud of it.' And they accept it and I have no problems."

(Comment by Gloria Galvez: You have to be flexible, there are expectations of you from your friends and family and you want to meet those expectations. Just satisfy them, especially your friends.)

(Comment from the audience: But it comes to the point where you don't know who to satisfy, your friends or yourself.)

(Gloria: Put a limit on what and who you really are.)

(Mr. Los Banos: Talk it out. Values are all same values.)

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*Being a Filipino in Hawaii means being a person who has respect for others, who is taught to be modest and obedient to elders.*

*(Honolulu delegate, Age 14)*

ETHNIC IDENTITY: GROWING UP AS A FILIPINO  
IN A PLANTATION SETTING  
Presented by Ms. Gloria Galvez

"I was born and raised in Kekaha, Kauai. Kekaha is a small and very good community...a sugar cane plantation. You find everything that textbooks relate to. In Kekaha, we have the 'bango system.' You get a charge number from the plantation so you can charge at the stores in Kekaha. We have only two stores. If you read textbooks they talk about segregated camps -- that's what you find -- they still exist. You find the Filipino camp, the Japanese camp, the Hawaiian camp.

"I'd like to make a point. Although there is a separation of various camps by ethnic identity, there is still a close and cohesive relationship in the community. The elderly, especially, relate very well to each other. They communicate in pidgin. You have Japanese elderly communicating with Filipinos and Hawaiians. It's a really neat and unique experience there.

"Going back to values and culture of Filipinos, my mom said, 'You can marry or go with any ethnic group except negro.' I think that's very Filipino, similar to the experiences with my peers. White was considered as beautiful. I remember coming back from the beach with a nice tan and my mom said, 'Oh, you're black, you look so old now. Why don't you stay white. White is so beautiful.'

"I really didn't have any problems, though as far as being accepted with other various ethnic groups because I didn't look Filipino. I guess it was prouder for me to say I was Filipino. When people asked me what was my nationality, I'd always say I was Filipino. Then people would reply, 'Oh, but you don't look Filipino.'

"As far as being discriminated against, I remember vividly about seeing my counselor about higher education. And he knowing my background being from a plantation and being Filipino, he said, 'You will not make it to the university system.' That really, really disappointed me. I cried and I said that isn't fair. I worked very hard. But he said that there are no opportunities out there for me.



"But I fought and I said that I'm not going to settle for that. After graduation from Waimea High School, I went to Honolulu Community College. At first I wanted to settle for Kauai Community College but it was my father who said go to Honolulu. But I said, 'Dad, are you kicking me out of the house? I want to stay here with you.' He said, 'I want you out. I'll support you, I'll pay for your rent, I want you to be independent. I want you to be out in the world.' Being from Kekaha, it's very secure. You have all your friends and relatives. It's very secure. Being insecure was what I was afraid of. I am very grateful for his advice.

"After being in school for awhile, I got to know the system. I found out about grants and scholarships. I worked my way to the university. Honolulu Community College was also very supportive and encouraging -- so that you go up to the university. Now that I've graduated I want to go back to my high school counselor and say, 'I made it. I fought and I made it.'

"Anyway, back to Kauai. There was this one particular woman, Mrs. Cuaresma, who was my role model. She had graduated from the university in education and was doing social work at home. She had the community in her hands. For a woman back in those days, we didn't have any such thing as women's lib or ERA but she had the community in her hands. When she spoke, people listened. She was that powerful. One day when she was giving a speech, I looked at her and said, 'Wow! I'm going to be like her!'

"Nothing stopped me regardless of myself and my background and being Filipino, so it was very fortunate that she was around to remind us of our new identity.

"Speaking of identity, I didn't really know or it hadn't really occurred to me, that I was Filipino until I went up the university. That's because back at home, we were still very close within the ethnic groups that we weren't classified as Filipinos, Japanese, Caucasian, we were all just very good friends.

"When I came to the university, there were ethnic studies, Philippine

studies, studies that specifically went into a particular ethnic group.

"After learning of my Filipino culture, I said, 'Yes, I can identify -- it's me. I am a Filipino, that's what makes me different from others.'

"Looking back at my peers, who also graduated with me, I find that they have broken away from the Filipino culture and identity more so than I have. I have accepted it but I have friends who did come from the Philippines who were both raised in the Philippines and came to school here in Hawaii at age 13 and have broken away from their culture. They don't speak the language. They don't go to their cultural celebrations and I think that's very sad. They have denied their ethnic identity and they have taken up with 'the American western identity' of being haoles. They speak really good English. They look down on the immigrant Filipinos and I think that is a problem for immigrants who come here to Hawaii. They have been acculturated here on the island.

