

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

October 2009

New Law Aims to Empower Filipino Women

By Randy Boyer

On August 14, 2009, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9710: The Magna Carta of Women. On

September 14 the Manila Women's Forum welcomed back speaker Ms. Sylvia Lichauco de Leon, President of the Lola Grande Foundation, to speak about the new law—and to introduce the concept of the Filipino Women's Fund to support women and women's issues in the Philippines.

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW), almost nine long years in the making, is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of all Filipino women (in the Philippines and abroad), especially those in marginalized sectors.

In the last session of Congress, Senator Jamby Madrigal, Chair of the Senate Committee on Youth, Women and Family Relations, worked tirelessly with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW—now renamed The Philippine Commission on Women under the MCW) to get the law passed.

The rights of all women as detailed in the MCW* and explained by Ms. De Leon include:



Left to right: Sylvia, Kristine, Lisa

- Protection from all forms of violence
- Protection and security in times of disaster, calamities and other crisis situations
- Participation and representation
- Equal treatment before the law
- Equal access and elimination of dual standards in education
- Non-discrimination in employment in the field of military, police and other similar services
- Equal participation in sports
- Non-discrimination and non-

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September MWF Meeting ■ **When:** Monday, October 12, 2009, 6:30 p.m. **Where:** The home of Julia Simpson, 22-B Cameron Tower, Essensa, Fort Bonifacio. **What:** Gina S. Mapua, Vice President for Education of the Executive Toastmasters Club and freelance trainer and coach, will present "Become the Speaker and Leader you want to be." She will discuss how to listen effectively, think on your feet and speak confidently. **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner. **November Meeting:** Monday, November 16, 2009.

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- derogatory portrayal of women in medial and film
- Comprehensive health services and health information and education
- Leave benefits—pregnancy and surgery due to gynecological disorders
- Equal rights in all matters relating to marriage and family relations

The law goes on to detail further rights and protections for *marginalized* women. The additional rights of marginalized women under the MCW include:

- Food security and resources for food production
- Localized, accessible, secure and affordable housing
- Employment, livelihood, credit, capital and technology
- Skills training and scholarships
- Representation and participation

- Access to information
- Social protection
- Recognition and preservation of cultural identity and integrity
- Inclusion in discussions on peace and development
- Services and intervention for women in especially difficult circumstances
- Protection of girl-children (ages 0-17) against all forms of discrimination
- Protection of women senior citizens

But, Ms. De Leon asked, who will fund the implementation of the MCW?

While the Philippine government in 1996 designated 5% of the budget of every branch and level of government for Gender and Development (GAD) programs, many local government units (LGUs) are not yet aware of this targeted allotment—and in any case, this level of funding is far from adequate to address the inequities of

attention and spending on issues relevant to women and girls.

The Philippine Commission on Women (new name of NCRFW under the Magna Carta of Women) will be the primary coordinating and policy advisory body, and the overall monitoring and oversight body to ensure the implementation of the MCW. While the government will bear the major responsibility for implementing the new law, the NCRFW states that “The State, the private sector, society in general and all individuals shall contribute to the recognition, respect and promotion of the rights of women defined and guaranteed in MCW.” Ms. De Leon proposes that the private sector’s response be the Filipino Women’s Fund.

Based on evidence from women around the world who have proven that they can make positive changes

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Magna Carta

Magna Carta, also called Magna Carta Libertatum (the Great Charter of Freedoms), is an English legal charter, originally

issued in the year 1215. It was written in Latin and is known by its Latin name. The usual English translation of Magna Carta is Great Charter.

Magna Carta required King John of England to proclaim certain rights (pertaining to freemen), respect certain legal procedures, and accept that his will could be bound by the law. It explicitly protected certain rights of the King’s subjects, whether free or fettered—and implicitly supported what became the writ of habeas corpus, allowing appeal against unlawful imprisonment.

