



Pagsulat DUAG:

QUEER YOUTH NARRATIVES OF PANAY



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Queer Youth Narratives of Panay 2020

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PAGSULAT DUAG

Queer Youth Narratives of Panay 2020



**ASEAN SOGIE
CAUCUS**



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To the future queer storytellers of Panay

FOREWORD

For queer youth, writing one's own story is an assertion of existence. It is an exercise of one's right to be, to live one's own identity, and to be treated with dignity. The story itself establishes a record, a relic, a memory, that can be carried across time and space. When one tells a story, the person warms the heart of another, melts the soft spot where one can pierce through and weave connections.

This book provides the needed space for queer youth from Panay island to exercise their agency. There is power in storytelling.

Yet, the memories of queer persons most especially those living in the periphery are set aside in public conversations. Their narratives rarely taken into serious consideration when policies, including those meant for human rights and development, are being crafted. Their narratives are oftentimes drowned by dominant voices, including those coming from the activist circles from the big cities and oftentimes amplified by social media.

This book contains stories, the raw and poignant ones. Read them as they cannot be left unheard.

Ryan V. Silverio
*Regional Coordinator,
ASEAN SOGIE Caucus*

PREFACE

On May, 2018, Iloilo Pride Team (IPT) and Hubon Manunulat were invited to a Rappler MovePH meeting in Iloilo City. During the meeting, they were asked how the local organizations can collaborate with each other. And so we thought, “What if we ask the youth of their stories? And what better way for their stories to be heard but straight from their own narratives?” With these questions, we also realized that not many have had the opportunity to learn the basics of even writing their own stories.

Being long-time friends with some of the members of Hubon Manunulat, it was easy for us to come up with a project for the coming 2019 Pride Month - a free creative writing workshop for the queer youth of the City of Iloilo. IPT, being a wide network of organizations and alliances forwarding safe spaces for all as well as organizing the annual Pride March, we took charge of looking for the first community where we could carry out the first of the series of trainings. On the other hand, Hubon Manunukat was in charge of the trainers and the content.

Just in time for the June 2019 Pride Month, we collaborated with Gabriela Panay-Guimaras and NAGKAISA to provide the venue and invite the queer youth of Brgy. Rizal Lapaz. From the meager resources we had - some cash donations enough to feed 15 people and writing materials and kits from our old projects - we repurposed many of our materials for the activity. We soon found ourselves conducting the first Pagsulat Duag Creative Writing Workshop for Queer Youth of Iloilo.

Mothers in the community were requested to prepare the food given the limited budget that we had. And chicken curry for lunch and

bihon for snacks just became the staple in all our workshops. This was the community's investment in the project, and it proved to be more environmentally friendly with the us avoiding the use of plastic cutleries and drinking glasses.

Every after workshop, participants were asked to read their own work. In a matter of a few hours, they were able to convey their most unforgettable experiences -- from losing their grandmothers or homes to coming out to their friends and families. Stories of resilience of the marginalized Ilonggo urban poor queer youth surfaced. We knew we should not just stop with one community.

We were able to reach three more communities. KAISOG helped us with North Baluarte, Molo where we held the workshop in the middle of a small street near the pier, with participants sitting on makeshift chairs and former election candidates' tarp shielding all of us from the summer sun.

Braving the torrential rains and flooded streets, participants and trainers converged in the legislative hall of Brgy. Calaparan, Arevalo where more stories of coming out, abandonment, and overcoming adversities surfaced. La Villa Pride hosted the last workshop in Sto. Nino Sur, Arevalo before COVID19 hit the Philippine shores. Gathered in the daycare center, sitting on child-sized chairs, and joining them in their Christmas party, we were also touched by their stories of acceptance and loss.

We wanted to share not only these stories. We also want to narrate the viability of Pagsulat-Duag as a low-cost project that can be replicated in other parts of the country and to teach as many as we can through the stories of Queer Youth of Panay.

Irish Inoceto
Chairperson,
Iloilo Pride Team

INTRODUCTION

PAGSULAT DUAG: Exploring the Narratives of Marginalized Queer Young People from Panay

Having a story and being able to tell it should be basic human rights. This simple idea is what inspired Pagsulat-Duag.

Pagsulat-duag started out as a series of free writing workshops given to queer young people from Iloilo City who come mostly from marginalized sectors, particularly the urban poor. Duag is the Hiligaynon word for color, and we envisioned the workshop to be a venue for queer young Ilonggos to write their colorful narratives. The first of four workshops was held in June 2019, through the joint efforts of the Iloilo Pride Team, Hubon Manunulat, and Kasingkasing Press.

The Iloilo Pride is a network of Ilonggo LGBTQIA¹'s that aims to put attention to LGBTQIA issues through social conversations. Meanwhile, Hubon Manunulat is a collective of writers from Western Visayas who advocate the use in various venues of the Panayanon languages --- Aklanon, Hiligaynon, and Kinaray-a. Finally, Kasingkasing Press is an independent press whose aim is to ensure the growth and enrichment of West Visayan Literature as well as the preservation of its rich linguistic heritage.

¹ LGBTQIA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, intersex, asexual, plus any other way a person chooses to identify.

Together, the team worked closely with people's organizations like Anakbayan and Gabriela-Panay to conduct the writing workshops in the various districts in Iloilo City. While the core group provided the resource persons, the different community organizations took charge of the meals and venue of the participants and facilitators during the day-long workshops. The community also provided the venues where the workshops took place: from a chapel, to an eskinita, a day care center, and a barangay hall.

This collaboration hoped to engage the community and develop a sense of shared ownership for the outputs of the project. Over the course of a year, these workshops generated narratives from participants whose ages ranged from 13 to 31 years old.

