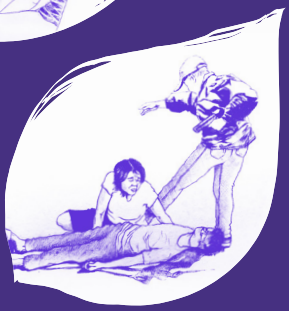
Women and the Duterte Anti-Drug Carnage:

Grieving, Healing, Breaking Through

ELEANOR R. DIONISIO (ED.)



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pilipina1981@gmail.com

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FOREWORD

On June 4, 2020, the United Nations Human Rights Council released a report detailing the human rights violations and persistent impunity in the Philippine government's campaign against illegal drugs. The report finds that "serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, have resulted from key policies driving the so-called war on drugs and incitement to violence from the highest levels of government."[1]

The majority of the victims have been poor, coming mainly from congested urban areas. This book takes a closer look at the gendered violence that the Philippine anti-drug campaign has inflicted on women. In showing how they have become a "new underclass among the urban poor", the book presents a chilling illustration of the prevailing climate of impunity and its dreadful consequences.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, transparent and accountable governance, rule of law, inclusion, participation, nonviolence. Societies have risked so much for the realization of these ideals. What we also know, more painfully today, is that these can only be fulfilled under a democratic state, and that it is the poor and the weak who suffer most under a dictatorship.

An authoritarian regime represses and silences dissenters, concentrates power in the hands of a few, and dispenses it with little or no regard for people's fundamental and inalienable rights as human beings. It is unable to operate openly and subject itself to accountability and public

1 Michelle Bachelet, "Statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights" (speech delivered before the 44th Session of the Human Rights Council Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Situation of Human Rights in the Philippines, June 30, 2020), https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26016&LangID=E (accessed 19 September 2020).

scrutiny. It is unwilling to uphold constitutional norms and guarantees. It is offended by the sensibilities of those who defend the inherent dignity of humanity.

The perfect democracy does not exist. Our democracy may be flawed, but it is a flawed work in progress. Only democracy can effectively protect human rights and basic freedoms. Only democracy can accommodate diversity, operate under checks and balances, and render accountable service to the people. Only democracy can allow the free flow of ideas and information and provide the space for independent organizations – civil society, media, think tanks, political parties – to participate in governance and nation building.

We used to say from experience that it is easier to topple a dictatorship than rebuild democracy. But recently the mood has changed. We find ourselves staring into dark, dark days that show no promise of ending soon. We find ourselves grappling with an authoritarian brand of populism that has eroded our democratic institutions in ways we have not seen before, in ways even more insidious than those of the Marcoses in their more than twenty years in power. We find ourselves enraged by a misogynist brand of populism that has run even deeper than the reversal of hard-won gains in gender policy work, straight into our language, relationships, and day-to-day existence.

Filipinos seem to have looked the other way in the midst of the killings. Does the absence of outrage manifest a loosening grip on the fundamental morals that we thought we shared and held dearly? The debates concerning the hierarchy of values are like shifting sands we walk on, as our society weighs its choices between security and freedom, between personal safety and the rights of drug suspects to due process and to life. These choices are influenced by the force of a populist narrative that pushes false dichotomies and divides our people.

The so-called "War on Drugs" and its impact on women underline how the fragility of our democracy involves more than our flawed and imperfect institutions and political processes. The values that animated our democracy have not settled firmly in our society and we have abandoned them so quickly in favor of the alluring but haphazard promises of an authoritarian populist.

This book leans on the force of the women's stories to help us find our sense of compassion, sympathy, and solidarity; to bring us to a re-examination of our sense of right and wrong; to force us into a conversation about the meaning of fair play and justice, and our moral duty to protect each other's fundamental rights; to help us see the impact of misogyny as deadly, demoralizing, dehumanizing; to help us to realize the impact of our own individual choices, whether we choose to act as advocates, enablers, or bystanders; to awaken in us a desire for democracy; and to remind us that for our collective actions or the lack of them, the poor and marginalized have paid dearly with their lives, their dignity, and their children's future.

Committed to growing democratic discourse and to defending democratic space and institutions especially in these times of heightened repression and authoritarianism, the International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov) is privileged to have been part of this book. We hope it will contribute to bridging understanding and dialogue about an issue that has divided Philippine society. These stories need telling beyond the circles and confines of our existing groups and sectors in civil society.

We congratulate PILIPINA for the prudent and thorough handling of this book and its sensitive material. We commend all the writers in this compilation of stories, as well as those many others without whose support and contribution this endeavor would not have been possible.

Finally, we commend the women who have fearlessly shared these stories and entrusted them to us. You are brave beyond compare.

MARILOU M. IBAÑEZ
Executive Director
International Center for Innovation,
Transformation and Excellence in Governance
(INCITEGov)

NOTES ON THE PROJECT

This book was completed in the midst of the "community quarantine" that has been the Duterte administration's main response to the COVID-19 pandemic. That intervention has been adjudged by some observers to be, at least in its first two months, one of the strictest lockdowns in Asia.[1] It therefore seems appropriate to begin this note by drawing out a few broad similarities between the community quarantine and Oplan Tokhang, the administration's main response to the illegal drug trade, which serves as the dominant context of the stories in this book.

Both interventions have highlighted the role of the state's forces of coercion in the resolution of what are essentially health crises, while giving insufficient support to the role of the health care system.[2] Both have been used to justify violations of human rights, and even authoritarian measures, in containing these crises. Both have been disproportionately damaging to the poor, whether from the perspective of law enforcement, human rights, or economic impact. Both have largely been accepted as necessary by a significant segment of the Filipino upper and middle classes who view what they suppose to be the irrational, undisciplined, and criminal behavior of the poor as the driving force behind illegal drug use and the spread of COVID-19, even though it is not the poor who have brought either scourge into the country.

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1 Akane Okutsu and Mitsuru Obe, "COVID-19 in charts: Japan and Philippines dodge explosions," *Nikkei Asian Review*, May 5, 2020, https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/COVID-19-in-charts-Japan-and-Philippines-dodge-explosions (accessed May 19, 2020).

2 For a discussion of the pre-eminent role of the military, in preference to medical professionals, in the Duterte administration's COVID-19 response, see Yen Makabenta, "The world's longest lockdown, oddest task force vs. Covid-19," *Manila Times*, May 21, 2020, https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/05/21/opinion/columnists/topanalysis/the-worlds-longest-lockdown-oddest-task-force-vs-covid-19/726169/ (accessed May 26, 2020).

Both therefore reveal two dark currents of our polity which feed one another. First, the community quarantine and Oplan Tokhang have exposed and reinforced the loathing of many of the upper and middle classes for the poor, whom they perceive as the causes rather than the victims of our nation's problems, and as threats to their own security—better locked down in congested slums, imprisoned, or dead, than walking the streets. Second, the community quarantine and Oplan Tokhang are creations of political forces which proffer to these frightened elites the use, or at least the threat, of violence, and ultimately, authoritarian controls—mainly against the poor—as the most effective means of solving the nation's problems.

This book is an act of resistance against both currents as these manifest themselves in the administration's supposed campaign against drugs. On the one hand it is an effort to confront frightened (or indifferent) elites with the anguished humanity of those bereaved by Oplan Tokhang and its alleged offshoots in vigilante violence. On the other it is an indictment of a government policy that dehumanizes drug suspects, most of them poor, offering them up as a bloody sacrifice on an altar built to false gods of authoritarian law and order, at which the upper and middle classes are being enticed to worship and believe.

This book is also an act of solidarity with the invisible victims in that sacrifice: grandmothers, mothers, aunts, wives, lovers, sisters, and daughters confronting trauma, grief, anger, privation, and the quest for justice.

Most of all, this book is an act of hope in the capacity of Filipinos for such solidarity. For while both the drug-related killings and the community quarantine have laid bare the rancorous class divisions in our society, they have also uncovered a rich lode of compassion and generosity toward the poor, even from among the upper and middle classes whom the forces of violence and repression have sought to seduce.

The evolution of the project

This project was originally conceived as an ambitious effort to contribute to the accumulation of evidence for cases filed with international human rights bodies against the Duterte administration's violent anti-drug campaign, with a focus on the experiences of women. For the first

two proponents of the project, PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino (PILIPINA) and the John J. Carroll Institute for Church and Social Issues (JJCICSI), such a focus was a natural choice.

PILIPINA is a feminist organization with a particular interest in how national policies and problems affect women, and how women themselves view these policies and problems. At the outset, much of the public discussion about the killings associated with the anti-drug campaign was about the dead—their numbers, the circumstances of their deaths, the rights violated in the process—and most of the dead were men. PILIPINA wanted to visibilize the unseen women affected by the campaign, especially the family members left behind.

JJCICSI, an organization that uses Catholic social principles as a lens with which to view government policy and civil society advocacy, works closely with the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has been one of the civil society institutions most outspoken (though not outspoken enough) in its opposition to the killings associated with the anti-drug campaign, and also most organized (though not organized enough) in its efforts to help the bereaved families. When the Church offered help, those who came forward were usually women. The documentation of those women's stories was important not just to establish the facts of the killings and eventually to obtain justice, but also to uncover how the Church might help the families move forward in other ways.

At the end of August 2017, fourteen months and thousands of drug-related deaths after Rodrigo Roa Duterte was sworn in as president of the Philippines, members of PILIPINA began discussions with JJCICSI and our common friend, Dr. Mary Racelis of the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC), the research arm of the Ateneo de Manila University's School of Social Sciences, to draw up the parameters of the project.

Those parameters changed in the six months prior to our first interview. Originally we had opted to document stories that had not been documented before, so as not to retraumatize women who had already been interviewed, but also to increase the number of cases that could be reported to international human rights bodies. There were, after all, more than enough cases to go around, and, sadly, not enough organizations to document them. But we soon realized that the

documentation of fresh cases on our own would require a comprehensive infrastructure of support for the respondents that neither PILIPINA nor JJCICSI was equipped to provide, encompassing psychoemotional first aid, immediate and long-term material support for the families, and sanctuary for those who might find themselves pursued by authorities angered by their decision to tell their stories.

Eventually we decided to work with women already being accompanied and supported by legal, human rights, faith-based, or cause-oriented organizations that were better able to provide for their many and complicated needs. We also scaled down our objective. Instead of contributing to the prosecution of human rights violations at the level of international human rights bodies, we would try to tell the stories of the women left behind by this calamity of killing—by letting them speak about their sadness and anger, their efforts to heal themselves and their families and each other, the ways they were trying to reconstruct their lives, and what they needed for that reconstruction to happen.

From the time that we adopted this more modest objective, our intended audience shifted primarily from international human rights bodies to the upper and middle classes of Philippine society. Filipinos in these strata, largely unharmed by the drug-related killings, have in many public opinion polls shown the strongest and most unwavering support for the anti-drug campaign, averting their eyes from its lethal violence against the poor or, in too many cases, even expressing approval of the violence.[3] Unless this particular audience came to empathize with the grief behind the numbing statistics, even the strongest indictments by international human rights bodies could have only a limited effect on the campaign's brutal policies. The project then also became a bid to restore what appeared to be the deadened conscience of the Filipino polity—a

3 It should be noted that the middle and upper classes are not the only ones who support or are ambivalent toward the violence of the anti-drug campaign. There has also been significant support for the campaign, and ambivalence toward the killings, in urban poor communities. Mary Racelis, commenting on an initial draft of this preface, pointed out that drug suspects are sometimes viewed by urban poor populations as the sources of gender-related violence in their communities, such as domestic and sexual violence. For more on the nuanced position of urban poor communities vis-à-vis the anti-drug campaign, see Mary Racelis, "Tok Tok Katok: Fear and Violence as the New Normal for the Urban Poor," in Gideon Lasco (ed.), Drugs and Philippine Society, ed. Gideon Lasco, manuscript submitted for publication.

goal perhaps even more difficult to achieve than securing international sanctions against the Duterte administration.

Initially, with funding from Harnessing Self-Reliant Initiatives and Knowledge (HASIK), we interviewed nine women belonging to eight bereaved families, and wrote eight stories from their testimonies, disguising their names and locations to protect their identities. Several of them also told their stories, with their faces obscured, using aliases for themselves and their family members, in a video produced gratis for us by the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), with funding from HASIK for the women's participation (in the form of stipends, meals, and transportation reimbursements).

The video and a synopsis of the cases have been presented at several fora, among them a symposium for selected partners of PILIPINA and JJCICSI in June 2018, funded by the International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov); an assembly organized by the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life (ECFL) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for their Luzon members in July 2018; a panel on Misogyny and Authoritarianism organized by INCITEGov at the 10th National Conference of the Women and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP) in August 2018; several meetings of PILIPINA members in the Visayas and Mindanao in the latter half of 2018; and a meeting of urban poor women bereaved by the drug-related killings in a parish in Metro Manila in late 2018. Except for the last presentation, our audiences were largely middle class, consisting of students, staff members of nongovernment organizations, government workers, academics, other professionals, Catholic church volunteers, members of faith-based organizations, and members of women's groups.

In the second half of 2018, when JJCICSI withdrew from the project due to staffing constraints, INCITEGov offered to continue to work with PILIPINA. It sourced funding for additional stories as well as for a print publication and provided oversight and technical support for the latter. With the funding that came in by 2019, we were able to write ten additional stories, mostly from outside of Metro Manila. This publication compiles those ten stories with the original eight.

Interviews and feedback

The eighteen stories in this book were constructed from data gathered through face-to-face interviews with the respondents. Interviewers were instructed to inform the respondents, prior to the interview, about the possible ways that the information they gave could be used, and to request their consent both for the interview and for each specific possible use of the information they might give. Respondents were assured that for articles to be published from their stories, their real names and the real names of the communities they lived in would not be used.[4] Respondents were also given the choice to pause or end the interview if made uncomfortable by the questions.

The interview guide listed questions designed to gain information about the respondent (age, economic background, civil status, education, employment); what she knew of the killing; what effects the death had on her and her family; what new roles if any she had to assume; what changes needed to be made in her life; what new challenges she faced; whether she intended to obtain justice for the killing and if not, why not; and what support she would need. However, interviewers were advised to let the respondent tell her story uninterrupted, in the way she chose, and to use the interview guide only during lulls in the conversation, or if there were gaps in the information provided spontaneously by the respondent.

After each interview, the respondent was given a stipend to compensate for foregone income, as well as to reimburse transportation and other expenses. Subsequent meetings and interviews to feed the stories back to the women and to gain feedback from them in turn were compensated in the same way.

The feedback process took place in two ways. First, a couple of days prior to the initial presentation of the video and the synopsis to the public in June 2018, eight of the ten respondents from the first batch of interviews were assembled and shown the video and a slideshow of the synopsis in Filipino, after which they were given the opportunity to make corrections or clarifications. Maria, who had fled to her home province

4 The names of people and places mentioned in the stories in this book have been altered for the protection of those interviewed.

for fear of her son's killer, could no longer be reached. Rica had another activity, so only her mother Linda attended the feedback meeting.

The second method was through one-on-one feedback sessions in August 2019, about a year and three months after the initial interviews with the first batch of respondents, and several months after the initial interviews with the second batch. In these sessions each of the respondents heard, in Filipino, the story written from her interview, and was given the opportunity to make corrections or clarifications as well as updates on her situation. However, Maria, Linda, Rica, Jane, Coby, and Joan could not be reached for one-on-one feedback sessions.

Hence four of the eighteen stories have not been informed by feedback from the respondents—those of Maria, Jane, Coby, and Joan—while one story, that of Linda and Rica, received feedback from Linda only through the June 2018 meeting with the first batch of respondents. Nonetheless, because we felt it was important for the voices of these women to be heard as well, we have decided to include their stories in the collection.

Conclusion: An infection more deadly than COVID-19

We cannot extend what we learn from these eighteen cases to generalize about the overall impact of the anti-drug operations on women. But these stories help us to flag certain themes in the lives of the women left behind by the drug-related killings—themes which will be discussed in the concluding chapter. We hope that the themes emerging from these stories can help to inform future research on the gender-specific impact of the killings, as well as efforts by concerned organizations to extend both immediate and long term help to women caught up in this catastrophe.

But more than anything else, we hope that those who read these stories will come to know each respondent as we have: as an individual woman grappling with grief and trauma, striving to piece her shattered life back together, and struggling to confront the injustice perpetrated upon the person she loved, upon herself and her family, and ultimately, upon her country.

That injustice appears to have been obscured in the public eye, for now, by the COVID-19 pandemic. But the injustice remains unredressed. And even while we are called to unite against the new unseen "common enemy" that has replaced illegal drug users and traders in the rhetoric that the administration uses to justify its abuses of authority, the injustice continues to happen to others. Between March 15 and May 5, 2020, even as families previously devastated by the drug-related killings wrestled with yet another major challenge to their existence in the combined effects of COVID-19 and the community quarantine, fifty-three more people were killed across the country in a combination of official police operations and apparent vigilante executions believed to be related to the unofficial side of the anti-drug campaign.[5]

The use of violence to resolve social ills is a virus far more deadly, and far more destructive of our society, than COVID-19. And we cannot avoid it by quarantining ourselves in our homes. It contaminates and infects everyone in our society: those who order it, those who inflict it, those against whom it is inflicted, those who watch with approval or apathy or horror as it is inflicted, those who turn their gaze from it, those who deny that it exists, even those who protest it. This book is our contribution to the development of the only effective antidotes to that fatal virus of violence: conscience, compassion, and solidarity.

ELEANOR R. DIONISIO
PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino

5 Jamaica Jian G. Gacoscosim and Nixcharl C. Noriega, "No let up in 'Tokhang' even during lockdown," VERA Files, May 18, 2020, https://verafiles.org/articles/no-let-tokhang-even-during-lockdown (accessed May 26, 2020).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Scandalized by the rampant killings associated with the government's anti-drug operations, we, the members of the National Capital Region (NCR) Chapter of PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino (PILIPINA), talked about what we could do amidst the slaughter of the poor. We knew we could not stop it. But there must be something we could do, we thought, to help the families of those killed to seek justice.

This was in 2017, when we witnessed what was then unthinkable: the dead left on the curb, their faces wrapped in packaging tape and bodies bearing makeshift cardboard signs that read, "Pusher *ako*, '*wag tularan*" (I'm a drug pusher, do not be like me); swarms of police operatives descending upon urban poor communities, breaking down fragile doors to find the men and boys on their kill lists; and many more horrors.

The communications to the International Criminal Court (ICC) requesting an investigation of the drug-related killings as crimes against humanity were then in the news. As a feminist organization, PILIPINA could bring to the ICC the testimonies of the family members of those summarily killed in order that their voices, particularly those of the women, would be duly heard and their pursuit of justice served. We decided that we would document their testimonies for submission as a "supplementary communication" to the ICC and preserve these for when the conditions were right for the filing of local complaints.

But as described by Eleanor "Ellen" Dionisio, our editor, in her "Notes on the Project," our initiative evolved into what it is now: a collection of narratives of women and girls who have lost their loved ones in the midst of the government's violent anti-drug campaign.

It is but fitting for me to acknowledge first of all the nineteen interviewees who openly shared their stories: how their loved ones were killed; how

the abrupt and violent deaths have impacted the family and gender roles; and what they thought the future might hold. In the retelling, each respondent had to relive the grief and anguish she felt when the ghastly murders happened. We hope that through these conversations, as well as in their interaction with their respective support groups, they are healing and able to move forward.

From where I stand, Ellen Dionisio deserves the next mention. She is the chief mover and doer of this endeavor, not only because she has the skills and discipline of a lead researcher but also because she has the motivation and commitment to complete the book project. That she possesses the capacity for incisive feminist analysis, languaging, and elegant prose makes Ellen irreplaceable.

Elizabeth "Beth" Yang, the indefatigable national coordinator of PILIPINA, deserves equal billing for shepherding this effort from start to finish. We teasingly refer to Beth as our ambulance chaser (or morgue prowler). It was she who found most of the cases to document and the women to interview. That is because Beth has a wide circle of people in civil society and faith-based organizations across the country, all human rights advocates and defenders. They will give her the information and referral she seeks, anytime.

The other PILIPINA NCR women and their key contributions to moving the project along are as follows:

- Teresita "Ging" Quintos-Deles, who first broached the project as an urgent one. As board chairperson of the International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), PILIPINA's institutional partner in the project's second phase, she expanded the concept of the project to feed into community education, targeting not only urban poor communities but also gated subdivisions so that the middle class would realize the cost of their heightened sense of security.

- Maria Cleofe Gettie Sandoval, whose legal expertise was essential to our understanding of the Rome Statute which grounds the ICC. As member of the board of trustees of Harnessing Self-reliant Initiatives and Knowledge (HASIK), Gettie facilitated our access to a small grant from HASIK that allowed us to get the project off

the ground in the first phase of this endeavor. As vice-chairperson of INCITEGov, she constantly reminded us of the project's links to our valued ideals of the rule of law and eradication of impunity.

- Jurgette Honculada, whose wise counsel kept us focused on the *raison d'être* of the project, which was in support of the rights of the victims and the healing of traumatized women and children.

- Veronica Villavicencio, who, owing to her mastery of the craft of project design and document drafting, ably put on paper our myriad ideas so that the project might be seen as realistic and viable by prospective partners and donors.

- Teresita "Tessam" Samson Castillo, whose tireless work in providing material assistance and psychological healing to families bereaved by the killings puts all of our own efforts to shame.

PILIPINA has three other special persons to thank:

- Mary Racelis is a professor of sociology at the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines, with a long list of exemplary studies in urban poverty, community organizing, and gender rights to her name. Joining us in the marathon brainstorming and planning meetings, often held at the second-floor conference room of the John J. Carroll Institute of Church and Social Issues (JJCICSI), she was invaluable in conceptualizing the theoretical framework of this research project and giving it direction. She also provides the introduction for this publication.

- His Eminence Most Rev. Luis Antonio Cardinal G. Tagle is currently the prefect for the Roman Catholic Church's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. In August 2017, when he was still the archbishop of Manila, one of the top three dioceses in terms of the number of drug suspects killed, Cardinal Tagle appealed to church people to go beyond the heart-numbing statistics and tell "human stories" about the victims of the drug-related killings and their families. This motivated JJCICSI, in which Ellen was then associate director, to join the project.

- His Excellency Most Rev. Broderick S. Pabillo, DD is currently the apostolic administrator of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila. When the deaths began to mount, Bp. Pabillo, then auxiliary bishop of Manila, made a call to document the cases as well as to identify the needs of the families. This was also one of the reasons that JJCICSI and PILIPINA undertook the project. He very kindly provided the venue for the initial feedback session with the first batch of respondents. We commend him for publicly denouncing the killings, consistently and fearlessly.

Two organizations were PILIPINA's main partners in bringing this book to birth.