Magna Carta was arguably the most significant early influence on the extensive historical process that led to the rule of constitutional law today in the English speaking world. Magna Carta influenced the development of the common law and many constitutional documents, including the United States Constitution. Many clauses were renewed throughout the Middle Ages, and continued to be renewed as late as the 18th century. By the second half of the 19th century, however, most clauses in their original form had been repealed from English law.

Magna Carta was the first document forced onto an English King by a group of his subjects (the barons) in an attempt to limit his powers by law and protect their privileges. It was preceded by the 1100 Charter of Liberties in which King Henry I voluntarily stated that his own powers were under the law.

In practice, Magna Carta in the medieval period mostly did not limit the power of Kings; but by the time of the English Civil War, it had become an important symbol for those who wished to show that the King was bound by the law.



John of England signs Magna Carta. (Image from Cassell’s History of England, Century Edition. Published ca. 1902)

“Women’s rights are human rights.” That’s the most “empowering provision” of The Magna Carta of Women, says Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chair Leila de Lima.



KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited* by Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

The MCW, Lola Grande, and VAW

Why Lola Grande?

Lola Grande Foundation for Women and Children, Inc. was named after Executive Director Sylvia Lichauco’s great-great grandmother, Cornelia Lau Chang Co. Inspired by the book Family Recollections written by her grandmother, Luisa Fernandez Lichauco, Sylvia realized at an early age how admirable Lola Grande’s characteristics and accomplishments were.

Lola Grande was strong, resilient, enterprising, adept at non-traditional women’s skills, highly productive, competitive, social, and philanthropic. A petite woman living in the nineteenth century, Lola Grande was involved in a variety of businesses. In many ways, she was very much ahead of her time – an esteemed role model for generations to come.

The name “Lola Grande” seemed a perfect fit from the very start. Children left behind by migrant women workers are often cared for by their big-hearted grandmothers. How appropriate that “Lola” in Filipino means grandmother, and “Grande” means grand or big! In fact,

* From various sources, for information purposes only. Readers are advised to exercise due diligence in getting the latest, complete and most accurate data.

many of us are inspired by our own mothers and grandmothers. Many of us are already great-hearted grandmothers in spirit—involved in social change, inspiring others, and motivating children by giving them something to aspire to become. This is the spirit that lives in Lola Grande Foundation.

(Excerpt from an article by Cornelia Lichauco Fung. Read the whole article at <http://lolagrande.com>)

Violence against women (VAW)

Violence against women is a technical term used to collectively refer to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Similar to hate crime, this type of violence targets a specific group. In the case of VAW, the victim’s gender is the primary motive.

Domestic violence

One type of violence against women is domestic violence. Women are more likely to be victimized by someone that they are intimate with, in what is now commonly called Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

To understand the impact of domestic violence in the sphere of total violence against women, one only has to consider that 40-70% of murders of women are committed by their husband or boyfriend. Furthermore,

the violence perpetrated is not only physical, it can also be verbal and psychological and verbal.

In unmarried relationships this type of violence is called dating violence; in the context of a marriage, it is called domestic violence. Because instances of IPV tend not to be reported to police, many experts believe that the true magnitude of the problem is more likely to be vastly underestimated.

Though this form of violence is often portrayed as an issue within the context of heterosexual relationships, it also occurs in lesbian relationships, daughter-mother relationships, roommate relationships and other domestic relationships involving two women. Violence against women in lesbian relationships is about as common as violence against women in heterosexual relationships.