Those of us who served as resource speakers² for Pagsulat-Duag were products of the many local and national writing workshops sponsored by different universities in the country. These workshops usually lasted anywhere from three (3) days to a week to almost a month. In addition, most of the participants in these formal writing workshops have already had a writing background.

So, while we used these formats to generate our own program of activities for Pagsulat-Duag, we had to make adjustments for our set of participants, whose writing experience was mostly limited to school submissions and social media posts. Additionally, our limited time and resources forced us to restructure the format used for Pagsulat-Duag so that participants will be guided in producing a personal narrative at the end of the day-long session.

The workshop starts with everyone taking turns to introduce themselves. This is followed by the first discussion entitled, "My

² The resource speakers for the workshop included Early Sol Gadong, Noel Galon, Gil Montinola, and Michael Caesar Tubal.

Narrative is Important.” During this time, participants are posed the following questions: How many stories about LGBTQ people have you read in books or seen on TV? How many were stories of young lgbtq people? How did you feel when you saw or read about these stories? Were any of these stories about young LGBTQ people from Panay? from Iloilo? How many of these are stories of a young queer Ilonggo who sells fish for a living?

This line of questioning aims to raise participants’ awareness about how narratives can shed light on social, political, and ethical dimensions that are often silenced from of our existing mind frame.³ Through these questions, the facilitators aim to emphasize to the participants that unless their stories were written, then how would other people know that there was, for example, actually a lesbian teenager from Rizal Pala-pala who juggled schoolwork and community organizing? Or a young trans woman from Sto. Niño de Arevalo whose gowns and makeup for beauty pageants are provided by her gay uncle? These qualifiers varied depending on what they revealed about themselves during the getting to know each other portion. After this first talk, Workshop 1 follows. Participants are asked to spend a few moments to think about a special or important moment in their lives that they would like other people to know about.

The second talk gives the participants a brief overview of what creative non-fiction is. There is also a discussion on how to write a personal narrative, and it is during this time that participants are provided a template which they use in Workshop 2 to take note of important details and descriptions in the moment or event that they identified during workshop 1. Lunch time always turns out to be a

³ Smith, T. J., & Paul, J. L. (2000). Sharing space, negotiating power, and creating meaning in the classroom. (pp. 1-13). In J. L. Paul and Terry Jo Smith (Eds.), *Stories out of School: Memories and Reflections on Care and Cruelty in the Classroom*. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

working break, because participants are eager to start filling out the templates they are given.

Finally, the third talk provides participants with techniques to stylize their narrative. Here, they are also strongly encouraged to write in whatever language they are most comfortable with. Workshop 2 follows, and participants are given time to put their thoughts together and write about their personal narratives. All throughout the workshops, facilitators work closely with the participants (with a facilitator working with two (2) to four (4) participants at a time) as they write their narratives.

After participants are through writing their narratives, volunteers are requested to read their works and are provided with more feedback for the revision of their work. We made sure to observe the appropriate ethical protocols.

Here are the themes that participants chose to write about: coming out, acceptance and non-acceptance, bullying, love, personal triumphs, and struggles with poverty. These themes share similarities with similar silenced narratives from other queer youth from other places in the world,⁴ but also clearly differ from them. From these general themes, a closer look at the narratives reveals the multiple disenfranchisements of the participants, given their class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, as well as age.

For example, in the stories "Ang Adlaw nga Ginhatagan ako Panty," "Confession," "Kampyon sa Kantahan," and "Tragic Night" the authors (all gay young men) talked about their efforts and triumphs as a means to make their parents (usually their father) proud. This thinking of the need to compensate for something seems to (1) stem

⁴ Myers, K., & Evans, K. (2020). Narratives from the Closet: Stories of LGBTQIAP Youth. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 30(1), 25-46. doi:10.7721/chilyoutenvi.30.1.0025

from their being queer and (2) the idea of getting out of poverty by doing good in school, winning in singing competitions, and becoming a successful community official. On the other hand, these same stories reflect that queer young people's main support system include the peers who accept them even in the middle of their internal struggle prior to coming out.

This undercurrent of “not being enough” was also evident in the narratives that talked about losing and finding love. In “Love the One who Loves You” and “Young Love, True Love,” the authors (one, a trans woman and the other, a flamboyant gay young man) spoke of their disbelief that someone could truly love people like them, alluding to their perceived *kakulangan* as queer and poor.

It was also interesting that for those who chose to explicitly write about their situations of poverty, the writers of “Kalye” and “Nasunugan” both wrote about not having a place to live in after either being kicked out of their home or having their house burn down. Because one's home is usually one's safe space, the experience of losing their homes and having nowhere else to go spotlights the issue of poor queer young people not having a space to call one's own, both figuratively and literally.

To add, it is striking to see that more than half of the outputs were written in the participants' mother tongue, Hiligaynon. As these participants were already at least in their teens, none of them has encountered the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education curriculum. All the participants were still in school, where the premium language was English. However, most of them chose to write in their mother tongue.

Brief conversations with them revealed that they found it easier to write about their thoughts and memories in their native Hiligaynon.

This reveals another source of disenfranchisement, which is language. Oftentimes, narratives are muted because they are written in a language that is different from the language of the academe, of mass media, or of trade and business. If we go back to the questions posed in the first part of the workshop, these young people most likely have not read stories written in Hiligaynon or seen movies where the characters spoke in Hiligaynon. This is another facet of their life that do not get acknowledged.