"Through Operation Manong, working at Farrington High School, I've seen immigrant students who don't strive, or who have no intention of striving for higher education because of survival. They usually have big families and they feel responsible for bringing in the income. In high school as well as after graduating, if they do, some of them drop out because they have to work. Also people from Hawaii are too secure so that they don't want to get their foot out.

"I go back to Kauai...I see all my friends being married at an early age. They haven't been off the island. They're just very content and secure. It's hard for me to go up to them and say, 'Come on, let's travel.' They usually say, 'No, I feel very insecure about traveling or being out on my own. I would rather stay on Kauai.' So a lot of Filipino kids on Kauai are living on the sugar plantation, planning to retire on the sugar plantation, marrying young and raising families by the age of 19 or 20.

"Some of the issues and questions that are lurking in my mind now that I have all this education behind me is, what happens to the elderly Filipinos who



get married to young ladies. A couple of people and I did research last semester on the Filipino single men. We did an overview of their contracts with the sugar plantations here and what happened after the contract and their lifestyles now. We focused mainly on the single men at Aala Park. It was a very interesting life that they led.

"Back on Kauai after six years have passed, a lot of changes have happened. A major change for example is the demolition of all the single men's barracks. If you are aware of how the single men's lifestyles were, they lived in barracks and after getting married, families also moved into these barracks and occupied one, two, three rooms. All of these barracks are being demolished. Where do the people go from there? I think that it is up to you, being Filipinos -- it is your responsibility to look at these problems and issues, to do research and to share your information with the community."

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*Being a Filipino in Hawaii means being proud of your heritage no matter what your ethnic background is.  
(Kauai delegate, Age 17)*

A Brief Comment on Ethnic Identity

by Dr. Amy Agbayani

(Following a short question and answer period with Ms. Galvez and Mr. Domingo.)

"Your questions are very good. Questions about how to be Filipino when it is a changing society...How to combine different values of different ethnic groups. And that question is a question that anyone has to answer in their own way. And I'll explain how I would try to answer it.

"One way is to be inconsistent. Sometimes be Filipino in a very Filipino setting, be a little more Haole in a Haole setting...to be something and to react to the situation and be very, very sensitive to what is appropriate then.

"Some people think that ethnicity is not something that is set and concrete. It's a changing thing. So that sometimes you don't ask, 'Are you Filipino?' You sort of say, 'When are you Filipino? When are Filipino values the more appropriate ones for you to follow. When is it salient?' And sometimes being Filipino is not that salient. For example, being a Filipino doctor is very important when dealing with a patient.

"You will confront that problem every single day of your life. And you will answer that problem in a different way every single day of your life. And that you, by the way you answer, are defining Filipino culture. Whatever you should do that will help the next generation, your own generation, think about better answers to those questions and I think this kind of conference is doing this."

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CULTURAL SIMULATION GAME: BAFA BAFA

Presented by Dr. Amy Agbayani

"This game is going to be boring if you are not willing to be corny and participate. Don't judge it. Even if you think it's stupid, just try and play with us, humor us for half an hour. What we'll do is divide the group into two 'cultures' -- Alpha culture and Beta culture. For five minutes, you will be taught the cultural rules of the culture you belong to then you will have a chance to visit the other culture."

Following are descriptions of the cultures.

The Alpha Culture -- The Alpha culture can be described as a very happy culture. There is much talking and touching is a must. It is a male-oriented and dominated society. All the conversation revolves around the exploits and adventures of everyone's male descendants and relatives. In this male-dominated society, the females are well protected. The oldest male signature must be obtained by every male who wishes to converse with a female. Strangers not possessing this signature are kindly escorted out of town. There are rules for everyday conduct -- males can approach anyone to converse but females must first obtain permission to enter into a male conversation. It seems as though the Alpha culture is a charade of idle male worship, a silly card game and the use of chips that have no value.

The Beta Culture -- The Beta culture is a purely business oriented society. The sole purpose of a Beta person is to trade for cards in a specific order and color scheme. There is a language of signs and syllabic 'mumbo-jumbo' for communicating and trading. Once a Betan completes a run of cards, he turns them in, receives points for his accomplishment and is then given a new set of cards to use in the trading grounds.

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On the next few pages, you will find Dr. Agbayani's discussions with the participants after the game.