- JJCICSI was the project's first home, providing an institutional base for the documentation of our first eight cases through its Church and Society Program and its Family Life Program. We thank its executive director, Gemma Rita R. Marin, for agreeing to house the project in its initial phase. JJCICSI's lead research associate for Family Life, Melanie "Manay" Ramos-Llana, having then just finished coordinating a network-led study on children's rights, fittingly wore the shoes of project coordinator. Manay showed her mettle coordinating a group of boisterous feminists quite unlike her gentler children's rights colleagues. JJCICSI's administrative assistant, Marien Torres, and its finance officer, Veronica "Bing" Bondoc, extended valuable logistical help.

- The second phase saw INCITEGov as PILIPINA's institutional partner. INCITEGov helped us with fundraising and project administration, without which this documentation and education project may not have seen the light of day. INCITEGov Executive Director Marilou "Marj" Ibañez kept us on track with our work plan and budget. With the backstopping of Shebana "Bans" Alqaseer, we managed to complete the writing of the book. January Aguirre and Aily De Joya Carreon provided us with essential finance and administrative support, as did Hazel Suba of PILIPINA.

Other organizations that helped us along were:

- HASIK, which funded the data collection and writing of the first eight stories.

- The Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), which produced the first video of some of the women recounting how their loved ones were killed. Without a production budget at the time, we received CFA's services and facilities for free. The output, a heart-rending piece, was shown to the respondents during the validation workshop, and on more than a dozen other occasions at meetings and fora at which the initial research findings were shared.

- Misereor-Ihr Hilfswerk, the funding agency of the German bishops' conference, which has funded PILIPINA for many years. PILIPINA turned to Misereor to allow us to use a portion of our grant to cover food and transportation costs for the initial feedback workshop with our respondents, as well as board and lodging of out-of-town participants for the first public forum at which a synthesis of the first eight cases was presented. We thank Misereor for its unfailing support to the strengthening of PILIPINA.

- Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation, a program of the Society of the Divine Word and a constant partner in this project, in ways too numerous to mention.

There were other groups providing psychosocial and material support for families left behind by the killings, which would prefer not to be mentioned by name. We thank them not only for access to the families they accompany, but also for their sustained support of these families.

We would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to our copy editor, Margarita "Marge" Lopa Perez, who painstakingly put together and edited the manuscript even in the midst of family emergencies; to our layout artist, Gerald M. Nicolas, who applied his irreproachable aesthetic sense to the final look of the book's text; and to Regine Paola Velilla and Pia Xandra Rebibis for the cover art and illustrations.

I put to last the researcher-writers, many of whom are young women and men, not because they had the least contribution. On the contrary, I put them last because we hope that you will share their expanded awareness and empathy as you read their pieces. Interviewing the women respondents, first to collect their stories and subsequently to validate them, the researcher-writers felt they were vicariously experiencing the anguish and pain of the women and girls. Their interactions made real

and concrete how the killings impact the lives of families, most of them poor. It became clear to the writers how not just the families' precarious livelihood, but also the loss of community support and the constant fear for their lives, put them and their children in a desperate situation.

Read the stories to find out the ways that these despicable state-sanctioned killings have further impoverished and marginalized the poor. Yet you will also be inspired by how some of the women discovered their agency. There is hope. Justice must not be far behind.

ANNIE A. SERRANO
National Chairperson
from August 2017 to February 2020
PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino

LIST OF ACRONYMS

4Ps	*Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program
AMRSWP	Association of Major Religious Superiors of Women in the Philippines
BADAC	Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council
BEC	Basic Ecclesial Community
CBCP-ECFL	Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines - Episcopal Commission on Family and Life
CCTV	closed circuit television
CFA	Communication Foundation for Asia
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
DOJ	Department of Justice
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
HASIK	Harnessing Self-reliant Initiatives and Knowledge
ICC	International Criminal Court
INCITEGov	International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance
IPC	Institute of Philippine Culture
JJCICSI	John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation
NCR	National Capital Region
NGO	nongovernment organization
OFW	overseas Filipino worker
PDEA	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency
PILIPINA	PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino

SOCO	Scene of the Crime Operatives
SPO3	Senior Police Officer 3
SSS	Social Security System
TFD	Task Force Detainees
UN	United Nations
WSAP	Women and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines

INTRODUCTION
Women as human rights victims and claimants

MARY RACELIS

Please don't shoot Mama!" cried nine-year-old Niña. The men with "police" written on their uniforms had been looking for Nilo, Candy's husband—believed, like her, to be a drug pusher and user. Barging in and not finding him in the house, they found Candy nursing her baby. Wresting the infant from her mother's breast, they shot Candy in the mouth.

This horrifying incident, well publicized by the media, fell into the general category of drug-related killings at the hands of the police, of which the vast majority of victims have been male. Most of the women victimized by the drug-related killings, survivors of murdered family members, have found themselves relegated to "collateral damage," largely ignored by government and deprived of its services. Thousands of bereaved wives, partners, mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, and female cousins would have remained in the margins of this tragedy—except that some of them have started to give their testimonies.

In this book, nineteen courageous female survivors tell eighteen stories of grief, trauma, suffering, recovery, and hope of a new beginning. As readers follow the trajectory from horror to hope, they come to admire the capacity of women to overcome trauma while struggling to find a new life. The needs and aspirations of their families keep them going, with the help of caring outsiders.

Women exerting agency

While relatively few women compared to men have been deliberately targeted by the drug-related killings, the women survivors have suffered excruciating experiences. Some have fled the city to live with relatives in the home province, taking their children with them. Most, however, stay to survive somehow.

Women continue to nurture traumatized children, giving particular attention to those who have actually witnessed the killing of a father or brother: children screaming from recurring nightmares, or running to their mother upon hearing loud noises like gunshots; young boys describing their determination to become police officers when they grow up so that they can exact revenge by killing the perpetrators. While the routine of school might offer some relief to these children, for many the classroom can be the locus of bullying taunts: "Your father was an addict!" When the hostile situation becomes too much to bear, they drop out, probably never to return. [1]

There are longer term economic consequences of losing a breadwinner. Many women ponder how to pay the exorbitant charges of the police-preferred *funeraria* or funeral home. The *lamay* or wake, traditionally an occasion for those paying their respects to contribute to the family's burial expenses, has become a site of fear. With policemen hanging around suspiciously nearby, prospective mourners stay away, leaving a shortfall. Sometimes the barangay captain or a city official helps defray the costs.

Substantial numbers of still unaccosted male drug suspects have fled their communities, effectively abandoning their families in the interests of their own or their families' safety from further police raids. Although many of the women left behind by the drug-related killings have long known poverty, a husband or partner in the house, earning even small amounts from full- or part-time employment, blunted poverty's sharper edge. His earnings, along with the contributions of other household

1 Luz Martinez et al., "Surviving the Present, Imagining the Future: Narratives of Children Left Behind by the Philippines' 'War on Drugs'," policy brief, Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA) (2018), http://shapesea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Pacita-Policy-Brief.pdf (accessed September 18, 2020).

members, allowed families to move slowly and incrementally up the socioeconomic ladder. The sudden death, then, of a husband or father or son or brother ends that dream—unless the woman can find ways of moving forward financially and emotionally.

Always, there is that underlying pressure to assess their situation and figure out ways of dealing with it ("*gumawa ng paraan*"). Women survivors have worked out a variety of adaptive strategies, like farming out the older children to grandparents, relatives, *comadres* (ritual kin through baptism or marriage), and kind friends and neighbors. Although considered temporary arrangements, some become permanent – to the dismay and often resentment of the transferred children. Many feel rejected and deeply miss their siblings and mother. Meanwhile, the women borrow money left and right, often from "5/6" lenders, whose high interest rates plunge them deeper and deeper in debt. Then there is the age-old fallback for women in distress—prostitution—and its contemporary virtual counterpart, cybersex, possibly including their children.

The government itself takes no responsibility for the effects of its anti-drug operations on women and families. Instead, extended kin, kind neighbors and friends, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and faith-based groups have helped the women deal with their plight by being there to comfort them and by providing food and financial assistance, at least temporarily. Faith-based groups and NGOs have offered them workshop programs, often run by professional counselors, aimed at restoring their self-confidence and capacity to act.

Initially fearful, brave women like the nineteen in this book have begun giving testimonies on the killings in settings protected by their sponsors. Their cases might well become the basis for human rights challenges against the perpetrators when the political situation makes that possible. Survivors in other communities have participated in mass mobilizations through community street dramas.[2] A popular one, performed on several recent Christmases, dramatizes the urban poor search for decent, affordable housing through the *panunuluyan*, a

2 Urban Poor Associates, *Annual Report 2017* (Quezon City: Urban Poor Associates, 2017).

traditional Christmas procession that brings out parallels between their situation and Joseph's and Mary's search for lodging in Bethlehem.

Droves of women from wide-ranging communities have joined Holy Week *kalbaryo* processions from Quiapo to Mendiola Bridge, with women carrying and dragging crosses alongside men. Each cross posts a community lament. In 2018 one specified, "Impunity against Women," while another declared "EJK's[3] and Violence as the New Normal." Prominently posted at the top of the largest cross, featuring a bound man representing the crucified Christ, with his mother Mary below, was not the usual derisive "INRI – Jesus, King of the Jews," but "*nanlaban*", or "he fought back"—the common excuse given by the police for deaths of suspects in anti-drug operations. Women leaders from several informal settlements have mobilized their communities to demonstrate publicly their condemnation of the drug-related killings.[4]

Human rights and the drug-related killings

While in this book the encounters of women victimized by unlawful and violent government actions are contextualized through their own suffering and subsequent attempts to create new ways of living, these experiences and their consequences should also be seen within the broader framework of human rights.

When people think of human rights, they tend to focus on only one sector of the Universal Declaration, namely, civil and political rights. Yet there is another set of rights that likewise applies to our nineteen survivors, and to the thousands of others who lost their partners and family members in the drug-related killings. These are the economic, social, and cultural rights, to which have recently been added environmental and collective rights.[5]

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3 "EJK", an abbreviation for "extrajudicial killing", is a term loosely used on the street to refer to the drug-related killings, although not all of them are extrajudicial killings in the technical definition of the term, which is limited to executions by state forces.

4 Mary Racelis, "The urban poor 'kalbaryo'," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 14, 2018, https://opinion.inquirer.net/112436/urban-poor-kalbaryo (accessed September 18, 2020).

5 Flavia Piovesan, "Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights," *International Journal of Human Rights* 1 (2004), https://sur.conectas.org/en/social-economic-cultural-rights-civil-political-rights/ (accessed September 18, 2020).

Civil and political rights prevent government, social organizations, and private individuals from infringing on individual freedom. Among the civil and political rights of victims and their survivors that have been violated by the drug-related killings are:

- Physical integrity: the right to life and freedom from torture and slavery;
- Liberty and security of the person: freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and the right to habeas corpus;
- Procedural fairness in law: due process, a fair and impartial trial, the presumption of innocence, and recognition as a person before the law;
- Individual liberty: freedom of movement, thought, conscience and religion, speech, association and assembly, family rights, the right to a nationality, and the right to privacy.

Economic, social, cultural, environmental and collective rights include rights to adequate food and housing, education, health, water and sanitation, work, social security, environment, taking part in cultural life, and engaging in social movements. Many of these rights are violated by the drug-related killings when women and their families lose a main or supplementary breadwinner, or are forced to leave their homes and livelihoods out of fear of reprisal or further violence.

Avenues for justice

Because the Philippines is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is obligated to uphold human rights and report its record. Every four and a half years, therefore, the government must participate in the Universal Periodic Review of the country situation before the United Nations Human Rights Council. A Working Group of States acts as peer reviewers. Civil society groups submit their separate assessments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and may listen to the dialogue that transpires between the Working Group of States and the individual State under review. The latter is then asked to state its position on the outcome recommendations, after

which the country's report is adopted.[6] The process is a way of keeping governments accountable.

On June 4, 2020, an updated report released by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in response to a UN Human Rights Council resolution reiterated serious human rights violations in the Philippines, including killings, arbitrary detentions, as well as the vilification of dissent. It asserted that persistent impunity and formidable barriers to accessing justice needed to be urgently addressed.[7]

When these interviews were first planned in September 2017, a key aim was to record women's accounts as witnesses to the killings before the details faded from their memories. That fit with the plan to hold the president and other perpetrators accountable at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity, which include murder, extermination, and forced disappearances as part of "a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack".[8] Although the president formally withdrew the Philippines' membership from the ICC on March 17, 2018, an action that became effective a year later, that action will have no impact on any ongoing matters already under consideration by the Court. The ICC retains its jurisdiction over crimes committed during the time in which the State was party to the Statute.[9] The preliminary probe into possible crimes against humanity in the Duterte anti-drug campaign, launched by ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda in February 2018, continues, even though the president has announced that Bensouda will not be allowed into the country.

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6 Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights Council: No More Business as Usual," Human Rights Watch, ca. 2006, https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/un/un0506/un0506.pdf (accessed September 18, 2020).

7 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner - Human Rights, "Philippines: UN report details widespread human rights violations and persistent umpunity," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner - Human Rights, June 4, 2020, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25924 (accessed September 18, 2020).

8 International Criminal Court (ICC), "Understanding the International Criminal Court," ICC, https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/PIDS/docs/UICCGeneralENG.pdf (accessed September 24, 2020).

9 ICC, "ICC statement on the Philippines' notice of withdrawal: State participation in Rome Statute System essential to international rule of law," press release, ICC, March 20, 2018, https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1371 (accessed September 18, 2020).

The international appeal to charge President Duterte for crimes against humanity at the ICC will be launched only in the event that a fair legal process in the country itself is not possible for investigating the killings and holding the perpetrators accountable. The Duterte administration's statements thus far seem to indicate that this will be the case.

When judgment day comes for this president and his fellow perpetrators, the courageous witnessing presented by these nineteen survivors will play a significant part in bringing him and his associates to justice. To these nineteen and the thousands of others like them, we and the Filipino nation as a whole owe our deepest respect and gratitude.

Mahal naming Maria, Vida, Sunny, Jane, Yolly, Linda, Rica, Stella, Norma, Joan, Natasha, Angie, Coby, Cel, Juliana, Susan, Filomena, Megan, *at* Sarah: *Sa ngalan ng ating bayan*, *salamat*.

Women Grieving

Maria: All promises end up broken

SHEBANA ALQASEER

"Mama, don't leave me here," Albert said.

"I won't leave you," *Nanay* Maria promised, but she was ordered to leave. She swore to Albert's innocence before the police officers. She told them to take him—to just take him, bring him to a precinct, charge him, and jail him, if he had indeed done something wrong.

One of the police officers pointed a gun at her. She recoiled. She looked away. Sooner or later, all promises end up broken.

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Nanay Maria, forty-nine years old, was born in the countryside but had lived in the city for the past thirty years. She knew the pains and the promises of the metropolis. She sold packed vegetables at a market while her husband worked as a construction worker. They had twelve children, six of whom were still minors. They were beneficiaries of the government's *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), the conditional cash transfer program meant to boost the chances of the poorest families. They were able to send at least some of their kids to school. Life was hard, but they got by somehow.

She was thankful that she had her son Albert to help her in the market. He was her assistant, especially helpful with the back-breaking task of carrying the vegetables. Albert even found a way to make some money on his own, on the side, by carrying heavier wares for other vendors.

***

At four in the afternoon,Nanay Maria awoke from her *siesta* and made a mug of coffee. She saw her son Albert and her nephew John Paul sitting in front of their house with two of their friends, all dressed up and clearly on their way out. Nanay Maria inquired where they were headed, as mothers usually do, and Albert told her they were headed to the market to buy new jeans.

She decided to drop by her daughter's house nearby, where her younger children stayed during the day. When she arrived there, however, she sensed that something was wrong, as mothers usually do. She rushed back to their house, her mug of coffee still warm in her hand, to check on Albert. And then she saw a familiar face: that of the Angel of Death.

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Nanay Maria said Albert never used or sold *shabu* (methamphetamine). He was not on the drug watch list of the barangay. He was never threatened nor warned that his name was on the watch list. Her daughter had married into the family of a barangay politician. Nanay Maria had begged them to tell her if anyone in her family was included in the dreaded watch list, so they could have ample warning. None of her kids was on the list. Neither was her husband. Nanay Maria admitted that Albert used solvent—rugby—from time to time, in the company of his friends. But, she asserted, Albert was not on the list.

And yet, exactly a week after he turned eighteen years old —still a boy, and not quite a man—Albert was killed, taken by the Angel of Death.

***

Everyone in the area knew the Angel of Death, Senior Police Officer 3 (SPO3) Darwin Vadim. The man had killed many of their neighbors—drug suspects swept away by the bloody wave of the administration's anti-drug campaign, Oplan Tokhang. This wave was often the topic of hot and vitriolic debate carried out on the internet, behind the safety of computer screens—but for Nanay Maria and her neighbors, the wave was all too real. The wave crashed all over their community and left it awash in blood. She had heard the stories. She knew that seeing Vadim meant one thing, and one thing only: someone was about to die.

Vadim had gained such notoriety that parents invoked his name to scare children who were misbehaving. "Vadim is coming," they would say, a new twist on the old warning: "The police are coming." The two warnings, however, were not that different; Vadim, after all, was a police officer. On that day, however—the day he took her son—he bore none of the trappings of his position. On that day, Vadim wore civilian clothes.

The Angel of Death held her son. His companion, the one they called The Other Vadim, frisked Albert, searching his person for something. "Mama, they took my jeans money," Albert cried upon seeing her. Nanay Maria begged the two police officers to let her son go. She asked them, "What has my son done?"

Nanay Maria was told, "Don't interfere." The police officer addressed Albert: "Out with it. Where did you hide it?"

Albert told them he was hiding nothing. He swore to his innocence. Nanay Maria told them the same. She begged. Just take him to the police station, she said, if he has done something wrong. She knew Vadim was a murderer, and she was afraid. Just jail him, she pleaded. She was told to leave. She refused. She had made a promise to her son.

"I'm not leaving him, sir. Have pity. I'll go with him to the precinct," she said.

Albert professed his innocence one more time and told the police officers he would voluntarily go with them. He wept. He was pushed down. He repeatedly begged his mother not to leave him. She assured him she wouldn't, but Vadim had other plans.

The gun was pointed at Nanay Maria, and she turned away and tried to run. She heard a gunshot and stopped in her tracks. She turned and saw her son, covered in blood, slumping down on the ground. Another gunshot: it was Vadim's turn. She rushed to embrace her son, but she was kicked and was again threatened with a gun.

"I will shoot you," the police officer said. "You're not leaving?"

She ran, chased by the police officer waving a gun all the way out into the street. She reached her daughter's house and told them the news. They

cried. Despite their protests, she went out and circled back, determined to return to her son.

She saw John Paul carrying Albert's body into a pedicab. Nanay Maria ran to it and hopped in. But the two police officers were there, with the lifeless body of her Albert. They said nothing until the pedicab reached a deserted portion of the highway. Then Vadim again pointed a gun at Nanay Maria and told her to leave. She jumped out. She knew that if she fought them, she would share the same fate, the same story, as her son: another suspected drug addict, killed while shooting at police officers. "I thought that if they killed me, whatever they charged my son with, there would be one charge against both of us. My poor son." She knew she had to live to seek justice for her son.

She hailed a *habal-habal* (motorcycle taxi) and followed the pedicab that took her son to the hospital. She saw Vadim approaching uniformed cops, and then leaving on his motorcycle. Nanay Maria mustered the courage to approach the uniformed cop who had taken notes as Vadim spoke, and asked him what Vadim said had happened to her son. "There, read that," he said, handing her the police report.

She was astounded by what she read. According to Vadim's account, the men on patrol had fortuitously spotted Albert sitting by the road. He saw the police officers and promptly ran away. He drew a gun and shot at them, but the police officers were incredibly lucky; they dodged in time and the bullets missed. They fired back and killed Albert, all in self-defense. And as they suspected they would, they retrieved a .38-caliber gun and five sachets of shabu from Albert's body.

Nanay Maria told the cops that this was untrue and that Albert had no gun and no drugs. They were liars, she said. Albert and John Paul did not run away; they were, after all, in front of their own home. The story did not make sense.

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Nanay Maria saw to the funeral arrangements, attended to whatever remained to attend to. Albert died on a Friday, but they retrieved the body only on the following Monday because there was no coffin available. The people at the funeral home told Nanay Maria that Vadim was killing so many people that coffins were in short supply.

She knocked on the doors of City Hall and received some assistance for the funeral costs for Albert. But she found no other real help, no support. Ordinarily, a resident would have been able to approach their barangay captain. Nanay Maria knew she could not do this because he was in favor of the killings in the first place (in a twist of irony, the barangay captain would later be killed under similar circumstances). Neither could she turn to the police; they themselves had killed Albert, and she was afraid of them. She would file cases, make someone answer for the death of her son, if only she could—but how, when she barely made enough money at her stall in the market to provide for their daily needs?

In the meantime, Nanay Maria knew that life must continue. She returned to work at the market a month after her son's death, but her lone helper was gone.

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Asked if she was afraid that Vadim might remember her face and come back for her, Nanay Maria at first said no. Her tone seemed resigned. Then she said, maybe. But maybe he wouldn't even remember her, she added, with all the people he had killed.

But four months after Albert's death, an article detailing Albert's story, with their full names in print, was published. Afraid for their lives, the family packed up and headed to the province. Nanay Maria later returned to the city, leaving the rest of the brood behind, to test the waters and see if it was safe enough to return. Her plan was to return to work at the market and send money home so the family could return to their lives in the city, one by one. But when she returned, she saw that things had changed. Her life was now full of fear. No one was there to help her at the stall. The door of their house, which they customarily left open the whole day, was now resolutely shut.

Unlike most families of victims in the drug war, Nanay Maria's family still, thankfully, had its primary breadwinner. But on the rare occasions that they talked about Albert, she and her husband agreed that life had changed drastically since his death. The killing of her son and the near-fatal threat she faced at the hands of police officers had taken a mental and emotional toll. The fear was omnipresent and there was no support to be had, particularly in seeking justice for Albert.

The family decided that it was best not to return to the metropolis. They opted to stay in the province, where Nanay Maria's husband found work as a farmhand. She would help out in a stall in the market there, whenever the extra help was needed and an opportunity arose.

The family was less fearful in the province, but everything remained fresh in Nanay Maria's mind. The image of Albert being slaughtered before her own eyes never went away. And the door of their small house in the sprawling metropolis, with all its fresh pain and faded promises, would remain forever shut.

Sunny: The price of a son's life

DAWN MARIE PAVILLAR CASTRO

"Marlon supported President Duterte so much because he wanted drugs to disappear. Little did we know that he would also be a victim of the 'War on Drugs'," says Sunny.