During the airing of the Miss Universe Philippines beauty pageant on October 26, 2020, one of the contestants, Kimberly "Billie" Hakenson from Cavite said she was not just going to be a voice, and that she was going to amplify voices.⁵ This really struck me because many times, as writers and activists, we have been told to be the voices of the voiceless. But maybe many of those we see as voiceless are just talking too softly. What is worse is that we may not even be listening.

So, to close, I believe that Pagsulat Duag, a simple, not so phenomenal workshop with a heart enabled the participants to have their voices amplified. And fortunately, our little project was lucky enough to find funding so that not only will the writers' voices be amplified, but they will also be given an opportunity to be listened to, as their narratives, along with others just like theirs, will be published in an anthology, and distributed back to their communities, their schools, and other key partners in this endeavor. Aside from this, Kasingkasing Press is also planning to publish more books that specifically cover the varied experiences of queer young people.

⁵ Billie Hakenson on Miss Universe PH run: 'I was heard, and people listened.' 28 October 2020. <https://www.rappler.com/entertainment/pageants/billie-hakenson-post-miss-universe-philippines-2020-run>

Aside from the narratives generated from the writing workshops, young queer writers from Western Visayas were also invited to contribute to the collection. Indeed, this has resulted to more robust narratives for this anthology.

Moving forward, we hope that we will be able to hold more iterations of the writing workshop so that more queer young people from marginalized sectors will be able to tell their colorful stories more eloquently as they write their narratives.

Early Sol A. Gadong

28 October 2020

Iloilo City

PART I

Ang Adlaw nga Nakabaton Ako Panty

Christian Kane Baumbad

"Pila edad mo sang nabal-an mo nga agi ka?"

Isa ini ka pamangkot nga pirmi ginabuya sa akon.

Tatlo ako ka tuig sang nakita ko ang agi ko nga tiyo nga nagapangmake-up. Sang makita niya ako, namangkot sya, "Maagi ka man?"

Wala ko anay nagsabat. Tapos nagpadayon sya, "Kon mag-agi ka gid man, indi ta ka ya pagpahulamon korona."

Nagsabat ako, "Wala ko ya labot kay maubra man ko sang akon korona."

Tungod kay damo ako tiya kag dugangan pa sang agi ko nga tiyo, sin-o abi ang indi matingala sa ila ginaubra? Nagasuksok sila aritos, polseras, kulintas kag nakapungos ang buhok kag may make-up. Ngaa nagapagwapa gid sila?

Isa ka adlaw, nakita ko si Mama nga ginalambid ang tuwalya sa iya buhok kag ang isa ka tuwalya nakatabon sa iya bilog nga lawas. Dayon nakita ko kay Papa nga tunga lang sang lawas niya ang may tuwalya.

Mas namian ako sa ginaubra ni mama. Kis-a kon matak-an ako, nagasulod ako sa kwarto kag mag-ilis nga daw kandidata sang isa ka contest. Nalipay gid ako kay daw ako ang nagdaog.

Samtang ako nagakalipay, nadakpan ko sang akon amay. Ginbakol niya ako sang paha. Wala pa sya nakontento kag ginbitay niya pa ako nga suli, kag ang mas bongga, ginsulod niya ko sa sako.

Hambal niya, "Indi ka da maggwa kon indi ka lalaki."

Sa tanan nga ginhimo sa akon, ang mas masakit ang magpakuno-kuno ako anay.

Sang nagsugod na ko eskwela, didto na ako nagbira-bira tuon sang maayo kag nanguna sa klase. Amo ini ang paagi ko nga mapahumok ang tagipusuon ni papa kag para mabaton niya ko. Gin-ubra ko gid ang tanan para makatapos nga may award kag nagapasalamat gid ko nga makasaka ako sa stage. Adlaw sang graduation nagsiling ako sa akon kaugalingon nga mangisog ako para ihambal kay papa nga agi ako. Wala sya nangakig kag isa pa, sya pa ang nagregalo sa akon sang panty.

Nahunahuna ko nga ang kabuhi sang agi indi labutaw biskan sila ginalabutaw, pero sige lang. Tatlo ako ka tuig sang nabaton ko nga agi ako.

Isang Linggong Walang Bahay

Pamatan-on sang Rizal, Lapaz

Taong 2015 nang nakaranas kaming apat na magkakapatid, pati na ang aking mga magulang, ng hamon sa buhay.

Labindalawang taon ako noong napasok ako sa hamon ng buhay. Nag-umpisa ang lahat ng ito noong gabing nagwala si papa sa bahay. Narinig kasi niya si Tito Sonson na kapatid ni Mama na palalaysin daw kami sa bahay. Nang gabing iyon, tumawag si Tito Sonson at sinabi niya sa aking ina na lumayas na kami sa bahay. Paluhang tinanggap ng aking ina.

Umupa na kami sa ibang bahay. Kahit doon ay pinalayas din kami. Umabot na sa puntong natulog na kami sa kalsada dahil wala na kaming matirahan. Isang lingo kaming natulog sa kalsada. Sobrang hirap ng sitwasyon namin. Hindi kami makatulog nang maayos dahil sa ingay ng mga sasakyan. Kung gabi na ay maglalalatag na lang ang aking ina ng karton para meron kaming matulugan. Isang araw ay nilagnat pa ako.

Pagkalipas ng ilang araw ay nalaman ito ng aking Tita Nelba at sinabi niya ito sa Tito Hando ko. Nang nalaman niya ang aming sitwasyon, agad-agad niya kaming binigyan ng pamasaha para sa kanila na manirahan.

Malaki ang pasasalamat ko sa aking Tito Hando. Dahil sa kanyang tulong, nakalagpas kami sa aming pagsubok sa buhay.

Ang lahat ng nangyaring iyon ay nalagpasan namin dahil kay Tito Hando. Kinaya namin ang mga pagsubok na iyon dahil hindi kami agad-agad sumuko.

