

ICONIC PINOY  
MAHARLIKA



SHOWCASING FILIPINO JOURNEYS

The One & Only "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika"  
Showcasing the Achievement and success stories of Icons from all walks of life.

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ISBN 978-9948-767-35-0



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# *History with Culture*

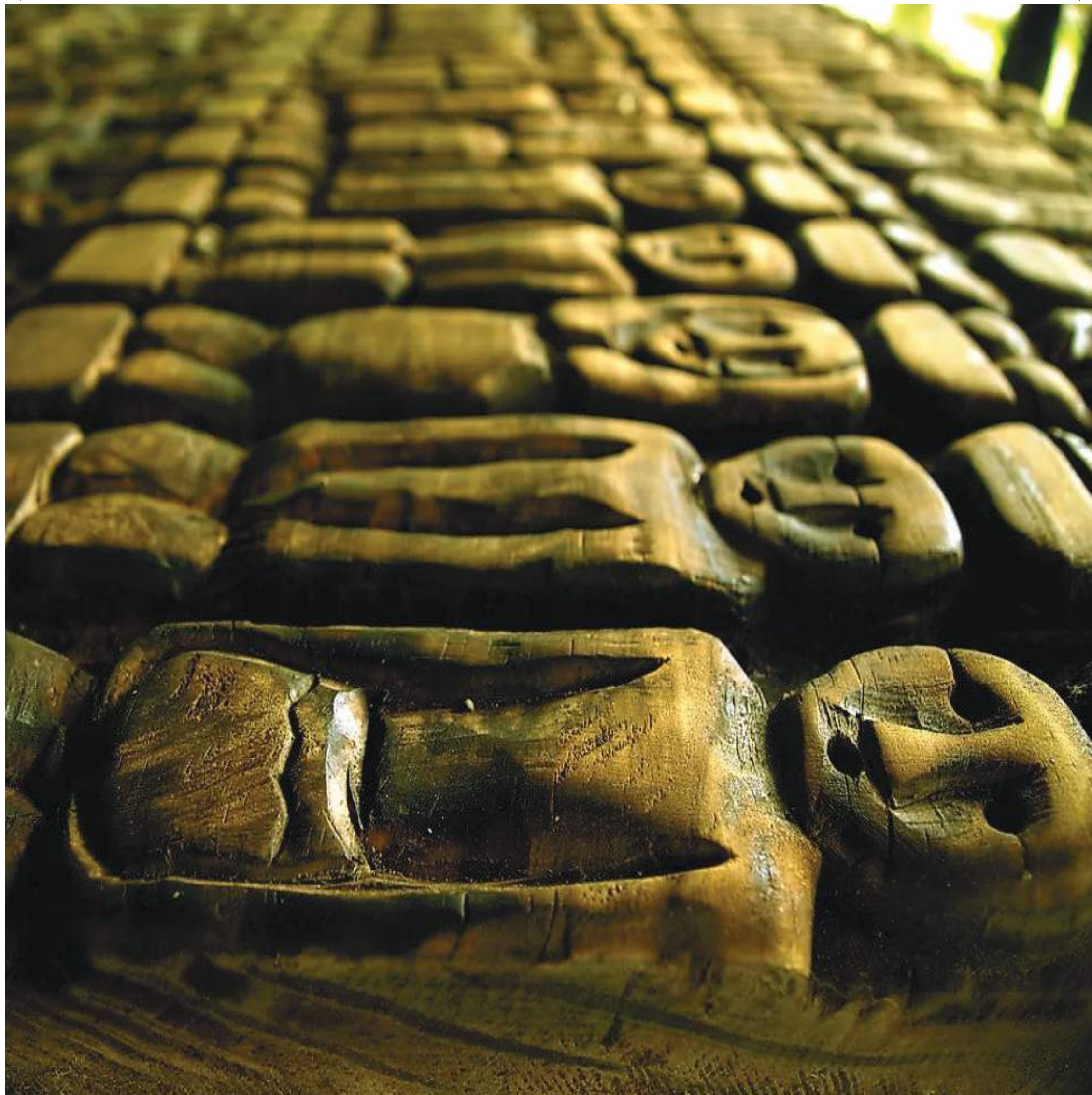
















*Glorious  
Past*





*H.E.. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Romualdez Marcos Jr.*

President of the Philippines









*Hon. Sara Z. Duterte*

Vice President and Secretary of Education - Philippines









EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

سفارة جمهورية الفلبين أبوظبي

ABU DHABI

#### MESSAGE

The Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi takes pride in the achievements of Filipinos abroad, especially the one-million strong Filipino community in the UAE. Therefore, any effort to amplify the achievements of Filipinos is assured of the Embassy's staunch support.

Beyond the achievements and extraordinary feats of the Filipinos featured in the book "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika", it is my hope that readers will be inspired by the quintessential Filipino traits and values that were the essential ingredients that allowed these individuals to achieve what they have accomplished.

The running thread, and underlying message of this book, seems to be that the Filipino is free to aspire to great accomplishments and undertakings, for that is the definition of a *maharlika*, a freeman. This aspiration is aided by the innate strengths of the Filipino, which includes resilience amidst adversity, adaptability, family-centeredness and deep spirituality.

May this book awaken in all Filipinos pride in our country and people.

My warmest congratulations to all who made this book possible.

  
**ALFONSO A. VER**  
Ambassador







## EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE



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It is with great pleasure and honor that I endorse this remarkable book, *"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievers"*, which encapsulates the extraordinary achievements of Filipinos around the world. This book serves as a testament to the indomitable spirit and unwavering resilience of the Filipino people, who have consistently proven their mettle in various fields and industries across the globe.

As an Ambassador of Zimbabwe, I have personally witnessed the immense contributions and impact of the Filipino diaspora, wherever I have met them across the globe. Filipinos are renowned for their exceptional work ethic, cheerful disposition, and unparalleled dedication to their craft. The stories shared within these pages vividly depict their unwavering commitment to excellence and their remarkable ability to overcome challenges with grace and determination.

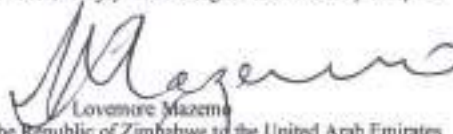
Through the lens of *"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika"*, readers are granted a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Filipino culture, highlighting the values and traditions that have shaped the lives of these global achievers. The book serves as a celebration of their accomplishments while also shedding light on the unique qualities that make Filipinos a truly exceptional group of individuals.

From groundbreaking innovations in science and technology to groundbreaking contributions in the arts, sports, and humanitarian endeavors, the Filipino achievers showcased in this book have left an indelible mark in their respective fields. Their stories serve as an inspiration not only to their fellow Filipinos but to people of all backgrounds, demonstrating the heights that can be reached through hard work, perseverance, and an unyielding passion for excellence.

Moreover, *"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika"* stands as a testament to the power of unity and the enduring spirit of the Filipino people. It showcases the collective strength that emerges when individuals come together to pursue a common goal and uplift one another. It is a reminder that success is not solely measured by individual achievements but also by the positive impact we can have on our communities and the world at large.

I commend the dedicated authors, researchers, and contributors who have meticulously crafted this invaluable piece of literature, showcasing the achievements and stories of these exceptional individuals. Their effort in compiling this book is a testament to their commitment to promoting the Filipino spirit and showcasing the global influence of the Filipino people.

I wholeheartedly endorse *"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievers"* as a must-read for anyone seeking inspiration, insight, and a deep appreciation for the Filipino culture and the remarkable achievements of its people. May this book inspire future generations of Filipinos to continue striving for greatness, embodying the values of hard work, resilience, and joy that are ingrained in the Filipino spirit.

  
Lovemore Mazema  
Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Arab Emirates  
10 November 2023





## PREFACE

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I extend my endorsement for the remarkable book, "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievers." This book serves as a poignant tribute to the exceptional achievements of Filipinos worldwide, showcasing their cultural richness, ingenuity, and unwavering spirit.

As an Ambassador for Global Peace from the United Nations U-Peace, I have had the privilege of witnessing the positive impact that Filipino individuals have made in promoting peace, harmony, and understanding across borders. The stories shared within this book are a testament to the extraordinary contributions of the Filipino people, who have demonstrated their remarkable work ethic, resilience, and infectious cheerfulness in the face of challenges.

"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika" paints a vivid picture of the vibrant Filipino culture while celebrating the achievements of Filipino individuals who have excelled in various fields around the world. Through their unwavering determination and commitment to excellence, these global Filipino achievers have become beacons of inspiration for generations to come.

This book encapsulates the essence of the Filipino spirit, highlighting the values of hard work, perseverance, and compassion that are deeply ingrained in the Filipino people. The stories within these pages serve as a powerful testament to the transformative power of unity, resilience, and the unwavering pursuit of peace.

I commend the dedicated authors, researchers, and contributors who have painstakingly compiled this treasure trove of stories. Their efforts in showcasing the achievements of global Filipino achievers are not only a source of pride for the Filipino community but also a source of inspiration for individuals around the world.

In endorsing "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievers," I wholeheartedly recommend this book as an essential read for those seeking to understand and appreciate the diverse tapestry of Filipino culture and the extraordinary accomplishments of its people. May the stories within these pages continue to inspire future generations to embrace their heritage, strive for excellence, and work towards a more peaceful and inclusive world.

Best wishes

  
H.E. Zulfiqar Ghadiyali  
Global Peace Ambassador  
United Nations, University for Peace.  
Member-Commission for Peace





#### Message of Congratulations



It is with immense pride and deep admiration that I was given a chance to endorse to you this extraordinary coffee table book, "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievements." Within these pages, you embark on a captivating journey through the remarkable stories of Filipinos who have achieved greatness across the globe. Through their outstanding success and unwavering spirit, they embody the rich culture, exceptional traits, and indomitable resilience that define the Filipino diaspora.

As the pages unfold, we delve into the lives of these extraordinary individuals who have left an indelible mark in their respective fields. Their achievements transcend borders and boundaries, serving as a testament to the limitless potential and unrivalled talent that reside within the Filipino community.

This coffee table book is a celebration of the Filipino diaspora—a mosaic of triumph, inspiration, and perseverance. It seeks to honour the diverse accomplishments of Filipinos worldwide, highlighting their ingenuity, creativity, and unwavering dedication. From business titans to artistic visionaries, scientific pioneers to influential community leaders, their collective achievements demonstrate the profound impact and global influence of the Filipino spirit.

Gladly, that I will be sharing my personal experiences dealing with Filipinos at the work front.

This book was done perfectly through meticulous research, interviews, and stunning visuals. DCom Publisher has curated a collection that embodies the essence of Filipino excellence. Each story is a testament to the tireless work ethic, infectious cheerfulness, and unyielding resilience that are inherent in the Filipino culture. Despite the challenges faced along their journeys, these individuals have consistently demonstrated an unwavering determination to overcome obstacles, proving that the Filipino spirit knows no bounds.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the invite to write about this book and outspreading that to the individuals featured within, whose stories have illuminated the path for countless others to dream bigger, reach higher, and strive for greatness. Your accomplishments have not only brought honour to your beloved Philippines but have also inspired generations to embrace their heritage and pursue their aspirations with unwavering passion.

I also would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the readers of this book, not only in UAE but globally who will also share in the recognition and celebration of Filipino achievements. It is my hope that as you immerse yourselves in the captivating narratives and stunning visuals, you will be stirred by a sense of pride and inspired to make your own mark on the tapestry of humanity.

"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating Global Filipino Achievements" is a tribute to the enduring spirit of the Filipino people—a testament to your ability to thrive and succeed, no matter the circumstances. As you explore the pages of this book, may you be filled with awe, admiration, and an unshakable belief in the limitless potential that resides within every Filipino.

Again, my sincere gesture and opportunity to thank all the Filipinos who were and still are working with us—in one or the other way, at IFZA.

Mabuhay ang Sambayanang Pilipino!

  
Jochen Knecht

29<sup>th</sup> November 2023



IFZA Business Park, Silicon Oasis  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates



## PREFACE



*It is with great pride and admiration that I am endorsing this Coffee Table Book "ICONIC PINOY MAHARLIKA – The Global Filipino Achievers." Within these pages, we delve into the remarkable stories of Filipino individuals who have achieved greatness across the globe. Through their exceptional accomplishments, they embody the rich culture, indomitable spirit, and unwavering resilience as the way their Filipino upbringings.*

*As an Emirati, I have had the privilege of witnessing the incredible journeys of Filipinos in this country. Their remarkable stories have left an indelible mark on me, igniting a deep fascination for their unwavering determination and extraordinary achievements. I have personally witnessed the inspiring success stories of many Filipinos who have made waves in various fields and industries across the globe. Their accomplishments go far beyond personal triumphs, serving as a powerful testament to the limitless potential and boundless talent residing within themselves. Each encounter has reinforced my belief in the immense capabilities and resilience of the Filipino people.*

*This book aims to shed light on the diverse achievements of Filipinos, showcasing their ingenuity, resourcefulness, and relentless pursuit of excellence. It celebrates the hardworking nature and positive outlook on life that are deeply ingrained in the Filipino culture. Despite facing numerous challenges and obstacles, Filipinos have consistently demonstrated an unwavering spirit, always rising above adversity with a smile on their faces.*

*These stories are a source of inspiration and a reminder that dreams know no boundaries. They demonstrate that with passion, determination, and unwavering faith, anything is possible. The Filipino community's achievements are a testament to the power of perseverance and the pursuit of excellence. These narratives serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for current and future generations of Filipinos, reminding me that nothing is beyond their reach when they embrace their heritage and embrace their values that define them.*

*I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals featured in this book, as well as their families and support networks. Your remarkable achievements have not only brought honor to your country, the PHILIPPINES, but have also paved the way for countless others to dream bigger and reach relentlessly for their set goals in life.*

*I would also like to extend my thanks to the readers, whose interest in this book shows a deep appreciation for the Filipino talent and the global impact of these achievers. May these different journey stories ignite a sense of pride within all of you and inspire to pursue your passions with unwavering determination.*

*Finally, I invite you to embark on this journey through the pages of "ICONIC PINOY MAHARLIKA – The Global Filipino Achievers". It is my sincere hope that this book serves as a celebration of the Filipino spirit, a testament to our shared values, and a source of inspiration for generations to come.*

*Mabuhay ang mga Pilipino!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mohamed Al Banna'.

<https://mohamedalbanna.com/>



# FOREWORD



It is with immense pride and profound excitement that I offer my wholehearted endorsement for the extraordinary book, "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating the Global Filipino Achievers." This remarkable publication artistically compiled the journey stories of Global Filipino Achievers and beautifully portrays the essence of our Filipino culture, showcasing the ingenuity, work ethics, and unwavering spirit of my co-Filipinos who have

excelled worldwide on their chosen careers and crafts.

As a brand ambassador, I have had the privilege of witnessing the remarkable talents and accomplishments of fellow Filipinos across various industries and nations. The journey stories shared within this book serve as a testament to our collective excellence, resilience, and unwavering dedication to our craft.

"Iconic Pinoy Maharlika" is a testament to the unwavering spirit of patriotism that runs through our veins. It encapsulates the stories of all Filipino Achievers who have not only brought honor to our nation but have also become global inspirations. This book celebrates our rich cultural heritage, emphasizing the values of hard work, cheerfulness, and unwavering resilience that define us as a people.

Through the pages of this book, readers will be captivated by the remarkable journeys of these Global Filipino Achievers. Their stories serve as a testament

to the heights we can reach when we embrace our heritage, nurture our talents, and pursue our dreams with unwavering determination. I commend the co-authors, curators, publishers, sponsors and contributors of "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika" for their dedication and tireless efforts in bringing this book to fruition. The commitment to showcasing the achievements and contributions of my co-Filipino achievers is a testament to our passion in promoting our culture and inspiring future generations.

In endorsing "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika: Celebrating the Global Filipino Achievers," I wholeheartedly recommend this book as a source of inspiration for every Filipino, young and old. May it serve as a reminder of our collective potential, instilling a sense of pride and fueling our determination to carry on the legacy of excellence set by all Global Filipino Achievers who are continuously thriving in all parts of world.

Together, let us celebrate our culture, embrace our ingenuity, and continue to shine as the "Maharlikas of the Century".

Mabuhay tayong mga PILIPINO, Mabuhay ang PILIPINAS!!!!

OWEN SP SANCHEZ

ICONIC PINOY MAHARLIKA

Brand Ambassador



Once again, I would like to thank all the Community members for giving me this opportunity to work on this wonderful project, not to miss the long waiting and calls but it all ending in great meetings and hospitality. *"It's a usual line ... but thats true"*

Each person and their family in a class of their own, there is lot to see, lot to learn and lot to write about them. Many we missed to meet yet felt the aura and grace while working on the designs.

Like always I say.... Initially seemed like a daunting task, but when I started all I had a vision which was supported by some great team ... also I want to thank all the members in this journey, who not only stood by me also encouraged me to continue the work on this Coffee Table Book, they constantly were guiding me all through to make this book a memorable one as each had a great source of content. Rest I'm sure the details of the book will explain.

*On a personal note - many of the Icons are so different and motivating that I would like to visit their home town and make a documentary film. I dedicate this book to my parents, as the initial idea was given by my mother. I also would like to thank my boss Teena Bhargava.*

So let's meet over a drink... *Though I prefer Tea :)*



**Vikas Bhargava**

Author / Publisher / Creative Cook of the Book







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# A Short History

*Philippines, island country of Southeast Asia in the western Pacific Ocean. It is an archipelago consisting of more than 7,000 islands and islets lying about 910 miles (1460 km) off the coast of Vietnam. Manila is the capital, but nearby Quezon City is the country's most-populous city. Both are part of the National Capital Region (Metro Manila), located in Luzon, the largest island. The second largest island of the Philippines is Mindanao, in the south.*

*The Philippines takes its name from Philip II, who was king of Spain during the Spanish colonization of the islands in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan. Because it was under Spanish rule for 333 years and under U.S. tutelage for a further 48 years, the Philippines has many cultural affinities with the West. It is, for example, the seventh most-populous Asian country with*

*English as an official language and one of only two predominantly Roman Catholic countries in Asia (the other being East Timor). Despite the prominence of such Anglo-European cultural characteristics, the peoples of the Philippines are Asian in consciousness and aspiration.*

*March 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer sailing for Spain, landed in Philippines. In 1542-1546 Spanish explorer expedition, Ruy López de Villalobos named the islands of Leyte and Samar "Felipinas" after King Philip II of Castile (then Prince of Asturias). Eventually, the name "Las Islas Filipinas" would be used for the archipelago's Spanish possessions. Today the Philippines is recognized as three major island groups with Luzon and Mindanao at both ends and the Visayas islands in the middle.*







## Interesting facts

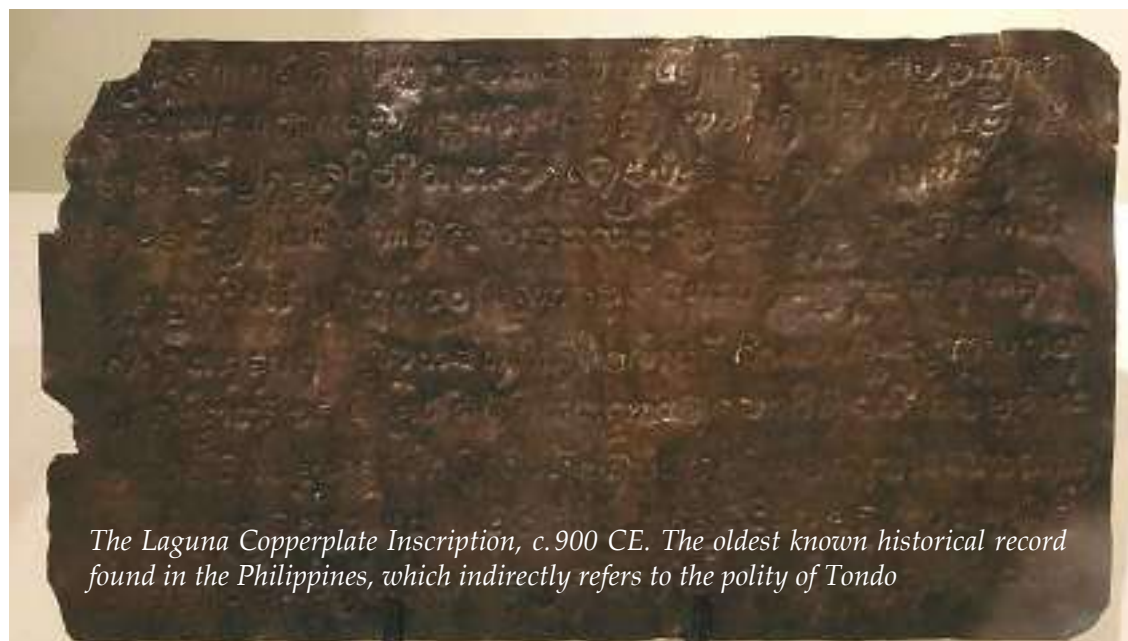
- There are 7,641 islands. ...
- There are 6 official National Symbols. .. Sampaguita flower, Narra hardwood tree, Philippine Eagle, Philippine pearl, Arnis martial art and Filipino sign language. There is the flag, seal, coat of arms and motto and the language.
- The National Flag of the Philippines has great symbolic meaning. ...
- The Philippines was a Spanish colony for over 333 years. ...
- America ruled the Philippines for 48 years. ...

**Historical values:** The earliest known hominin remains in the Philippines is the fossil discovered in 2007 in the Callao Caves in Cagayan. The 67,000-year-old find predates the 47,000-year-old Tabon Man, which was until then the earliest known set of human remains in the archipelago.

**Oldest City:** Cebu, with the population of 2.5 million, is the oldest city and the first capital of the Philippines. Under Spanish rule for three centuries, Cebu has the oldest school founded in 1595, San Carlos and which became a University in 1948, and the oldest street, Colon Street, built by the Spaniards.

**Rules:** There are reliable records for the main periods of Philippine history: Spanish rule (1521–1898) American rule (1898–1946) Japanese occupation (1941–1946) That's why it is a culture where East meets West. The Filipino people have a distinct Asian background, with a strong Western tradition. The modern Filipino culture developed through influence from Chinese and Arab traders, Spanish conquistadors, and American rulers.





*The Laguna Copperplate Inscription, c.900 CE. The oldest known historical record found in the Philippines, which indirectly refers to the polity of Tondo*

The Philippines is called Asia's pearl of the orient for the richness of its culture and the beauty of its landscape. It is home to centuries old churches, turn of the century mansions, ancient forts and modern museums. The Philippines is an archipelago comprising 7,641 islands. The Philippines is blessed with abundant natural resources — this is their pride and soul. This is also their lifeline. This is where they get their food for everyday sustenance. That is why their economy thrives.

## The History

The earliest historical record of local polities and kingdoms is the Laguna Copperplate Inscription, which indirectly refers to the Tagalog settlement of Tondo (AD 900–1589) and two to three other settlements believed to be located in Manila, Laguna, Mindoro, Pangasinan. As well as settlements in Cebu, Panay, Bohol, Butuan, Cotabato, Lanao, Zamboanga and Sulu.

## Uniqueness

The Philippines is made of more than 7,641 islands. In addition, on every island there is a paradise to be found, unique food to eat, a singular culture to experience and new people to meet. The sheer

amount of beaches to enjoy is almost uncountable.

## The Largest City

Quezon City (Tagalog- Lungsod Quezon) is the largest city in the Philippines and is one of the constituent cities of Metro Manila. Commonly called QC or Kyusi, it has a population of about 3,1 million people.

Finest cities: *(not clear what the criteria used for this)*

- Daraga, Albay.
- Vigan City, Ilocos Sur
- Silay City, Negros Occidental
- Alaminos, Pangasinan
- Basco, Batanes

## Languages

Tagalog and Cebuano are the most commonly spoken native languages, together comprising about half of the population of the Philippines. Hiligaynon and Ilokano are also widely spoken.

Only Filipino and English are official languages taught in schools.



## First two names

Some people may have two given names (e.g. Jose Mario), reflecting the Spanish custom of dual names. The mother's paternal family name (or maiden name) effectively acts as the person's 'middle name', while the father's paternal family name operates as the person's 'surname'. As this archipelago nation was under Spanish rule for over 300 years, many names commonly used in the Philippines today are Spanish versions of Christian names. Then, the rule of the United States for nearly 50 years brought in English names and those associated with American pop culture.

## Gender name

Filipino is the Hispanized (or Anglicized) way of referring to both the people and the language in the Philippines. Note that it is also correct to say Filipino for a male and Filipina for a female.

## Religion

Indigenous Philippine folk religions (collectively referred to as Anitism or Bathalism), the traditional religion of Filipinos which predates Philippine Christianity and Islam, is practiced by an estimated 2% of the population, made up of many indigenous peoples, tribal groups, and people who have reverted into... The Philippines proudly boasts to be the only Christian nation in Asia. More than 80.2 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 6 percent belong to various nationalized Christian cults, and another 2 percent belong to well over 100 Protestant denominations. In 1380, the Sunni Shafi'i Ash'ari and Sufi Shaykh Makhdum Karim reached the Sulu Archipelago and Jolo in the Philippines and established Islam(5.6%) in the country through trade in several regions of the island. In 1390, Minangkabau Prince Rajah Baguinda and his followers preached Islam on the islands.

## The first queen

Purificacion Garcia Villanueva was born in the town of Arevalo, Iloilo to Emilio Villanueva and Emilia Garcia. Her mother was born in Palencia, Spain. In 1908, at age 22, Pura Villanueva became the first "Queen of the Manila Carnival."

## Japan invasion

The objective of the strikes at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines was to shield Japan's drive southward to seize the oil and natural resources of Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies.

## Oldest Tribes

As records, these are The Negritos and the Austronesians.

## Why is the Philippines called

## Maharlika?

The Maharlika-meaning freeman or freedman, were the feudal warrior class in ancient Tagalog society in Luzon, the Philippines. They belonged to the lower nobility class similar to the timawa of the Visayan people, however, the word has come to refer to aristocrats or to royal nobility of society.



## Economy

According to the World Bank classification, the Philippines is a lower middle-income country with a GNI per capita equal to USD 3,950 in 2022 and one of the emerging market economies in the East Asia and the Pacific region boasting a globally-recognized competitive workforce. The agricultural sector is a major component of the Philippine economy, although it contributes only about 8.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022. Crops can be grown throughout the year in the country's rich and fertile soils, and the sector employs nearly one-third of the total workforce. The principal farm products are sugarcane, rice, coconuts, bananas, corn (maize), and pineapples. Additional products include mangoes, citrus, papayas, and other tropical fruits; coffee and tobacco; and various fibres such as abaca (Manila hemp) and maguey, which are used mainly to make rope. A wide variety of vegetables are raised for domestic consumption.

## Natural Resources

Most of the country's metallic minerals, including gold, iron ore, lead, zinc, chromite and copper are drawn from major deposits on the islands of Luzon and Mindanao. Smaller deposits of silver, nickel, mercury, molybdenum, cadmium, and manganese occur in several other locations.

## Blessed Love

The Philippines is a land of rich natural beauty and cultural diversity. From the ancient walls of Intramuros in Manila to the revolving tower restaurant in Pasig City, to the white-sand beach

of Boracay, there is something for everyone to love in the Philippines.

## Neighbor

the country closest to the Philippines is Taiwan. Taiwan is located to the north of the Philippines and separated from the northernmost Philippine island of Luzon by the Luzon Strait, which is about 250 kilometers (155 miles) wide at its narrowest point.

## An Identity

A sense of national identity and pride emerged out of struggles for Philippine independence. However, loyalties remain foremost with one's family and place of birth. Key values such fellowship; respect and acceptance are found throughout the culture, with many Filipinos displaying a warming and hospitable demeanor. A true Filipino is defined by his or her total embrace of the collective values and culture of the Filipino society, and being proud of it. A true Filipino not only imbibes but radiates as well the Filipino characters that are unique to them.

## Climate:

The climate of the Philippines is tropical and strongly monsoonal (i.e., wet-dry). In general, rain-bearing winds blow from the southwest from approximately May to October, and drier winds come from the northeast from November to February. Thus, temperatures remain relatively constant from north to south during the year, and seasons consist of periods of wet and dry.





## Some Other Facts

- Francisca Susano, who is believed to be the 'oldest person in the world' and the last woman alive to be born in the 1800s, died in the Philippines at the age of 124. Born on Sept. 11, 1897, Francisca Susano breathed her last on the evening of November 22, 2021.

- Filipinos are predominantly of Malay descent, frequently with Chinese and sometimes American or Spanish ancestry. Many Filipinos have Spanish names because of a 19th-century Spanish decree that required them to use Spanish surnames, or last names.

- José Protacio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda, best known as the “Father of the Philippines,” was a polymath who came to embody the struggle against European colonialism in Asia, and the visible head of the Philippine nationalist movement at the end of the nineteenth century.

- A number of locations in the Philippines have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites. These include four 16th-century baroque churches built by the Spanish in Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay, and Miag-ao (collectively designated in 1993), the 16th-century trading town of Vigan (1999) in northwestern Luzon, and the ancient rice terraces of the northern Luzon cordilleras (1995). The other 3 are natural sites like the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River, Tubbataha Reefs and the Mount Hamiguitan Range wildlife sanctuary.

- Local nongovernmental organizations such as the Heritage Conservation Society and some historical groups have also sought to preserve the local heritage.

## Animals & Birds:

The Philippines are inhabited by more than 200 species of mammals, including water buffalo (carabao), goats, horses, hogs, cats, dogs, monkeys, squirrels, lemurs, mice, pangolins (scaly anteaters), chevrotains (mouse deer), mongooses, civet cats, and red and brown deer, among others. The tamarau (*Anoa mindorensis*), a species of small water buffalo, is found only on Mindoro. Of more than 50 species of bats, many are peculiar to the Philippines. Hundreds of species of birds live in the Philippines, either for all or part of the year. Prominent birdlife includes jungle fowl, pigeons, peacocks, pheasants, doves, parrots, hornbills,

kingfishers, sunbirds, tailorbirds, weaverbirds, herons, and quails. Many species are endemic to the island of Palawan. The endangered Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) is limited mainly to isolated areas on Mindanao and in the Sierra Madre on Luzon.

## Dresses

Although slacks, shirts, skirts, and dresses based on European designs are common throughout the Philippines, some garments are unique to particular groups or regions. The malong, a colourful woven tube of cloth that can be worn in a variety of ways by both men and women, is characteristic of Muslim communities in Mindanao. In the urban areas, many men wear an intricately embroidered shirt, the barong, for casual and formal events. On special occasions, urban women may wear the terno, a long dress characterized by broad “butterfly” sleeves that rise slightly at the shoulders and extend about to the elbow. Many of the smaller ethnic groups have characteristic attire for events of special cultural significance.





## Food



Whether festival fare or everyday food, major meals in most Filipino societies are built around boiled or steamed rice or rice noodles. Small amounts of meat, including chicken, pork (in non-Muslim communities), goat, or fish complement the rice or noodle core, along with an assortment of fruits and cooked vegetables. Assorted alcoholic drinks are made from coconut sap, sugarcane, and rice. Balut, a parboiled embryonic duck still in the egg, is a popular street food in the Manila area. Many Filipinos consider adobo, the national dish of the Philippines. The perfect adobo lies in the delicate balance of soy sauce, vinegar, garlic and spices (bay leaves and fresh ground peppercorns).

## Art & Music

Early Spanish chroniclers testified that the Filipinos carved the images of their anitos (gods and goddesses) and ancestors in wood. They also played a variety of musical instruments, including end-blown flutes, nose flutes, jew's harps, gongs, drums, and lutes, among others. Various seasonal celebrations (e.g., harvest) and life rituals (e.g., courtship and marriage) called for certain instrumental music, songs, and dances. For instance, in some of the Muslim communities of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, the kulintang ensemble, consisting of a set of gongs suspended horizontally and vertically and a single-headed drum, can still be heard at festive events. Some of the local dance traditions have been preserved or reinterpreted by contemporary performing

groups, such as Bayanihan (the national folk dance company of the Philippines). To encourage the development of arts, the government gives awards of recognition and maintains a National Arts Center (established 1976), which includes the Philippine High School for the Arts in Los Baños, south of Manila.





# Sports and Recreation

A number of sports introduced by the Americans in the early 20th century enjoy great popularity in the Philippines. Basketball and Baseball are particularly prominent, with amateur games occurring regularly in neighborhoods throughout the country. However, there are six major sports in the Philippines: basketball, boxing, tennis, football, billiards, and volleyball. Over time, basketball was able to captivate every Filipino's heart. It is the most played and the most popular sport for the Filipinos. The Philippine Basketball Association was a league founded in April 1975. The country has produced many legends in Sports Industry



Filipinos have excelled in various internationally competitive martial arts, including boxing, wushu, and tae kwon do, while local Filipino martial arts traditions have experienced a resurgence since the end of the 20th century. The country has produced champion boxers in competitions hosted by the World Boxing Association, and the Philippines has taken several medals in martial arts in the Asian and Southeast Asian Games.

The Philippines has participated in the Summer Olympic Games since 1924 and in the Winter Games since 1972. Filipino athletes generally have been most successful in swimming, boxing, and track and field events. Cockfighting (sabong), an age-old pastime in the Philippines, has retained a passionate following. It is a popular form of gambling, with many spectators betting on the outcome of the fights. Although practiced throughout the country, cockfighting is most strongly associated with Cebu.







## Films

The Filipino film industry was one of the busiest and bustling film communities in Asia, releasing an average of 350 films a year making Philippines. Even with the problems currently facing motion pictures around the world, films are still considered one of the popular forms of entertainment among the Filipino people, directly employing some 260,000 Filipinos and generating around 2 billion revenues annually. Among its neighbors in Southeast Asia, Philippine cinema remains as the strongest in the Southeast Asian region with the majority of films made in the region came from the Philippines along with the film industries of Thailand and Indonesia. On September 12, 2019, the film industry celebrated its One Hundred Years of Philippine Cinema, which declares the same day up until September 11, 2020, as Philippine Cinema's Centennial Year.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an enormously negative effect on the film industry

## Fashion

Fashion and clothing in the Philippines refers to the way the people of the Philippine society generally dress up at home, at work, travelling and during special occasions. Clothing and fashion are signifiers of identity, the social fabric of society, and markers of cultural beliefs and historical change. Filipiniana clothing such as the Maria Clara gown, the terno, and cultural dress have played important roles in the heritage of the Philippines.

The clothing style and fashion sense of the Philippines in the modern-day era have been influenced by the indigenous tribes, Chinese waves of immigration, the Spaniards, and the Americans, as evidenced by the chronology of events that occurred in Philippine history. At present, Filipinos conform their way of dressing based on classic fashion or prevailing fashion trends.

Apart from Western influence, the Philippine style of clothing was dictated by its climate. With a tropical climate (dry and rainy seasons), indigenous groups wore and to this day still wear colorful woven clothes, often with intricate beadwork and other ornam a type of a collarless shirt – which later became adorned with laces, trimmings, buttons, and a collar – was where from the Barong Tagalog evolved. On the other hand, the Bahag was a type of loincloth.

The Filipiniana/Terno gown, the modernized Traje de Mestiza rose to popularity as a formal attire during latter half of the 20th Century.







## Tourism

Tourism has been growing steadily. Most international visitors come from South Korea, the United States, and Japan, but the number of Malaysians, Singaporeans, and residents of other Asian countries is increasing. Metro Manila and Cebu are among the most popular destinations, as are such resort areas as Boracay Island, just off the northern tip of Panay. DoY reported 2.65 Million foreign arrivals in 2022.

## Media and Publishing

A highly independent press developed in the Philippines under U.S. administration, but many newspapers ceased publication during the period of martial law. Newspapers are published in English, Tagalog, and many of the country's vernacular languages. The operators of radio and television stations belong to a national organization called the Association of Broadcasters in the Philippines that regulates the broadcasting industry.









## ICONIC legacy from the Past to Present for the Future...



While these are the known ICONS who had created history and contributed immensely to the growth and development of the country across all aspects, we're now presenting the Icons of the present day - the men and women who've carried forward the glorious legacy left behind by their spectacular ancestors, and presented aura in a completely new way on the global map.

Embark on a journey with us as we uncover their stories, struggles, successes and achievements that will engage and inspire one and all.







# Providing *opportunities for the community*

AGNES P. MIRANDA - Businesswoman and philanthropist



HCP Agnes P. Miranda of Toronto ON Canada, is an accomplished businesswoman and a strong supporter of the Filipino Community since she migrated to Canada in 1966. Agnes is the current President of the Philippine Independence Day

Council, a non-profit Filipino – Canadian umbrella organization mainly tasked with the Philippine Independence Day celebrations bring together the fourth largest minority group in Canada.



*Over 40 years of serving the community, Agnes Pasaporte Miranda find great pleasure in seeing people lives in community change for the better , her loved ones and of people somewhere else in the world. She find her own existence in this world more meaningful when she see the benefit of helping others. She get a full sense of accomplishment knowing that the sole act of gratitude from blissful years of her life is spent between the spectrum of harsh reality and the positive impact to the life of every person who have trusted and believed in her. Life can be a special journey if it's travelled by a restored dignity because someone is willing to pledge unconditional commitment to light the path along the way.*



She is also a Senior Executive Vice Chairman and Co-Founder of World Financial Group Canada and a recipient of the WFG Pioneer Award for her substantial contribution to the growth of WFG Canada advocating Financial Literacy and

Education not only among Filipino-Canadian but also globally. Being extremely passionate about her advocacy of helping the community here and abroad, she continuously bridges and provides opportunities

for Filipino-Canadian to promote and embrace Filipino Culture through her community programs, fundraising events and charity works that helped calamity victims in the Philippines and those who are affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic.





*Extremely passionate about her advocacy of helping  
the community all over the world*







She became a true inspiration to the community and have garnered numerous recognition in both of her business building expertise and mentorship and her humanitarian deeds. Some of her most notable recognitions are:

- 2012, HCP Agnes Miranda was awarded by the Philippine Independence Day Council as Outstanding Filipino-Canadian in the field of business.
- 2015, HCP Agnes Miranda was awarded one of the Outstanding Asian Canadian in recognition for Exemplary Contribution to the Canadian Community given by the Canadian Multicultural Council Of Asians in Ontario, Canada.
- December 2015, she was also recognized by Kol Hope Foundation For Children for her mission to help kids with disabilities around the world.
- 2016 , during the 25th Year Anniversary of Philippine Chamber of Commerce Toronto, HCP Agnes Miranda received a Certificate of Excellence in recognition of her achievement, leadership, commitment and desire to make a difference in the community.
- 2017, HCP Agnes Miranda received the RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards.
- September 2017, HCP Agnes Miranda received the Golden Balangay for Excellence in Business. The First Golden Balangay Award aims to promote excellence, hard work, higher education, entrepreneurship, public service, positive relationships and community involvement.
- 2018, Agnes was awarded as one of the 100 Most Influential Filipino Women in the World 2018 by the Filipino Women's Network. HCP Agnes Miranda received her "Builder" award in London, UK.
- September 2020, HCP Agnes Miranda received the most coveted Top 25 Legacy Award of World Financial Group, recognizing her and her team for the most number of families helped totaling over 200 Million Dollars in her advocacy of Financial Educations in her entire WFG career.





- In December 2020, Agnes Miranda sponsored two of the Alpha Kappa Rho Fraternity annual charity drives through the Pamasko Ng Akrho, which brightened 150 families holiday celebration through the Noche Buena Package Giving Program and Mula sa Puso ng Akrho, which distributed essentials and food to neglected and abandoned children at the Mother Teresa Spinelle's Treasure, INC and Bahay ni Maria in the Philippines.

- 2021, Agnes Miranda was awarded by the Philippine Consulate General of Toronto ON Canada, the Community Service Award during the Quincentennial Commemoration of Christianity in the Philippines.



- 2022, Agnes received the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Global Service and Leadership awards during the Mabuhay Philippines Festival Celebration at the Xinflix Studios in Markham ON.

- 2022, Recipient of the Warsi International Organization (WIO) Global Womens Award.

- 2022, Appointed as Honorary Patron-In-Chief of Warsi International Organization and WIO Global Women's Award Academy.





- 2022, Recipient of the International Friendship Award from Xinflix Media Group of Markham Ontario.

- 2022, Featured as one of the ASEAN Heroes in the Book authored by a prominent Filipino author, AKS Maria Rosa “Bing” Nieva Carrion in her book “ASEAN HEROES.” Agnes Miranda’s goal onwards, is to help the young generation to fulfill their dreams in the field of sports, music, and literary arts and to continue her advocacy in the Financial Literacy and
- Education campaign, mentoring and coaching senior citizens to retire in dignity and to continue to serve the community.

-- 2023, recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II 75th Jubilee Pin, a commemorative pin awarded to Agnes Miranda for her significant contributions and service to the community.

- 2023, As the current President of the Philippine Independence Day Council of Toronto recently led the highly attended double
- celebration OF PIDC’s 35 years and the Mabuhay Philippines Festival’s 25th year anniversaries.

- 2023, Agnes Miranda is recently inducted as Hope Creating President (HCP) of Rotary Club of Manila 101 under Rotary International District 3810.

- 2023, Asia Pinnacle Awardee as Asia’s Most Outstanding Leader for Financial Literacy & Education at Okada Hotel, Manila-Oct 13







*As a little girl in the Philippines, Agnes P. Miranda dreamed of coming to Canada one day. “My interest to come to Canada began when I was merely 10 years old, when studying at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy run by French-Canadian nuns,” recalls Miranda, an executive vice-chairman of World Financial Group (WFG). “I still remember how they showed movies showing children ice skating, tobogganing and skiing! I exclaimed to the nuns, ‘When I grow up, I am going to see your country, Canada!’”*

*After graduating from university in banking and finance, Miranda took the plunge and applied for immigration. She landed in Canada as a 20-year-old single woman in 1966. And she got a job the very next day. “When I was asked if I had Canadian experience, I simply answered, ‘I would if you hire me today.’ And that they did. Imagine the day after I arrived, I had a job as a junior accounting clerk!”*

*She’s come a long way in the financial industry since then; 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of her co-founding WFG in Canada.*

*“The most important qualities that helped me as an immigrant were courage, ambition and perseverance,” says Miranda, who gives lots of her time to mentor other Filipino Canadian women in business.*

*In 2009, she was a recipient of the WFG Pioneer Award for her substantial contribution to the growth of WFG Canada, and, in 2012, she was awarded Outstanding Filipino Canadian in the field of business by the Philippine Independence Day Council.*

*With her keen business acumen, Miranda is also a promoter of community events, particularly related to culture and beauty. She has produced fashion shows, pageants and other cultural events in Toronto. Recently, Miranda received a Lifetime Award of Excellence for her contribution to Canadian Asian Fashion Week – Toronto.*

*“My commitment to give back to the community has grown more over the years,” says Miranda. “I am focusing on helping youth succeed in ventures such as sports and arts.”*







# Serving to protect *the humanity*

**SENATOR GRACE POE** - Politician, Businesswoman, Educator, and Philanthropist  
Serving as a Senator since 2013



Grace Poe is a formidable advocate of transparency in governance, efficient delivery of public services, and the protection of the rights of mothers, children, commuters and consumers.

