

## Writers, artists, cultural workers strengthen ranks to raise standards

Contributed by Amado V. Hernandez Resource Center  
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For the first time ever, a national cultural summit was held by the Amado V. Hernandez Resource Center (AVHRC) in cooperation with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. From Sept. 12 to 14, artists, writers, and workers in the cultural arena convened in Antipolo City for the theme "Asserting the role of Filipino artists in nation-building in the time of globalization."

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AVHRC is a cultural institution conducting discussion and training programs for writers, artists, workers, farmers and the urban poor. Established in the name of labor leader and National Artist for Literature Amado Vera Hernandez, the center also publishes literary, critical and journalistic works focusing on pressing social issues.

The NCCA is the national government body for the promotion, development and dissemination of the Filipino people's culture.

Mr. Elmar Ingles delivered the welcome remarks from NCCA Chair Ambeth Ocampo, wishing a success for the program and proffering his own view that progressives and militants must never waver in voicing out their views. Institutions such as the NCCA must have productive engagement with various organizations in the cultural sector like those belonging in the people's movement.

AVHRC Chairman of the Board Dr. Edberto Villegas opened the program and talked on the role of artists and writers in the changing times of globalization. He suggested that we must publish and disseminate works of revolutionary writers from all over the world, such as Guatemala's Otto Rene Castillo.

Playwright Bonifacio Ilagan presented the historical social role of national democratic cultural workers in the anti-dictatorship struggle, delivering poignant projects and activities they had worked on before.

Jennifer Padilla, AVHRC Executive Director, delivered the conference's most important paper, the State of Culture and the Arts from the perspective of the progressive movement. She specifically cited how the culture of peace is greatly manipulated in the aim of decimating "the enemy" in the all-out war campaign.

Fictionist and film critic Rolando Tolentino conversed with the audience on the salience of our involvement in popular culture, a crucial understanding of how it is defined by capital and imperial project and the necessity of critical work in the limited struggle within this field.

Film director Joel Lamangan shared his views on censorship practices. Coming from the inside of show business, Lamangan railed against how the views of the status quo determine the exhibition of films and how censorship eventually turns into-censorship that forcefully thwarts dissenting views. Multi-media journalist Danilo Arao spoke on how the militaristic campaign of the current fascist government has taken its toll on media workers, citing the number and scope of killings, arson, harassment, and torture that powerfully put off media reportage.

Joel Garduce, convenor of the International League of Struggles Commission for Arts, Culture, and the Free Flow of Information, highlighted culture-especially cultural products such as films and audio-visual discs-and its ties with global interests and consequently, how this very global economic set-up paves way for anti-imperialist struggle on a world-wide scale.

The event gathered individuals and groups working in the cultural field to discuss and debate on history, orientation, specific projects, deficiencies, and recent successes. Padilla affirmed that "we need to assess the state of affairs for each and every cultural organization after some years of existence." Many of those who joined the conference have been here for decades, continually creating works that will be part of mobilizing society for genuine change, while a significant number of participants have just emerged to conquer the cultural scene with their top-caliber outputs. "Recent events also demand our stand on matters impinging on our efforts as cultural workers, most importantly the harassment and abduction of artists operating on sensitive issues," added the center's head.

Of the activities data gathering was the most difficult part. Each participant spoke on the exigencies of their particular cultural work - art form, varying audiences, financial constraints, communicative efficacy, documentation, and information-dissemination. They presented a state of the locality and the general economic and political conditions of their region. Significance lies on how the culture of festivals and eco-tourism projects have administered local culture, subordinated

the people's way of life to the demands of the local government unit for cash receipts. A lot of the cultural production in the '70s and '80s are to be recovered and conserved in the latest media technology for grassroots and institutional educational operation. Seminars on marketing and public relations work are a priority. More than ever, a review of the public's reception is a must in terms of varying tastes and worsening social conditions. These formed the bigger part of the program of action.

Precisely because of the intense discussion on the comprehensive cultural work the delegates carried out on the day before, the making of short and medium-term plans on the last day was easier. There was a consensus on the regularization of art workshops coupled with critical and theoretical studies. Artists have to be updated on recent trends, availability of materials, formal necessities or the elements of each art form, the impact of mass media technologies, and effects of other disciplines on their own works. They believe that criticism is an indispensable practice to further improve their works and sharpen sociopolitical involvement. An educational curriculum is pointed out as an urgent task. Mass organizations of artists in each field have to be formed and institutions for the formalization of their cultural works - research, publication, finance, mass integration inviting students and professionals, forums - have to be established.

The Philippine Cultural Summit resolved on four major concerns.

1. A systematic propagation of a national language based on Filipino has to be undertaken for cultural understanding.
2. We must call for an end to political killings of activists and cultural workers. Cases in the abduction of Teatro Obrero members in Negros and Southern Tagalog Exposure media workers in Quezon have to be pursued. An investigation on the death of journalists is an imperative of the times as murder is deemed as the most brutal form of censorship.
3. The all-out war policy has to be ended as it brands all those who oppose iniquitous policies as subversive, destabilizers, and even terrorists.
4. Destructive mining and the abrogation of the mining act have to be campaigned for as the large-scale mining operations being undertaken all over the country displaces our indigenous groups, destroys their way of life, appropriates their customs and traditions for commercial purposes and further leads the country to total environmental discussion.

Delegates delivered performances on the summit's third and last night. Fellow cultural activists from nearby Metro Manila met up with the participants. Songs, plays, poetry reading, and dances on issues of militarization, agrarian problem, plight of the urban poor and workers, and the indigenous people's struggle were the binding act that urged the participants to persevere in heightening cultural work's involvement in the greater social movement. Many suggested that a national alliance or network of artists and cultural workers has to be formed to for a greater and far-reaching cultural political work.

The necessity of the summit hinges on the role of consciousness in changing the very exploitative and oppressive conditions that determine a supportive cultural counterpart. Padilla delivered the declaration of unity calling on artists for a commitment to enhance their craft and forge greater unity for a culture that will realize a free, independent, peaceful and just society.