Two Years Ago, Nagpalangga Ako

Transwoman halin sa La Villa Pride

Two years ago, nagpalangga ako sang tawo bisan bal-an ko man nga indi niya ako kaya palanggaon pabalik.

Nagpalangga ako sang tawo nga indi niya man ko kaya palanggaon. I gave everything I can, hoping that one day he will love me back, but I ended up broken, wasted, and rejected. So, I just accepted the fact nga indi gid sya para sa akon and I moved on.

Days passed and I met this guy. He found me interesting kag nangilala sya sa akon. He told me that he was a pansexual guy and he asked me kon pwede sya ka-court and he wanted to know more about me.

I opened my heart again for him and took the risk. He courted me and after knowing each other, I accepted him.

Now, we are getting stronger and we celebrated our first anniversary last September. We are about to celebrate Christmas and New Year together.

And now, nagapalangga ko sang tawo nga palangga niya man ako. Being with him makes me realize that we don't have to chase people for love.

Bilang Isang Kampyon sa Kantahan

Dave Gerapusco

Bilang isang kampyon, marami ang nangyari sa aking buhay. Isa na rito ang pagbabago ko at ang pagbabago ng pakikitungo ng mga tao na nakasalamuha ko. Dahil dito, marami ring mga oportunidad ang dumating at ibinigay sa akin.

Bago nagsimula ang lahat, nag-umpisa ako bilang simpleng mag-aaral na walang nakakaalam sa aking talent. Ngunit isang araw ay may isang tao na nagsabi na huwag akong matakot. Huwag ko raw ikahiya kung ano man ang ibinigay ng Diyos sa akin. Ang taong iyon ay ang aking tatay. Kung hindi dahil sa kaniya ay wala ako ngayon sa posisyon ko.

Pinalaki ako bilang kontisero at pinalaki bilang mang-aawit. Patungo sa aking pangarap ay kasama ko ang aking tatay. Matalo o manalo ay nandiyan siya, gumagabay at nakaalalay sa akin.

Ngunit isang araw, habang ako ay nasa paligsahan, nabalitaan ko ang nangyari sa aking tatay. Naaksidente siya sa kaniyang sinasakyang motor patungo kung saan akong lugar naroon. Nang nalaman ko ang nangyari, hindi ko pinagpatuloy ang pagkanta ako. Dahil sa aking nalaman, naging balisa ako at nawalan ako ng lakas ng loob sa mga araw na iyon. Hindi ko maipaliwanag kung ano ang aking naranasan doon. Nawalan ako ng taong parating nandiyan na gumagabay sa akin at sumusuporta lagi. Noong mga oras na iyon, naisip ko na wala na akong silbi kung wala siya. Gumuho ang mundo ko nang nalaman ko na wala na siya.

Dalawang taon makalipas ang pagkamatay ng ang aking tatay, naisipan kong bumalik sa pagkanta dahil din sa aking ina at kuya.

Nabuhayan ako ng pag-asa at inspirasyon upang ibalik ang nawalang ako. At nabigyan ako ng pagkakataon na kumanta sa National Festival of Talent, Singing and Writing Competition at pinarangalan bilang isang Kampyon.

Sa araw ng aking pagsalang ay naisip ko ang aking ama at pumasok sa aking isipan na kahit wala siya ay alam ko sa puso ko na nariyan siya para gabayan ako. Sa hirap at ginhawa na aking pinagdaanan nariyan siya para gabayan ako sa mga dadating pa na paligsahan.

Heto ako ngayon, masaya at sinasamsam ang pagkapanalo bilang kampyon. Nais ko rin pasalamatan ang mga taong tumulong sa akin upang abutin ang aking pangarap at sa mga taong gumabay at nagtiwala sa akin. Masaya ako ngayon, sa biyayang ibinigay at ipinagkaloob sa akin ng Diyos. Patuloy ko pa rin itong gagamitin upang makatulong at makapagbibigay ng inspirasyon sa katulad ko bilang isang kampyon at nais ko rin makapagbigay ng inspirasyon sa mga kabataang patuloy na nangangarap na abutin ang kanilang pangarap.

My Experience That I Cannot Forget

Queer Youth halin sa Calaparan, Molo

My experience that I cannot forget was when my parents accepted me for being part of the LGBTQIA. Before, I did not think they could accept someone gay in our family. I did not know if they could accept me. Since I was a kid, I already know that I was gay. I hid my identity to my family because I was afraid of them.

I decided to confess when I was in Grade 7. It was my birthday when I finally decided that I cannot hide my real identity anymore. I asked my friends how to reveal my real identity.

"Ma? Pa? Please don't be angry," I told them in my bedroom. My parents were happy that I confessed to them my real identity. I was crying after that begging for their acceptance. Fortunately, they accepted me from the deepest of their heart.

After the day I confessed, they now treat me just like my sister. They love me so much. Now, my family supports what I love and what I like.

Sunog

Pamatan-on sang Rizal, Lapaz

2013. 11:25 sang gab-i, nagatulog sang maayo sang pamilya ko sa kwarto. Samtang kami nagatulog, nakabugtaw si Mama kag nakita ang wala nga bahin sang amon balay nga nagakalayo. Ang didto nga parte sang balay puno sang mga kahoy nga gamit, amo na nga dasig magdako ang kalayo. Hala dalagan kanday mama upod ang mga utod ko. Ako ya, nagakatulog sa kwarto, wala kabalo sang nagahitabo sa gwa balay.