She began her life in public service when she was appointed by President Aquino to serve as



chairperson of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) in 2010. While at the MTRCB, she implemented policies and programs to promote "intelligent viewing." She introduced the new ratings system for television programs, "designed to empower parents to exercise caution and vigilance with the viewing habits of their children."



In 2013, she was invited to run as one of the administration's senatorial candidates. It was a successful campaign which ended with her topping the polls. In her first term as senator, she immediately set to work creating meaningful legislation, more than 50 of which are now fully enacted laws. Among these are the laws providing for free lunch program for public school children; for maternal and child care for the first 1000 days of life of a child; for free text alerts in times of disaster; for extended validity of driver's license and passports; and making our streets, public spaces, and workplaces safer by prohibiting all forms of sexual harassment; to name a few.

In 2019, she ran for a second term as senator, won a seat and continues to serve our country especially our most marginalized and disenfranchised sectors.

Senator Poe also led the passage of the long



overdue amendment to the 85-year old Public Service Act which seeks to liberalize the economy.

These amendments to the Public Service Act have the capacity not only to improve the quality of public services in the country, but also to transform the Philippines into a more globally competitive arena where businesses flourish, and each and every Filipino thrives.

The measure clears the ambiguity surrounding the interchangeably used terms "public utility" and "public service."

The proposal limits public utility to three services: distribution of electricity; transmission of electricity; and water pipeline distribution and sewerage pipeline systems.

All other public services that are not natural monopolies will be freed from such foreign



equity restriction but not from any of their other responsibilities as public service providers.

It aims to encourage the entry of more players and capital investments; in turn, enhance competition, leading to better consumer service.





*In 2019, she ran for a second term as senator, won a seat and continues to serve our country especially our most marginalized and disenfranchised sectors.*



Grace was a foundling who was discovered on September 3, 1968, in Iloilo City in the holy water font of Jaro Metropolitan Cathedral. The parish priest named her "Grace" in the belief that her finding was through the grace of God.

She was eventually adopted by Fernando Poe, Jr. and Susan Roces, who were newlyweds at that time. Both her parents are renowned and well-respected artists who have made important contributions to the Philippine Film Industry. Her father, Fernando Poe, Jr., was known as the, "King of Philippine Movies" and was posthumously declared a National Artist of the Philippines in 2006. Her mother, Susan Roces, was an actress with an illustrious career, during which she won five FAMAS Awards, including two Best Actress wins.

Grace grew up in Manila. She studied at the University of the Philippines, where she majored

in development studies, then moved to Boston College in Massachusetts, United States where she finished a degree in political science.

Grace married Teodoro Misael Daniel "Neil" Vera Llamanzares. They have three children: Brian, Hanna, and Nika.







# Governing *the hearts*

GOVERNOR GWENDOLYN FIEL GARCIA - Governor of Cebu



GWENDOLYN F. GARCIA is the first woman governor elected in Cebu's 454-year history. She served three terms from 2004 to 2013 and was reelected for a fourth term in 2019 after serving two terms in Congress, becoming the only Cebu governor to come back for a fourth term. In the 2022 elections, she yet again carved another

milestone by becoming the first official in Cebu's electoral history to have breached the one-million-vote mark when 1,478,436 Cebuanos gave her a most resounding vote of confidence — with a lead margin of over 1.1 million votes over her closest rival. She is now serving her unprecedented fifth term in office.



Often called as Cebu's iron lady and the most beloved "Governor of The People," Gwen is the eldest child of former governor Pablo Paras Garcia and Judge Esperanza Fiel-Garcia. When she first became governor in 2004, she aggressively pursued a 12-point agenda to address the problems of roads and bridges, water, power, health, education, women, business, agriculture and food production, tourism, heritage preservation and the environment.

A graduate of Broadcast Communication from the University of the Philippines-Diliman, Gwen, a mother of three, is known for her strong and assertive leadership style. She has been vocal in advocating for the rights and welfare of her constituents and her leadership has earned both support and criticism from various sectors.

Under her watch, she implemented effective financial management which officially made Cebu debt free in 2009 and the richest province in the country in terms of assets which stand at P235



billion, according to the 2022 Commission on Audit report. She runs Capitol like a business enterprise: efficiently and professionally, with the best interest of Cebu and the Cebuanos as her guiding principles in crafting policies and decisions. Throughout her political career, Garcia has initiated various development programs and projects aimed at improving the infrastructure and economic growth in Cebu.

During her return in 2019, Garcia's leadership was tested by the Covid-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020. Under her watch, Cebu implemented measures that balanced health and the economy; the lives and livelihoods of the people. Because of her bold and decisive policies, Cebu is now ahead of the entire country in terms of pandemic responses and post-pandemic recovery efforts.

She was the first local chief executive to reopen tourism in as early as August 2020, junked the required RT-PCR tests for travelers coming to

Cebu, and made the wearing of facemasks "optional" in open and well-ventilated spaces. While formerly controversial and heavily criticized, these policies have eventually been adopted by the national government for nationwide implementation.

Her visionary leadership salvaged Cebu from the pit of the disaster when the double whammy of the pandemic and Super typhoon Odette devastated the province. Instead of letting the Cebuanos adopt a mendicant mentality, she introduced programs that have helped Cebuanos help themselves. She implemented the Sugbo Negosyo program, in partnership with the private sector, which helps micro and small entrepreneurs jumpstart their businesses by giving them entrepreneurial trainings and capital. Another program, the Sugbo Kahanas provides free skills training for Cebuanos, especially those who lost their jobs during the pandemic.





The Enhanced Countryside Development hooks up entrepreneur-borrowers with financial institutions at very low-interest rates. The Sugbusog Program, a backyard gardening initiative, made Cebuanos productive and provided them with nutritious food at the height of lockdowns. Today, the program is adopted by all levels of local government as well as households, public schools, police stations, and Capitol-run hospitals.

In 2019, she also started the Caravan of Provincial Government Services for Cebuanos to have access to basic services despite the lockdowns, such as medical, dental, optical, laboratory, legal, and agricultural, among many others. Recently, the "Kadiwa ng Pangulo" has become part of this quarterly Caravan as a response to the call of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for local government units to organize their own initiative and make locally produced agricultural products available to the public at a cheaper price. This includes selling rice at PHP25 per kilo.

Cebu Province allocated P1.8 billion for the Dasig Sugbo Program to expedite the recovery efforts of over 400,000 households in 32 local government units that were severely affected by Super typhoon Odette in December 2021. To ensure proper use of government funds, beneficiaries were given QR-coded cards that they can use to purchase food and housing

materials from partner stores. This also helped stimulate the local economy that was in a bad shape. Cebuano culture and heritage have taken center stage under her administration. The Suroy-Suroy Sugbo was born and institutionalized in 2005, a tourism caravan that has become the most effective tool for promoting local tourism. After six years of hiatus, the program was revived in 2019 and is now made a benchmark by the national government's "The Philippine Experience" program of the Department of Tourism. The Suroy Suroy Sugbo's latest installment had Capitol leading 11 busloads of participants in touring the northern Cebu.

The Pasigarbo sa Sugbo, Festival of Festivals also made a comeback, with the entire One Cebu Island taking part in the grandest festival showdown this country has ever seen. Under Garcia's watch, the inmates of the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (CPDRC) perform dance routines, giving a different approach to rehabilitation and daily exercise. Thus was born the now popular CPDRC dancing inmates, a concrete proof of the transformative brand of leadership that she has been displaying through the years.

Cebu has also gained recognition worldwide and has forged ties with cities and provinces across the world, including China, Korea, Israel, Spain,

Hawaii, Guam, and Russia. Locally, Cebu has garnered awards for good governance for several years, and for its pioneering tourism practices during the pandemic. Gov. Garcia herself is also a recipient of several awards including the Order of Lakandula Grand Cross (Bayani) Medal, Most Influential Filipina 2018 Nicole Award, an Outstanding Lawmaker by Superbrands International for three consecutive years, and the No. 1 Performing Governor in the Philippines in 2020 and 2021.

Today, Gwen, dubbed as the face of "One Cebu" (the party her family founded known for its regional focus and strong influence in Cebu politics) has become a unifying force in Cebu, with the entire island, including the highly urbanized tri-cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, now looking to her for guidance in crafting important policies. Indeed, Cebu is now a One Cebu Island, thanks to the trailblazing leadership of Cebu's Iron Lady and the Governor of the People: Gwendolyn F. Garcia







# Resilient & Innovative *for Sustainable Development*

USEC. SANDRA SANCHEZ MONTANO - Chairperson, Philippine Commission on Women



*With all her life works she was chosen to represent the Philippines in the  
APEC BEST TOP MANAGER  
awards during the APEC Summit in La Serena Chile 2019.*

Her inspiring transition from Baguio City 1990 killer earthquake victim to a resilient, innovative life saver bagged her an award as the 1st ASEAN Woman Leader in ASEAN Business Investment Summit in Myanmar (2014). Her altruistic efforts to empower women on urban and rural farming, food security and sustainable livelihood through TROPIKA food manufacturing were recognized by ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network (AWEN) awarding her Outstanding ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network 2015 in Hanoi Vietnam.



Her valuable contribution in MSME Inclusive growth as part of APEC Global Value Chain, founding of CHEERS a social enterprise pre hospital care success story was featured in the APEC Going Global Together coffee table book, her outstanding work performance on occupational safety and health made her on the lists of awardees among the 100 Most Influential Filipina Woman in the World 2016 by Filipina Women Network a San Francisco, USA based women lead organization.

One of the authors of Intensity 7 Disrupt 3.0 Woman in Rising published by FWN.

With all her life works she was chosen to represent the Philippines in the APEC BEST TOP MANAGER awards during the APEC Summit in La Serena Chile 2019.

She bagged the 2022 Ministerial Awards on her COVID 19 initiatives and response in the Global Summit Women held in Bangkok Thailand.

She was among this year's Asia Leaders Awards Woman of Substance by Rising Tigers Nation Builders.

She is a Registered Nurse and Naturopathy Doctor by profession, graduate of Combating GBV new Intervention and Approach, an International GAD Resource fellow by MASHAV in Israel with 18 other countries, finished Angat BAYI Women Empowerment Leadership Program in the University of the Philippines Center for Gender Studies. She's successfully completed Basic Citizen Military Training Reservist by the Philippine Air Force.







*“Women are powerful beyond measure and beautiful beyond pressure”*

Usec Sandy is happily married blessed with 3 children, recently the MONTANO family was awarded during the 2019 JOLLIBEE Family values awards, Jollibee Foundation gives honor to deserving families who exemplify positive FILIPINO values such as generosity, compassion, love for the community, love for the environment

while also providing selfless service to the ordinary citizens towards nation building.

A proud farmer’s daughter, our champion on gender equality women empowerment and resiliency towards sustainable development says “Beside a successful man is an empowered

woman” her life motto “Women are powerful beyond measure and beautiful beyond pressure”

As an author, it is an honor to have GAD Resource Speaker Undersecretary Sandy Montano, Chairperson Philippine Commission on Women to be in our first book.







# Equity & Justice *for the community*

**JUSLYN CABRERA MANALO** - Mayor, City of Daly City

*She was re-elected in 2020 with highest votes ever for a  
City Council race in Daly City's history.*

Juslyn Cabrera Manalo, lifework to date pushes for equity and justice for the community and creating policies that enhance the quality of life for the residents, ensuring small businesses thrive and supporting youth development and older adult programs. Early in her career, in the non-profit sector, Juslyn became a Community Service Worker at the Veterans Equity Center providing direct service to the Filipino World War II Veterans who were deemed inactive from U.S. Congress-an injustice that needed to be resolved. She along with others started SAVE (Student Action for Veterans Equity) to build a national campaign advocating for The Filipino Veterans' rights.

Juslyn also managed the Bill Sorro Housing Program (BiSHoP), a program that helped low to moderate income families, find, defend and sustain their housing.

She also worked in the corporate private sector as a Community Engagement Manager for Brookfield Properties, building partnerships to create community development such as affordable housing, local job creation, cultural district support, open green space, and youth development- one of the most comprehensive Community Benefits in a Development Agreement in the City and County of San Francisco totaling \$76M.

*“I’ve always had a passion to help others. Now I have the opportunity to help the community that raised me. Follow your heart’s passion, it will lead you where you are meant to be.”*

In 2016, Juslyn became the first Filipino American woman on the City Council in Daly City and was appointed Vice Mayor in her first year. Right away, she pushed the needle to bring the issue to support all immigrants. Also, she led raising the minimum wage in Daly City and is still above CA state minimum wage to date. She was an appointed Personnel Board Commissioner for the City of Daly City and was previously chairwoman for the SamTrans Citizen Advisory Committee ensuring that local community voice is represented on transit.

She is also on the board of Senior & Disability Action, an organization that fights for policy

locally and beyond for older adults and those with disabilities. Manalo earned her Masters of Public Administration, from San Francisco State University's School of Public Affairs and Civic Engagement.

She has also attained a Bachelor of Arts, in Asian-American Studies and a Minor in Women Studies from San Francisco State University. She believes local activism is key in communities.

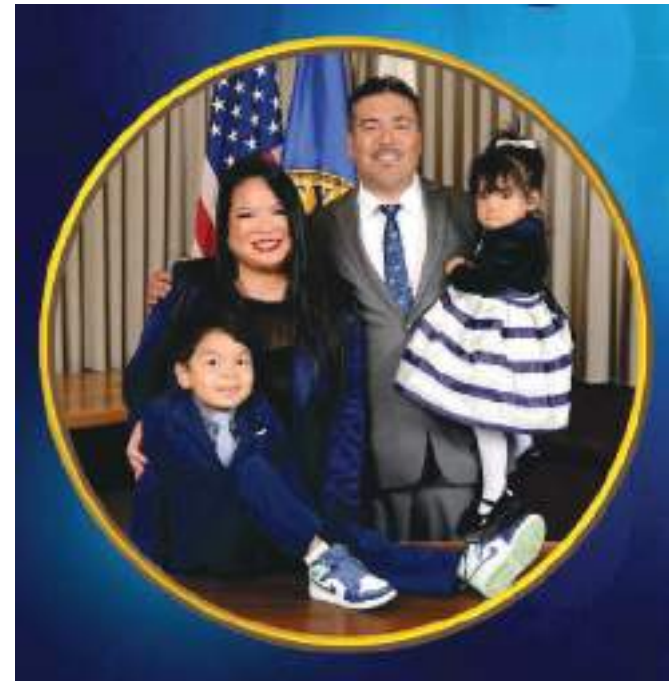
Juslyn is the President of the Filipino American Democratic Club of San Mateo County which has been in existence for 40 years and active in the San Mateo County Democratic Central Committee.

On the state California Democratic State level, Juslyn is on the Executive Board for the Filipino American Democratic Caucus(FADC) as Chairwoman. For the League of California Cities, a bi-partisan CA statewide organization with 479 member cities, Juslyn is the President of the Asian Pacific Islander Caucus.

She sits on the Bay Area Water Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) and a delegate for the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Most recently she was appointed to the C/CAG City/County Association of Governments in San Mateo County.







In 2017, Juslyn broke the barrier and became the first Filipino-American/Asian American woman to become Mayor in Daly City. Daly City is next to San Francisco, CA and considered the “Pinoy Capitol” with the highest percentage of Filipinos in a mid-size City.

Juslyn Cabrera Manalo was born in San Francisco of Filipino parents and was raised in Daly City, California. She is raising her 4 year old and 2 year old son with her husband in her hometown.

She was re-elected in 2020 with highest votes ever for a City Council race in Daly City’s history. In December of 2020, she became Mayor for her second term.

#### **Notable awards:**

- *STARS Award Chancellor Award for Community Service California State University 2001*
- *Certificate of Honor, City and County of San Francisco 2013*
- *Filipino Women’s Network Global Award - Filipina Influential for Emerging Leader 2015*
- *Filipino Women’s Network Global Continuing Influential for Policy and Visionaries 2018*
- *Alumni of the Year, SFSU Asian American Studies Department 2019*
- *Trailblazer of the Year, CA Democratic API Caucus 2019*
- *San Mateo County Board of Supervisors’ Proclamation 2021*
- *Filipino Women’s Network Keepers of the Flame 2022*







# Creative Changes *for next generation*

HON. JOHN MARVIN C. “YUL SERVO” NIETO- Honorary Vice Mayor Of The Year, City Of Manila

## *Ang Lingkod Bayang Manilenyo (A Public Servant of Manila)*

The first of July 2022 marks a new chapter for John Marvin Cruz Nieto, with the same promise of unceasing and unparalleled service to his constituents as a Lingkod Bayan. Vice Mayor Nieto committed himself to continuing the same brand of service and devotion he had been known for and exhorted everyone to file their new COCs, redefining the same as Compassion, Obligation, and Commitment, thus:

*“Ngayong tapos na po ang eleksyon, nais kong mag-sumite tayo ng bagong COC. Diba ang COC ay pina-file natin sa intensyon nating lumahok sa halalan? Ngayon ang COC na ito ay may isa pang*

*kahulugan: Compassion, Obligation, at Commitment.*

*Compassion—bigyan natin ng awa ang ating nasasakupan. Obligation—gampanan ang ating katungkulan. Commitment—maging totoo tayo sa ating mga pangako. Yan ang gawin nating pamantayan ng paglilingkod.” (Now that the election is over, I exhort everyone to submit their new COCs. Isn’t it that we file our COCs in order to become candidates in elections? COC, however, has another meaning: Compassion, Obligation, and Commitment.*

*Compassion—let us serve our constituents with sympathy. Obligation—let us all perform our respective duties. Commitment—let us be true to all our promises. This will be our standard of service.)*



With this in mind, Nieto embarked on a new journey in the field of public service, this time as the second highest ranking city government official in the nation's capital.

John Marvin Cruz Nieto is a Manileño through and through, born on 22 February 1977 and raised in Binondo, Manila by parents Martin and Zenaida Nieto. The second of eight children, Nieto, who carried the nickname "Jon-Jon" in his childhood years, attended kindergarten at the Tulungan Daycare Center, primary school at the Pedro Guevara Elementary School, obtained secondary education from the Arellano University and graduated with a degree in Criminology in 1998 at the Philippine College of Criminology.

In 2007, Nieto entered politics as a 3rd District Councilor, serving three full terms, where he became a known legislator, having authored hundreds of resolutions and 21 notable ordinances passed by the City Council. All while, persevering to fulfil his promise of

unceasing service to his constituents, as evidenced by his projects such as medical missions (called Araw N'yo, Serbisyo Ko), mass weddings and baptisms (Kasalang Bayan and Binyagang Bayan), feeding programs (Kusina Manileño), mass circumcision (Binyagan sa Tag-Araw: Operation Tuli), and other programs providing wellness services— all of which have become innovated and enhanced continuing projects as the Vice Mayor of Manila city.

As a neophyte legislator, serving as a two-term Congressman in the same district from 2016-2019, he relished the opportunity to serve his constituents in a new capacity, and proceeded to sponsor bills aimed at improving the lives not only of his constituents but of the Filipino people in general. As a result, out of 1,224 House Bills he principally authored, 128 were enacted into law under the 17th and 18th Congress. He distributed millions of pesos worth of guarantee letters and sponsored several infrastructure projects consisting of government buildings, police stations,

multi-purpose barangay halls, medical facilities, libraries and school facilities.





With a staff that has grown exponentially, consisting of fellow *lingkod bayans* adopting the same culture of service that defined Nieto's career, the Vice Mayor is now able to carry out his projects—this time, on a much larger scale and with an unprecedented number of beneficiaries, embodying his promise of *Serbisyong Walang Katulad* (Unparalleled Service).

The Vice Mayor and Presiding Officer of the 12th City Council of Manila was able to preside over 521 ordinances and 2,011 resolutions authored by the 38 hardworking and dedicated councilors of the city, earning them an 82% rating from the Regional Local Legislative Award (LLA) by the Department of Interior and Local Governance (DILG).

On its 122nd founding anniversary, the City Council of Manila launched its official City

Council of Manila Website, an archive of legislations dating from the Municipal Board in 1901 up to the present council.

For the remainder of his term, Nieto has many other huge projects lined up, some of which are carried over from his time as Councilor and Congressman.

Nieto is a doting husband to Flovelyn L. Nieto, an entrepreneur with whom he is raising four sons and two loving daughters.

More notably, Nieto is a contemporary metal work artist, spending some of his personal time painting and creating pieces inspired from the aerial view of the landscape of Manila. He has conducted 3 exhibit shows at various art galleries, most recently at the Manila City Hall, enabling him to donate a portion of the proceeds to charitable works.









# A Man of Action and Vision:

## *Leading the Positive Change in Nation-Building*

**ALFRED VARGAS** - Actor and Politician as Councilor of Quezon City



Alfred Vargas, a man of action and vision. His vision for the Philippines is one where all children have access to quality education, the poor are empowered to be partners in nation-building, and every family can enjoy the comfort and security of a decent home.

With this vision, he has been propelled to formulate policies and legislation that address key issues in health, education, employment, and housing. He has also initiated pioneering programs in the 5th District of Quezon City where he was the first, elected congressman.



While many may consider a career in both showbusiness and politics as tough and taxing, he stood out and showed that the two very challenging industries can be married and can bring out the best of an actor and public servant to the fore.

He bagged two Best Actor awards from the Golden Screen Awards and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) Film Awards. He was the principal author of 93 Republic Acts.

He has been recognized as one of the top-ranking congressmen in terms of legislative performance. And his efforts as a public servant were also recognized by socio-civic organizations, having

been given the prestigious honor of one of the Ten Outstanding Young Man of the Philippines.

Alfred is a true blue Atenean, having studied at the Ateneo De Manila University from prep to college. As a grade school student, his talents in music and sports were honed by the Ateneo Boys Choir and Basketball Varsity Team. He also experienced his first election, having won the Sergeant at Arms position in fourth grade. In high school, his leadership skills were further put into practice as the elected president and vice president of his class. In college, he found his passion in theater after joining Tanghalang Ateneo and playing leading roles in Shakespearean plays.

In 2002, Alfred earned his Bachelor's Degree in Management Economics at the Ateneo de Manila University. It is in this same school where Alfred was indoctrinated on how to become a man for others.

Alfred is also an Iskolar ng Bayan, having

received his Master's Degree in Public Administration at the University of the Philippines - National College for Public Administration and Governance.

Raised by a father who was a businessman, Alfredo Vargas Jr., and a mother who was a lawyer and government official, Atty. Susana Dumlao-Vargas, Alfred was brought up in a loving environment where integrity, compassion, and competence were the pillars of building good moral character.

His father, though strict and firm, was an excellent mentor and visionary who inspired Alfred to think beyond himself and contribute meaningfully to society.

His mother was Alfred's role model for integrity, discipline, compassion, and excellence, having served the government for more than 30 years and holding key and sensitive positions in the Office of the President, while maintaining a simple and humble lifestyle.







A devoted father, a loving husband, a multi-awarded actor, an outstanding lawmaker, and a genuine public servant, he is Alfred Vargas. His faith in God is unswerving and he lives by one strong, unchanging principle that service to humanity is the best work of life.

Of his legislative achievements, the closest to Alfred's heart is the passage of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act (RA 11215) into law. His mother succumbed to uterine cancer in 2014 and Alfred bore witness to the hardships his mother and their family had to go through during this painful phase in their lives.

He did not stop his efforts to combat the big C. Prior to its enactment, he filed eleven cancer-related bills meant to address one of the worst diseases that kills Filipinos. He was hands-on, working with the Cancer Society of the Philippines for two years until the cancer bill got the Senate, bicameral and Malacañang's nod.

Alfred's strong and enduring leadership has made relevant reforms in areas of disaster preparedness, education, health, and livelihood.

There is a big expectation on what a true public servant can accomplish to solve the people's

toughest problems. Alfred Vargas has the vision to build a better, beautiful community we all yearn to be part of—one that we can leave to our children with confidence, calm, and peace of mind. His actions as an actor-public servant help us meet life's challenges with confidence.

He embodies the true ideals of a leader. He is a true statesman. And he brings hope that there is someone we can truly rely on, a warrior and defender, an indefatigable ally who will do what is good and what is right, with us and for us, no matter what the circumstances.





# Advocacy *for people empowerment*

**JOJI ILAGAN BIAN** - Business Leader, Educator and  
Trustee - Mindanao Business Council, Philippine Chamber of Commerce Industry,  
Davao City Chamber of Commerce Industry and East ASEAN Business Council & Mindanao Commission of Women



'My life is a tapestry of different weaves and colors symbolizing my diverse experiences as a wife, mother, educator, business leader, and community worker,' she said. Moreover, these experiences gave her a broader perspective and understanding of the complexities of life.

Joji Ilagan has worked tirelessly for over 45 years

on her advocacy for people empowerment through business, education, and skills training. These resulted in providing jobs and investment opportunities.

She has done this not only through her network of schools but also through her engagements and

*She was the youngest-ever recipient of the Datu Bago Award in Business and Education; the highest award given by the City of Davao, Philippines for her contributions to the city's growth and development in business and education.*



affiliations. She has functioned in various capacities in civic, religious, industry, trade, and business organizations, as well as government-created commissions, carrying this advocacy with her. These efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Her entrepreneurial journey in education has consistently inspired many entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams. From a two-classroom school in 1980, she expanded her Joji Ilagan International Schools network to five [5] schools offering early childhood education to baccalaureate degrees.

Joji Ilagan is highly esteemed in the industry and business sectors for her accomplishments. In holding leadership and trustee roles in the Mindanao Business Council, Philippine Chamber of Commerce Industry, Davao City Chamber of Commerce Industry and East ASEAN Business Council, and Mindanao Commission of Women, among others.

Joji Ilagan Bian has a solid track record in community engagement in education, business, politics, civic and religious movements over 45 years. She has received the Patnubay Award in Non- Governmental Organization Work for

Education in recognition of her consistent work providing free skills training and scholarships at the grassroots level.

She was the youngest-ever recipient of the Datu Bago Award in Business and Education; the highest award given by the City of Davao, Philippines for her contributions to the city's growth and development in business and education.

She was also awarded one of the Philippines Best Dressed Women in 2021.



*"I had walked the halls of power and dined with the poorest of the poor, and from these experiences, I became wiser and much better. I pray that I continue to be God's instrument in transforming people's lives."*

Three [3] Philippine Presidents conferred on her the following awards as a recognition for her unselfish services to the country in business and education: The Kabalikat Laang Bisig Presidential National Awardee 1997 for the promotion of Development of Technical Vocational Training in the Philippines and the scholarship programs to out of school youth of the Joji Ilagan Foundation conferred by then President of the Republic of the Philippines, President Joseph Estrada.

Two other Phil Presidents had conferred on her various awards: the Presidential Merit Award for her membership in the 1997 Consultative Commission to review the Philippine Constitution conferred on her by Pres Gloria Macapagal Arroyo; Pres. Fidel Ramos for her immense contribution to the development of Mindanao.







*Awarded as one of the  
Philippines Best Dressed  
Women in 2021.*

She was also awarded in 2017 by the Filipina Women Network as one of the 100 Most Influential Women of the World—the ASEAN Women Network as One of the Most Outstanding Women Entrepreneurs in 2018. The Australian Embassy recognized her as the Most Outstanding Australian Alumni in 2018. She also received recognition as one of the Asian Phil Heroes for 2022.

Her success story was featured in the Go Negosyo book: "55 Inspiring Stories of Women Entrepreneurs". Local, national, and international publications have also given her countless accolades, including Disrupt 2.0 Filipina Leadership Stories published by the Filipina Women's Network USA. Her leadership journey as an entrepreneur, educator, and woman leader was aptly titled "Dreaming Big, Giving the Best". This book was launched via a 'Book Reading' in the House of Lords in the London Parliament.



*Throughout her life, she has consistently broken down barriers for women and all individuals who would otherwise not have the opportunity for personal growth and advancement.*

Joji Ilagan Bian exemplifies what a woman should be in this age of constant flux: a combination of vision, skills, and strength tempered with resilience, tenacity, and genuine care.

She leads a life devoted to developing the potential of young people, molding their minds, and transforming their lives through education. She has worked with Muslim and Christian women, influencing them and instilling in them an entrepreneurial mindset.

As a woman business leader, she has transcended genders and has stood firm in her belief that women leaders are strong, straightforward, and results-oriented.

Throughout her life, she has consistently broken down barriers for women and all individuals who would otherwise not have the opportunity for personal growth and advancement.

Despite her countless achievements and

commendations, her dedication to continuing her advocacy has continued. Her tenacity and entrepreneurial spirit come from a drive to help others, as shown in her continuous involvement in education, tourism, religious affiliations, and business.

Her resume may be comprehensive, and she plays multiple roles, but these come only next to her familial obligations as wife, mother, and grandmother.









# Determination *is the key to Accomplishments*

**MA. LOURDES DE VERA NAVARRO** - CEO at ZC Kings Manpower and Janitorial Services Cooperative,  
ZC Kings International Boxing Promotions & Entertainment Corporation,  
Kings Asia Pacific Consultancy, Navishi Shell Corporation, Rotary Makati EDSA- Life Changing President



*“Cling to your vision, persist in your plans, and never abandon your dreams. With resolute passion and untiring dedication, dreams transformed into reality”.*



It was the turn of a new century, in 1999 to be precise, when Cory embarked on her entrepreneurial journey. Her journey was far from a leisurely stroll. It was riddled with mistakes and was mostly a trial-and-error expedition.

She stood alone, supported solely by her family and her never-say-die spirit. The path was rough and rugged, a long and winding road to her aspirations.

Armed with nothing but determination, unwavering perseverance, and an

unquenchable desire to uplift women in her community, Cory found her guiding lights, propelling her forward.

She participated in the BIMP (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) Trade Fair, where she obtained her first taste of the export business. Her products, borne from the company she established, Camille's Novelty, took center stage. This marked the inception of her transformative journey. As her business gained traction, Cory turned her attention back to her community. She orchestrated the formation of El Sabroso

Multi-Purpose Cooperative, rallying local women in Zamboanga City. Collaborating with the Department of Trade and Industry and other local MSMEs, she bestowed livelihood opportunities upon these women. Amidst these endeavors, her business took off. Making a leap of faith, Cory secured a loan from a bank, pledging her own assets as collateral, to infuse her community with capital for their ventures—ranging from bottled sardines to stuffed toys. The products she championed saw unprecedented success during the Malaysia Trade Fair. That singular step she took in 1999 has propelled Cory to her present stature.



Her message to budding entrepreneurs resonates: “cling to your vision, persist in your plans, and never abandon your dreams. With resolute passion and untiring dedication, dreams transformed into reality”.

Cory stands as a living testament. Cory stands as the Founder of the Kings Group of Companies, with footprints across several industries and entities like Kings Lending Corporation, Kings Manpower, Kings City, Kings Asia Pacific Trading, and Home Culinary and Technical School. In memory of her late husband, she established the Rolando Marquez Navarro Foundation, a pillar for charitable endeavors and advocacies like the Zamboanga Valientes Sports Program – nurturing local basketball and boxing talents, priming them for both domestic and international competitions. Cory's imprints extend to leadership as well.







## *Philippines' Best Dress Award Recipient*

As the Life Changing President of the Rotary Club Makati EDSA, her tenure garnered the highest accolade of 6 stars among 118 Presidents. Her club also achieved the District's second-highest membership count during her stewardship. Notably, Cory sponsored 30 Life Changing Scholars during her presidency. Beyond borders, she organized the Ambassador Club of Melbourne and served as its Charter President. Cory was recognized as one of Manila's Best Dressed. She is also one of the Best Dressed Women of the Philippines.



Cory attributes her achievements to the Almighty, acknowledging the impossibility of her feats without divine guidance. In gratitude, she shares her faith through weekly Bible studies across her multiple organizations and companies. Cory founded the Ambassadors of Christ, extending these studies virtually to participants from the Philippines, Melbourne and Vietnam. In Cory's words, "In giving, we receive abundantly." For Cory, life isn't just a journey; it's a series of purpose. Her legacy forms her destination, a testament to her lasting impact. Beautiful inside and out — an icon in the truest sense.





**AFFILIATIONS-**

1974–Present Philippine National Red Cross, Zamboanga City Chapter (Member)

1980–Present Philippine Nurses Association, Zamboanga City Chapter (Member)

1980–Present Professional Regulation Commission (Registered Nurse)

1982–1991 San Miguel Corporation (Company Nurse)

1990–1993 Fatima Pastoral Council, Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City (Vice President)

1990–Present Bukas Loob sa Dios, Zamboanga City (Member)

2003 Philippine National Red Cross, Zamboanga City Chapter (Chairman)

2011–Present Metro Manila Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Member)

2011–Present Makati Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Vice President)

2012–Present Rotary Club of Makati-EDSA (President Nominee)

2012–Present Rotary Club of Makati-EDSA, Community Service (Chairman)

2012–Present Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Member)

2013 Rotary Makati EDSA (Vice-President)

2014 Inner Wheel Makati-EDSA (President)

2013–2015 Makati Chamber of Commerce (Vice-President)

2013–2015 Inner Wheel Club of Pasay-EDSA (President)

2015–2016 Soroptimist Ayala Alabang (Vice –President)

2017–2018Victoria Chamber of Commerce (Member)

2017–2018 Inner Wheel of Williams Town (Member)

2016 to present Zamboanga Valientes (Founder)

2019 to present The Ambassador Charter Club of Melbourne-Ambassadors of Christ (Founder & President)

2019 to 2021 Providence Church (Member)

2021-2022 Rotary Makati EDSA (Life Changing President)

**AWARDS and RECOGNITIONS**

2003 Certificate of Appreciation, Urban Poor Solidarity Week

2005 14 Top of the Year Award, Zetan Foundation

2005 Certificate of Recognition 30th Anniversary of College of Nursing, Ateneo de Zamboanga University

2005 Excellence Spirit Service, Ateneo de Zamboanga University 25th Jubilee

2008 Reyna Elena de Zamboanga, Zamboanga City

2010 Certificate of Recognition, Ateneo de Zamboanga University College of Nursing

2010 Rotary Club of Zamboanga City West, Zamboanga City

2011 The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, Zamboanga City

2012 Empowered Women of the Philippines 2012

2013 Empowered Women of the Philippines 2013

2013 Manila’s Best-Dressed

2014 Famous Manila’s Best-Dressed

2015 Manila’s Best-Dressed, “Style Ambassadors”

2015 New York Fashion Model, United Nations Week

2015 Nominee, Eminent Personality of the Year, United Nations Fashion Week

2015 Inner Wheel Club of the Philippines National President’s Awardee

- 1st Runner-Up, Best Club IWY 2014–2015
- Promotion & Publicity of the Organization
- Best Club in ECOSOC Projects
- Organizing, Chartering, & Nurturing IWC – Manila Metro
- 2015 Outstanding Leadership Award, Inner Wheel Club of Pasay EDSA
- 2015 Club Service Award, Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines
- 2015 Rookie Club & Club President Award, Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines
- 2015 ECOSOC Economic Development Award, Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines
- 2016 Hall of Fame Award – Manila’s Best Dressed
- 2016 Best Dress Melbourne Cup
- 2016 Best Miss Tiara Award Melbourne
- 2017 Fifteen FAAABVLOUS Women VIII
- 2017 Global Achiever Awardee for Outstanding Businesswoman and Civic Leader
- Dangal ng Bayan Awardee for Outstanding Civic Leader and Family Advocate
- Huwarang Ina Awardee
- 2018 38TH Huwarang Ina Mother’s Day Celebration and Award
- Family Choice Consumers Award
- 2022 Philippines’ Best Dress Award Recipient
- 2023 Philippine Profiles Asia Awardee









# Love & Oneness

**DR. JONATHA “JO” BELCIÑA LEICHER**

“I AM” • Poverty • Power • Universe • God • Love • Empathy • Compassion • Spiritual Awakening & Ascension  
• Quantum Realm & Mechanics • INFJ • Pleiadian Starseed • Quadrivium • 12 Chakras & Merkabah Activation  
• Akasha • Wu Wei • Buddha Awareness • Taoism • DNA G-Quadruplexes Evolution • Primordial Spiral  
• Gamma Brain Waves • Language of Creation • Laws of The Universe • Revelation 1-22 & 7:2  
• Nostradamus Repository C1:Q9 • Enigmatic 137 • Tesla 369.

*In women’s Army Training Corps (ROTC-WATC). She was the only female among the 5-brigadier staff where she led three battalions, six companies, and 18 platoons.*

Dr. Jonatha “Jo” Belciña Leicher, a Filipina, was born in the mystic island of Siquijor, Philippines. She is the 5th among the ten children of Jose Belciña and Victoria Yurong (deceased). Dr. Jo grew up in poverty. At a young age of 12, Dr. Jo served as a children’s mass gospel reader at St. Michael’s Cathedral in Iligan City on Sundays. 1991-1993, Dr. Jo joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps – Women’s Army Training Corps (ROTC-WATC) at the Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology. She was the only female among the 5-brigadier staff, where she led three battalions, six companies, and 18 platoons. In 1992, Dr. Jo functioned as Iligan City’s *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) youth counselor.





While in college, she worked three jobs: as a dishwasher at Enrico's restaurant in Quezon Avenue, as a music moderator at Pagoda karaoke bar in Mercado Street, and as a waitress at *Musikahan* resto-bar in Quezon Avenue extension, Pala-o, earning 30-50 pesos (US \$0.60 - \$1.00) a day. In 1993, her parents lost their house, prompting her to accept a stay-in job as a housemaid to a young couple working at the university's administration department, earning 10 pesos (US \$0.20 cents) daily. At the same time, she was a Tae Kwon Do green-belter martial artist and an active varsity athlete in Track and field and swimming (butterfly stroke), where she reached the nation's highest athletic meet called *Palarong Pambansa*.

However, Dr. Jo had to give up college to be able to help her struggling family. She relocated to Manila and ventured into the entertainment industry, where she worked as a Guest Relations Officer at the top elite clubs, namely Lexus, Pegasus, and Infiniti. She established a catering business handling 30-35 staff and functioned in

various roles. At the same time, inspired by her father's talent, Dr. Jo set up an advertising sign shop business across the town's public market. In 2004, Dr. Jo invested in building a two-story commercial and residential building for her parents in Cangmalalag, Siquijor. Despite being a successful self-made businesswoman, Dr. Jo struggled internally from a deep sense of having a greater spiritual purpose.

In December 2007, Dr. Jo immigrated from the Philippines to Tucson, AZ, to marry her then-fiancé. From 2008-2014, she worked as a server to support herself while going back through college. In July 2010, Dr. Jo gave birth to her first child. Unfortunately, due to irreconcilable differences, she filed for divorce in mid-2013, where she deviated from the US divorce law. She waived all her rights over the community property, 401K, alimony, and child support, demanding only joint physical custody. Finally, in May 2014, Dr. Jo graduated and obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at The University of Arizona.





*Dr. Jo won the election as one of the Board of Directors of the Philippine Nurses Association of Austin, Texas (PNAATX)*



In early 2015, Dr. Jo relocated to Austin, TX, and worked two full-time RN jobs totaling 72 hours/week. She has received numerous recognitions and awards for exceptional provision of patient care. In the Fall of 2016, Dr. Jo pursued a Doctor of Nursing Practice specializing in Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner at the University of Arizona. In July 2017, Dr. Jo remarried and gave birth to her youngest child in May 2018. Unfortunately, in early 2020, the marriage ended due to irreconcilable differences. In November 2021, Dr. Jo was elected as one of the Board of Directors of the Philippine Nurses Association of Austin, Texas (PNAATX), founded in 2019. Finally, in May of 2022, Dr. Jo graduated and obtained the title Doctor of Nursing Practice, where she was honored to sing the American national anthem,

Star Spangled Banner, during the commencement at the University of Arizona.

In July, the Beverly Hills SOCIETY magazine featured Dr. Jo and her life story on its cover. Hundreds of copies were sold and counting! On August 20, 2023, Dr. Jo received the Most Outstanding Healthcare Leader and Advocate 2023 award during the inauguration of the America Excellence Awards held in Hollywood, CA. Among the 150 awardees worldwide, only two were granted to speak. Dr. Jo delivered a powerful speech urging all people to realize their true being and be of service to humanity. She also gained the beauty title Miss Quantum Universe 2023.

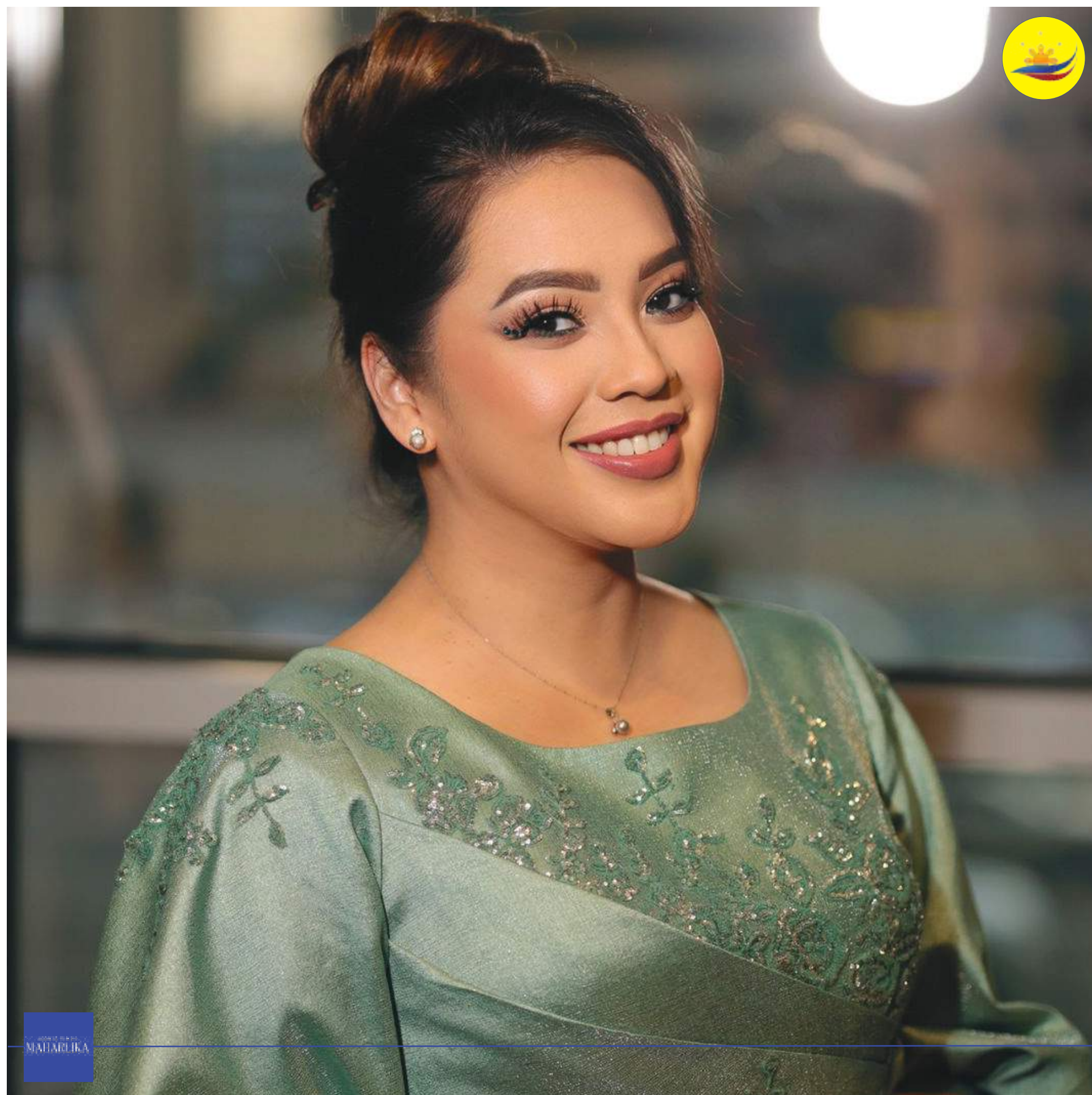


Dr. Jo states, “I have been struggling all my life, looking externally to fill that ‘void’ in me but

failed. The failures and defeats sparked my deep curiosity about the evolution of human life and my spirituality. The unwavering belief, faith, and trust in the Universe have led to my spiritual awakening and, eventually, enlightenment and the discovery of the true essence of my being. All my questions rooted in childhood and even from previous lifetimes were answered. My heart is at peace now. Finally, I have discovered the true purpose of my existence in this world: to advocate for the people suffering from poverty, homelessness, and injustices. I can fulfill my mission by establishing a worldwide philanthropic initiative that I will call – Love and Oneness.”









