

## **Episode001: Pinoy Teachers in the U.S.**

PINOY POST (PP): Welcome to the first podcast of Pinoy Post. Our guest for this inaugural podcast is Sol Angala, a Filipina teacher in Washington, DC. She is currently a special education teacher at Jefferson Junior High School in the, DC area. She has a degree in Family Life and Child Development from the University of the Phils. She writes an online column called Mother and Teacher on the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart website. Last year, she started the Pinoy Teachers Network or PTN, a network of Filipino teachers all over the world.

PP: Sol, welcome.

SOL ANGALA (SA): Hi, good morning.

PP: So, can you tell us more about PTN or Pinoy Teachers Network and how that started?

SA: Pinoy Teachers Network is a global support network of Filipino teachers so we have actually nine countries now with all Filipino Teachers only members in the Pinoy Teachers Network. And, it is more technology based, we are having our meetings electronically and we're a...more of a collaborative support network. So, we're not funded, we don't have any membership fees at all because as you know we teachers just migrated so we're not yet stable, we're not yet financially stable so we understand that situation. What we do is we collaborate with those organizations that are already stable like...the Philippine Embassy is very supportive of us and that is really a good thing and so it is more of a collaborative support network.

PP: And so what kind of activities do you do at PTN so what is the main project?

SA: Right now, because we just started, our first major activity is supporting each other... the winter drive last Fall of 2005 when 80 Filipino teachers came here in PG (Prince George's) county in Maryland. And, you know, I know what they are going through being exposed to winter and cold, it is not very easy and they don't have money to buy their coats and it is very expensive. We asked the Philippine Embassy to disseminate the information of this Winter Drive. And a lot of Filipino...

PP: so their recruiter didn't tell them what to bring, how to prepare themselves?

SA: Most probably she told them but it is not ...like bring a jacket it has to be a coat and it is really expensive. We asked the Philippine Embassy and the response was overwhelming. Twenty-five big boxes of coats and pants and a lot of things...around 13 Filipino community organizations helped with that..that was our first project. Now we're having projects with Feed the Hungry Philippines like helping the Mayon victims and the landslide victims in Leyte. So it is more of a collaborative...because they have the resources but we don't have them...we have books, we have the we have the educational means. With Feed the Hungry we support their education projects. We don't have funding.

PP: you touched on something interesting, you said last winter or fall, 80 teachers from the Philippines came over. That is only for one county. Would you know how many Filipino teachers are recruited each year to the US.

SA: I am not sure. But my recruiter during our time in 2003, she was able to recruit 700+ Filipino teachers all over the country. That is only for one year, for one recruiter. And there are several recruiters. So the recruiter in Maryland is different from the recruiter in Texas and L.A. there are a lot (Laughs)

PP: it could be into the thousands

SA: I went to Baltimore last month to meet the 119 Filipino teachers last July. I was so overwhelmed to see all of them 119 of them.

PP: so 119 new potential members for PTN. (laughs)

SA: They were having their new teachers' orientation. So, I was overwhelmed. Some of the PTN members from PG County went with me to Baltimore. It was a reunion because some of them are our friends and we didn't know they were coming.

PP: So can you tell me how dire the situation is in the Philippines then if thousands and thousands of teachers are leaving the country. What is the situation?

SA: Actually, the situation is as expected ...brain drain. It is sad...that a lot of Filipino teachers who are mobilizing the Philippine education...they are the prime movers of Philippine education...are not satisfied with the educational system in the Philippines that's why they are migrating

PP: why are they not satisfied. What areas of Philippine education are they not satisfied.

SA: First and foremost, their achievements are not well recognized. There are a lot of good Filipino teachers who are achieving and they not recognized I can attest to that for myself.

PP: In what sense are they not recognized....by the Dept of Education?

SA: Mababaw lang naman yung kaligahan nang teachers, just a simple congratulatory note or a certificate of recognition for doing good sa kanilang paghihirap pero walang ganoon..na bypass hindi ko alam kung bakit ganoon, like for ex I was the youngest school administrator. A the age of 23, I founded a school for special education and it is a private school and it branched out into two satellite schools ....

SA: It is one of the good schools in special ed then. which was referred by professionals Pero, Parang ang dami ko nang ginawa pero walang nakakarecognize. That is private, wala akong problema sa salary pero yung public school teachers na naghihirap na..na kahit nung election sila pa yung hinihila sila tapos puyat pa sila, hindi naman sila na rerecognize at nabibigyan tamang compensation. So yun yung isa sa mga reasons.

PP: It seems like yung compensation is a big thing. Can you quantify that you don't have to go to dollars and amount, give the listener how big the difference is.