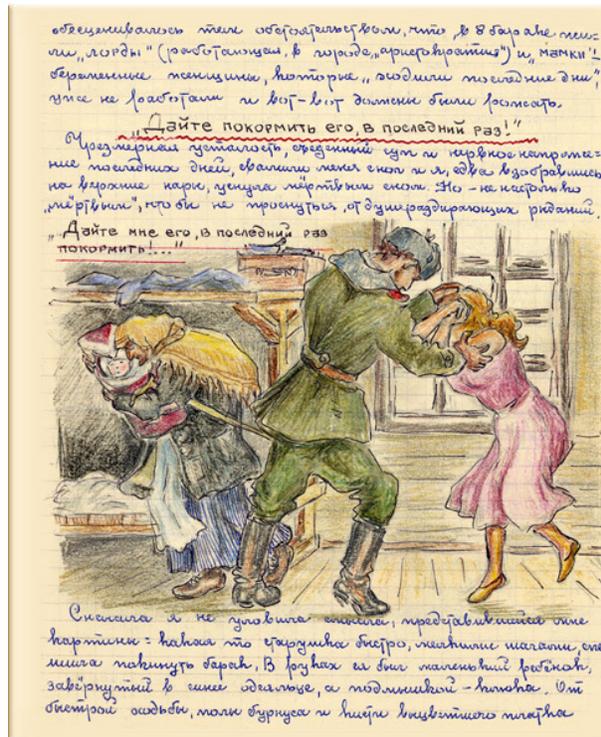
In fact, violence against women by women also exists outside the sphere of relationship violence, and even less research has probably been done on this subject.

State violence against women

Another type of violence against women is state violence. For example, many women underwent extrajudicial punishment in labor camps of Nazi

Germany and the Soviet Union. Their suffering was described in memories of former Gulag women prisoners like Eufrosinia Kersnovskaya (1908-1994), a Russian woman who spent 12 years in Gulag camps. She wrote her memoirs in 12 notebooks of 2,200,000 characters, accompanied by 680 pictures.

“Let me feed my child for the last time” Author: Eufrosinia Kersnovskaya (1908-1994)



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 given the proper opportunities and tools, and on similar and successful women's funds that were created by women for women, the Filipino Women's Fund (FWF) would raise money from various sources, particularly women funding women, friends of women, corporate giving, home town associations, and philanthropy from the large community of Filipinos abroad. There are over 133 members of the Women's Funding Network (www.wfnet.org), among them the Global Fund for Women, New York's the Sister Fund, Mama Cash of Netherlands and the Dallas Women's Fund.

The FWF, which would be guided by principles of social justice, philanthropy and volunteerism, environmental sustainability, and corporate social responsibility, would be both a change-maker and grant-maker. The FWF would have as its primary objective the support of women's programs in the Philippines that empower Filipinas and their families in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The FWF would be the glue to attract and connect alternative solutions to the systemic problems of a society that does not allow the full development of women in the community. With appropriate goals, set of requirements, monitoring and implementing systems, the FWF would help, through guidance and grants, the well-thought-out missions and goals of different women's development organizations to be

realized. As envisioned, the FWF would ensure that the elements necessary to the success of programs and projects are present in order for FWF grantees to attain their development objectives.

Ms. De Leon shared just a few examples of the types of projects that the FWF could support: anti-trafficking and exploitation of women; national infant nutrition and breastfeeding campaigns and national infant nutrition (from ages 0-5) funding health care workers in indigenous tribes, campaigning for domestic worker's rights; education and capacity building; job creation through cottage industry support; re-education on gender and development at all levels; and disaster preparedness and management. Ms. De Leon ended her motivating presentation with a Call to Action:

By virtue of our new and powerful Magna Carta of Women, we call on all of you you, our sisters, to support the establishment of the Filipino Women's Fund. Through the FWF we can:

- Allow women to plan and establish lasting solutions to their problems and ensure that all elements for their success are present and available.
- Promote active political participation and leadership for women and lobby for a greater share for women from the fruits of development from the State.
- Make employment available and make women employable through policy change, capacity building and cultural revolution.
- Leverage development efforts.

*The entire text of the MCW can be downloaded at <http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph/index.php/magna-carta-of-women>. The first project of Lola Grande may be seen at <http://www.icgmd.info>. Ms. De Leon would be most grateful for volunteers with all types of experiences.

Manila Women's Forum

Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, talk to women of various cultures, and share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join.

The current officers are: **Amy Alexander**, Message Board. **Julia Holz**, Treasurer, Membership and Programs. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair. **Junie Navarro**, Message Board. **Lisa Stuart**, Message Board Moderator. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website. **Shari Virjee**, Programs, Message Board.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. For more information about MWF, please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

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