(After the BaFa BaFa cultural simulation game, Amy asked the group, "How did you feel when you were in the other culture? How did you feel when you saw the visitors in your own culture?" The various responses were:

"Frustrating! I couldn't understand what they were saying or doing."

"I felt really left out."

"It felt stupid and they looked weird!"

"It was very strange to be in their culture."

"It was different in the other culture, I didn't know what to do."

"I wanted to go back to my own culture."

"They (the other culture) acted funny!"

The participants then shared the different characteristics of the two cultures -- Alpha and Beta. Following are Amy's responses to the questions brought up by the participants.)

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"A simple solution to feeling the way you did (in the other culture) is to get someone who speaks and understands both cultures -- a bilingual, bicultural person. I am a bilingual person because I know both cultures, Alpha and Beta. I can tell you what they do there and what they don't do there, how different or how similar the cultures are. This is a simple-minded solution.

"For some reason, people get really uptight, they think, 'When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do! If you are going to be an immigrant, you better shape up and learn English!' These children are trying to learn English, but until they can, sometimes they need bilingual assistance.

"How many of you have taken French, German or a Philippine language? You can do it for years and have a hard time asking where the bathroom is. We used to train Peace Corps American volunteers Philippine language and one of the things we do is say, 'Okay, for breakfast today, no speaking English, only Tagalog.' It was hard for them to ask for the butter. It's really hard to learn.



"I think some of you were hanging around each other when you went to the other culture. You hung around with people who know what it is like where you just came from, to whom you can say, 'Hey, this is weird!' when you're talking to each other or when looking at something.

"Some people get very upset when immigrants hang around with each other. 'They should mix,' they say. But actually it is very much more comfortable to hang around with your own kind and then later when you are a little more confident, mix.

"Use common sense and be willing to try to be nice to the other person. I think a lot of problems would stop if we would be willing to be nice, a little bit. Don't judge them immediately. Like if someone steps on your toe -- maybe stepping on your toe in the other culture is good. So stop judging them first. But there are sometimes we can't really help when people make mistakes. For example, if you are driving on the left side instead of the right side of the street -- do that a couple of times in error -- it can be fatal. You can always learn from your mistakes.

"Another thing, people mention about how do you understand the other things. You do it by common sense. But sometimes common sense isn't that common. For example, some of you went over to our culture next door. You didn't notice there was a difference between males and females. And you didn't notice that we had a chief. You also didn't understand the meaning of the chips. You thought you were supposed to get more, maybe. (That is) because you were bringing with you your cultural backing and to how you view reality. So you couldn't even see what was there because that wasn't in your head for you to be able to see. You impose things, even in your sincere attempt to understand, you may not be able to make it.

"It's really very complex and this little game gives you the feel for how difficult it is to be newcomers in a new culture. And how strange you look to people in the local culture.

"This game can be applied to different cultures but it can be applied to other things like generational gaps, parents and children, each has his own style...between educated people and people who aren't educated. You have your own jargon which is totally unintelligible to anyone else's. Lawyers have their own jargon, doctors have their own jargon and way of doing things. And yet we are supposed to interact with each other. We sometimes are living in two different worlds, like two ships passing in the night, going in opposite directions."

(Question: How can we come across to the other person?)

"Try and empathize. Empathy meaning, try and put yourself in another person's shoes. Try and say, 'Wow, look at this new person, I wonder how I would react given this.' Try and see things as that other person will see. Another thing is not be so judgemental so fast. Instead of saying, 'Wow, that is weird!' say, 'Maybe there is something positive, useful and interesting about that weird way of doing things.' And frequently, you'll learn a lot and you expand and grow. You don't do things just the way you always do. You try and do things the way the other person does things. That is a very simple way to come across."

(Question: How do you use or deal with body language?)

"Body language is very culture-bound. It doesn't have a cross-culture. Sitting too close to Helen is a no-no to many other cultures. In the Philippines, if Helen and I were good friends, we would be walking down the street holding hands. You try and do that here and it's a little tough on everybody. Just talking to each other -- for example, the French are much closer to each other when they talk. In some cultures, you say, 'How are you?' to a child, and touch him on the head -- that's a no-no. The head is a very sacred place for some people like the Thai and Indo-Chinese. You touch them on the head -- it's like you have insulted that person."

(Question: How can you tell if you are doing something wrong or not accepted?)

"Be very observant. Be very aware of yourself. What is it you just did to turn off the other person. What is it that person is doing that is turning you off. And say, 'Hm, that's what's happening now, I wonder if I do something else, will that make it better?' You'll be experimenting. Be observant, try different things and see what it is you are doing that is making things better or worse. Most people don't try...if you're not doing it the way I'm doing it, you're obviously wrong, they say."

