

## YOUNG MEMBERS OF ACRP/RFP ASIA ARE A HOPE OF *THE PRESENT*

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### INTRODUCTION

The “2019 Youth Peace Camp of Asia and Pacific Interfaith Youth Network (APIYN)” was convened in Manila, the Philippines from 26 November to 30 November 2019. The followings are my personal reflections having shared with the participants in the Camp as my closing remarks on the final day of the Camp. For a reference, the STATEMENT adopted at the Closing Ceremony is being attached with this article.

### OPENING SESSION

In Opening Session, we listened to excellent speeches such as welcome remarks of Rev. Fr. Pabio Tiong, the keynote speech of Hon. Secretary Abdullah Dabs Mama-o, congratulatory remarks of Dr. Lilian Sison, Rev. Tae-sung Kim and myself.



Here I wish to emphasize that all the words expressed in their oral presentations were truly an inspirational “encouragement” to you, young leaders of *Religions for Peace* movement. For instance, emphasizing that we are one family and one humanity, the Honorable Secretary stressed that the teamwork of young people can contribute to peace in Asia, showing his deep confidence in young people.

Rev. Sugino of *RfP* International said excitingly through video that *RfP* youth members are the “center” of the *RfP* movement. Rev. Tae-sung Kim drew our attention to the significance of a series of APIYN Youth Camp last several years, emphasizing how young people have been contributing to fostering the shared well-being of peoples.

Bearing those encouraging words into your mind, please be reminded that you are

respectfully and confidently being encouraged by a wide range of people. You are not alone. You are indispensable bridge-makers or peacemakers for a better Asia and beyond. Be confident that you can play important roles in the present world. Let me repeat that being a positive cause for a better world, you do not have to wait until the future comes.

## PLENARY SESSIONS

Next, in Plenary I and II, we listened to valuable presentations by the two distinguished young Pilipino activists and several leaders of APIYN. What we have learned from them were like “the words of diamond.”



For example, Dr. Naguit said that we have to begin with “WHY”, and “WHY” is multi-faceted like a logical WHY and an action produced WHY. Mr. Lopez stressed that a sense of “WOW” and a sense of “WONDER” would be the starting point for our actions and endeavors.

Mr. Saito shared with us a significant saying that one person cannot accomplish peace, but unless one person makes a first step forward, peace cannot be attained. It is worthwhile remembering. Rabbi Rachel said that meeting and connecting other people is so important to bring about mutual trust and understanding. I think that an endeavor of relation-making or connection-making with other people is in fact a fundamental component in generating a peaceful environment among people, as Rabbi Rachel emphasized.



Shameer stressed that “publicity” is important, and he emphasized that no publicity means no interfaith dialogue. Publicity as he points out is a key element in connecting one with another for genuine dialogue.

Last but not the least, Gasun pointed out that we sometimes sense different power balances in different places and contexts. She also stressed that in order to keep an impartial balance, you have to take a side, while emphasizing that we should be mindful of the voices and cries of the minorities.

All of these words urged me to ponder symbolic words such as “engagement”, “responsibility”, “connectedness”, “respect for differences” and “a value of diversity”, all of which are important elements so that we can “foster people’s well-being.”

At the Fellowship Dinner, in addition, we must not forget what Madam Mastura, President of *RfP* Philippines, said to you, namely “be brave”, “be strong” and “be beautiful.” Her message is as good as Mr. Steeve Jobs’ commemoration address at Stanford University in 2005.

## **WORKSHOPS**

With respect to Workshop Discussions 1-4, I observed the following things among so many leanings:

### For Workshop 1

1. It became so apparent in Chris’ facilitation in this workshop that passion for actions should be in tandem with an analytical mind-set to bring about effective outcomes.
2. Illiteracy comes from a stereotyped contextualization of each individual. Therefore, a flexible mind-set is a prerequisite to become literate not only to religion but also other spheres as well.
3. One of the responses to Chris’s presentation done by Group 4: namely *Lack of religious literacy stems from religious leadership* was so astonishing. I keep it in my mind for my further work in interfaith dialogue.