# A Tale of *Choices and Chances*

**OWEN SP SANCHEZ** - The “Rare Breed”, Public Figure, Media Personality, Seasoned HR Practitioner  
100 Most Influential Filipina Women in the World 2018 and APEC Gold Medalist 2018  
TOP50 Influential Women in Dubai & One of the 24 Most Empowered Women in 2023



Owen SP Sanchez, a luminous vigour emerging from Asian descent, crafts a narrative that echoes with resilience and tenacity, leaving an indelible mark on the tapestry of success.

She tells a tale of a Multi-Awarded Woman who came from a country

where education system is deemed to be only third-rate and not accepted globally. Owen takes us through her life choices and chances, how she found her niche, rose above judgements and emerged as a woman of purpose, passion, and productivity.



A woman who has never been typical, she graduated holding a Latin Honor – “Cum Laude” with a degree of Tourism & Travel Management from University of Santo Tomas, in the Philippines, graduated "Magna Cum Laude" whilst taking her MBA in HR Management from Orlando University, specialized and received her distinction as Departmental Honors in HR Organization Development at Stanford University, USA.

Owen's intellectual prowess only surpassed by her unwavering determination, yet in Dubai this dedicated woman has chosen to carve a name and continuously make an impact in the Corporate World of Business & Human Resource, Broadcast and Media industries. What chances made her shift, and why is she in this Iconic Book alongside other global Filipina

visionary women from across the continents? Every girl has always dreamed of living her own story of “Once Upon a Time”, and she was no exemption. She’s always imagined that life is always about glitters and sparks, of bed of roses and cloud nine. Just like the fairy tales she used to love and dreamed of since she was six, she thought she was really meant to live only in perfection and pure bliss—she had seemingly reached the pinnacle of her career from her top management position in most of MNCs and Fortune 500 companies as early as she reached thirty, to a beautiful family life, two precious boys, wonderful ancestry in her home-country, a supportive mentor, and a blessed life abroad.

There’s nothing she could ask for that mirrored her childhood dreams, really. She was no ordinary girl as she came from a prominent

family in Manila who raised her to always be the kind of daughter who they can be proud of. If she could remember the first definition of wealth and success in life, she first learned it from her family. Growing up, learning that the environment she was living in was very active and far different from the ordinary, she felt privileged, yet at the same time, pressured.

Though it was all clear to her that she grew up in an unusual family set-up, it bore to her that she was trained to be an achiever, she has always been. The rigid trainings she had inside the walls of their home had transpired inside the halls of the academe, making her a consistent A+ student and a young active organization officer and a beauty pageant title holder. “I am made for these”, as what she’d always say to herself.





She continued to strive for excellence in and out of the classroom, from academics to social activities. Nevertheless, in an era marked by the relentless pursuit of gender equality and the ascendancy of women in the corporate world and the realm of HR abroad, few professionals exhibit the depth of expertise and unwavering commitment that she possesses, stands as a shining example of triumph over challenges.

Her illustrious journey from Manila to the pinnacles of the business realm is a testament to the power of determination, hard work, and unwavering passion for success. In the corporate arena, she traversed a trajectory. Her fruitful career journey in the Middle East began

in Dubai when she joined, moved and had started to work in Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority joining McDermott International the most dreamt Oil and Gas Company to work with. Then she was pirated to join Abbott, a renowned American multinational pharmaceutical, medical devices and healthcare company. Where her career and versatility of know-how have been tested. From Executive Administration and Marketing, pivoting to Human Resources, whilst juggling a role in Regional Financial Planning and Analysis.

Owen quickly established herself as a dynamic force. During her tenure in Abbott, she had the privilege of being mentored by the late Francois Viljoen, a former HR Director, who became her inspiration. This mentorship set her on a path of excellence and dedication in HR Management that she continues to exemplify.

Owen's journey of accomplishment also led her and imprinting her legacy to International SOS, a Medievac, an Air Ambulance & Medical Services company, where she served as the HR and Administration Manager, built the entire core from scratch till expansion and stayed for more than 7 years. Following this, she orchestrated transformative HR initiatives as she assumed the role of HR Organizational

Development Head at SDV – Bolloré Logistics in Dubai, an Emirates Group, an armed aerospace logistics for Airbus, showcasing more her prowess in steering organizational growth. Owen's influence extends beyond boardrooms, her versatility is further evidenced by her roles as the Vice President for Broadcast Media & Communication, VP for Corporate Business Development & Client Relations, while being the VP for HR Administration & Operation. These roles illuminate her ability to navigate complex responsibilities with finesse and dedication, yet continue to impact diverse audiences. However, her achievements extend far beyond the confines of HR.



A distinguished public figure and multi-awarded media personality, she is a true luminary and has earned an indomitable reputation for her contributions to broadcast media and communication. With accolades such as being recognized as one of the "100 Most Influential Filipina Women in the World 2018" and the APEC Gold Medallist, her impact on various fields is undeniable. Owen's list of awards is as remarkable as it is extensive. From earning her initial year in Media, she was immediately crowned as the "Best Media Personality of the Year" in 2022, followed by the "Outstanding Woman in the Field of Broadcast Media" title. Her recognition spans continents and industries, and mid 2023 the Philippines' Golden Eagle Awards accorded her as the "Philippines' Multifaceted Empowered Women & Outstanding Media Personality of the Year". Now, acknowledged as the "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika" Brand Ambassador of this Global Filipino Achiever's Book and much more.

"When one opportunity knocks, do not ignore it, go for it!"

Her media features in different contents, and being branded as the "RARE Breed" by Tatak Pinoy. She was featured in Illustrado Magazine

in 2014; in Dubai Vibes Magazine, as one of the 24 Most Empowered Women in 2023, and the recent, as one of the TOP50 Influential Women in Dubai by Womenpreneur Magazine, these showcases her commitment to sharing knowledge and inspiring others.

Owen SP Sanchez, as a brand name, influence extends globally, with affiliations that include the KM Universe Pageant Advisory Board, I-Glow Influencer's Empire, ER Luxury Collections, Ixxia Jewellery and Alish Apparels by Danube Brand Ambassadors. Her capacity for leadership and her ability to inspire has led to appoint her as one of the four (4) Jury of the UAE's Got Talent 2022 and continues their Season 4 for this year; she became Pageant's Brand Ambassadors for Miss/Mrs International Woman of Substance and for Mrs Lady of the Year Middle East.

*"Woman, you have to pursue what you really like. You have to be firm in the things that you plan for yourself. You have to move from that FEAR in your HEART!!!"*







Owen's journey becomes a testament to triumph over challenges and a clarion call for empowerment.

“Woman, you have to pursue what you really like. You have to be firm in the things that you plan for yourself. You have to move from that FEAR in your HEART!!!”

In a world hungry for inspiration, Owen SP Sanchez's narrative stands tall, beckoning aspiring achievers worldwide to embrace challenges, conquer milestones, and contribute to the symphony of empowerment and diversity. Her journey story offers valuable lessons for aspiring achievers. Her unyielding

pursuit of knowledge, willingness to embrace challenges, dedication to mentorship, and advocacy for change stand as pillars of her success.

By emulating her dedication and embodying her values, anyone can chart a path toward their own story of achievement and contribute to the advancement of women in the professional sphere.

With all her achievements in life, one thing remains in her: All the adversities, all the failures, all the crashes, and injuries and wounded hearts were far beyond worth it. They were all opportunities, as if divine

storms, which led her to LOVE life even more. Challenges, she realized, create meaningful colours in our lives, because it would be oddly boring if we never have to strive or struggle.

Hitting rock bottom makes us become a fighter, a warrior—and that’s who she is now, will you can be, too. If we want to be significant in this world, we cannot be ordinary. If we want to make a difference, we cannot always stay in the safe harbour.

For someone who is such a lover of life, all she wants to continue doing right now is two things: being able to give back and use whatever resources she has to help other people.





# Building Beyond *a Green Future*

JENNY LIN MAAÑO - NGAI - Co-Founder & President, SUNSMART Solar Power Technology Inc.



SunSmart, Asia's leading renewable smart solar energy pioneer, continue to empower underprivileged communities across the Philippines by providing immediate access of clean energy, potable water, cold storage, communication and connectivity through its decentralized micro-utility mother station approach bridging the gap between energy and the environment as an an integrated and hybrid utility

solutions for all. The company has dedicated its mission to make "Living Off the Grid Possible" serving the current unserved, underserved or namely the G.I.D.A.S. Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Areas no matter how near or far. Thus, keeping with SunSmart's E.L.E.M.E.N.T.S. of advocacy: "Elevating Livelihood, Empowering Mankind, Engaging Nature Towards Sustainability."



“Today, 16 million Filipinos are living without access to electricity. And this should not be the case, given that we have the resources and latest innovations at hand to help them. SUNSMART aims to provide power to the unserved and underserved areas and make life sustainable, resilient and economically viable for 16 million of our fellow men,” says Jenny Lin Maaño - Ngai, President & Co – Founder of SUNSMART Solar Power Technology Inc.

SUNSMART service a broad range of clients, ranging from township residences, commercial, industrial, right up to participating with rural electrification development and partnerships with Local Government Units.

The company have achieved the many firsts in their industry, including being the first to introduce integrated solar power energy, being

the first and only Solar Hybrid readily integrated with smart Artificial Intelligence of Things (AIoT) features, and the very first to viably prove in ASIA through its recent win and esteemed recognition from ACES Asia Corporate Excellence Sustainability award, that to live off the grid is POSSIBLE.

SunSmart believes that their expanding commercial operations will prove that the use of not just solar power, but innovative solar power systems and solutions, are the way forward. Not counting having a main niche as a Direct to Manufacturer & independent R&D platform, the company is the very first to introduce and establish a Distributorship model in Solar Energy industry due to the mobility, multifunctional and ease of use of their solar power systems. With a clever modality, the company was able to timely

expand its Sales & Marketing teams and Technical & Engineering expertise in various regions, creating a stronger impact of providing innovation knowhow, environmental awareness and significantly sustainable “livelihood” by training the local people at site and hiring them as the first priority of the growing, advance and skilled team forces of SUNSMART.

Through SUNSMART business model and values, the company continue to gain recognitions and accolades to many of the communities they have served. Its inspiring accomplishments is led by no other than its President & Co-Founder, Miss Jenny Lin Maaño - Ngai, who strengthened the company’s mission with her Four (4) Pillars to success; that is to serve with a heart for People, Planet, Progress and PURPOSE.



April 10, 2019 Miss Jenny Lin Granados Maaño-Ngai is one of the very first Filipina in green energy field who landed in the high profile People Asia Magazine as Faces in the Crowd “Running and Ruling Woman entrepreneur to inspire today”

On April 12, 2020, Miss Jenny was featured by The Manila Times “Keep in View” as WOMAN POWER PLAYER bravely energizing the remote areas determined to bring solar energy to the 16 million Filipinos who remain unserved and underserved.

On the same year of June 30, 2020, she remarkably received a one in a decade honorary award from Philippines Forbes Business Society as the youngest “Jose Rizal Pamana Awardee” Most Inspirational Business Entrepreneur Leader.

In early January of 2021, despite the challenges faced in Covid19 Pandemic, Miss Jenny bearing the flag of the Philippines with her company SUNSMART won the global arena of ACES - Asia Corporate Excellence Sustainability in Malaysia as ACES Most Promising SME and Asia Corporate Excellence Sustainability Business Leader.

On January 14, 2022 Miss Jenny was one of the privileged chosen few key inspirational woman speakers from the Philippines for (WHD) World

Humanitarian Drive in London, UK combatting adversity against the uprising and vast effects of Climate Change. She received and is currently listed by WHD-World Humanitarian Drive Founder, Chairman & CEO Dr. Abdul Basil Syed Frsa as an “INSPIRING MILLIONS AWARDEE” along with prominent names of high profile corporations, business leaders and renowned personalities all over the world such as James Bond Girl Rachel Grant and famed author and award winning story writer Tony Cranston from UK among all others.

At her own initiative of CSR works and unconditional support of creating livelihood programs during an employment halt from the pandemic to the LGBTQ communities and Filipino Fashion Designers of the Philippines , last July 12, 2022 independence day celebration, Miss Jenny was named by the reputable organizations together with Crowne Plaza Galleria as “Philippines PRIDE Most Quintessential Woman”.

On December 3, 2022, with lengthy humbled accomplishments Miss Jenny have garnered beyond her solar business, Philippine Best Brand Management Committee composed of media, key influencers, political leaders and celebrities has awarded Miss Jenny as Philippines BEST FACE OF SUCCESS 2023. Among the awardees also includes Mercedes Benz and The Manila Times.







# Inspiring the women *by creating path*

**MYRNA TANG YAO** - President & CEO, Richprime Global Inc, Richwell Trading Corporation



Ms. Myrna T. Yao is a graduate of Business Administration in the University of the East. She finished her Master's Degree in Business Administration in the same university. She is a proud mother of 4 daughters and grandmother of 9 grandchildren.

Women in business are not a rarity; entrepreneurship has allowed many to run successful businesses. But breaking the glass ceiling for women in business can inspire women who choose business as a career to aim high or higher.

*She is a recipient of many local and international awards  
including 2021 BPW International Excellence Business Leader Award*



The story of Richwell Trading Corporation, the leading distributor of children's toys and shoes and baby products, and one of the brains behind its success, exemplifies the possibility of a woman taking on a big project and exhibiting exemplary leadership in its success. Gender is not an issue if women handle themselves professionally and competently in any undertaking, earning the respect and confidence of the people they work with. Richwell's ascendancy in the business community in the early 80's began with the tenacity of a forward-looking woman who co-founded the company and who raised its standards so that it becomes at par with its peers worldwide.

Despite the instability of the local political and economic conditions, Richwell successfully maintains the marketability of its products. Because of its track record in creating a market for

its existing brands like Barbie, Richwell continues to acquire new brands for exclusive distribution in the country. Given its ability to set right pricing for good quality shoes, Richwell currently holds one of the biggest share in infant and children's branded shoes in the Philippines. Toys and Children Wear.

As the President and Chief Executive Officer of Richprime Global Inc, Richwell Trading Corporation and other companies. Ms. Yao's passion or success is the result of hard work, perseverance, determination and a focused mind – knowing where she wants to be, what she wants to happen for the company, how she would like to see Richwell and RGI Group of Companies grow and progress in the future.

Despite having reached the peak of her professional life, Myrna could not find enough

fulfillment so she started pursuing what she has always dreamt of, to go into socio-civic work to be able to help more people, especially those not privileged enough to have the proper education to be employed or venture into business.







Mrs. Myrna T. Yao was appointed Chairperson of the National Commission on the Role of the Filipino Women (NCRFW), now known as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from 2004 until 2010. PCW is the government's advisory body on policies and programs for the advancement of women. Before being appointed Chairperson, she served as a Commissioner of NCRFW, she championed the passing of the Magna Carta Law of Women into law during the Presidency of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and the visionary and implementor of the Great Women Project during her term as Chairperson of Philippine Commission of Women, representing the National Council of Women of the Philippines from 2000 to 2004.

She now serves as the Founding Chairperson of the Philippine Federation of Local Councils of Women. She is also the Founder and President of the Filipino-Chinese Federation of Business and

Professional Women of the Philippines since 1999. She is likewise involved in the movement that assists children through the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, Philippines, and now the Chairman Emeritus, where she has the distinction of being the Charter President and the Founder.

She is a recipient of many local and international awards including 2021 BPW International Excellence Business Leader Award; 2020 Global Woman Honorary Awards by Global Woman Club; 2020 People of the Year Awardee by People Asia; 2019 ASIA CEO Awardee for Regus Entrepreneur of the Year and InLife SHERO of the Year Circle of Excellence Awards; Asia Leader's Awards 2019 Woman of the Year; 2016 BizNews Asia Awardee for Entrepreneurship Award; 2015 & 2016 Most Influential Filipina Women in the World; 2013 International Women Entrepreneurial Challenge Awards held in Lima, Peru; International Entrepreneur Award held in Cairo, Egypt awarded by the Global Summit of Women

of Washington D. C. and Gold Prize Award for Women's World Excellence Award held in Beijing. She was also granted the Presidential Merit Award by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for her success in the field of entrepreneurship in the local and international level. She was awarded in 2015 as the 100 Most Influential Women in the World. In 2015, she launched her book entitled "The Gift of A Dream" The Great Women Project which Vision and Conceptualization, started from her. In 2023, she completed her Doctorate Degree at De La Salle University for PhD in Criminology and Philosophy.









# Rewards for *outstanding achievements*

**MARIA MONTSERRAT ITURRALDE-HAMLIN "MONETTE"**  
President and Founder, TeamAsia

*Monette is passionate about her advocacies on women's economic empowerment  
and gender equality, sustainability and green events*



Maria Montserrat Iturralde-Hamlin (Monette for short) is the founder and president of 31-year-old TeamAsia, an award-winning integrated marketing communications firm that brings brands to the next level experience through integrated marketing, events, PR, creative and digital services ([www.teamasia.com](http://www.teamasia.com)).



Monette concurrently serves as chairperson of Hopkins International Partners, Inc.; president of the Government-Academe-Industry Network (GAIN), and Vice President for Conventions of the Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers (PACEOS). She recently ended her two-year term as chairperson of the Women's Business Council of the Philippines (WomenBizPH) and now serves as a trustee.

She served on the Tourism Promotions Board as director representing the Meeting, Incentives Travel, Conventions, and Exhibitions, Events

Services and Facilities Sector for three years. She also heads the Sub-Working Group for Human Resources of the Philippine M.I.C.E Roadmap 2030. A founder of the Philippine MICE Academy, she regularly delivers lectures on event management.

A sought-after speaker, moderator, trainer, business consultant and author, Monette has been recognized by LinkedIn in 2021 and 2023 as one of Top 100 Most Influential Filipino Women. She also received the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network's 2018 Outstanding Women Entrepreneur; Philippines Women Leadership Awards 2018, IABC 2016 CEO Excel Award, and 2014 Ten Outstanding Alumnae of the College of the Holy Spirit. She has represented the country in various fora of APEC, ASEAN, AWEN and Asian/Spanish Network of Women. She was conferred the Global Woman Leadership Award at the Global Woman Summit in the UK in June 2022.

Aside from numerous magazine articles, editorials, book reviews, case notes and management cases, Monette has co-authored *Professional Event Management: A Guide to Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions and Events*, and is chapter lead on *Communications with a Gender Lens* for *I am Woman*. She has her own column entitled *Monette's Musings* at [www.theredcircle.com](http://www.theredcircle.com).

Monette is passionate about her advocacies on women's economic empowerment and gender equality, sustainability and green events, inclusiveness, communications, corporate social responsibility, education, and global competitiveness of human talent.

She leads her 31-year-old award-winning integrated marketing experience agency TeamAsia in creating social change through nation-building efforts. She pushed TeamAsia to sign up for the United Nations Women Empowerment Principles to keep track of its gender equality and women empowerment initiatives. TeamAsia was recently recognized by UN Women Philippines as the SME Champion for Gender-Inclusive Workplace. Moreover, she helped build TeamAsia's own annual event "MommaCon" starting 2020, providing a safe space for mothers to discuss taboo issues on motherhood.







To shed light on the issue of unpaid labor for women Monette wrote, “What is a Woman’s Worth” in her column on The Red Circle, which was then picked up by local dailies and shared by the UN Women Regional network. She set up My Dream In a Shoebox (MDIAS), TeamAsia’s annual education campaign that provides children with their educational needs. Now in its 15th year, MDIAS raises funds to build e-hubs and sponsor scholars so that children may continue learning amid the pandemic. Since 2009, MDIAS has distributed over 421,219 school kits, provided for 497 scholars and raised over USD100,000 to support its beneficiaries nationwide.

Monette advocates for economically empowering women through organizations like Women’s Business Council Philippines, Inc. (WomenBizPH) to help people understand women empowerment and gender equality. She



led the organization of a series of womenars (women seminars) to help companies better understand women empowerment and gender equality. The lessons from the sessions were collated into an e-Book, I am Woman, serving as a guide for women leaders.

Monette also promotes the country’s tourism and the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions industry with the Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Inc. (PACEOS) and enables the global competitiveness of Filipinos through the Government Academe Industry Network Inc. (GAIN). Monette is an active lifetime member of Global Woman Club Manila.

She completed AB Psychology at College of the Holy Spirit, graduating Summa Cum Laude; Master in Business Management (MBM) with Distinction at the Asian Institute of Management;



and is a Fellow of the Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD). She heads the Board Diversity and Inclusion Committee at ICD.

A widow, she is mother to three wonderful children: Bea, Cara and Niccolo. She loves to experiment in the kitchen and posts her creations on social media using #casadeduckies.









# Community leader *resolve social issues*

LEONOR S VINTERVOLL- CEO & Co-founder, European -Philippine Advocates



Leonor Vintervoll migrated to Norway in mid-1981 when she was given a job training program at the head office of Norconsult A.S, Philippines, where she worked for seven years. Born in the Philippines,

she was destined to work and live in Norway by having met her Norwegian husband Aage during this assignment, who respects and supports her advocacies.



They are gifted with a son, Rayner! Leonor has a track record of 30 years as community leader despite her full-time job as entrepreneur, advocating causes that resolve social issues or a frontline fundraiser for the education of the underprivileged children in the Philippines, or



help disaster-stricken villages struck by natural disasters. Her track record of community service is long and meaningful. Leonor founded the Philippine Women's Organization in Norway in 1990, a non-profit/charity foundation focused on women empowerment, equal rights and welfare for women, youth and children.

Her position paper resulted to the lifting of the ban on the deployment of Au Pairs in Norway and the whole Europe, of which to date, thousands of Filipino youths are benefitting from this youth program.

In closed cooperation with three Ambassadors based in Sweden, Philippines, Leonor served three Philippine Ambassadors as the contact person of the Filipinos in Norway until the establishment of a Philippine Embassy in Oslo in 2007. She was the Chair/Coordinator of the Filipino Community in Norway for six years. As



Behind the Scenes leader, she was always ready to help whether it was a Filipino with a problem in Norway or a disaster fund-raising for the Philippines. Appointed by the Norwegian government in 2000, her experience as a Lay Judge for 16 years in the City Court of Oslo and Borgarting Lagmannsrett (Court of Appeal) was a great influence of her life and leadership, and a significant factor in her successful leadership in the community.

Leonor, a multi-awarded woman, her dedication to community service was recognized when she was awarded one of the FWNIOO Most Influential Filipina Women in the World in 2015, 2017 and 2022 by the Filipina Women's Network based in San Francisco, USA. Awardees are inspirations for the empowerment of the next generation of women leaders. Leonor serves as a Board Director and Vice President for Membership (2017-2023).





She also received a Certificate of Recognition for her role as Ambassador for Peace from the Presidential Peace Adviser of the Office of President of the Philippines. In Europe, she led as a Chairperson of ENFID-European Network of Filipino Diaspora, with 17 country members (2016-2022).

Giving a poor child the hope and the chance to change her/his life through education is closest to her heart, thus sponsoring ten poor children's education under the care of the World Vision Philippines is just one of her initiatives in the Philippines! Believing in empowering women, she is working towards building a small

"Women's Center" in her hometown, where women who have not reached higher education are taught crocheting, sewing, cooking, and other means of livelihood.

Leonor is a Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of EPA – EUROPEAN-PHILIPPINE ADVOCATES. EPA focuses on giving back to our Motherland, the Philippines and helping out Filipinos in need in Europe. The Group recently donated four classrooms (two one-story duplex building)! These buildings contribute in lessening the Government's lack of school classrooms: Umingan National High School, Pangasinan, and San Isidro Elementary School,

Sulat, Eastern Samar. EPA is again donating a MULTI-PURPOSE Duplex Building.

Awards:

*FWN100 Most Influential Filipina Women in the World 2015*

*FWN100 Keepers of the Flame 2017*

*FWN100 Keepers of the Flame 2022*

*Certificate of Recognition as Ambassador for Peace by the Presidential Adviser of the Office of the President of the Philippines 2018*

*Received a Plaque of Recognition from the Department of Education, Region 1 Schools Division Office II of Pangasinan 2023*





COURAGE • INTEGRITY • LOYALTY



M A R A N G A L

# “Making a difference is being noble,”

*The making of the First Philippine National Police General from the Zamboanga Peninsula.*

Elbon started out a people person and was forged into a proud soldier. For all the years that he was active in public service, country always came first.

No wonder he always went for 1st, graduating No.1 in athletics. He received the Athletic Saber or Baguio City Mayor Award. He had a record for receiving Major A in basketball, volleyball, boxing, baseball, badminton, tennis as well as Major A with 3 stars for track and field.

As an officer, he always preferred to be on the field. His first assignment was in Jolo, Sulu, then the urban jungles of Manila. He has travelled through the mountains of Ilocos and Ifugao, the plains of Central Luzon, the shores of Zamboanga, before turning to the last chapter of his career on the rolling plains and hills of CALABARZON. His accomplishments, too numerous to be mentioned here, would seem like scenes from a familiar motion picture.

His parents, Prospero Sr. and Antonina, lived to their 90s to see their little boy become the first PNP general of the Zamboanga Peninsula when he was promoted in March 2002.



**Retired Police Brigadier General Prospero "Elbon" Cornelia Noble Jr.**  
Born on September 25, 1950  
Graduated PMA Class of 1974  
Athletic Saber recipient  
(Baguio City Mayor Award)



PMA Ring Hop, 1974



PMA roommates, 1973



Commanding Officer, Nueva Ecija, 1980



US Army Infantry School,  
Fort Benning Georgia, 1985



Tired Pass Patrol, 1996



Regional Director,  
Zamboanga Peninsula (PRO9) 2005



Regional Director, CALABARZON (PRO4A) 2006





*Noble family at Lilo, Zamboanga, 1960's*



*Wedding, January 12, 1974*



*The General's daughters, 2002*



*Negros Oriental High School, Dumaguete City, Homecoming 2003*



*Mother Antonina's birthday, 2010*



*Grandchildren, 2016*



*Disneyland, 2018*



*Holy Land Pilgrimage with Mistahs, 2018*



*Japan winter trip, 2020*



*Three generations of Prospero, 2022*

## *Athletic Activities*



*Jogging with DND Sec. Fidel V. Ramos, 1989*



*His beloved sport of tennis, 1980*



*PNP's Basketball superstar, 1982*



*Track and field trophy, 1983*



*Retirement sport of golf, 2020*

## *Elbon, always marching on.*

A man of humble beginnings, Elbon remained a 'probinsyano' at heart and has never forgotten the value of hard work, perseverance, equality and self-discipline.

He expresses his love for humanity and his zest for life with each passing day. Aside from being a soldier, he is a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a friend, a star athlete and a whole lot more. For those who have experienced having him in their lives, their hearts embrace the spontaneity and joy of his spirit.

He is a very natural, almost uninhibited person who expresses himself with engaging frankness. A man of many achievements who never misses out on a good joke or prank and is the proverbial life of the party.

Through all these years, he has lived his life with the fervent hope that he leaves each destination a lot better off after he first set foot on it. A man noble in name and orientation, he is ever moving forward, marching to the beat of his personal mantra of "Making a Difference".



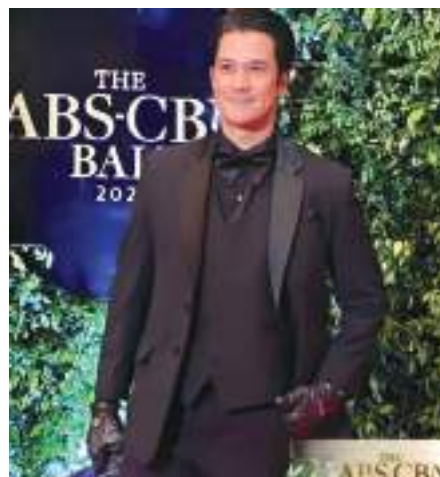




# Actions *of versatility*

**DIETHER PASCUAL OCAMPO** - Artist, Coast Guard Auxiliary Officer, and Philanthropist

*“Believes in improving quality of life by giving back to society”*



Diether Ocampo is a celebrated actor, philanthropist, and Captain of the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (PCGA). He was born on the 19th of July, 1973 in Bacoor, Cavite, and is of German, Chinese, and Spanish descent. He undertook his primary and secondary school education in Cavite, then earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree at De La Salle University, Dasmariñas.

During a talent search that ran between 1995 and 1996, ABS-CBN identified him as a potential candidate for an actor's role. A year later, he joined the Star Circle Batch II. During the same period, he was the vocalist of a pop-rock band.

In 1997, he made his acting debut in a movie called Calvento Files: The Movie. Diether holds the record for starring in the most TV series in the Philippines, being featured in 13 television serials. Some of his most famous roles were in La Vida Rosa (2001), Wherever You Are (2005), and Apoy sa Dagat (2013). He has appeared in several commercials and also starred in an anti-zoo ad for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

In addition to acting, Diether was also the executive producer of the band The Pin-Ups,

which was signed under an American label. He also served as an executive producer of Tandem Entertainment.

A steadfast patriot, Diether joined the PCGA in 2014, and completed his maritime training in 2019 at the Philippine Center for Advanced Maritime Simulation and Training (PHILCAMSAT) through the Philippine Transmarine Carriers, Inc. (PTC). He currently serves as the Deputy Director for External and International Affairs of the PCGA National Auxiliary Main Office (PCGA NAMO) and concurrent Deputy Chief of Staff for Maritime Community Relations (COMREL) – CGAD NCR-CL.

Since 2014, Diether has served as special staff and aide-de-camp to the foreign diplomatic corps, including the ambassadors of the United

States of America, Canada, Germany, Israel, Vietnam, Singapore, Spain, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. He is an honorary member of the Naval Special Operations Command (NAVSOCOM) Class of '85, Coast Guard Special Operation Force (CGSOF), and Coast Guard Air Force (CGAF). He actively participates in Defense Cooperation Initiative Programs with foreign diplomatic attachés and also is an honorary member of the Foreign Armed Forces Attachés.

Diether also served as Investment Promotions Ambassador for the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), Ambassador of Goodwill of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and HERO Foundation Ambassador, in which capacity he helped organize events to raise funds for the families of fallen soldiers.



WHAT IS THE PCGA, AND WHAT IS CAPTAIN OCAMPO'S ROLE?

*The PCGA is a non-government, non-partisan civilian volunteer organization that supports the Navy and Coast Guard. As a member of the PCGA, Diether is dedicated to carrying out the PCG's mission of promoting safety of lives and property at sea, protecting the marine environment, and conducting humanitarian missions and disaster response.*





Coming from humble beginnings, Diether is a man with a big heart whose passion for helping the less fortunate is far-reaching. He is a charter member and co-founder of the Rotary Club of Makati Circle of Friends (RCMCoF), and currently serves as Project Chair for numerous programs such as the Iron Circle Bloodletting Program and the Tunay na Iskolar ng Bayan Program—a program that seeks to provide 1,000 scholarship grants to orphans of fallen soldiers and dependents of eligible Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard, and Philippine National Police personnel.

He is also the co-founder of a non-profit, non-partisan organization called Kabataang Inyong Dapat Suportahan (KIDS) Foundation, established in 2008, which delivers medical and academic support to less-privileged children in remote and conflict-stricken areas of the Philippines.

Related to his PCGA commitments, another of his primary advocacies is to uplift and improve the entire marine ecosystem—especially the quality of life of fisherfolk communities—by promoting proper training and more responsible fishing practices, as well as creating

awareness of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

The multi-faceted Diether is also a private pilot, competitive polo player, avid golfer, certified advanced open-water diver, and spearfishing pesca-sub diver. He is a dedicated father to his son Dream, and actively supports his academic career.

Diether's central ethos is to value the family, and to be a loving father, a responsible son, a faithful brother, and an honorable patriot.







# Sustainable Future

## *“A Vision for tomorrow”*

**BRIAN POE LLAMANZARES** - Chief of Staff for Senator,  
Chairman of the FPJ /Member of the Blockchain Council



*An author of "A Sustainable Future," a book that aims to help Filipinos plan for the battle against climate change. author of "A Sustainable Future," a book that aims to help Filipinos plan for the battle against climate change.*

Brian Poe Llamanzares is a multi-faceted individual with a Master's Degree in Climate and Society from Columbia University and Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Perpetual Help. He has a diverse range of educational experiences, having completed programs at prestigious institutions

such as Wharton, Stanford, MIT, and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He also took part in the Conference Diplomacy and Multilateral Negotiations Program at the United Nations in Geneva, further expanding his knowledge and expertise in international relations and diplomacy.



Brian is a leading figure in technology and innovation, known for his entrepreneurial spirit and contributions to the industry. He is a member of the Blockchain Council of the Philippines, working towards making the Philippines a leader in blockchain technology. He is the founder and CEO of Time Master Watches, a Filipino lifestyle brand that offers quality timepieces, and co-founder of Unit256, an art tech enterprise that aims to make Philippine Arts accessible and aid in art preservation. He is also lead investor in A3 Group of Companies, founder of Oracle Media Group, and CEO of A-Team 360 Reputation Management Services.

Currently, Brian serves as the Chief of Staff for Senator Grace Poe and is Chairman of the FPJ Panday Bayanihan Foundation, which is dedicated to serving the Filipino community in times of crisis. He is also the author of "A Sustainable Future," a book that aims to help Filipinos plan for the battle against climate change.

His passion for sports is also evident as he joined the 2022 SEA OIL Radical Challenge Philippines, racing for Porsche Design and Team PartsPro, and was awarded "Rookie of the Year." Throughout his career, Brian has been recognized for his leadership and contributions in entrepreneurship, public service, and innovation, including being named one of Lifestyle Asia's Power Millennial Award winners

for Entrepreneurship in 2018, being recognized as one of People Asia Magazine's "Men Who Matter" in 2020, and being named as a "People to Watch" for 2023 by Rising Tigers Asia Magazine. He also invested in Mind You Mental Health Systems, promoting mental well-being for the community. He is also involved in WOOP, a platform that helps financially-challenged students apply for and look for scholarships. He believes that this platform can bridge the gap between donors and students in need by providing a secure platform for scholarships from the private sector.





*He is a true example of how one person can make a difference, and how one's passion, dedication and hard work can lead to a successful and impactful career.*

In summary, Brian Poe Llamanzares is a highly accomplished and well-rounded individual who has dedicated his life to making a positive impact in various fields. He is a leader in technology and innovation, an advocate for education and community service, and a passionate individual who is committed to the betterment of his country. His involvement in various initiatives and recognition for his contributions demonstrate his unwavering dedication to the Philippines and its people. He serves as an inspiration for the youth and for those who aspire to make a difference in their communities and the world.



He is a true example of how one person can make a difference, and how one's passion, dedication, and hard work can lead to a successful and impactful career. His recognition by Rising Tigers Asia Magazine as a "People to Watch" for 2023 is only a testament to his potential as a leader.









# Crafting a Masterpiece of *Resilience and Empowerment*

**MYRNA TAM NATIVIDAD -**

Author, Speaker, Certified Go Negosyo Level 1, 2, and 3 Business Mentor, Certified Neuro-Transformational Coach



*Her mission is to share the lessons she's learned, making it easier and quicker for fellow Filipinos to start and grow their businesses.*

In the grand tapestry of life, each wrinkle etched upon our faces tells a unique story, a testament to the beauty of our journey. Self-love serves as the vibrant palette, infusing our years with authenticity and vitality. It is in embracing both the aging process and self-affection that we create a timeless masterpiece of enduring beauty - our very own work of art.

Myrna Tam Natividad, lovingly known as Mommy N, stands as a living testament to the idea that learning knows no age boundaries.

Her remarkable life journey is a testament to her unwavering determination, resilience, and the unquenchable thirst for knowledge, proving that life's lessons are a continuous process, regardless of age.



Growing up, Mommy N witnessed her parents' struggles as former teachers turned business owners, grappling with repeated setbacks in various entrepreneurial ventures. As the eldest of four siblings, she experienced the disparity of not enjoying the same material comforts as her classmates. Despite her parents' challenges, she initially disfavored entrepreneurship due to their experiences. Her dream was to become a teacher, a path that held immense joy for her, especially when sharing knowledge with her most dedicated listener, her father.

At the young age of 21, she began her career as a college Math instructor. By 24, she had married her high school sweetheart and welcomed their first child. Life was comfortable until her husband unexpectedly lost his job, leaving them solely reliant on her teaching income. Faced with financial difficulties, she felt compelled to start a "side hustle."

With limited capital, Mommy N approached

her relatives and former classmates, proposing consignment deals for their goods. She compensated for her lack of funds with unyielding determination and perseverance. Listening keenly to customers' needs, she offered an array of products, from rice and eggs to small appliances. An unexpected order for jewelry marked a turning point in her life, leading her to specialize in fine jewelry.

Her journey into the jewelry business may have been providential, given her maternal grandfather's background as a jewelry maker and her grandmother's history of selling his creations. As her income from the business began to surpass her teaching salary, she decided to resign from teaching and dedicate more time to her growing family and business.

However, the road to success was far from smooth. A series of adversities struck her life. Two of her agents fell victim to swindlers, resulting in the loss of millions worth of

jewelry. Burdened by the debts to suppliers, her agents left her to shoulder the responsibility.

At this point, Mommy N realized that the jewelry business might not be sustainable. Instead of focusing solely on resolving the ongoing issues, she embarked on exploring more suitable business ventures. Seeking financial assistance, she and her husband became licensee owners of STI College and Chowking in Zamboanga City, believing that expanding their business portfolio would ease their financial situation.

Their problems continued to escalate, and despite increasing sales, their debt reached nearly 50 million pesos. This juncture was a turning point in Mommy N's life, one that pushed her to the brink. She attempted to take her life multiple times, but each time, her attempts failed.





Amidst her anger and questioning of her faith in God, she experienced a moment of profound revelation. In the silence, she heard a message within: "You still have a mission." She whispered, "Then save me, because I no longer know what else to do."

A miracle followed. Her husband approached her, and they began discussing a solution to their debt problems. Instead of dividing their businesses, they decided to run them together, with Mommy N managing the internal aspects and her husband overseeing external matters and finances. This decision made their lives easier, more harmonious, and less burdened by debt. Within a span of 5 years, they managed to clear their debts.

Today, Mommy N thrives as a business coach and mentor, fulfilling her lifelong dream of educating people. She is also a certified GoNegosyo mentor, the first and only Filipina Internationally Certified Master Neuro-Transformational Results Coach and NLP practitioner/mentor. She has



authored a book titled "Grow Your Business Pinoy" and launched online training programs, such as "Business Basics for Business Owners," "Discover Your Business Calling," and "Build Your Business Right" - a 90-Day Coaching and Mentoring Program for Business Owners. In 2017, she made history as the inaugural recipient of the Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award, presented by the Department of Trade and Industry Region IX

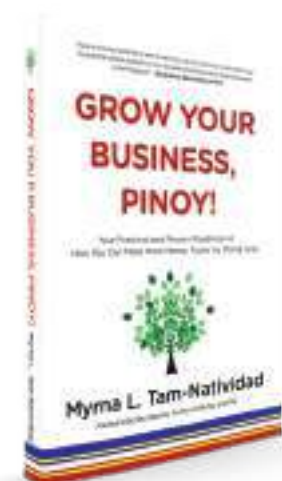
Having encountered over 20 business failures before finding her path to success, Mommy N is determined to help reduce the number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and the problems they leave behind. Her mission is to share the lessons she's learned, making it easier and quicker for fellow Filipinos to start and grow their businesses.

Mommy N envisions impacting the lives of 10,000 Filipina business owners, creating a network of empowered entrepreneurs. Through mentoring and support, she hopes to instill a sense of



nurturing wealth within this network. It's a long-term goal, but she firmly believes that by sowing the seeds of true empowerment, Filipino entrepreneurship can thrive and create a brighter future.

Mommy N's journey teaches us that the inner game is crucial in winning life's battles. With unwavering determination and resilience, she has crafted a masterpiece of resilience, empowerment, and wisdom. Her story inspires us to embrace life's lessons and approach each chapter with self-compassion and grace. As we navigate the canvas of time, blending the hues of experience, we too can craft our unique masterpiece of enduring beauty.







# Be relentless *success is for sure*

**GERALDINE POPIOCO** - Former International Cabin Crew  
& Senior Franchise Consultant Of JC Business International

*“If your life has not been favorable and pleasant to you, life does not end there. Just do not quit.  
Find an opportunity that will make it happen to you and then work hard.  
Success will come to you at the right time. Be relentless”*



“Rags to Riches” starts with a journey of Geraldine Popioco, born and lived in Tondo, Manila. Her mother is a former OFW in Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia for 20 years and father used to be the one of the biggest business owners in Divisoria. Geraldine, have 17 siblings and life has been too complicated for her. She have a broken family since she was 1 year old.