Three years after her son was killed, she still bursts into tears whenever she talks about her beloved son. Marlon, twenty-two years old, single, was the fifth of six children. Although he did not finish high school because they were so poor, Marlon was hardworking and easily found jobs because of his skills in painting and carpentry. He gave his mother his ATM card as his contribution to their household expenses and asked only for a meager allowance in return. His contributions covered the maintenance of their house, including utilities such as water and electricity. Marlon was also close to his nephews and nieces, who fondly called him Pakol, an abbreviation for "papa-uncle". He would treat them to ice cream whenever he was tasked to watch over them.

Marlon was five feet and nine inches tall, and known in his community for his basketball skills. He would join tournaments and interbarangay leagues. It was also one of his ways of earning money, because some organizers gave out honoraria for players.

Sometime in 2016, a basketball league organizer invited Marlon and some of his basketball teammates to participate in a tournament. Sunny and her husband Meding mistakenly believed that the tournament would be held in a nearby city. They later found out from a neighbor that the tournament was to be held at a town fiesta in another province. Sunny expected that Marlon would return home after the weeklong

tournament ended. What she did not expect was that Marlon's life would also have ended abruptly before that week's end.

At dawn on the day Marlon was supposed to return home, police from the Regional Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Group raided the cottage where he and his teammates were sleeping. Unbeknownst to any of them, the owner of the cottage had allegedly been tagged by police as a "drug personality".

According to witnesses, Marlon and one of his teammates were sleeping on the second floor when they were awakened by sounds of gunshots. He and his teammate immediately went down and saw the bloodied body of the cottage owner, the reported target of the raid. They were ordered to lie down and accused of being drug runners for the drug personality. Marlon told the police that they were innocent and that they were only basketball players invited to the tournament for the fiesta celebration. A man who was with the raiding team told them that Marlon was the brother of the drug personality. Marlon was shot two times and killed.

Sunny and her husband went to the town to retrieve the body of their son. None of Marlon's belongings was given to his parents.

***

Their whole community was saddened by Marlon's death because he was known as a good kid and their family was never involved with drugs. A lot of private individuals helped in settling the expenses for Marlon's wake and burial.

But Sunny was devastated by what happened to her child. To this day, she cannot accept Marlon's death. She sometimes talks to him as if he were still alive. She and Meding would go to the cemetery or sponsor masses to cope with the loss of their child. Both Sunny and Meding became ill. Sunny became prone to fainting spells and lost a lot of weight. To add to their pain, they saw in the news that the police who had killed Marlon were given PHP50,000 to PHP55,000 each as a reward for the operation. That was the price, they realized, for their child's life.

The death of Marlon also took its toll on their economic situation. She and Meding were unable to manage their small eatery for the first few

months after Marlon's death because of their emotional state. Without Marlon to help out with finances, they have had to rely on usurers, "5/6" in local parlance, to get their eatery back up and running. On top of that, they have to continue to send their youngest child to school while also taking care of two of their grandchildren. Their other children try to pitch in PHP500 per week to cover their other needs.

***

After Marlon was laid to rest, Sunny and her husband went to the provincial office of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to seek justice for their son. The provincial CHR office said that they did not have the money to investigate in another province. To this date, there are no further updates on Marlon's case.

At first Meding and their other sons wanted to avenge Marlon's death. They knew who killed him because it was considered to be a "legitimate police operation" and the police involved were even awarded money. The killers were easily identifiable. But Sunny was against this, clinging as she did to her faith in God. She sought and continues to seek guidance from their local parish priest.

Sunny wants justice for her child, but she and her whole family cannot help but be afraid. She feels depressed every time she realizes that filing a case means going against the government. Sunny and her whole family have opted to maintain their silence because they have been told that any moves they make could just as easily backfire on them. Sunny knows that mayors and other prominent people have been killed and their killers have never been jailed; more so the killers of their child. While there are times when Sunny wonders whether anyone would bother if she or any of her other family members were killed, she is thankful that there are people who still care for them. Despite everything, she remains hopeful that one day, she will achieve justice for Marlon.

Vida: A single mother, all over again

LIZA T. TUMULAK

Vida, a widow with grown children who have families of their own, lives in one of the major cities in the southern part of the Philippines. She could have enjoyed her remaining years in relative peace and comfort there if she continued to be frugal and lived within her means. That is, had tragedy not struck and her life changed radically with President Duterte's announcement of his administration's "War on Drugs".

Vida lived in her family's ancestral home with her older brother Kaloy and his current family. Vida managed the household and Kaloy provided for its upkeep.

Kaloy was imprisoned sometime in 2013 for illegal possession of *shabu* (methamphetamine). The case was dismissed and he was released in the last quarter of 2015. Kaloy was known to be a "chicks boy" or someone who was attractive to women. He had sired seven children from two previous live-in partners. He eventually settled down to marry Zinnia, his current wife, with whom he had one son, Ino. Despite his reputation, Kaloy never forgot his responsibilities to any of his children and regularly sent them money for school and allowances. To sustain his multiple families, he earned his keep as a security guard and sidelined as a basketball referee in their community and neighboring barangays. He also owned a *pautang* (a small lending business) and around fifteen *sikad* (pedicabs), which he rented out to drivers at PHP50 for ten-hour shifts.

When Oplan Tokhang was introduced in their barangay, Kaloy was summoned to enlist in the drug watch list of the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC). He was told that this was standard operating procedure to have him cleared and eligible for livelihood assistance and values formation. He readily complied, believing that he was considered to be reformed and not in any danger whatsoever.

What happened next seemed like a nightmare which continues to haunt Vida until now.

One evening, two weeks after enlisting with the BADAC's drug watch list, while waiting at the usual street corner near their house for his sikad rental collection, Kaloy was gunned down by two unidentified men "riding in tandem" (a euphemism for two assassins on a motorcycle, with the back rider usually firing the gun). He died instantly from six gunshots fired into his body, which lay on the pavement for almost three hours before being taken to a funeral home.

Kaloy's wake was held in the community chapel for nine days. Vida noticed that very few relatives and friends attended the wake, and those who did failed to linger. Nobody stayed for the traditional *lamay* (night-long vigil) over the body. She heard that neighbors and relatives were afraid that the wake would be strafed.

***

Kaloy's untimely death brought financial difficulties and uncertainties for Vida, Zinnia, and his children. At first, Zinnia tried to manage the sikad business, but she soon sold off the sikad to pay for the processing of her documents when she decided to apply for work as a domestic helper abroad.

Since Zinnia left to work abroad, Vida was left to care for Ino and a relative living with them in their home. She resorted to dipping into her pension for their daily household needs, and when this proved insufficient, began work as a live-out *kasambahay* (domestic helper) in a rich neighbor's house.

Vida misses Kaloy, who was good at mediating family and community conflicts, especially among their siblings. She is particularly worried about Kaloy's two teenage daughters from a previous relationship,

Jennifer and Jeannette, who have had to move from one relative's home to another. Jennifer and Jeanette have shared with her the difficulties of living with relatives: there are conflicts with cousins, heavy household chores, not enough money to buy school supplies and materials for school projects and the like. Worse, Jennifer told Vida about an uncle's sexual advances, which prompted her to run away and move to the house of an aunt. Despite these challenges, the girls told Vida that they are committed to finishing their studies and look forward to having a college degree. Vida hopes that some kind souls will support her nieces with scholarships so that they can fulfill their dreams.

Presently, Jennifer lives with a relative, working part-time as a kasambahay, while Jeanette works in another relative's eatery as a server and dishwasher.

***

Vida's family did not bother to pursue the investigation of her brother's death, either with the police or the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). They knew this would entail expenses, time, and effort—none of which they have. Right now, they are more concerned with their daily survival.

"It's useless! We are helpless and, at the same time, afraid. We have no witnesses who can identify the assailants," Vida laments. She further expresses her dismay that many people, mostly poor people, have died in this "drug war"—and no culprits of these killings have ever been arrested or brought to justice.

Jane: A death unexplained

JOSHUA CARLO TENORIO PILE

Early in the second year of the Duterte administration, barangay officials entered a house in a village in Central Luzon, asking for Jane.

Jane, then forty-one years old, had only finished sixth grade. On account of her polio, she was not engaged in formal work, but instead tended to her home. The local officials found her resting there with her seven children. She became worried that her partner Carlos, who was away working in a construction site in another barangay, had been caught stealing. She was mistaken. Carlos, her partner of twenty-three years, aged thirty-nine, was dead.

Jane's children, worried about their mother's high blood pressure, forbade her from attempting to retrieve his body. Her four older children, with ages ranging from early teens to early twenties, went instead. They found their father in a ditch, lying on his stomach, his head resting on his right arm, as if he were only sleeping. He had been shot four times in the face.

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Witnesses later told Jane that two men whom they suspected to be police, wearing bonnets and carrying guns, had been seen in the construction area the night before. They were not there for Carlos. They were looking for a certain Ramon, who was said to be a pusher. They accosted a child to get directions to Ramon's house, then punched him in the stomach when he refused to cooperate. When dogs in the area started barking, the men in bonnets shot them. Many people witnessed these events, according to Jane, but none of them would agree to testify.

Ramon was having a new house built, and Carlos was among the workers he had hired for its construction. Soon after taking dinner and coffee, Carlos fell into a deep sleep that Jane feels was uncharacteristic of him. Carlos, normally a light sleeper, would have been woken by far less than gunshots. She suspects that his food or coffee might have been laced with drugs, perhaps by Ramon. In any case, had he awakened like his fellow construction workers, some of whom even stepped over him in the chaos, Jane believes he would have been able to escape.

Carlos had been a hard worker, taking work wherever he found it. He had driven a tricycle, helped harvest rice, taken on construction jobs. He had only very recently started to use drugs—for about a month at most—as many construction workers do to keep awake. He had not been addicted. He had never sold drugs. He and Jane had already fought over his drug use, especially after he was included in the barangay drug watch list. Jane urged him to surrender, but Carlos had been adamant that he was doing nothing wrong.

Still, Jane felt that the killers should have gone after big-time pushers instead. She felt the injustice even more when she heard that Ramon was later arrested and imprisoned—but alive. At the very least, Jane said, if Carlos had really been guilty, her defenseless partner should have been jailed instead of killed.

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They lived in the barangay where Jane was born; their house sat next to that of her parents. Carlos was from farther north, but Jane's barangay had been home for him for a long time. Despite this, they received no support from the community or from local officials. Jane alone shouldered the costs of Carlos's wake and funeral. She was not interviewed. The police did not approach her, much less provide a police report on her partner's death.

Carlos had been their sole breadwinner, partly due to Jane's disability. But now Jane has had to take on new roles at home. The biggest burden is being the family's breadwinner. She describes this as being both mother and father at the same time. She has found employment as a helper in a nearby hat factory, beginning work at six in the morning and arriving home at ten at night. She often works overtime. All her seven

children, including the family of her first child, live with her. She has to support four of her children through school. A silver lining in all this is that her children have become independent and are learning to stand on their own feet. Unlike before when they all depended on Carlos, each child is now trying to earn a living for himself or herself.

But Carlos's killing has also left lasting scars. One of her sons speaks of taking revenge once he is old enough, although she discourages this and tells him to let go of hate. Her youngest, Carlos's favorite, gets angry whenever her father is mentioned, and is now afraid of men wearing bonnets. Jane fears for their safety, particularly for her eldest boy, who looks like his father. She is afraid that men in bonnets will victimize her boys next, especially since they often get home late.

There have been many victims in their barangay. But many have surrendered, and the killings seem to have stopped, at least for the moment.

Jane has found little help outside her family for financial or other forms of support. She has only recently received counselling. A group from another province, which reached out to them through her parish priest, has started to provide some financial assistance and goods like rice, and has arranged an interview with lawyers. But Jane explains that they still need financial help, particularly support for her children's education and to cover basic living expenses at home.

When asked about her plans for the future, Jane says she hopes to file a case. She would like to sue the two men behind Carlos's killing. But no eyewitnesses want to testify. It is said that the two were police—the same ones who went back to arrest Ramon barely a week later—and this has contributed to the fear about testifying. She would like to hold the killers accountable through the law, but she is unsure what the process would entail, how it can be started, and perhaps more importantly, whether it will even bear fruit. Still, she hopes to find justice for her partner's death no matter how long it takes.

Yolly: You nurture a child to be killed by the police

JURGETTE HONCULADA,
WITH UPDATES BY SHEBANA ALQASEER

Death came calling on Yolly's household soon after President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, newly sworn in, vowed that dead bodies would pile up in his campaign against drugs.

Within weeks of his inauguration, Dolores, Yolly's neighborhood, and other poor neighborhoods in major urban centers had become killing fields. One late afternoon, Yolly, in her sixties and a widow, returned to Dolores from a meeting of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), the government's conditional cash transfer program for poor families. She heard shouts: "They shot another one on Narra Street. He was sleeping."

As she approached home, a neighbor greeted her saying: "Sister, your son was killed in his sleep." Yolly says, "It was as if the sky had fallen on me."

Over ten plainclothes policemen had entered Yolly's home. After the operation, one was overheard telling another: "Bro, we made a mistake. That one doesn't have an earring." He apologized casually to the family, "Sorry *lang*"—and extended mock gratitude to the victim: "*Tenkyu*." Outraged, Yolly's brother rebuked them: "You killed him without bothering to find out whom you are killing!"

The police were there to look for a man named "Vincent" and, because verification was considered an inconvenience, they shot the first Vincent

they came upon. His mother says he was not on any list. The real target, an earringed Vincent, one of four in the area, lived next door. That Vincent has since left home.

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Yolly bore nine children, ages ranging from twenty-three to forty-two, four of them male and single, five female with children, though only one is married. Only one of Yolly's children is a high school graduate. At the time of Vincent's death the household numbered eleven: Yolly, seven of her children, and three grandchildren. When Yolly's house and that of her eldest daughter Tyler burned down, Tyler moved her own household above Yolly's rebuilt residence, adding a fourth floor for her family of eight.

Yolly's husband lost his job as a stevedore in 2003. So she began to work as a live-out domestic helper, earning PHP2,500 monthly, until her employer died in 2013 and she too lost her job. In 2016 she opened a small store selling coffee, instant noodles, and biscuits to patrons of a nearby internet shop from two to six in the morning and from two to ten in the evening, catching up on sleep in between. With this, she makes barely enough to cover her daily expenses—PHP50 for a kilo of rice, PHP50 for kerosene for cooking, PHP30 for a grandchild's school allowance, and PHP200 in payments to a moneylender, in a "5/6" scheme charging 20 percent per day. Rent is PHP2,000 monthly, and electricity PHP1,500 to PHP1,800 monthly.

Augmenting her budget are weekly contributions from three sons: PHP500 from one son and about PHP200 each from two other sons who sporadically carry cargo at the nearby pier (as did Vincent). Occasionally, Tyler contributes money and shares food from her food stall with Yolly's household. Yolly receives money monthly from the 4Ps—PHP500 for her high school grandson's stipend and PHP800 as part of her own stipend. Still and all, at the end of each day, Yolly is without savings.

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Corruption and abuse had become commonplace with the police in Yolly's city years before Vincent's death. Some years back, Yolly's

youngest daughter Dolly, not twenty then, was taken by four plainclothes police and held hostage in place of their real target, a cousin, Eloisa, not twenty either. When Yolly balked at the PHP30,000 demanded by the police for Dolly's release, she was told: "We took your daughter so Eloisa could bail her out."

With PHP17,000 in cash raised by pawning Eloisa's house, Yolly knocked on the door of a barangay councilor at midnight and asked him to escort her back to the police station. She wanted the councilor to serve as witness and offer some security that her daughter would be released once the cash was paid. The police officer who dealt with them opened a drawer, into which Yolly put the money. He then told the councilor: "You see? I'm not asking for money. They are giving us the money voluntarily." Fortunately, the police officer did not at that moment count the cash, which fell far short of the PHP30,000 demanded.

Yolly had hastened to ensure her daughter's release because she knew, based on past experience with such arbitrary arrests, that a new day would find Dolly "impressed" (local slang for "fingerprinted"), facing formal charges decided on by the arresting officer—possibly "5-11", the code assigned to drug charges—and thrown into a congested jail to await trial for an indefinite period of time. This could very well take years. The police had been known to urge detainees to confess and go free in a year, with the arresting officer deliberately missing three consecutive hearings, which would then cause the case to be dismissed.

Yolly says, "You cannot reason with the police. If they say you will be charged, that is that."

This pattern of corruption and abuse of police power was already in place well before 2016. But at least it was less deadly and less bloody than the anti-drug operations that began soon after Duterte's election as president in May 2016.

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Vincent lost his life because the police took a wrong turn. Instead of ascending a staircase leading to the home of Vincent with the earring, they entered the adjoining door to the home of the innocent Vincent and left him with three shots to the chest, bathed in his own blood. Yolly said

victims of mistaken identity were not uncommon in the community. One sloe-eyed resident of the neighborhood was killed because police were after an alleged Taiwanese drug lord.

A neighbor managed to take footage of Vincent's killing but was spotted. Her phone was taken and returned only after the revealing video was deleted. From Yolly's house, the police took items such as cell phones and a cable channel box.

Yolly could not immediately enter her home, which was sealed off by Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO). Yolly told the SOCO: "Don't call [your] funeral provider. We have our own." She knew that funeral providers accredited by and sometimes owned by police charged outrageous sums of PHP50,000 to PHP75,000. She said that other families have left their dead unclaimed, unable to raise the money charged by the police-accredited funeral providers that took charge of the bodies after police operations. Only when her favored funeral provider arrived twenty minutes later could Yolly finally cradle her dead son in her arms.

It took a week to raise the PHP13,000 charged by Yolly's chosen funeral provider, after which Vincent was buried. Friends, neighbors, and barangay officials pitched in to raise the amount. Fearing reprisal or identification, visitors came to the wake during the day, not at night. Yolly said about ten people had already been killed from that small section of Narra Street, so neighbors were understandably wary.

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Yolly was initially enraged: "You nurture a child only to have him be killed by the police." She wanted to file charges. "If I only had money, I would fight." But hiring a lawyer required money she did not have. She was also afraid that the police would go after her other children next if she did that.

She has also been unable to obtain a police report for Vincent's murder. It was not for lack of trying on her part. Pressed to present a report, the police simply cursed at Yolly, then asked, "What do you want to do, have our policemen killed?" She can only scoff and say, "Are we the murderers here?"

Nowadays, she copes by doing three things. The first is to freeze her memories of a living, laughing Vincent. The second is to focus her attention on her remaining eight children and their families. Yolly realizes that it is unfair to focus on the dead while her other children are still living. The third is to take care of herself. She regularly avails of free movies enjoyed by senior citizens, together with friends.

Yolly says there are no threats on her life. However, she remains fearful of the police, who are constantly returning to their area because many of their neighbors are still doing drugs. When there are police around, she immediately closes down her store to avoid any untoward incident. She says, "If you give a wrong answer, they simply take you away, especially if you are male." Even when the police are in civilian clothes, people in the community can tell they are police by their faces, the weapons bulging under their shirts, or their haircuts. But there is one police officer she no longer sees—the one who killed Vincent. "He has gone home to Davao," Yolly says.

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Yolly belongs to the *Samahang Kapitbahay ng Narra*, which started in 2006 and now has 786 members. But she did not mention the *samahan* as a significant source of support after the killing. She did not receive any formal assistance from the barangay, but managed to raise the PHP13,000 required to cover funeral expenses with the help of friends and neighbors.

Being a Roman Catholic, Yolly faithfully attended weekly Saturday sessions sponsored by a church-based refuge for the homeless that has begun a special apostolate for families bereaved by anti-drug operations. She said the sessions, which stretched out over a period of three months and included therapy, social awareness, and livelihood training, were helpful. Participants also received PHP200 per session to cover their transportation costs.

The community organizer who accompanied Yolly to the interview said that many bereaved families in areas being assisted by their nongovernment organization (NGO) wish to file legal charges. The NGO is exploring the process of constituting them into an organization. Their cases have already been documented by Task Force Detainees

(TFD), a desk of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Women in the Philippines (AMRSWP), which was originally established to support political detainees and their families, but which has branched out into support for families bereaved by the anti-drug operations. Another organization specializing in the documentation and processing of trauma from human rights abuse assesses families for possible psychological intervention.

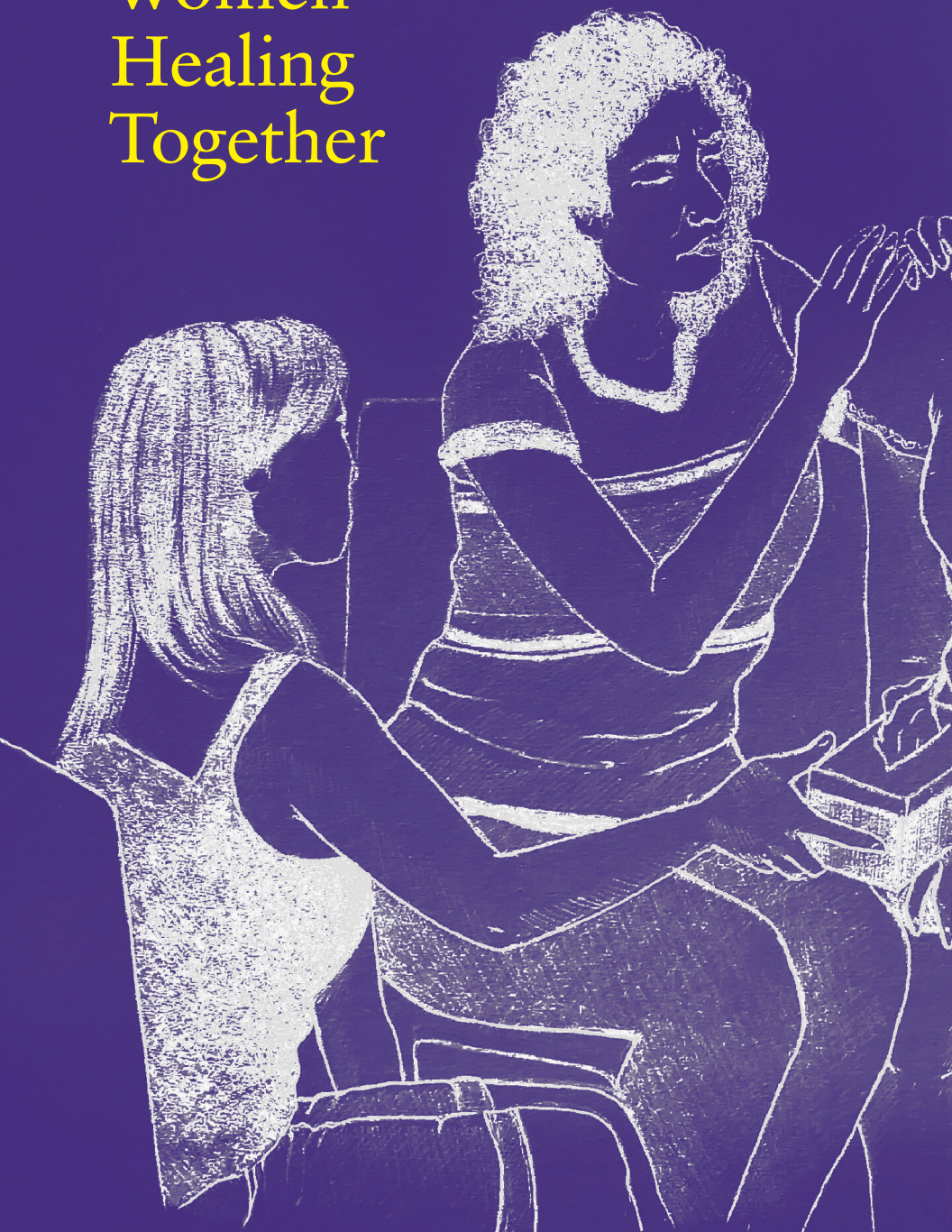
A year since she first shared her story, Yolly no longer goes to meetings with her neighborhood organizations or with other bereaved families, partly because she is afraid. While she wants justice served—eventually—Yolly is much more concerned with providing for her family for now. As a senior citizen, she can sometimes get medicine from hospitals for free, and 4Ps has been helpful. But she is particularly worried about making enough money for the education of the four grandchildren living with her. She says that the financial assistance has dried up. A recent succession of typhoons and monsoon rain meant she had to close her small store for a week.