(Question: How do we explain to others why we do things the way we do?)

"I'm oftentimes asked to be on a panel and they say, 'Oh, can you tell us about Philippine culture...' In ten minutes!? (That's difficult!)

"If you have a new immigrant friend who comes to you and says, 'Could you tell me how to handle myself because I'm taking out this new girl.' You wouldn't know what to say. Because you, as a local person, or as a Filipino, do not know how to talk about your own culture. Culture is below consciousness and it is difficult to talk about articulately or to write about. But in one sense you are the experts of your culture because you do it everyday. What you do defines culture. So all you have to do is be more aware of yourself.

"You don't know how much you really know unless someone asks you -- until you have that comparison. One of the best things for you to do to find out about your own culture is to go to a different place. If you have the opportunity to travel someplace -- to go to the mainland. In New York, they do live differently there. You never even thought of what it was that they were doing differently. You just thought that was the way everyone in the world filled out their taxes or they took the bus this way or they counted this way.



"It's only when you have a comparison that you know more about yourself and that's what is the beauty of Hawaii. The beauty is that there are many different people here and many different ways of doing something. Instead of us trying to be alike all the time, we could actually just keep growing. Some people, for example, have this stupid idea that foreign language or culture learning shows lack of pride. We can only speak a hundred words of English and if you learn Ilocano, your English will get worse, they say. That's not true. Your English will get better as well as your Ilocano will improve. So you know more about your own culture by getting into another culture."

(Question: What if we, from a local culture, explain to the newcomer exactly how we do things here, from the very start?)

"Yes, that's exactly what we'd like to do, although American culture is not that easy. We can't explain it in 10 minutes. We can't explain it in a hundred hours. But we are suggesting to the Department of Education and the state to have people who know local cultures to be in a position to teach newcomers, to be outreach workers in the Department of Health, to be at the university to help new kids through school. These are the things that can be done to help people but is it a priority? It's not. Most people say, 'Well, tough...sink or swim.' Sink or swim actually isn't a bad approach sometimes for those who learn to swim. But sink or swim isn't always the kindest way of doing things.

"Actually for a newcomer, the rule should be to just observe. A lot of kids -- you can watch them -- when they came into a new school, they barely say, 'Boo.' What they are doing is they are absorbing a lot of information and it takes them about six months to sort it out and have the confidence. Yet sometimes, people say that you should try to help that person out, make him participate. That is the worst thing a person can do. Observing and getting information yourself slowly and then working it out with the freedom to make mistakes is important. You oftentimes learn by making mistakes."

(Question: Why is it that very young children have a better way of adapting to a new place?)

"This is part of the human development of children. We have learned most of what we know by the time we are six. Little children's capacity to learn is great. Children constantly make mistakes, constantly ask and also we treat children as though we expect them to ask. We expect them to make mistakes.

"If a grown-up person starts slurping his soup, you just look around the other way and say, 'Oh, how ridiculous!' But you don't go and insult that person by saying, 'Hey, there are different ways to do this.' You expect to say that to children.

"I know some children who can learn many, many languages and know which language is appropriate to use."

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*Being a Filipino in Hawaii means eating bagoong\*  
everyday.*

*(Hilo delegate, Age 18)*

## CLOSING REMARKS

Presented by Mr. Domingo Los Banos, Jr.

"We have completed the first phase of this project, the community conferences, and we are now about to finish the second phase, this main conference...now we go to the third phase...the follow-up phase, so, what now?"

"Again, I ask from you to be very sure that you go home and be true to your responsibilities, and report to your groups of what has transpired. Especially, you must talk to your parents. Thank them for allowing you to come, and share with them some of the things that went on here. I think the kind of enthusiasm I feel from you is true. The true test of what we have done this weekend is what you do when you go back home -- that is really the evaluation of our efforts.

"So I ask that each of you consider your responsibilities and I hope that each of you have left here with some knowledge and skills, some morals. I should like to thank each of these excellent role models we have -- Dean Alegado, Joe Florendo, William Domingo, Gloria Galvez, Amy Agbayani, Belo Palalay, and all the resources. They were assigned knowing that you would like to have some role models. And you certainly have had them here.

"I think the future is very good for us Filipinos and I hope that you all will take home some very lasting friendships amongst the group here. And above all else you will go home being very proud that you are a Filipino. Thank you."

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