

Chapter 5

A Celebration of Thanksgiving*

Today's intellectual feast is the ninth in the *Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr. Distinguished Lecture Series*. Begun early this year, this monthly academic pursuit draws attention to the aspirations and the achievements of the Supreme Court during the seven-year term of our Chief.

The Lecture Series Highlights

The Lecture Series started on February 9, 2005, with a discourse on “The Legal Profession in the Digital Age,”^[1] delivered by retired Justice Jose C. Vitug, followed on February 28, 2005, by a review of “Legislative Investigations and the Right to Privacy”^[2] by Mr. Justice Reynato S. Puno.

On March 30, 2005, Dean Raul C. Pangalangan of the University of the Philippines College of Law presented an in-depth perspective on “Hilario G. Davide, Jr.: A Study in Judicial Philosophy, Transformative Politics and Judicial Activism.”^[3]

Another respected academic, Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, SJ, of the Ateneo School of Law, lectured on the “The Contributions of Chief Justice Davide Jr. on the Writing of the Constitution.”^[4] Father Bernas extolled the achievements of our Chief as a member of the

Constitutional Commission that had drafted our 1987 Charter.

On July 28, 2005, we heard my esteemed guru, the venerable Jovito R. Salonga -- described by Senator Joker Arroyo as the “Last Titan of the 20th Century” -- speak on the need for “Maintaining Public Faith and Confidence in the Judiciary.”^[5]

Three distinguished international legal personalities graced the Series; namely, Mr. Justice Michael Donald Kirby of the High Court of Australia who spoke on “International Human Rights Law and Domestic Enforcement”;^[6] President Rodolfo de Leon Molina of the Supreme Court of Guatemala, on the “Judicial Reforms in Guatemala”;^[7] and Mr. Anthony Gerald Toft, the World Bank’s chief counsel for East Asia and the Pacific Region, on “Judicial Reforms -- Issues to Consider.”^[8]

A fourth globally acclaimed legal scholar, Mr. Justice Anthony Kennedy of the US Supreme Court, was scheduled to lecture on September 12, 2005. The death of US Chief Justice William Rehnquist, however, constrained him to cancel his trip, so that he could be present during the wake. We are still talking with him about a possible rescheduling of his appearance here.

Today’s cerebral presentation entitled “The Commitment to Judicial Education” is unique. It brings together under one roof nine distinguished personalities to walk us through the different milestones of Philippine judicial education, then and now. Taking turns in presenting a “Retrospect” of judicial education will be Justice Ricardo C. Puno (ret.), chair of the Department of Civil Law of the Philippine Judicial Academy (Philja); Justice Reynato S.

Puno of the Philja Board of Trustees; Justice Justo P. Torres (ret.) of the Philja Academic Council; Fr. Ranhilio C. Aquino, the head of Philja's Academic Affairs Office; and Professor Sedrey M. Candelaria, who heads the Academy's Research, Publications and Linkages Office. To discuss court-annexed mediation are Deputy Court Administrator Bernardo T. Ponferrada, head of the Judicial Reforms Office of Philja; Dean Eduardo D. de los Angeles, chairperson of the Philja Design and Management Committee; and Professor Alfredo F. Tadiar, director of the mediation project at the Court of Appeals, who will discuss court-annexed mediation. Then, the most esteemed Madame Justice Ameurfina A. Melencio Herrera (ret.), Philja chancellor, will share her visions and insights into the future.

Today's program is the first of three lectures that will focus on what the Chief himself calls "the centerpiece of [his] stewardship of the Judiciary"^[9] -- the Action Program for Judicial Reforms or APJR. I shall follow next month, on October 19, 2005, with a presentation of an "Overall Perspective of the Philippine Judicial Reform Program."^[10] The Series will then be fittingly capped by a valedictory lecture^[11] by the Chief Justice himself on December 13, 2005.

Impressive as the Lecture Series may be, I must however stress that it is just one of the many activities lined up by the Valedictory Executive Committee to commemorate Chief Justice Davide's final year in office.

Together with the Lecture Series, these retirement activities are collectively referred to as our "Celebration of Thanksgiving." I will now summarize these thanksgiving activities.

***Speeches, TV Documentary,
Coffee-Table Book, Cultural Presentations***

1. The issuance in both print and digital versions of the major speeches, significant decisions and dissenting opinions of Chief Justice Davide^[12]
2. The production of a TV documentary showing the salient features of our Chief's incumbency^[13]
3. The publication of a coffee-table book-cum-photo essay showing the milestones of the Davide term^[14]
4. The sponsorship of a Concert, as well as a Philippine Dance and Musical Festival by Supreme Court officials and employees^[15]

***Judicial Renaissance,
Exhibits, Open Houses***

5. The publication of my new book, entitled *Judicial Renaissance*, which will extensively discuss the reforms initiated, evolved and implemented under the APJR^[16]
6. The presentation of a traveling "Exhibit on the Life and Thoughts of Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr.," to be shown in several trial courts in Manila, Cagayan de Oro, Pampanga and Cebu^[17]