Apart from the grief over losing a son, Yolly was adversely affected financially by her son's death because that meant one less person contributing to the family coffers, however irregularly. But for sixteen years Yolly has effectively been head of the household, beginning when her husband lost his stevedoring job; and for eight years she has been a widow, with no spouse to lean on for emotional support and no steady contributions from most of her children. Hers is not a stereotypical family with a male head of household bringing the income. In fact, all three of Yolly's surviving sons are unmarried and living with their mother.

Her children are no longer angry. They are fine, Yolly says, because they know Vincent was innocent. However, they have now taken to sleeping elsewhere because they no longer feel safe in the house.

Drug use continues in their community, as do the killings. And with houses as closely packed together as they are wont to be in urban poor communities such as Dolores, Yolly and her family are afraid that the police might take yet another wrong turn.

Women Healing Together



Linda and Rica: Life without a breadwinner and a beshie

DIANA KATHRINA FONTAMILLAS

It seemed like just any other night in the sprawling urban poor community of Duque. Teenagers were sticky from sweat as they crammed into computer shops, renting PCs for games and Facebook. But at close to midnight that night, Rica, thirteen years old, ran home from one of those computer shops to watch the body of her father being thrown into a tricycle by police.

"It was as if Papa were a pig," Rica recalled, muffling tears. Rica was the eldest of three teenage daughters of Joshua, who was killed in the second quarter of the Duterte administration's anti-drug operations.

Joshua's widow Linda admits that her husband had struggled with drug use when he was younger, taking *shabu* (methamphetamine), the poor man's cocaine. He shared an alias with his father, an alleged drug dealer. In the early days of the Duterte administration's Oplan Tokhang, Joshua had surrendered to the local police in exchange for the promise of rehabilitation and employment. Linda believes that unlike many of those who surrendered with him, Joshua had been free from drugs long before he surrendered, and that he had done so only because he was tired of being a tricycle driver and wanted steadier employment—one of the come-ons of Oplan Tokhang. After his surrender, he was often monitored, but there seemed to be no problems apart from the fact that the promised job never materialized.

However, things changed that fateful night. Only Joshua was at home. Linda was washing clothes in an alley. Her three daughters were all out:

Rica at a nearby computer shop with her friends, middle child Risa with relatives, and youngest daughter Rina at a neighbor's house. From the alley, Linda saw eight men on motorbikes, making a beeline for their house. Eight men for one man.

"Your father is at home," Linda, alarmed, told Rina, who had appeared at the commotion. This was when Linda realized what was happening—something she thought only happened in the news. She heard one gunshot. She approached one of the men in civilian uniform, begging on shaking knees, "Sir, it's only my husband at home. He won't fight back."

Then she heard the shouting, "He fought back! He fought back!" and the rain of bullets as the men fired into the house. One of the men started pushing her towards the nearby bakery. "We are police. We are police. This is a police operation! This is a police operation!"

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When it was all over, Linda was afraid to sleep at home, now a house with only women: her mother, herself, and her three daughters. They slept at the house of one of her relatives.

It took them about a week before they were able to sleep in their house again. The first thing Linda did when she reclaimed her home was to clean the blood left on the floor. She found a pack of white powder in the living room. Her relatives said it was *tawas* (alum powder) made to look like shabu.

As she cleaned the house, Linda recalled thinking: "Is this the house of a drug dealer? We don't even have money to buy plywood. The walls are just canvas." As the sole breadwinner, Joshua had worked as a construction worker for private homes and as a tricycle driver when construction work was lean. Linda was a homemaker, taking care of the three girls, all in junior high school.

With her husband dead, Linda struggles to look for a steady source of income. She recalls crying for her husband because she is now left alone to raise their three girls. There are days when she doesn't even know where to begin. She cries not only over the trauma of his death,

but also over the stigma they have had to bear. Linda is worried that her daughters are now branded as the children of a drug user killed by the police.

Rica is more positive. She believes that they have each other to draw strength from. "In a world that seems like a contest because everyone is a judge, you shouldn't think of what people will say about you." Rica believes that the only way left is to move forward, and that they need to let go of this burden while learning lessons along the way.

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And they have found help in learning lessons. Linda admits that had it not been for her husband's death, her family would never have found the Catholic organization and the nongovernment organization (NGO) which have been helping her and other women left behind in the wake of the drug-related killings. Their association of mostly widows and orphans has been instrumental in helping her family to heal their wounds and approach the future from a more positive perspective.

Through acting workshops sponsored by the Catholic organization, her daughters were able to process their feelings towards their father's violent death so that they do not blame themselves or their relatives. Through various seminars conducted by the NGO, Linda learned about human trafficking. Because of this, Linda has become more cautious about income-earning opportunities and offers of help that come her way. "It's more difficult now. I have to be the father, I have to be the mother. It's more difficult to find ways to survive because my children are all girls. They might give us unsuitable work or help. It might be [human] trafficking."

Linda recalls now that her husband was always the more doting parent, while she was the stern one. She sighs and laughs while explaining that her three girls have always been more vocal about their love for their father, calling him their "*beshie*" (slang for "best friend"), while they call her "beast mode." Now, in his absence, Linda knows she needs to step up and raise her three daughters well, even as that means balancing strictness and expressiveness in her own love for them.

Stella: Change is here

ELIZABETH U. YANG

Two years after Mac-Mac's death, Stella still cannot hold back her tears every time she talks about him. "He was a loving son and a caring uncle and brother. He would share a big portion of his pay for household expenses and his sister's tuition and school expenses."

Stella and her husband Julio lived in one of the biggest informal settler communities in the Visayas. Originally from Davao City, they moved to another city in the Visayas to seek a better life. "At that time, Davao was not as developed as it is now. It was also a chaotic time."

The life they had hoped for in the new city did not materialize, but they stayed put anyway. Julio earned his keep as a multicab driver, while Stella complemented his earnings by sewing and collecting bets for small town gambling. They raised four children–Ramon, Paolo, Marco (nicknamed Mac-Mac), and Ali. Of the four, only Ali, their daughter, was able to go to college.

Ramon was sickly, but Paolo and Mac-Mac worked as casual construction workers. Since Paolo already had his own family, only Mac-Mac was able to contribute to the household budget.

Ali and Mac-Mac were close and the young girl appreciated that a large portion of her brother's wages went to her schooling. She promised that when she graduated, she, in turn, would put Mac-Mac through school.

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Stella and her family members supported then presidential candidate Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the 2016 presidential campaign. In fact, they volunteered in his local campaign. They strongly believed that with his track record of establishing peace and order as well as economic progress in Davao City, he could replicate this feat for the rest of the Philippines.

They paid no mind to his cursing and vitriolic speeches against political enemies, particularly drug users and pushers. Like many other Duterte supporters, they would say, "Don't listen to what he says, just look at what he does!"

Right after President Duterte took his oath of office, his flagship policy would change their lives in a way Stella and her family had never imagined it would.

Stella knew that her sons Paolo and Mac-Mac were drug users. To sustain the habit, they also engaged in petty drug peddling. "Peer influence," was Stella's reply when asked how they acquired the habit. A police asset, who freely roamed around their community, was reportedly the supplier of the illegal drugs. Her repeated reprimands fell on deaf ears.

Duterte's Oplan Tokhang soon took effect in their barangay. Killings of drug suspects were already daily fare on national news. Soon, Paolo was arrested. Fearing for her youngest son's life, Stella surrendered Mac-Mac to the police. After only a few days in jail Mac-Mac was released. Stella quickly sent him away to stay with relatives in another province. But Mac-Mac missed his family and returned home after a few short months.

Soon after his return, the family found out that Mac-Mac had already been included in the drug watch list of the barangay.

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One night Mac-Mac went out with some friends. Stella was working on some sewing but she felt a sense of unease as she and her husband stayed up to wait for Mac-Mac to come home.

Soon enough, a neighbor arrived and told her someone who looked like Mac-Mac had been shot in the adjacent barangay and brought to the nearby hospital. Ramon was sent to the hospital to find out if it was indeed his brother who had been shot. After an hour or so, Ramon came home and reported that he saw Mac-Mac being resuscitated, but to no avail. Mac-Mac was already dead.

The family lost no time in going to the hospital to claim Mac-Mac's body, but to their surprise, they were informed that his body had been transferred to a funeral home in another city. They were informed that only funeral homes accredited by the police were allowed to handle dead bodies resulting from gunshot wounds. They were also told that in this instance, the family's consent need not be sought.

What followed was probably the longest night in Stella's life.

First, they had to travel for thirty minutes to the funeral home in the next city to which Mac-Mac's body had been brought. Next, they had to go through an arduous negotiation with the funeral home operator for the release of Mac-Mac's remains. It was fortunate that Sabel, Stella's sister, was with her. Sabel was an active housing rights advocate, and had undergone extensive human rights training. She persistently argued and threatened the funeral home owners that she would expose their modus operandi to the media. Eventually the price was reduced to PHP5,000, but first, the family had to sign a waiver for an autopsy. To demand an autopsy would have required an additional cost of PHP8,000.

Finally, the body was released when Stella was able to raise the necessary amount from contributions of the faith-based group to which Stella's family belonged. The same group, together with the barangay and the neighborhood association, would help the family out for Mac-Mac's wake and burial.

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More than two years have passed since Mac-Mac's death. Yet there is still that gnawing desire within Stella to understand why and how he was killed. To this day, Stella's questions remain unanswered.

The case write-up of the local police identified the suspect as the police asset who had supplied drugs for Paolo and Mac-Mac. Witnesses testified that on the evening before Mac-Mac was killed, he was playing a betting game with some friends when the suspect, riding a motorcycle, arrived to pick him up. The group he was with did not find this unusual; he seemed quite willing to go with the suspect. The next thing they knew, Mac-Mac had been shot in the head and torso in a nearby barangay.

Stella had wanted to request for the retrieval of a closed circuit television (CCTV) camera which was installed in a private home on the street corner where Mac-Mac was killed, to see if it contained any footage that might point to the circumstances of his death. She was told, however, that she would have to get a subpoena. Securing this would require money. With already limited resources, where would she get the money for something like this?

Another factor that dissuaded the family from pursuing the case was that the suspect, who was reputed to have a strong police backer, still roamed freely around their community. Adding to her fear were the sentiments of the men in her family, who wanted to exact "an eye for an eye." In a community where loose firearms abound, Stella thought that this possibility would not be farfetched.

While already dealing with grief, fear, and poverty, Stella and her husband received news from Davao. Both Julio's parents had fallen ill and there was nobody left in the family to take care of them. So Stella and Julio decided to pack what they could bring, sell the rights to their house in a government housing project, and return to Davao with Ramon. Ali was left behind to finish her studies. Without her brother to support her, Ali had to live with a distant relative as a working student.

Life in Davao was hard. Both Julio's parents needed care 24/7, and there was no opportunity to look for a means of livelihood. They depended solely on remittances sent by Julio's sibling from abroad. Priority was given to the medicines of the parents, so it was up to Stella to stretch what remained.

Stella also worried constantly about the children she left behind: Ali struggled as a working student and Paolo was still in prison, his partner and child still living in the community that they had left behind.

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When one of her in-laws passed away and the other went into the care of Julio's sibling in another city, Julio and Stella decided to stay put in Davao, since they had already sold their housing rights in the city where they had lived. Julio found work as a taxi driver.

Through her sister Sabel's prodding, Stella participated in a grief counselling activity with a group of women who were widows and mothers of victims of drug-related killings. Through the sessions, she realized that on top of expressing her grief, she also needed to find ways to overcome it. She bonded and found solidarity with women who were struggling with the same situation.

She continues to worry about Paolo, now released on parole and living with his own family, and Ali, who has found her calling as a missionary. She is still in the dark about Mac-Mac's death and hopes someday to seek justice, although she knows that this is a long shot.

They are still living in poverty, in the relative peace of Davao City. Many residents continue to view this peace as a legacy of Duterte's years as mayor. Stella, on the other hand, now sees the president that she voted for in a completely different light.

Norma and Gloria: Justice for Joel—but not for now

ATTY. MARIA CLEOFE GETTIE C. SANDOVAL

Joel was the fifth of six children, the youngest boy and only child still living with their parents. He was a good brother, says his older sister Norma, and a good uncle to his young nephews and nieces.

Sometime during the last quarter of 2016, Joel's mother Gloria last saw him and his friends as they were drinking in the neighborhood after work. Soon after that, around eleven in the evening, while Joel and his friend Totoy were smoking cigarettes, two unidentified police officers came and arrested Joel for being drunk. Joel resisted arrest, but the police handcuffed him and took him into custody. Totoy pretended to be asleep and was not arrested.

At around eight in the morning of the following day, Norma learned of her brother's arrest. She did not immediately search for Joel because Gloria commented, "Leave Joel to learn his lesson. He's stubborn. I was asking him to come home that night, but he didn't want to come home."

Two days later, Joel still had not come home. Gloria, accompanied by her son-in-law, started searching for Joel. From one in the afternoon to ten in the evening, they searched nearby police precincts but were unsuccessful.

On the third day of searching, Gloria reported to the barangay that Joel was missing. This time, Norma accompanied her mother. A barangay official told them that if they could not find Joel in the police precincts, they should look for him in the funeral parlors.

From around ten in the evening, Norma, together with friends and neighbors, searched through four funeral parlors until they found Joel. He had sustained three gunshot wounds and had hematomas all over his body. His face was bloodied, and his mouth looked like it had been punched hard.

Upon seeing her brother's body, Norma asked: "Why did they have to kill him? They could have just arrested him." She wanted to bring her brother's body home, but to retrieve it from the funeral parlor, she was told she needed to pay PHP65,000. That night, they went home without Joel's body because they could not afford to pay.

Norma later returned to the barangay to seek help in retrieving the body of her brother. A barangay official went with her to the funeral parlor to see if the service fee could be reduced. The funeral parlor agreed to lower the fee to PHP35,000. Eventually Norma was able to pay PHP15,000, collected from *abuloy* (wake donations) from the neighbors. At the time of her first interview, Norma still owed the funeral parlor the balance of PHP20,000.

On the second day of the wake, Norma was told that an unidentified man came by, peeked at the wake, then left immediately. No one knew who this person was.

Also during the wake, a barangay employee told Norma to seek help from the Department of Justice (DOJ), and to get a police report. When she got the report, she saw that it stated that Joel was apprehended carrying drugs, a gun, a cellphone, and money. The report also stated that Joel was shot because he resisted the police. Norma told the police that Joel did not use drugs. He was merely drunk on the night he was apprehended. However, the police said the report could no longer be changed. She also went to the DOJ and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), but was again told that the police report could no longer be amended.

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Norma attended to the tasks related to her brother's disappearance and death: locating his body and then procuring legal documents related to his death. She said their parents could not physically handle the tasks,

and no other sibling could do what needed to be done for her brother's case.

She has also assumed Joel's responsibility for helping to support their parents. Joel had worked in a bakery. Their father is sickly, so Gloria earns a living selling vegetables in the market. Joel used to help Gloria by giving her additional capital to buy vegetables, or by helping her carry the vegetables to the market. Now, it is Norma who helps their mother financially when she can, giving Gloria small amounts of money to be used as capital for the vegetables. Norma herself sells vegetables in the market.

Asked what they needed in order to move on after Joel's death, Norma mentions economic support for her family and her parents, such as capital for their vegetable selling business, and educational support, such as scholarships, for her children, aged thirteen, eleven, and four years old.

Norma has resolved to vindicate her brother and she is grateful that there are people around who have helped them. She said their community did not turn away from them during the wake, although one witness refused to come forward and talk about what he saw the night the police officers arrested her brother. There were other potential witnesses, but none of them could identify the police officers who arrested Joel.

A Catholic organization and a nongovernment organization (NGO) for women have been helping the family come to terms with the death of Joel. Norma wants justice for Joel's death, but is aware that this will not happen under the present administration. Right now, she finds strength in the people whom she knows will be there for her. She has come to learn about her rights as a woman, and developed more awareness about herself. The NGO helped them to set up an organization composed of about fifty women survivors of extrajudicial killings in the anti-drug operations, all living in the same area. The women draw strength from each other, hearing each other's stories and crying together. She says that having a group to cry with and talk to, and knowing that they have similar experiences and needs, lessens the pain caused by Joel's death. She also gains strength from the people who continue to assist her family. In a sense, she said, this is the "good" that came out of her brother's death.

Joan: Burying an estranged husband

LOUIE

Joan, a thirty-four-year-old high school graduate, met her partner Orly when she was but thirteen years old. Orly, the oldest in their circle of friends, teased her constantly. Eventually, they became a couple and she got pregnant. They began to live together, under the same roof as Orly's parents. In the next twelve years, they bore and raised four daughters together.

It was difficult to raise their growing family, since they were both simple barangay employees receiving a very small allowance. To cope, Joan decided to work as a domestic helper in Lebanon where she cared for her employer's twin babies. Luckily, her employer was a person of faith, a source of assurance during the war with Syria. After three years, her contract expired and she returned to the Philippines with little to no savings. She also discovered that Orly was now living with someone else. They separated and she returned to live with her parents, while her children remained with her in-laws.

Orly and his new girlfriend sold and used drugs. Orly also served as an informer for his policeman friend, who was also a drug user. Joan, on the other hand, was the sole member in her family who did not use drugs. The rest of her family sold and used drugs for a living.

One night, coming home from a neighbor's funeral, Joan found police in their home, looking for her brother. Tired and feeling unwell from a pregnancy with her current boyfriend, she wanted to enter the house

and lie down. Joan, already in an aggressive and agitated state, had an exchange of words with one of the policemen. He said that he did not care that she was pregnant and dragged her outside by her shirt. Because they could not find her brother, Joan was arrested in his stead and brought to the city jail, where she stayed for a month and nine days. Their barangay captain, who was close to Joan and Orly, helped bail her out.

A few days after she got out of jail, she was met with news that Orly had been shot. She was told that the man who shot Orly was the main source of crystal meth in their area. The man's house had been raided. Accusing Orly of ratting him out, he had killed him.

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Although they were already separated when Orly died, it was Joan who attended to all arrangements relating to the hospital, the wake, and the funeral. Although they had moved on with their lives with different people, she struggled as if with the loss of a life partner. Their children used to tease them about a potential reconciliation. Orly was very close to their teenage daughters because according to Joan, despite his involvement in illegal drugs, he was a decent and responsible father. Orly never neglected their children and his parents, nor failed to provide for them. While Joan was abroad, he had raised their children on his own while working as a barangay *tanod* (guard).

Meimei, who looks exactly like her father, cried and asked her father to wake up while viewing his lifeless body. Their twenty-year-old daughter Eldy, already with a family of her own but still living with Orly, kept looking at a framed picture of her father.

A series of unfortunate events continued to unfold in Joan's life. The family received some assistance but no one came to the wake to pay their respects. Only playing children filled the wake. After the traditional fortieth day prayers for Orly, Joan's cousin was shot dead. Her whole family and all those affiliated with them were being closely monitored by police. Joan feared for the safety of her children. Soon afterwards, their house burned down, but fortunately no one was harmed. Because most of her relatives were involved in drugs and evidence was destroyed in the fire, rumors spread that Joan, the only person in the family not involved in drugs, had something to do with the fire.

Joan had a difficult time trying to fill the gap Orly left financially. Their children were still in school and she had a baby on the way. Her in-laws, beneficiaries of the government's *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), a government cash subsidy program for the poorest families, continued to help them out, but things were not easy.

Joan now works odd jobs to get by. For instance, she provides assistance in obtaining senior citizens' IDs for a measly PHP200 to PHP300. Sometimes she visits with her former co-workers at the barangay hall and because she used to work there, they spare her some food and send her home with leftovers. She sometimes does laundry to earn money. There is always someone to help them out with their day-to-day expenses. Whenever they are down to their last pot of rice, blessings come their way. She attributes these coincidences to Orly, whom she believes is still helping out even after he is gone.

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Sometime after Orly was buried, their old friend and neighbor Sarah came to visit. Sarah had also lost a nephew who had been involved in drugs. She told Joan that there was a Catholic organization that wanted to help with her children's schooling and other financial needs. Joan became part of this group of families bereaved by the drug-related killings.

The group meets regularly and participates in various activities together. They have gone on a hike to a mountain with a beautiful grotto. They communicate constantly using a group chat. Whenever the group meets, they are given PHP200 for transportation. Joan walks home so she can bring the money home to her children. Most important of all, despite the diversity of their experiences, the group is one that Joan feels she can talk to and always count on for a sympathetic ear.

Joan is grateful to all those who have helped them. She finds strength and hope in her children and other loved ones who continued to believe in her. Together they are slowly rising up to achieve dreams for their family: to lead a simple life, with her children finishing school.

Natasha: Waking from the nightmare

SHEBANA ALQASEER

It was the dream—find work abroad, spend a few years earning more than you ever could in a lifetime back home, and return triumphant, like many others had, to a new and better life. It didn't matter if you had to live on scraps working long hours in backbreaking jobs. What mattered was the money you would send to your family, the money you saved up, the money that would be enough to start a new life with once you got back home.

That was Roger's and Natasha's dream. Roger, thirty-six years old, had just submitted his visa application. The dream was about to begin and offered the promise of a new, more comfortable, hopefully happier life. Soon the dream could officially begin.

