

IN THESE PANDEMIC TIMES...

AN INSPIRING STORY TO UPLIFT OUR SPIRITS...

This is a rather long read, but it is something that can uplift our spirits in these dark pandemic times:



Winnie Talosig-Rebancos was almost home from her 18th birthday celebration at Jollibee when she heard a commotion.

"Magbayad na kayo ng upa niyo!" Their landlord was shouting through a megaphone looking for her parents. All their neighbors could hear that they had not paid their rent again.

"Our landowner was calling my father's and my mother's names, demanding them to pay the rent. When they did not come out, he called the barangay captain to fetch my parents," said Rebancos. "They did that three times in six months."

"I felt ashamed. It was not something that anyone would want to happen to her family. I would see my mom cry, I would see my father cry about it, but I was helpless."

Rebancos is Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines' chief of technology. That megaphone incident is a profound memory that motivated her to rise up from poverty.

"I promised myself and my parents that would never happen again after I finished my studies." "I never knew we were that poor not until I reached high school," Rebancos shares.

"When our fourth sibling was born, I realized we were not at all like other families. We didn't have the usual appliances at home, we didn't have a TV, or a fridge. We went to market on a daily basis.

There were many times when their house had no electricity. Every three months, they lived in darkness and lit candles because her parents had not been able to pay the electricity bill. Every afternoon when her father came home from work, Rebancos was asked to go to the store and buy a single can of Ligo sardines. That was their dinner for the whole family. "So every day, sardines," Rebancos recalls.

"My dad lost his job when I was in second-year high school, and my mom was just a seamstress," said Rebancos. With no steady income, the family had to resort to a lot of sacrifices to make ends meet. As the eldest child, Rebancos knew her family's hopes were pinned on her and her studies. Her parents decided to prioritize her schooling over her siblings' education, and that made her feel a lot of guilt. *"Ang nakaka-konsensya,* when I reached my third year in college, it was also my younger brother's turn to go to college. *Sabi ng father ko sa kapatid ko,* 'choose a school that has a lower tuition fee because we need to give way for your *ate.*'"

According to Rebanco, her brother preferred another school to the one he ended up in, but he was resigned to his fate.

While studying Computer Science at St. Paul University Manila, one of the biggest challenges for Rebanco was not having a computer at home. "Imagine taking a computer course but you don't have a computer at home! My day would be filled with programming in my head, and then writing the programs, writing the codes on my notebook. I would get it done the following day when I could get my hands on the computer at school." Every day, Rebanco walked one kilometer from a dropoff point to her house just to save a couple of coins she would have used on the jeepney fare.

"I had this friend whose strict parents had her fetched from school every day. I would ask her if I could hitch with her going home. She would drop me at a specific place and I would walk one kilometer from there going home, just so I could save the fare."

And because they could not afford them, Rebanco didn't have any textbooks throughout her college life. "I would jot down notes because I did not have books and I always frequented our library. My siblings were the same." They didn't take field trips either. "We didn't know field trips. We couldn't afford field trips."

After graduating from college, Rebanco taught for a while at St. Paul but eventually pursued a different career because of financial needs. She surprised the company's vice president when she turned down their generous offer.

"When I reached the final interview with the company's vice president, she gave me an offer, and I said no." The vice president was shocked. "I was a fresh graduate and they were offering a compensation package for fresh graduates. I told the VP, I'm sorry I will not be able to accept her offer."

But what happened next surprised the interviewer even more. Rebanco pulled out a piece of paper and laid down all her plans. "I told her I'm putting my brother through school. 'I promised that to my parents. This is how much it will cost. And these are the bills I will pay monthly. I am taking care of the monthly expenses of the family, and helping my parents with these other things.'"

That impressed the vice president even more, so she told Rebanco, "You know what, I like you and I'm going to give you what you want." The vice president added, "This is the first time that someone is asking me for this favor and because I like you, I want you to be part of the company."

Instead of receiving an entry-level salary for an analyst, Rebanco was given the salary grade of a specialist.

It was a combination of faith, hard work, and motivation that led Rebanco to buy a house for her parents at age 26. "Remember that megaphone incident? I went to church after that. I was in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and I told God: I know what I want to do with my life, and the only thing that I will ask you is to bless these plans."