Wala sila kabalo nga ara man ako gihapon sa kwarto. Pero nagsulod si Papa liwat sa balay. Dulom na kay patay na ang mga kuryente, naglabay si Papa sa kwarto, ang tuyo niya man lang salbaron ang amon ido nga si Wantaw. Samtang nagadalagan sya pakadto sa kurungan sang amon ido, aksidente niya ko nga natapakan kag didto na ako nakabatyag sang sakit. Didto na ako nakabugtaw. Pagmuklat ko, nakita ko dayon ang mga gamit nga ginakaon sang kalayo. Nakulbaan ako kag puno sang nerbyos, pero nagtuyo ako nga magdalagan pa-gwa. Pagbukas sang pwerta, kita ko ang mga gamit pa nga nagakasunog pero sige-sige man gihapon ang akon dalagan asta nakalab-ot sa pinakauna nga pwerta kag nakita ko ang pamilya ko nga nagahibi-singgit. Ara kami sa dalan, nagapungko. Ginalantaw namon ang amon balay nga nagakarumpag, nagakaruspag, kag nagakaguba. Nag-abot na ang mga bombero. Hala basya sa nagasunog nga balay namon pero samtang nagadako nga nagadako ang tupad balay namon nadala. Nakita namon ang pagpalagyo sang tag-iya sang karinderya nga puno sang luha ang bayo kag wala na sya tsinelas. Ginahulat namon mag-untat tani ang kalayo kaso nag-abot ang traysikol upod ang tiya ko. Naghambal sya nga masakay na lang

kami kag direktso na lang sa ila balay. Nag-upod man kami. Pagkatapos sang tatlo ka oras, may nagtawag sa amon nga ubos na tanan ang balay. Ang ginhalinan sang sunog amo ang plantsa nga wala nakakas sa salaksakan.

Naghibi kami. Puno na sang luha ang amon bayo pero nagpasalamat man kami dayon sa Ginoo nga wala man biskan sin-o sa amon nga may pilas ukon ano man.

Of Judgments, Prayers, and Confessions

Marnie Espinosa Envidia

It was 12 in the midnight and I was lying on my bed when I received a text message.

"Kapoy na ko sa mga nabatian ko, Mei. Gusto ko na mag suicide" – Althea.

I was shocked. Without bothering to change my clothes, I ran to Althea's house. Althea is my *suon* (god sister). She is a bit taller than me, chubby, and very jolly. But Althea was not the jolly person she was when I reached their house. Her eyes were filled with sadness. We sat on their red sofa under the dim orange light of their lamp. The electric fan whirred steadily. Althea smelled of sweat and alcohol.

I held her hands and said, "What happened? Why are you crying?"

She looked at me with empty eyes and cried.

"Why can't people accept my flaws, Mei, and what I wanted to be?"

I did not know how to answer her. Althea is lesbian, and for quite some time she has shared with me how badly she feels every time people make negative remarks about the way she acts – more masculine than feminine. Before I could say anything, suddenly Althea was holding a knife to her wrist.

"Althea, – NO!" I explained. "I am here. I love you. I accept you for who you are. Please put that down."

Crying, and still holding on to the knife, Althea said, "No. You're only saying that because you are kind."

"You are loved, Althea," I told her. "By me and by many people. But you cannot see it because you are focused on people who only judge you. We, your family, we are here. We love you. We are here. Ok? You do not need to do that. Jesus died for you, *para lang mag-suicide k?*. Look on the positive side. PRAY!"

I felt Althea slowly letting go of the knife. I immediately took it and put it at the table away from us. Tears were streaming down our faces as we hugged each other.

"Let us pray, Althea," I told her. "Let us ask God to give you strength and courage to face your challenges and problems so that you may find it easy to cope with."

Sunrise is still far away but I know that when it comes, even the yellow orange curtains will not be able to keep the rays of the sun from brightening this room, and the red sofa that quietly listened to us will not be able to whisper our own prayers and confessions to anyone else.

Landong sang Balangaw

Anakbayan sang WVSU nga nag-upod sa North Baluarte, Molo

Malamig pa rin ang halik ni Haring Araw. Basang eskinita, mataong lugar. Isang pook na hindi ako pamilyar. Alas otso pa lamang ng umaaga ngunit sinuyod ko ang isang daanang ngayon ko pa lamang napupuntahan. North Baluarte Day Care Center. Tama naman ang tinahak ko base sa Google map pero bakit parang nawala ako?

“Nong, Amo ni ang North Baluarte Day Care Center?”

“Huo” isang malamig na sagot sa ilalim ng mainit na panahon. Pabalik-balik ako kakatanong kung saan ang ano. Subalit tila ay nawala ako.

Gaya ng kung paano ko nawala ang tapang na pinagmamalaki ko isang araw na tinawag akong “baboy” ng aking guro.

Tulad pa rin ng mga nagdaang araw, ang mga silya sa aming classroom ay magulo at sa sahig ay may mga naglalarong papel. Lahat ay nagsisigawan nang biglang pumasok ang gurong hindi na bago sa amin. Isa-isang natahimik ang bawat isa at ang mga ilaw ay pinatay na niya. Itim ang kulay ng lahat hanggang sa nabalot ng asul ang lahat mula sa isang projector.

“Katoliko ang dominanteng relihiyon sa France subalit isa rin sila sa bansang may matatag na suporta sa LGBT,” wika ng isa kong kaklase.

At ang simula ng mala-impyernong-isang-oras ay nagsimula. Habang ang matatamis na ngiti ng mga mag-aaral ay sumisilay sa madilim na silid, naging makulimlim naman ang pag-iisip ng isang taong dapat sana’y minumulat kami sa halip na kinukulong kami sa paniniwalang ika nila’y nagpapalaya kahit ang totoo’y nagmamataas.