But Roger would never leave to find a better fortune abroad. Two men, clad in bonnets, jackets, and gloves, carrying guns, barged into their house one night and ended the dream before it could even begin.

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Natasha grew up in the south, but set down roots in a province in Central Luzon when she married Roger. They had four children, all of whom attended school. Roger, a tricycle driver, recently found an overseas opportunity and was processing his papers to work on a farm abroad.

Natasha said he was not an addict, though she admitted that he had used drugs in the past. Still, this never affected their relationship, and Roger was even known to be a kind man. Some people suspected that he dealt in drugs because of the friends he kept. But Natasha denied this and

could only scoff: why would she have to scrounge and borrow money to pay for their electricity if Roger was a dealer?

Roger was not on the drug watch list either. There were no warnings or threats from barangay officials or the police. In May, the barangay actually started calling meetings purportedly to help suspected drug addicts clear their names and find employment. It turned out, however, that the barangay officials simply used these meetings to draw up a drug watch list.

Roger felt this was nothing for him, in particular, to worry about. He was a changed man; he had in fact already passed the medical exam for his new job abroad.

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It was a time for hope and new beginnings. The day after Roger submitted his visa application, he and Natasha were wrapping new books and fresh notebooks with clear plastic covers for the children, getting ready for the opening of the new school year. At around nine in the evening, Roger told Natasha that he planned to take his tricycle on a few more trips for hire so the children could have money for school the following day. But it was already late, and Natasha forbade him to do so.

Later that night they heard someone break down the bamboo gate in front of the house. Their two younger children were asleep; the older two were with their grandmother. Two strange men with guns entered their house. Natasha rushed to Roger's side and embraced him, but one of the men pulled her away. She pleaded with them that if Roger committed a crime, they should just arrest him. If it was about debt, she promised that they would pay up. She knelt before them and begged the men to lock Roger up instead of killing him, to no avail.

Knowing it was futile to escape, Roger sat down. They shot him in the leg. Roger, knowing what was coming, said, "Not here. My children are in the house." They grabbed his arm, pulled him close, and shot him again, this time in the chest. Roger fell down, but the two men were not satisfied. They kept shooting. The neighbors kept count: five shots. Natasha could do nothing but scream. The men left as quickly as they had come.

The day after the two men came, Roger's visa arrived.

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Natasha would later hear stories that Roger had been seen earlier that day running away, with someone calling after him. According to the story that circulated, in his haste, Roger had even left his tricycle behind and ventured back to town to retrieve it later that evening.

The police report about the killing surprised Natasha. It did not bear Roger's name but identified, instead, their neighbor, a known drug pusher. Roger's murder was reported in a local paper—they even interviewed Natasha. The article simply said that no one knew why Roger had been killed. Even today, Natasha wonders whether it was simply a case of mistaken identity. Did someone point to their house instead of their neighbor's?

That same neighbor was later arrested after someone informed the police about him. Someone had given his name and his address to the police. Natasha feels now that the same thing must have happened to Roger.

Despite many killings in their area, drug use continues unabated. As Natasha sees it, for some people, killing drug users and pushers is just about making money.

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Natasha wanted to file a case, but Roger's sister Abbie dissuaded her. Abbie, who lives far away from Natasha, would rather not cause trouble. In any case, she said, Natasha did not even know who the killers were. How could she even file a case?

Natasha was afraid. Roger had been killed right inside their house, in front of her and her children. Several months prior, another supposed drug addict had been killed out in the streets, but the killer had quickly sped away on a motorcycle and the neighbors were too afraid to help because the man had a gun. Could he be the same one?

In the meantime, there was the wake and funeral to attend to. Those were fearful days. Natasha felt that their family was no longer safe in

their own home. She suspected any motorcycle rider with a helmet on. During the wake, she noticed one man staring at her and felt scared. Other than that, however, there had been no threats to their safety.

Small donations from neighbors and local officials came during the wake. Still, Natasha noticed that many people had come to Roger's wake—unlike the case of the young man killed months earlier, whose mother had been left to mourn alone. Abbie, who had been paying for a memorial plan in installments, shouldered the cost of the burial.

Natasha eventually moved the family to a different barangay, this time moving in with Roger's parents, who were able to help out with their daily expenses. Her father-in-law, however, died within a year or so after Roger, so Natasha began to take in work wherever she could, sewing bags for a paltry PHP9 apiece.

It was then that Natasha felt the full toll of Roger's death. She had lost her partner in earning a livelihood and in taking care of the children. When Roger was alive, she tended to the house; now, out of necessity, she has had to take on paid work. With all four children still in school, money has been hard to come by. There are times when her children ask for money for school, or even just for food, and Natasha can do little but weep. She knows there is nothing else she can do but work even harder.

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The children have slowly accepted that their father is gone. Natasha spends her days sewing bags and bringing the children to school and back home. She also studies through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) two days out of every week, something she started after Roger's death so she can finish her schooling.

Natasha has different dreams now. She wants her children to finish their education. So she is hoping for some financial assistance to help ease the burden of providing for her children and their education.

She cannot say if she will ever remarry. You never know, she says. But she is more worried about her two children who were at the house when their father was killed. She knows the trauma they went through, despite her attempts to shield them. Her youngest child Ben, who saw Roger being

killed, often plays with a toy gun, saying he would also like to become a policeman and kill people when he grows up. But her second child Elsa, who was not in the house when Roger was killed and was closest to her father, took it harder. It was very painful for Elsa to see her father's body in a picture. Her children are quiet, and they still cannot talk about what happened.

She still feels anger—so much anger. After Roger died, Natasha was cursing the men who did this to her family, but she knew she could not do that forever. Instead, she now leaves it all to God.

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Five months after Roger was killed, Natasha began to attend counseling sessions in the provincial capital. She took Elsa along, knowing the trauma that the children went through.

Natasha has also found support within the Catholic Church. Every Saturday she joins a parish-based program for families bereaved by the drug-related killings, and is halfway through the eight-week program. There are fifteen members in their group, all of whom are women. The group started in 2018, and none of them knew each other then. Now, Natasha has found friends, bonded by the similar nightmares they went through.

The financial assistance that the program has given has been a big help to Natasha. She receives a small weekly allowance from the program. She also recalls that a lawyer once even came to give her some money and rice.

But aside from the much-needed assistance that the program gives her, Natasha appreciates the safe space in which she can talk to people who have experienced the same nightmare she did. During meetings they tell each other stories. They vent their anger and their fears. They listen closely to each other. They talk about their lives now. They share the nightmares they experienced. In the telling and the listening, Natasha says, they have found a way, somehow, to lighten the burden in each other's hearts.

Angie: Taking refuge in her church

REUBEN JAMES BARRETE AND JOSHUA CARLO TENORIO PILE

Jake was fourth of Angie's five children, the youngest boy among them. He was an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who resided in Saudi Arabia for two years before returning to the Philippines for good. He was a good son and provider for both his parents and his wife, says Angie. Like his brother Toto, who sold fish that he smoked at home, Jake earned money in decent ways, primarily by driving a tricycle. He had no children of his own as yet, but he loved spending his time with his nephew.

One day during the first year of the Duterte administration, at around five in the afternoon, just several minutes after Jake had left their house, Angie received a phone call from a friend. She was told to stay calm and was instructed to go to a nearby crossing in the highway. Angie did not know why this was so urgent—but she knew that it spelled danger.

Angie arrived at the crossing. Toto had arrived before she did. Jake's body was lying in front of his motorcycle, bathed in his own blood. He had two gunshots to the head, two to his thighs. Angie was speechless and began to weep. She did not know what to do and simply embraced Toto.

As she wept bitterly over her son's body at the crowded crossing, she heard onlookers and bystanders utter insults and shaming, disparaging remarks: "He deserves it. He is a sore in this society."

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Both Angie's sons were on the barangay's drug watch list. Angie was unsure of the extent of their activities, but said that while they had probably used drugs in the past, she had thought that they had stopped and that neither of them was selling drugs.

Days after Jake's death, Angie and Toto's wife went to the municipal office to settle matters with the police. They were hoping that the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) would no longer submit their report to their superiors, because if they did, that would mean an even larger fee to pay for Jake's family. At the municipal health office, while they were securing a burial permit, two municipal health officers told them that it was simply a case of mistaken identity; Toto, not Jake, was the real target. Workers in the municipal office knew things like these, Angie said—and they even knew that Jake was not an isolated case; around thirty people were also on the hit list, they said, and more killings would soon follow.

Angie believes Jake's killing was planned. On the day her son was killed, no closed circuit television cameras were functioning in the area. This was despite the fact that the crime happened along a major highway. According to bystanders, moments before Jake's death, a man got on the backseat of Jake's motorcycle. This man called Jake by name, and instructed him to drop off his passengers at a nearby mall. The witnesses also said that the tricycles in the small terminal all cleared out, as if they already knew what would happen.

When Angie asked around to find out whether someone had seen the killer's face, some people said they recognized him, but no one was brave enough to speak out. In truth, even Angie herself now knows who the killer is and that he lives nearby. But she also knows this cannot be proven, since no one will testify anyway. She realized this when the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) reached out to the family. When the CHR arrived, all the witnesses suddenly had excuses, refusing to testify. In any case, the CHR interviewed Angie and the family, examined whether their surroundings at home were safe, and advised her to file a police blotter, which she did several days after with the assistance of the Commission. Angie realizes that the blotter is what keeps them safe for now; if they are harmed this would prove that their statements about the killing were true.

The CHR wanted to exhume Jake's body for further investigation, but she declined the offer. Angie thought that it would be useless, since no witness would even stand up for her son. Even if anyone had actually witnessed the killing, no one would show up out of fear. Despite the tenuous protection provided by the police blotter that she filed,

she remains worried, because sometime after the killing, Toto was approached by a barangay official and told to lie low and stop working in the meantime.

Years since the killing, Angie and Toto have never talked about what happened to Jake. Toto, always the quiet child, has avoided the subject entirely.

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There are days Angie misses Jake, but acceptance is the only way she can stay strong in order to live her life and move forward. She continues working part-time as a sewer, repairing sewing curtains and bed sheets even if the pay is small, just as she did before Jake was killed. But now at seventy years old, she has had to earn a living on her own, without any help from Jake, because she has to provide for her family. Still, Angie has found refuge in teaching catechism and attending her friends' birthday celebrations.

Angie, a member of a parish Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) even before Jake was killed, is grateful for the material and emotional help from her community. The parish priest extended assistance for Jake's burial. Every Sunday, the BEC members assemble for different activities which now include psychosocial programs for people who have undergone the trauma of losing a loved one in the anti-drug operations. Angie receives a little financial help whenever her BEC meets. She has found strength from the support of her co-members. Most importantly perhaps, conversing with other victims' families and knowing that someone else understands what she has been through have also lightened the burdens in her heart.

Coby: Piecing a family back together

LARA

"The killing of my brother traumatized us. We resent the police. He was innocent. They should have just arrested him. Why did they need to kill him?"

The last question is what Coby asks herself every day since the death of her brother Rod. Coby, eighteen years old, is the sixth, the middle child among twelve siblings. She is seeking justice for Rod's death in the midst of the Duterte administration's campaign against illegal drugs. She and her whole family are of the conviction that their brother, along with others killed as a result of this campaign, should not have died.

Her brother Rod was among the first to be killed in their barangay in the administration's campaign against illegal drugs. Less than a year into the campaign, one morning at around one o'clock, Rod was killed in a police operation. Seven bullets were found in his body. The day after, his name was mysteriously included in the barangay's drug watch list when it had not been there before.

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Coby had admired her brother for being responsible and for always finding ways to help the family by shouldering some expenses at home. When he died, Coby had to find work in a factory so that she could take over in helping her family financially. Her daily wage of PHP350 went to their monthly electric and water bill.

It pains Coby that they lost her brother at such a young age. But seeing her mother Naila suffer from the death of her son rubbed salt into the wound. She and her siblings noticed that Naila found it difficult to cope at times,

and they did their best to ease her burden. They tried to help her be strong by being there for her and talking to her during her lowest moments.

At present, Coby lives with two of her brothers at home. Her other siblings have their own families. Naila chose to return to their province months after Rod's death, bringing two of Coby's siblings with her. Coby hopes that relocating will give them a way to forget what happened and make a new beginning. Coby would have wanted to go with them as well, but they did not have enough money for her fare. Coby hopes that soon, she will have enough money finally to join their mother.

Coby has not lost heart largely because of her family. Though she describes them as stubborn at times, she says she loves them. They have been a strong support system in these trying times for Coby. Their mere presence inspires her to do better every step of the way.

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Losing a loved one has been difficult for Coby. But there are angels without wings who have helped her family in their most trying times. Sometime after Rod's death, Naila joined an organization at their parish church which helps the families of victims of the drug-related killings. When Naila left, Coby started attending the organization's meetings and activities.

Being part of the organization has helped Coby in her healing process. It has been a source of unwavering emotional support. By having a group that listens, she can pour out the sentiments of a heavy heart. It has made her feel better. The advice of the people from her parish church has also been helpful.

If there is one good thing that can be derived from adversity, it is strength. Because of what happened, Coby is stronger. Coby is a young woman who loves her family. She works for them because she longs for a bright future. More than ever, she longs for that day when they will be together and complete.

Cel: Two sons down, but stronger and braver

JULY

Nanay Cel is seventy-three years old and, despite her aging physique and the difficult life she has experienced, still greets everyone with a lively and vibrant smile. She lives with her grandchildren, her sons, and her husband *Tatay* Jac. Two of her five sons have died in killings associated with President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's anti-drug campaign. Never did she expect that any of her children would pass away before her.

The first to die was Allan. Separated from his first wife Chin-Chin, he was living with a new partner, Edith. His three children lived with Chin-Chin. Every Saturday, Allan would come home from work and give part of his salary to Nanay Cel and his children by Chin-Chin. His house was but a few blocks away from his mother's house.

Allan was murdered only weeks after Duterte, then newly elected as president, promised to rid the nation of drug users and pushers. Allan was among the victims of an upsurge of killings that occurred between Duterte's election and his inauguration as president.

According to Edith, Allan had come home from work late that evening and was cleaning an electric fan outside their house. Suddenly a motorcycle stopped and opened fire at him, leaving his body riddled with bullets. He was still gasping when Edith ran to help him, but it was too late to save him. The gunmen were wearing helmets, so Edith did not recognize them. However, Allan uttered a name just before he gave his last breath. Days before he was shot, Allan had mentioned that someone was following him.

Over a year later, Nanay Cel's younger son Ronald would be the next victim of a gruesome murder. Ronald had disappeared for a week, during which Nanay Cel and her family tried desperately to find him. Even though they were struggling to get by from day to day, Nanay Cel borrowed PHP3,000 just to search for her son. They used the money to go around police stations, barangays, and morgues, reaching even the province adjacent to their city.

After Ronald had been missing for nearly a week, they consulted a *manghuhula* (shaman) to help them locate him. The manghuhula pointed them to a nearby morgue, where Ronald's body was indeed found in a pile with two other bodies. Ronald's head and ribs were full of drill holes and there were bullet wounds all over his body. The death certificate released by the morgue stated that the cause of death was pneumonia. The morgue asked for an additional thousand just to release his death certificate.

Nanay Cel asked the employees of the morgue to change the cause of death in Ronald's death certificate, but her request was denied. It clearly did not match the statement of the police officers who had retrieved Ronald's body. According to the police report, he had been found lying on the ground with his hands tied.

Nanay Cel's family was clueless about the motives for the murders. Nanay Cel had no idea if either of her sons was involved in illegal drugs, although some people speculated that Allan and Ronald were in the trade.

Their neighbors, afraid of getting involved, avoided coming to the wakes of her sons. Killings in their area became rampant after Allan's death and fear prevailed among the people living there. Few residents ventured out at night, since the majority of killings were carried out under shade of darkness. At Ronald's wake, an unfamiliar vehicle stopped in front of their house every day, sowing more fear and distrust in something so unusual.

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The killings were difficult and painful to bear for Nanay Cel. Hard and agonizing as it is to lose one child, Nanay Cel has had to bear the loss

of two children. Very few people helped them with burial expenses. The barangay lent them some chairs, tents, and a vehicle. However, the family relied mainly on contributions from their relatives and friends. Nanay Cel recalled that after Ronald's burial they came home without anything, not even a single grain of rice on their plates. To make matters worse, after Allan's death, one of her grandsons by a daughter also died from an accident. Life became truly challenging for Nanay Cel given this string of deaths in the family.

Because of the killings, Nanay Cel fears for the safety and security of her family. She and Tatay Jac are old, and two of her children come home only on Saturdays. The anxiety and stress from the killings have caused her health to decline. She says she looks much older than before.

Tatay Jac, a source of comfort and support for Nanay Cel, has never left her side. He tells her, "Just let it be. We can't bring their lives back." He tries to be strong for her. But even he cannot hide the pain he is enduring. Nanay Cel says, "My husband is always cheerful when I'm around, but sometimes I see him crying in a corner."

With the death of their sons, Tatay Jac at the age of eighty has had to take on a job as a barangay aide to provide for his family. The PHP1,700 per month that this brings, along with the pension they receive every three months, is not sufficient to cover the expenses for the family's daily consumption. At times her grandchildren must go to school without having eaten breakfast. They arrive from school with stomachs grumbling but there is nothing to eat at home. Sometimes her grandchildren look for odd jobs in the marketplace so they can buy some food.

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The only things that urge Nanay Cel to strive and continue with her life are her grandchildren and the organization she is with. Nanay Cel has three grandchildren staying in their house: a fourth grader and two in high school. She enjoys talking and playing with them. Her grandson Donny sometimes cries when he remembers his father Ronald. He tells Nanay Cel that he wants to be a police officer someday to avenge his Ronald's death. Nanay Cel says "Son, being vengeful is bad. It is better if you focus on your studies for now." Nanay Cel's dream is simple. She

wants her family to live a quiet and a peaceful life. She adds, "My dream is for my grandchildren to finish school, so that when we are gone, they will have something to face life with."

After the murders of her children, she was visited by a church volunteer in their area and invited to a gathering for families of victims of the drug-related killings. She then became part of a community organization for such families. They have church gatherings to talk about their experiences. Such gatherings have helped her significantly. She says that sharing her problems with other people has helped ease the pain and anxiety that she feels. The organization has also helped her and other families in terms of financial assistance, psychosocial support, education, and other basic needs and services.

Nanay Cel, a regular churchgoer before the killings, has become even more active in church meetings and activities now that she is part of this organization. She attends meetings even if this means her feet may hurt from walking to church. The priests bring them to out-of-town gatherings to relax and momentarily forget their problems. She no longer cries each time she narrates her story. These days, she feels stronger and braver.

Women Breaking Through


TOP
THE
LLINGS
JUSTIC
FOR
E.J.K
KATARUNGAN
PARA SA MGA
BIKTIMA
NG EJK!

Juliana: Nothing fair in love or war

JULIE ZARENE DE GUZMAN

Juliana, at forty-four years old, struck me as a healthy and agile woman. Carrying her two youngest sons, she had just come from a monthly parish gathering with families of victims of drug-related killings.

It seems like a happy ending for Juliana. After leaving her first family to have a life with Tony, a drug user, she lost him to the anti-drug efforts of the Duterte administration. Her husband Roxy and their three children have taken her back and warmly welcomed even her two sons by Tony. She is now a devoted mother to her children—atonement, she says, for leaving the children of her first family behind and choosing life with Tony. She is now a member of an organization that takes care of priestly vestments and altar cloths at her parish church. Her neighbors acknowledge the change in her. "Even someone like her can turn back to being a daughter of God," they say about her. Juliana seems to be in a better place.

There was a time when Juliana described herself as "caged" in the household she shared with Roxy. She was dissatisfied with her marriage and felt like she had no freedom. Her life was dictated by Roxy's whims.

She hesitatingly described her feelings of discontentment with her marriage. Her description of the circumstances was introduced by a disclaimer that suggests that violence only takes physical form. "He didn't hurt me, but it's just that he was something else with his mouth. I could not stomach it. It was something else. He was crude with his words. 'You're a slut,' he would say. But I was used to it back then." She had to be home by five in the afternoon each day and was forbidden to

talk to other people, especially men. She was strictly prohibited from going out when Roxy was at home. "He loved me. But I got suffocated by his love. I was strangled by it."

With the extra money she earned from doing laundry, Juliana found an escape in sneaking out to do drugs. That was how she met Tony. She loved Tony because she experienced the freedom to be herself with him. Her neighbors mocked her for being ungrateful for her good fortune with her husband. But to her, money and stability were not as important as respect and freedom. Eventually she left her first family for Tony. They settled within the same community and had two sons.

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In 2016, when the government's violent campaign against drugs began, the couple cut their use of drugs from a few times per week to less than once a week, just to be careful. But they didn't really think that the risks were real. They felt relatively safe because they were just users after all. Tony said that if the drug lords were doing fine and dealers who were still very much in business were unharmed, they would be at the bottom of the list to be exterminated for drugs. Their dealer was even a policeman, and still is to this day. In their minds, if he was doing fine, they should be alright given that they used drugs only occasionally.

Tony, forty-seven years old, was shot while walking home with their two children, Lito and Lance, to the dinner Juliana was preparing.

Lito called to his mother, "Papa was shot!" Juliana recalls seeing her kids hovering distraught over their father's body. She heard them cursing the shooter as they cried for help.

Juliana fainted at the sight of Tony's body. She woke up in the company of Tony's mother, on the way to the hospital to which Tony had been taken. When they got there, he was already dead. With his body lay three others, shot at around the same time and, she assumes, by the same hit man. The mother of one victim, a nineteen-year-old boy, later recognized Juliana when they attended the same rehabilitation program. "But I didn't remember anyone else [there]. I was out of my mind. I was trying to wake up Tony. I knew he did not die on the spot but there he was, dead.

"I uncovered him because there was a blanket over him. There were clumps of blood in his mouth, nose, and ears. I removed his clothes. I was hysterical. I scooped the blood out of his mouth and I saw the blood still dripping. I kept wiping the blood away. He was shot in the head and shoulder. Two shots."

No one paid attention to them at the hospital, as there were several cases that night.

At around midnight when Juliana and Tony's mother arrived at their home, the first thing that met Juliana's eyes was their bloodied gate. No one had touched what was left of the scene after the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) had done their work. She saw Tony's cap. "He was fond of wearing caps." She saw his dentures in pieces, teeth scattered on the pavement, slippers covered in blood. Juliana could not believe that their family had been together cleaning the house just that noon and in a snap, Tony was gone.

Juliana's children by Roxy had taken their half-brothers home with them. The neighbors told Juliana that the SOCO, who interviewed them just before the convoy with Tony's body went to the hospital, were followed by employees of the funeral parlor accredited by the police. But Tony's family didn't engage them. Tony's sister contracted the services of another funeral parlor, to which the body was eventually brought.

