

[DILIMAN DIARY: Notes on the 1971 Diliman Commune](#)

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Presented to the Forum, "We, the Communards: 40 years of continuing struggle" organized by CONTEND-UP, February 23, 2011, Recto Hall, UP Diliman.

I was at the Diliman Commune, that historic event on February 1 to 9, 1971; the event showcasing the power of the militant solidarity of the UP community against military incursions into the university. Too many events had happened since then and I have bits and pieces of remembrance of those days, forty years ago.

I was a Sampaguita dormer and remembered the entry of the soldiers into the dorm and into our rooms with some residents losing watches and wallets after the soldiers left. A similar thing happened in Kamia and in other dorms.

I remember (wo)manning the barricades in front of the Faculty Center with other students and faculty members. Long metal tubes attached to the huge LPG tanks used in the Chemistry department transformed the tanks into flame throwers. These and the self-igniting molotovs (there was no need to light the molotov prior to throwing them) created by Physics professors were our defensive weapons in case the military entered UP again. We stayed 24 hours at the barricades sustained by food brought in by the residents of the communities around UP. I was particularly touched by the hot pan de sal delivered to us one early morning by the owner of a small bakery.

The communards, as we called ourselves then, were ecstatic when low flying air force helicopters fled after students using the Engineering and AS rooftops as launching pads released lighted kwitis against the invaders of UP's airspace. DZUP became the Tinig ng Malayang Komunidad ng UP Diliman with student announcers taking turns to give updates on the situation in UP, commentaries on the Marcos government and playing the infamous tape of Marcos purportedly singing "Pamulinawen" to Dovie Beams, an American starlet rumored to have an affair with

the President. *Bandilang Pula*, the paper of the Diliman Commune, came out published by the students using the printery of the UP Press.

These bits and pieces are not sufficient for they do not do justice to the historic event that was one of the defining moments of my UP generation. So, I did archival work at the UP Library and went through issues of the *Philippine Collegian* in February 1971.

Antonio Tagamolia was editor then. Senen Siasoco was managing editor and Eduardo T. Gonzales and Fernando Barican were associate editors. I was features editor. And Ramona Flores was one of the staff members.

The February 4, 1971 issue had the headline "Sinalakay ang UP!" 3 nabaril, 60 sugatan. The left ear of the mast head had the slogan, "Ipaghiganti si Pastor Mesina" while the right ear said "Struggle against militarization of the campus". The lead story of that Feb. 4 issue provided a chronological account of the events leading to the Diliman Commune

Feb. 2 Monday: Students put up barricades at Katipunan and the University Avenue in support of striking drivers protesting increase in the price of gasoline. Inocentes Campos, UP Math professor initially stopped by the barricade at the University Avenue turned back. When he returned, he had on a bullet proof vest and started shooting at the students. Pastor Mesina, 17 years old, BS Zoology major, NSDB scholar and PSHS graduate was shot by Campos and would die on February 4 at the Veteran's Memorial Hospital where he was taken after the shooting. Leo Alto, a pre med student was hit on the left cheek. In the afternoon, soldiers attacked Vinzon's Hall and another student, Reynaldo Bello, 19 years old, Veterinary Medicine major, was shot in the right arm.

Feb. 3 Tuesday: Students gathered at the AS steps and agreed to put up barricades to protest military incursions into the campus. By 10 am, UP was surrounded by Metrocom soldiers. Tomas Karingal, QCPD chief refused the request of then UP

President Salvador P. Lopez for a dialogue. At 5 pm of that day, Karingal's men using tear gas attacked Molave, Yakal, Areas 14 and 17, Vinzons Hall, the AS Pavilions, Kamia and Sampaguita. President Lopez according to the Collegian, "ay nanawagan ng pakikiisang damdamin sa mga mag-aaral ng pamantasan."

Feb. 4 Wednesday: Incensed by the violence perpetrated by the military the day before, the students set up more barricades. By 2 pm, DZUP was held by the students who operated it to broadcast the events in the university. The Collegian also reported that "Senators Benigno Aquino, Eva Estrada Kalaw and Lorenzo Sumulong arrived at the University and expressed solidarity with the students and concern over the presence of the military on campus. They called for the departure of the military."

The February 10 Collegian would report that the barricades were removed at 8 am that morning by virtue of the announcement made by the "Provisional Directorate ng Demokratikong Komunidad ng Diliman."

The same issue noted that protest classes were held in February 8 at the University Avenue by UP faculty members' "Temario Rivera, Dolores Feria, Zeus Salazar, Vic Manarang, Roger Posadas, Gonzalo Jurado, Pepe Miranda" and others.