### For Workshop 2

1. Renz, the worship facilitator, assisted all group members in identifying the fundamental nature of human beings. A sentence mentioned in this workshop: *identifying differences is easier than identifying similarities* is worthwhile remembering.
2. Workshop 2 spotlighted the deeper meaning of differences, which connoted a more inclusive perspective. The interpretation of differences like this is a part of Asian spirituality, I believe.
3. In this context, we need to explore other Asian spiritualities, of which we can be proud.

### For Workshop 3

1. Radia, the facilitator of the workshop, invited the participants to ponder the genuine meanings of “pluralism” and “inclusiveness.” The participants recognized that these two important terminologies retain multi-faceted ramifications.

2. I recognized that each group in the workshop discussion talked about the marginalized, the weak, minorities. Afterwards, I came to know that each one of you, participating in this Camp is an individual, who really care for other people. You are truly persons, who try to foster people's shared well-being. Having witnessed it is like I felt that the mission of this Camp was completed
3. Lastly, as an insider of ACRP operations, I thought that an additional agenda could have been added to this workshop. That is how the influence of young leaders in existing national chapters of ACRP can be empowered so that the voices of young people are clearly heard in the leadership of that the existing national chapters.

#### For Workshop 4

1. Workshop 4 tried to integrate what were discussed in Workshop 1 - 3 into a comprehensive picture.
2. Meera and Takashi, the facilitators of Workshop 4, urged the participants to move from knowledge to actions.
3. In view of the challenges we face such as Violent conflicts, Freedom of Religion and Belief, Human Rights, Justice and equality, Sustainable Development Goals, Protecting the Earth and the Environment, the working group discussions were able to identify various means of how to counter those challenges: they are: 1) building relationships and connections among the like-minded people, 2) extending special care for the weak such as the minorities, 3) collaboration and cooperation through which the faith communities can enhance their strengths and advantages, etc.

#### For Workshop 5

1. Shameer's facilitation was excellent.
2. Typhoon activity was so excellent, and it was beyond my imagination!
3. Manifestations of what you are going to achieve by 2020 were a valuable exercise in moving ourselves from just talking to real action.



In view of the overall Workshop Sessions,

I wish to touch upon 3 points:

1. Teamwork can generate clear-cut outcomes, which sometimes go beyond imagination of those involved.
2. A fundamental question will be how to transform what you have discussed into real programs/projects, which are beneficial to people on the ground. As Radia, Facilitator of the workshop 3, mentioned, it is easy to say things. But it is difficult to act in local surrounding. In this context, it was a worthwhile exercise in Workshop 5, where you tried to identify a clear goal to be achieved by next year with specific time frame.
3. I am so overwhelmed to witness that a participant from India and a participant from Pakistan came to agree that young people in both countries plan and carry out a collaborative program together in the near future, regardless political complexities that both countries are facing.

## **VISITS**

On the visit to the Dumagat Community

1. Brother Martin Francisco said that we are just “accompanying” the people of the Dumagat community for the last 23 years. “Accompanying” is a beautiful word. It is so egalitarian in comparison with helping, assisting from one actor to another. I thought that the word of “accompanying” is one of the terminologies, for which we have been searching in our deliberations during the Champ in our efforts in finding ways to get engaged, get connected and to foster our shared well-being as a whole.



On the visit to the Quiapo Church

1 The person spoke in orientation emphasized the centrality of “spirituality” in exercising dialogue. And he also mentioned that “love” is a foundation of dialogue.

I think that you could take his remarks vis-à-vis spirituality and dialogue as a matter of course because you properly understand the true meaning of spirituality and are practicing properly dialogue. I truly believe that that dialogue is not a technique. It is rather a genuine religious practice based upon deep spirituality and love/compassion.

## **CONCLUSION**

In concluding, I earnestly hope that you bring back what you have learned in this Camp to respective places where you are stationing. And make use those lessons learned for the



sake of your neighborhood, local communities and people in desperate need.

I repeat that you are genuine bridge-makers, peace-makers and world changers.

I also hope that some of you can join the 9th Assembly of ACRP, which will be convened in Tokyo Japan in October 2020. Inputs of young leaders like you all are really required to make the ACRP Assembly next year more accountable for our people's needs and requirements of the contemporary world.

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