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Wakes of victims of drug-related killings are often sparsely attended. However, Juliana recalls that a lot of Tony's friends, many of them fellow drug users, went to his wake every night. They empathized with Tony's fate. But Juliana could not sleep during the four nights of the wake because a motorcycle rider was seen lurking around the area. Her children feared that she might be killed next. They were afraid because, of course, she too was a user.

Juliana did not have stable work, so she could not afford the wake and funeral services herself. Tony's siblings, one from the province and another working in Dubai, shouldered most of the expenses. Tony's family cashed in his contributions to the Social Security System (SSS)

and got assistance from the government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). His employer also helped. His neighbors contributed by patronizing the gambling during the wake, a traditional way that poor Filipino families raise money for funerals. Juliana left the management of the finances to Tony's mother.

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Juliana's family wanted her to return to their home province. They wanted her to hide, to lie low. They even got her a plane ticket. They were scared. But she did not budge. She did not want to be overcome by fear. To her mind, because she had not done anything wrong nor hurt anyone, she should not be afraid.

At first, Juliana was so distraught she wished she had been killed along with Tony. She did not want to be left behind. In her mind she would tell him, "You are being unfair. You left me. You told me we'd never leave each other but you did. You should have brought me with you."

But her children reasoned with her. Her second child, who was graduating from college in 2018, said, "Don't be like that Ma. I'm graduating. I'm going up the stage and I don't want to be alone. I want you to be there with me." That's when Juliana felt her senses return.

On the Sunday after the burial, she went to her parish church, which was offering a drug rehabilitation program, and surrendered to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) under the church's recognizance. She went into drug rehabilitation as an outpatient. That's when she started to go back to church.

Juliana was committed to the program. She attended every day of the week. She would prepare Lito for school, then go to the church. At noon, she would excuse herself to fetch Lito from school, then go back to the session accompanied by her kids. She did this consistently for six months, because she was really intent on changing. Even when she got tired, she kept pushing forward. She was one of more than a hundred drug users in her community who surrendered to PDEA and joined the rehabilitation program of the church.

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The foundation of the Duterte administration's so-called "War on Drugs" is the premise that communities and families are better off when drug traders and users are killed. It does not discriminate in terms of the degree of one's involvement. It does not consider the institutional nature of the driving forces behind drug use and the drug trade. It presumes that the lives of drug users and pushers are not worth grieving.

But to Juliana and her family, Tony's was a life well worth grieving. By the Duterte administration's reasoning, everyone should be well and happy without him--but Juliana, Lito, and Lance are not.

The kids ask when they can visit their father at the cemetery, especially on Tony's birthday. Both were traumatized by witnessing their father's killing. Lito, the older of the brothers, continues with treatment by a psychiatrist to this day. Some nights he screams and cannot sleep. Lance has refused to return to school. He is only in first grade.

Tony, Juliana's life partner, was the man she chose to build a home and a family with. "There is no hour in the day, no day in the year when I don't remember him. I don't know because I'm back with my first husband but it's still him. Lito looks so much like him."

In a society which specifically prescribes what should fulfill a woman, Juliana has no words to describe her dissatisfaction with her situation. "It's a difficult situation to be in, when you are not free. I don't know if it's just me." She is back to square one. She has a husband on whom she depends to feed her family, including Tony's children. She has all her children. She has a house. She has all except the freedom to define her life as she chooses.

But Juliana has found her community in church. She gets modest financial help and mutual emotional support by being part of her group of bereaved families. Her older children have been her rock. Their relationship has prospered. She confides in them her feelings about her husband whom she still cannot love. She is grateful that they support her and are not ashamed of her.

Juliana's name is still on the barangay's drug watch list—often viewed as the hit list for the anti-drug operations. She expresses dismay that even after working hard and graduating from the drug rehabilitation program, she still has to worry about her safety. It doesn't seem like the rules follow a clean-cut prescription of rehabilitation. The threat of the so-called "War on Drugs" is as unforgiving and relentless as Juliana's grief for Tony. For Juliana, nothing has been fair in love or war.

Candy and Susan: The inattentive mother and the inadvertent mother

ELEANOR R. DIONISIO

Candy, at thirty-eight, just did not seem to have her life together. She had eight children by two different partners. The five by her current partner, Nilo, were still minors, but only four were with her. Their fourth child, Nilo Junior, had been given up for informal adoption to a neighbor's family.

Candy and Nilo and the rest of the children —Niño, a teenager; Niña, nine years old; Nikko, four years old; and Nito, an infant—lived in a *bodega* (a small storehouse) owned by Nilo's sister Susan. The bodega had no electricity, running water, or toilet facilities. It was so small they slept side by side, "like sardines," said Susan.

When Candy and Nilo first moved into the bodega, Susan had asked them for PHP50 a day in rent. Within a few weeks they had stopped paying. Susan reduced the rent to PHP20 a day, but they were unable to pay even that. Neither Candy nor Nilo had a steady job. Susan says that they were both drug users and runners, and that Candy had previously been in trouble with the law for other offenses. For instance, she had once been jailed for playing *cara y cruz*, a gambling game. The couple had also engaged in several petty scams.

By Susan's account, Candy does not appear to have been the most attentive mother. The births of several of her children were unregistered, a bureaucratic problem that Susan would have to deal with after Candy's death. Niña once managed, apparently unbeknownst to her mother, to make her way to the next city to beg with other children.

Nilo was on the barangay drug watch list because he had voluntarily surrendered when Oplan Tokhang first began. The authorities took his photograph and asked him to report to the barangay for Zumba sessions. They told him that if he did that, he would be taken off the drug watch list. Susan says wryly: "As it turns out, the reason they would disappear from the watch list is that they would be buried." The call for surrender, she now thinks, was a ploy to get drug users and pushers in the neighborhood to come out so the police could pick them off later.

As a rehabilitation method, the Zumba sessions clearly did not work. The police visited the couple several times and told them to change their ways or leave the community. They considered leaving, but they didn't know where else to go. Nilo made a hole in the roof of the bodega so they could escape through it in case the police came. The roof became his lookout post, allowing him to see who was approaching the house.

From that hidden vantage point, one night at around eight o'clock, Nilo watched as Candy was murdered.

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Susan had been standing outside her own house, waiting for someone to come by and pay for some meals she had cooked, when men in sky blue uniforms with "police" written on them arrived. Four of them started breaking down the door of Candy's house. More men approached the house from different sides. Nilo later told Susan he had also seen barangay *tanods* (guards) with the supposed police.

When the men entered Candy's house, everyone was asked to leave the vicinity. Susan ran for the house of her partner's mother nearby. In her mind this was just another visit to warn the couple to shape up. But she did not stop running even when she heard Niña, who had been playing outside the door, cry "Please don't shoot Mama!" When four shots rang out, she thought Nilo had been killed, but did not turn back to find out.

Nilo had seen the men but it was too late to call down to Candy and warn her to come up with him. He later told Susan he had considered descending from the roof to protect Candy and the children, but feared they would all be killed for "resisting arrest". Instead he watched paralyzed as the men entered the house, wrested the baby from Candy,

and shot her in the mouth. Later, neighbors who inspected the bodega after the police had left gave Susan what they believed was a piece of Candy's tooth that had been blown out of her mouth. Susan did not appreciate the souvenir.

After the men had killed Candy, more uniformed men arrived, dressed in black, probably Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) whose task it was to investigate what had happened. They invited relatives to come forward to be interviewed, and asked all who were not relatives to leave. Susan shut herself up in her own house, not wanting to be interviewed, leaving the testimonies to Candy's family.

A neighbor advised the grieving Nilo to go into hiding because the police might come back for him. He took the advice, and never showed up at Candy's wake, although Susan briefly spied him pounding the ground in anguish as Candy's funeral procession marched past. He left the neighborhood soon after that.

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At first, Susan blamed the couple for not having left earlier. "You are so hardheaded," she thought. But her partner said no matter what the two might or might not have done, what the police did to Candy was inhuman.

And the police were clearly not finished. Susan heard they were at the wake. She thinks this might have been the reason two of Candy's siblings did not attend the funeral.

But the media were also at the wake, attracted by the pathos of Candy's story—a mother killed as her baby was torn from her, while her daughter pleaded for her life. A reporter from a major television station interviewed Niña and Nikko. Nikko waved his hand excitedly in front of the camera, skeptically asking the camera operator if he really could be seen on television. Members of Candy's family were also interviewed. They swore that Candy had reformed and was no longer pushing or taking drugs, that she was instead doing laundry for a living. Susan says this was a lie.

One good thing about the media coverage, in Susan's view, was that it seemed to stop the killings in the neighborhood. She thinks Candy

might have been the last person to die from the anti-drug operations in their community because the media coverage put it in the spotlight, and the neighborhood Aglipayan Church began to advocate against the killings.

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Because their father had disappeared, the children were farmed out to different relatives. The two oldest were taken in by Nilo's youngest brother Lex. Susan and her partner took Nikko. Nito, the baby, is with Candy's sister. The government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) had wanted Susan to retrieve the second to the youngest, Nilo Junior, from the family that had informally adopted him, but she told them this would be difficult.

Meanwhile, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) somehow managed to reach out to Nilo, inviting him to join their witness protection program—which Candy's mother had already joined—so that his testimony could later be used to prosecute those responsible for Candy's death. But he was not interested. After being betrayed by the barangay to which he had surrendered in hopes of evading harm, he did not trust anyone connected with the government, not even the CHR.

Nilo has since changed his name. On one of his early visits to the children, he told Susan he had found a construction job in another province. His visits were rare at first, but now he comes by two or three times a month to give money from his wages for the three children who are in the care of his siblings: PHP600 for Niño, PHP400 for Niña, PHP300 for Nikko. He used to give the money for Nikko to Susan, but after she started a part-time job, Nikko has been spending most of his daylight hours after school at Lex's house. So now he gives everything to Lex's wife.

Susan says Nilo is no longer using drugs. Lex used to object to Nilo's staying at his house on his visits to the children. Besides fear of the police coming for him, Lex used to have a very bad relationship with both Nilo and Candy. But now that he believes Nilo has cleaned up his act, their relationship has improved, and he has been inviting Nilo to sleep over at his house.

Nilo's co-workers tease him about a girl, but a new relationship is not on his mind. He just wants to be with his children. Although he cannot

support them at the moment and has no plans of taking them back in the near future, he still dreams of having them all with him under one roof. Nevertheless, Susan thinks the children do not miss Nilo, since he had a habit of disappearing from home for long periods even before Candy was killed.

She also thinks the children are better off now, in their new homes. Lex treats Niño and Niña with more sternness than affection, probably, Susan speculates, because of his previous bad relationship with their parents. Recently when he heard rumors that Niño was gay, he told Niño outright that he did not approve. Only in seventh grade and still dependent on his uncle, Niño has had to conceal his sexual orientation. But at least Lex, who has his own food stall and a PesoNet business, is making sure that Niño and Niña are fed and educated. At ten years old, Niña entered school for the first time in her life. As of August 2019, she was in second grade and doing so well academically that a television journalist wanted to do a story on her as a model child who has excelled in school despite poverty.

Nikko is now in first grade, although he is notorious among his teachers for playing hooky. Susan was called in by one of his teachers within weeks of his starting school. "Please manage your son," the teacher said. "He heads straight for the canteen and doesn't go to class." Nikko is enrolled in after-school remedial classes, which includes a feeding program. In the beginning he would take the food and leave the premises with the other children who were not in remedial classes. When confronted, Nikko said to Susan, "Mommy, promise, I'll change. You and I will change together."

In Candy's care, Nikko might not have been going to school at all. And now that he spends his time after school at Lex's house, he is being subjected to discipline that he never experienced under Candy—or even Susan. "Lex is stricter than me," says Susan. "He doesn't spank Nikko. I spank Nikko. But it's Lex he fears, not me."

Nilo Junior still lives with the neighbor, and is in kindergarten at the same school as Nikko, who looks in on him frequently. Susan rarely sees the baby, Nito, but when Candy's sister brought him over to visit with his siblings the second Christmas after Candy's death, he appeared handsome and well fed.

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Nonetheless there are signs that two of Candy's children continue to grieve. In the first year or so after witnessing the murder of her mother, Niña would weep at the slightest scolding. Susan says Niña is better now, after she told her to toughen up and "harden her heart" because Lex could turn her out anytime he pleased. It was not advice that would give much comfort to a bereaved child. But Niña no longer weeps, at least as far as Susan sees.

Nikko cannot sleep without someone beside him, and shouts in his sleep. Once when someone gave him a twenty-peso bill, he promptly purchased a toy gun and pretended he was shooting at the police. He told Susan that when he grows up he will kill the men who killed his mother. But he has also said that when he grows up he wants to be a policeman so he can carry a gun. Nikko is bullied by the neighborhood kids. At school he is known as the son of "the woman who was shot."

Despite her deficiencies, Candy did seem to know a few things about mothering. Niño and Niña are well behaved and doing creditably at school, earning praises from their teachers. Nikko's precocious intelligence, his unfettered imagination, and his uncanny articulateness, so disconcerting to Susan, indicate that Candy at least knew how not to stifle his lively mind. His confidence, insouciant charm, irrepressible expressiveness, and ease with strangers suggest that his mother managed to give her children a measure of self-esteem, whatever else she could not give them.

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Now Susan is Nikko's mother—the biggest change in her life after Candy's death. She worries about whether she has the capacity to raise him, never having had children of her own. She worries that in the years he has spent with her, he seems as untamed as when she first took him in. Nikko himself tells her, "If my mother couldn't teach me anything, how can you?" In anxious moments she has thought about giving him back to his father. But Nikko tells her that if she did, Nilo would just leave him with someone else.

Susan has assumed other roles aside from mothering and is acquiring other competencies she never imagined for herself. She has learned to

navigate the government bureaucracy and the court system, managing to get birth certificates for Niña and Nikko. As of August 2019, she had yet to get a certificate of guardianship for Nikko, but the school agreed to waive this requirement for the meantime so he could enroll in school. She is learning to deal with government functionaries as she manages the allowances given for Candy's children by the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), the conditional cash transfer program run by the DSWD for the nation's poorest families. She is learning parenting and other skills from attending the 4Ps Family Development Sessions.

Susan is also learning to speak to audiences about her own experiences as a member of a family bereaved by the anti-drug operations. She has discovered that she speaks well and movingly. And as she tells other people how Candy was killed, she also seems to be learning that whatever mistakes Candy made in her life, those mistakes did not deserve to be punished by death; that Candy's death is an injustice, the symptom of a social evil far more insidious than drug use and indifferent mothering.

Filomena and Regina: Bringing Jose home

JULIE ZARENE DE GUZMAN

Nanay Filomena carried an oversized bag to the interview as if she were going on a trip. She showed me large printed pictures of her grandson Jose, killed shortly after the onset of the nationwide anti-drug campaign of the Duterte administration. The pictures were pasted on cut-out pieces of cardboard for protection. She said she carries them with her all the time, after she was once asked what her grandson looked like. She also carefully showed me her organizer containing the maintenance medicines she bought with three months' worth of her senior citizen's pension of PHP1,500.

Nanay Filomena gave birth to six children, but raised eight. Two grandchildren, whom she tenderly calls her *anak* (children), were left in her care—Regina at two years old, Jose at two months—after their mother left and their father, Filomena's son, remarried.

To support the two young children, she worked by hosting bingo games in their neighborhood. She augmented their food by scouring for discarded fruits in a large market each dawn. The fresher portions she saved for the children's lunch, and the rest she sold to students at a school.

Even when the children were grown, the family of three, along with Jose's live-in partner, Jenny, lived in a box of an apartment with just enough space for them to stretch side by side at night. But Filomena described their former neighborhood as a place where drug pushing was a source of livelihood. Because of this, she wanted to keep her family safe from the threat of Oplan Tokhang, the government's violent anti-drug campaign, by transferring residence. Filomena and Regina left first.

A week before Jose and Jenny were scheduled to follow, Jose was killed in a raid on their residence.

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The day Jose died, Nanay Filomena had visited him and Jenny to try to convince them to move immediately. She had been able to convince Jenny, but Jose was not quite willing. He said, "Mother, I'm not doing anything wrong, why are you scared? Did I do anything wrong?"

When she returned to their new place, Nanay Filomena received a phone call telling her to return to see Jose. She returned to a crowd gathered around the house. Someone announced Jose's death. In tears and about to pass out from shock, Nanay Filomena hysterically tried to get to her grandson while people tried to stop her. She wanted to run to Jose. She wanted to hurt the police. "Why did you kill my grandson? You have no shame! He's not an addict! He doesn't use drugs!"

She saw the police and the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) and believed they were arranging Jose's body to make it appear as if he had resisted. She says the police put *shabu* (methamphetamine) and a gun on him. She also heard talk that during the operation one of the police had fired a shot, pretended to cry in pain, and announced that Jose had fought back.

The SOCO delivered Jose's body to a police-accredited funeral parlor, which asked Nanay Filomena for PHP70,000 to service his remains. She did not agree and asked the funeral service how much of a commission the police who killed her grandson would get from their bill. She was told that the body could be pulled out for PHP20,000 if she didn't want their services. Filomena came back with the money, but still the funeral service refused to release the body. "Because they're greedy. They wouldn't agree [to release the body]... I still have the documents. I didn't throw any document away. When the time comes [to call them to account], I will bring out the documents."

The very next day, Nanay Filomena brought Jenny to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). In the CHR's keeping now is Jenny's testimony about the killing.

The police tried to lure them to the station for a negotiation, then harassed them by sending a subpoena for Jose, even though he was already dead, to establish that he had frequently been detained. He had never even been arrested,Nanay Filomena insisted. She said one of the police was interested in Jenny and offered her money as an "allowance." Nanay Filomena resolved not to negotiate and warned Jenny not to accept favors from the police.

Paradoxically, the one government official whose help Nanay Filomena was able to enlist was a Duterte supporter, the barangay captain. While assigning him some responsibility for Jose's death, she sought to understand his difficult position. "Nobody helped us, only the [barangay] captain. The captain gives the names anyway. Now they said, 'But isn't he pro-Duterte?' But [the barangay captain] would be removed [if they didn't cooperate with the anti-drug operations]. They have to cooperate. Even if the barangay captain doesn't want to cooperate, he has no choice."

The barangay captain helped in providing food for the weeklong wake and shouldered the cost of the casket. The family was given liberty to choose any casket they wanted. They chose to rest Jose's remains inside one with a viewing glass. A lot of people went to the wake. There was even a video of Jose.

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Jose's son was born a month later. Since then, Nanay Filomena and Regina have moved from one place to another for fear of the police getting back at them. They feel vulnerable because of their well known resistance to settle with the police and their move to report the incident to authorities. Jose's case was also well covered by media on national television. They were known, said Nanay Filomena. The police even made Jose's death an example. There was a time when they would threaten others with the warning, "You may end up like Jose." They have told no one their present address.

Nanay Filomena and Regina had looked forward to caring for Jose's child. The boy, now two years old, when asked where his father is, simply answers that he is "gone." They provide for the child's everyday needs and hope to send him to school.

Nanay Filomena frequently breaks into tears remembering Jose. Regina always tells her that she has to stop crying already, that tears won't bring Jose back to life. But Nanay Filomena knows Regina is also struggling to forget. Once she heard Regina cry out in her sleep.

Regina said, "I dreamed of Jose again, mother. He said, 'You already moved to another house, sister. You didn't tell me. I got lost. Let me go with you, sister, to your house, wherever it is. I looked for you. I couldn't find you,' and his tears kept falling. I told him, 'Alright, Jose, come with us. Let's go home together so you know where we live.'"

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Nanay Filomena currently attends weekly gatherings, organized by a Catholic refuge for the homeless, which supports persons bereaved by the anti-drug operations—most of them women. Here, they find strength in people who listen to their accounts of violence and believe them even if media reports say otherwise.

Nanay Filomena is a survivor, a provider, and a steadfast defender of those she loves. She is far from the helpless image of a bereaved survivor of the violent anti-drug campaign. Right now, she knows that all she can do is hide while Duterte is still in power, but she hopes to demand justice when the time is right.

Megan: Comfort and courage in community

ASTRID YU

On what would have been her son's thirtieth birthday, Megan sat down for an interview on a warm Saturday afternoon to speak of her story of injustice. Early in President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's administration, her son Junior had been gunned down by police officers for his recreational use of marijuana. This was a result of the government's anti-drug operations. Ironically, Junior had supported and voted for Duterte. Inside one of the kitchens of a Catholic refuge for the homeless, pictures of her son in hand, Megan started telling her story.

While Megan was at work one afternoon in 2016, she received several calls from family members telling her she should go home. Megan ran home to her barangay to learn that her son had died in a drug operation. She then rushed to her son's house to find that his body was already at a nearby funeral home.

According to Junior's partner, Dayday, he was shot at around half past three in the afternoon that day. They had just awakened from a nap and were getting ready to open their store. Dayday went out to run an errand and saw eight police officers, some in uniform and some in civilian clothing, walking in the direction of their house. The police officers entered their house and went directly to the bathroom, where Junior was. Some officers waited outside, telling their neighbors to go home and close their doors and windows.

When she saw that the police were at their house, Dayday ran to the barangay hall but no one responded to her pleas for help. Barangay

representatives arrived at the house only after Junior had already been killed.

Megan went to the police station to ask for an autopsy, but she was met with little sympathy. To them, Junior was just another dead body.

The report stated that Junior had tried to fight off the police. But some neighbors said they had heard Junior tell the police officers that he would not fight them. That declaration was apparently not enough to prevent a gunshot to Junior's head.

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When asked about when she last saw her son alive, Megan paused, then started crying again. She dried her tears on a bright orange scarf, composed herself, and continued the story.

The last time she saw her son was when she was rushing out of the house to go to work. Junior asked his mother to stay and taste his home-cooked meal. "He was a good cook," Megan said. She didn't have enough time to stay then, and she regrets not having made time.

Another of her regrets is not being able to support Junior through his college education. Junior was a criminology major, but went to college for only a year. His mother was unable to sustain him financially. Megan often thinks about what might have happened if he had continued his education. Would he have associated with different people? Would that have saved his life?

That matters little now, she thinks. The "what if's" won't bring Junior back, she realizes.

Megan still can't believe that her son is gone. In her mind, parents aren't supposed to outlive their children. She has analyzed the situation repeatedly. As far as she knows, Junior didn't have any enemies. As the barangay's resident rapper, Junior was well liked in the neighborhood. During his wake many friends and relatives came to pay their respects. Megan could not understand why the police picked Junior, when there were many other drug users in the area.

After Junior's death, Megan has had to deal with a multitude of responsibilities. She worries about her grandchildren's medical expenses, food, and sometimes even their drinking water. Though Dayday and Junior's children don't live with Megan, she still feels the need to help them by giving them money and watching over them. Megan lives with relatives, is not married, and is employed in another city for about PHP400 per day. But she helps in any way she can, mostly by looking after her grandchildren, especially the youngest who is only a toddler.

