

## PWPA National Conference in Davao City, Philippines with Thomas Selover

Chooli Julia Nuyana  
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*Thomas Selover*

Converging on the Grand Regal Hotel in Davao City on April 13 were around a hundred educators and government figures from all over the Philippines. The Professor's World Peace Academy's national conference with the theme, "Trailblazing Innovative Pathways to Peace and Nation- Building," brought them there.

The conference also served as an assembly of the different officers in existing and candidate PWPA chapters in different regions in the Philippines. Another purpose of the conference was the launching of PWPA in the Davao region.

The Universal Peace Federation and the Professors World Peace Academy- Philippines with the support of PWPA International and the Davao City government co-organized it. During the Opening Session, the newly installed president of PWPA in the Davao Region (Region XI) Pilar Braga, a city councilor in Davao, gave the welcoming remarks. Dr. Chung Sik Yong, chairman of the Asia Regional Group spoke, challenging the educators and delegates on their responsibilities and roles in nation-

building. Dr. Thomas Selover, president of PWPA International and president of the Sun Hak Peace Graduate School, one of the many educational institutions True Parents have founded, gave an inspiring and insightful address. He discussed the five principles of a peace-loving society: interdependence, mutual prosperity, universally shared values, win-win-win thinking and hyo jeong (the feeling of a filial connection). "It is meaningful to me to be here in Davao City. I am excited by the vigor of this city that produced the very vigorous president of the Philippines, President Duterte," he said.

### **Dealing with crises**

The first session of the conference addressed the critical issues of our time with moderator, Dr. Glenn Pajares, dean of the College of Arts and Science of the University of San Jose Recoletos. The first speaker Dr. Robert Kittel, international president of Youth and Students for Peace, talked about the universal principles of peace, which emphasize the value of goodness, which is placing public above private and living for the sake of others.

He also stressed on the principles of love and introduced the four types of love within the family. He spoke of educational materials that YSP released at the Africa Summit in January. He emphasized fundamentally that we should base peace and development on the loves experienced in the family: children's love, siblings love, conjugal love and parental love. He said that each has its role and unique character and they build on one another. "The foremost obligation is to respect, defend and protect the family. It is essential because the family nurtures the four loves, which we learn and bequeath to the next generation. "This is what we need to teach our children in word and in deed. The four family loves is the framework. Take it and make it yours. Use the Filipino culture inside of it," is how he concluded his speech.

The second speaker, from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the director in Davao, Chinot Adao gave a presentation entitled, "Resolving Conflict: The OPAPP Experience," where he discussed government efforts at conflict solution and conflict management. He presented the six point peace and development agenda issued by the president, which is the OPAPP road map under their mandate to promote peace and development in the country.

One of the highlights of the PWPA national conference were the plenary talks that addressed critical issues and challenges of the modern society in respect to local government, media and the family. The editor-in-chief of the Mindanao Times, Ms. Amalia B. Cabusao, as the moderator, laid out timely and relevant issues that resource speakers and which everyone then discussed.



### **Peace promotion**

Mr. Aljo R. Bendijo, a PTV Channel 4 (government television) broadcast journalist, who spoke of the role of a responsible and reliable media moved in a peaceful direction, that the media and press be utilized righteously and be used as a means to open people's minds to peaceful advocacy is important. Mrs. Maria Luisa Fatima Nebrida, a movie director- scriptwriter-producer, on the other hand, expressed the importance of using arts and film in advocating peaceful causes. After showing a trailer of one of the movies she produced, she stressed that films that carry peaceful messages play a huge role in influencing people. "Film happens to be a very powerful medium because film moves people to change. More than any other medium, it projects light on the issue, moves people to meditate, conveys a story and chronicles history."

Attorney Wencilito Andanan, former undersecretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government, as he spoke about local government units (LGUs) said, "Our comparative advantage is what other countries do not have. It is the responsibility of local government executives to look for that unique feature in their provinces, cities and municipalities. Ask, what do I have? Exploit that. Develop it."

In his very passionate remarks, he encouraged officials from the LGU sectors to lead righteously while bearing in mind their responsibility of service to their community and need for vigilance to make your LGU better and more prosperous for the people in it. He applauded Sultan Pax Mangudadatu, the governor of Sultan Kudarat, for exceptionally good government.

Finally, the chairman of UPF and PWPA-Philippines, Dr. Julius B. Malicdem, the last speaker of the session, delivered an insightful message. He emphasized tackling the alarming issue of rampant family breakdown in the Philippines. He stressed the importance of building families as schools of love and centering them on God in order to build a nation and secure the lives of those in future generations.

In his presentation, he stressed that if a person is not exposed to the four types of love in his familial upbringing, he can have defects as he grows and these can be reflected in his character and attitude towards society. He then spoke about the Peace Marriage Blessings that took place all over the Philippines, which aim to renew marriages and rebuild families. He added how the government should support such a peaceful cause. The session ended with remarks from the reactor, Dr. Felicitas V. Sicam, one of the PWPA Board Members. An open forum followed.

### **Culture and Martial Arts**

Another session focused on Initiatives of Civil Societies which was facilitated by Mr. Jose Marie Flores of PWPA Davao. The presentations included the following; Mindanao Peace Initiative presented by Pax S. Mangudadatu, governor of the Province of Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao; Dr. Antonio Delos Reyes, who spoke on "Federalism and Its Impact in Nation-Building". Another presentation was about the Zero to Hero Project presented by Dr. Venus Agustin, president of International Peace Leadership College (IPLC) in Rizal Province and the president of the World Tongil Moo Do Federation in Asia (TIMD). He introduced the Zero to Hero Project initiated by PWPA, IPLC and WTMF. The concept of this project is to educate out-of-school youth, unemployed individuals, drop-outs, young people with different backgrounds and those who have lost their vision in life.

The aim is to raise their dignity to become productive youth based on developing their potentials through education of the heart and Tong Il Moo Do training. The goal of the program is to raise ten thousand 120-Day TIMD graduates and three thousand TIMD instructors within four years through a series of 120-Day TIMD Instructor Training Programs and Peace Studies, which were officially endorsed without expiration by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines on November 29, 2016.

The conference ended with the Closing Session facilitated by Dr. Irma Balulot, with the appointment of ambassadors for peace, who were mostly from the education sector. Then representative delegates gave their impression of the conference. The conference formally ended with the installation of the president PWPA's Davao chapter, Pilar Braga, who gave her inaugural message. It was her birthday. Dr. Thomas Selover of PWPA International gave concluding remarks.

The day after the conference, all the PWPA national officers as well as PWPA chapters who were still present had a special organizational meeting to draw out their plans for the year and discussed future programs.