At the age of 2, her real sister were brought to their grandparents because their mother cannot provide support for them, her father had transferred them in a small room where they had to live on their own since her father’s new family cannot accept them. At 5th grade, Geraldine and her sister lived on her own in small room on a squatter’s area living like a rat.



They were selling everything under the sun while studying just to make a living. She make projects of her classmates in school to survive. At one time she was working on a canteen after schooling for her sister food. She believe in education so she continued studying. Geraldine took her college in Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila as a Tourism. At one time there was a big typhoon and she was not able to sell to earn for our food. She tried to ask help from her father but he just ignored them, it was the saddest time of her life that she made a decision not to be poor. She realized that she cannot depend on anybody, not even her parents. At age of 17 while she was in college, she worked part time in a fast food. She finished college in 4 years at her own effort. She travelled from Makati, to Intramuros to San Lazaro to work and sleep while in the Jeepney and not have enough time to sleep at home. She was hoping that she could get a better job after graduation even if she have a good school but it was all a frustration.

After graduation she worked in the aviation industry as Passenger Service Assistant for 3 years. It was a misbelief that education would make her rich. Geraldine even observed the seniors in her industry who worked for 40 years still having so many debts, no house, no cars, still renting and commuting and have a less life. She worked in Solaire as a slot machine attendant, she kept on applying on different airlines for a job and worked on graveyard so she can apply in the morning. She had 25 rejections before I got hired in Air Asia in Malaysia. It took her a year to go abroad before she started her job because application concerns so she have to find ways to survive while waiting for her travel. At that same time, her sister got troubles in her lending business that we got so much debt which gave me more reason to work abroad. When she arrived and worked in Malaysia, it was another frustration. People thought that those who work abroad and Flight Attendant are rich and have more. In reality, it was not enough because of

high cost of living and her basic needs. The least savings she could make, she even have to send it to Manila to pay for our debts. Disaster never ended. Pandemic suddenly came. Fate had been so tough on me.

For 3 months there was no flight, got a loan her job to buy a condo in Manila which she could not pay neither. Until May 14, her former officemate shared to her the online franchise business. It was a spark of hope. She is so tight, no money to start but, she understand to have to do something so she just borrowed money from a trusted friend to start the business. Geraldine is in doubt at the start but have no choice but to make her move.

After 3 months she got retrenched in her dream Job as Flight attendant because of pandemic, so December went back to the Philippines. From there she decided to do the online business full time.



She started working full time and earned her 1st million in February, for a total of 6 months. In April Geraldine got her 1st car which was Ford Mustang. She is so glad and realized that it was thru this business where she can make a fortune and a bright career.

She got her 2nd sports car on February 2022 which was BMW Z4. She earned almost 10 million in 3 years and it was fulfilling. She was able to help her sister start 3 laundry shops and helped her pay our family debt. Geraldine created 3 car achievers and 4 House Achiever and She is awarded as “Asia’s Most Trusted Senior Franchise Consultant 2022” by Pinnacle Awards. Another award as “Asia’s Remarkable Senior Franchise Consultant of the year 2023”.

She had a billboard in edsa Magallanes as Most

Reliable Senior Franchise Consultant. SHE qualified several incentives from their Business Company as house and lot, travel incentives and luxuries. She was able to help many ofws go back to the Philippines, including her mother and also other ofws who trusted her and now they are enjoying their time with their families while having their online franchise business opportunity. She visited several countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, UAE and even travelled other countries. She is currently handling many foreign partners now and many ofws from different countries. She experience extra ordinary lifestyle things she never experience in her employment.

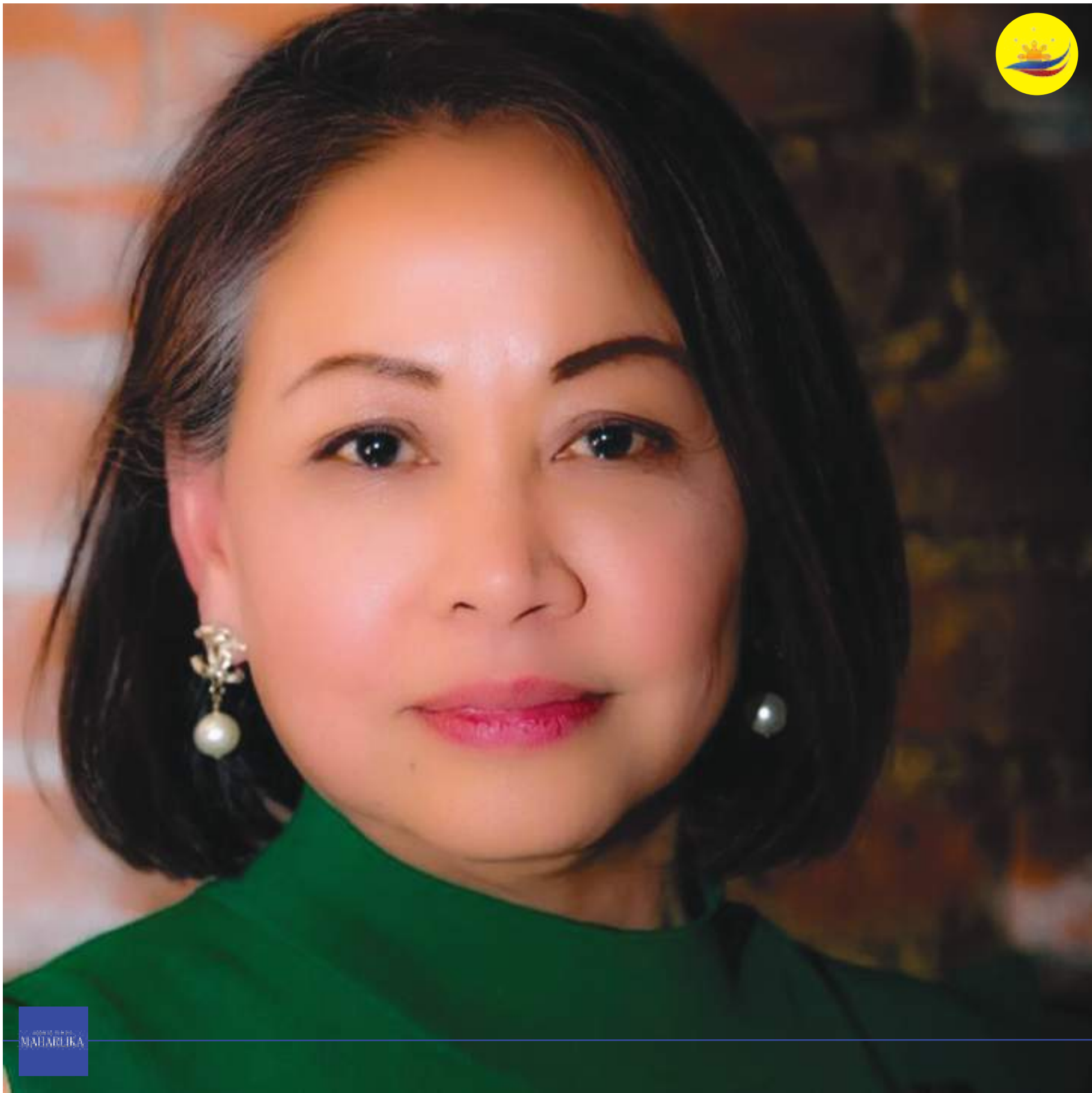
Geraldine greatest dream is to create more millionaires and expand her business all over the world - in US, Canada, Europe, Australia

and Middle East and to help more ofws have more time with their families.

“If your life has not been favorable and pleasant to you, life does not end there. Just do not quit. Find an opportunity that will make it happen to you and then work hard. Success will come to you at the right time. Be relentless”

The God who gave us Life is the same God who help us to Finish his will for us. We have the best God and with Him, nothing is impossible!







# Connecting lives, *leading with heart*

**SONIA T. DELEN FITZSIMMONS** - Senior Vice President at Bank of America – Global Leasing

*During the pandemic, Sonia spearheaded a project that secured a donation of 300,000 units of Covid-19 Testing Kits, valued at US\$2,850,000 to the U.P.-Philippine General Hospital.*



When it comes to highlighting influence and achievements, the conversation must turn to: Sonia Delen. Sonia learned early in life to foster a sense of fellowship, camaraderie and community, thanks to the strong influence of her father, Aquilino Delen, who worked tirelessly in service of his common man in the

rural area in Batangas City. She learned a deep understanding of achieving excellence in all aspects of life, and love for helping others, nurtured early on at Saint Bridget College; and in her college years at the University of the Philippines (UP), that she would find her voice and purpose.



*She co-founded, and is the president of the Filipino Food Movement (FFM), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, promoting, and progressing Filipino cuisine in the mainstream.*

During the Martial Law years, Sonia played a pivotal role in UP's student leadership where she served as the first chairperson of the Consultative Committee on Student Affairs (CONCOMSA), that replaced the banned UP Student Government. Amidst the political storm and surviving numerous threats, Sonia led the student body in upholding the rights of the disadvantaged and persecuted.

In 1982, she emigrated to the United States where her life and advocacy only furthered her *raison d'être*: spearheading positive change to bridge gaps and build communities.

A champion of the rights of those living in the margins and a constant voice of the underrepresented, one of the great highlights of Sonia's life and career occurred in 2018 when she was appointed by then Governor Jerry Brown as the first Filipino-American and Asian-American

non-lawyer and public member of the Board of Trustees of the State Bar of California – the agency of the Supreme Court responsible for the admission, regulation, and discipline of lawyers in California. According to her fellow Trustees, Sonia brought an incredible voice to the Board, with her sense of style, flair, expertise, and joy to every meeting. A consummate professional, Sonia served with devotion and distinction, setting the standard for public members henceforth. To this day, she retains the distinct honor of being the only Fil-Am public member in the history of the State Bar of California.

Paying it forward plays a big part in Sonia's legacy. During the pandemic, Sonia was instrumental in providing a necessary tool in the fight against COVID-19. As chair of the Apl.de.ap Foundation International and director of the UP Alumni Association of San Francisco (UPAASF), she spearheaded a project that secured a

donation of 300,000 units of Covid-19 Testing Kits, valued at US\$2,850,000, to the U.P.-Philippine General Hospital.

Sonia co-founded the UPAASF Filipino Cultural Immersion Camp for Filipino-American youth to learn about Philippine culture and heritage. She heads the Apl.de.ap Foundation's campaign to combat blindness caused by Retinopathy of Prematurity among newborn babies, with specialized medical equipment and training to select regional hospitals in the Philippines.

She co-founded, and is the president of the Filipino Food Movement (FFM), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, promoting, and progressing Filipino cuisine in the mainstream. Through FFM's collaborative effort, Filipino cuisine, restaurants, and chefs are now recognized in major media publications and networks.





Her desire to uplift voices led her to become an executive producer of documentary films, including the critically acclaimed film ‘Harana’ (The Lost Art of the Serenade), and ‘The Road to Sydney’ about transgender rights and equality.

Sonia contributed articles in books published by *Filipina Women’s Network (FWN): DISRUPT. Filipina Women: Proud. Loud. Leading Without A Doubt: The First Book on Leadership; and DISRUPT 4.0: BEING.*

Her work in the community has not gone unnoticed. Sonia has received many awards,

including a 2010 Presidential Citation from former Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for community service in the San Francisco Bay Area.

More recently, the Women We Admire publication named her one of the Top 50 Women Leaders of San Francisco for 2022. She is a recipient of the University of the Philippines’ 2nd Gawad Oblation Award for her significant contributions to the University; the 2023 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award from The Outstanding Filipino Award (TOFA); and 2023 UPAAA Distinguished Alumna Award from

the UP Alumni Association in America.

Sonia finds fulfillment in relationship building and connecting others to boundless opportunities. A woman for women everywhere, Sonia leads in more ways than one: a true trailblazer who puts the well-being of people first.

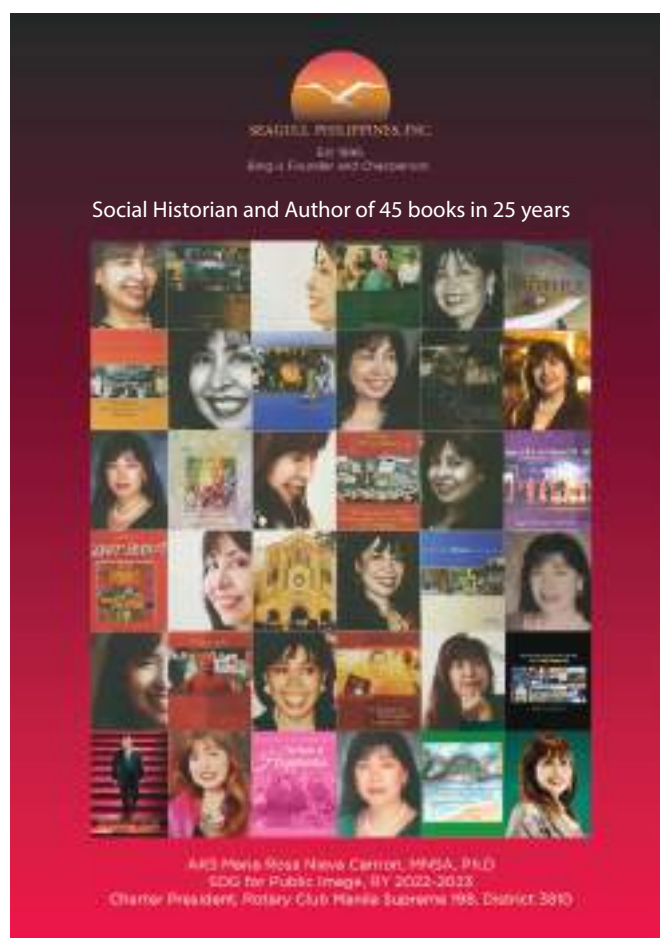
Sonia is a senior vice president at Bank of America – Global Leasing, a division of Bank of America; and enjoys playing golf, classical music and the opera. She lives in San Francisco with her spouse, Christopher Fitzsimmons and their children: David, Justin & Matthew.





# Enduring Legacy *of Her Books*

**MARIA ROSA "BING" NIEVA CARRION -**  
Founder, CEO, Resident Author and Book Creator of Seagull Philippines Inc.



Once upon a time, there lived this precocious, young girl on the heart-shaped island of Marinduque, in the Philippines. She grew up in the company of her happy nurturing family, with a tall, handsome Castilian father Ramon Saiz Carrion, a mining engineer, who headed the iron oremines as General Superintendent and a beautiful, caring, wonderfully strong mother, Rosario, who ran a warm, welcoming home.

This wide-eyed observant girl, one of 8 siblings enjoyed the best of both worlds growing up with the copper mountains of Balanacan in Mogpog town on one side and the deep blue sea on the other.



However, at the age of 9, her world was shattered as her father died of a stroke leaving her bereaved mother with 8 children to care for, the youngest being 2-year old twins. They moved to the capital town of Boac, where they lived in the hundred-year-old matriarchal house with her beautiful, strong-willed grandmother Elvira Sarmiento Nieva, widow of Marinduque's first Governor, Juan Morente Nieva. In this old-world setting she became deeply conscious of her rich family roots as she heard stories about the Nieva Clan that spanned 5 generations of powerful, influential and principled ancestors who originated from this town, the capital of the province. The wide brown nara-paneled walls of the stately white matriarchal house were very much part of her activity-filled childhood, standing right in the town center and only two hundred steps to the Catholic Church which represented to her a rich legacy of the family's history.

Widowed at the young age of 39, her mother Rosario, manifested her resilience and strength by bringing up her 8 children single handedly. She was the quintessential mother earth and a

woman of dignity, elegance, character, and grace. It was from her mother that this young girl learned her values. Fortunately, this brave, determined mother maintained her positive attitude towards life and ingrained in her young daughter and her siblings a deep sense of spirituality. At Angelus, they would daily gather to pray the Rosary and thank God for His abiding beneficence that blessed the family year after year from milestone to milestone. This young girl wholly immersed herself into the reading habit which developed her love for literature and honed her creative writing talent.

"The little girl is me. At an early age, I have minded my own business, which has borne rich fruit as evidenced by the many books I have written, let us encourage our children to read books and spend less time on their cellphones and gadgets. The youth need to be reminded of the more important aspects of life".

Maria Rosa "Bing" Nieva Carrion is an established social historian in the Philippines. She has written 45 big coffee table books in the last 25 years which are found in select libraries around the world. A

complete set is found in the San Francisco, California MainLibrary for which Congressman Gavin Newsom hosted a reception in her honor and presented her with a Certificate of Honor for her generous book donation.

Bing as she is known was recognized as one of 100 Most Influential Global Filipinas by the Filipina Women's Network based in San Francisco, California, USA, for her published books and her sustainable Advocacy programs for women and girls. She was also awarded as one of The Outstanding Women in the Nations Service (TOWNS), the prestigious award for exemplary Filipinas. She won in the category of Business (Marketing Communications).

A graduate of Maryknoll College, now Miriam, she was a recipient of the school's Triple A-Amazing Alumna Award, for her books and CSR projects for women and girls. Bing took up her Masters in Public Administration at the National Defense College of the Philippines with top honors - Master in National Security Administration (MNSA). She is currently a Lt. Col. in the Army ReserveForce.



*"My continuing desire and passion to write and produce books that focus on the legacies of the human spirit is the essence of my life's work. Long after we are gone from this Earth, the power of the written word remains to create positive change and lasting impressions on those who read my books - that changes them and us forever."*



She was honored with a Doctorate in Public Administration and Good Governance (Honoris Causa) in recognition of her continuing advocacies and initiatives for the empowerment of women and girls in the areas of education, sustainable development and skills training and for her published books.

Bing hails from the heart-shaped province of Marinduque situated in Southern Luzon where her grandfather Juan Morente Nieva was the first governor and her brother, Jose Antonio Nieva Carrion was the 11th governor. Her distinguished family is considered the first family of Marinduque.

Bing is mother to 2 wonderful, successful

children - Aristoncito and Aryssa Maria. She is doting grandmother to 3 grandchildren-Aidan Matthew, Adam Isaiah and Alon Hiraya - who are the loves of her life.

She is Author, Philanthropist, Weekly Columnist for the Daily Tribune, Rotarian Leader, Women Empowerment Advocate, Social Historian, Life Coach, and Happiness Guru. She is a much sought-after motivational speaker in the Philippines and abroad.

Knowing that books will outlive our lives on Earth, Bing shares, "My continuing desire and passion to write and produce books that focus on the legacies of the human spirit is the essence of

my life's work. Long after we are gone from this Earth, the power of the written word remains to create positive change and lasting impressions on those who read my books - that changes them and us forever. "







# Serving to empower *the community*

**DR. AILEEN MARIATEGUE-VILLANUEVA**

A Multi-Awarded Community Leader, Well-Loved Medical Practitioner of Over 30 Years



*To take charge of everyone's health and help them step into the best,  
healthiest version of themselves*

Dr. Aileen Mariategue-Villanueva is a leading General Practitioner (GP) at one of the UAE's largest hospitals, Mediclinic Al Noor in the town centre of Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Villanueva or "Dr. Aileen" is a qualified GP, graduated as Doctor of Medicine in 1991 from

the Philippines, at the Far Eastern University-Nicanor Reyes Medical Foundation (FEU-NRMF). Inspired to further her medical career, by 2004, she completed her Occupational Medicine at the University of the Philippines, School of Public Health.



On top of her daily duties, she plays an active role in the Filipino community. Recently, Dr. Aileen was elected as the Vice President of External Affairs of the newly formed group - United Global Filipinos of the 21st Century.

Inspiring other practitioners and the next generations in the medical field, Dr. Aileen is passionate about personalised care and helping under-served patients and those who face certain barriers in accessing healthcare.

#### MEDICAL CAREER IN THE UAE

From 2020 to date, Dr. Aileen has been working full-time as a licensed and qualified GP at the Mediclinic Al Noor in Abu Dhabi. From 2017 to 2020, she worked for three years as GP at the New Medical Center Specialty Hospital in Abu Dhabi. She was also the Head of Department at the NMC Mabuhay Clinic which brought advantage to the Filipino Community in Abu Dhabi and nearby

emirates as well. From 2014 to 2016, she worked for two years as GP at the Asian Philippine Medical Centre in Abu Dhabi. From 2012 to 2013, she worked for a year as GP at the Advanced Cure Diagnostic Medical Centre in Abu Dhabi.

From 2008 to 2012, she worked for four years as GP at the Gulf Diagnostic Hospital in Abu Dhabi.

#### INVOLVEMENT IN VARIOUS COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Year 2023, elected as the Vice President of External Affairs of the new organisation - United Global Filipinos of the 21st Century. From 2019 to 2023, Dr. Aileen served as Chair of the Shades of Pink Society in Abu Dhabi, actively providing moral support, wellness activities to members and other forms of assistance to all cancer patients. From 2017 to 2018, she was a member of the Executive Board of the Philippine Business Council (PBC-AUH) in Abu Dhabi.

Since 2010 to date, a co-founder and a Member of the Executive Board of the League of Filipino Healthcare Professionals (LFHP) since its inception in July 2010. The League of Filipino Healthcare Professionals has completed over 80 medical missions at Philippine Overseas Labor Office - Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (POLO-OWWA) in Abu Dhabi.

#### AS COVID-19 FRONTLINER

Because of the hardships and health risks of working during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Aileen had to comply with lockdown mandates. During this time, she offered free online medical consultations to the Filipino community in the UAE and particularly to those who lost their jobs and to those without any health insurances.

Using her own social media account - she posted on how she could provide guidance via online to those seeking medical help.



*In placing patients and the profession of medicine at the centre of all she does, she shines excellence to other practitioners.*



Dr. Aileen is a constant recipient of various awards in the UAE and abroad.

AMONG MANY HONORS, DISTINCTIONS  
AND AWARDS

Year 2023, Dr. Aileen was recently appointed as President of the Las Damas de Rizal in Abu Dhabi, marking the pioneering establishment of

this group in the Middle East and African Region. Year 2019, Dr. Aileen together with her husband Dr. Joey Villanueva were awarded by Illustrado Magazine as one of the 300 Most Influential Filipinos in the Gulf in the category of Healthcare Professionals and Humanitarians in Dubai, UAE. In the same year, Dr. Aileen was an awardee of the 100 Most Influential Women in the World at the 2019 GLOBAL FWN100™ - Builders category, held in Paris, France.

During this year, she also received the Philippine Pride/Outstanding Professionals award from the Philippine Business Council Honors-2019 held in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Year 2018, Dr. Aileen received the award 2018 TFT Healthcare Professional of the Year held in Dubai, UAE. The Filipino Times (TFT) is an institution that yearly recognises globally competitive Filipinos in the UAE.

AS A WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMA, FRIEND  
AND A DANCING PARTNER

A great friend to many, a fulfilled wife to Dr. Joey Villanueva, mother to Adrian who will soon become a doctor, Angelo's now a pilot, Alyssa and Alfonso are both entrepreneurs in different fields and a doting grandmother to Michael.



A dancing partner - Dr. Aileen is a great supporter and a member of the longstanding Abu Dhabi Filipino Dance Club.







# Epitome of *determination*

**MONICA HIPOLITO-AGUILAR-** COO - Streetpark Productions / Co-Executive Producer - The Final Pitch

*Monica's life journey has been far from ordinary, as she had to face the daunting challenge of battling Lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease.*

Monica Hipolito-Aguilar, a Remarkable Journey from Corporate Professional to Flourishing Entrepreneur. The story of Monica Hipolito-Aguilar is one that exemplifies determination, hard work, and a passion for both family and career. Born on September 29, 1976, into a close-knit family of three siblings, Monica's early life was shaped by the values of perseverance and diligence instilled by her parents.

Her journey to success began at St. Scholastica's College in Manila, where she laid the foundation for her future endeavors. Upon completing her academic journey, Monica recognized the importance of staying ahead in the fast-evolving digital landscape. With a thirst for knowledge and a desire to excel in her field, she enrolled in the Kellogg Executive Education program, where she earned a coveted certificate in Digital Marketing.

Monica's career took flight when she landed a position at Alltech, a renowned bioscience technology company, where she served as an Asian Product Manager. Her time there sharpened her business acumen and exposed her to the intricacies of the corporate world. A true go-getter, she later transitioned to become the Marketing Manager at Landco, a prominent real estate company, where she continued to thrive and showcase her exceptional marketing skills.

However, Monica's true entrepreneurial spirit found its calling when she decided to join forces with her husband, John Aguilar, and co-own a TV production company. Together, they became the force behind several successful shows on CNN Philippines, including "Philippine Realty TV," "The Final Pitch," and soon, "Methods to Greatness" In her role as co-executive producer, Monica harnessed her innate nurturing personality and excellent leadership qualities to

lead the company to success. A shining moment in Monica's entrepreneurial journey came with her significant role in "The Final Pitch," a TV show that provided startups with a platform to pitch their business ideas to potential investors. Her contributions to the show proved invaluable, as she helped numerous budding entrepreneurs secure vital investments, giving their dreams the wings to take flight.

Monica's life journey has been far from ordinary, as she had to face the daunting challenge of battling Lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease. Despite this significant health setback, she drew inspiration from the lessons taught in "Methods to Greatness" and chose to embrace a life without relying heavily on medications. Her perseverance and determination to overcome obstacles in both her personal and professional life serve as a shining example of her resilience.

"My resiliency is born out of my ability to listen - listen to my body, listen to others, and respond accordingly," Monica Hipolito-Aguilar shares, offering insight into her ability to navigate life's challenges with grace and determination.

Beyond her astounding business achievements, Monica is a devoted mother to three children, and her family speaks fondly of her loving and supportive nature. Balancing her successful career, motherhood, and being a supportive wife to John, Monica has showcased her ability to excel in multiple roles and responsibilities, leaving an indelible mark on those around her.

"I am surviving Lupus because of a team of doctors, experts in nutrition, and the support of my family," Monica reveals, acknowledging the essential role her support system plays in her journey.







*"I am surviving Lupus because of a team of doctors, experts in nutrition, and the support of my family,"*

In every aspect of her life, Monica Hipolito-Aguilar embodies the values of resilience, grit, and a nurturing spirit. Her journey from a driven corporate professional to a flourishing entrepreneur stands as a testament to her unwavering dedication and passion for what she does. Through her experiences, Monica has shown that with hard work, determination, and a compassionate heart, anyone can turn their dreams into reality and make a positive impact on those around them.

Monica's story continues to inspire and motivate individuals from all walks of life. As an influential figure in the business world and a beacon of hope for those facing challenges, she exemplifies the heights that can be reached through tenacity and a relentless pursuit of one's dreams. Her story will undoubtedly continue to inspire future generations of entrepreneurs, instilling in them the belief that with passion, hard work, and the courage to overcome adversity, success is well within reach.

Monica Hipolito-Aguilar's extraordinary journey reminds us that greatness can arise from the most unexpected places. Her relentless pursuit of excellence, combined with her nurturing and resilient spirit, has not only led her to entrepreneurial success but has also touched the lives of countless others along the way. As we look to the future, let us draw inspiration from Monica's story and strive to make a positive impact on the world, just as she has done with her remarkable life.







# Engineer Beauty Queen

## *with Pure Heart*

**SHEENA ORTEGA MECAYDOR** – Engineer in First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB)



*The victory is sweet if you shared to countless others.*

A graduate of Civil Engineering in Bicol University College of Engineering with full scholarship as an athlete until she graduated. Known as strong and resilient athlete to represent the Civil Engineering team in so many games such as volleyball, basketball, table tennis, soccer, and athletics such as 100m-3000m, relay, long jump and hurdle. With this skills and ability, she managed to finish her school with less financial support

from her family. She applied for a school scholarship and took student assistance in the library for her allowance, and she passed the PRC board exam by only having a self-review in their site accommodation in her first-ever work after graduating college. This experience taught her to focus on her goals, prioritize her time, and build great habits that everything is possible for a person who wants to help their family.

She joined the Gawad Kalinga, help the Guinobatan Municipality to packed food for the victim of Mayon Volcano eruption and shared the story and photo of her Elementary classmate in Sagip Kapamilya of ABS-CBN in 2010 to seek help where her family kept her in dark place due to mental illness. ABS-CBN team visited and picked up her classmate in their place to help her and she lived a normal life again for years. The seed of love to help others who are in need is planted in her heart no matter what way she could.

Engr. Mecaydor is supporting Safekids Philippines, an initiative for well-being of indigenous children as well as the elderly. This is a key moment to step-up to protect this generation of Filipino children and she believes every child deserves a future most especially the indigenous children. She is a highly accomplished professional with an impressive list of credentials. As a registered civil engineer passed in the Philippine Engineer Licensure

Exam in May 2008, she is also a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP). Mecaydor has achieved numerous accolades throughout her career, including certification in ASEAN Engineering Registry (AER) where she is a certified Engineer in all countries in South East Asia.

Mecaydor's achievements includes receiving an award as one of The Filipino Times Watchlist Top Engineers and Architects in the Middle East 2023 and receiving a Service Excellence Award in Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) for her 7yrs of work in the company.

She is working in First Abu Dhabi Bank and her responsibilities as an Engineer involves supervising and monitoring fit-out projects, designing, planning, and renovation. She manages all aspects of project management, including budget, schedule, procurement,

quality, and risk, and interfaces directly with bank internal stakeholders to define project requirements. In addition to her credentials, Mecaydor has held various leadership positions in professional organizations, including serving as the Board of Directors for the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers (PICE) UAE Chapter in both 2019 and 2023. She has also been a member of PICE, PICE-UAE, Fellows Toastmasters Club and PMI-UAE Chapter. Her vision to assist and inspire other young or aspirant engineer is continuous.

Engr. Mecaydor loves volunteering works and she is a certified volunteer in UAE. She is a regular blood donor at the AUH blood bank joining other organization. She is also a certified Open Water Diver for FAB Ocean Clean-Up Drive and has participated in the Clean UAE Campaign and Mangrove planting. No one can stop her pure heart to support others in any kind of service.





*She has also been a member of PICE, PICE-UAE, Fellows Toastmasters Club and PMI-UAE Chapter. Her vision to assist and inspire other young or aspirant engineer is continuous.*



She never dreamed to join a beauty pageant however God made a way that leads to her International Beauty Queen Title. Her first pageant was on 05 August 2023 in Mrs Phil-UAE by La Vida Rosa Travel & Events held in Dubai and won 1st runner up.

She represented the Filipino Community in UAE International pageant in her life. In short period of time of preparation and with her dedication, she broke a record to be the first ever Mrs OFW in UAE who took home an International Beauty Queen Title as Mrs Tourism Globe 2023 in the 6th edition of Mrs Tourism, an international beauty pageant for married women held in Music Museum, Greenhills, Philippines on 02 October 2023.

She also won Mrs Tourism 2023 Ambassador

for Arts & Cultures and Doc Rob Vitality Wellness Center Star of the Night.

She said at the end of the race, it is not about winning or losing but rather how did you cope up with the challenges and brought inspiration to women and mothers regardless of profession, color, ethnicity, religion, belief, and status in life. The victory is sweet if you shared to countless .

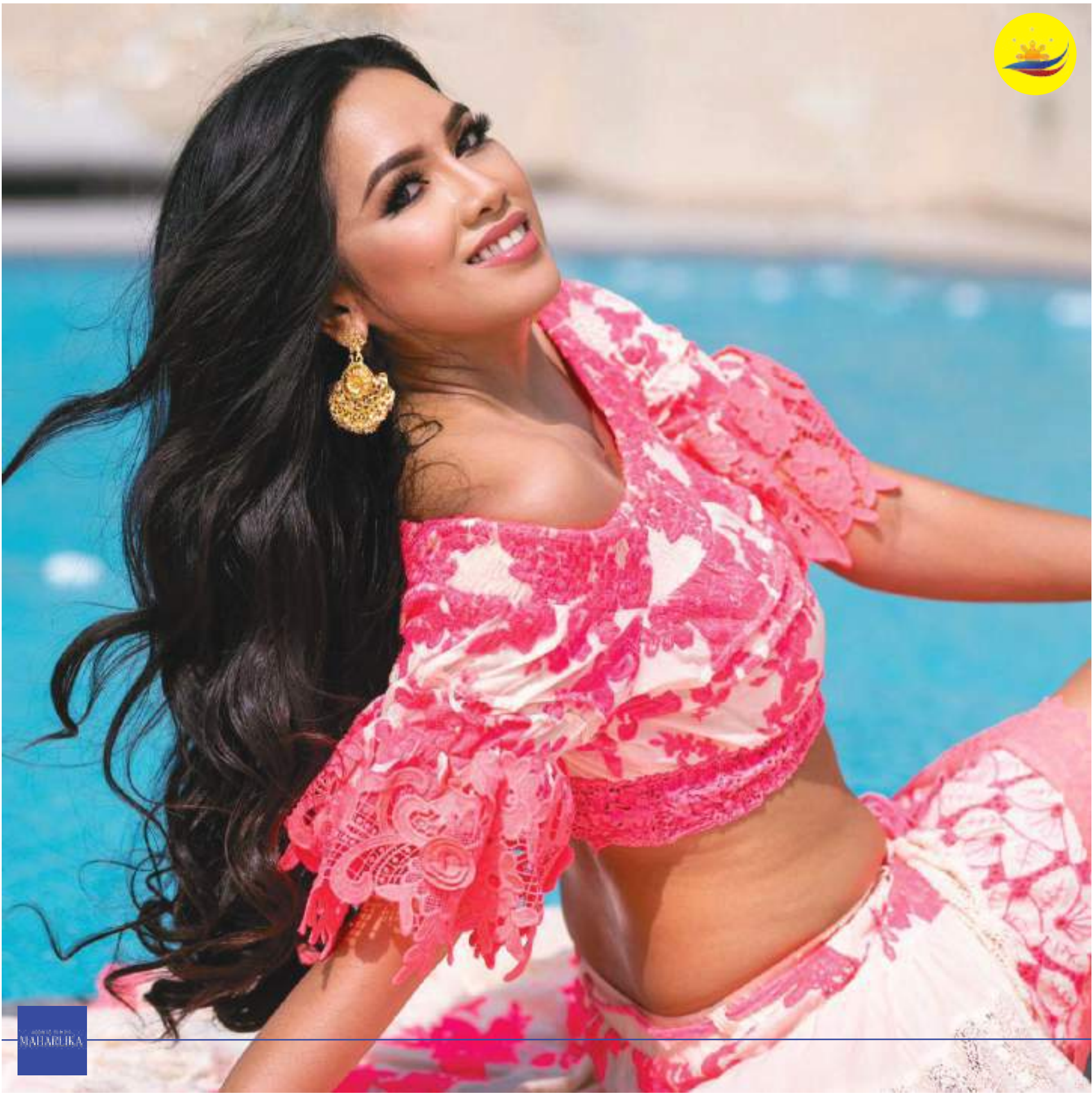
Asia's Pinnacle Award also awards her as Asia's Outstanding Female Civil Engineer. She also received an award of Hollywood Asia's Iconic Female Civil Engineer and Gold Seal of Excellence Most Influential Civil Engineer & Empowered Women of the Year.

Engr. Mecaydor is working in UAE since 2008



and her success with kind heart is a testament of her hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence.







# Testament to *tenacity, ambition and hard work*

YVONNE TAÑEZA



Yvonne Tañeza, at 35, is the Personal Assistant to the Cluster General Manager at the 3 Hotels of Wyndham Dubai Deira and Radisson Blu Dubai Deira Creek. With a degree in Hotel & Restaurant Management and 15 years in hospitality in both UAE and USA, her roots trace back to the modest province of Sultan Kudarat. Yvonne's life was challenging growing up. She began farm work at age 9, her childhood was a patchwork of challenges, woven with hope and

endurance. While many enjoyed leisure, she found solace in selling yema candy and banana chips during her elementary and high school years (sold homemade treats during school recess, earning every centavo with pride. Despite humble meals (Many days she had just rice with salt, or were lucky to have dried fish.) and treacherous river crossings to school (she crossed two rivers on foot), but her spirit never dimmed and her adversity was her strength.



She pursued a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management to work abroad and uplift her family's life. Choosing a path in Hotel and Restaurant Management wasn't just a career move, but a beacon of hope for a brighter future for her family. Her university days were a blend of triumphs and trials. Paying for college was a challenge. An enriching OJT experience in Singapore brought hope and tested her perseverance. Yvonne earned her Bachelor's Degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management and soon worked in the UAE in 2009, starting as a waitress for 6 months then moving to administrative roles. Yet, with every hurdle, her resolve only grew stronger. Destiny took her to the shimmering sands of the UAE and later, to the vast expanse of the USA, teaching her that with dedication, the world recognizes and rewards hard work. Balancing academia with her love for pageantry, she's been

crowned multiple titles, including the recent Mrs. Philippines UAE – Grand Universe 2023. Her journey embodies the idea that one's background isn't a barrier to success. Her accomplishments are a testament to tenacity, ambition, and hard work.

Honored with the "Most Outstanding Migrant Award for Community Service and Promotion of Cultural Diversity" by the Global Migrant Heritage Foundation, USA - Recognition for supporting and participating in several fundraising events and fashion shows to benefit the Cancer patients in the Philippines and USA and crowned as Mrs. Heritage Philippines USA 2019, Yvonne has been deeply involved in community service. From volunteering for medical and legal missions to cultural performances and fundraising events, she's been a beacon of hope and support.





Her dedication extends to charity events in the UAE, USA, and Philippines, aiding distressed Filipino workers, cancer patients, and less privileged children. In giving, she found a purpose. From financial contributions to local organizations, mentoring kids, donating schools' essentials to infrastructure development, Yvonne embodies selflessness, kindness and her roots remind her to always give back. Through financial aids, outreach programs, and personal interventions, she believes in nurturing the seeds of the future and uplifting those around her.

As Mrs. Philippines UAE – Grand Universe 2023, her advocacy underscores the importance of supporting education for the underprivileged. She believes that even small gestures can bring monumental change in a child's life. Having risen from challenging circumstances herself, Yvonne's mission revolves around education as a tool to combat poverty and unlock potential. Her message:

today's children are tomorrow's leaders. With education, we can foster a world where opportunities abound for everyone, irrespective of their background. Yvonne's journey in the Mrs. Grand Universe competition is not just for herself, but to shine a light on a cause close to her heart: universal access to education.

She understands its transformative power, as it can elevate individuals and communities. Every child, she believes, deserves the chance to learn, explore their potential, and lead a purposeful life. Her vision? "A universe where every child, irrespective of socio-economic background, has the key to bright futures." She stands firm in her belief that education is the foundation of growth, hope, and limitless possibilities.

Growing up in poverty was a formidable challenge, but armed with unwavering determination, perseverance, and dedication,

she was able to turn the tides of her life. Through her success story, Yvonne aspires to inspire every young Filipino dreamer – focus on your education and arm yourself with knowledge, chase your vision, strive for your dreams, and always carry the heart of a good citizen. She believes in perseverance, kindness, and choosing good. Her vision for the future is to usher in prosperity through entrepreneurship, and to lay the foundation for the education of many young souls. Yvonne's future goals include starting a hospitality business to provide jobs and founding a foundation for underprivileged children's education.

Her message to the readers of "Iconic Pinoy Maharlika", is to remember that every challenge is a stepping stone to greatness. Yvonne's journey, from the farms of Sultan Kudarat to the global stage, serves as a testament to what unwavering faith and hard work can achieve.







# -Beauty Unveiled-

## *The Journey of a Visionary Entrepreneur*

ANNE BARRETTO- CEO & Owner, Hey Pretty



Hey Pretty®

In a world where passion meets profession, one woman's fascination with the beauty industry sparked a remarkable journey. As we delve into the pages of this coffee table book, we unveil the life and ventures of an entrepreneur whose story is as inspiring as it is beautiful. From the tender age of a young girl, the allure of makeup and the allure of experimenting with hair became a captivating

fascination. Her playground was the realm of cosmetics, and her canvas was herself.

But it was not merely a fleeting interest. It was an enduring passion, one that would carry her through the years. When adulthood beckoned, she made a life-changing decision—to turn her lifelong passion into a thriving business.



The genesis of her entrepreneurial journey was an aesthetic clinic, a haven for those seeking to enhance their beauty. After four years of diligent work in the field, she embarked on a bold endeavor: founding "Hey Pretty Skin!"

Hey Pretty Skin, the brand is dedicated to empowering individuals through accessible beauty services and skincare products. With over five years of experience, they prioritize affordability without compromising quality.

CEO Anne Barretto's vision is to break the misconception that beauty is only for the elite, making high-quality enhancements available to all. Hey Pretty Skin, their direct-selling branch, empowers women entrepreneurs to achieve financial freedom. They believe in self-love, confidence, and offer diverse services to improve health and well-being. Their mission is to create a safe, comfortable environment where every individual can feel confident, beautiful, and

empowered. Today, she boasts a vast network of distributors spanning not only the Philippines but also international shores. The key to her products' appeal lies in their affordability and undeniable effectiveness.

Her journey began in 2018, and it has since evolved into one of the most remarkable success stories of her life. But her dreams extend beyond business; they are deeply rooted in family.

Her greatest aspiration is to ensure her parents enjoy a comfortable and joyous retirement. It's this unyielding determination that fuels her relentless work ethic.

Her multiple businesses converge seamlessly, all centered around the concept of beauty. Their core mission: empowering women to embrace their confidence and feel beautiful in their own skin.

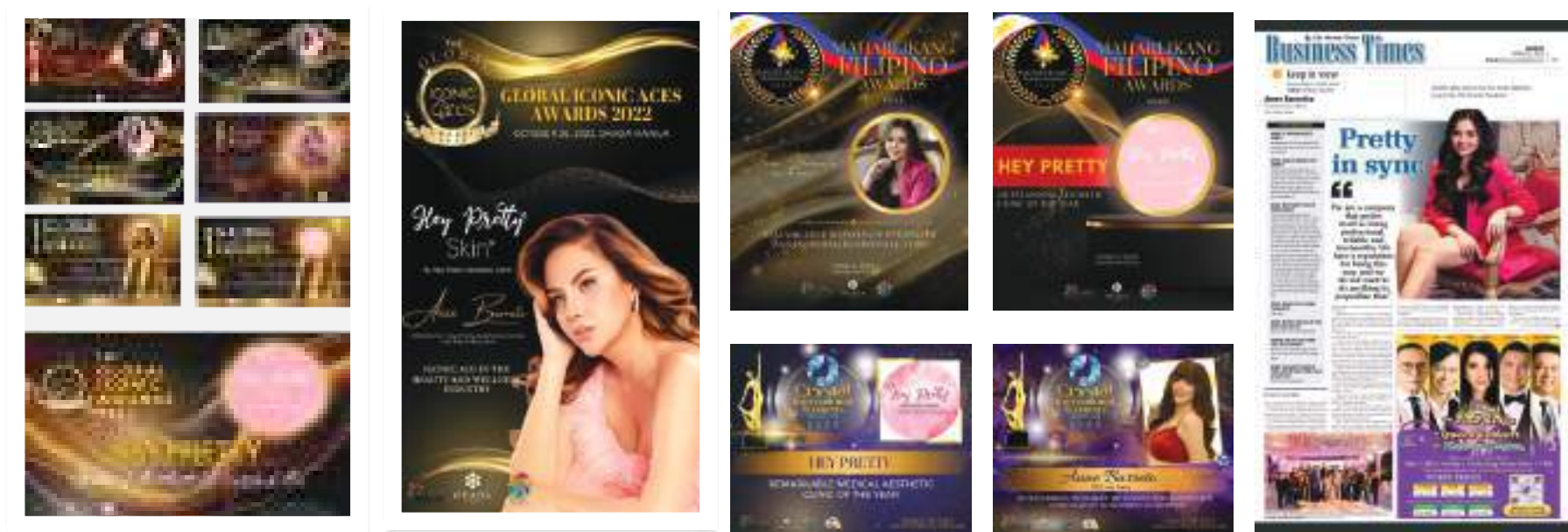
Her academic journey led her to graduate in 2011 with a degree in Tourism from Centro Escolar

University. But, as the world grappled with a pandemic, her financial management skills were put to the test.