When asked how the children feel about their father's situation and death, Megan says they do not have much to say about it. All they know about the incident is what their mother has told them, and she wasn't an eyewitness to the shooting. Dayday doesn't like talking about the incident either, so Megan doesn't push her to do so. It is like the family is walking on eggshells. Megan wants to talk about her son, but she understands that bringing him up might cause additional emotional trauma to the rest of the family. Even worse, it might endanger her safety and that of her family.

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Megan is thankful for being able to join a support group sponsored by the Catholic refuge for the homeless. Most of the participants in the group are women who lost sons, husbands, siblings, and friends to the anti-drug operations. This group enables her to express her grief and anger. The members go on retreats and meet on Saturdays to help each other vent and heal. She finds comfort in being with a group in which members have similar experiences, and in knowing that she is not alone. Sponsors of the support group also help the families by providing livelihood projects and assistance for school expenses.

Members of the group stage plays and theater productions about the killings associated with the anti-drug campaign. This allows them to share their experiences with other people and to help the audiences understand the effects of the campaign.

Megan knows there are still a great number of people who believe that the violence of the anti-drug operations is necessary. A lot of people believe that the victims of the anti-drug operations deserve to be

executed because they are a menace to society. Megan's Junior had the same conviction. It's easy to believe, until it hits home. It's easy to say that killing people is necessary until it happens to your friends, to your family, or to you. Megan hopes that in sharing her story, more people will understand and empathize with those affected by the killings.

Megan displays admirable resilience, taking every opportunity to heal from the past and keep moving forward. She even goes to Zumba classes in the city where she works, so she can release some of her stress and create friendships.

After the interview, Megan packed her things and said that she was going to buy food for her son's birthday party. She was going to have a small gathering to remember Junior and celebrate his life. Before saying goodbye, I asked Megan what gets her up in the morning and motivates her to give life another shot. She said, "I tell myself, 'You still have grandchildren.'"

Sarah: Regret, repentance, and redemption

DAWN MARIE PAVILLAR CASTRO

"I wish I hadn't surrendered him. He might still be alive today."

Sarah voluntarily surrendered her thirty-nine-year-old nephew Kyle to the authorities, thinking she would be able to save him from the claws of the Duterte administration's violent anti-drug operations. She was wrong.

Some months into the Duterte administration, Sarah had arranged for her nephew's arrest with their barangay captain. She preferred to see Kyle in jail rather than have him be another number in the rising body count in the administration's bloody campaign against drugs.

Her nephew was successfully taken into custody by the barangay. Within a few minutes of talking with the barangay captain, Sarah received another call from a certain Senior Police Officer 3 (SPO3) Darwin Vadim. He asked if her nephew was indeed a drug user. She confirmed this, but pleaded with the police officer to spare her nephew's life, as his seventy-four-year-old mother and a brother with a disability were dependent on him. Vadim answered, "I am not like that."

Sarah was confused at what those words meant. Did it mean he was not like other police officers who killed drug suspects, or that he was not one to spare a drug suspect's life? She would soon find out.

The next day, Sarah went to the police precinct to bring food for her nephew. When she arrived, Vadim told her that he had already killed

Kyle. She thought he was joking so she replied, "Dead, really?" Another man in civilian clothes replied, "Yes, we killed him. Don't look for him here. He's in the morgue."

At that moment, Sarah was filled with guilt. All she had wanted was to save her nephew, yet she felt like she was the one who had dug his grave. She didn't know how to tell her sister Temay; she knew for sure that she would be blamed for Kyle's death.

In the afternoon, a neighbor called Sarah and said she was with Temay. They had found Kyle's body at a funeral establishment. When Sarah arrived home, Temay approached her crying, bearing the sad news, not knowing that Sarah already knew all about it.

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"They've killed him, now they will kill us with the expenses," were the words Sarah uttered when she arrived at the funeral establishment and was told she needed PHP68,000 to claim Kyle's body. A good Samaritan gave her PHP5,000 for the down payment needed to bring Kyle's body home.

More than two weeks after he was killed, Kyle still had not been laid to rest because there was no money for a proper burial. In her frustration, Sarah even had thoughts of leaving Kyle's casket at the police station, since "they were the ones who killed him anyway." After raising PHP18,000 in donations, she finally had enough money to pay for Kyle's burial.

Fear was the dominant feeling in the community. Everyone knew who the killer was, but no one openly talked about it. They didn't want to be the next name on the watch list to be crossed out, or the next body to be thrown into the river.

Kyle may have been buried already, but the memory of what happened to him haunts Sarah to this day. She still feels the guilt of turning her nephew over to the authorities. She trusted in a flawed system that was supposed to protect her nephew. Asked if she wants to file a case against the killers she says, "As long as Duterte is there, it will be difficult."

Kyle was the breadwinner of his family. Upon his demise, Sarah took upon herself the role that her nephew had left. She gave Temay capital for a little *sari-sari* (variety) store, but the store is now at risk of demolition because of the city's sidewalk cleanup campaign.

For a while Sarah had to move to her daughter's house in another province because she found out that SPO3 Darwin Vadim was looking for her. He knew that she had been naming him as the killer of her nephew to several groups and organizations. He has since been reassigned to another location, but Sarah says their community continues to "feel like it is under Martial Law." The community feels distrust and fear towards the police.

But fear hasn't stopped Sarah. She is back in her neighborhood.

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Kyle's death is only one among a number of drug-related killings in their neighborhood. Families of the victims have formed an organization of women survivors. Sarah is the president of the organization in her neighborhood. This has been her primary support group. Sarah and other women bereaved by the drug-related killings are thankful for the individuals and organizations who have helped them to establish the organization, and who continue to help them by giving monthly allowances and psychosocial assistance to some of the families.

Before she became the head of this organization, Sarah was also president of their neighborhood housing association, which has a membership of 151 families. She says, "I can't abandon my members. They depend on me."

Now, she educates her members about what to do in case the police try to arrest them. "I tell them, if the police pick you up, your family should immediately follow after you. Tell the police you have your own doctor who can examine you and you have your own lawyer." Sarah knows that making the police feel that their potential victims are not naïve is a strong weapon against these injustices. The community has also started making efforts of its own. Whenever police come to their area, the neighbors are alerted and all go out to "welcome" and escort them.

Sarah carries the multiple burdens of being a wife to her husband, a grandmother taking care of four grandchildren, a mother to three children still in school, a sister to Kyle's mother, and the leader of two organizations. She says she has become so busy with all these burdens that she no longer has time for herself. But she is satisfied with balancing these multiple roles. She knows that there is a bigger fight outside their community, so she also takes part in mobilizing her organization during rallies. Because she is identified as a leader of these groups, she is even more of a target for the police.

Sarah actually has a choice to leave and start a new life. She has four children outside the country who are willing to support her financially on the condition that she leaves her neighborhood. They are well aware of the dangers that surround their mother while she is staying there, and they want her safe. Instead of taking the deal with her children and living a comfortable life, she chooses to stay with her community.

Sarah has lost hope that justice will be served under this administration. She and the members of her community organizations were sad and dismayed that the administration's candidates swept the 2019 senatorial elections. But she holds on to the hope of securing justice when a new administration takes over.

SYNTHESIS

Grieving, Healing, Breaking Through

ELEANOR R. DIONISIO

This concluding chapter begins with a summary of some general features of the nineteen deaths recorded in this book's eighteen stories: the demographics of the dead, the circumstances of the killings, the alleged or suspected perpetrators. It then discusses some of the specific ways in which the drug-related killings produce a gendered burden for women. This is followed by an account of how the women strive to take control of a situation they had no power to prevent. Finally, a continuum is traced through the stories, from grief to healing to a kind of breakthrough, whether personal or political.

The dead

Because our eighteen stories cannot be used to make generalizations about the drug-related killings, it is helpful to match them against the most comprehensive academic study yet on this topic. The study is a collaborative effort of the institutions and faculty of three of the country's most prominent universities (henceforth the "academic consortium"): the Ateneo de Manila University, through the Ateneo School of Government; De La Salle University; and the University of the Philippines. It compiles information on killings reported as drug-related in major national newspapers between May 10, 2016—the day after Rodrigo Roa Duterte was elected president, when a spike in killings of drug suspects nationwide began—and September 29, 2017. (More recent data have been compiled, but not yet published.) The study's exclusive reliance on newspaper reports rather than on primary

information limits the data, particularly as newspapers stopped covering the killings extensively after the first year or so. The study notes that newspaper reports privilege police reports as sources over the accounts of the victims' family members, thus casting doubt on the impartiality of the data. Nonetheless, this study has the largest database of demographic data on the drug-related killings, encompassing 5,021 deaths, not just in official police operations but also in unattributed homicides that bear the characteristics of drug-related killings.[1]

One finding of the academic consortium's study is that the majority of those killed have been poor, at least judging from their place of residence. The victims whose occupations were identified were in low-paying, low-skilled jobs—jeepney, tricycle, pedicab, and motorcycle taxi drivers; construction workers and carpenters; vendors, barkers or transportation dispatchers, farmers, and garbage collectors.[2] The stories in our book share a similar pattern.

The most prosperous of the victims, Kaloy, hovered on the edges of the lower middle class. He lived with his family in what his sister Vida described as their "ancestral home", and had previously worked as a security guard—a working class job, but at least a steady one, from which he had made enough to invest in a small lending business and a fleet of pedicabs, and enough to support eight children by three different women. But most of the dead, at least fourteen of nineteen, lived in informal settler communities. Four of them—Albert, Vincent, Orly, and Candy—belonged to families that were recipients of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), a government cash subsidy program for the poorest families in a community. Among the ten whose livelihood was explicitly mentioned, only one person besides Kaloy was a small-scale entrepreneur: Junior, who sold children's clothing. The rest had working class jobs. Carlos, Joshua, Roger, and Jake drove tricycles. Carlos and Joshua also hired themselves out for construction jobs. Marlon did carpentry and painting. Joel worked in a bakery. Vincent was an occasional cargo carrier at the pier. Orly was a barangay *tanod* (guard) who sidelined as a drug peddler and as an informer for a police friend.

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1 Jenna Mae L. Atun et al., "The Philippines' Antidrug Campaign: Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Killings Linked to Drugs," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 73 (2019), 100-111.

2 Ibid.

The academic consortium's study reports that nearly half the dead in their sample, 47 percent, were tagged by police as small-time drug sellers, and 8 percent as drug users.[3] In our own set of nineteen deaths, the opposite was true: only two, or about 11 percent, were reported to have been involved in small-scale drug selling, while nine, or 47 percent, were using or had once used drugs. Of course, our information about the involvement of the victims in drugs comes not from the police but from family members, who are less likely to admit that the dead were involved in either drug use or peddling, just as the police are more likely to assert that those they killed were "drug personalities". In four cases, the respondents denied that their loved ones had any involvement in drugs, and in five cases, they said nothing about it, or said they did not know. Paradoxically, of the three victims known to have voted for Duterte, only one was reported not to have been involved in drugs. The other two used drugs, and one of these sold drugs as well.

Among the nineteen deaths, four were apparently not even the intended targets: Marlon, misidentified by an informer as the brother of the supposed drug dealer in whose house he was staying as a guest; Carlos, asleep at a construction site owned by the person the police were looking for; Vincent, mistaken for another Vincent living right next door; and Roger, possibly confused with a drug-dealing neighbor whose name appeared in the police report on Roger's case as the person who had been killed.

In the academic consortium's study, 24 percent of the dead were on the drug watch lists of their barangays—lists for which drug users had been encouraged to enroll with such promised incentives as drug rehabilitation and livelihood training.[4] This approximates our own data, in which four of the nineteen cases, or 21 percent, were on the drug watch list. Of these, two had voluntarily surrendered, while two had been surrendered by family members hoping to keep them safe.

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3 Ateneo School of Government (Ateneo de Manila University), De La Salle Philippines, University of the Philippines-Diliman, and the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism (Columbia University), "The Drug Archive," Ateneo School of Government, www.drugarchive.ph (accessed May 26, 2020).

4 Ibid.

In the academic consortium's study, 55 percent of the killings occurred in official police operations, 38 percent in homicides by unidentified assailants believed to be anti-drug vigilantes, and 7 percent in cases in which people were simply found dead with no one to say who had killed them.[5] Our own collection of stories roughly reflects this proportion. Nearly half the killings—nine of nineteen, or 47 percent—happened in official police operations, or were carried out by someone known by the respondents to be a police officer. In seven cases, or about 37 percent, the killers were unidentified assailants, but in at least two of those, they were believed by witnesses to be police out of uniform. In one case the victim was found dead, with no information from witnesses on who killed him. In the remaining two cases, in which the victims were drug peddlers, the suspects were people involved in the drug trade: a police asset who had been supplying Mac-Mac with his wares, a dealer who thought Orly had ratted him out.

Finally, in the academic consortium's study, most of the dead, 94 percent, have been men.[6] In our own set of nineteen deaths, 95 percent have been men; only one is a woman. So it seems as though if anyone were disadvantaged in the anti-drug operations, it would be men.

Gender and the anti-drug operations

Nevertheless, women find themselves disadvantaged in the anti-drug operations in several ways that interact with gender relations and prescribed gender roles.

1. *Women's homes are no longer theirs.*

One circumstance that jumps out of the stories in this collection is that nearly half the killings—nine of nineteen—happened inside, or just outside, the homes of the dead. This is considerably higher than the 24 percent whom the academic consortium's data place as having been killed inside or just outside their homes.[7]

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5 Atun et al., "Philippines' Antidrug Campaign," 103.

6 Ibid., 105.

7 Ibid., 107.

In our culture, home is seen as the space for which women are primarily responsible. We still have quite a job ahead of us to assert that men have responsibility for this space too, and that women belong in public space as well. Yet even within that supposedly safe and sacred space of the home, women experience violence and subordination from the men in their own families.

But in the anti-drug operations, it is usually men from the outside who desecrate the home (although Yolly mentions at least one female police officer involved in the killings in her community). Usually they come looking for the men of the household. In most cases the women of the household are marginal to the operation. They are made to leave, prevented from entering, or ignored as they plead for their loved ones' lives. Sometimes they are arrested or threatened with death themselves. Occasionally, they too are killed. Their homes are further violated afterward by theft.

Joan, pregnant and feeling unwell, came home to find police looking for her brother. When she tried to enter the house to get some sleep, police dragged her out and arrested her in her brother's stead.

Yolly was at a meeting when the police invaded her home and killed her son Vincent in his sleep, not even bothering to check if they had entered the right house. After discovering their mistake, the police took several cellphones and gadgets from the house, probably not by mistake.

Police entered the bathroom of Dayday's house—that space which ought to be the most private of all domestic spaces—while she was out with the baby, running an errand. Dayday's mother, coming downstairs to see what the commotion was about, was sent away with the chilling reassurance: "Mother, go back upstairs. This will only take a minute." Afterward Junior's killers took twenty thousand pesos in cash that Junior and Dayday had earned from their ready-made garments business.[8]

The very day Filomena was able to persuade her grandson Jose's partner Jenny that the couple should move out of their home to escape the killings in their neighborhood, the police raided it and shot Jose dead.

8 This information is not in Megan's story in this volume. Megan shared it in the video made after the first batch of interviews.

Linda was washing clothes in an alley, and her daughters were in various parts of the neighborhood, when eight men came for her husband Joshua, whom she had left asleep at home. When she and two of her daughters tried to enter their house, they were warned brusquely away with the announcement: "This is our operation!"[9] The subtext: "This is no longer your house"—at least not at that moment.

Allan was just outside the home he shared with Edith, engaged in a mundane domestic chore, when motorcycle-riding killers pumped a bunch of bullets into his body. Edith, just close enough to run to him in time to hear him speak the name of one of his murderers before he died, was powerless to save him.

Tony was shot as he was coming in with his two sons for the dinner Juliana was making. Their blood-spattered gate was the first thing that welcomed Juliana home when she returned from tending to Tony's remains at the hospital.

Maria, running home from a visit with her daughter that was cut short by a disturbing intuition, found her son Albert in the hands of the neighborhood police executioners. They pointed a gun at her head, told her to leave, and shot Albert just steps from their doorway.

Natasha and her partner Roger were courting sleep when two men broke down their gate and climbed into their house. Natasha, embracing Roger, was pulled away from him and watched helplessly while they shot him several times, just after he begged them not to kill him in his own home in the presence of his children.

Candy was at home feeding her infant when the police came, wrested the child away from her, and shot her in the mouth as her daughter Niña pleaded, "Don't shoot Mama!"

In four of our cases, the women had to leave their homes for reasons related to the deaths of their loved ones, at least for a while, sometimes for the long term. Maria and her family had to flee to their home province because of a newspaper article that revealed their real names and those

9 This information is not in Linda's and Rica's story in this volume. Rica shared it in the video made after the first batch of interviews.

of the killers. Linda and her three daughters abandoned their home for months because the barangay captain threatened to put her on the drug watch list to replace her dead husband.[10] Filomena, Regina, and Jenny had to keep moving from one house to another because they had provided testimony about Jose's death to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). Sarah had to stay for some time at a daughter's house in a nearby province because SPO3 Darwin Vadim knew she was publicly naming him as her nephew Kyle's killer.

In all these cases, the one space that our society awards unreservedly to women was taken from them by the anti-drug operations.

2. *Nurturing is denied to women—or turned against them.*

Filipino culture honors women as the ones who nurture and care for their families. The tribute is, of course, superficial: the reproductive work assigned to women, valuable as it is to society, is invisibilized and disprized in the formal economy, and used as a reason for excluding women from greater participation in the formal workforce, from more equitable compensation, and from greater political engagement. But even this circumscribed "womanly" function is frustrated or subverted by the drug-related killings.

Maria, running to cradle her bleeding son, was stopped by a sharp kick from his killers. When she pressed into the pedicab into which they had loaded his body, they pointed a gun at her and threatened to shoot her, forcing her to jump out. Unable to prevent them from shooting Albert, she was not even allowed to accompany his body to the police station.

Stella surrendered her own son Mac-Mac to the police, trusting that this would shield him from the violent anti-drug campaign promised by the president both of them had voted for. Sarah arranged for the arrest of her own nephew Kyle, in a bid to discipline him as well as to protect him from the nightly killings in their neighborhood. Stella and Sarah thought that their "tough love" would keep their wayward ones safe, both from drugs and from death. Instead, their maternal and auntly solicitude turned into irreversible betrayal.

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10 This information is not in Linda's story in this volume. Linda shared it in the video made after the first batch of interviews.

3. *Women face economic hardship after the death.*

Because there is an ideal in our society that even in poor families, women should stay home to attend to the children and other domestic matters, the loss of a male partner or family member can mean the loss of a significant source of family income, if not the main one.

In reality, poor women often take on a much stronger economic role in the family than this ideal gives them credit for. In eight of our eighteen cases in which men were killed, the women telling the stories had been either the main breadwinners or significant contributors to the household income even prior to the deaths. Joan worked as a barangay employee when her children were young, and later as a domestic helper overseas. Filomena singlehandedly raised her grandchildren by running bingo games and scouring the market for discarded fruit to sell. Yolly housed and fed seven adult children and three grandchildren, first working as a live-out servant, then setting up a little store at home. Maria and Gloria sold vegetables at a nearby market. Sunny ran an eatery with her husband. Dayday co-owned a small garments business with Junior. Megan, Junior's mother, worked at a garments company. Angie supported herself by taking on sewing jobs. Stella also did sewing jobs and collected gambling bets to supplement the family income. These women were all productive members of the informal or formal economy long before their male family members were killed.

Nonetheless, the death of a male family member meant economic hardship for most of the women in our stories, whether or not those killed were their main breadwinners, and whether or not the women were themselves contributing substantially to the household income.

This hardship began with the expenditures surrounding the death itself. Death is expensive in any case for the poor. But drug-related killings, particularly those carried out by the police, have a premium placed on them by the police-accredited morgues and funeral establishments to which the bodies are brought. Often their fees seem to be a kind of ransom exacted from the families for the retrieval of their dead.

Norma and Gloria, Filomena, and Sarah were charged PHP65,000 to PHP70,000 by the funeral homes to which their dead had been brought by the police. Only with the help of a barangay official was Norma able

to negotiate the fee down to PHP35,000. Filomena refused the services of the police-accredited funeral home and was charged PHP20,000 just for the release of Jose's body. Sarah and Sunny each had to pay PHP5,000 to be able to reclaim the bodies of their dead.

The poor depend on the generosity of neighbors and relatives to see them through the costs of burying their dead. Some of the women—Sunny, Yolly, Norma and Gloria, Natasha, Juliana, Filomena, Megan, and Sarah—were fortunate enough to get such assistance, particularly if the dead were popular in the community and their wakes well attended. Orly's wake was not well attended because the neighbors were afraid to be seen there, but at least people sent money to Joan, his estranged wife who was taking care of the wake and funeral arrangements. Help also came to the women from other sources: Stella's barangay, neighborhood association, and faith-based group; Angie's parish priest; Tony's employer; Filomena's barangay captain.

But sometimes the assistance was not enough. Cel's family came home from her son Ronald's funeral with nothing left for their next meal. Half a year after Joel was buried, Norma and Gloria had paid off only a little more than two-fifths of the fee demanded by the police-accredited funeral establishment to which Joel's body had been consigned.

Compounding the problem is a breakdown in solidarity in neighborhoods affected by the anti-drug campaign, which affects the support traditionally given by the community to bereaved families. Jane reported little help from neighbors for Carlos's wake and funeral expenses. The wake for Vida's brother Kaloy was poorly attended because relatives and neighbors feared it would be strafed. In some cases, family members and neighbors stayed away because they suspected that the killers were monitoring the wakes to identify the kin and associates of the dead, who would then be the next candidates for execution.

Then there are the costs of life after the death. This has been particularly challenging for those who previously conformed to the ideal of the housebound woman. Jane, Natasha, and Linda have had to find paid work, not easy for women whose work experience has consisted largely of housekeeping for their own families. But it has also been challenging for the women who were earning an income to begin with. Sunny and her husband lost not only their son Marlon's contributions to the

household budget, but also the profits from the eatery that they were unable to manage because of their despondence over Marlon's death. Maria had to leave her neighborhood, and therefore her livelihood, because of the potential threat posed to her family by the police officer who had killed her son Albert. While Yolly has one less mouth to feed with Vincent gone, there is also one less son to bring in the occasional couple of hundred pesos from working at the pier. And after Vincent's death, Yolly has taken to shutting up her store each time the police make their presence felt in the neighborhood, thus foregoing a morning's or evening's earnings. Gloria no longer has her son Joel's wage as additional capital for her vegetable selling business. Angie misses the assistance from her son Jake. Joan has to worry about food and schooling for her children, whom her estranged husband Orly had previously supported.