Pabalik-balik pa rin ako sa eskinitang ito. Tinatanong ang mga tao ng mga tanong na hindi rin nila mawari. Sapagkat ako, hindi ko rin mawari, kung saan ako ngayon patungo. Kung saan kami noon patungo. Patungo ba sa pinto ng salbasyon ng langit o sa umaapoy na ilog ng paghuhusga.

Habang nakatitig sa litrato ng dalawang lalaking ikinakasal, ay sinusumpa naman ng iba ang kaligayahan nila.

"Siguro kon sadya man na sila pero bag-o sila mapatay ginatubuan man na sila sang sakit-sakit."

Hindi ko na alam kung pang-ilang katahimikan ito ngayon. Pero ang panghing sumusulasok sa aking ilong ay pabango pa kung ikukumpara sa lapastangang pananaw niya. Kalapastanganang sinabi ng Diyos. Diyos niya. Diyos namin. Diyos natin?

Baboy, lapastangan, at marami pang pagmumura galing sa bibig. Subalit kung maging abo kami hindi ba dapat siya na lang ang magpasya? Hindi isang guro na pareho lang rin naman naming nagkakasala.

Remembering One of the Most Tragic Nights sa Life Ko

A Life Cleansing Experience

Elvin Jay Vinas

It has almost been a year and a half years, *pero* I can still recall *kon ano ang natabo* last July 6, 2018 when my sister invited me to attend the birthday party of her friend.

While we were having our dinner, I received a call from my father. We had a little talk about sa livelihood project *nga gin-propose* ko *nga i-put up* sa Guimaras. Before we ended the call, he told me that he is very proud of my achievements and I could feel his sincerity because it sounded serious. I felt that he was smiling while he was telling those things to me. He also advised me to sleep early because by tomorrow, it would be my first day as barangay councilor.

After an hour, I wondered why my sister looked pale. She had been calling my attention for a while. I was about to ask her what was wrong when she started to cry out loud and told me that she received a message from our younger sibling that papa was admitted to a hospital. He was already gone.

We immediately contacted some of our siblings *nga mag-upod sa amon magpuli sa* Guimaras. When we arrived sa port, *indi pa kami pagpatabukon* because it was already 12:00 midnight *kag may bagyo pa*. However, we begged because it was an emergency. Good thing, *naluoy man sila sa amon*.

When we arrived sa hospital, *gahinibi na ang tanan* and *nakita namon si papa nga nagahigda kag tugnaw na*.

Happy and proud *gid ko sa* parents *ko* especially kay papa kay everytime *gina-question* ang gender ko sang *mga migo niya, gina-*

defend *niya gid ko*. *Gina-guide niya gid ko* always nga *mag-set sang* good example and be an achiever. *Ka-sad lang kay* he was just only 54 years old. That is why *gusto ko hambalan tanan nga* parents nga *dapat mangin* good foundation *kita sa aton kabataan*. *Indi na pagkontrahon ang gusto nila*. Instead, *suportahan ta sila kag* let us properly guide them. *Sa mga kabataan, mangin* good listener *kita sa aton ginikanan kay tanan nga* advices *nila*, they are always *para sa makapamaayo sa aton*. Let us always appreciate their sacrifices.

Ang True Love nga Ginatawag

Barbie Sue

Since 2017 until now 2019, kami man gihapon sang partner ko. Nakilala ko sya sang nagaeskwela pa kami. Second year high school sya samtang grade 10 ako. Una namon nga pagkilalahay sa amon man lang barangay. Sa tuod, ipingay pa kami balay kag didto kami nangin close.

Sang nagkilalahay na kami, nagmayuhay na kami, nangin close friends kami asta nga may nabatyagan na kami sa isa kag isa. Sa iya ko lang nabatyagan ang tuod nga pagpalanggaanay. Bisan kis-a nageselos na ako, ginaagwanta ko para indi lang sya madula sa akon.

Worth it man ang mga sakripisyo kag mga effort nga gin-ubra ko para sa iya. Wala man ako naghinulsol kay ginpasadya niya man ako. Ginbaton niya ako bisan amo lang ko sini. Asta subong, nagaupdanay man kami gihapon kag nagapasalamat ako kay nakilala ko sya. Sa iya ko natun-an kag nabatyagan ang true love nga ginatawag.

PART II

What a Girl Tells the Sun

Rheane Joy E. Senangote

You coming to my life is perhaps the most surreal of things that has happened to me. I have never been more content and thankful.

One truth that I can admit (with a heavy heart) is that I always get ahead of myself – always scared of what is coming next that I often forget to enjoy the here and now.

Perhaps this is why I love the sunset. I love the promise of both fear and courage. I love how it makes me feel both scared and brave at the same time.

I love it when the sun is about to kiss the horizon, the sky is bursting with magnificent mix of colors – oranges, yellows, pinks, reds, and violets. I love how the sky boasts of this splendor it almost feels like sorcery. I love how it could mean that something good, something beautiful must have happened during the day to deserve such tribute. I love how it seems to celebrate a life worth living. And I would like to think you are that something good, that something beautiful, and that life.

But I know then that sunset is fear - fear of falling short of time that I cannot catch it, fear of never seeing the colors again, fear of taking it for granted, fear of the clouds, of the storm that may come its way and hide it, and fear of not exerting much effort to see it before the day ends.

So, this very same sunset makes me scared – the darkness after the colors is long gone and the coldness after the last breath of warmth has left. I am scared of feeling uncertain of the things around

me. I am scared I will not know what to do next. And I am most scared the sun will not come back and set again. I am scared I will not see you again or will not feel your warmth again.