During these challenging times, her business was deemed non-essential and prohibited from operation. Undeterred, she pioneered a mobile clinic, bringing her services directly to clients' homes, adhering to stringent safety measures.

In the realm of business, she understands the importance of maintaining a sterling reputation. Hey Pretty Aesthetic Center/Skin has become synonymous with professionalism, reliability, and trustworthiness, attributes they're dedicated to preserving. With a roster of affluent clients and celebrities, ensuring their comfort and satisfaction is a top priority. They trust Hey Pretty to handle their skincare needs, freeing them from the hassle of maintaining their routines.





Before the pandemic reshaped her routine, she cherished her travels, both domestic and international, for the exposure to diverse cultures and experiences they offered.

Her life is an ode to organization, meticulously allocating time between her roles as a professional, a mother, and a wife. Striving for balance, she endeavors to give each facet of her life its due attention. Traveling with her family is her favored escape, a moment of bonding and relaxation amidst their busy schedules.

Sports may not be her cup of tea, but she immerses herself in studying business strategies, ever on the lookout for opportunities to bolster her ventures.

Free weekends often beckon her to explore new horizons, challenging her to step out of her comfort zone.

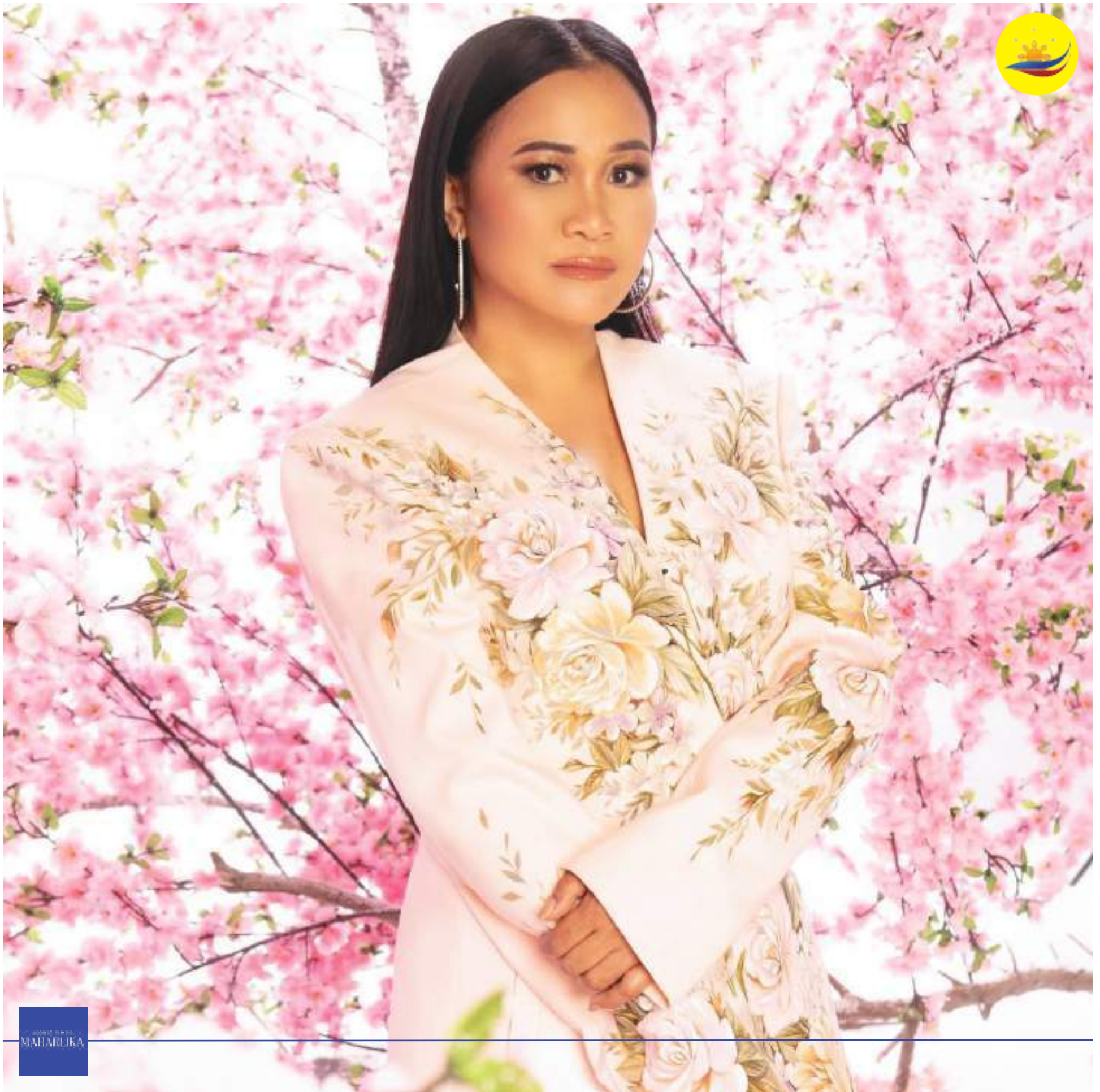
Central to her journey is the unwavering support of her husband, a seasoned business expert whose guidance has been pivotal in managing personnel and finances. A father who worked tirelessly to provide for a large family serves as her role model. Witnessing his sacrifices has kindled her resolve to reciprocate their unwavering support.

Motivation flows ceaselessly from her parents, family, and dedicated staff. Her parents' support during her formative years nurtured her dreams, while her family's guidance played a crucial role in laying the foundation for her ventures.

Her staff members, a tight-knit community, exemplify teamwork and camaraderie, fueling her drive to work diligently every day. Their collective mission: to spread happiness to all they touch.









# From Island Life *to the Global Stage*

CHONA BACAOCO - Creative Director, MM Milano's



Chona Bacaoco, the creative force behind MM Milano, a rising star in the world of sustainable fashion. Chona's journey is one of inspiration and determination, and it all started on a picturesque island in the Philippines. Imagine growing up on a small island known for its sweet mangoes and the untamed beauty of

nature. This was Chona's reality as she spent her formative years on Guimaras Island in the Philippines. The deep blue ocean waters, the powdery white beaches, the scorching sunlight, and the lush green tropical vegetation all played a role in shaping her perception of beauty and sustainable design.



Chona's unconventional path in fashion began in her family's humble tailoring shop. Her mother, a skilled dressmaker, shared her own unique ideas and techniques, laying the foundation for Chona's future designs. It was here that her love for fashion and sustainability took root, nurtured by her father's lifelong commitment to sustainable living practices.

Chona's journey was far from smooth sailing. She faced rejection and bullying early in her career due to her lack of formal fashion

education. However, these challenges only fueled her determination to prove herself and make her mark in the industry. In 2019, a turning point came when she joined forces with Andréas Volkmar, a music composer, model, and business consultant. Together, they embarked on a remarkable journey, showcasing their creations at prestigious International Fashion Weeks in cities like New York, Milan, Paris, London, Dubai, Texas, and Eastern Europe.

At the heart of MM Milano's identity lies a profound commitment to sustainability and inclusivity, two cornerstones that define Chona Bacaoco's remarkable journey in the world of fashion. Sustainability isn't just a catchphrase for MM Milano; it's a way of life. Chona proudly integrates local hablon fabric, woven from pineapple and abaca fibers, seamlessly harmonizing it with organic materials from Italy and Germany, resulting in stunning

garments while championing eco-conscious practices.

The story of MM Milano's sustainability begins with the choice of materials. Chona's dedication to her craft and the environment is evident in her deliberate selection of hablon fabric. Sourced locally from the Philippines, hablon fabric is crafted from pineapple and abaca fibers. It's a testament to her commitment to supporting local communities and preserving traditional craftsmanship.

Chona's decision to blend hablon with organic fabrics from Italy and Germany exemplifies her commitment to sustainable fashion on a global scale. By combining these materials, she creates unique and elegant designs that not only captivate the eye but also honor the planet. The seamless fusion of these textiles symbolizes her belief that fashion can be both beautiful and environmentally responsible.





But sustainability for Chona extends far beyond the materials she uses. It's about making a tangible difference in the lives of those who contribute to her creations. She collaborates with small weavers in Antique, a province in the Philippines, providing them with valuable livelihood opportunities. This partnership not only empowers local artisans but also ensures the preservation of traditional weaving techniques, keeping a piece of cultural heritage alive.

Moreover, Chona's brand stands as an embodiment of inclusivity. It's not just about clothing; it's about making a positive impact, both locally and globally. This commitment to inclusivity goes beyond the superficial aspects of fashion, delving deep into the values that underpin the brand.

One of the most poignant moments in MM Milano's fashion shows occurred when an 83-year-old grandfather, Frank Lam, graced the runway as a model for MM Milano's suits. This touching scene held deep personal significance for Chona, who had long envisioned her father participating in her shows. Frank Lam's presence served as a testament to the brand's inclusivity and the power of dreams, no matter one's age or background. It was a reminder that fashion can be a vehicle for self-expression and empowerment, transcending societal norms and expectations. In conclusion, MM Milano's journey is a remarkable tapestry woven with threads of

sustainability and inclusivity. Chona Bacaoco's unwavering dedication to these principles has not only transformed the fashion industry but also touched hearts worldwide. Her brand stands as an embodiment of the belief that fashion can be a vehicle for change, making a positive impact on individuals, communities, and the environment. It serves as an inspiring example of how one person's vision and commitment can lead to a brighter, more sustainable future for fashion and beyond.

MM Milano's designs, like Chona herself, are forward-looking. Their Pluto line, designed by a 13-year-old talent from Ohio named Pluto Ernsberger, is a blend of futuristic and galactic aesthetics, featuring organic fabrics from Milan and Germany. Chona's vision is to create fashion that transcends borders and resonates with a global audience.

Andreas Volkmar, Chona's partner, acknowledges her incredible contributions to the agency, emphasizing the strength of their partnership.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the MM Milano team persevered. They undertook a two-week quarantine in Dubai, utilizing the time for photoshoots and finalizing the looks of the 24 models who would grace the New York Fashion Week runway.

Looking ahead, Chona and her team are gearing

up for more remarkable shows, including one at Palazzo Barozzi in Milan and a significant showcase in Paris alongside fashion luminary Michael Cinco.

In closing, Chona reflects on her journey with pride and determination. She serves as a shining example of resilience and self-belief, proving that you can design your own destiny and achieve your dreams, no matter the obstacles in your path. So, remember Chona Bacaoco's story the next time someone tells you what you can't do. You are the designer of your life, and your dreams are worth pursuing.







# The Shoe Fairy who makes *Luxurious and comfortable pairs of shoes*

**DOREEN ODVINA** - Couture Fashion Shoe Designer

*“My Poterntial of being a shoe designer is Infinite”*



DOREEN ODVINA is a couture fashion Shoe Designer based in Manila, Philippines. She specializes in couture footwear, with a vision to provide all-day comfort and luxurious

experience through a pair of custom shoes. Her brand specializes in making footwear primarily for: Weddings, Debuts, Special Occasions, Company Uniforms, and Orthopedic Cases.



Her passion and love for shoes started when she was a toddler. Her Mom would often buy gold sandals and sparkly shoes for her. *“I remember my Mom would hand me a pair of gold shoes. Some of them have bead-works while some are adorned with sequins. I would walk with my head down watching my feet sparkle”.*

Growing up, she knew that she wanted to make luxurious pairs of footwear. But fate led her to become an IT and E-Commerce Manager of big companies for fifteen years. *“Back in year 2000, when I was about to go to a university, Information Technology was starting to become a trend and people say that positions in IT get the most high paying jobs. Being a young Mom at the age of seventeen, I convinced myself to become an IT professional someday because I was worried not being able to afford sending my daughter to good schools. I enrolled at De La Salle - College of Saint Benilde. After four years of studying and right after our thesis defense, I went to our school’s computer laboratory to start look for job vacancies online. It was six months away before my daughter’s enrollment in a toddler school. In my mind, I have to earn what two heads would earn because I’m*

*a single mother. My main goal was to save up enough for her first tuition fee. After five days, I found myself signing my first ever job offer and was able to save up as much to pay her first tuition fee. I was very lucky to get employed even before graduating college. It’s funny that on my graduation day, I met my Mom and my siblings early in the morning at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). All my classmates were feeling so emotional graduating that day, while I was feeling so sleepy because I just came from a graveyard shift.”*

Doreen climbed the corporate ladder of BPO, cruise, and airline industries. Her experience working for reputable companies eventually taught her all the best practices that she now carries for her own brand.

*“It was really a big shift for me. After working so long with IT professionals like programmers and developers, I’m now working with fashion designers and great talents in the event industry. Their characters and ways of working are quite different in a good way.*

*The first person I met in the fashion and event industry*

*was Francis Libiran. I didn’t have a shop after retiring from my corporate job. I would conduct my meetings and measure the feet of my clients in different places. Sometimes in restaurants, sometimes in their own homes. Until I stumbled with a bride-to-be who asked me to get the measurements of her feet at Francis Libiran’s studio at The Peninsula Manila. Francis encouraged me get an office few doors away from his studio. He told me that he’ll recommend me to his clients so we can match his gowns with custom shoes. It was surreal and I thought maybe he’ll forget about me the next day. But lo and behold, Francis was an angel that God sent me. He recommended me to a lot of people. After a month, we finished the construction of my shoe atelier at The Peninsula Manila. It’s unbelievable how all these transpired at the height of the pandemic... and it’s really amazing to think about how things really happened! “*





Doreen was featured by CNN and got recognized nationwide as someone from the fashion industry who makes high-quality customized shoes. “My potential of being a shoe designer is infinite”. She held the very first Shoe Fashion Show in Philippines’ fashion history last January 2023 at Shangri-La The Fort with 40 models and celebrity muses. She showcased a collection of couture footwear that made them consume almost 30 kilos of crystals.

“We have done so many shoes for fashion shows of big designers so I thought of making my own show where shoes is the main focus on the runway.”

Since she opened her shoe atelier last February 2021, she already managed to work and made custom shoes for fashion shows of renowned fashion designers. Shoe worked with Michael Cinco at the Arab Fashion Week last October 2021 and 2022, and the latest was in September 2023 in Michael’s Show in Manila. She also takes pride being able to work for shows of Ezra Santos, Val Taguba, Rian Fernandez, Mak Tumang, Michael Leyva, Jo Rubio, Jazelle Sy, Albert Andrada and many more. Doreen is now the go-to shoe brand of big fashion shows, soon -to-weds, upcoming birthday celebrants and celebrities in the Philippines.

Her namesake label Doreen Odvina houses exclusive designs for the famous, trendy and

fashionable personalities. Her collections offer outstanding craftsmanship of intricate and opulent couture embellishments for ladies’ shoes, and finest high-quality leather materials for men’s shoes.

She lives up to her brand promise where every piece can be customized from the size, color, and heel to make it more special for everyone.





ATENEO DE MANILA  
UNIVERSITY





# Visionary Couple *for Education and Empowerment*

**EDGARDO T. VALENZUELA**

Adjunct Professor, Ateneo School of Government (ASoG)  
Faculty, Economics Department, School of Social Sciences, ADMU

**CRISTINA M. LIAMZON, PhD**

Faculty, Ateneo de Manila University School of Government (ASoG)

*Globally Changing Mindsets of Overseas Filipinos and their Families: 2008-2023*





*Together with other colleagues, they also founded an NGO in Rome, the Associazione Pilipinas-OFSPES (Overseas Filipinos Society for the Promotion of Economic Security)*

Cristina M. Liamzon, PhD is a core faculty member of the Ateneo de Manila University School of Government (ASoG). She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of the Philippines in 1975. She took her first graduate degree at the Asian Institute of Technology Bangkok, Thailand, with a Master of Science in Human Settlements Planning (major in Rural Development ) in 1982. Her second graduate degree was at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government with a Master in Public Administration degree where she was also an Edward Mason Fellow in Public Policy and Management. Her doctoral degree was awarded by the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome Italy with a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Sciences (Magna Cum Laude). She was the first National Coordinator of an NGO, Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human

Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRRA). She also worked as a development consultant with UN agencies such as UNDP, IFAD and with international and regional NGOs such as the Society for International Development (SID) in Rome.

Edgardo T. Valenzuela is an Adjunct Professor with the Ateneo de Manila University School of Government (ASoG) where he has been regularly teaching for the last decade. He started his career as a regional training officer with the Asian Cultural Forum in Development in Bangkok, Thailand, followed by a brief stint at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific then became the Executive Director of the Asian Non-Governmental Organizations Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), which had an outreach of some 3,000

rural development organizations in South and Southeast Asia. From there he joined the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, Italy for over two decades where he retired as Chief of the Global Coordination Unit for World Food Day Advocacy and Special Events Unit at FAO HQ. He then joined an Asian Development Bank Technical Assistance Project based in Bangkok on the Core Agriculture Support Program Phase 2 for the Greater Mekong Sub-region through NIRAS, a development consulting firm. He holds an international Master in Business Administration degree from the European School of Economics and a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts major in Philosophy from the Ateneo de Manila University where he also studied social psychology. He also obtained a certificate on Development Management from the Asian Institute of Management.



Aside from these involvements, Tina and Edgar served as volunteers for the Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy of the Vicariate of Rome based in the Basilica of Sta. Pudenziana where they built the Family Ministry as part of the work of the Chaplaincy's Commission on Family and Youth. Together with other colleagues, they also founded an NGO in Rome, the Associazione Pilipinas-OFSPES (Overseas Filipinos Society for the Promotion of Economic Security).

Following a thorough needs assessment and in consultation with the Philippine Embassy in Rome and the Sentro Filipino Chaplaincy, Tina and Edgar proposed, promoted and conducted, in 2008-09, the first-ever Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship (LSE) Training Course in collaboration with the Ateneo School of Government with Dean Antonio La Vina, JSD.

The ALSE OF-LIFE program is a capability and empowerment program for Overseas

Filipinos/OFWs. It consists of 12 sessions delivered twice a month over six months.

The Program is divided into three modules: a Leadership module with focus on the migration context, appreciative inquiry planning tools, communications and conflict management and on Servant Leadership and Good Governance.

The second module is on Financial Literacy which tackles Personal Financial Management and discusses all aspects of budgeting, net worth assessment, social investments and does a deep dive on cooperatives for nation-building.

The third module is on Social Innovation/Social Entrepreneurship with focus on local and global examples of social innovations and social enterprises, development of business models and financial analysis and planning.

This ALSE OF-LIFE program, started in 2008 has

been in continuous operation for the past 15 years and is currently known as the Ateneo Overseas Filipinos' Leadership, Innovation, Financial Literacy and Social Entrepreneurship (ALSE OF-LIFE), a program under the Executive Education program of ASoG. To date about 5,000 OFW/OFs from 32 countries have taken this course. In Europe, it started in Italy with courses in Rome, Naples, Florence, Milan, Turin, and Cuneo.

This was followed in Brussels, Paris, and in The Hague, and then Rotterdam, Amsterdam. Barcelona and Madrid in Spain. Geneva, Switzerland was the last face-to-face location pre-pandemic in 2019.

After the pandemic, a virtual program for Russia (Moscow, St Petersburg and Vladivostok) and Germany was initiated in 2022.



*This ALSE OF-LIFE program, started in 2008 has been in continuous operation for the past 15 years and is currently known as the Ateneo Overseas Filipinos' Leadership, Innovation, Financial Literacy and Social Entrepreneurship (ALSE OF-LIFE)*



In the Middle East and North Africa, face to face programs started in 2012 in Dubai initially in collaboration of the Philippine Business Council and the Philippine Consulate.

This was followed by programs in Abu Dhabi, also with the Philippine Business Council, and one batch had a class in Sharjah for the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In 2023, a virtual program for UAE also included students from Lebanon. The program in Doha, Qatar was initiated in 2017 and has been run every year since then. From 2020, the programs

became online and for 2023, the program has been able to reach students from Oman and Saudi Arabia (Alkobar).

Two on-site programs have also been held in Cairo, Egypt before the pandemic in collaboration with the Philippine Embassy in Cairo.

In Asia, the program was brought to Hong Kong SAR in 2012 and in Macau SAR in 2013. This was followed by Singapore in 2016 and Tokyo, Japan in 2017. In 2019, programs were started in Bangkok, Thailand with the Embassy and the

DTI and in Seoul, Korea also with the help of the Embassy. During the covid pandemic, in collaboration with the DFA Technical Cooperation Council an online batch was organized for Sri Lanka in 2021. In 2023, in collaboration with MECO and the DMW, a hybrid program with online and on-site sessions, was initiated in Taipei, Taiwan.

The Philippines was started in 2013 and since then, more than a dozen programs have been conducted for OFW dependents, reintegrating OFWs and cooperative staff workers involved in programs for the diaspora.



The last frontier is in the Northern Hemisphere and the online program now has graduates from the USA, Canada, Guatemala and mostly from the Caribbean countries since 2022 and a second batch is expected to finish virtually in late 2023.

Today some 5,000 alumni from 32 countries have been oriented with a sense of servant leadership and strengthened their ability to speak, reflect, and reach out to others as well as care for Planet Earth. The knowledge and skills they have learned have contributed to better communities, better societies, and a better environment.

As far as Edgar and Tina are concerned, this legacy will live on as an inter-generational program which will be sustained by the commitment and dedication of the alumni who continue to volunteer their time and effort for this program.

Clearly the ALSE OF-LIFE Program's vision of Filipino migrants and their families united towards supporting each other in becoming empowered and highly respected members of society and consciously contributing to nation-building, can be seen in the impact it has so far created and remains a step in the right direction.

Tina and Edgar have been conferred the Fr William F. Masterson, SJ Award by Xavier University/Ateneo de Cagayan in 2013 for their work in social development.

The Manila Standard (News Media) have given the Visionary Award (Social Entrepreneurship category) for their work with OFWs Education and Empowerment (capability-building and training) in December 2015.

Tina also received the Global Fairness Award from the Global Fairness Institute in Washington DC in November 2016 for her work on the ALSE OF-LIFE Program.

*Global Fairness Award from the Global Fairness Institute in Washington DC in November 2016 for her work on the ALSE OF-LIFE*







# Advocate for *Women and Children Rights*

**ATTY. LORNA PATAJO-KAPUNAN** - Senior Partner -Kapunan & Castillo Law Offices



Atty. Lorna Patajo-Kapunan graduated from the University of the Philippines AB Political Science (1973) and LLB (Law) 1978 and had seminar courses in Japan Institute of Invention and Innovation (JIII) Tokyo (1997); World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) Asian Region, Taejon Republic of Korea, (November

1998); National Institute of Humanitarian Law, San Remo Italy (September 2005); Summer Course International Humanitarian Law, Magdalene College, Cambridge University, London UK (July 2010). She founded in 2011 the Kapunan & Castillo Law Offices where she is currently Senior Partner.



Although recognized as one of the leading litigation lawyers in the country because of her high profile cases, her legal expertise is extensive and includes licensing law, franchising, corporate and commercial law, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, international humanitarian law, family law, estate law and succession.

Atty. Kapunan started her distinguished career in law with Angara Abello Concepcion Regala and Cruz (ACCRA) where she was a senior associate until 1986. She served as a senior partner of Roco Kapunan Migallos Perez & Luna Law Offices from 1986. She was Founder and a Senior Partner of the Kapunan Lotilla Garcia & Castillo Law Offices from 2009-2011. Her Firm owns the

distinction of being the first and only law firm to have been conferred the Institutional Spirituality Quotient (ISQ) Award by the Bishops/Businessmen Conference (BBC-June 2008), and is the sole Philippine member of the International Lawyers Network (ILN).

Attorney Kapunan has a number of professional involvements throughout her legal career. The most recent ones include Founding President, Intellectual Property Alumni Association (IPAA); Past President and Current Director, Intellectual Property of the Philippines (IPAP), Past Councilor, Asean Patent Attorneys Association (APAA); Past Chairman, Copyright Committee (APAA); Past Regional President, Asean

Intellectual Property Association (ASEAN IP); Director, Licensing Executive Society of the Philippines (LES); Past Chairman and President, Women's Business Council of the Philippines and Past Chairman, National Issues Committee, Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), Past Chairman UN Women (Formerly UNIFEM).

Atty. Kapunan became an awardee of the Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) in the field of Corporate Law and was Bar Examiner in 1988 in this field of law. She was a professional lecturer at the European-based International Center for Legal Studies and was a lecturer of various subjects including "Media and





the Client” “Family and Ethics Law” for the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) required by the Philippine Supreme Court.

Atty Kapunan sits in Boards of major corporate clients as Corporate Secretary and Director and is involved in various socio-civic groups. She is presently Governor/Counselor of the Philippine Red Cross, Vice Chairman and Trustee of Cultural Center of the Philippines, Past President Rotary Club of Sampaguita and past District Legal Adviser Rotary District 3800, Past President and Area Director of Zonta Foundation Area 1, Past Trustee of Rustan’s Essences Foundation, Past President Stop Trafficking of Filipinos, Advisory Board World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Legal Adviser, Ballet Philippines, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Legal Adviser.

Atty. Kapunan is the daughter of Retired Supreme Court Justice Lino M. Patajo and Cristeta Taaca Patajo, Past Dean of Manila Doctors School of Nursing and VP Academic

Affairs UDMC and member Professional Regulations Board for Nursing. She is the widow of former RTC Judge Eduardo Roden E. Kapunan, her Classmate in UP Law School. She has five sons, three grandsons. All her sons (except one Architect) and grandsons are lawyers or future lawyers. Her eldest son, Lino, is now Managing Partner in her Law Firm.

Atty. Kapunan is an advocate for Womens and Childrens Rights and the Environment. She has the distinction of being the first to have obtained a Writ of Kalikasan from the Supreme Court for her West Tower/Barangay Bangkal oil spill case.

She is Legal Counsel of Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME) which advocates economic nationalism and champions the fight against poverty and corruption in all branches of the Government. She also is an advocate for the protection of equity/royalty rights of artists, performers, broadcasters – which has gained her the reputation of being a “lawyer for the celebrities.”

Atty. Kapunan received the Most Outstanding Filipina Women Global Leaders Award from the Filipina Women’s Network (FWN) in 2016. She is a distinguished member of the Pi Gamma Mu International Honors Society. She recently received the First Tala Award of the Global Artist’s Creative Collaboration for Empowerment (GACCE-USA).

Atty. Kapunan was a TV Host of the weekly TV program “Legally Speaking” in DZRJ TV Station and was also a co host in DZRH. She was a former columnist for Business Mirror. She is now co host of a weekly telleradyo program “Laban Para Sa Karapatan”. She has joined the number one rating popular daily program “FACE 2 FACE” as one of the “trio tagapagpayo” in TV 5 and One PH.

She frequently is invited to talk shows, for a and conferences as guest speaker or resource person on current legal and political issues especially on women empowerment, environment, arts and culture.





# Leaving a *lasting impact*

ATTY. MARIE GLEN ABRAHAM-GARDUQUE - Celebrity Lawyer and Philanthropist



*Beyond her legal career, Atty. Maggie had diverse interests, including a love for fashion, arts, music, and entertainment*

Atty. Marie Glen Abraham-Garduque, more popularly known as "Atty. Maggie", a renowned celebrity lawyer and philanthropist, was born on September 30, 1978. She grew up in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Throughout her life, she has made significant contributions to the fields of law, fashion, arts, music, and entertainment, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of many individuals.



Atty. Maggie grew up in a close-knit family in Calapan Mindoro City. From an early age, she displayed exceptional intelligence and a passion for helping others.. Driven by her dream to become a lawyer and advocate for justice, Marie pursued a degree in law at University of the Philippines Diliman.

She displayed remarkable dedication and was actively involved in various student organizations, where she honed her leadership and public speaking skills.

Upon graduating with flying colors, Atty. Maggie

began her legal career at a reputable law firm in Manila. Her relentless pursuit of justice and her ability to handle high-profile cases involving celebrities and influential figures quickly earned her a reputation as a formidable lawyer in the industry.

Atty. Maggie's passion for her profession and her natural ability to connect with people, including media personalities, led her to become a celebrity lawyer. She represented numerous celebrities in legal battles, protecting their rights and privacy in the face of intense media scrutiny. Her successful representation of high-profile clients further

solidified her status as one of the country's most sought-after lawyers.

Beyond her legal career, Atty. Maggie had diverse interests, including a love for fashion, arts, music, and entertainment. Recognizing the potential of these industries to bring about positive change, she founded the Fashion Arts Music and Entertainment Foundation (FAME Foundation). The organization's primary objective was to support aspiring artists, musicians, and performers from underprivileged backgrounds, providing them with opportunities and resources to pursue their dreams.





*Her humility and down-to-earth nature endeared her to people from all walks of life. She remained dedicated to her family and friends, always offering support and encouragement in their endeavors.*

Under Atty. Maggie's leadership, the FAME Foundation organized numerous fundraising events, fashion shows, and talent showcases to raise funds and awareness for its cause. Many aspiring artists received scholarships, mentorship, and guidance through the foundation, making it a symbol of hope for those striving to make a mark in the creative industries.

Despite her busy schedule, Atty. Maggie found time for her loved ones and cherished her role as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend. Her humility and down-to-earth nature endeared her to people from all walks of life. She remained

dedicated to her family and friends, always offering support and encouragement in their endeavors.

Throughout her career and philanthropic efforts, Atty. Maggie touched the lives of countless individuals, leaving a positive impact on the legal profession, creative industries, and the lives of those less fortunate.

Her legacy as a compassionate and fearless lawyer and philanthropist continues to inspire future generations to make a difference in their communities and society at large.







# The Timeless King *of Philippine Fashion*

VINCE BORJA, - Celebrity Fashion Designer



Triumph Over Adversity Growing up in Tandag City, Surigao Del Sur, Vince Borja faced numerous challenges that shaped him into the remarkable individual he is today. Born to parents who couldn't afford to support his education, he experienced the struggles of being a working student. Despite facing these obstacles, Vince's determination, passion, and talent guided him towards a path of success. One of the earliest challenges Vince

encountered was the lack of financial resources to purchase basic school supplies, including a new pair of shoes. Nevertheless, he never allowed these limitations to hinder his education. He persisted with unwavering dedication and attended school, wearing the same old pair of shoes day after day. This experience instilled in him a strong work ethic and a commitment to making the best of his circumstances.



During his college years, Vince continued to thrive as a dance instructor and undertook various projects while pursuing his HRM degree. His ability to manage his responsibilities, coupled with his unyielding determination, impressed those around him. Vince became a role model for other students.

education, he ventured into the world of online selling, showcasing his resourcefulness and commitment to his goals.

Vince's journey to the zenith of his career is a testament to his unwavering discipline, unrelenting dedication, and a profound understanding of his craft.



Vince Borja's life is a remarkable testament to his unwavering determination, adaptability, and relentless pursuit of his dreams. From humble beginnings in Tandag City, Surigao Del Sur, Vince's journey took him through various challenges and opportunities that ultimately shaped him into the successful individual he is today. After venturing to Cebu to seek better opportunities, Vince's path led him to the service industry, where he started as a waiter. His strong work ethic and dedication were quickly recognized, leading to a rapid promotion within just three months to the role of a barista. His commitment to excellence and his ability to quickly learn and adapt were evident in his swift rise through the ranks.

Vince Borja's journey from a budding designer to a celebrated fashion icon is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance, and an unyielding dedication to one's craft. The Timeless King of Philippine Fashion has chosen to pivot his focus towards his personal life and family, including his beloved "Darling," to whom he yearns to dedicate more quality time. Despite his stepping back from the runway spotlight, Vince Borja remains steadfast in his commitment to causes close to his heart. His ongoing support for organizations like the Concordia Children Pediatric Foundation and orphan children reflects his unwavering dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of those in need.



Vince's story took yet another turn when landed in Manila. He rented a bedspace in Evangelista, Pasay City, and began working as a cook. Recognizing the importance of education and personal growth, he decided to enroll at Slim's Fashion School, an institution renowned for producing some of the Philippines' most prominent fashion designers. To support his







His life's philosophy is grounded in the belief that patience and virtue will inevitably be rewarded. Vince advocates against rushing through life, asserting that if one's actions are virtuous and just, blessings will naturally follow. In the face of criticism, Vince imparts a sage piece of advice: focus and discipline are the cornerstones of success. This wisdom goes beyond the realm of design, extending into the realm of business acumen. It is this holistic approach that has propelled Vince Borja to his celebrated position, reminding emerging

talents that a strong foundation is paramount to achieving their dreams.

With a penchant for philanthropy and a keen eye for elegance, Vince's vision transcends fashion, seeking to create a positive impact and foster global connections through his artistry. Vince's immediate focus, however, is set on his upcoming show entitled "Love Me Tonight." Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Okada, this charity gala dinner promises to be a night to remember, marked by opulence and enchantment. The theme encapsulates the essence of the evening – a celebration of love, passion, and the magical allure of fashion. Through this event, Vince aims to inspire and captivate, using his designs to convey emotions and stories that resonate with attendees.

The grand unveiling of the Alta Moda International Look Book Magazine 2023 further underscores Vince's commitment to innovation and inspiration. This publication serves as a visual testament to the evolution of his craft, offering readers a glimpse into the world of

haute couture and the creative genius behind it. As the pages come alive with the latest trends and designs, the magazine showcases not only Vince's prowess but also the legacy he is building for future generations.

In his journey, Vince Borja exemplifies the idea that success is not confined to personal achievements; it is about uplifting others, sharing knowledge, and leaving an indelible mark on an industry. Through his dreams of mentorship, international exposure, and transformative showcases, Vince Borja sets an example of a designer with a vision that extends far beyond the glamour of the runway, touching lives and inspiring countless souls along the way.









# A Confluence of *Empowerment & Conservation*

**CHRISTINE AMOUR-LEVAR**

Philanthropist, Adventurer, Climate Investor, Author, Human Rights & Sustainability Advisor



*Every single action we take reveals what we truly believe.  
It is a vote for the kind of world we want to live in.*

Christine Amour-Levar boasts a captivating tapestry of life experiences, drawing from her rich French, Swiss, and Filipino heritage. With each strand woven from a fervent desire to effect change, Christine's narrative paints a vivid picture of an individual who has dedicated her life to social impact.

Born in Manila into a multicultural setting, Christine's formative years were shaped by diverse influences and the strong women in her family who surrounded her. This early immersion paved the way for her to value inclusivity, appreciate cultural nuances, and understand the interconnectedness of our global community.



With an academic foundation anchored at Sophia University in Tokyo, where she graduated Cum Laude, Christine's professional trajectory was set in motion.

Her initial foray into the corporate world was with the American advertising agency, McCann Erickson, in bustling Tokyo. This experience taught her the value of international communication, shaping her expertise in creating narratives that resonate across cultures. Later, Christine took her skills stateside, joining global sportswear giant, Nike at their world headquarters in Oregon. With the brand, her journey expanded from Latin America to Europe, and eventually to Singapore, each experience further reinforcing her global perspective and her love of sports.



However, as her professional narrative evolved, so did her passion for social entrepreneurship. The intersection of her career with personal purpose began to shine through more prominently when she embraced leadership roles, particularly at Temasek Trust in Singapore. As the philanthropic arm of the Sovereign Wealth Fund, Temasek Holdings, she championed causes that mattered, ensuring that business goals aligned seamlessly with societal impact.



Christine's true north has always been clear – the empowerment of women and the stewardship of our environment. These dual passions birthed

two ground-breaking initiatives: Women on a Mission (WOAM) and HER Planet Earth. WOAM is not just an organization; it's a movement. Founded on the bedrock of empathy, it seeks to uplift women who have faced violence and abuse, believing in the transformative power of education and skills training. On the other hand, HER Planet Earth exemplifies Christine's profound respect and love for nature. This initiative operates at the nexus of environmental conservation and the empowerment of underprivileged women, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between communities and their ecosystems.

While these organisations are central to her purpose, Christine's influence extends further. As an advisor and board member for various entities focused on social impact and sustainability, she consistently amplifies her mission. By steering discussions on the boards of organisations such as the Impact Investment Exchange (IIX), Investible VC, focused on their global climate tech fund, Zero Waste Singapore and the Sulubaaï Environmental Foundation of the Philippines, Christine amplifies her impact, guiding these organisations with her unparalleled expertise and insight.

Beyond boardrooms and strategic discussions, Christine's literary prowess shines bright. Her book, 'Wild Wisdom', published by the esteemed Penguin Random House, isn't just a testament to





her adventures but provides a deep dive into the life lessons she's extracted from her travels. Moreover, her voice resonates across international publications, shaping discourses in platforms ranging from Forbes to the Manila Bulletin Newspaper.

As a speaker, she's no stranger to elite platforms, sharing insights on subjects like Leadership, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Sustainable Finance. Esteemed institutions like INSEAD, TEDx, and multinational corporations like Google, Credit Suisse, SAP and the United Nations have benefited from her wisdom.

Recognitions, such as her inclusion in Tatler Asia's Most Influential Impact List, accolades like the GGEF Woman Eco Gamechanger and the Financial Times spotlighting her as one of the

"Women of the Future Southeast Asia Leading Lights," Christine's legacy as a global trailblazer is undeniable and a testament to her invaluable contributions.

Yet, amidst all these achievements, Christine remains grounded. Fluent in six languages, and having traversed over 75 countries, from the frigid terrains of the Arctic to the pristine wilderness of the Antarctic, her heart remains anchored in Singapore, where she plays her most cherished roles - a dedicated mother to four and a supportive wife.

In Christine Amour-Levar, the world doesn't just find a professional or an entrepreneur; it witnesses the journey of a visionary, continuously weaving a legacy of change, inclusion, and sustainability.







# Journey of *vision and determination*

**MALOU JANE POLANGCO** - CEO, NCB Cosmetics Trading LLC  
Clairine Beauty & Wellness Trading

*“It is remarkable what women can accomplish with just a little ambition.”*



M. Polangco believes that everyone should have access to powerful, nourishing skin care products that are kind to the body. She is proficient in handling business providing flexibility and support, a growth hacker with years of remarkable contributions and experience in sales and marketing in the market, is creative, sharp-

minded person with leadership & coaching skills with strong time-management skills and a work ethic She started her carrier way back in 2004-2005 a customer Representative in Boardway Hotel, UAE, she then continued with the same position in R Holding Real Estate Ajman, UAE 2006-2012.

When she started to have her family, she decided to stop working. Motherhood is the biggest blessing for any woman. However, it was also the most challenging phase of her life. Then many women have overcome the challenges of motherhood and prospered for it in their professional lives, and Ms. Polangco happens to be one of them.

As a stay-at-home mom, she started working on various business ideas such as selling luxury bags & skin care products, which became successful. She decided to start a firm of her own and had a vision of creating her own skin care brand products, today, her business NCB Cosmetics Trading LLC is quite a successful name. And yes, apart from managing her business she manages the demands of her 2 kids. She always want to inspire mothers and women. A little bit of motivation is all that you need to get your career back on track after motherhood. She has proven to everyone that even a stay-at-home mother can build a career time management is all you need.

Combining her passion and being an entrepreneur, she founded her skincare brand Clairine, Clairine is a Skincare brand product manufactured by Naturele Beaute Cosmetics and Pharmaceutical. Started in 2021 in the Philippines and expanded a branch in UAE in the same year. Her company soon began its path to leadership, creating & producing natural skin care products at world-class standards.

She believes that Filipinos love skincare and it is a necessity. Their goal is to have a healthy, glowing complexion. Her products embody those key approaches, as the products have a high-quality standard, and are very safe to use. Her team of chemists and pharmacists are constantly improving maximum natural formulations. She also made sure to make it as affordable as possible. She aims to offer the most beneficial solutions that fit all people's needs, thus, Improved products and innovative.

Ms. Polangco was working as a successful entrepreneur in the Philippines and the UAE, running several businesses. Despite being a mother of 2 and being the CEO of 2 companies it never stopped her from achieving her goal, In a short period, she received her first award; Maharlikang Filipino Award 2022

Leading Entrepreneur and Brand Building. She also achieved numerous award globally being The Global Iconic Aces Award 2022, Iconic Beauty & Skincare Brand, Asean Excellence Achiever Award 2022, Outstanding Quality Initiative in Beauty Cosmetics and Skin Care, Maharlikang Filipino Award 2023 Outstanding Beauty 8 Cosmetics Brand of the Year 2023, Top Global Influencer Award 2023, Dubai UAE, Woman of Strength and inspiring Business Leader 2023 Awards in OKADA. MANILA and recently "The Buri CEO of the year 2023. Dubai,

*"She has proven to everyone that even a stay-at-home mother can build a career time management is all you need".*







*“Being an entrepreneur can be quite lonely.  
When you put yourself into a situation  
where you’re surrounded by people who get you,  
It all becomes so much easier”.*

In 2023, she launched her second company, which is more focused on beauty health and wellness. The business had been growing and the team had growing exponentially. People were coming to ask for help and coaching. So, they started with a membership community for mentoring, and this was hugely successful and just kept building teams globally

She provides quality and effective products and Information conveniently - Clairine (Her company brand) provides community. “Being an entrepreneur can be quite lonely. When you put yourself into a situation where you're surrounded by people who get you, It all becomes so much easier”.

It's important not just for when you stumble, but also for when you hit your goals and are looking for that high-five. She benefits from the Clairine community just as much as the team and clients do.

With her busy business and hectic schedules, she remains selfless and never fails to continue exclusively involved successfully in big beauty pageant events and sponsorship such as Mr. & Miss Teen Philippines Independence Day 2023 Yearly pageant of Mrs. Universe 2021, 2022 and recently 2023 in UAE, Mrs. Philippines UAE 2023, Miss Earth Philippines 2021 Face of Le Flaire 2021. She was invited as one of the panel of Judges in many beauty pageants such as Mrs. Philippines UAE Ms. Teen Kalayaan 2023





# Advocacy to promote *a dying industry*

ANN ONG - International Multi Awarded, High Fashion Jewelry Designer



*“ My art is like nature- no flower nor seed grows  
with the same symmetry”*



Ann ONG Founder of Definitive Handcrafted Opulence a high fashion work of art jewelry based in Philippines having her works displayed at Asia Society Museum in New York at Park Avenue, special boutiques at Paris , Gstaad, Singapore , Moscow , and Atlanta Georgia.