SA: It is really big. yung isang co-teacher ko dito na...huwag ko nalang sabihin...pero sabi ko sa kanya, bakit pinababayaan mong mangyari sa yo yung mga ganitong cases. Sabi niya "ok lang yan kasi dito sa America yung isang buwang sweldo ko dito isang taong kinikita ko sa Pilipinas isang taong kikitain. So, kahit anong gawin nila sa akin dito ok lang yon. That's so pathetic, no. Pero yun ang reality yung isang buwan na kinikita naming dito isang taon sa Pilipinas

PP: And that is why it is a strong motivating factor to leave. On Friday we were at the embassy reception where rina lopez was talking about the situation in the Phil. So is it really common to see school with 150 children to one teacher is that an exaggeration?

SA: Not an exaggeration nung nandoon ba kami ganoon na talaga yung mga situation lalo na sa far flung areas kulang na kulang ang teachers. Lalo na ngayon na-nag-mi-migrate yung mga teachers talagang nauubusan na nang mga teacher. Pero

sinasabi ko hindi mauubusan talagang merong mag-gra-graduate sa education. What can the state do to hold them back. From leaving the country

PP: So what can the government do?

SA: I'm challenging the government. konting recognition sa mga teachers

PP: Do you think recognition is enough kung ang hila dito ay one month's salary is equal to one year. So don't you think mas more than recognition and kailangang gawin?

SA: Maraming paring mga teachers doon na nai-wan pinili talaga nilang mag-stay so iyon yung mga teachers na kailangan nating i-tap at suportahan...they chose to stay. Kami, may pangangailangan...may pamiliya..may resources kami na makaalis sa Pilipinas. Pero maraming teachers doon walang resources. Hindi nila kayang magsanla nang lupa. Wala naman silang isasanla bahay at hindi nila kayang maglubog sa utang.

PP: Anong resources yun to pay for processing fees?

SA: Six thousand dollars ang binayad ko just to come here sa agent ko. The others are paying \$13k.

PP: Ah, so hindi ang recruiter ang magbabayad noon?

SA: Talagang nalulubog sa utang yung mga teachers. At pinipili nilang malubog sa utang. Iniiisip nila „kaya naman naming bayaran. Pero maraming teachers and hindi maitim nilang isanla yung lupa nang pamilya. So they chose to stay. Sabi nila “kaya naman namin dito ayaw naman naming mag-silbi pa sa mga dayuhan.“ So yun yung kailangang suportahan ng government. And we challenge the government to really hold on to these teachers. Professional development is one thing. Napapabayaan yung mga teachers. Professionally sila pa yung nagbabayad nung kanilang seminars, conventions. Kami dito, kami yung binabayaran. A-attend kami nang seminars and conventions, kami yung binabayaran. Pero doon, bakit yung teachers pa ang kailangang mag-shell out mag shell-out. Hindi ba pwedeng libre na lang yan.

Kahit hindi na sila bayaran.

PP: At saka yung mga school buildings

SA: Yung mga school buildings, ano ba ang nangyari. Ang laki nang budget nang government sa education. Pero saan napupunta?

PP: Saan nga napupunta?

SA: Umutang sila sa World Bank nang \$200m recently lang, ang DECS. Supposedly for education but I don't know what's gonna happen there and what's their plan. Pero US\$200mm is a lot and it can do a lot. So, hindi ko na gusto pang alamin kung anong gagawin nila doon pero sana naman sa magandang paraan nila gamitin iyon

PP: You have the ear of the Secretary of the Department of Education. Anong tatlong bagay na “Secretary, eto ang tutukan mo.“ Concrete, anong tatlong bagay iyon?

SA: Yun ang infrastructure nang mga school buildings lalo na sa far-flung areas. Dito sa Metro Manila, Metro Manila na yan pero dilapidated na. Sana naman yung mga facilities pagandahin para sipagin yung mga teachers. yung mgapangalawa, sana bigyan nang recognition yung mga teachers, konting reward lang yan hindi naman kailangang malakihan na monetary reward kahit na certificate para at least alam nung mga teachers na nakita kami at yung magandang ginagawa namin. sana

huwag nang abusuhin yung mga teachers..inaabuso talaga lalo na during election parang kasama sa trabaho nila. Hindi naman kasama sa trabaho nila. Ang trabaho nang mga teachers is to give instruction and education to the students

PP: And form the next generation. That's a good point, I was looking at an interview you gave Manila Bulletin, si Annalyn Jusay. You had mention that PTN is apolitical. And I'm quoting "we do good in the classroom and we leave the political arena to the politicians." I guess you kind of alluded to that election duties shouldn't be part of the Filipino teachers' job description.

SA: At tsaka sinabi ko, ayoko nang makialamin doon sa hiniram nilang funding para sa education sa World Bank. Ayoko nang makialam ayoko nang ungkatin kung saan mapupunta iyon. Pero we want to remain apolitical kasi hindi kami magaling diyan. Magaling kami sa classroom pero yung mga lawyers magagaling diyan sa mga...political. Ayaw naming maki-ano diyan dahil dagdag yan sa sakit nang ulo. (Laughs)

PP: Although you want to be apolitical, meron ba kayong planong magkaroon nang dialogue with the Secretary (of the Dept of Education)?

SA: Sana magkaroon kami nang boses. We want them to hear us.