But even so I know sunset is courage – courage to go on despite all of the uncertainties, courage to face another day to wait for another sunset, courage to sleep at night and hope at the start of the day that the sunset will be the last thing I would see to conclude my day, and courage to keep believing that despite varied sunsets day by day it is still the same sun that brought color to the sky, the same sun that left, and the same sun that I will see again. The same you.

And I know I am courageous because despite the uncertainties, the darkness, and coldness that come after, I would still want to feel your warmth as you set even if only to watch you leave again.

Help me be courageous.

TRANS sa Probinsiya

Wyn Gallo

Mabalod nga paglayag ang pagbukad sang matuod-tuod mo nga balatyagon, nawong, kag paghulag. Maduha na ka tuig sugod sang nagsugod ang akon nga pag-transition sa pagkababayi. Maduha na man katuig nga pagbaka-baka sa nagalain-lain nga balod nga bitbit sang pagbulag sang imo lalaki nga lawas padulong sa pangin isa ka babayi.

Ginbayaan ko ang akon nga obra sa paghunahuna nga indi mabatun ang isa ka transgender-woman sa isa ka pampubliko nga buluthuan. Kapin pa gid nga napriso ang paminsarun sang kadam-an nga kon ikaw isa ka manunudlo, wala ginatugutan nga pwedi magbayo sang pang-maestra ang isa ka maestro, amo man ang isa ka maestra.

Nangin mabudlay ini nga proseso nga nagdulot sang nagalain-lain nga pag-uyog nga nasari-sari ang kusog. Awat kag mahal ang mag-order online sang mga Hormonal Pills para sa Hormonal Replacement Therapy (HRT) nga kon diin ginainom sang isa ka transgender. Apang, tanan ini kaparyu sang balod, magakadangat sa pangpang, magahalok sa duta kag magalabay lamang.

Went upstairs to watch gay porn instead

@gagarange2.0

In our dining table,
When I was kid,
You will never hear the word homosexual, or masturbation.
Instead, u will be fed with stories about men who survived the war,
and politics in between
Social arguments, why boys who dress up as girls end up being
executed for having freedom of expressing their true self, or for playing
with dolls, or liking pink too much.

Across the table, you can overhear my father complain about the
overcooked pasta
He sounded like, "They're not supposed to act like that, God didn't
create that (whatever they're called) they are cursed to the society, a
bad example for the next generation XY chromosomes, always with
the explicit image and vulgar language. I will never let that diseases
get my son; I would be very ashamed! This house will never be filled
with embarrassment."

I stood up from the table, without finishing my dinner "excuse me, I
lost my appetite".

Original Sin

Adlao

Eve was never his to take
As soon as Adam was awake
Her lips were never for his sake
A sin like apple forms her nape

I would protest the story's fate
The verses written, ruled as straight
Because two apples on a plate
Makes for a rather better date

Adam can never trace her lips
Nor will he ever feel her tips
Spite be thrown, I do it best
No one else can reach her crest

Though I may be but a snake
These words I know I cannot fake
A girl she is, I too as well
For Eve, from heaven did I fell

Forgive us for we will defy,
Although condemned, sin it may be
The heavens could never deny
She and I were meant to be

Ang Ingus kang Hamtic

Macky Torrechilla

Ang panuruan ko kang mga syudad ukon diin pa nga lugar sa gwa kang Antique, mga hungud nga aragtunan tungud hay may kinahanglan ako buhatun rugto. Halimbawa, kang nagtinir ako sa Iloilo apat ka bulan kang nagligad nga tuig, to para sa obra. Ang panuruan ko kang mga lugar sa gwa kang Antique, mga aragtunan, samtang ang panuruan ko kang akun probinsya, akun gid nga balay – sadya, komportable, kag buta kang mga pamilyar nga lugar kag tsura. Dya bahul gid nga parte sa akun pagkaagi.

Sa akun koleksyon kang binalaybay nga kadya nabalhag run kang Kasingkasing Press, akun ginbalayan kang mga istorya ang mga lugar rugya. Akun ginsipad-sipad ang akun pagsipal sa dya nga mga lugar – buruhatun nga indi ko mahimo sa iban nga lugar. Hay iba ang nabatyag ko nga seguridad kag iba ang kulba sa pagpanago sa mga haron rugya. Iba ang ingus ko, namun, sa mga siuk rugya – mga ingus nga dapat man mabatian kang iban.

Ako si Bryan

Jul Bert

Ako si Bryan, pero mas gusto ko tawgun nga Barbie. Trese anyos run ako kadiya nga adlaw. Gusto ko man daad magbakal ka cake nga may Sailormoon kag Bratz, kag magkanta ka happy birthday samtang ginahuyupan ang pink nga kandila, garing, nagamasakit si Nanay kag ako lang anay kadiya ang maobra.

Ang mga tuktukon nga salsalun nagahimo nga bugas kung ipakilo. Ang mga botelya ka lapad kung duru, makabakal gid ka pinakas kag lamayo. Ang mga plastik kung tiponon, pwedi makabakal ka papel kag lapis para sa modules. Hambal ni Nanay, kung mag sigi-sigi ang ang amon obra, basi makabakal kami ka selpon para Online Class kunu ni Manang.

Bilog ko nga adlaw gin-agwanta ang init ka adlaw. Gasir-ab run ang akun suruk-suruk pero di ako magkaun para sa bulong ni Nanay. Darwa ka shin kag sangka singkwenta ang akun kinitaan kadiya nga adlaw. Mauli ako run sa balay para mabakal namon ni Manang ang bulong ni Nanay. Gusto ko daad man magbakal ka bestida kag lipstick, Pero, unahon anay ang bulong.