Ann is an internationally acclaimed and multi awarded high fashion jewelry designer . She has won 3 consecutive KATHA AWARDS the most prestigious and highest award given to a Filipino designer . She won the NEW YORK NOW 2016 winter show the Best designer for sustainability with her saivaged wood minaudiere, for fashion. And her recent award and recognition at Paris Premiere Classe x Eyes On Talent year 2022. Her award was for her creativity for the minaudiere she designed and her mission to promote the works of her artisans and giving jobs to them. And her advocacy to continue promote handcrafting which is a dying industry.





*“ Nature always inspires me. I channel those inspirations to every piece I make.”*



Ann ONG has been consistently doing international trade shows since 2013 her first show was at Frankfurt Germany at Ambiente.

She has started her New York international trade shows 2015 with New York Now, Curate International Show and the SHWRM New York international trade show . For Paris she started 2016 at Maison & Objet and now she's focus at

Premiere Classe Paris shows during Paris Fashion Week , I love my job I have met Fashion Icon Iris Apfel and we became good friends . I was invited several times at her apartment at Park Avenue. And at one of my shows in Paris I met Carlo Rampazzi a famous architect and furniture designer that became my client and a good friend, I am always inspired to promote my artistry together with the heart and soul of my artisans.









# A Woman of *substance and purpose*

**CAROL OCAMPO MERCADO** - Charter President

*"It was difficult to start our business but with God's help, hard work, good workers, good clients, supportive banks, perseverance and tenacity, Jojo and I are blessed to grow our business and sustain simpler operation at this difficult time."*

From a few years ago, not very many women from privileged backgrounds grew up wanting to become building developers. But Carol is made of tougher stock. While women from previous generations were raised to bring up good children, create comfortable homes for their families while sacrificing their own dreams, she was thinking of even bigger dreams.





Carol grew up in the idyllic heart-shaped island in Southern Luzon called Marinduque. She is a descendant of the distinguished family of Juan Morente Nieva, Marinduque's first governor and his beautiful courageous wife, First Lady, Elvira Sarmiento Nieva. Her mother Asuncion, one of the younger children of Juan and Elvira molded her into a fine daughter while managing her pharmacy, other family-owned businesses and a loving wife to Dr. Rafael Ocampo, a caring and gentle Doctor of Medicine from Bulacan who was so popular in the provincial hospital specially with the poor as he was a compassionate doctor who cheerfully cared for the sick without expecting regular fees in return.

Carol attended grade school and high school at St. Paul's College, Manila and pursued her business degree in De La Salle University where she forged strong relationships with her classmates who have become good friends even today.

As faith would have it, she met Jojo Mercado, an architect who helped her achieve her dreams of not only constructing buildings but established their own successful company named Mercado Builders Development Corporation now growing from strength to

strength for the last 25 years that in 2018, she was recognized by the Global Filipina Women's Network and awarded the Most Influential Filipina Woman in the World for the Founder and Pioneer Award Category in London, UK together with other distinguished Filipino women from different countries.

Carol looks fragile because of her petite frame but she is a strong and lovely woman of focused dreams while also passionately engaging and committing in civic roles and building bridges for humanity through her active role as a Rotarian and ever active in high profile projects through her mastery in applying for Rotary Grants in her previous club where she was a charter member and now in her newly chartered rotary club, the Rotary Club of Makati Premier District. She was the District Grants Subcommittee Chair in Rotary Year 2019- 2020 where she was able to assist over 30 clubs to obtain financial grants from Rotary International thus changing the lives of the marginalized.

Filipinos in far-flung areas were reached with: building water systems, providing basic education, addressing health concerns and many more sustainable projects that today still benefit thousands of poor Filipinos.







She was Chairman of the Avoidable Blindness Project of Rotary International District 3830 in 2004. The project garnered the First Rotary International Award of Distinction for Public Relations through community service. She also authored many other grant projects like the Tuloy sa Don Bosco for Street Children by providing irrigation system and fishpond in 2000. Other notable projects are: the Save an Eye for your Eyes Only, which made the Santa Lucia Eye Bank Foundation of the Philippines, the very first state-of-the-art Eye Bank in South East Asia in 2002 (making it possible to screen quality corneas giving the gift of sight); Water for Health and Life providing a full water system and access to potable water benefitting over 300 families in two remote barangays in the province of Marinduque in 2013; and project proponent of Let's Save the Brain, a global grant which provided bedside monitors for stroke patients in PGH.

But what preoccupies Carol today aside from managing her triple A construction company? She has been passionate in helping the Philippine

Cancer Society Inc. For many years. Her latest accomplishment is providing two brand new Japan-made state of the art mobile clinics that shall conduct periodic breast and cervical cancer screening in marginalized communities in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces. Carol designed the program to be self-sustaining with the main objective of saving the lives of women, our mothers, and preventing devastation of Filipino families from losing their mothers.

Today the reality of the pandemic has hit us hard. Carol has therefore instituted strict health protocols in their construction company to ensure sustainability and providing financial support for their employees.

Together with Jojo, she has created "bubbles of safety" for all their project units and communities nationwide which has proven to be very effective. Carol shares, "It was difficult to start our business but with God's help, hard work, good workers, good clients, supportive banks, perseverance and tenacity, Jojo and I are blessed to grow our business and sustain simpler operation at this difficult time."

She has joyfully agreed to be featured in this milestone coffee table book titled "Giving Hearts: The Inspiring Stories of the Best Dressed Women and Men 2021". Carol is also delighted because BDWP Founder and Chairperson Helen M. Ong invited a known acclaimed author of many successful books for honorable personalities and

entities, Bing Nieva Carrion as Editor in Chief to write and conceptualize the book content.

The centerpiece of Carol's life is her family, her grandchildren, the growth of her company, and her charitable advocacies that uplift her heart as she tirelessly addresses to alleviate the plight of poor Filipinos specially during this epic pandemic.

Everyday offers new, magical moments and opportunities for Carol because her giving heart is allowing her the opportunity to touch lives-give faith and hope that tomorrow will bring a better life to the less privileged with their dignity and self respect intact as Filipino citizens one day at a time.







# Influence others *through actions and outlook*

DEMEE KOCH - CEO, Founder of DE MOI



Demee Koch worked tirelessly for more than two decades to lay the groundwork for her cosmeceutical business. This pursuit was sparked by a game-changing idea with the potential to profoundly transform people's lives.

This vision was realized in 2018 with the birth of DE MOI, a compassionate brand founded on principles of integrity and equity. DE MOI products exemplify ethical consciousness and environmental sustainability.



Koch passionately advocates for conscious beauty, inclusivity, empowerment, and societal influence in her role as a speaker, writer, and commentator specializing in beauty and entrepreneurship.

Koch's unwavering goal is to inspire positive change by educating people about the importance of making wise choices in supporting products that not only benefit society but also protect the welfare of animals and the environment.

DE MOI's presence quickly expanded in the following years, gracing the shelves of prestigious beauty retailers in Switzerland, various Arab countries, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and the Philippines. This expansion can be attributed to the brand's unwavering commitment to values that align with the ever-changing landscape of the beauty industry.

DE MOI continues to be at the forefront of

industry advancements that combine innovation and sustainability. Koch's journey into entrepreneurship was ignited by her personal experiences and moments of inspiration. These instances led her to recognize needs or opportunities grounded in her own observations. A resolute determination welled up within her to provide products in alignment with her core values and ethical principles, bridging a gap in the market for conscientious and cruelty-free beauty alternatives. The urge to effect positive change in people's lives and contribute to global betterment was deeply ingrained in her.

This impetus compelled her to craft products that not only benefit individuals but also contribute positively to society and the environment. Her motivation was fueled by the vision of empowering individuals through the realm of beauty. Her pursuit as a migrant entrepreneur has been propelled by the creation of products that boost self-confidence and self-care while also

championing inclusivity and empathy. Her goal was to challenge the industry's established norms and gradually revolutionize it. This entailed challenging conventional beauty ideals and practices, as well as introducing a new beauty paradigm that prioritizes ethics, sustainability and social responsibility.

Koch passionately advocates for conscious beauty, inclusivity, empowerment, and societal influence in her role as a speaker, writer, and commentator specializing in beauty and entrepreneurship. Through her contributions to Forbes Business Council, various social media channels, and other prestigious publications, she shares her leadership acumen, concepts, and unwavering dedication to nurturing a more comprehensive and conscious beauty sector. Her ambition is to become a source of inspiration for many people, to foster an ongoing drive to encourage others in their endeavors and to break down barriers within their respective fields.





She is also one of the authors of 'FWN Disrupt 4.0' and has recently released her book 'Becoming Miss Right.' This accomplishment adds depth to her perspective as she navigates the complexities of career, relationships, and personal growth. The book offers actionable advice and heartfelt support, allowing readers to become the best versions of themselves.

She faced prejudices and rejections as an immigrant woman from the Philippine islands. But she only wanted to improve the beauty industry by educating people about how brilliance knows no boundaries based on race or gender. As a Filipina, she knows how to find and take alternative paths in difficult situations, how to hold on and keep going even when the outcome appears to be slipping away. Life's difficulties are obstacles to overcome, puzzles to solve, or fears to confront. She encountered numerous setbacks before finally achieving her goals. Those setbacks, strangely enough, shaped her optimistic outlook on work and



entrepreneurship. Despite the widespread opposition to her efforts, she maintains a positive attitude that propels her forward.

The 45-year-old serial entrepreneur has fortified herself with a combination of qualities: bravery, unyielding resilience, and the ability to navigate uncertainty. This combination, along with her passion for creating impactful beauty products and championing important causes, has been the foundation of her journey. She has boldly embraced risks to carve a niche for herself in the cutthroat world of the beauty industry, bolstered by the ability to adeptly navigate intricacies and challenges through years of seasoned expertise. Koch believes that nearly everyone meets someone in their lifetime who inspires or facilitates their growth in some way. She, too, has most likely been influenced by someone who inspired her to discover her best qualities, accomplish extraordinary feats, or simply engage in self-improvement for personal fulfillment. While there is no one-size-fits-all formula for



becoming a source of inspiration or a beacon of success for others, she recognises the power of leading by example and devoting time to assisting others in their personal evolution and broadening of perspectives.

She carefully considers those individuals or aspects that fuel her own inspiration. Reflecting on the qualities required to energize those around her, she strives to incorporate these qualities into her own being, with the goal of shaping a positive influence on others through her actions and outlook.

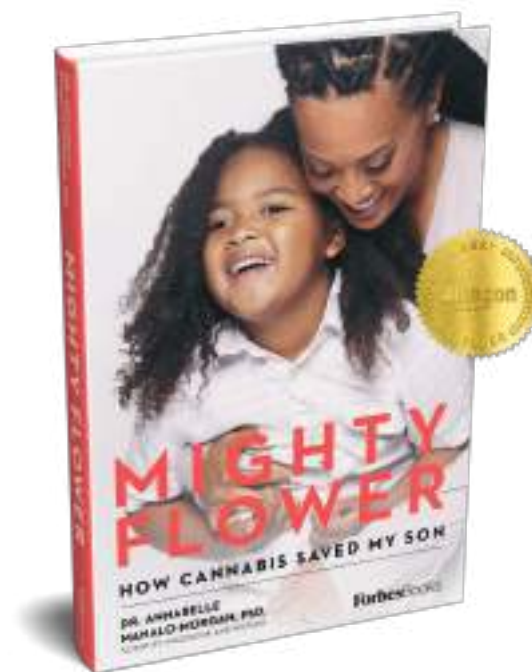






# The possibilities *of implementing cannabis*

DR. ANNABELLE MANALO MORGAN, PhD - Scientist, Educator, Author



*“Mighty Flower” defines me. It defines the life circumstances that have shaped me and helped me grow, and it defines my strength to not just overcome the challenges, but to incorporate them into my very substance- and to bloom. And at the same time, Mighty Flower defines the cannabis plant that this book is all about- a plant that has so much power and so much potential. It’s time to let cannabis bloom into everything it could be.*

*- Dr. Annabelle on why her ForbesBook is entitled Mighty Flower*



A native of Canada, Annabelle Manalo-Morgan, PhD balances life as a scientist, educator, author, and mother of five. An alumni of Dillard University of New Orleans, Louisiana and graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, Dr. Annabelle has completed an NIH clinical trial certification and began her graduate work at Georgetown University in Neuroscience. Dr. Annabelle has a doctorate in Cell and Development Biology from Vanderbilt University and focuses on genetic mutations that mimic the offset effects that chemotherapy has on heart disease. She has presented and published on the resulting cardiotoxicity as well as on the developing cardiac mesothelium. Since leaving

Canada at 17 years old, Dr. Annabelle has had a diverse set of unplanned experiences through higher education and a basketball dream that has helped her navigate into who she has become today.

In 2016, Dr. Annabelle faced an unimaginable tragedy when her newborn son suffered from a stroke. Over the course of his first few weeks of life, Macario experienced 200-500 seizures per day. There were no medication regimens that worked and ultimately, 38% of Macario's brain was removed when he turned 28 days old. Macario was predicted to suffer from right side paralysis, have limited functional capabilities

such as communication and memory, nor was he predicted to eat on his own. When Macario turned 6 months old, Dr. Annabelle formulated a medication to replace all her son's prescriptions and witnessed the miracle of Macario beating all odds.

Today, Macario is 7 years old and while still missing a large area of his brain, he walks, talks, plays, and eats like any other 2nd grader. Macario has no developmental deficits. Dr. Annabelle published her memoir, "Mighty Flower. How Cannabis Saved My Son", with ForbesBooks this February of 2023 detailing her story and what her new mission is in seeing "more stories like Macario's".





Dr. Annabelle now pursues the possibilities of implementing cannabis and/or plant compounds into current and traditional modern medicine while focusing on a model that expedites clinical trials at a lower cost through parallel research. She served as Tikun Olam USA's Chief Scientific Officer and started her own company, Masaya Medical Inc. in 2019.

She was recently on the board of directors and the lead scientific officer of a Nasdaq company called Flora Growth Corporation. From clinical trials on the quality of life of cancer patients to a solution or an "Epipen for Heart Disease", Dr. Annabelle serves as both an active biologist and a scientific liason to the commercial side consults on legislation and is lead on multiple clinical trials around the globe at both the government and academia level.

While advocating as an international speaker for medical cannabis backed by scientific rigor, Dr. Annabelle's focus is on a collaborative effort in translational science with contributions towards

precision-based medicine. She was selected as a Most Influential Filipina Women in the World 2022, and her book *Mighty Flower*, has recently published with ForbesBooks this February 2023 and has already achieved best seller status.

Dr. Annabelle credits her ability to balance her multifaceted life to her Filipino roots. In her memoir she writes about growing up with both her Lola and Mother who were relentless in their day to day lives. "They never ran out of energy and just never complained", she stated. And her father, Mr. Arturo Manalo would remind her often that her last name's tagalog meaning is to win. In *Mighty Flower* Dr. Annabelle adds, "So many times, I'd feel like I was on top of the world! And Dad would come shut that down.....the way Dad loved me, in a way that needed no words, was exactly what I needed to become me. It made me realize that I could always do better...despite what everybody else was saying or portraying to me. Dad made me expect more from myself. And to this day, I always do." She finds every aspect of her life as a gift. From being a mother to 5

(including 2 phenomenal FilAM student athletes), a touring bestselling author, speaker, a global scientific advisor, and as a wife of a Grammy award winning touring musician, Dr. Annabelle hopes that her family can help and inspire many around the globe







# Pioneer of *Holistic Healthcare*

**DR. CATHERINE SY LUIB** - Chiropractor and Acupuncture Physician



Dr. Catherine Sy Luib (also known as Babaylan Dayang Guro) is a renowned Filipina Chiropractor, Acupuncturist, Nutritionist, Herbalist, and Shamanic Medicine Practitioner in San Diego, California. She epitomizes the fusion of Eastern & Western integrated healthcare. Her Chiropractic neuromusculoskeletal specialty along with ancient practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Filipino Traditional Medicine (which she coins as “Native Hilot”), is

a testament to her dedication to holistic healing of the mind, body, spirit, and soul. The Luib Health Center, is officially the first and only Integrative Medicine & Holistic Wellness Center in the USA to promote, offer, and teach the fullness of Native Hilot. The Luib Health Center also includes - The House of Hilot, The House of Moxabustion, The House of Herbs, The House of Baybayin, and The House of Myths and Legends.

Born and raised in Cebu City, Dr. Luib has always connected strongly to her cultural roots. Growing up in her household, Dr. Luib's curiosity about religion, spirituality, leadership, travel, and alternative medicine was nurtured. Her academic pursuits culminated in a Doctor of Chiropractic degree, which she complemented with a Masters Degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine. This dual qualification became the cornerstone of her distinctive approach to healthcare. Additionally, she furthered with in-depth studies of Clinical Hypnotherapy, NeuroLinguistic Programming, Nutrition, Counseling, Tai Chi Chuan, Qi Gong, Yoga, Meditation, Breathwork, Functional Medicine, and Filipino Traditional Medicine (Native Hilot).

The hallmark of Dr. Luib's practice lies in harmoniously integrating all of the variety of aforementioned natural healing modalities. This innovative synthesis effectively addresses an array of conditions, ranging from physical discomfort to emotional, mental, spiritual, and soul imbalances. This approach underscores her unwavering belief in the body's intrinsic capacity for healing when understood, nourished, and provided with comprehensive care as well as in the understanding of energy, traumas, and the unseen.

Dr. Luib's impact transcends the walls of her wellness center, resonating deeply within the San Diego community and Filipinos throughout the

USA. Her practice functions as a sanctuary for those in search of holistic healing, spiritual nourishment, and cultural connection. By fostering genuine connections and prioritizing patient-centric care, she establishes a foundation of trust and empathy in her patient-practitioner relationships. Her commitment extends further as she champions holistic wellness through in-person/virtual workshops and retreats and hosting regular Philanthropic Medical Missions to the Philippines. Her dedication has garnered admiration from her peers and gratitude from her patients.

At the heart of Dr. Luib's practice is her patient-centric philosophy. Recognizing the individuality of each patient, she crafts personalized treatment plans that address physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. She also addresses the soul. Her empathetic approach encourages open dialogue, leading to partnerships built on compassion, empowerment, and mutual understanding.

Dr. Luib's influence extends beyond her practice, positioning her as a vocal advocate for holistic well-being. Utilizing social media, blogs, and public speaking engagements, she shares her insights with a broader audience. By reframing healthcare as a proactive and holistic endeavor, she inspires individuals to embrace balanced lifestyles, cultivate a deeper connection to what they consume, and for creating right relations.







Dr. Catherine Sy Luib's unflagging commitment to understanding the intricate facets of the human body, her nurturing of patient relationships, and her unwavering advocacy for holistic wellness have left an indelible mark on the San Diego community and beyond.

She was honored with a prestigious recognition for her Global Influence, Service & Footprint as 2018's "Most Influential Filipina Woman In The World" in London, 2018's "Woman Of Worth" in Los Angeles, her "Inspirational Filipino Immigrant" story featured in the New Americans Museum of San Diego, ABS CBN, TFC's "BUHAY" tv series, and the PBS "Out of the Boondocks" Docuseries. She was also selected by the Philippine Embassy in Washington DC in 2018 for the Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO) for her global legacy project in Filipino Traditional Medicine. Additionally, she was



awarded the 2019 Hiyas Award, a 2020 TOP Hats Nominee, featured on CBS8 News Highlight for 2022 AAPI Heritage Month, and received the 2022 FilAmChamber Cultural Bearer Award for her healing work in the community through Native Hilot.

Restoration of Filipino Indigenous memories, Reactivation of Filipino Traditional Medicine & Re-Membering the Connection To Ancestral Healing are her legacy projects. She encourages all to experience the Ancient Filipino Healing Arts, Philippine Healing Plants, and Therapeutic Herbs to help improve the health and healing of dis-eases. She believes that Indigenous Filipino Medicine holds a significant impact on natural healthcare delivery, progressing our collective human consciousness, and for the healing of sacred lands and ancestral traumas from a colonized past.

*By reframing healthcare as a proactive and holistic endeavor, she inspires individuals to embrace balanced lifestyles, cultivate a deeper connection to what they consume, and for creating right relations.*







# A Trailblazer *in HPB & Cancer Management*

**Dr. CATHERINE TEH, MD, MSC, FPCS, FRCS(ED)**  
**Pioneering Surgeon, Visionary Leader & Innovator**



*She pioneered a system that formulates the best strategies for cancer treatment while considering available resources and conducting risk-benefit analyses.*

Dr. Catherine Teh's illustrious career has been marked by groundbreaking achievements in the field of hepatopancreatobiliary (HPB) surgery, as well as her visionary leadership and innovative contributions to healthcare. As the first Asian woman accepted into the prestigious Les Compagnon Hepatobiliaire, a Society of world's best HPB Surgeons, she has shattered barriers and inspired countless individuals, all while leaving an indelible mark on patient care.

Dr. Teh's vision of collaborative cancer management led to the creation of awareness of the significance of the Multidisciplinary Tumor Board. By bringing together experts from various fields, she popularized a system that formulates the best strategies for cancer treatment while considering available resources and conducting risk-benefit analyses. Her innovative approach has become the gold standard, empowering oncologists, surgeons and other specialists to work together and make informed decisions for their patients timely, effective, safe and patient centered.

Beyond her practice, Dr. Teh serves as a mentor, training and educating younger surgeons in the complex specialty of hepatopancreatobiliary surgery. By sharing her expertise, she ensures a lasting impact on the field, inspiring others to pursue excellence in patient care.

Dr. Teh's exemplary leadership has brought

transformative changes in patient safety and elevated the standards of care. By fostering a culture of collaboration and accountability, she has instilled a sense of purpose among healthcare professionals, creating a safer and more compassionate healthcare system.

Dr. Teh's pioneering spirit has propelled HPB surgery in the Philippines to new heights. Introducing advanced techniques, such as laparoscopic approaches and fluorescent-guided HPB surgery, she has made complex Liver, Pancreatic and Biliary surgeries for cancer and other diseases more accessible and successful, significantly reducing mortality and morbidity rates and improving patients' quality of life.

Given the opportunity for several clinical fellowship and observership in advanced HPB surgery to Living Donor Liver Transplant (LDLT) at various centers in the world, Dr. Teh's keen leadership brought together the diverse

departments of the National Kidney & Transplant Institute (NKTi) and Makati Medical Center (MMC). Her visionary thinking gave birth to the Liver Centre of both NKTi and MMC, revolutionizing the HPB and liver transplant program and advancing the care for patients with liver diseases.

In 2015, Dr. Catherine Teh made history by becoming the first woman appointed as the Chair of the Department of Surgery at the National Kidney & Transplant Institute. Her appointment marked a significant milestone for gender equality and showcased her exceptional leadership skills and dedication to advancing her chosen field.

She was also recognised as one of the Most Influential Filipina as a thought innovator in 2017. She received several awards and accolades such as most outstanding Jubiliarian of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery in 2018, the







Distinguished Public Service Award in Advancing HPB surgery in the Philippines and Asia awarded by the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract in San Diego in 2022 amongst many others.

She co-founded the Philippine Association of HPB Surgeons and served as it's President during the challenging COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2021. She served as the founding President of the ASEAN Laparoscopic HPB Council 2020 to 2023 Dr Teh is also the first and only woman in the founding council of the International Laparoscopic Liver Society and serves as it's Chair of the committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

Her pioneering works in this male dominated field and many leadership roles locally and globally serves as an inspiration and role model.

During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Teh demonstrated her leadership by developing comprehensive surgical guidelines

and recommendations. Her forward-thinking approach ensured the safety of patients and healthcare professionals while continuing essential surgical procedures. Through her insights and expertise, she provided a roadmap for navigating the complexities of surgery during a global health crisis.

Amidst the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, Dr. Teh fearlessly took charge and spearheaded publications on surgical delays, providing critical insights for esteemed organizations. She crafted unique pathways and protocols within operating rooms, ensuring the mitigation of infection transmission for surgical patients.

Driven by her passion for integrating technology in healthcare, collaborating with engineers and IT specialists, Dr. Teh co-founded the Telemedicine Network of the Philippines in 2015. Taking advantage of her experience in telemedicine long before the onset of pandemic, she used this platform, through a comprehensive workshop series, she empowered healthcare professionals to

combat the pandemic head-on, covering infection prevention, COVID-19 management, surgical workflow, and effective triage systems.

In response to the harmful effects of surgical smoke during the pandemic, Dr. Teh ingeniously invented the "Teh Closed Suction Vacuum Smoke Evacuator." Its affordability and easy assembly made it a game-changer in local hospitals and resource-constrained settings worldwide, leaving a lasting impact on the surgical landscape.

Dr. Catherine Teh's unwavering dedication, impactful leadership, collaborative spirit and innovative inventions have not only saved lives during the COVID-19 pandemic but have also set the stage for a future where healthcare meets challenges with creativity and resilience.

Her remarkable journey serves as an inspiration for generations of healthcare professionals to dream bigger, push boundaries, and make a significant difference in patient care.





# A Tale of *Dedication*

**Dr.MARILYN (Wafa) ROSCALES KASIMIEH** - Senior Executive Cultural Event  
IACAD, Mohammed Bin Rashid Center for Islamic Culture, Government of Dubai

*We live in a country with a great legacy of cultural heritage, forming a solid foundation,  
and inspired by the values passed down from their leaders to societies throughout the ages.*

Marilyn “Wafa” Roscales Kasimieh Ph.D., a Filipino migrant who arrived in Dubai in 1988, embarked on her journey with a simple aspiration: to provide a better life for her family. Over the span of 35 years, her life in Dubai has transformed into a remarkable tale of achievement, community service, and dedication.

Today, Wafa Kasimieh holds a senior executive position at a government department in Dubai, which serves as a testament to her dedication and hard work. In addition to her government role, she plays an active role in managing a restaurant business alongside her Palestinian husband. Despite her busy schedule In 2001 she decided to study Islamic Principle at the Preston University in Ajman, UAE (a branch of the Preston University, USA) In addition, her contributions extend far beyond her professional life, as she is deeply involved in charity work, aiming to make a difference in the lives of those in need

One notable recognition of her exceptional contributions came in 2010 when she received the prestigious Presidential Banaag Award. This award, given to Filipinos overseas, acknowledges their outstanding achievements and contributions to both their home country and abroad. The following year, she was honored with the Bagong Bayani Award, further recognizing her significant contributions by the Philippine government.

Despite her residence in Dubai, Wafa Kasimieh remains dedicated to her homeland, the Philippines. She supports a high school in the Iloilo province, where she has provided scholarships to more than 100 high school and university students over five years.

Her commitment to helping her compatriots doesn't stop there. Through her work with the Dubai Government over the past 27 years, she

offers support to Filipinos in local jails, providing counseling and spiritual guidance.

Through her dedicated service, Wafa Kasimieh has facilitated donations from individuals and organizations to help cover airfare for Filipinos returning home and provide assistance to those in need. She also assists fellow Filipinos, particularly those from her hometown of Lambunao, in finding employment opportunities in the UAE through her group, Lambunaonons in the UAE, which boasts approximately 150 members, with the majority residing in Dubai.

One of her notable qualities is her commitment to addressing labor-related problems faced by Filipinos in the UAE. She refers them to the relevant authorities, showcasing her generosity in both time and financial support.

Wafa Kasimieh's journey is a testament to her transformation from a young, ambitious migrant

seeking a better life to a community leader making a significant impact in both Dubai and the Philippines. Her dedication to charity work, commitment to supporting her compatriots, and her efforts to strengthen the bonds between the expatriate community and the UAE Government during Ramadan showcase her unwavering commitment to helping others.

In addition to her community service, Wafa Kasimieh has ventured into the world of advocacy and leadership. Her involvement in initiatives like #Expo2020 Dubai's Women's Pavilion demonstrates her dedication to promoting women's empowerment and meaningful dialogue on a global scale.

Her efforts to connect international women's communities with the government of Dubai reflect her commitment to advancing women's rights and opportunities.







Furthermore, her educational journey is a testament to her determination. Despite a demanding schedule as a working mother, wife, and businessperson, she pursued a master's degree in Islamic Principles at Preston University in Ajman, UAE. Her dedication to higher education aligns with her lifelong commitment to self-improvement and excellence.

Wafa Kasimieh attributes her success to her family and her faith. Her conversion to Islam in 1990 was a pivotal moment that opened new doors in her personal and professional life, enabling her to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Her role at the Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department in Dubai allowed her to empathize with those on their spiritual journeys, further fueling her passion for her work.

Throughout her journey, Wafa Kasimieh has embraced challenges with an open heart and a results-oriented mindset. She welcomes

accountability and sets high standards for herself, a quality she values in leadership. Her numerous certificates of appreciation and plaques reflect the recognition she has received from various institutions and organizations for her outstanding contributions.

Amidst her already impressive array of accomplishments, Wafa Kasimieh has also ventured into the world of entrepreneurship, creating her own perfume business known as 'WafaQ.' This fragrant endeavor showcases her passion for creativity and innovation, as well as her commitment to providing high-quality products to her community.

'WafaQ' has quickly gained recognition for its unique and captivating scents that resonate with the diverse cultures and backgrounds of Dubai. Wafa Kasimieh's perfume line has become a symbol of her dedication to fostering connections and unity among people of different origins through the power of fragrance. Her

entrepreneurial spirit aligns perfectly with her mission to empower others and make a positive impact in both Dubai and the Philippines.

As she reflects on her four decades of service, Wafa Kasimieh draws inspiration from the leadership style of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, emphasizing ethics, knowledge, and excellence as the sources of true leadership. She remains dedicated to her mission of contributing to the development of her department and giving back to the community she considers herself a part of.

Wafa Kasimieh's remarkable journey from a young migrant with dreams of a better life to a distinguished community leader and advocate is a testament to her unwavering dedication, boundless compassion, and tireless commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of others.

Her story serves as an inspiration to all who strive to create a better world through service and leadership.





# The Journey of *Vision and Tenacity*

**GABRIEL JOHN RIMANDO** - Filipino Institute Group of Companies



In the vast landscape of entrepreneurial endeavors, some stories stand out, not just for their success but for the impact they have on communities and the inspiration they offer. One such tale is that of Gabriel John Rimando, the visionary behind the Filipino Institute Group of Companies.

When Gabriel founded the Filipino Institute in 2015, he wasn't just launching a new venture; he was laying the cornerstone for a movement. Recognizing a gap in the educational landscape for the Filipino community in Dubai, Gabriel set forth to provide them with tools and resources to succeed.

The Filipino Institute aimed to empower through education and skill development, but its goals stretched far beyond. The vision was to provide an environment where aspirations could be nurtured and dreams realized.

Every startup faces its set of obstacles, and the Filipino Institute was no exception. From dealing with limited funding to navigating the operational intricacies of a new entity in a foreign land, the path was laden with hurdles. Yet, what sets an entrepreneur apart is not the absence of challenges but the mettle to overcome them. Gabriel, with his indomitable spirit, steered the ship through rough waters, ensuring that the institute's vision remained the North Star.

The success of the Filipino Institute in Dubai wasn't the end; it was the catalyst for further growth. Recognizing the resonating impact of the Institute, the decision to expand was clear. Soon, branches emerged in Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Bur Juman, JLT, and Barsha. Each new location was more than just a physical presence; it was a testament to the Filipino Institute's commitment to making quality education and skill enhancement accessible to all.

While education remained the core, Gabriel's entrepreneurial spirit wasn't confined to one domain. The pandemic presented challenges but also highlighted opportunities. Saint Zita Cleaning Services was conceptualized and

launched to address the newfound emphasis on sanitation and cleanliness.

Media, with its vast reach, was the next frontier. With Dubai Vibes Magazine and later Kasosyo Magazine, the group celebrated the achievements of expatriates and Filipino entrepreneurs. These publications weren't just about stories; they were about aspirations, dreams, and the journey to achieving them.

The healthcare sector's growing demand was another realm that Gabriel ventured into. Caredant, a home health care center, was born out of a need to provide quality training for caregivers and nursing assistants. It was another step towards community empowerment and service.

Understanding the universal language of food and its power to connect, the Filipino Institute Group of Companies embarked on a culinary journey. The transformation of Shokudo Restaurant to Bulgogi Grille Restaurant was not just a rebranding exercise; it was a mission to provide a genuine Korean dining experience. The subsequent expansion of this culinary delight to Timog, Cavite, and Valenzuela in the Philippines underlined the group's commitment to quality and authenticity.

Today, looking back at the tapestry of achievements, challenges, innovations, and

expansions, the journey of the Filipino Institute Group of Companies seems nothing short of monumental. At its helm, Gabriel John Rimando stands as a beacon of inspiration for countless aspiring entrepreneurs. His tale is a testament to what vision, paired with tenacity, can achieve.

Every branch opened, every magazine published, every service launched echoes the ethos of the group and its founder – to empower, inspire, and make a lasting impact. As we chronicle this journey, we are reminded that entrepreneurship is not just about business; it's about vision, resilience, community, and, most importantly, making a difference.

In the chapters of history, the Filipino Institute Group of Companies, with its multifaceted endeavors, will be remembered not just for its success but for its contribution to reshaping narratives and inspiring dreams. It stands as a testament that with conviction and commitment, boundaries can be transcended and horizons expanded.





Having built a strong foundation in education, media, healthcare, and culinary sectors, Gabriel turned his sights towards fostering an environment that would facilitate other aspiring entrepreneurs. Recognizing the importance of mentorship and networking, he initiated platforms and events where successful business people and budding entrepreneurs could connect, share experiences, and learn.

In an ever-evolving world, staying static is akin to moving backward. For Gabriel and the Filipino Institute Group, innovation was always at the forefront. The group continually sought to understand emerging trends, technologies, and methodologies. They invested in research and development, ensuring that their offerings, whether in education or the culinary world, remained top-notch and relevant.

While many organizations understand the importance of giving back, for Gabriel, community engagement was more than a corporate responsibility – it was a personal mission. He initiated several community programs, scholarships for deserving students, and outreach initiatives that provided support to the marginalized sections of society. For Gabriel, the success of his ventures was measured not just by profit margins but by the positive impact they had on the community.

In a world grappling with environmental

challenges, Gabriel recognized the importance of sustainable practices. He integrated eco-friendly practices across all branches and ventures of the Filipino Institute Group. From sustainable sourcing in their restaurants to introducing courses on environmental awareness in their institutes, the emphasis was clear: building a sustainable future was paramount.

The success in the UAE was just the beginning. With a proven model and a reputation for excellence, Gabriel began exploring opportunities beyond the shores of the UAE. Preliminary talks, partnerships, and collaborations in other Asian countries and even Europe hinted at a global expansion. The dream was not just to replicate the success but to tailor it to the unique needs of each region, creating a global brand rooted in local understanding.

The story of Gabriel John Rimando and the Filipino Institute Group of Companies is a compelling reminder that dreams, when pursued with passion, can lead to legacies. From a singular institute in Dubai to a conglomerate with diverse interests and a global footprint, the journey has been nothing short of spectacular.

However, beyond the business success, it's the intangibles that stand out — the lives touched, the dreams realized, the communities empowered. As we chronicle this ongoing journey, we are constantly reminded of the power of vision,

perseverance, and the relentless spirit of entrepreneurship.

In Gabriel's own words, "Our journey is not defined by the destinations we reach but by the milestones we create, the challenges we overcome, and the lives we touch along the way."

As we look forward to the future chapters of this saga, one thing is clear: the journey of the Filipino Institute Group of Companies, under Gabriel's leadership, is far from over. It's a story that continues to inspire, motivate, and blaze new trails.







# A Youth Advocate *and Changemaker*

IZABELLA FAYE LEBIG - Student, Author and Public Speaker



## *Empowering Tomorrow: The Phenomenal Journey of Izabella Faye Lebig*

In a world that often questions the potential of young minds, Izabella Faye Lebig stands as an irrefutable testament to the boundless capabilities that youth possess. At just fourteen years old, Izabella has embarked on a journey that has not only captured hearts but has also made a tangible impact

across numerous lives. A year 10 student at the Cambridge International School in Dubai, her story is one of inspiration, determination, and exceptional achievement that has left an indelible mark on the realms of literature, public speaking, philanthropy, and youth empowerment.



The journey of Izabella Faye Lebig encompasses literary brilliance, advocacy, philanthropy, and a commitment to empowering youth.

Izabella's accomplishments stretch beyond the realm of writing and speaking, encompassing a diverse array of fields. Among her many accolades, she was recognized at the Distinguished Women Achiever Awards by De Monfort University Dubai, a testament to her achievements that rival even the most accomplished individuals. The 2023 Emirates Festival of Literature featured her as a launchpad author, where she not only shared her work but also had the privilege of hosting events alongside renowned authors. The Promising Youth Award she received at the WeHEIS Awards 2022 recognized her dedication to making her

community better and positions her among accomplished individuals in various fields.

Izabella's journey is rooted in a commitment to effecting change that transcends borders. This visibility extended to her feature in The Xpats Insiders Magazine Volume 3, where she shared insights into her journey as a young published author. Her initiatives have also touched lives across the globe. Her philanthropic endeavors extend to Pughanan Integrated School, a remote school in the Philippines where she partnered to establish a Reading Center for children of farmers, enabling access to literacy and knowledge. Her collaboration with organizations like the Friends of Cancer Kids Iloilo Foundation and the Philippine Consulate where she shared proceeds of her books to help those in need exemplifies her dedication to championing causes close to her heart.

Beyond the accolades and accomplishments, Izabella Faye Lebig embodies the spirit of youth empowered to shape a better future. She stands as a living testament to the potential that lies within each individual, regardless of age, to drive change and inspire those around them. With her third book on the horizon, the completion of the Alex Hades Trilogy signals the culmination of one chapter in Izabella's journey and the promise of many more inspiring chapters to come.

As if these accomplishments weren't enough,

Izabella's influence permeated the airwaves as she graced the Dubai Eye 103.8 Radio, sharing her insights on both her books and her philanthropic endeavors. Her recognition extended to the prestigious Mohammed Bin Rashid Library, where her book found its place among esteemed authors.







*The journey of Izabella Faye Lebig encompasses literary brilliance, advocacy, philanthropy, and a commitment to empowering youth.*

Remarkably, despite her age, Izabella has already taken on the mantle of a resource speaker. Her participation in international forums, such as the International Authors and Coaches Forum in Dubai and the IPON (Savings) Conference 2022 in the Philippines, is a testament to her ability to captivate audiences with her wisdom and eloquence. Her role as the youngest resource speaker in Sunlife Insurance Company's webinar, "Suntalks 2.0," showcased her potential to reach and inspire thousands across the world.

Izabella's brilliance is also mirrored in her scholastic and intellectual pursuits. Earning a Silver Award at the 2021 Queens Commonwealth Essay Competition, she joined the ranks of illustrious writers under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

On top of her being a consistent honor student at school, her performance in the World Scholars Cup, has been nothing short of astounding, with

multiple trophies and medals validating her intellect and prowess in debate. In all her accomplishments, from her literary ventures to her influential talks, Izabella Faye Lebig emerges as a shining example of determination, compassion, and limitless potential. As she continues to inspire youths globally, her story stands as a reminder that age is but a number and that the pursuit of one's dreams can yield truly extraordinary results.

As Izabella continues her journey, there's no doubt that her achievements will inspire generations to come. Her name is etched not only in the annals of accomplishment but in the hearts of those she touches with her words, actions, and unwavering spirit. With the future in her hands, Izabella Faye Lebig exemplifies the transformative power of youth and the limitless potential that lies within each individual determined to make a difference.







# Revolutionizing *the Beauty Industry*

JESI MENDEZ - Celebrity Stylist



*It is a living testament to the relentless pursuit of excellence  
within the beauty and grooming industry...*

In the vibrant and competitive beauty industry of the Philippines, there exists a name that has consistently shone as a beacon of excellence and sophistication – Jesi Mendez Salon. With a legacy spanning over five decades, Jesi Mendez Salon has transcended mere recognition to become

synonymous with quality and innovation in the beauty and grooming sector of the country. This is the captivating journey of how Jesi Mendez Salon evolved from a modest Buendia salon into an illustrious franchise empire, raising the bar for quality and service in the process.



The story commences with Jesi Mendez himself, the visionary founder and owner of Jesi Mendez Salon. His odyssey into the world of beauty began in 1975 when he secured his International Cosmetology license through the California Board Exam in the sunny state of California, USA. However, Jesi's thirst for knowledge and unwavering commitment to excellence fueled his relentless pursuit of further education and skills enhancement through advanced courses and global seminars.

Jesi Mendez's tireless dedication and passion for his craft did not go unnoticed. His exceptional talents earned him numerous accolades, both locally and on the international stage. A watershed moment arrived in 2002 when Hair Asia bestowed upon Jesi Mendez

Salon the prestigious title of one of the "10 Finest Salons." This recognition solidified Jesi Mendez's status as the ultimate authority in the beauty domain in the Philippines.

At the core of Jesi Mendez Salon's evolution is the decision to expand through franchising, birthing the Jesi Mendez Salon Franchise with a mission to elevate professionalism and standards in the Philippine beauty industry. Prospective franchisees, making an investment ranging from Php 3,000,000 to Php 4,000,000, are guided towards locations covering a minimum of 75 square meters in bustling malls or high-visibility free-standing spots. The franchise package encompasses corporate logo and brand use, an impeccable reputation, start-up support, site selection expertise, turnkey construction and design, a proven

operations system, a comprehensive operations manual, international standard training, local market promotion assistance, access to premium salon products, grand opening assistance, and ongoing guidance, all serving as a testament to Jesi Mendez Salon's unwavering commitment to franchisee success, empowering entrepreneurs and continuing the legacy of beauty excellence.

The origins of Jesi Mendez Salon can be traced back to Buendia, where a humble salon first opened its doors, specializing in expert bridal makeup. The reputation of Jesi Mendez Salon spread like wildfire as clients marveled at the transformative experiences it offered. Over the years, the salon underwent a remarkable evolution, expanding its presence to 12 branches strategically located in high-end malls, hotels, and bustling town centers.



*Jesi Mendez Salon has not only set new standards for quality and service but also continues to inspire and shape the future of beauty in the Philippines.*

Jesi Mendez Salon's clientele is a diverse tapestry that includes celebrities, models, young professionals, students, housewives, and even discerning male clients.

The salon's comprehensive array of services caters to the diverse beauty needs of its patrons, offering an extensive menu ranging from haircuts, hair coloring, perming, and hair treatments to makeup services, nails, waxing, plucking, facials, and even convenient home services. Irrespective of their clientele's background, Jesi Mendez Salon remains unwavering in its commitment to delivering unparalleled quality and service.