PP: Have you attempted to do that?

SA: Not yet..hopefully step by step ganyan makarating kami doon, kasi very supportive yung Philippine embassy. Nakikita nila yung aming vision and they are supporting us. And some of the consulates in other states, they are starting to respond na rin positively. So, hopefully yung govt, isa ngang mga reporters dito sa Philippine News, she challenged me, she challenged me. Alam mo ang lakas nang magiging boses ninyo and you can change, you can change....

PP: Is this Bing?

SA: Si Rita. You can change the education situation in the Phils if only they listen to you, they hear you out kasi yung na nga, alam mo yung situation namin reality yan, bakit kami umaalis sana naman pakinggan nila kami

PP: Alam ninyo kung magagawa ninyo, PTN will have a big, big voice.

SA: We have members in the pHil. Hindi Inaman ito Us basedlang , there are also PTN members in singapore, japan, europe, australia. Mas marami sa phils kasi ilan kaming bumuo nito. Pero majority nung core group members nasa Pilipinas. Anim nasa pinas, 1 sa canada tapos 3 kami nandito sa US, 1 nasa California...

PP: Paano kayo nagkakita-kita?

SA: Electronically lang.

PP: Magkakilala ba kayo dati?

SA: Hindi kami magkakakilala, sa blogging lang.

PP: So you had your blog.

SA: So they had their blogs, tapos nagano sila, nag-tatag kami. Nakita namin na educators kami, pare pareho ang mga problema. Yung mga nasa Pilipinas eto yung mga problem tapos mag-mi-migrate sila. So, why don't we start this support network. Kasi, a lot of countries are absorbing Filipino teachers pero pag dating dito sa america we are in the dark. Hindi

namin alam kung anong gagawin. So talagang we need to support each other. So we started that last year. After two months ang laki na, naging 60 na yung mga members tapos naging 180.

PP: Eh, ngayon ilan na?

SA: Ngayon nasa 300 pero ayon lang iyong ha nasa e-group lang namin. Pero kapag gurong Pinoy ka, kapamilya ka. So, kahit wala ka sa listserve basta't pinoy teacher ka kapamilya ka naman dahil wala namang membership fee. (laughs) Basta't teacher ka, kasama ka, su-suportahan ka namin.

PP: Nakita ko nga yung criteria ninyo, so yung first is pinoy or pinay teacher. Pero yung second is...

SA: Advocate

PP: advocate, so what does that mean? As long as you're interested in the issues of education maski hindi teacher you can join.

SA: Meron kaming parent advocate. Parent siya nang dalawang honor students tapos nakita niya yung vision nang tapos sabi niya "I want to be a member." Tapos siya yung nag-aano nang ulirang guro, siya yung gumagawa nung ulirang guro sa website. nagiinterview siya nang mga Filipino teachers at siya yung nag-fe-feature. Meron kaming lawyer advocate sa Pilipinas at dito. So wala na kaming problema meron na kaming lawyers. Nakita nila yung vision...

PP: Were you envisioning legal problems down the road?

SA: Oo, dito lang.

PP: In what sense?

SA: Hindi namin alam mahahabla na kami.

PP: Bakit?

SA: Kasi, yung mga bata dito meron legal rights at hindi namin alam yang mga rights na yan.

PP: So hindi sinabi yan sa orientation?

SA: Hindi like me kakarating ko lang dito. Eh, alam mo naman very touchy tayo sa Pilipinas so ganyang tap at the back ganyan ganyan. Pero dito hindi, "Don't touch me, don't touch me!!" sasabihin nung mga bata. Tapos iba na yung dating noon sa kanila. So yung konting touch na iyong sasabihin na corporal punishment na iyong kahit hindi naman. So yung ako'y bago-bago pa dito nagulat na lang ako ng sinabihan ako nang administrator ko na may nag-pr-press nang charges sa akin dahil sa corporal punishment. Sabi ko „Anong ginawa ko?“ Kinausap ko yung nanay, wala namang nangyari. And then last year ganoon na naman yung nangyari.

PP: Sa iyo o sa ibang tao?

SA: Sa akin din. Pinagsasabihan ko yung bata and then the kid threatened me, „I want to kill you Ms. Angala!“ Tapos nagulat ako doon, tapos sinabi ko doon sa administrator. Ako pa iyong na-press nang charges. Kaya daw ganoon daw yung bata sabi nung nanay, dahil verbally abusive daw ako. So may lawyer na doon, may judge na. Nasa hearing na ako hindi ko alam kung bakit.

PP: So wala yung nagrepresent sa iyo noon.

SA: Yung nagrepresent sa akin baguhan na administrator at hindi man lang ako kilala, at yung sinasabi lang niya „I support Ms. Angala. Ms. Angala is right.“ Ganoon lang yung sinasabi. So I was there, i stood for what I believed in and I won the case.

PP: Wo you just showed...