Pag-abot ko sa balay, duru ang mga tawo. Pagsulod sa balay, nagahibi si Manang, kupkup si Nanay. May mga kandila sa ingud ni Nanay. Gulpi ako naghibi nga nagasambit, Happy Birthday to me, kung huyupon ko kandila sa ingud ni Nanay, mabuhi ayhan tana?

Wara nasulud sa botilya ang amun pagkatawo

Reyson Peralta Samulde

"Tagay bala John, ipakita sa mga Ninong mo nga tunay 'kaw gid nga laki."

"Kon malingin ra mga agi, mangin laki man ra gihapon."

Isara lamang si John sa mga agi sa atun komunidad nga nagatuman lang sa mandu bisan apgut sa anang tubug ang irimnon agud pamatud-an lamang nga laki tana sa mata kang anang pamilya. Pero sa gihapon, nagakim-ing anang mga tudo sa pagguraput kang botilya. Pirit na man pakipagbatuan pero maluming gid tana bisan bakulon ukon may kastigo militar pa. Bukut tanan pero harus kalabanan, ang mga agi indi mangin laki bisan lingin kag may hublas nga babayi nga ginakuyang kana. Kon malingin, nagakaringking, biga-biga kag nagapangagaw mic sa videoke kag gulpi lang mangin Regine, Sarah, Mariah, Celine ukon Ariana Grande. Garut pamulbos, lip tint, blush on kag nilandi run sa mga laki. Bisan bakud pa ang lawas kag lalaki gid kon mamisti, nangin Barbie kon gabii kag nagalagaw ang alismad sa mga zipper kang kaimaw na nga mga varsity ukon gasipal ML. Bukut tanan pero harus kalabanan, nagadugang baris kon malingin sobra pa sa mga babayi. Ang iba nga mga agi kon malingin, nangin mamanyag nga kataw, engkantada kag bisan may mga suso ron, indi gid mangin lalaki pero parehas kang tanan, ginakalam kag nagasagap man kang mainit nga hatas kang mga lalaki.

Wara sa Tanduay, Emerapador, Johnny Walker, Jose Cuervo kag iba pa nga botilya nasulud ang pagkatao kang mga agi. Labaw pa sa prinsipyo, panindugan kag pagtoo, amun diya nga pagkatao.

Kaagian sa Tion sang Pandemya

Marvin Monfort

Kabudlay gid subong para sa tanan. Labi na gid sa mga agi. Indi ko na pag isa-isahon kon ngaa kay kulang ang oras kag ang aton ginastoryahan parte sa aton nga pagkabecks. Xempre wala anay inatot kon responsable ka nga paka. Teh ara Ing kita sa balay laban, pahimunong sa banga. Ang nagahatag sa akon kalipay KPop, BL, Drag Race kag mga dolls ko. Pano nag agi ang kpop? Chura nila, kanta, bayo kag gawi wala toxic masculinity. Kag hmb1 sg isa ka host, kung huna2 mo jugel imo idol, dako chansa nga plangak. Damo ko bet sa KPoppers kag sa BL actors kay ka mga gwapo. Kulang oras. Basta #asiancool subong ang interes kay #decolonization Drag Race = #selfexplanatory hehe. Ang mga halampangan ko more gid ang OOTD, mas damo pa sa'kon kay mas pirmi ginagamit ang pambalay collection ta dibala? haha! Kabay pa kabalo man kamo mangita kasadyahan sa quarantine =]

nuances
tabing-ilog

I was raised with kisses on the cheeks, the back of my hands, and on my forehead every time I come and leave home. With the kind of love that only rewards you once you do something greater than the other. Where respect is a one-way street, and anything other than that is being ungrateful. But I guess there are bits of love carefully hidden in their words, and my eyes are often already drowning in emotion before I can even catch them. But it must be there. Believe me. I am still grateful.

Growing up, I found a love that almost worshipped me to some degree, and I, at some point, did the same for him. Until now, I still cannot wrap my head around the thought of how fragile his faith might have been when he just came and went whenever he pleased; how he leaves you with questions and comes back with half-assed answers and hollow promises of salvation and peace. A love that was young and inconsistent. And not long after, I discovered a love that was pure and kind.

Until now, I still cannot understand how it went wrong. How clinging to each other for affection became wringing at each other's necks, how I felt so suffocated. I started to not feel anything at all. Every time I think about this, I only end up blaming myself. But I guess at some point, we made each other happy. At some point, there was love. Believe me. I am still grateful.

I have come across so many different versions of love, but I am sure that I first started to know about it when it came to me asking for back massages and gave me stories in return. The kind of love that always takes your side. A love that sends you off and waits for you to

come home – a love that has the time. I lost that, but I am still, so, so grateful.

I once had that kind of love, but now I have found it once more when she came to me asking for pieces of myself and gave me pieces of her in return. The kind of love you talk to until the sun rises then takes you on a morning walk. A love that stops in its tracks to watch how the same sun sets and the moon and its first star begin to peek. A love you send off and wait for to come home to you – a love that makes time. This was love, and for this especially, believe me, I will never stop being grateful.

There are all kinds of love. You cannot tell me what it is and what it is not, nor can I tell you. There is no single definition, but I know that there are no secrets behind it, no underlying motives, no grand scheme – love does not make you doubt yourself. It is certain. Love is love is love is love is love.

There are all kinds of love, but love – simply *is*.

Having a story and being able to tell it should be basic human rights. This simple idea is what inspired Pagsulat-Duag.

*from the Introduction of
Early Sol A. Gadong*

What if we ask the youth of their stories? And what better way for their stories to be heard but straight from their own narratives?

*From the Preface of
Irish Inoceto*

Pagsulat
DUAG



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