Jesi Mendez Salon is more than just a salon; it is a living testament to the relentless pursuit of excellence within the beauty and grooming industry. It transformed from a modest Buendia salon into a high-end franchise empire, setting new benchmarks for quality and service throughout the Philippines.

Through its pioneering franchising initiative, Jesi Mendez Salon is not merely changing the fortunes of aspiring beauty entrepreneurs but also reshaping the beauty landscape of the Philippines. The legacy of Jesi Mendez lives on, serving as a beacon of inspiration for a new generation of beauty professionals who aspire to

infuse their craft with passion, expertise, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. In conclusion, Jesi Mendez Salon's remarkable journey is a testament to the transformative power of dedication and passion within the beauty industry.

From its humble beginnings to its position as a high-end franchise empire, Jesi Mendez Salon has not only set new standards for quality and service but also continues to inspire and shape the future of beauty in the Philippines. Jesi Mendez Salon is a living legacy that reminds us all of the boundless potential within the pursuit of beauty and excellence.







# Bootstrapping to *Million-Dollar Businesses*

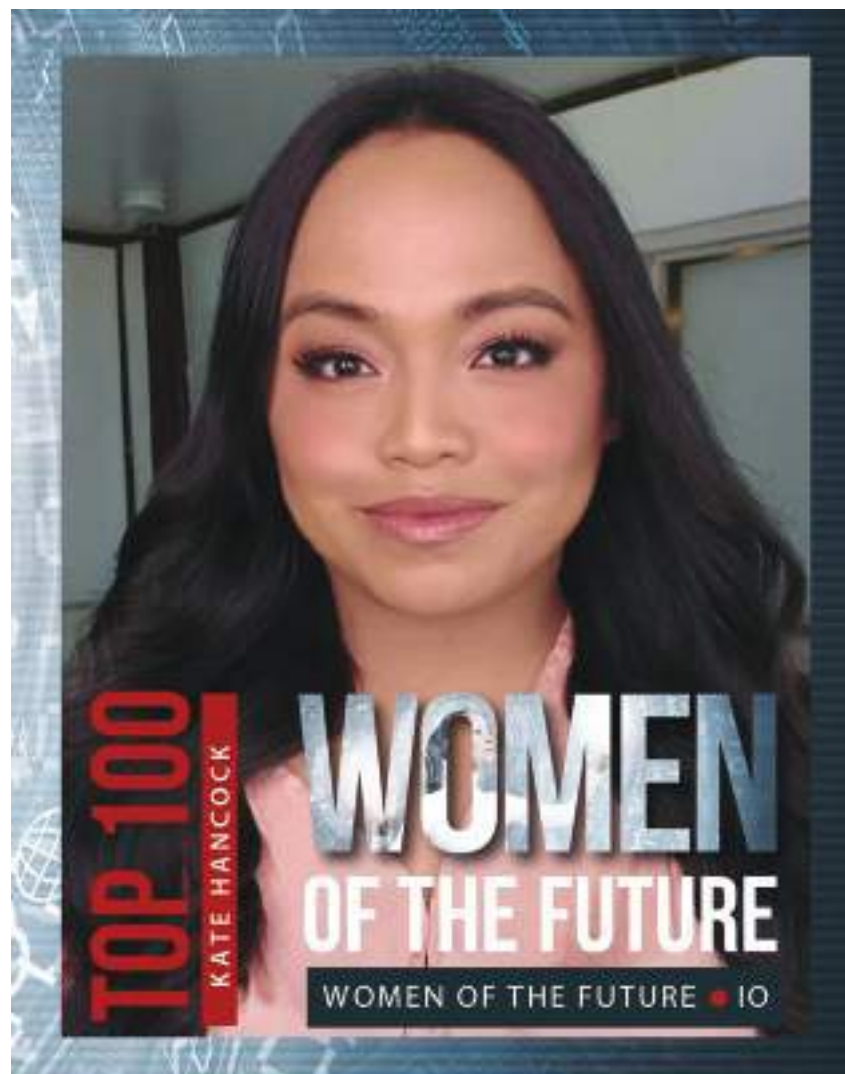
KATE HANCOCK- Serial Entrepreneur & international TEDx Speaker





Kate Hancock is a self-made entrepreneur and visionary, whose unwavering drive and entrepreneurial spirit have propelled her to the forefront of business success. With a starting capital of just \$20, she built her first company from the ground up, growing it to over a million dollars in revenue in 12 months and 8 figures in total online sales. Today, she is recognized as one of the Top 100 Women of the Future, and a Harvard Business School Web3.0 Speaker.

Kate's approach to business is unorthodox, as she is constantly exploring new frontiers and finding ways to reshape the future of her industry. Her innovative spirit has earned her a place on the advisory board for various tech projects, and her expertise and insights have made her a sought-after contributor to Entrepreneur Magazine.



*Kate Hancock's journey embodies the spirit of tenacity, innovation, and global impact. Her multifaceted accomplishments across industries, her resonating presence on prestigious platforms, and her role in fostering communities of entrepreneurship solidify her as an unparalleled force in the modern business landscape.*





*Kate has been a guest expert on CNN International and a speaker at TEDx events, inspiring others to reach their full potential and make a lasting impact.*

Beyond her own businesses, Kate is a leader in her field, sharing her wisdom and experiences as a sought-after speaker and influencer. She has been a guest expert on CNN International and a speaker at TEDx events, inspiring others to reach their full potential and make a lasting impact.

Kate's story is one of perseverance and determination, and a testament to the power of hard work and visionary thinking. Her unwavering spirit and unrelenting drive have

earned her a place among the top entrepreneurs of her generation, and her businesses continue to thrive, changing the world for the better."

Despite her many achievements, Kate remains grounded, always striving to do better, to be better, and to leave a lasting legacy. She is a true pioneer of entrepreneurship and innovation, and her story is one of perseverance, determination, and triumph







# Motivating factor *for the teams*

MARIA SUZETTE G. GEMINIANO - Marketing Manager, Hotel Sogo Group



*“I remember during my childhood, I studied ballet, swimming, piano lessons, arts and design. I am fond of drawing landscapes, different scenarios and dresses”.*

Maria Suzette Gatchalian Geminiano, also called Sue or Zette by colleagues and friends. Born in Quezon City, Metro Manila on July 4, 1974. Her father Jaime M. Geminiano is a rubber craft businessperson and her mother was late Gloria Gatchalian

also a businesswoman when she was still alive. “I remember during my childhood, I studied ballet, swimming, piano lessons, arts and design. I am fond of drawing landscapes, different scenarios and dresses”.



My goal when I was young was to be an architect, however, my mom persuaded me to be a nurse, and so I took up nursing. Though Nursing was not really my chosen career, I was able to perform well and finished the course. Passed the board exam and the US state board.

I had to work and earn back then, so I decided to work as a Medical Representative in a pharmaceutical company, I was doing my own promo materials back then and I was recognized by it, hitting my sales target consistently because of the marketing strategies that I have been doing. Worked as an advertising and marketing assistant, thereafter and continued my career in marketing.

As a marketing person, I tried different industries, then became a National Sales and

Marketing Manager of another pharmaceutical company and Creative Director and Operations Head of an advertising company.

Heading towards the marketing career, I believe that I should hone my skills further by reading and studying. Developed more by attending seminars and finished a Digital Marketing Course via Simplilearn modules, of Wharton University (online studies). In addition, continue to study at Asian Institute of Management for Business Analytics.

I am an action-oriented and performance driven individual offering extensive leadership skills and the crucial ability to function well under pressure and in fast-paced business environments. I am adept at executing any tasks associated with the job.

As the Corporate Marketing Head, I have demonstrated numerous times that I am a reliable person with proven track record of success in accomplishing the assigned tasks and targets set for all the hotel brands of Global Comfort Group. I am able to organize and motivate the marketing staff to stay on task and ensure all the marketing efforts be implemented that lead the whole team to accomplish the set projects and obtain its objectives.

I can humbly say that I possess a good data and market analytic ability that I was able to hone through the years in different industry and market environment which also paved the way to a sound business and market strategizing technique which I used as tool in developing marketing plan and activities.





*I love and enjoy learning new things, I am proud to say that I spearheaded the set up of the chatbot, food ordering system and the online room reservation*

My good strategizing ability made me create or conceptualize advertising campaigns, like the concept of “Dahil Mahal Kita gusto Ko sa Sogo Ka”, modesty aside, I was the one who conceptualized this campaign coming from the objective, not only to compete with room rates but to have a relevant message linking the thought of spending a little more for a quality product and services. The creation of message using "Eur" word instead of "Your" Hotel for Eurotel is also a sample of creativity. The creation of live "Astrogirl" was also my idea including other campaigns made for Dreamworld.

focused, and composed under pressure, always putting the company's interests first. Being prepared and thoroughly researching the topic, before the interview to ensure I can provide accurate and insightful responses.

Being the spokesperson for an organization requires more than just excellent communication skills. It demands a deep understanding of the company's values, mission, and objectives and an ability to articulate these effectively to various audiences. Demonstrated my ability to effectively convey complex information and ideas to a range of stakeholders, including those who may not be familiar with the brand's products or services.

In terms of technical know how, since I love and enjoy learning new things, I am proud to say that I spearheaded the set up of the chatbot, food ordering system and the online room reservation.

Throughout my career, I have successfully developed and implemented marketing campaigns that have improved the public image and increased brand awareness of the companies and brands I have handled.



I have a good communication skill, is essential in my position . n my current position, I have been into an average of 10 interviews per year and I believe that I was able to communicate the brand's message well, and establish a good public image of the brand. Over 20 years' experience in the field, enabled me to effectively communicate complex ideas and strategies to multiple parties.

Handling interviews can be challenging, especially in high-pressure situations with a lot at stake. I have learned to stay calm,







# “Queen M”

## *A symbol of kindness & simplicity*

**MARLYN FLORES CASTRO - Partner -Pinas Cargo, Pinas Travel, Pinas Spa & Beauty Center and Pinas Gold**



*“All of us have our own talents, skills and ability to succeed in life just trust God and His process.”*

Marlyn Flores Castro is a 44yrs old lass from Angeles City, Pampanga and a graduate of Bachelor of Business Administration Major in Finance and Management Accounting. Second in a brood of twelve siblings, she assumed the bread winner role in the family at a young age. She came to Dubai in 2005 for a greener pasture with a goal to elevate herself & to uplift the status of her family in the Philippines.



Her OFW journey in the UAE started as an ordinary logistics employee for 9 years. She juggled her time with work and several part time jobs like car lift service, food catering and as a travel agent. Armed with big hopes and dreams she knew that with hard work and determination

she will achieve her dream to build a house for her family who experienced being evicted from a property they didn't own.

In 2014 she took the opportunity to open up a business with her business partner Nehal Thakkar- PINAS CARGO EXPRESS and Clearing LLC, a cargo company that sends Balikbayan Boxes to the Philippines. It catered to Dubai based Kabayans at first and eventually grew bigger catered all the emirates of UAE.

On the other hand, Pinas Express International Distribution and logistics Inc. – A Philippine based company of Pinas Cargo was also established to manage the distribution of the balikbayan boxes in the entire country.

The company she owned now evolved into PINAS Group of Companies in UAE comprising Pinas Cargo, Pinas Travel, Pinas Spa and Beauty Center and Pinas Gold. Not only that She was able to franchise as well 15 stores of Mister Donut Phils in Pampanga area. Both Philippines & UAE businesses were able to give employment to total of 140 staffs in UAE & 260 staffs in the Philippines

In gratitude for the countless blessings from God the PINAS Group has its own CSR programs, one of which is the Pinas Cargo scholarship given to deserving students in the Philippines who's parents are financially incapable to support them but are willing to finish their studies, and this program is ongoing until now.







Marlyn, known as Queen M to her staff believe that “all of us have our own talents, skills and ability to succeed in life Just trust God and His process.” She also believes that success is when you Help other people be successful too because it is lonely if you are alone at the top.

PINAS Group is really proud and grateful to have

their CEO as one of thriving Filipinas in the UAE who was just recently awarded by FILSOC Gawad Pinoy 2023 as one of Most Outstanding Entrepreneurs in UAE and by Asia's Pinnacle Award as one of Asia's Passionate and Renowned CEO.

Marlyn loves Cooking, reading, listening to educational clips, travel & baking.

She says “While at work I am always active and dynamic. I have to show my entire team my assertiveness, problem solving abilities, full of ideas about our future plan and risk-taker.

I have 2 sons (eldest John Mark 9yrs old/Isaac 2yrs old) with my partner Nehal Thakkar”.







# The world *is his stage*

**RIAN FERNANDEZ ATELIER** - Fashion designer - Alcala

*Perceived as a designer, he is likened to a museum filled with a thousand masterpieces colored by joys, ripened by pain. together with his countless blessings, his artistry has brought him to places.*







*A designer of Miss Universe candidates for the past 7 years up to the present namely Miss Universe Thailand, Canada, Cambodia and Malta. Also a designer of Miss World Chile, Guinea and Nicaragua. He made the most talked about dress of Miss Thailand*





Rian always had the heart for the arts. The expressive quality of his personality can be best seen through his masterworks. Perceived as a designer, he is likened to a museum filled with a thousand masterpieces colored by joys, ripened by pain. together with his countless blessings, his artistry has brought him to places.

He had his fashion studies at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore. A celebrity fashion designer and a wedding couturier from the majestic Philippines. His ensemble was featured in Vogue Italia magazine. A piece of his garment was exhibited in Music Through Your Veins in London, England. His artistic juices continued upon entering in another venture. A designer of

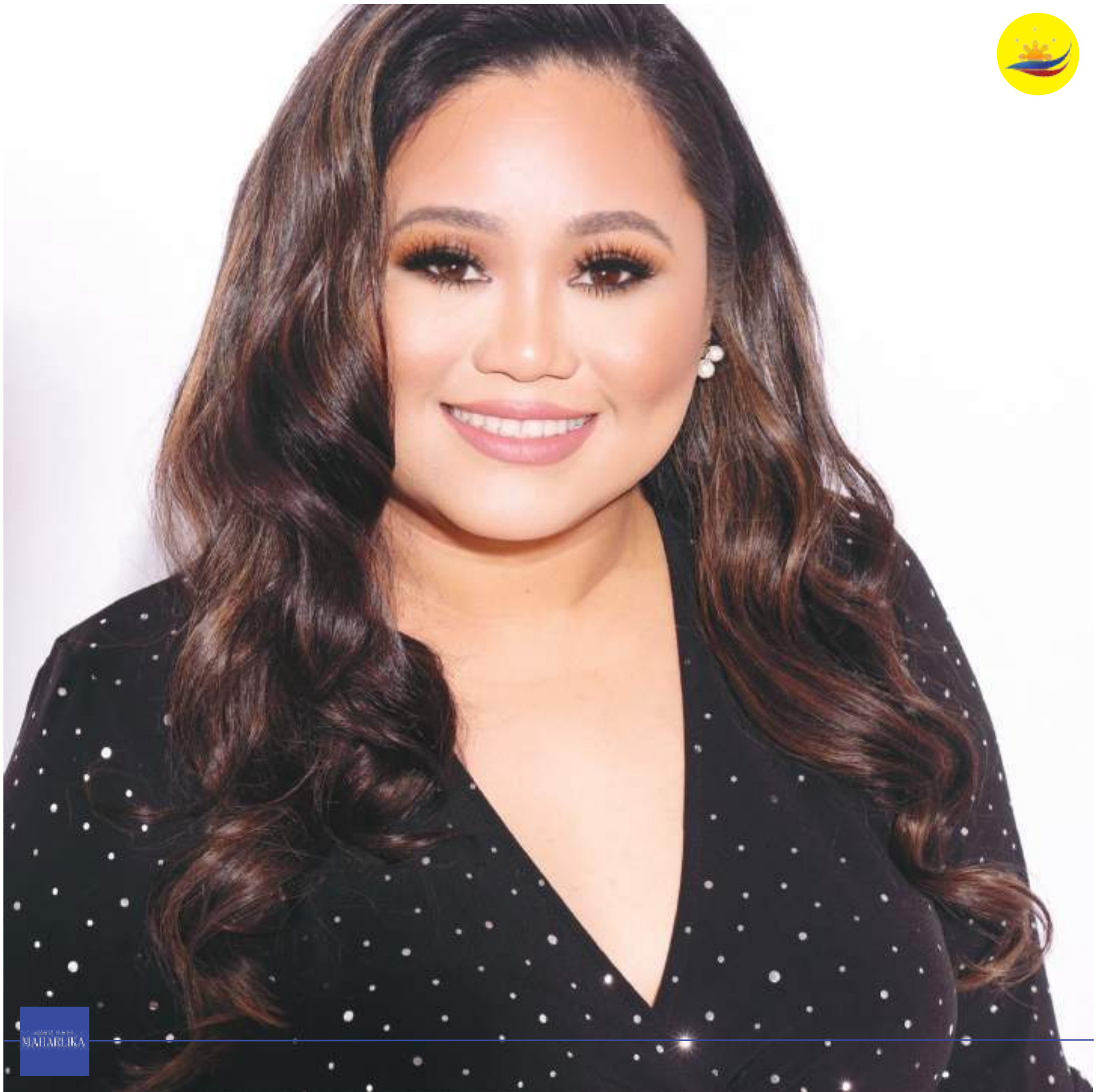


Miss Universe candidates for the past 7 years up to the present namely Miss Universe Thailand, Canada, Cambodia and Malta. Also a designer of Miss World Chile, Guinea and Nicaragua. He made the most talked about dress of Miss Thailand, Chalita Suansane for Miss Universe 2016 terno fashion show. Awarded as one of the Best Designers of the Northern Philippines and Outstanding Designer during Pilipinas Fashion And Style Week 2018. He also showcased his collection in the New York Fashion Week from 2018 to 2020. Rian launched his Personal Protective Clothing line in NYC Times Square USA. He designed the dress of Kriss Mincey during the Grammy Awards 2017 in Los Angeles, California. He is the ace designer of



HitechMODA New York. Awarded as Designer of the Year by Indrajark International Award 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. One of the most sought after designer of Thailand. He was also invited to participate in Arab Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2023 and Fall/Winter 2023 fashion shows. He is the designer of the newly crowned Miss Universe 2022 R'bonney Gabriel and was nominated as Best Fashion Designer - International by New York Fashion Award held in Brooklyn, New York. A member of Council of ASEAN Fashion Designers.

To him, the world may be his stage, but there is more to just playing your role - it is doing it with heartfelt passion.





# Embracing a life *of service and selflessness*

**THERESA GUCK** - Mentor. Artist. Entrepreneur. Messenger.



Theresa Guck's transformative journey is driven by her unwavering commitment to promoting education, fostering diversity, and championing equality. Supported by her husband, Steve Guck, and their four children - Yoshiko, Christopher, Stephanie, and Matthew - she has embraced a life of service and selflessness, leaving a positive mark on individuals, communities, and nations worldwide.

Central to Theresa's mission is her passion for international understanding. By opening her home to exchange students from culturally rich countries like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Serbia, she has created an environment that celebrates diversity and bridges gaps between nations, nurturing a generation of global citizens.

*Her commitment to making a tangible difference reaches far beyond her local community.*

Theresa's dedication to community service is evident through her leadership roles in prestigious nonprofit organizations and esteemed youth associations like the Girls Scouts and Boys Scouts of America. Through mentoring programs, she empowers and inspires countless young minds, guiding them in honing their talents and unlocking opportunities for personal growth.

Her commitment to making a tangible difference reaches far beyond her local community. In the Philippines, she spearheaded initiatives like "Abyan ko Ikaw" (You are my friend), "Tsinelas ko para sa imo" (My slippers are yours), "Love for Kids Philippines," and "The Cupid Project International Card Giving." These endeavors have had a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals, providing sustenance, joy, access to education, and opportunities for personal development.

Collaborating with others, Theresa has made significant impacts in areas such as environmental conservation, community engagement, mental health awareness, and human rights advocacy. By engaging volunteers

and communities in cleaning campaigns, she preserves pristine coastlines and marine ecosystems for future generations. During the festive season, her toy drives bring smiles to underprivileged children, fostering kindness and generosity within society.

Recognizing the critical importance of mental health, Theresa actively engages in educational awareness campaigns, destigmatizing mental health issues, and promoting well-being. Her collaboration with human rights organizations sheds light on social injustices, promoting inclusivity and advocating for equality.







Her involvement extends to supporting pageantry for young kids, providing a nurturing environment for self-confidence, public speaking skills, and a sense of purpose. By integrating community service into their platforms, Theresa encourages young participants to engage in meaningful philanthropic endeavors.

Furthermore, she advocates for supporting pageantry within the LGBTQ community, providing a safe space for individuals to express their authentic selves. These platforms raise awareness about LGBTQ rights, foster acceptance, and promote equality, inspiring participants to become advocates for positive change.

Theresa's dedication has earned her prestigious awards, including the Presidential Gold Service Award from the President of the United States, not once, but twice, alongside her family. Nominated as one of The Outstanding Filipinos

of America Awards, her contributions are widely recognized and celebrated.

Her journey is immortalized in the best-selling book, "The Wonder Women of the 21st Century," honoring twelve inspirational women worldwide. Her efforts to make a change was noticed by the Leaders of All Nations International as one of the Filipino International Leaders.

Theresa's life serves as a testament to the profound impact one person can make when committed to promoting education, fostering diversity, and championing equality. Her unwavering dedication to empowering others and creating a compassionate and inclusive society is an inspiration to all, shaping a better world for generations to come.

Theresa serves as both the designer and creative visionary behind IXXIA Jewelry. Her brand is steadfast in its commitment to supporting



philanthropic organizations that drive positive global change. Their overarching aim is to engrain the act of giving back into their core values, ultimately serving as an inspiration for others to follow suit.







# A Journey of *Creativity, Resilience & Artistic Brilliance*

ANGELO ESTERA - Fashion Designer- Dubai



Angelo Estera, a name synonymous with creativity, resilience, and artistic brilliance, has captivated the world with his unique artistic vision and ability to bring imagination to life. Born on a sunny day on December 14, 1971, in the picturesque fishing town of Catbalogan city of Western Samar Philippines, Angelo's journey would be marked by a relentless pursuit of his passion, overcoming obstacles, and leaving an indelible mark on the Fashion world.



From an early age, Angelo exhibited a natural talent for art. With a box of crayons in hand, he would spend hours meticulously sketching and painting, creating vibrant worlds on paper that stirred the imagination. Growing up in the seventies at a young age he got inspiration from his mother a beautician from her wardrobe of twin set dresses, pleated skirts and tiny stilettos. His first attempt of making dresses designs was her cousins designing dresses for them to wear. Recognizing his gift, Angelo's parents nurtured his artistic inclinations, providing him with the necessary tools and encouragement to explore his creativity.

As Angelo grew older, his passion for Fashion design intensified, and he sought to expand his horizons beyond the traditional mediums. Embracing to his long time dream to become a

full pledge Fashion designer he packed his bag and left his hometown and moved to the big Capital city of Manila, he apprenticed and worked with Filipino designers into the realm of design, where he was exposed to the fashion arena along with his mentor working through the gritty of the fashion world, he exposed himself in the metropolis accessing museums, digital art, and multimedia creation. With an insatiable desire to learn and master new techniques, Angelo immersed himself in the world of fashion and technology, attending workshops, collaborating with fellow fashion artists and designers, and pushing the boundaries of his artistic capabilities.

He won many accolades as an aspiring Fashion designer and represented his country to various prestigious young designers competitions. The prestigious Paris young designers competition

(Concours International des Jeunes Createurs de Mode). Sponsored by Air France! The Smirnoff international young designers Competition. And one of the finalists among 6 designers of the then prestigious 2nd MEGA magazine young designer competition. Judged by no less than fashion luminaries the likes of American designer Cynthia Rowley, Josie Natori and Elaine Stone, the dean of the New York fashion institute of technology.

While in Manila he used his prize money winning one of the designers competitions to establish his name by putting up his own small atelier catering to clients from socialites, showbiz personalities and prominent figures in politics and social scene. He became a stable roster of designer showcasing his seasonal collection in the PFW Philippines Fashion Week for years.





Driven by a thirst for knowledge and a hunger to showcase his talent to the world, Angelo embarked on a journey of self-discovery and exploration. He traveled far and wide and settled in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, encouraged by his peers he worked briefly with a small couture house catered local clients with his magical couture creation and was openly received and for sometimes he works as a privately royal designer in one of the Royal families of the Emirates. Immersing himself in diverse cultures, absorbing the rich tapestry of human experiences, and translating them into his artwork. He traveled from the bustling streets of New York to the serene landscapes of Bali, Angelo's keen eye captured the essence of each place, infusing his pieces with a sense of wonder and intrigue.

It wasn't long before Angelo's talent began to garner attention. He opened his eponymous label in Dubai and joined Fashion weeks Exhibitions and fashion galleries clamored for the opportunity to showcase his captivating Fashion Collection, and critics hailed him as a rising star in the Fashion world. His ability to seamlessly

blend traditional techniques with innovative modern mediums set him apart and his pieces became sought-after treasures for Fashion Clients enthusiasts alike. His wedding collection has been a brand name in China wedding boutiques along with other international brand for all these years.

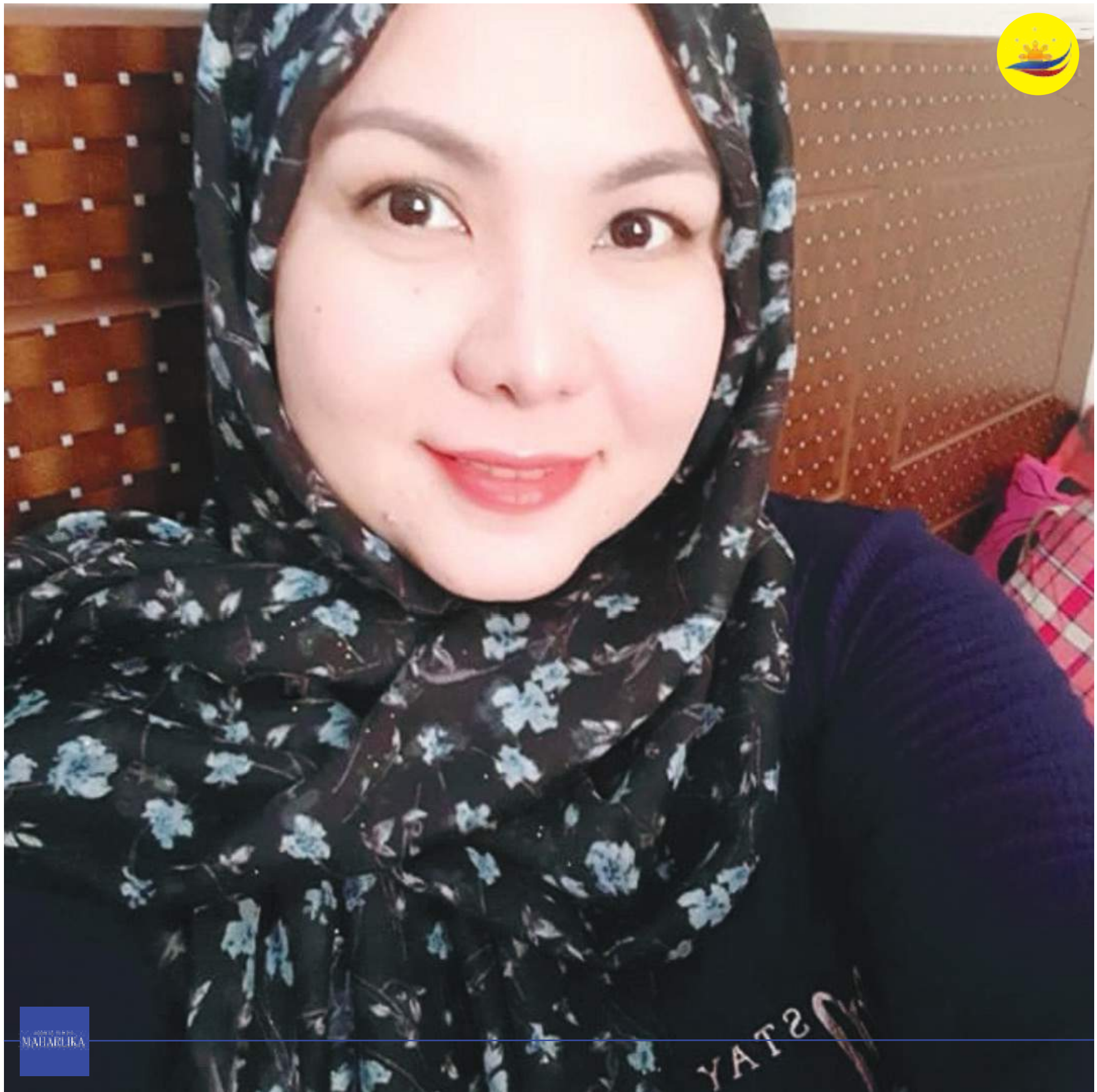
However, Angelo's journey was not without its fair share of challenges. Like any Fashion artist navigating the tumultuous waters of the creative industry, he faced rejection, self-doubt, and moments of uncertainty. But it was in these moments that Angelo's true character shone through. Rather than succumbing to setbacks, he used them as fuel to refine his craft, honing his skills, and pushing the boundaries of his own creativity.

Despite the recognition and success he achieved, Angelo remained grounded and committed to making a positive impact on the world around him. His artistic endeavors became intertwined with philanthropic efforts, as he used his talents to raise awareness by becoming a voice to aspiring young hopefuls that you can dream and be able to achieve in life if you pursue and persevere as he inspired all upcoming youth from becoming a fashion designer themselves. Whether through collaborations with nonprofit organizations or art workshops for underprivileged children, Angelo's fashion and art became a catalyst for change, a medium

through which he could inspire, uplift, and bring about social transformation. As the years passed, Angelo's artistic journey continued to evolve. He embraced new mediums, experimented with innovative techniques, and explored a diverse range of themes and concepts. His work became a reflection of his own growth as an individual, as he delved into the depths of the human psyche, capturing the complexity of emotions and the beauty of the human form.

Today, Angelo Estera stands as a testament to the transformative power of art. His journey serves as an inspiration. He continued his journey and still aspires that he will be able to soar high and be able to conquer.







# Do not settle for less, *Strive for excellence*

ANN GLOGHINETTE ORAIS PEREZ - Financial Consultant and Academe Practitioner



In a world often dominated by predictable success stories, there emerges a remarkable individual, Ann Gloghienette Orais Perez, who defies all expectations, showcasing unparalleled resilience, unwavering determination, and an extraordinary capacity for giving back to society. Her life's journey is a testament to the indomitable human spirit, and it commences with an extraordinary voyage of self-discovery and achievement.

Affectionately known as Ann or Ameera, comes from a background characterized by challenges and a profound sense of independence. As the eldest among her siblings, Ann learned early on the weight of responsibility. Her parents separated when she was just five years old, thrusting her into a life marked by self-reliance. At the tender age of six, she carried her own birth certificate and vital documents, a testament to her early independence.



During her formative years, Ann's aunt, a constant source of inspiration, whose words of encouragement resonated deeply to excel in her studies and to strive for a meaningful life despite the challenges.

Ann's entrepreneurial spirit began to emerge during her school days. In her younger days, she would acquire food from her stepmother and sell it at her school, her first venture into the world of business. This early experience, coupled with her college years in direct selling, laid the groundwork for her future endeavors.

What sets Ann apart is her unwavering pursuit of excellence. Her passion for teaching and her profound desire to make a positive impact on others through community engagement served as guiding principles in her life.

However, Ann's road to success was far from smooth. Growing up with a sense of self-reliance and independence from such a young age

presented unique challenges. She married and subsequently divorced at a young age, becoming a single parent by the tender age of 29. These life experiences might have deterred many, but Ann's spirit remained unbroken.

A pivotal moment in her life occurred when, at the age of 17, she worked as a cashier at Jollibee. In just a month, her dedication and hard work were rewarded with a promotion to Senior Cashier. This marked a transformative turning point, a moment of epiphany that crystallized her belief in the power of unwavering commitment to excellence. It was a belief that would continue to guide her in the years to come.

Ann's academic journey is a remarkable testament to her unceasing commitment to lifelong learning. Her list of educational achievements spans both local and international institutions, demonstrating her dedication to acquiring knowledge. From a B.S in Accountancy,

to MBA and a double Ph.D in Educational Management and Business Management-Finance, Ann's academic prowess knows no bounds she just recent finished her Post-Doctoral in Strategic Management and currently a 2nd year Law School Student. She has pursued professional qualifications across the globe, earning recognition from esteemed organizations such as Certified Management & Business Educator by Chartered Association of Business Schools (UK), the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (UK), Registered Cost Accountant at Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Australia, and the Institute of Accounting Technicians in Canada.

Ann's journey to success extends beyond personal accomplishments. Her unwavering commitment to giving back to her community and society at large is truly commendable. Through volunteer activities, she actively contributes to various initiatives aimed at improving the lives of others.





Ann recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting Filipino culture and values. As an educator, she instills in her students the significance of cultural pride and integrity. Through her advocacy and education, she fosters a sense of responsibility to stand with morals and dedication, exemplifying the qualities that define Filipino workers and entrepreneurs.

For young Filipinos aspiring to succeed or make a difference in the world, Ann's story offers invaluable guidance. She emphasizes the importance of setting clear goals, investing in education and skill development, networking, embracing hard work and perseverance, maintaining cultural pride and identity, and giving back to the community. Her personal philosophies include learning from failures, being resilient, seeking inspiration from role models, committing to lifelong learning, embracing diversity, and having confidence in one's abilities.

Ann's international journey, characterized by her academic pursuits and research, has represented the Philippines on a global stage. Her contributions have not only strengthened the Philippines' global reputation but also showcased the immense talent and dedication of Filipinos worldwide.

As for her legacy, Ann aspires to leave behind a pillar of kindness, truth, education, and community service. Her future goals include becoming an educator and a lawyer who continues to give back to the community.

Ann's success story has profoundly shaped her personal growth and perspective on life. She recognizes the importance of self-awareness and acknowledges the role that people behind the scenes play in shaping one's journey. Her experiences have made her stronger, instilling in her the drive to strive for excellence.

In conclusion, Ann's journey is nothing short of

extraordinary. Her life story is a testament to resilience, excellence, and the transformative power of giving back. Her achievements and unwavering dedication to her community and culture serve as an inspiration, ensuring that her legacy continues to uplift and inspire Filipinos worldwide. Ann's message is clear: never settle for less than excellence, and always find ways to give back to others and your community.









# Cow Mama UAE

## *380 Liters of breastmilk and counting...*

CHINIE JANE CHING- Flight Attendant, Global Advocate, Mother and Child Welfare



*Chinie is passionate about spreading the word about the manifold benefits of breastmilk*

A passionate mother proves that not all heroes wear capes. She is one such generous soul who donated her breast milk to support babies separated from their mothers due to medical conditions, mothers who are low in milk supply, babies in intensive care unit (NICU) including babies who have lost their mothers because of

Covid-19. The Dubai-based flight attendant who has been traveling around the world for 10 years, was awarded a Global Humanitarian award for her selfless gesture by Prodigy Bureau and Sheikha lawaher Bint Khalifa Al Khalifa, Chairperson of Sheikha lawaher Al Khalifa Foundation for Youth empowerment for two times.

*"I am really trying to connect with families who needs help, and I am prioritising the babies who have lost their mummies. As a new mother it breaks my heart knowing this kind of situation. Knowing the health benefits of breastfeeding means I am thinking if this can save lives and create a healthier next generation then I will do it."*

She was also been awarded with International Humanitarian Awardee by The Xpats Insider with His Excellency Muhammad Al Zarooni, She was also been recognized as one of the top 50 Empowered Women in appreciation of Emirati and Emiratri by heart women of UAE with her actively participation in inspiring women across UAE and around the world.

She was nominated for Asia's Pinnacle Awards for her selfless efforts and her active global campaign of turning "Strangers to Supporters" who vowed in participating her advocacy in saving more babies lives across UAE and around the world is truly successful and has won hearts of the public with her authenticity, uniqueness and selflessness. Today, she has already helped about 62 newborns and counting and continuously sending off breastmilk to more

babies, because of this more and more mothers are joining her advocacy extremely inspired with her story. Her passion and dedication in mother-and-child-care movement and her advocacy that help increase the public knowledge about the importance of breastfeeding has reached globally with her multi-national children (Indian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Kenyan, Utopians, Filipino, British and Pakistani)

#### Destined to Donate

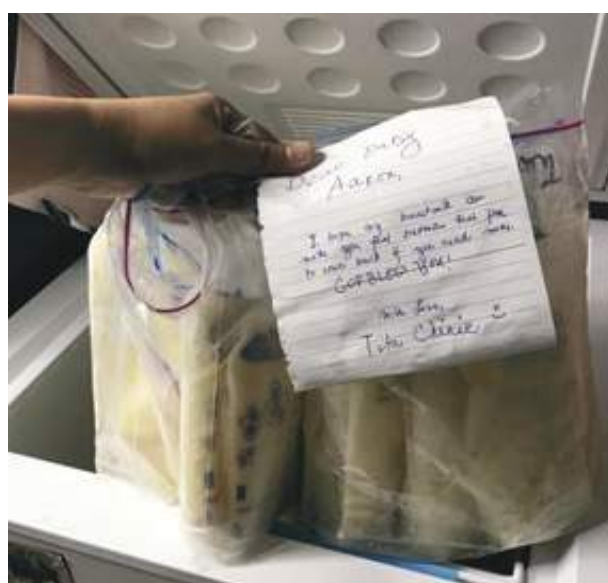
Chinie is passionate about spreading the word about the manifold benefits of breastmilk.

- especially the highly concentrated and nutrient-dense early milk known as colostrum
- and would like to educate people about the importance of breastfeeding.

"I grew up in the South part of the Philippines,

where children are usually drinking powdered milk instead of breastmilk," she says. "There was one mum breastfeeding in our village, and I was amazed by how much money she saved by doing so, and also by how beneficial it is for the baby. It inspired me. I felt this was my ambition that some day when it is my time I am going to donate milk, I was praying for it."

However, it didn't look like it was going to be easy for Chinie to breastfeed at all. Ten years ago she discovered that she suffers from a kidney disorder, which meant that she was advised to limit her water intake. One of the key prerequisites of breastmilk production is to drink enough water, so Chinie was not sure if she would be able to drink enough to give herself a good supply.







As it turns out, she has been able to take a huge amount of water without any negative impact, drinking at least 8 litres per day. “I feel very blessed to have enough milk to share,” she says. “I thought because of my medical situation this could hinder me, but now every mum is asking me ‘What is your secret to make so much milk?’ I wish I could tell them something more, but it’s just water.”

Chinie says she feels it is her duty to help motherless children if she can. “I work hard for it, it takes big-time dedication and perseverance. But I am sharing this gift to inspire more newbie mothers to not quit breastfeeding if possible, to promote breastfeeding, and to connect with and help families who have a newborn who needs my breastmilk.

It’s something Chinie takes enormous pride in. “This global crisis is taking almost everything from us, and it breaks my heart every time I hear a pregnant woman or mother died because of COVID-19, leaving their innocent child here on Earth,” she says.

Chinie’s dedication is driven by a desire to help, she says. “I am really trying to connect with families who needs help, and I am prioritising the babies who have lost their mummies. As a new mother it breaks my heart knowing this kind of situation. Knowing the health benefits of breastfeeding means I am thinking if this can save lives and create a healthier next generation then I will do it. I don’t mind working hard, having short nights, and not doing the household chores, but this is my way to connect and help the next

generation to become better and healthier, and I will do it as long as I can. These children is worthy of my simple sacrifices because they are the future of a stronger, healthier and a better next generation.”







# Commitment for *making a positive impact*

CRYSTAL DIAS - Award Winning Co-Founder of Dias Solicitors/Lawyery



*Her mentorship has also extended to budding entrepreneurs as part of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, where she supported young African women in their start-up endeavours.*

Born in the vibrant Philippines, Crystal embarked on a remarkable journey that led her to become a prominent figure in the legal landscape of the United Kingdom. Her story began with a pivotal move to the UK in 1990, where she pursued her academic aspirations and passion for justice. Crystal's dedication saw her studying Law at the distinguished School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, ultimately earning her LLB (Honours) degree in 1996. Her commitment to her field was further demonstrated when she achieved solicitor qualification in 2003.



The visionary force behind Dias Solicitors, Crystal partnered with her husband, Christopher Dias, to establish the firm in 2008. This niche practice, nestled in the heart of London, stands as a testament to her prowess and unyielding determination. As the sole Filipino woman solicitor at the helm of her own law firm in Holborn – the very epicentre of London's legal sector – Crystal Dias has carved an impressive niche for herself. Her services extend to both the public and corporate clients, embodying a versatile approach to her legal practice. In 2022, Dias Solicitors underwent a transformation and transitioned into a limited company, now operating under the name Lawyery. Crystal is a co-founder and director.

Her professional journey has been distinguished by her unwavering commitment to championing the rights of vulnerable individuals. Her clientele includes children, victims of domestic abuse, those struggling with addiction, individuals with

physical and mental health challenges, the elderly, non-native English speakers, those with learning difficulties, and trafficked women. Her legal acumen goes beyond the courtroom, extending to mentorship. Crystal takes pride in nurturing young interns aspiring for legal careers. Dias Solicitors offers these interns invaluable work experience ranging from two weeks to three months. Many of these interns are driven young Filipino women with Law Degrees from the UK and abroad. Her mentorship has also extended to budding entrepreneurs as part of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, where she supported young African women in their start-up endeavours.

Crystal Dias' influence reverberates through her active participation in the Filipino community in the UK. She currently holds the position of Vice-Chair (internal affairs) at the Filipino Women Association-UK, where she champions the cause of empowering young scholars from

underprivileged backgrounds in the Philippines. Crystal's dedication is further demonstrated through her contributions to Kanlungan Filipino Consortium, where she imparts legal wisdom through pro bono webinars for undocumented migrants. Her advocacy extends to the digital realm as well, where she serves as a presenter for the online media company Juan Eu Konek, specifically contributing to the segment "Immigration 101." Moreover, for over a decade, she has been a steadfast columnist on immigration matters for One Philippines Newspaper in the UK.

Crystal's career as a solicitor continues to be a source of immense fulfilment. Her role offers intellectual challenges and the opportunity to engage with individuals from diverse walks of life. Her exceptional interpersonal skills and legal proficiency have earned her endorsements, particularly from the Filipino communities in the UK, including the Philippine Embassy.