SA: Oo, wala akong documentation pero sinabi ko yung ginagawa ko, tapos sabi ko, „That's not an excuse even though he's a special ed...special child...he cannot assault a teacher, he cannot threaten a teacher like that.“ So ayon maraming ma-a-ano doon...pero at least yung judge fair siya.

PP: I think that's a good segue way to, yung, my next question is the difference between teaching back home, and teaching here.

SA: Yes. Parang iniisip nila, we're in the land of milk and honey. (Laughs) Pero yung kinikita namin, eh, siguro, tama lang 'yun sa mga nangyayari sa amin. (Laughs) Kulang pang kabayaran yun pag na-

PP: (Laughs) Kulang pa sa mga, yung mga mental anguish. (Laughs)

SA: Oo, grabe. Akala nila, oy, nasa Amerika na 'yan. Maganda na ang buhay. Hindi. 'Yung mga bagong dating dito, buti nga nangyari-

PP: Initially may utang pa nga eh.

SA: 'Yun na nga ang sasabihin ko. One year 'yon. Buti sa akin, hindi nangyari kasi private 'yung aking trabaho. So cash kong binayaran 'yon, wala akong kautang-utang. Pero 'yung mga co-teachers ko, awang awa talaga ako dahil sila biktima ng mga agents nila, tapos ang laki ng interes kapag umutang sila. Mga, ewan ko, mga one hundred-

PP: So umuutang sila sa agent nila?

SA: Oo, siyempre, ano yan-

PP: So that could be something, an advocacy that you could no? 'Yung PTN? Helping, I mean, not to encourage teachers to leave, but if you so decide to leave, these are the good agents you can go to. 'Yung mga medyo fly-by-night, huwag nang puntahan.

SA: 'Yun nga. Doon sa aming listserv, sa e-group namin, we discuss that. Kung ano ang mga problema doon, mga problema dito. So we know. Alam naming ang isa't isa. Naiintindihan naming ang isa't isa. And then 'yung mga talagang gustong pumunta dito nai-rerecommend namin ang magagandang agents.

PP: 'Yung mahusay.

SA: 'Yung mahusay na agents, hindi 'yung mga lokohan.

PP: Oo.

SA: Tapos mayroon na kaming links sa POEA website na, 'pag wala doon, hindi nakalista 'yung agency na iyon, huwag mong puntahan. Oo, so eto nalang ang mga recommended agents, pero 'yung mga nandoon na mga agencies, sasabihin pa rin namin eto ang mga magandang puntahan. Kasi 'yung mga iba talaga, loko loko talaga.

PP: Grabe. Parang 'yung Amazon, 'pag bumibili ka ng libro, mayroong mga rating?

SA: Oo.

PP: Ganoon nalang. O, three star ka ba? O four star o five star? 'Di ba?

SA: Ganoon nalang.

PP: So 'yun pa lang, hindi ka pa umaalis, may problema na. So pagdating dito ano 'yung difference sa pagturo sa bata dito sa pagturo doon?

SA: Mahirap i-gain 'yung respect nila eh. Katulad ko, third year ako, ngayon ko lang nai-gain ang respect nila pero yung first year ko, everyday namumura ako. Everyday minumura ako ng mga bata. Umiiyak na ako. Sa labas ng classroom ko ilang beses na akong nakita ng administrator na umiiyak, tapos 'yung isang teacher, nakita ako. 'You don't cry, Ms. Angala, you have to be strong, you don't quit.' 'Yung mga ganoon. Talagang, ' If they're like that to you, you have to be like that to them.' Ganyan ganyan. 'You have to be strong.'

PP: Ganoon? 'Yun bang ginawa mo? Fight fire with fire?

SA: Oo, talagang ngayon, pinakita ko na. 'Yung second year ko, pinakita ko na, hindi ako takot sa kanila.

PP: So, paano mo pinakita 'yon?

SA: Very firm na ako. Firm, firm 'pag nagsasalita. Pero, nandoon pa rin 'yung mga makukulit! Nanakawan ka.

PP: Ganoon?

SA: Nanakawan ka, naka padlock na ha! I-break nila ang padlock. Nanakawan ka. 'Yung mga ganoon!

PP: Anong eskuwela ba ito?

SA: Lahat ng eskuwelahan. Magandang school na 'yon.

PP: Magandang school na 'yan?

SA: One of the best schools na 'yan. Pag pumunta ka (giggles) naku, kailangan mong ma-interview 'yung mga nasa Baltimore. Grabe, alam mo sinabi sa akin ng mga nasa Baltimore teachers na lumipat dito, yung mga African-Americans ha. 'Yung mga lumipat dito, sabi nila 'Ms. Angala, you don't know what these... these teachers don't know what they're going through! They're walking in the streets, they don't know that that's, uh, you know, uh, drug, uh hindi nila alam na naglalakad sila doon na wala pakialam sa mundo! (Laughs) Sabi ko, 'Oh my God.'

PP: So that's where PTN comes in, no? Oh, huwag kayong maglakad sa ganyan.

SA: We warn them dahil napaka-naïve namin pagdating dito. Oo.