7. The sponsorship of “Open Houses of Halls of Justice” in selected courts nationwide to educate the general public, particularly the youth, on the “Access to Justice” aspect of our reform program^[18]

***Essays, Awards,
and PERLAS***

8. The sponsorship of a nationwide essay-writing contest amongst law students on the theme “Judicial Reforms Under the Davide Watch”^[19]

9. The giving of special Judicial Excellence Awards to outstanding judges and clerks of court^[20]

10. The holding of the “Chief Justice Davide Awards for Outstanding Service in the Judiciary,” which is a search for model judiciary employees nationwide, to complement that for judges and clerks of courts mentioned earlier^[21]

11. The grant of the Davide Reform Awards to local and international institutions and individuals who have contributed significantly to the planning, financing and implementation of the APJR^[22]

12. The launching of a project called “Public Education on the Rule of Law Advancement and Support,” or PERLAS^[23] -- a novel undertaking to inculcate in our elementary and high school students the need to know, propagate and obey the rule of law in

our country

***ASEAN Law Association
(ALA) Conference***

13. The co-sponsorship of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA) Conference to be held from November 24 to 26, 2005, in Makati [\[24\]](#)

***International Conference and
Showcase on Judicial Reforms***

14. The holding of an “International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms” (ICSJR) also in Makati on November 28-30, 2005. Since this global gathering is by far the most important project to commemorate the Chief’s term, let me discuss it a bit more.

Sponsored by the Supreme Court with financial grants from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the US Agency for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency and other developmental partners, this unique conference *and* showcase aims to share our reforms agenda with the rest of the world through (1) plenary addresses and workshop discussions and (2) an exhibit of our judicial reform projects. In the showcase portion, our judicial modernization projects will be shown for the participants to see, touch, behold, and in some cases actually operate.

Ladies and gentlemen, the activities lined up by the Valedictory Executive Committee are centered on the APJR, but they take various forms -- intellectual, cultural, social and

sports activities. They are led and participated in by all the constituencies of the Judicial Branch of our government -- from justices and judges to court employees, law schools, law professors, lawyers and law students all over the country, as well as the general public. As the highlight of the celebration, the judiciaries of the world will be featured through their participation in our global judicial reforms conference and showcase.

***Members and Assistors of
the Valedictory Executive Committee***

As chair of the Valedictory Executive Committee, I would like to recognize its members publicly for the first time: the dedicated and caring ladies and gentlemen who have toiled and are still toiling during their own extra time -- without any additional compensation, but only out of love for our esteemed Chief Justice -- to bring forth all these valedictory activities.

First, let me acknowledge the Supreme Court magistrates who are members of the Committee; namely, Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing, Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, Justice Antonio T. Carpio, Justice Renato C. Corona and Justice Adolfo S. Azcuna.

Now let me recognize the Committee members with specific project assignments:

- Philja Chancellor Ameurfina A. Melencio Herrera, who is mainly responsible for the success of the *Chief Justice Davide Lecture Series*
- Atty. Maria Luisa D. Villarama, our clerk of court, who brings art, dances and music to the celebrations through a concert and musicale at the Philamlife

Theater in Manila

- Court Administrator Presbitero J. Velasco Jr. who, together with Deputy Court Administrator Jose P. Perez and Assistant Court Administrator Reuben P. de la Cruz, supervises the Open House of the Halls of Justice
- Atty. Enriqueta E. Vidal, who coordinates the 2005 Chief Justice Davide Employees' Awards
- Court of Appeals Justice Ruben T. Reyes and Prof. Venicio F. Flores of the Philippine Association of Law Professors who, together with Ms Reslyn M. Yambao of the Association of Law Students of the Philippines (ALSP), are spearheading the countrywide essay-writing contest
- PMO Director Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum, who is in charge of the Davide Reforms Awards, PERLAS, and the Secretariat of the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms
- Atty. Ismael G. Khan Jr., chief of our Public Information Office, who is overseeing the production of a TV documentary; and who, together with Director Dumdum, is producing the Chief Justice Davide coffee-table book
- Atty. Ma. Luisa L. Laurea, who is coordinating the Judicial Excellence Awards
- Atty. Annaliza T. Capacite of the Office of the Chief Justice, who is in charge of the compilation and printing of the Davide speeches, decisions and dissenting opinions
- Ms Milagros S. Ong of the Supreme Court Library Services, who is directing the Chief Justice Davide Exhibit
- Atty. Jose Anselmo I. Cadiz of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, who is

stewarding the environment-related projects of the Committee

- Atty. Avelino V. Cruz, who is coordinating the Silver Jubilee of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA)
- Other members of the Committee: Dean Andres D. Bautista of the Philippine Association of Law Deans and Atty. Tanya Lat

Finally, may I also acknowledge our support staff: Atty. Millicent N. Reyes, committee secretary; Atty. Ma. Lourdes C. San Pablo, committee assistant secretary; Atty. Jennifer Jardin-Manalili; Ms Melinda S. Item; Atty. Ma. Gleoresty Sp. Guerra; Atty. Michelle T. Regala; Mr. Jose Emmanuel David M. Eva III; Ms Annie Rose A. Laborte; Atty. Ma. Melissa R. Dimson; Atty. Nicolas C. Nañgit Jr.; Atty. Joel Emerson J. Gregorio; and Ms Me-An Inocentes.