The Collegian also enumerated the seven demands forwarded by the "Provisional Directorate ng Demokratikong Komunidad ng Diliman" :

- 1) Pagbabalik sa dating presyo ng langis
- 2) Malayang paggamit ng ilang oras ng DZUP
- 3) Malayang paggamit ng makina ng University Printing Press
- 4) Paglalantad sa mga mag-aaral na konektado sa military tuwing araw ng pagparehistro
- 5) Pagbabawal sa pagpasok ng tauhan at sasakyang military sa kampus
- 6) Pag-urong ng mga habla laban sa mga mag-aarl kaugnay sa malaganap na kaguluhan

7) Pagpapatalik kay Prop. Inocentes Campos

In its February 18 issue, the Collegian reported that two of the demands have been granted by the Board of Regents. Students were given the 7 to 9 pm time slot of DZUP from Tuesday to Saturday and students were allowed to use the facilities of the Printing Press at a charge lower than the usual charges.

What for me are the lessons of the 1971 Diliman Commune?

1. The UP community united, initially in support of the demands of the jeepney drivers for a rollback on gasoline prices and in larger number in defense of the university against military incursions and attack on academic freedom;
2. At the core of the militancy and perseverance needed to establish and maintain the Diliman commune for eight days were the progressive organizations of students with support from progressive faculty members and residents of the communities inside the campus. While there were segments of students and a few faculty members who publicly expressed opposition to the commune, the fact that it lasted from Feb. 2 to February 9 and was voluntarily ended by the communards on February 10 indicated that there was widespread support for the Commune;
3. UP President Salvador P. Lopez' position against military presence in the campus and the support of the students by opposition senators including Ninoy Aquino were significant in broadening the support of the communards;
4. Cultural forms of protest whether through the use of the DZUP, the publication of the *Bandilang Pula*, the protest posters were important in broadcasting the justness of the Diliman Commune and the demands of the communards. (After the Diliman Commune, a protest play cum musical entitled "Barikada" was produced by local artist groups.)
5. The creativity of the students and professors bloomed in the midst of the struggle. The anti-aircraft kwitis, the self-igniting Molotov bombs, the flame-throwers from LPG tanks were just some examples of that creativity.
6. The UP coeds, experiencing first hand state violence in the dorms and in the campus, unshackled themselves from the decorative roles associated with them in the university's traditional "Cadena de Amor" and as muses in the Lantern Parade. They came forward as communards ready to defend the university.

Our gathering today is not merely a nostalgic trip down memory lane. The Diliman Commune's message of a university in solidarity with the people opposed to spiraling prices and a university ready to defend itself against attacks by state forces remains relevant to this day. With the Oil Deregulation Law, the multinational oil companies raise gasoline prices practically every week. Price hikes in transportation costs, in food prices, in utilities are a daily occurrence while budget cuts for basic social services have made education, health and housing services unreachable for the majority of our people. The neo-liberal thrust of the past UP Administration with its emphasis on global competitiveness and resource generation has eroded the public character and the public service orientation of the nation's premier state university. That thrust has also led to the atomization of the university's various units and has weakened the solidarity even within the constituent universities and among the CUs as university and college officials place emphasis on generating resources for their own units. The Aquino Administration's emphasis on public private partnership and the huge reduction in the budget of state universities and colleges means the continuation of the very same economic and social policies that provide subsidies to business but reduce government support for social services.

UP Tigil Paslang, an alliance of UP students, faculty and staff formed during the 2006 massive attack on human rights and civil liberties by the Macapagal-Arroyo administration issued a statement "Soul Searching, A Statement for the July 20 Activity for the Missing Students" on the forcible abduction and disappearance of Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan:

It is now easier to take stock of the conditions that shape a university's soul. Unlike other institutions that are primarily driven by the inertia of capital and power, a university ideally enjoys relative isolation from these imperatives to allow it to fulfil its important role as a social critic and repository of social memory. This historic role has been played by UP time and time again. Generations of UP students and faculty have lived these ideals of speaking the truth against power whether it be against foreign domination, corruption or tyranny. Many of the activists, nationalists, and intellectuals that help chart the destiny of this nation towards more democratic ideals came from the university. In an apt symbolism represented

by the Oblation, countless have martyred themselves offering their lives for the ideal that the university stands – the courage to speak the truth when no one dares to, and to sacrifice one’s life for such convictions. It is the capacity of the university to witness for the truth that gains for it a soul. Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan are embodiments of this core of university traditions.

Thus the Diliman Commune and our commemoration of its continuing significance today, 40 years after the event, highlight our continuing struggle to retain the soul of our University by arresting the drift of UP Naming Mahal turning into UP Na Naging Mahal and to continue to call on our University, “UP ang galing mo, ialay sa bayan. ”

References:

1971 Philippine Collegian: February 4, 10 and 18. Micro Film section. UP Main Library.

Tigil Paslang. “Soul Searching ”, July 17, 2006.

<http://tigilpaslang.blogspot.com/2006/07/soul-searching.html>, accessed February 2, 2011.

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