PP: Oh, ano ba 'yan.

SA: 'Yung school ko, one of the best schools na pero nangyayari pa 'yan, what more 'yung ibang schools.

PP: Oo, that are not so, you know-

SA: Talagang, naku, ang sinasabi ko sa 'yo. Nabubugbog ang mga teachers ang laki ng mga pasa dito, sabi ko, diyos ko, pinababayaang mangyari 'yung mga ganyan.

PP: So walang ginagawa 'yung administrator?

SA: Ayaw ng teacher! Ayaw niyang-

PP: Magkagulo?

SA: Magkagulo. (Laughs)

PP: And, without naming names, is that something – anong stand ng PTN, is it more of-

SA: We don't want to tolerate that. We don't want that to happen to us. Kaya, we inform each other na, you know, we also have rights. The union, the teachers union, will always be there to support us. Why don't you go to the proper authorities kapag ganyan ang nangyayari? Pero may mga teachers talaga na they prefer to keep quiet. Pero, 'yun, ini-inform namin sila . Go to, you go here you go there.

PP: Oo. Hindi mo naman maipilit kung ayaw puntahan.

SA: Hindi namin mapipilit kasi ayon, so alam mo yon, nangyayari yan, nangyayari yan and it's not really – this is not really the land of milk and honey for us, you know. (Laughs)

PP: So what is it? If you were to replace 'milk' and 'honey'?

SA: Uhm, it's, uhm, I don't know. (Laughs) Parang, parang ganoon din, parang pareho lang, 'yung reality ng nangyayari sa amin dito is equal to the reality na nangyayari doon pero in a different ano naman, in a different situation.

PP: 'Yung hirap?

SA: 'Yung hirap na dinaranas namin doon.

PP: So 'yung na-solve 'yung isang problema, which is more of the economic side pero may dagdag na iba pang problema.

SA: Hmm, oo.

PP: But do you think you come out stronger?

SA: Yeah! Oo, it's all a learning process. Everything is a learning process for us. 'Pag, ah, 'yung first year ko, napaka iyakin ako (laughter), napaka weakling ko, second year medyo firm na ako. Third year-

PP: Ano ka na (Laughs)

SA: I am not just a survivor, I'm thriving now!

PP: That's good, that's good.

SA: So ganyan 'yung mga nangyayari sa teachers dito. And we learn from each other. Ganito doon, halimbawa, ganito sa PG (Prince George) county. 'Di na ako pupunta diyan. (Laughter) 'Di na ako ta-transfer diyan. Kasi nalalaman namin.

PP: May umuuwi ba?

SA: Oo.

PP: Mayroon bang nag-gigive up at ayoko na? Suko na ako.

SA: Hindi lang nag-gigive up. Mayroong nag-gigive up at hindi lang nag-gigive up. 'Yung mga hindi pumasa ng state board exams, uwi talaga sila dahil, 'yung mga ayaw naming umuwi, lipat sila. Lipat sila ng ibang state.

PP: Para mag try ulit?

SA: Para mag try.

PP: So how many chances do you have to take that exam?

SA: Ano kami-

PP: O try and try?

SA: Try and try. Uhm, one year lang naman. Binibigan kami ng one year. Every month mayroon namang state board. So you can try and try and try. 'Pag hindi ka pa ring pumasa eh sampung beses ka (Laughter) uwi ka nalang sa Pilipinas. Ayun.

PP: Hay naku!

SA: May mga kasama ako na, may napa-uwi, dahil wala na, tanggal na sa trabaho tapos hindi niya alam anong gagawin niya. Ayaw naman niyang kumuha ng abogado. Uwi siya sa Pilipinas. Mayroon namang lumipat ng state. Oo, so okay naman. May support network talaga.

PP: And, how did you decide to come to DC?

SA: I didn't decide for that.

PP: Ikuwento mo kasi interesting 'yung story ng pag apply mo and I think you were going to California?

SA: Yeah I was going to San Jose. I was, when I heard that one of my sorority sisters, you know, got here sa California, sabi ko ako, din kaya mag apply. So kinuha ko 'yung address, nag apply ako. And then, ano, na-interview ako, umatend ako ng seminar and then okey na! San Jose, California, hintay nalang daw ng H-1 visa. So hintay naman ako. Malapit na, March na, kasi nag apply ako January. Excited! March na, ganyan, tapos tumawag sa 'kin 'yung agent sabi nya nasarhan.

PP: March ng 2003 ito ano?

SA: Oo, e September ang opening ng classes, March na, Sabi ko, paalis na tapos nasarhan kasi may mga lumipat na teachers, nabigay ang slot ko. Sabi ko, anong choices ko ngayon? 'Di pa naman ako nagbabayad noon pero, ano na ako. So sabi niya, Florida, mag interview ka sa Florida atsaka sa Washington, D.C. So kung ano 'yung mauna. So sabi ko o sige mag interview ako diyan. E 'yung mga HR representatives nandoon sa Pilipinas from Washington, D.C. Naandun sila!