Quest for Reforms to Continue

Ladies and gentlemen, when Chief Justice Davide delivered his vision-mission statement as he started his term in 1998, little did we realize that the centerpiece of his stewardship -- the APJR -- would catch the undivided attention and total support, not only of the Philippine officialdom and public, but also of foreign judiciaries and international developmental agencies like the United Nations, World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

Indeed, the APJR's vision is far-reaching. It aims at producing a corps of competent, dedicated, honest and courageous judges; and at speeding up the delivery of high-quality

justice. Its ultimate goal is a judicial system that enjoys the full trust and confidence of the people because its actions and decisions are judicious and prudent, even though they may sometimes be unpalatable to current public sentiment.^[25]

The personal stewardship of Chief Justice Davide may end by operation of law when he reaches the mandatory retirement age of 70 on December 20, 2005. But the Valedictory Executive Committee is sure that the reform projects he envisioned, inspired and diligently worked on will continue even after he will have retired. They will always be the cornerstones of the judicial renaissance he has ably stewarded. For all these, he will be well-remembered in history as one of the greatest Chief Justices of our country and our region of the world.

Maraming salamat po.

*
- Remarks I delivered as chairperson of the Valedictory Executive Committee on September 29, 2005, at San Beda College.

[1] At the Conference Hall of San Beda College.

[2] At the Malcolm Hall of the UP College of Law.

[3] At the Yuchengco Auditorium, De La Salle University.

[4] June 15, 2005, at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) Rockwell Center.

[5] At the Thomas Aquinas Research Complex Auditorium of the University of Santo Tomas.

[6] Justice Kirby's Lecture was delivered on April 15, 2005, at the SC Session Hall.

[7] April 27, 2005, at the SC Session Hall.

[8] August 24, 2005, at the Jose P. Laurel Hall of Freedom, Lyceum of the Philippines.

[9] See Panganiban, *Reforming the Judiciary* (2002), the Supreme Court Press, p. xii.

[10] At the RCBC Auditorium in Makati City.

[11] The Chief Justice will speak on a topic of his choice on December 13, 2005, at the SC Session Hall.

[12] The Office of the Chief Justice is overseeing the compilation of this project.

[13] The 5- to 15-minute long TV documentary is a production of the Public Information Office (PIO).

[14] The Program Management Office (PMO), in coordination with the PIO, is responsible for producing the coffee-table book, which is actually a photo essay on the life, work and achievements of the Chief Justice.

[15] The Concert will feature Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez on the piano, together with other homegrown talents. The dance and musical presentation will showcase employees of the Supreme Court.

[16] The book will be launched during the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms this November.

[17] The Exhibit was shown on September 19, 2005, in Cagayan de Oro City; in October in Pampanga; in November at the Makati Shangrila, in time for the International Conference and Showcase in the same month; and on December 21, 2005, in Cebu City. The awarding ceremony will be held on December 12, 2005.

[18] A dry run of the activity was held on August 10, 2005, at selected Pasay City courts. There were also open houses on August 12 in Quezon City and Cebu City courts; on August 17-20 in Baguio City and Davao City; and on August 26-28 in Cagayan de Oro City.

[19] The nationwide essay-writing tilt is a joint undertaking of the SC, the Philippine Association of Law Professors, and the Association of Law Students of the Philippines. Cash prizes and plaques await the competition winners and the law student governments they represent.

[20] The awarding ceremony will be held on December 12, 2005.

[21] Awards for excellence will be given to outstanding personnel of the first- and second-level courts, including the Shari'a Circuit Courts; outstanding Supreme Court personnel below the position of Chief of Office; and outstanding employees of the Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan and the Court of Tax Appeals (also below the Chief of Office position). The awarding ceremony is scheduled on December 9, 2005.

[22] The Davide Reform Awards ceremony for local awardees is slated on December 15, 2005, and for international awardees on November 30, 2005, as part of the culminating activities for the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms.

[23] The project seeks (1) to promote greater public understanding of the importance of the rule of law; (2) to develop awareness of the roles/functions of the judiciary among the youth; and (3) to widen a support base to sustain the judicial reforms for the long term. Presently being prepared are 500 prototypes of rule-of-law teaching exemplars, which are intended to be distributed to all elementary and high schools nationwide.

[24] This will dovetail with the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms to be held on November 28-30, 2005.

[25] See Panganiban, *Leveling the Playing Field* (2004), PRINTTOWN Group of Companies, p. 40.