*Crystal is the award-winning founder of diassolicitors and is known for her empathy with her clients and her first rate knowledge of immigration and family law. Crystal works with the UK's Filipino community to promote and advocate for migrant and women's rights.*

In 2023, Lawyery celebrated a dual win at the UK Business Awards Legal Awards. Crystal and her husband Christopher were honoured to receive the titles of "Boutique Legal Firm of the Year" and "Charity Legal Team of the Year." These wins highlight the firm's expertise and success in delivering top-notch legal services while also showcasing their commitment to making a positive impact in the community. Additionally, Lawyery was proud to be named a finalist in the highly competitive category of "Immigration Law Firm of the Year," further recognising their proficiency in immigration law.

Acknowledged for her impact, Crystal Dias has garnered accolades that underscore her global influence. Notably, she was recognized in 2018 by the Filipina Women Network as one of the "100 Most Influential Filipina Women in the World." This recognition was followed by the "Ladies of All Nations International Human Rights Champion" title in 2019 and the "Megaworld International Mega Exemplary

Global Achiever Award Community Service" in 2021. Crystal Dias received well-deserved recognition as a finalist in two categories at the prestigious law.com Women, Influence & Power in Law UK Awards. She was honoured as a finalist for "Law Firm Leader of the Year" and "Collaborative Leadership." These nominations highlight Crystal's exceptional leadership skills, her significant contributions to the legal profession, and her commitment to fostering collaboration and empowerment within the industry.

On 25th July 2023, Crystal Dias was informed by Lubna Shuja, the President of the Law Society of England and Wales, that she had been shortlisted for the inaugural Law Society Legal Heroes ceremony on 7th September 2023. Only 25 reached this shortlist.

These honours celebrate Crystal's multifaceted achievements as a legal luminary, mentor, community advocate, and trailblazer.







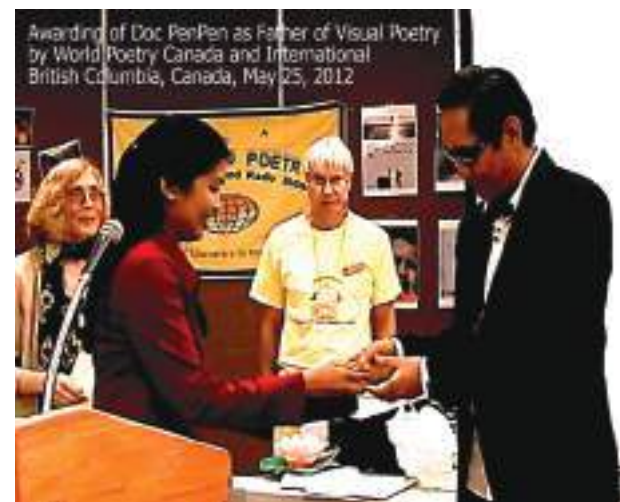


# The Father of *Visual Poetry*

**EPITACIO R. TONGOCHAN, M.D.,** *known as* Doc PenPen Bugtong Takipsilim

*Quest for understanding the human body led him further into the intricacies of Anatomic Pathology, where he specialized in 1988. The roots of his intellectual prowess can be traced back to his Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology in 1979.*





*Beyond the artistry, he is a man of science and compassion —  
an inspiring fusion of creativity and humanity.*

In the world of words and wonders, the lineage of great thinkers spans nations: Greece for philosophy, the Czech Republic for psychoanalysis, England for evolution, and Greece once more for medicine. Yet, in the realm of visual poetry, Poet Laureates from Canada, the USA, India, China, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, and Africa, among others, acknowledge and bestow the title "Father of Visual Poetry" upon a Filipino. Now, the Philippines proudly claims its own luminary: Epitacio R. Tongohan, M.D., known as Doc PenPen Bugtong Takipsilim. Beyond the artistry, he is a man of science and compassion—an inspiring fusion of creativity and humanity.

Doc PenPen's journey towards his poetic legacy began with an unwavering dedication to education. He donned the robe of medical knowledge, earning his Doctorate in Medicine in

1984. His quest for understanding the human body led him further into the intricacies of Anatomic Pathology, where he specialized in 1988. The roots of his intellectual prowess can be traced back to his Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology in 1979.

In the annals of artistic history, the year 2011 marked the dawn of a new era as Doc PenPen was conferred with the title, "The Father of Philippine Visual Poetry," a title that would soon resonate worldwide. His poetic prowess transcended borders when he found himself recognized in the vast landscapes of British Columbia, Canada, in 2013, being hailed as "The Father of Visual Poetry" and "Visionary Poet."

The Philippines' heart swelled with pride as The National Library of The Philippines, within the hallowed halls of The National Museum of The

Filipino People, adjudged and conferred upon him the prestigious title of "Father of Visual Poetry."

In 2014, the enchanting melodies of Turkish praises echoed as Doc PenPen was honored as "Görsel Şiir Babası" (Father of Visual Poetry). His journey continued, as Italy embraced him in 2016, proclaiming him "IL PADRE DELLA POESIA VISUALE" (Father of Visual Poetry).

Africa too, sang his praises, crowning him as "ANYUINSEM AGYA" (Father of Modern Visual Poetry) in Ghana in 2016. Even in the heart of entertainment, Doc PenPen found recognition when FILIPINO MOVIE ARTS and SCIENCES (FAMAS AWARDS) honored him as the Father of Visual Poetry in 2016, making his name synonymous with cinematic excellence.



The world took notice, and India, on the 14th of October 2017, officially proclaimed him "DRIISYA KAVITA CHAKRAVARTY" (King of Visual Poetry), marking an epoch of his transcendental journey.

Ghana, not content with one accolade, honored him thrice on September 29, 2018, as the Father of Humanitarian Poetry, Father of Visionary Poetry, and King of Kings of Visual Poetry.

As the world watched in awe, the People's Republic of China welcomed him in 2020, acknowledging his undeniable mastery by crowning him as the "FATHER OF VISUAL POETRY."

Doc PenPen's laurels extend beyond the realm of poetry. In 2014, he was awarded the title of "Outstanding Alumnus in Career Achievement" by the UERM COLLEGE OF MEDICINE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INC. His hometown, Tanay, proudly hailed him as the "Parangal sa Natatanging Anak ng Tanay" (Illustrious Son of Tanay) in 2014.

In 2008, he received a Special Citation on Digital Film Making from FAMAS AWARDS, solidifying his versatility and genius.

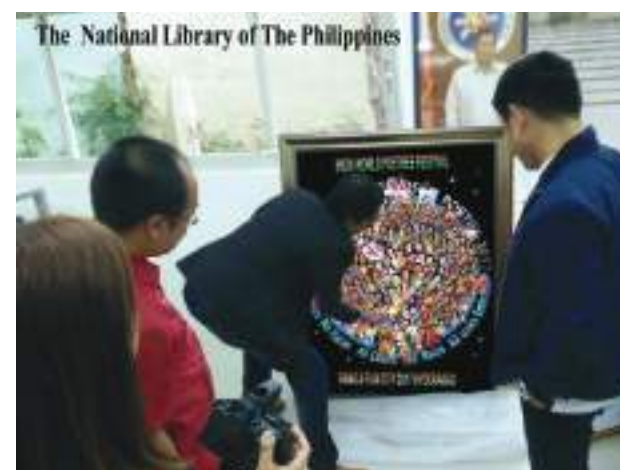
Doc PenPen Bugtong Takipsilim, a name etched in the annals of artistry, medicine, and humanitarianism. His journey from the corridors

of science to the canvas of words has left an indelible mark on the world. He is more than a poet; he is a maestro, a healer, and an inspiration, leaving a legacy that transcends generations. His life, a testament to the power of words, is a symphony of artistry, humanity, and boundless creativity, a true embodiment of the human spirit's infinite potential.

In 2012, Doc Penpen authored the renowned "Pentasi B Poetry Book," a triumphant trilogy of verses that brim with vitality. It achieved an astonishing auction price of \$30,000 in California, USA, cementing its status as a prized modern poetry collection and a cherished literary gem. All proceeds from the book were dedicated to supporting disadvantaged Filipino students.

Now, the last Pentasi B Poetry Collector's Edition is set for auction at an impressive \$200,000, while his Visual Poetry Artwork, featured at the 2013 National Museum of The Filipino People during the Pentasi B Historical Forum, is open for bidding at a staggering \$1 million.

The auction proceeds from the Pentasi B Book Collector's Edition (Last Set) will fund the PENTASI GRAND ASSEMBLY OF WORLD POETS in the Philippines in 2024. This endeavor seeks to fulfill the prophecy from Sonnet 7, as interpreted by Seer Poet Danny Gallardo, making THE PHILIPPINES – THE POETRY HEART OF THE WORLD!







# Synonymous with *innovation and luxury*

**GARIMON ROFEROS** - Creative Director



Garimon Roferos Couture, a name synonymous with innovation and luxury in the Dubai Fashion Industry, made its grand entrance onto the fashion scene in 2016, with the exceptionally talented Garimon Roferos at its helm as the Creative Director. What sets Garimon Roferos Couture apart is not only its

remarkable designs but also the avant-garde spirit that permeates every creation. While Garimon is known for his modest demeanor within the fashion community, a closer look at his illustrious career and stunning gown portfolio reveals a different side: one that is daring, innovative, and edgy.



His designs effortlessly straddle the line between classicism and fantasy, making him a trailblazer in the industry.

The journey of this Filipino native from Davao to the pinnacle of the fashion world began when he clinched the prestigious Concours Internationale Des Jeunes Creatures de Mode's D'Incitation in Paris, France, in 2004. Garimon's winning entry, an ingeniously crafted Philippine terno constructed entirely from aquatic plant lilies and bago-bago vines, caught the discerning eye of fashion icon Pierre Cardin. This triumph marked the beginning of a remarkable career trajectory.

"Most Promising Designer of the Year" award by The Philippine Fashion Times. This accolade served as a testament to his unwavering commitment to creativity and innovation within the fashion industry. It was a moment of validation for his exceptional talent and the unique perspective he brought to the world of fashion.

However, Garimon's influence was not confined to national borders alone. His exceptional contributions to the fashion world transcended geographical boundaries, earning him recognition on the global stage. In both 2017 and 2018, he was prominently featured among the "100 Most Influential Filipinos in the World" by The Filipino Times.



In 2010, driven by an insatiable desire for growth and artistic exploration, Garimon Roferos made the bold decision to close his shop in Davao and relocate to Dubai, where he would work under the tutelage of renowned designer Michael Cinco. With dedication and an unwavering commitment to his craft, Garimon quickly made his mark on the Dubai fashion scene. In just six years, his remarkable successes paved the way for the establishment of Garimon Roferos Couture, a couture shop bearing his own name.

These international accolades not only solidified Garimon's reputation as a visionary designer but also underscored his capacity to inspire and make a lasting impact in the fashion arena worldwide. His ability to seamlessly blend tradition with innovation and to push the boundaries of creativity had captured the attention of fashion enthusiasts and industry experts alike. Garimon Roferos had truly become a global icon, a testament to the enduring influence of his artistry and his unwavering dedication to the craft.

In 2017, Garimon Roferos achieved another remarkable milestone in his illustrious career when he was bestowed with the prestigious





These honors were more than just awards; they were a recognition of Garimon's unique ability to leave an indelible mark on the world of fashion, demonstrating that true talent knows no borders. His journey from a promising designer to an influential global figure is a testament to the power of passion, creativity, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. As Garimon Roferos continued to redefine fashion, the world eagerly awaited what groundbreaking designs and innovations he would bring to the runway next.

Garimon Roferos Couture stands as a testament to rewriting the conventions of traditional bridal fashion. Each creation is meticulously crafted to cater to the unique style and preferences of the wearer. The couture shop offers an immersive experience, allowing clients to actively participate in the design process. Garimon himself takes the time to understand every client's desires, ensuring that

their dreams are brought to life in every stitch. From the inception of the design to the creation of intricate embroidery works and personalized fittings, Garimon's involvement is hands-on and deeply personal. The brand is renowned for its breathtaking wedding gowns and distinctive evening dresses, which are distinguished by their elaborate designs, exquisite fabrics, and intricate embroideries. These masterpieces are a testament to the brand's commitment to affordable luxury, a blend of opulence and accessibility that characterizes the Garimon Roferos Couture experience.

Nestled in the heart of Business Bay, Dubai, our showroom serves as a showcase for the innovative designs that have become the hallmark of Garimon Roferos Couture. It is here that the dreams of countless women are transformed into reality, with each creation reflecting the individuality and elegance of its

wearer. Our commitment to creating unforgettable moments and cherished memories is unwavering.

If you aspire to meet the visionary behind Garimon Roferos Couture, Mr. Garimon himself, we invite you to reach out to us without hesitation. Your journey towards a bespoke, enchanting couture experience begins here, and we look forward to making your dreams a reality. Garimon Roferos Couture is not just a fashion house; it's a testament to the limitless possibilities of creativity and the enduring allure of timeless elegance.

*His exceptional  
contributions to the fashion  
world transcended  
geographical boundaries,  
earning him recognition  
on the global stage.*





# A beacon *of inspiration*

**JOANNE DE GUZMAN RICO** - Head of Marketing at Salma Rehabilitation Hospital



Joanne de Guzman Rico, Salma Rehabilitation Hospital's Head of Marketing, exemplifies perseverance and empowerment. Joanne has conquered several challenges since her humble beginnings in Manila to become a global marketing professional as she brand-leads a fast-growing rehabilitation unit under SEHA, which comprises the largest network of government medical facilities in the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Joanne's story is one of grit and academic excellence. Recognizing the value of a solid educational foundation, she worked hard to succeed despite financial constraints. She overcame the restrictions of poverty by earning scholarships through her dedication and hard work, and she embraced a future full of possibilities.

Joanne pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, graduating Magna Cum Laude from the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of the Philippines - Diliman after graduating as Valedictorian with several academic and special distinctions. Her commitment to excellence laid the groundwork for her exceptional career journey.

Joanne's corporate career started when she joined Globe Telecom, where she worked as a Sales Administrative Associate and then as a Customer Service Associate, earning the company's honors and special distinction. Her marketing career took off when she joined Ministop Philippines as a Franchise Marketing Officer, where she received the coveted Rookie of the Year Award in just six months despite having no formal schooling in the field.

Joanne's professional performance caught the attention of the higher-ups at the age of 23, and she was promoted to Advertising and Promotions Manager. Under her leadership, she managed a

team of seven and spearheaded marketing strategies and campaigns for the company's chain of over 250 stores. Mentored by one of the Philippines' business tycoons, Joanne underwent training at Ministop's headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, where she mastered the core brand strategy and successfully implemented it in the local market.

In 2009, Joanne broke new ground as the first Filipino woman to venture into healthcare marketing in Doha, Qatar, joining Al-Ahli Hospital as the organization's Marketing Executive. Her drive and expertise were further recognized when she joined Burjeel Hospital in Abu Dhabi, UAE, as part of its pioneer team. Charged with launching the brand and expanding its market share within the capital and beyond, Joanne single-handedly power-moved all marketing campaigns across various platforms.

Her dedication and contributions did not go unnoticed. Joanne was honored as the Burjeel Star Employee in 2013 and received further recognition during Burjeel's 2nd Annual Day in 2014. In 2015, she was promoted to Senior Marketing Executive, and a year later, she became the Assistant Marketing Manager, overseeing PR communications and corporate events verticals.

Joanne's skills piqued the interest of NMC Healthcare, one of the UAE's leading private

healthcare organizations, in April 2018. As Marketing and Sales Manager, she was instrumental in turning around Bareen International Hospital, which had been in the red for three years. Joanne's strategic marketing approach and relentless commitment to deliver results catapulted Bareen to its breakthrough growth in terms of volume, revenue, and profitability. Due to this, NMC stepped up business expansion plans, acquired more medical centers in the emirate, and placed them under Bareen team's supervision. The Bareen Cluster expanded from one facility to eight in a short period of time, strengthening its place as a key player in the healthcare industry. Joanne's remarkable achievements propelled her to the position of Cluster Head of Marketing and Sales, where she optimized the brand positioning, increased brand awareness, grew brand loyalty, and increased footfall, revenue, and profitability for each medical facility.

In August 2022, Joanne joined PureHealth and SEHA's Salma Rehabilitation Hospital as Head of Marketing.







*Joanne's journey has not been easy, as she has navigated obstacles and broken stereotypes based on nationality and gender norms in the workplace.*

Joanne's career is defined not just by her professional achievement, but also, by her profound determination to make a positive impact in the community. She has become a strong advocate for children's right to education after personally seeing the value of academic access, particularly for impoverished children.

Joanne has been a steadfast supporter of World Vision Philippines for 18 years, assisting several children, families, and communities in underprivileged parts of her home country. During her time at Ministop Philippines, she introduced the Child Sponsorship Program to JG Summit employees and Ministop franchisees, and established the World Vision Coin Bank campaign across all locations. Her passion to help led her to arrange and conduct pro bono events for the community. She is now an advocate and spokesperson for World Vision Philippines on a global scale.

Joanne wrote a book chapter on her experience to inspire other Filipino women to rise above obstacles and break glass ceilings. Her chapter in the Foundation for Filipina Women's Network's "Disrupt 4.0 Filipina Women: BEING - The Fourth Book on Leadership" is a chronicle of her challenging journey. The book was launched in the prestigious Gremio Literario in Lisbon, Portugal in November 2022.

Joanne has received numerous awards and recognitions for her outstanding achievements throughout the course of her 18-year career. Notably, The Filipino Times named her Marketing and Advertising Professional of the Year in 2017. In addition, she was named a Thought Leader in Illustrado's 300 Most Influential Filipinos in the Gulf, Legacy Edition in 2020.

The Foundation for Filipina Women's Network named her one of the Most Influential Filipina

Women in the World™ in 2021, making her the only awardee from the Middle East. She was awarded Outstanding Leadership at the Health 2.0 Conference in Dubai the following year.

Joanne was most recently recognized in the field of marketing in 2023 at the Marketing 2.0 Conference for her extraordinary accomplishments spanning international markets over the previous decade.

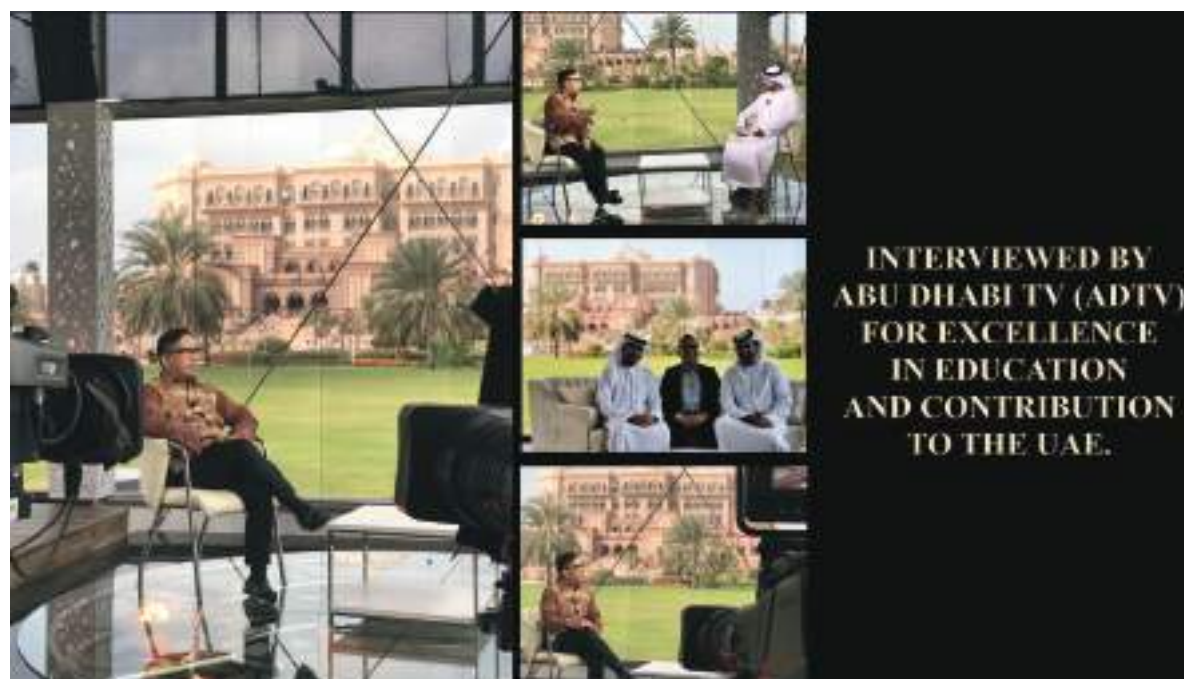
Joanne's journey has not been easy, as she has navigated obstacles and broken stereotypes based on nationality and gender norms in the workplace. Equipped with her basic principles of faith, passion, grit, and resilience, Joanne rose to the challenge and has emerged as a trailblazer, placing her at a distinguished position in the international arena. Her substantial accomplishments in the workplace and significant contributions in the community inspire those who want to make a difference.





# Excellence in *teaching and inspiring students*

**REX D. BACARRA, Ph.D** - Faculty - Zayed Military University - Rabdan Academy. Speaker. Writer.



Dr. Rex D. Bacarra stands at the forefront of education, leaving an indelible footprints in the global educational landscape. Currently, he has the unique distinction of being one of few educators chosen from across the world to partake in a special program by the UAE government at Zayed Military University under Rabdan Academy and the UAE Ministry of Defense. His primary responsibility involves teaching Ethical Standards to a select group of Emirati students, who are being groomed as future military leaders.



*For ten years in a row, his students have rated him as an excellent professor, highlighting the remarkable impact he has had on their lives.*

With specialties in Global Leadership, Culture and Ethics, Change Management, Strategic Human Resource Management, and more, Bacarra's knowledge and experience are wide-ranging. His career trajectory has seen him working at prestigious institutions such as Curtin University-Dubai, Geneva Business School, York St. John Business School, and the American College of Dubai. He served as the former Dean of General Education at the American College of Dubai and is presently McGraw-Hill Education's Digital Faculty Consultant for Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA).

Dr. Bacarra's illustrious career is adorned with numerous accolades and recognitions. A testament to his dedication is the prestigious BAYANI (Hero) AWARD from the Philippine Consulate, the highest honor given to an overseas Filipino expatriate. His significant contributions were acknowledged when he was featured and

profiled as an "Extraordinary Inspirer of Students" by Khaleej Times. Furthermore, he was invited to deliver a talk on the International Day of Peace in 2020 by the Heartfulness Society, in cooperation with the United Nations.

His excellence in teaching and inspiring students earned him a profile and interview by Abu Dhabi TV (ADTV). Dr. Bacarra's story of Filipino excellence abroad was featured by GMA 7 Pinoy TV and recognized in Karen Davila's "Overseas Filipino Winners" segment. Other notable recognitions include being named one of the Top 30 Most Successful Self-Made Men in the UAE by Prodigy Bureau Network in 2022 and receiving the "Global Leadership Award for HR-UAE" by HR Success Talk in 2021.

He was also awarded the "Educator-Innovator of the Year" by Xpedition Magazine in 2019, the "Educator of the Year" by The Filipino Times in

2019, and the "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" by The United Federation of the Filipino American Educators in New York, both in 2020 and previously. The same organization honored him with the "Salindunong Award" in 2022.

Dr. Bacarra was consistently listed among the 100 Most Influential Filipinos in the Gulf from 2016 to 2020 by Illustrado Magazine. He was featured as one of the Filipino Achievers in Dubai in the book "Behind the Domes of the Majestic Mosques," and was given recognition for his teaching excellence in the Gulf News' Your Reports section.







In a powerful testament to his influence and popularity among his students, Dr. Bacarra is the only faculty member in the history of the college to have received a standing ovation from multicultural graduating students. For ten years in a row, his students have rated him as an excellent professor, highlighting the remarkable impact he has had on their lives.

Dr. Rex D. Bacarra is a beacon of inspiration and excellence. His exceptional career and the numerous accolades and recognitions he has received demonstrate his lasting impact on education and his commitment to shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Dr. Rex D. Bacarra's influence extends far beyond the realm of academia. He is a much sought-after facilitator and speaker, regularly addressing communities and organizations on topics of relevance such as leadership. His speaking engagements span across local and international audiences, marking him as a truly global educator.

His most recent speaking endeavor saw him invited by the Hawkamah Institute for Corporate Governance, owned by the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), to expound on the topic of Gender Diversity. This was an opportunity for him to bring his expertise to bear on one of the most vital topics in contemporary leadership and human resource management.

His reputation as a leading voice in ethical and effective leadership led him to be invited by the United Nations and the Heartfulness Organization as a speaker during the International Day of Peace. This underlines his global reach and the recognition of his views on peace and ethical leadership at an international level.

Further illustrating his far-reaching influence in the UAE, Dr. Bacarra was called upon to give a leadership talk at the Joint Aviation Command of the UAE military in Abu Dhabi. This privilege underscores the high regard with which he is held in the country's most critical defense sectors.



*His reputation as a leading voice in ethical and effective leadership led him to be invited by the United Nations and the Heartfulness Organization as a speaker during the International Day of Peace.*







# Be your boss, *and do something fulfilling*

**ROWENA M. AGGABAO -**

Founder and Managing Partner of A&R Partners Ltd, A&R Integrated Farm and AMMA Management Consultancy



*“I will always be beyond grateful. I came to Dubai with an ambition to make a difference. It did not happen overnight, it is a series of long and painful struggles to be where I am today”.*

“I want to be remembered as the Filipina in UAE who sets up business to help people build their dreams”. Rowena M. Aggabao, Mom, Wife, Entrepreneur, Mentor & Author based in Dubai. She is the Founder and Managing Partner of A&R Partners Ltd, A&R Integrated Farm and AMMA Management Consultancy. The key to success is to dream big, work hard

and stay focused. It is through the companies she has found that she is able to work on something that she is completely passionate about which is helping people and assisting them building their dreams by becoming entrepreneurs. “It has always been a vision to be my own boss, be independent and do something fulfilling”.

She is also an Author and Co-Author of two books both available globally via Amazon globally through Kindle Publishing and via Payhip in the UAE. At a young age, her passions had always been extemporaneous speaking and writing. She says, “The books I’ve written and published was a fulfillment of a childhood dream to be able to write a book. It is dedicated all the people who helped me to be who I am today. The books tackles life, love, family, death, joy, resilience, failure, success and family”.

Originally from Enrile, Cagayan who served the Department of Labor and Employment (Manila) and the Manila Trial Court, She came to Dubai in 2008 with a pocket full of dreams and with the hope to carve a name in a country full of opportunities. It was not easy and it was a tough start actually but because of prayer, hard work, perseverance and patience, the businesses were doing good and she was able to incorporate two more companies after the pandemic.

Despite of the many challenges, she never gave up and continued with the journey up to this day. “I am an ambitious, motivated and reliable person who has developed a mature and responsible approach to any task that I

undertake or situation I am presented with. A self-made woman with no rich parents or connections who made it out of pure hustle and hard work. I have a methodical, customer-focused approach and a strong drive to get things completed and to meet clients’ expectations. A graduate of AB Mass Communication and AB Law with more than 10 years of experience in Intellectual Property, Management, Wealth Planning and Corporate Services. I am excellent in working with others to achieve a certain objective on time and with the highest standards. After 13 years in the UAE, 4 years of which as Advisor/Consultant in the Top 5 Intellectual Property Firm and 7 years of as Manager of the International Department of the biggest Corporate Services provider in the MENA Region, I have decided to setup my first company, A&R Partners Ltd. in 2019”. The core services are company formation, intellectual property registration and second residency and citizenship.

“Before I finally took the courage to set up my own along with my husband, I worked as a trademark and intellectual property advisor in one of the best intellectual property firms in Dubai”.







She recalls “Arriving in 2008, during the economic crisis and looking for a job was extremely difficult back then, I will always be grateful to my first employer for giving the chance to spread my wings and meeting my mentor in the same workplace who I will forever have high respect. I have worked in the same company for almost three years handling high- end luxury portfolios and gained abundant knowledge on intellectual property.

It is my fondness of corporate law that made me grab an opportunity to join the biggest Firm that provides Trust and Corporate services not just in the UAE but globally. Rising through the ranks, I was initially just an administrator with an assigned portfolio until promoted to Supervisor and then becoming the Manager of the International Department handling company formation outside the UAE. The most rewarding part of the job is the Philanthropic Program if yearly targets are achieved wherein a deserving community will be chosen and will receive assistance and generous donation from the



company. The countries that benefitted from the project were Philippines and Cambodia.

It’s through the many years of dedication to my work and to the community that I have been a recipient of numerous awards namely, Trident Trust Ambassador (2017), Top 50 IP Emerging Players IPR –Gorilla (2019), Corporate Ladies in Business Category – SHE UAE (2020), Top 10 Ladies in Business (2021), 28 COE (2022) and HR Success Talk (Jury/Panel) International Memberships”.

At present I am also a member of some prestigious International Organizations like International Trademarks Association (INTA), Entrepreneurs Asia, Philippine Business Council (Dubai and Northern Emirates) – The Executive Club, International Women Entrepreneurs Society and Amazon Author Central.

As a longtime Dubai resident Rowena eventually along her husband built their small Family in this beautiful city, she emphasized, “I will always be



beyond grateful. I came to Dubai with an ambition to make a difference. It did not happen overnight, it is a series of long and painful struggles to be where I am today. Do not let go of your dreams no matter how long it will take and don’t stop. Seize the day when you reach the destination you want to be”.







# Success story *through hardship*

**FRANCIA P. SALDO** - Managing Director and Founder  
SALDO International Trading FZE / SALDO International Trading LLC

*“In order to attain the impossible, one must continue to attempt the possibilities”*



Drive, determination, self-improvement and other positive values are behind the creation of my businesses in UAE and other Middle East regions for the past 5 years. I have been in the hotel, retail and real estate industries with experience in customer service, sales

and marketing before I launched a corporate branding business, Saldo International which now has a 3 million AED revenue, servicing customers in one of the best places in the world, UAE and some middle east regions.

*I never complained and took all the challenges I experienced as lessons to get to where I am now.*



Dubai has given me a lot of career and business opportunities. Here, I have learned new skills and techniques from different companies I worked with. I have applied all these learnings to grow my own business and hope I can inspire people with my story.

“I was born in Camarines Sur Philippines. Back then, I have had a hard life and struggled to finish school. I was a Reserved Officer of Women's Auxiliary Corps, Philippine Army during my High School, and College years.

Basically, my Sales experience started when I was a teenager selling peanuts, candies, snacks, and vegetables for my aunt, who I lived with and asked me to sell different stuff in my hometown. I would walk miles to get to school to save money for other expenses. I never complained and took all the challenges I experienced as lessons to get to where I am now.

I graduated Bachelor of Science in Food Technology, Major in Food Processing at Central Bicol State University in the Philippines. After graduating college, I got a job as a Food Technologist, exporting products to Japan. It was a tough job because if there is no supply of ingredient(s), there is no work schedule, so I don't get paid. I started to apply somewhere else. I remember the day I was interviewed for a staff position of an international Japanese restaurant in one of the biggest cities in Manila, I was wearing an old long-sleeve white polo shirt and a pair of black pants. I felt so embarrassed because the interviewers were wearing suits and beautiful dress, yet I was able to get the job.

A couple of years later, I took a job offer as customer service associate for a five-star hotel in the Philippines. I was the first one awarded as Customer Delight of a program in Asia at Shangri-La Hotel.

I wanted to explore more so when I had the opportunity to apply as a manager at Sofitel Hotel in Dubai, I took the chance and flew from Philippines for work”.

I have vast experience in:

- Hotel supervisor and manager – Sofitel Hotel, Dubai
- Manager and supervisor from supermarkets, Carrefour Dubai
- Restaurateur and owner of a bar in France – Avignon France
- Sales Executive and leasing professional in real estate – Al Futtaim Group Real Estate
- Sales Executive – Somji Advertising LLC

*I was able to finish a few diplomas while working abroad and, in the Philippines, one is Executive Secretary at Search International School in Dubai and Diploma in Starting Travel Business in Manila, Philippines. Also, I studied French Language from 101 to 103 level at Alliance Française Dubai UAE.*





*There were obstacles in my way and I was warned it would be difficult, but with confidence and faith I know nothing is going to be impossible.*

I was contributing millions of annual sales to the previous company I worked with but then I realized what if I start my own business? Where do I go next? What is my career path? There were obstacles in my way and I was warned it would be difficult, but with confidence and faith I know nothing is going to be impossible. I decided to take the plunge and set up my own business. Within 5 years I founded 2 companies Saldo International FZE and Saldo International Trading LLC. With Dubai and the regions backing my financial needs, it helped me win clients. Now, I'm earning millions through hard work, efficiency and quality of service that I provide to my clients. The early success of five years has helped build the momentum to strive more. I now provide merchandises across UAE

and other Middle East regions, sourcing supplies from Asia and North America.

These are the mottoes for Success I live by.

There should be a balance between customer service and employee engagement Seek a solution – in every difficulty lies an opportunity.

Never give up. If you fail, learn from it but never give up.

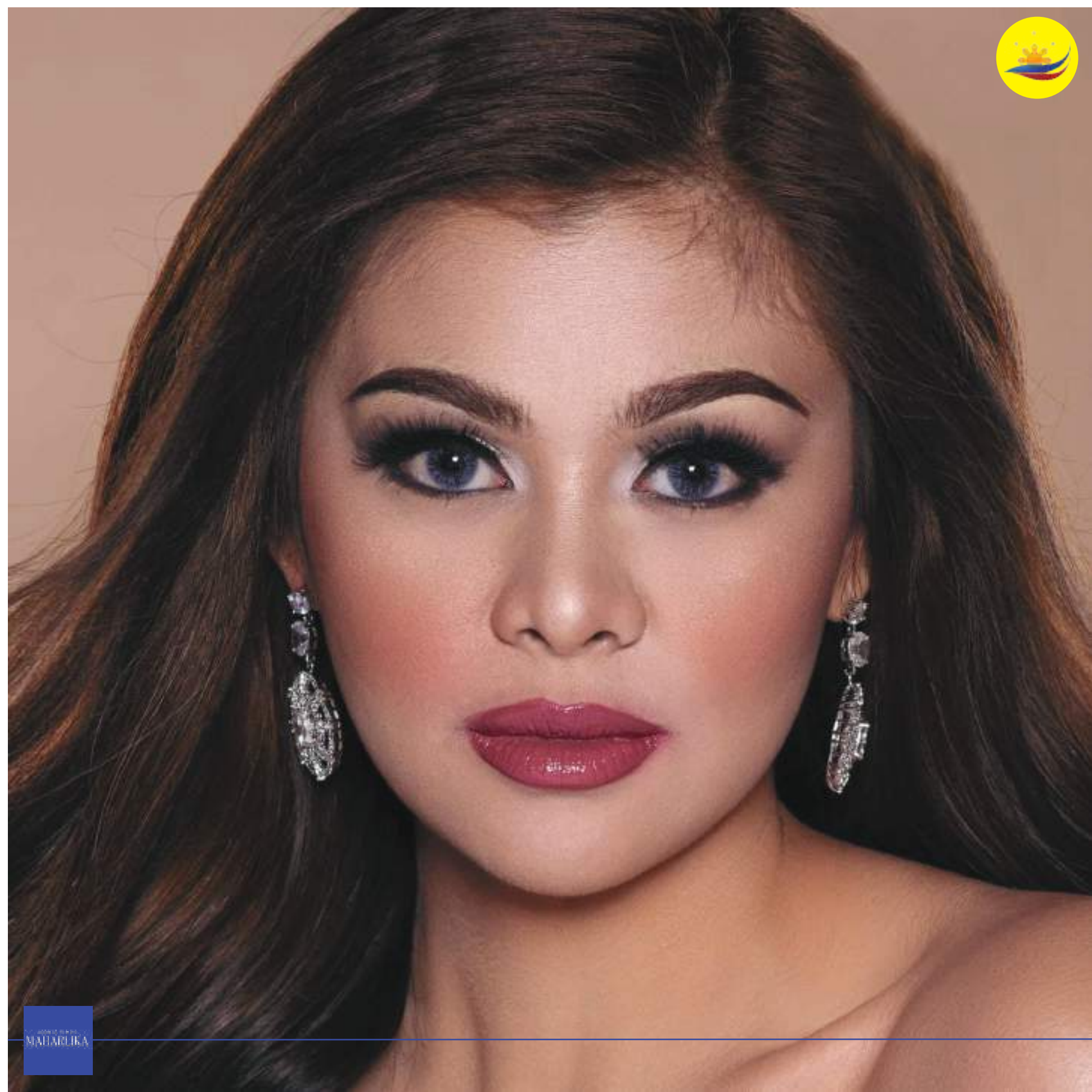
Make a right decision. Always think of what's best for others not just oneself.

Never stop exploring. If you don't initiate nobody else will.

The biggest risk is not taking a risk – Mark Zuckerberg

Be humble, stay humble.







# Young rising star *with a vision*

**PRINCESS JANE BORAZON** - Model & Advisor in Migration Firms



She was born on April 18, 1999 at Baao camarines sur in Bicol Philippines. Proudly represents the enchanting province of CAMARINES SUR known for its Remarkable Beauty. She was a strong independent woman especially during her college days. She graduated, Bachelor of Science in

Tourism Management at Mariners Polytechnic Colleges, Naga Campus. She aspires to be a Flight Attendant someday. For her, Mariners not only link its students to their future but they link them with anyone in the world because they are globally competitive.





She started to join Pageants when she was 15 years old. She won different Titles in her Hometown as well as regional pageant. She was crowned as, Miss Teen Bicolandia 2nd Princess 2016, Miss Teen Pintakasi 2016, Miss Baao 2018, Miss University 2018, Miss ABBS 2018, Miss Reftex 2018, Miss Rinconada 2019, Miss Tabak 1st Runner up 2019 and Recently crowned as her 1st International Crown, Miss Philippines DXB Tourism 2023. Her passion lies in promoting Diversity to foster Inclusivity. Despite our varying cultures and traditions, these differences do not hinder our unity. Instead, they become the very source of our strength, pride, honor, and unwavering determination to achieve success.

She loves Baton Twirling so much and she became a Majorette Leader of Mariners Polytechnic Colleges and Camarines Sur Majorettes.







She has a brother a year older than her. She was raised, loved and cared for by her grandparents because her mother went abroad when she was 1 year old. Ever since her best inspiration is her mother. Even though they have been apart for many years, it did not hinder her to reach her goals in life as she was lucky also to have her beloved grandparents.

She went to Dubai in the month of October 2022 to be with her Mother who worked there for many years. Now, she is living her best life and seizing every moment with her family. She is currently a Processing Advisor in one of the Migration Firms here in Dubai.

She aspires to be a flight attendant in the coming months.

She was lucky to meet new people who helped and molded her to become who she is now. One of them is her Manager, Designer and Handler, Benj Dela Rose of Calivo Couture. He is the one who's behind the success of Princess and made her STRONGER, BOLDER AND A FIGHTER.

Princess is looking forward to more Pageants Internationally and Open for new opportunities.









# Beyond Beauty

## *A Journey of Crowns and Compassion*

**NICOLE OSUNA DICHOSO** - Miss Global Philippines & Tourism Ambassador

*Her presence on stage is nothing short of captivating, and she has earned numerous accolades and titles that reflect her dedication and commitment to the craft.*



Nicole, a woman hailing from the picturesque province of Zambales, is a true embodiment of talent and grace. Her journey through life has been nothing short of extraordinary, and she has left an indelible mark on various fields, including Beauty Pageantry, Architecture, and Fashion.

Born to Jacqueline Osuna and Joseph Dichoso, Nicole was raised with values that instilled independence and wisdom within her. These principles have played a pivotal role in shaping her into the remarkable woman she is today. Her achievements go far beyond the surface glamour, as she has become a prominent advocate for Mental Health Awareness.

Nicole's story becomes even more fascinating with the addition of her older sister's achievement. It seems that talent and beauty run in the family, as her sister's success in the Miss World Philippines competition in 2013 as the 4th Princess adds another layer of accomplishment to their family's legacy.

In the world of Beauty Pageantry, Nicole has dazzled audiences and judges alike with her beauty, poise, and intelligence. Her presence on stage is nothing short of captivating, and she has earned numerous accolades and titles that reflect her dedication and commitment to the craft. Her charisma and grace quickly propelled her to the forefront. She adorned herself with titles such as Miss Filipinas - Tourism 2014, Binibining Zambales 2015, Miss Bikini Philippines 2015 – 2nd runner up, Mutya ng Olongapo 2016 and Miss Global Philippines 2018 – Tourism , capturing the hearts of judges and audiences alike.

Parallel to her pageantry success, Nicole earned her degree in Architecture, demonstrating her commitment to academic excellence. This academic achievement set the stage for a multifaceted career that transcended conventional boundaries. Her architectural background not only shaped her eye for aesthetics but also laid the foundation for a unique career that would later combine beauty and intellect in perfect harmony.

**Fashioning Success :** Nicole has strut the runways of Philippine Fashion Week and MEGA Fashion Week, working with renowned designers and stylists like Leo Almodal, Rocky Gathercole, and Norman San Diego to name a few. This solidified her status as a sought-after fashion model. Her modeling career showcased her versatility and elegance. With her undeniable charisma she was able to land an International Modelling contract with D'Scout Exclusives International and has been doing numerous photoshoots for different international well known magazines around the world. Her dedication to her passion and craft has opened multiple doors for her and is continuing to shine despite all odds.

Beyond the runway and crown, Nicole emerged as a passionate mental health advocate. Her journey as a beauty queen and fashion model has undoubtedly given her a platform to reach a wide audience. Her beauty and style have captured the attention of many, but it's her courage in sharing her personal struggles with mental health that truly sets her apart.

By openly discussing her mental health issues, Nicole has broken down stigmas surrounding mental illness and has shown that anyone, regardless of their outward appearance or success, can face these challenges. Her vulnerability and honesty have resonated with countless individuals who may have felt alone or ashamed about their own mental health struggles.







This international recognition not only brought pride to her homeland but also solidified her status as a beauty queen with global appeal. Her victory was a testament to her unwavering dedication, grace, and charm.

Nicole's remarkable journey from beauty queen, to fashion model, and mental health advocate showcases her unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in various domains. Her crowns symbolize not only her beauty but also her compassion and dedication to breaking barriers, instilling hope, and inspiring change in the world. Nicole continues to inspire and empower others with her story, proving that one can truly reach for the stars while staying grounded in their roots.

Nicole's advocacy work goes beyond her personal story. She has used her platform to raise awareness about mental health issues, promote access to mental health resources, and encourage others to seek help when needed. Her advocacy has likely inspired others to do the same, creating a ripple effect of support and understanding in communities around the world. Her personal journey serves as an inspiration to many, demonstrating that strength and beauty can coexist with vulnerability and resilience.

In 2023, Nicole added another crown to her impressive collection, winning the prestigious title of Miss Philippines DXB 2023 - International.

*Beyond the runway and crown, Nicole emerged as a passionate mental health advocate. Her journey as a beauty queen and fashion model has undoubtedly given her a platform to reach a wide audience.*





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