PP: Ah oo!

SA: Oo, so uupo ka lang para kang na-interview sa D.C., pero iba 'yung sa amin. Sa Washington, D.C. hindi nakapunta, so conference 'yan. Video conference. So nasa isa kaming auditorium, isa-isa uupo kami, parang 'yung picture ko nandito, 'yung picture nila nandoon. Anim ang nag-interview sa akin.

PP: Paano? Panel?

SA: Panel, oo. Anim. So, okey naman, interview din ako sa Florida.

PP: Anong mga tanong ang tinanong sa 'yo? Atsaka ano ang mga mahihirap na tanong?

SA: 'Yung mga tungkol sa mga, 'yung anong behavior modification techniques ang inaanong mo sa mga istudyante, tapos 'If you were assigned in an inner city school, is that okay with you? What would you do?' E 'di ko pa alam kung ano ang inner city school noon (Laughter). Hindi ko pa alam na may patayan at pinapatay ang mga teachers doon. (Laughter) Yeah, that's okay with me, ganyan ganyan. (Laughter)

PP: And now you know.

SA: Now I know! Totoo pala. Diyos ko! Alam mo, kinukuwento sa akin ng co-teacher ko, naglalakad siya bigla lang may barilan. Barilan doon, tapos hinila daw siya ng, ano, angel, parang anghel daw. Hinila nalang daw siyang ganyan, sabi niya 'You know what, madam, you will get killed here.' Sabi niya dahan dahan, sumakay nalang daw siya ng bus.

PP: Sino 'yung humila sa kanya?

SA: Hindi niya kilala basta hinila nalang kasi nagbabarilan nung naglalakad siya. Anyway, yon, so kung anong unang dumating. Florida or Washington, D.C. Nauna ang Washington, D.C. So, hindi ko plinano. Excited ako na makarating ng Washington, D.C. because that's the nation's capital. So sabi ko blessing in disguise naman na dito ako napadpad dahil headquarters na ng Pinoy Teachers' Network atsaka ang lakas ng dating kapag sinabi mo Washington, D.C. Pinoy Teachers' Network headquarters, nandoon. O di ba ang ganda ng dating?

PP: Atsaka nandito ang embassy.

SA: Andito ang embassy at very supportive sa amin.

PP: So marami kang, a lot of Filipino politicians come here so at least mayroon kang exposure sa kanila din.

SA: Oo . Yeah, talagang blessing in disguise na hindi ako napadpad sa California (Laughter)

PP: Was it your first time in the U.S.?

SA: Yeah it was my first time. 'Yun siguro ang first week ko talagang honeymooning na, honeymoon in Washington, D.C. Pasyal, pasyal. (Laughter) Feel na feel. Tapos e 'yung mga second month ko nararanasan ko na ang mga ewan ko sa iskuwelahan ko. Gusto ko nang umuwi.

PP: Gusto mo nang umuwi?

SA: At hindi ko kasama ang, hindi ko kasama ang pamilya ko. Wala na akong pera.

PP: So what you decide to... let's try it one more time and let's stick to it?

SA: Ang laki na ng nagastos ko eh. (Laughter) Atsaka ang daming gustong pumunta dito sa Amerika, nandito na ako, so I just have to hold on. Ang hirap ng mga dinanas ko noon. For four months wala kaming suweldo. Pumapasok na kami noon sa trabaho. Two hundred dollars lang dala ko. Imagine kung paano nagkasya 'yan?

PP: Bakit walang suweldo?

SA: Hindi 'yung mga fingerprinting, hinihintay namin Social Security number hinihintay namin.

PP: So hindi kayo mabayaran hanggang lumabas lahat iyon.

SA: Hanggang lumabas lahat iyon. Protocols lang.

PP: Pero siyempre binayaran kayo?

SA: Oo, retro 'yan lahat, pero 'yung first four months ang hirap! Two hundred dollars paano mo ipagkakasya 'yan sa loob ng apat na buwan. So mga jewel – mga accessories ko, hilig ko sa mga quartz, ganyan ganyan. Rose quartz, mga pearls, ay nabenta ko lahat. Pati ang mga regalo sa akin, nabenta ko lahat para lang maka survive. Tapos hindi pa 'yun, hindi kasya sa pagkain ko eh. Noodles, ten cents noodles. Morning, lunch, night.

PP: Oh my God!

SA: Ten cents noodles! Ang payat payat ko na noon. (Laughter) Tapos, phone card pa, para sa aking pamilya, phone card wala akong cell phone. Tapos tawag ako.

PP: Talagang nakakaiiyak naman ng, huh.

SA: Naku! Naiiyak pa rin ako. Hanggang ngayon. Naiiyak pa rin ako 'pag naaalala ko 'yun. Tapos kung sino mang makabasa ng aking life story at may blog din ako na puro life story ko. Ang dami kong blogs. (Giggles)

PP: Pwede bang isa-pelikula 'yan? (Laughter)

SA: Nakasulat na ang lahat, eh. 'Yung ano nalang, ang gagawa nalang ng script. (Laughter)

PP: So kung maging pelikula 'yan, sino bang gusto mong maging Sol Angala? (Laughter)

SA: Hay, hindi ko na nga kilala 'yung mga artista ngayon eh, pero maganda si Christine Hermosa.