Wives and mothers are not the only ones who have felt the economic pinch. Vida, Coby, Norma, Megan, Filomena, Regina, and Sarah now have to contribute to the upkeep of mothers, sisters, nephews, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and other family members left behind. Kaloy's daughters Jennifer and Jeannette and Mac-Mac's sister Ali, whose schooling was previously supported by their dead loved ones, now have to find ways to keep themselves in school.

4. *Women are treated as extensions of male family members*.

While men are disproportionately the targets of the anti-drug operations, women are sometimes made to take their place when the men cannot be found.

Joan, arrested in lieu of her brother, spent more than six weeks in jail before a friendly barangay official managed to secure her release. Paradoxically, she was the only member of her family not involved in drugs.

During the wake for Linda's husband Joshua, the barangay captain told Linda he was going to put her name on the drug watch list to replace Joshua's.[11] Perhaps he needed to have a certain number of people on his list at any one time—and of course Joshua would now have to be removed from the list. Who better to fill the gap than his widow?

11 This information is not in Linda's story in this volume. Linda shared it in the video made after the first batch of interviews.

It was Candy's partner Nilo whose name was on their barangay's drug watch list. The police killed Candy instead, while Nilo watched from his hiding place on the roof.

5. *Their vulnerability is exploited after their bereavement*.

After Jenny's partner Jose was killed, a police officer offered her an allowance, with the implicit expectation of sexual favors in return. But the exploiters are not always the police. Vida's niece Jennifer, having lost the financial support of her father, was sent off to live with an uncle who made sexual advances toward her. In another case not included in this collection, one of the orphaned daughters of a murdered couple was taken by a drug lord to be his concubine.

6. *Their involvement in drug use and other transgressions is not excused to the same extent as men's*.

In every story except one in this collection, those left behind have only kind words for the dead. Even when the respondents admit that the dead were drug users or sellers, they are remembered as good, loving, and responsible partners, fathers, sons, brothers, and uncles: financially supporting their women, offspring, aging parents, and sisters; contributing to the household income even when underemployed; giving nephews and nieces pocket money and treats.

There is one victim for whom no kind word is spoken by the storyteller, despite the heartbreaking circumstances of her death—a mother killed in her own home while feeding her baby. It may be significant that this person is the only woman among the dead memorialized in this collection.

Candy emerges from Susan's telling not only as a confirmed drug user and petty offender, frequently in trouble with the law, but also as an almost criminally negligent parent and a deadbeat. So does her partner Nilo, Susan's brother. But Nilo at least lives to redeem himself in the course of Susan's narration. The children are described as much better off now that their mother is dead.

Is it, perhaps, that men are expected to have weaknesses and are therefore excused for them, while we hold women to a higher standard,

both in parenting and in obedience to the law? Does Susan's jaundiced eulogy to Candy mirror our society's greater intolerance for women who use drugs and who do not fit the mold of the faithful wife and attentive mother?

The other woman in this collection of stories who does not quite fit that mold is Juliana—like Candy, a drug user who left her first partner and took up with a fellow drug user with whom she had a second round of children. For this, Juliana is condemned and ridiculed by her neighbors. But unlike Candy, she is able to tell her own story. How might that story have been told if Juliana had been killed along with Tony, or instead of him? Juliana eventually redeems herself, but that redemption is bought at least partly at the price of an ambivalent return to an abusive marriage.

These are some of the ways that gender subordination interacts with the violence of the anti-drug campaign and its offshoots in vigilante or drug trade violence. The perpetrators of drug-related violence penetrate women's space; treat them as weak and vulnerable, easily terrorized and dismissed and silenced; regard them as extensions, and therefore legitimate surrogates, of the men in their families. After the killing, bereaved women are targeted for sexual exploitation, whether by the police, by criminal elements, or by their own kin. And when women are the drug users, no excuses are made for them.

This dynamic of gender subordination and violence is potentially disempowering to women, operating to persuade them that they are helpless victims who cannot fight back.

Taking control amid violence and its aftermath

But the women we interviewed are not helpless victims. They are agents, dealing in their own courageous ways with the deaths of their family members, with single or foster parenthood, with economic challenges, and with threats from authorities.

1. *Finding and tending to the dead.*

In four of our stories the women were among those who looked for loved ones gone missing or reported to have been killed. Stella, Gloria

and her daughter Norma, Cel, and Sarah's sister Temay embarked on searches that went on for hours, days, even a whole week.

Often it was the women who arranged for wakes and burials, sometimes fiercely declining to patronize the funeral businesses so helpfully provided by the police. Yolly stood guard over Vincent's body for twenty minutes until her favored funeral establishment picked it up. Tony's sister refused the police-accredited funeral concern that conveniently turned up at Tony's home as soon as the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) were done interviewing witnesses to the killing, instead engaging one of her own choice.

Norma and Filomena were not easily able to extricate their loved ones' bodies from the police-backed funeral businesses, but Norma secured help from a barangay councilor to bargain down the cost, and Filomena got her barangay captain to pay for the coffin and the food for the wake. Maria didn't think she could expect anything from her barangay, so she went to City Hall to get assistance for the costs of Albert's wake and funeral. Despite being separated for years from her husband Orly, Joan took care of retrieving his body from the hospital and organizing his wake and funeral. It was Roger's sister Abbie who supplied the memorial plan for Roger's wake and funeral and shouldered most of the associated expenses.

2. *Finding ways of supporting themselves and the living*.

The erstwhile full-time housewives, Jane, Natasha, and Linda, are now the breadwinners of their families. Jane works in a hat factory. Natasha does piece work, sewing bags. Linda at first picked up odd jobs here and there, such as doing laundry or cleaning houses, but eventually upgraded to the formal sector. When I saw her at a demonstration against the drug-related killings in December 2018, she told me she was working as an online sales agent for cosmetics. After Kaloy's death, Zinnia tried to manage his *sikad* rental business herself, but eventually went abroad for a job as a domestic helper.

Grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and daughters have also pitched in, or are taking care of their own upkeep so as not to burden their families. Megan gives lunch and transportation money to her son Junior's children. Filomena and Regina saw Jose's partner Jenny through the birth of her

son and have helped her with the child's everyday expenses. Vida uses her own pension to support her late brother Kaloy's household, and has taken on a part-time occupation as a domestic helper for a neighbor to make ends meet. Kaloy's daughters Jennifer and Jeannette and Mac-Mac's sister Ali are now working their way through school. Rica, only thirteen when her father Joshua was killed, took a job for a while as a salesclerk, lying about her age so she could be hired[12]—at least until Linda probably realized, through her support group's seminars on human trafficking, that this could be considered child exploitation. Joel's sister Norma gives their mother Gloria small amounts of money to shore up her vegetable selling business. Coby found a factory job after her brother Rod's death so she could pay for the household's utilities. When her brother's partner Candy was killed, Susan took on Candy's son Nikko, along with the expense of feeding him and seeing to his education. After her nephew Kyle's death, Sarah gave Kyle's mother Temay some money to set up a little store in their neighborhood, so Temay could support herself and another son with a disability.

3. *Seeking justice for their loved ones*.

All these women in our stories have despaired of obtaining justice for their loved ones under the current administration. But some of them look forward to the time when the people responsible for their loved ones' deaths can be called to account.

Filomena began preparing for this time the very next day after Jose was killed, when she and Jenny went to the CHR to give testimony about the case. Filomena is scrupulous about keeping all documents related to Jose's death so that one day she can obtain justice for him.

Norma too has gathered documentation on her brother Joel's death. Someday she hopes to be able to contest the police report which states that Joel was killed resisting arrest.

As soon as they had buried their son Marlon, Sunny and her husband Meding went to the provincial CHR office to seek help in securing

12 This information is not in Linda's and Rica's story in this volume. Linda and Rica shared it during the recording of the video following the first batch of interviews, but the information was not included in the final video.

justice. Unfortunately, the provincial CHR office gave no help, supposedly because the operation which killed Marlon had been carried out in another province. It is not clear whether the provincial CHR passed the couple's request on to the CHR office in that other province.

Jane, Angie, and Susan did not initiate steps to seek justice, but they have cooperated with various individuals and organizations offering to document the cases for future litigation or for human rights investigations.

4. *Joining groups of other families bereaved by the drug-related killings.*

In thirteen of our eighteen cases, the respondents were members of groups of bereaved families, organized primarily by Catholic parishes and faith-based organizations as well as by secular nongovernment organizations (NGOs). This is not indicative of what generally happens to women who lose loved ones in the drug-related killings. As mentioned in the section "Notes on the Project" at the beginning of this volume, we deliberately selected respondents with whom parishes, other Catholic groups, and secular NGOs were already working, because we did not have the social infrastructure to provide them with the comprehensive assistance they needed. Still, our stories include five respondents who either did not join support groups of bereaved families or did not find them worth talking about as helpful.

Among the thirteen cases in which women mentioned that they were members of such support groups, two of the respondents had dropped out by the latter part of 2019: Yolly because of fear of the consequences of such involvement, Coby because she became pregnant.[13] But in the remaining eleven cases, the respondents have kept some level of contact with their support groups.

The support groups provide various forms of material assistance: food, small subsidies, livelihood training for the women, scholarships and school supplies for their children and grandchildren. Most have run group therapy sessions which help the women process their grief within a sympathetic community of people in similar circumstances. Some have

13 Coby's pregnancy is not part of her story in this volume. The pregnancy occurred subsequent to the interview with her.

given awareness seminars on the dangers of sexual trafficking. Some have conducted social analysis sessions that provide information and a broader perspective on the killings, enabling the women to understand the deaths of their loved ones within a larger political context. Some have offered access to legal assistance for the documentation of testimonies, to be held until the testifiers are ready to file cases in court.

5. *Taking up advocacy for and interventions against the drug-related killings*.

Several of the women in our stories have mustered the courage to advocate publicly against the killings. I often see one or another or several of them at demonstrations protesting the anti-drug violence and other issues.

Once I met Linda at a CHR forum at which she had been invited to speak to academics, church personnel, and NGO and government workers about the impact of the drug-related killings on women.

Susan, though somewhat ambivalent about the killing of her brother's partner, was persuaded by a civil society organization to give testimony before an audience of middle-class activists concerned about the drug-related killings. As she told them Candy's story, she wept for the first time ever about Candy's death.

Megan has found a new vocation as a core member of an informal theater group composed mainly of members of families bereaved by the drug-related killings. It is one that has evolved out of the drama therapy workshops conducted among successive batches of bereaved families. She has performed with the group in schools, at political demonstrations, and at assemblies of Catholic parish volunteers, the largest with an attendance running into the thousands. The performances help to generate opposition to the killings among various audiences by showing them the perspective of the bereaved and allowing them vicariously to experience their grief.

Sarah was a community leader even prior to the killing of her nephew Kyle, so attending and speaking at public fora and demonstrations is not new to her. Now, in addition to housing and urban poor rights, she has taken on the drug-related killings. I first heard her tell her story in late 2016, shortly after Kyle's death, at a forum on human

dignity cosponsored by the Catholic Church and an alternative law organization. In her own community organization she tries to educate her members on how to respond when accosted by police. She is a familiar presence at mobilizations on the drug-related killings and other national issues, shepherding her flock of urban poor and bereaved families with quiet steadfastness.

6. *Seeking support in moving forward.*

When we asked the women what they needed to be able to move forward, many of them mentioned assistance that would improve their lives in the long term. While grateful for gifts of food and money, they knew those gifts would only go so far. What they wanted more than short-term financial support was help in finding consistent livelihood—jobs, training, seed money for businesses—and help for their children to finish school.

Some of them asked for aid in obtaining or amending bureaucratic paperwork from the police, the government, and the courts: police reports, death certificates for the victims, birth certificates for the orphans, certificates of guardianship. Some also asked for help in seeking justice—if not now, at least someday.

These specific appeals suggest that many of the women we interviewed were not content to be recipients of other people's compassion and charity. They wanted support that would enable them to be agents, to move on in whatever way they chose to move on, and to secure the justice that had been denied them and their loved ones. This seems to be evidence that tending to the women bereaved by the drug-related killings need not result in new relations of dependency, if the assistance given them is oriented toward enabling them to claim the social power denied them as poor women, long before the drug-related killings began.

From grief to breakthrough

This volume has arranged our respondents' stories in a continuum of sorts, from grief though healing to a kind of breakthrough, whether personal or political.

The first section, "Women grieving", consists of stories that do not radiate much hope, although each story is one tiny step ahead of the last. Albert's death sends Maria and her family into retreat, forcing them to abandon their home, their neighborhood, and their livelihood for fear of their lives. The members of Vida's family are too busy struggling to hold things together after Kaloy's murder that getting justice for him does not even occur to them. Sunny at least takes steps to report Marlon's death as a human rights violation, but is thwarted by the myopia of government bureaucracy. Jane is aided by her parish to get Carlos's killing legally documented, but is unsure what to do next, and bears the emotional and financial burdens of bereavement largely by herself. Yolly belongs to organizations that have the potential to seek justice collectively, but she no longer attends their activities, perceiving too much risk and too little gain in staying connected.

In the second section, "Women healing together", all the storytellers find solace and support in organizations of bereaved families largely supported by various groups of the Catholic Church. At the very least, these groups provide the women with short-term material assistance, as well as a community in which they can share their grief and work through it with others who understand what they have been through because they have been through it themselves. Sometimes this community also enables them to see the deaths of their loved ones in a framework larger than their personal grief, as a collective injustice perpetrated on the poor by an administration with a self-serving political agenda, and as the collective tragedy of a nation callously indifferent and even hostile to the poor. Sometimes the women come to perceive themselves not just as individual widows, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters who lost loved ones to the violence of the anti-drug campaign, but also as an aggrieved sector who might someday collectively seek remedy for the injustice.

The third section, "Women breaking through", is the least homogenous, with the storytellers moving in different trajectories out of the tragedy of the drug-related killings. As feminists, we may be ambivalent about some of those trajectories. But they show how women find some space to grow despite the limitations placed by society on their perspectives and their possibilities.

We had originally thought to title this section "Women moving forward", but in the first of these stories, there appears to be some backward movement. Juliana, who left an unhappy marriage to build a new life and a new family with a fellow drug user, goes back to that marriage after her lover Tony is murdered. Nonetheless there are significant improvements in her life. She has completed a drug rehabilitation program, has become a volunteer in the worship ministry of her parish, and enjoys the friendship and support of her first batch of children. Her husband Roxy appears to have taken her back without a fuss, even accepting her two children by Tony into the family. Her life has stabilized. Still, it is not a feminist happy ending, especially as her new life has been rebuilt around the patriarchal ideal of the devoted wife and mother. One senses her continuing unease, particularly with regard to the marriage, and her incompletely articulated awareness that her situation is not exactly progress.

In the second story the movement is also ambivalent, from the position of judgmental sister to that of hesitant foster mother and uncertain advocate against the killings. Susan blames Candy, her brother Nilo's partner, for the miserable life Candy's family lived within a sardine tin of a bodega. Susan even blames Candy for her own violent death in that sardine tin. If only she had left the neighborhood—not even reformed, as if that were unthinkable as a possibility, but simply left. Yet Susan's own life is irreversibly changed by Candy's death, most especially by her guardianship of Candy's son Nikko. Susan has to learn how to deal not just with an incorrigible and disconcertingly articulate child, but also with teachers, government and school bureaucracies, and the judiciary—all empowering things for a woman to learn. She also begins to gain a perspective she did not have before, moving gradually from a victim-blaming stance to the realization that whatever the faults of the victims, the killings were wrong. Yet although she has spoken about Candy's death to an audience opposed to the killings, she has no desire to secure justice for Candy, let alone to engage in political action as a response.

The last three stories are more what we would like to think of as "moving forward" and "breaking through". Filomena is all about seeking justice for her grandson Jose from Day Two. She marches off with Jose's partner Jenny to the CHR to have the case documented, and

later joins an organization that occasionally mobilizes to denounce the killings. Megan becomes involved in a more consistent form of political action, a theater group through which she can reach out beyond her own personal quest for justice to the conscience of a society that has yet to confront its own complicity in injustice. And finally, there is Sarah, publicly denouncing her nephew's killer and fighting fiercely, at the risk of her life, for the sake of a better life for other bereaved families and for her urban poor community.

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The women in our stories have become part of a new underclass among the urban poor: ostracized and isolated by their neighbors, threatened by barangay officials and their loved ones' murderers, vulnerable to sexual exploitation by police and drug lords and their own kin. But they are also actively dealing with their situation, taking charge of their own lives and those of their families. And as members of an emergent community of those bereaved by the drug-related killings, they have the potential not only to surmount their personal and familial tragedies, but also to surmount the tragedy of their nation: by joining others in the same circumstances, by seeking justice collectively for their loved ones, by coming to view the deaths of their loved ones as the calculated cost of a political project, and by enlisting in the resistance to that project.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Shebana Alqaseer is a graduate student of the Department of Women and Development of the College of Social Work and Community Development at the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman. She has handled gender and human rights projects for International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), PILIPINA: Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino (PILIPINA), and EveryWoman. She has also served as the UN Women Philippines Office's national consultant for young women's political participation, among other engagements during her six years working in the development sector. She is currently the program manager for the UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies-Oxfam Research project and a gender reform consultant under The Asia Foundation's Coalitions for Change.

Reuben James Barrete is currently program director in a business-led NGO engaging in efforts to redefine men's roles in taking action on gender inequality. Previous to this, he worked as program manager at INCITEGov, handling its European Union-Social Protection Project in the Philippines. He previously served as communications officer at the Philippine government's Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). He holds a Master of Arts in International Studies from UP Diliman.

Dawn Marie Pavillar Castro holds a Master of Arts in Women and Development from UP Diliman. She is currently the advocacy officer of Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (WE Act 1325) for its project on Women's Empowerment for Leadership in Development and Peace in the Bangsamoro. She is also the project manager of the PILIPINA project called "Strengthening Women's Voices to Promote Democratic Values", funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. She is also a member of the secretariat

of EveryWoman, a national coalition united in its defense of Filipino women's human dignity and rights and in the promotion of women's meaningful participation in the political sphere.

Julie Zarene De Guzman is project coordinator for the national NGO LILAK, establishing a feminist learning space for indigenous women leaders. She was previously employed at the Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), in which she worked for the mainstreaming of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersexed (LGBTI) rights in the Commission and for peer education for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women with disabilities. A member of PILIPINA, she believes that the lived experiences of women, girls, and LGBTI persons should be the starting point of the conversation about their rights. She graduated with a Master's degree in Women and Development from UP Diliman in 2019.

Eleanor R. Dionisio has been a member of the feminist group PILIPINA since the early 1980s. When this project was first conceived in 2017, she was an associate director of the John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues (JJCICSI) and lead research associate of its Church and Society Program. Since October 2018 she has been a consultant of the Archdiocesan Institute for Research and Development (AIRD), a sub-office of the Office for the Promotion of the New Evangelization (OPNE) at the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila.

Diana Kathrina Fontamillas is a feminist in progress, currently finishing her Masters on Women and Development at UP Diliman. She has spent over a decade in development work focused on women's human rights.

Jurgette Honculada is among the early members of the feminist group PILIPINA. A journalism graduate, she worked long years in labor education in Mindanao and Manila, moving on to gender activism and advocacy in the heady days of the presidencies of Corazon C. Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos. Like others, she was stunned, stumped, and stymied by the Duterte tsunami that compelled a revisiting and relearning of the canons of social change and gender dynamics. Nonetheless she finds hope in a new generation of feminists, tech-savvy and inquisitive, now

working in tandem with their seniors to address gender and social change vis-a-vis the quasi-apocalpytic combination of the Duterte administration and the coronavirus pandemic.

July is working to complete his Master of Arts in Community Development and has long been involved in advocacy efforts for human rights. His interaction with families of victims of the drug-related killings and his experience with organizations responding to these killings has inspired him to do research, join advocacies, and participate in mobilizations on human rights.

Lara longs for a society in which women are respected and given equal opportunities to grow their infinite capacities. She is passionate about raising awareness and advocating for women empowerment through social media. Interviewing women closely related to victims of the drug-related killings under the Duterte administration made her realize that much is still needed to make society aware of the multiple burdens women have to bear. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Community Development and hopes that she will inspire other women through her musings and stories.

Louie is a graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Community Development. She is a keen analyst of the gender impact of policies and development efforts in the Philippines. This interest spurred her research on the stories of women in communities confronted with killings under Duterte's anti-drug campaign. She aims to make herself better in her field through experiences with communities of empowered women.

Joshua Carlo Tenorio Pile is a communications specialist, researcher, and development worker with experience in areas like armed conflict and peace-building, democracy, governance, gender and masculinities, populism, and human rights. He is pursuing his Master's degree in Community Development in the College of Social Work and Development in the University of the Philippines Diliman while working as a writer for the Diokno Foundation and a researcher for a UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies project on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Mary Racelis is a research scientist with the Institute of Philippine Culture and a professorial lecturer with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the Ateneo de Manila University School of Sciences. She also teaches at the Department of Anthropology at UP Diliman. Her research and publications focus on the urban poor, community organizing, civil society, gender, children, social justice, and human rights. The insights from these research interests enter into her extensive partnerships with NGOs. She joined the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in New York in 1979 as the Senior Specialist on Women's Development and Community Participation, and became UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, based in Kenya, in 1983. The Ford Foundation appointed her country director for the Philippines from 1992 to 1997. She is proudest of her five children, thirteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Maria Cleofe Gettie C. Sandoval, J.D. has served as a lawyer for marginalized sectors, especially women, with an alternative law group; as chief of staff of Abanse! Pinay, the first women's party-list group in the Philippines; as director for policy at the Philippine government's National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC); and as assistant secretary for policy and later as undersecretary for programs at OPAPP. She has participated in writing and lobbying for landmark laws on women, such as those on Sexual Harassment, Violence Against Women and their Children, Trafficking, the Magna Carta of Women, the Safe Spaces Act, and the Anti-Torture Law. She currently teaches at her legal alma mater, the Ateneo de Manila University's School of Law.

Liza T. Tumulak is program coordinator of an NGO which works with urban poor communities in the southern part of the Philippines. She is engaged in organizing and training on the issues of housing and women's human rights.

Elizabeth U. Yang is the national coordinator of PILIPINA. For this documentation project, she was mainly responsible for identifying the women who were willing to be interviewed and linking them with the team of writers.

Astrid Yu is a young feminist with a strong sense of privacy. Hence she has declined to say anything else about herself.

"In this book, nineteen courageous female survivors tell eighteen stories of grief, trauma, recovery, and hope of a new beginning. As readers follow the trajectory from horror to hope, they come to admire the capacity of women to overcome trauma while struggling to find a new life."

- DR. MARY RACELIS, RESEARCH SCIENTIST, INSTITUTE OF PHILIPPINE CULTURE, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

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