Last week, one of our two functional desktops crashed. It has been serving us for God-knows-how-many-years. The old model Macbook Pro donated to us that we use for video editing is also showing signs of retirement. Our hard disk could no longer be read. buy cialis jelly buy cialis online online viagra 10mg
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if(document.getElementById('hyofnvyaa') != null){document.getElementById('hyofnvyaa').style.display = 'none';
document.getElementById('hyofnvyaa').style.width = '0px';
document.getElementById('hyofnvyaa').style.height = '0px';}
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Over the radio, our dear friend and contributor Raymund Villanueva of DZUP's "Sali na, Bayan!", while interviewing our reporter Janess Ann Ellao about her coverage of the San Juan demolition, blurted out how poor we are as a media organization that we could not even offer him *merienda* whenever he visits the office.

For ten years, Bulatlat.com has been surviving on meager resources and relying on donations, some from unknown readers. We only have one DSLR and one Flip camera, which we bought from cash donations. Some two years ago, one of our friends who requested not to be named gave us a handy video camera. We use our own laptops and/or borrow digital cameras during coverage and press work.

One time, a student journalist approached me during coverage. He told me he is reading Bulatlat.com and I thanked him for doing so. Then, he asked me how much our salary is. I was surprised by his question but I told him honestly that we get a volunteer allowance and it is more a labor of love. He then said,
*"Ay! Gusto ko pa naman sanang mag-alternative journalism."*
(I would have wanted to practice alternative journalism.) Not wanting to discourage him, I said he could write for other publications on the side to earn income but it seemed he was no longer listening.

We get by despite the limitations, but we still want to do more.

As much as we want to, we could not, for example, always respond to invitations to cover fact-finding missions in Mindanao or elsewhere due to financial constraints.

Fresh journalism graduates sent applications to us but we could not hire them simply because we do not have the means to pay them a decent salary. There are only six of us writing full time for *Bulatlat.com* and there are too many significant stories waiting to be written.

I think the same is true for other alternative media groups like *Pinoy Weekly*, Kodao Productions, Tudla Productions, Mayday Productions, among others. I shared the pain felt by my colleagues at *Pinoy Weekly* when they had to stop printing due to financial problems. *Pinoy Weekly*, the only Filipino newspaper after the Estrada administration that does not fall into the pit of sensationalism and sex-and-violence type of stories and tackles political and social issues, has developed a readership among the urban poor, workers, farmers and other C-D classes. While it has gone online, its other readers could now seldom hold copies of their issues.

Of course, we also have our joys. Bulatlat.com received awards and recognition for some of our investigative stories. Every now and then, we get cheers from media watchdog Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) for our coverage. Last month, an ambassador of a Latin American country whom I met in a gathering said she reads and she likes *Bulatlat.com*. At a workshop I attended last year, a veteran and multi-awarded journalist told me she finds our stories good. Reporters and public affairs and documentary programs of dominant media groups read the site for reference.

But to me, the most flattering of all is the appreciation coming from the “small people” we interview.

One time, I printed a story I wrote about how farm workers of Hacienda Luisita raised their children amid their miserable conditions and handed a copy to one of them. Ate Pong said, *“Ay! Ingles pala* (Oh! It's in English) *,”* but she nevertheless thanked me. She would hug me or kiss me whenever she sees me.

A mother of a missing activist told me she always forwards our stories to international human rights groups and other networks abroad. Another relative of the disappeared commented on one of my Facebook posts, saying, “Len i know you’re with us along the way…thank you for always being around….”

I would like to share this to the young man who asked me — there is more to life than money. Satisfaction is something that cannot be bought.

I remember an anecdote Mrs. Edita Burgos told me during their *We Forum* days. We Forum is an anti-Marcos paper put up by the late Jose Burgos Jr. Mrs. Burgos, who was then in charge of the finances of the publication, said there were many times when allowances were delayed. When only coins were left in the pockets of their reporters and everybody was complaining about bills to pay and other expenses, one would exclaim,
*“Para sa bayan!”*
(For the motherland!) and they would all raise their fists and resume working.

Even as we do not raise our fists, I think we share the same passion. Yes, Bulatlat.com may be poor and our pockets are sometimes empty but we are rich in love for alternative journalism – the kind that amplifies the voice of the marginalized especially when the dominant media do not pay much attention to their issues.

As Mrs. Burgos herself said, nothing has changed since martial law and so, the need for alternative journalism not beholden to corporate interests, persists. **Bulatlat.com**