PP: Ah!

Sikat pa ba siya hanggang ngayon?

PP: (Laughter) You never know, baka before you know maging pelikula na 'yan!

SA: Maging artista! Magaling na artista siya! (Giggles)

PP: And so, ano ang plano ng... What is the future plan of PTN? You had mentioned something about 'yung pilot study program? Can you talk about that? 'Yung pilot study program on Filipino school, culture, language.

SA: Yeah, that's one of the projects. Actually, we want to collaborate with the, halimbawa sa Virginia may Mabuhay Philippines. Teacher nagpapatakbo 'nun.

PP: Ano 'yun? Ano ang Mabuhay Philippines?

SA: Mabuhay, it's a school,

PP: Ah, a school.

SA: A school for culture and arts. Philippine culture and arts.

PP: Ah, parang Sunday school, parang ganyan.

SA: Oo, Sunday school ganyay, 'yung iba naman summer school. Ayun we want to-

PP: 'Yung may Bahay Kubo din diba sa-

SA: Sa California. Tapos sa PAAD naman, Paaralang Pilipino. 'Yung mga ganyan, gusto namin na talaga 'yung mga Filipino teachers i-tap nga kasi kailangan nila ng teachers, e. Ang ginagawa nila, kumukuha sila ng mga volunteers na hindi naman teachers e andito na ang teachers!

PP: Nandito kayo!

SA: Oo, so hindi naman kami kailangang isuweldohan because we want really to give back to the country, so we want to know them tapos eventually, we will support them.

PP: So 'yung mga students na pumupunta sa Mabuhay Philippines, Bahay Kubo, they are children of Filipino immigrants?

SA: Yeah .

PP: Who want to reconnect?

SA: Yeah.

PP: So learn Filipino songs?

SA: Know their roots. Oo, iyon. And we don't want to reinvent the wheel! It's already there! They have the resources!

PP: Exactly.

SA: They don't have the manpower and that's where we will come in.

PP: You can come in.

SA: Oo, and eventually naman sa Pilipinas, they have their plans.. 'Yung mga Pinoy Teachers' Network sa Philippines, they have also their plans of, you know, letting their voices out. Inaano ko na sila, pinapabayaan ko na sila kung ano ang plano nila pero hinay hinay lang 'yan. Step by step. Andito kami ngayon, sinusuportahan ng Philippine Embassy. 'Yung boses namin pinakikigangan. Eventually maririnig din kami doon.

PP: Aabot.

SA: Tapos hindi na kami kailangan pang i-contact dito sa Amerika. Kontakin nalang nila ang mga members sa Pilipinas at sila ay interbyuhin dahil alam na alam nila. Dahil nag-uusap usap kami e. Our meetings are electronic. Lahat! So, ano talaga. Hi tech kami. (Laughter) Hindi kami 'yung katulad ng ibang teacher organizations na 'Kailangan punta tayo dito, meetings, ganyan.' Hindi. Ayaw namin mga gastos gastos na 'yan at sayang pa sa oras. Electronic kami.

PP: And you can tap more people that way.

SA: More people, oo. Tapos-

PP: So mayroon kayong, I think you use a lot of Skype, no?

SA: Skype.

PP: So you do conferences?

SA: Yeah, conference calls. Ang maganda pa niyan, hindi lang puro meeting na sakit ng ulo o mga problema. Hinarana kami ng Claretians.

PP: Oh yeah, I saw that. Paano iyon?

SA: Ang ganda!

PP: Was that a special occasion? Or impromptu?

SA: Impromptu. Sinabi ng isang Pinoy Teacher's Network member from Claret sa susunod na Skype – 'yung Claretians nanao sa China, sa Beijing, China, sa choral concert – and they will sing for us! So sabi ko 'Oy maganda 'yan' So kinontact na 'yung mga sa ibang bansa. Mayroon sa China, mayroon sa Korea, mayroon sa Africa. Iba't ibang mga... Dalawa kami dito sa U.S. Siguro dose kaming mga teachers na nasa Skype. Tapos 'yun na, kumanta na. Kanta ng kanta. (Laughs) Naiiyak na ako 'nun, tapos sabi ng asawa ko 'Ano 'yan? Ang galling a!' Sabi ko ang mga Claretians 'yan, ang choir nila.

PP: Kinanta nila ang mga Filipino songs?

SA: Oo. Mga Filipino songs, mga kundiman. Magaling talaga! Singing ambassador 'yung kanilang coach. So magaling talaga.

PP: 'Yung UP singing ambassadors.