She told God, "If I graduate in two years, I will be a programmer analyst for two years. Then I will move my way up and become a systems analyst for two years, then move my way up and become a project manager in two years. So that makes it six years."

She hoped that in six years, she would be able to purchase a home for her family so they would longer have to rent, and no landowner would ever again embarrass them with a megaphone in front of their neighbors. And she did it.

In the middle of her "plan of life," she decided to migrate to Canada, but God was bent on keeping their promise. Rebanco was about to immigrate to Canada but she got injured and fractured her leg when a Ford Expedition hit her car.

That scuttled her new plans, so instead of immigrating to Canada, she stayed in the Philippines and got another work opportunity at Coca-Cola, where she eventually became the project manager. "In three months at Coca-Cola, I got promoted. You can only be promoted only two levels, but I got promoted three levels at that point in time, enough for the salary to be at the minimum requirement for the bank for me to loan!"

Rebanco was so happy that she could finally fulfill her plans. "I brought my parents to the new house, and they were like, *ano ginagawa natin dito sa bahay na to?* And I said, *dito na tayo titira!*" The feeling was ineffable.

"Looking back, I probably wouldn't attribute it all to myself. I have strong faith. Everything just conspired to what I planned. I am just a believer that if you do good things to your parents, you will receive good things as well," said Rebanco.

As a female heading the technology division of Coca-Cola Philippines, Rebanco finds herself in an industry dominated by men.

"I would have developers who are all male, and I would just be the only woman in the group because I manage the project," said Rebanco. But she is helping to close that gender gap. "In the past 20 years that I have been with this profession, I have actually converted 10 female professionals who used to be in finance, admin positions, who used to be other positions other than technology. I have converted them to joining technology. I believe that this is a very inclusive profession. It does not require any gender."

In 2019, Rebanco told their CEO about how companies always chose graduates from the big schools in Metro Manila.

"Then he asked me what were the top schools in the Philippines, and then I told him, no, that's not the point here!" Rebanco explained that there are diamonds in the rough in the schools other than the top universities in the Philippines.

"So I proposed to him, why not allow me to work with Microsoft in identifying school where we could partner. And then get ideas from students, which can help Coca-Cola in the future?" CODE or Coca-Cola Developer Enablement Initiative was born. It is a coding festival for students to present innovative ideas to Coca-Cola on what applications can be used to solve problems in the

community. "It's a cause where all the students have the avenue to share ideas to businesses like us."

Winnie's Advice to Young Filipinos "You need to find your purpose. If you cannot find it, you have to ground yourself on something that is bigger than you," said Rebancos. In other words, the purpose is about helping the people around you. "When I was younger I felt like my purpose then was to make it easier for my parents as they grow old... but growing up, I realized that my real purpose is actually to help others."

"To Filipinos out there, you need to find your purpose. You need to get yourself anchored onto something bigger than yourself and then use that to help others. Because ultimately, there is no better way or better feeling than actually helping others." (From Esquire magazine)

PAULINIAN JOINS CEAP NCR FORUM



"I am an Ethical, Paulinian Leader and Professional, consciously expressing my Faith."

The entire community of SPU Manila sends its warmest congratulations to our CBM student, Ms. Mary Geannel Cabahug, BS Entrepreneurship 3, for being one of the panel of speakers during the CEAP NCR General Assembly held on September 17, 2021 guided by the theme "Gifted to Give."

SPU Manila is proud of you!

PAULINIAN EDGE HOLDS ANOTHER LIVE STREAMED FINALLY FRIDAY

Mamaya na ulit (September 17) ang karambola sa FINALLY FRIDAY. Bida-bidahan sa araw na ito sila Bb. Lovely Rivero at Claudette Khan sa usapang 80's!! Siguradong makaka-relate ang mga batang 80's!

Kasama muli ang mga usyuserong sina Doc Aimee at Doc B ng tambalang Side A at Side B at makakasama din sa araw na ito si Prof. Lalaine Mallari!

Huwag mag-alinlangan. Makibida at maki-usyoso sa usapan at kwentuhan tungkol sa usapang dekadanghan!

Sugod mga kapitbahay!! Abangan ang livestream link.