SA: 'Yung kanilang coach. So magaling talaga. 'Yan ang isa sa mga magagandang, ano, hindi ko pa naipo-podcast kasi kailangan ko pang i-edit pero ipo-podcast ko 'yun kasi ang galling talaga. Tapos now, naman, 'yun nangyari sa – alam mo 'yung oil spill?

PP: Oo sa Guimaras!

SA: Guimaras. 'Yung mga Pinoy Teachers' Network members sa U.P. Visayas, they're doing something about it and it's very positive. 'Yung mga, ano ba 'yung mga puno ng, 'yung mga pananim-

PP: Mga mangroves?

SA: Mangroves! Oo, inaalagaan nila 'yun. Tapos ngayon nasira, so ngayon inaanong nila, mine-maintain nila ulit. Inaayos nila ulit.

PP: Can you give us an idea how big the damage is? From my reading, it's not the whole island of Guimaras.

SA: Yeah it's not the whole island

PP: So is it, what, like seven towns out of how many?

SA: 'Yun 'yung sinabi sa 'kin ng co-Pinoy Teachers' Network member ko sa U.P. Visayas hindi naman daw ganoon ka laki. It's just a part.

PP: Is it fifty percent? Twenty?

SA: Wala siyang sinabi. Wala siyang na-mention pero they're doing something about it and it's positive, and then that's our next, ano naman, sa podcast namin we want to interview them about what they're doing about it. Kasi ang dami dito sa US na nakarinig nga niyan and it's not just Filipino teachers na nakarinig niyan, maraming interesado na mga scientist. So we want to invite them sa Skype, mag conference kami. Tapos, 'yun ang i-interview namin.

PP: Very good.

SA: Oo, so all they need is the internet connection and Skype.

PP: And the microphone and Skype and it's all connect – you can tape it, right?

SA: Yeah you can record it and you can podcast it. So that's the beauty of technology.

PP: Exactly.

SA: You don't have to go to the Philippines and interview the person.

PP: Yes, yes exactly.

SA: Through technology, ang dami pang nakakinig. Ang dami pang pwede – parang panel discussion, diba?

PP: And that's what I also want to do with Pinoy Post, is to interview people like you who, I think prior to this interview or our conversation we were saying how we want to, you know, there's a lot of bad news but we also want to focus on the bright spots, right? Constructive criticism is welcome but also welcome good ideas, and definitely PTN is a good idea! (Laughter) Do you think you will go home?

SA: Yeah, I'll go home...kasi ang dami kong projects na gustong i-jumpstart doon and I think they're just waiting for someone to trigger that. But they are ready there, the Pinoy Teachers' Network members are ready there.

PP: Anu-anong mga projects?

SA: Conventions, more on professional development projects talaga. Kami ditong mga Filipino teachers, trained kami. Well trained kami. Trained kami ng mga districts. 'Yun gusto namin i-balik sa Pilipinas. 'Yun ang wala kami dati and talaga, hinahanap namin iyon, kailangan pa naming magbayad. 'Yun ang gusto naming ibigay, hindi niyo kailangang magbayad, kami magpo-provide. We want to collaborate with the government, with the Department of Education with that, na i-tap nila 'yung mga Filipino teachers! We're not asking for any payment.

PP: Exactly.

SA: We just want to impart knowledge.

PP: Out of love for country. So it's a summer thing? Pagka walang pasok dito, you go home, do that training and then come back.

SA: Yeah, sana ganoon, sana sila sa Department of Education they set up a convention, and 'yung mga Filipino teachers na uuwi, kami ang presenters. Makikinig 'yan, maraming a-atend niyan. Tamang tama 'yun dahil summer kami, bakasyon kami, may pasok sila. So uuwi kami dun. We will give presentations. We will give professional development trainings. We will impart knowledge, kung anong gusto nilang matutunan. Diba? It's a positive thing, bakit kailangan nilang mag dwell sa 'Oh, nag-alisan na sila, inabandon na tayo' ganoon. Hindi, look at it the positive way na 'Umalis sila, marami silang maibabalik dito.'

PP: Exactly.

SA: Ganoon, ganoon dapat ang thinking pero ewan ko. (Laughter) Sana ganoon ang mangyari. That's what we want to do, and we want to have, to discuss that with the Department of Education. I hope they listen to us.

PP: I hope so. I hope they listen to this interview. (Laughter) And they can do what they need to do. But do you think you will ever go back to the Philippines for good?

SA: Sa ngayon, not for good. Siguro eventually, when I retire. Gusto ko doon mag retire, marami akong ma-i-share-share naman doon sa education doon. Pero right now iacquire ko muna ang knowledge and skills Wala pa akong plano, as of now.

PP: Sol Angala, thank you very much for your time.

SA: Tapos na? (Laughter)

PP: We can do a part two. But, thank you very much. I think you've made something out of a bad situation which is the brain drain into something hopefully which is a brain gain.

SA: Yeah, brain gain. Brain gain is a good term. Gamitin natin 'yan. Brain gain.

PP: Brain gain. Ok so from the land of milk and honey stay tuned and we'll have more conversations in the future. Thank you very much.

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