

THE FILIPINO VOICES MANIFESTO
(1st Edition Draft)

In the beginning was a word, and that word was made into a sentence and that sentence formed a paragraph which grew into a blog post.. That blog post would eventually become a plethora of articles, and thus the power of a blog had materialized.

With a few individuals who participated in the creation of that word, had now come, even more individuals, writers, and contributors. It just so happens they were Filipino, and thus, Filipino Voices was born.

That my friends and dear readers is how Filipino Voices essentially, in a very generalized term, came to be. And yet, because we just started in April 1st of this year, the growing pains of this collaboration has already been felt.

And so comes the need to formulate principles, not so much guidelines, as to what Filipino Voices is all about, and what it shall stand for, above that of writers who will always contribute articles independently of each other.

This specific article is going to be a brief undertaking which will hopefully give our readers a bit more of an understanding as to what exactly makes Filipino Voices tick, focusing on the dynamics of this collaboration, and how its relevance is important to the growing landscape of New Media in The Philippines.

Furthermore, we will try to provide clarity with a brief explanation on our Editorial Policy, or probably a lack thereof, which gives great freedom for our writers to express themselves in style and interest, as well as providing an outlet for their passion to shine through.

And lastly, some closing thoughts and a challenge, to the writers, contributors, and readers of Filipino Voices

Four parts

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1. The Wisdom of The Crowd

Who knew that applied behavioral economics and game theory, could find itself within the confines of Filipino Voices, but it just so happens, it can apply, if, in my opinion, the independence of the individual writers, contributors, and readers is kept intact.

The book, “The Wisdom of The Crowds” by James Surowiecki, provide us with a simple framework and concept that can easily apply to Filipino Voices, especially as we grow as a collaboration.

The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations, is about the aggregation of information in groups, resulting in decisions that, he argues, are often better than could have been made by any single member of the group. The book presents numerous case studies and [anecdotes](#) to illustrate its argument, and touches on several fields, primarily [economics](#) and [psychology](#).

The opening anecdote relates [Francis Galton](#)'s surprise that the crowd at a county fair accurately guessed the weight of an ox when their individual guesses were averaged (the average was closer to the ox's true butchered weight than the estimates of most crowd members, and also closer than any of the separate estimates made by cattle experts).^[1]

The book relates to diverse collections of independently-deciding individuals, rather than [crowd psychology](#) as traditionally understood. Its central thesis, that a diverse collection of independently-deciding individuals is likely to make certain types of decisions and predictions better than individuals or even experts, draws many parallels with statistical [sampling](#), but there is little overt discussion of statistics in the book.

Here is something, if even on the concept alone, that can help us understand the usefulness of how groups can contribute to a better understanding and a better result in terms of decision making, and in our case, maybe in terms of our views and analysis on issues of great importance.

The wisdom of the crowd can only work, if each individual contributes independently of one another.

To rely, solely on others' views and opinions can not only turn this theory upside-down, but can inevitably lead to what could be termed as "The Stupidity of The crowd".

The stupidity of the crowd, in my opinion lies when individuals cease to think independently of one another. If we can isolate the views and opinions of individuals, then we have a better shot at arriving at a better outcome.

In any case, as the old saying goes, two heads are better than one, and in this collaborative, a multiple of writers and contributors may just be better than an individual writer.

2. Citizen Media

It is our fervent hope that a part of the vision for Filipino Voices is the inclusion of more citizens as we try to bring the voices of more Filipinos into the fold, the service aspect of our collaboration can be achieved, and the true aspect of new media can be realized.

As Filipinos, we have a great opportunity for such citizen participation to actually take hold. We are connected through the great power of text messaging, and in a few years, hopefully sooner rather than later, more and more of our fellow Filipinos will be able to connect to the internet, and we will be in a better position to deliver relevant information at a faster rate.

When we mention citizen media, we are talking about participation, and this must also be part of our greater vision for FV.

Technology has given us the tools needed for the easy participation of ordinary citizens in creating media. With the rise of technology, we are now able to focus on growing our network and focusing on our content.

We have Wordpress, the blogging platform that we use, but there is also Blogger, Livejournal, Multiply, and others, in which posting content has never been easier than ever before.

It is probably going to be the greatest potential for our society to take back our media, for us to have a say in what we want to read and discuss, for us to have a say as to how long stories get covered, and for us to finally decide when an issue is finally resolved.

The true power of citizen media lies in the power of a deep and vast network of ordinary citizens, such a network that we can tap into for information, knowledge, and in our case, passion in making a difference. We can tap into analysis and thought that can often be overlooked by traditional media. When traditional media taps into a select group of writers to offer “opinions”, we can tap into the deep ocean of wisdom of our citizenry for that much needed out of the box thinking.

Citizen media will play a big part in the future of Filipino Voices. As we tap into the experiences and passion of our writers, contributors, readers, and citizens, we will have a network that is dynamic and able to serve up fresh perspectives, fresh information, and a new found energy in knowing that a new dawn has arrived in The Philippine media landscape. And as Martin Luther King Jr. said, I can see the mountaintop. But hopefully, in our case, let's reach it together.

3. Editorial Policy

Balance

Now, let me take a little heavy tone for just one second, and I promise to be as gentle as possible. When we start to complain that we are becoming one-sided, or have veered off to where one would think FV should be going, there must be a realization that is made. This realization is that each contributor and writer can provide that balance. Unlike, a bureaucracy in which the decisions are made by a few, in FV, the decisions are made by each individual writer/contributor/commentator.

You don't need to petition for a spot at FV, it's there for the taking. You don't need to lobby the Senate or Congress, you can take the spotlight for yourself.

If the path we are taking is slightly off, then you have the power to steer.

It's a cop out, if one could think of it as such, that much of what we see, the woe is me attitude of many in society is applied to FV. If one does not like what is being said, what is being written, then certainly the challenge, and the opportunity, is there for you to make that correction.

In many other new media outlets, where like-opinionated individuals flock to cheer on their like-minded counterparts, writers, and bloggers, it is our fervent hope that this shall not be the case with FV. This is where the friction is coming from, because it so much harder to come to a place where you are not sure that your views will be challenged rather than praised, where every word you write is out there for scrutiny.

In my opinion, this is where much of the more flocked too sites out there have gone astray. Believe me when I say this, that I enjoy sites like DailyKos, and even very conservative blogs, but when the site has become the main propaganda tool for just one side of the debate, then the balance is not there, and the readers are not served.

We at FV may not cater to the extreme views on a collective basis, but each individual is allowed to make that decision. And we certainly should pride ourselves in the fact that all the views are being represented. And if there is any part of our vision that should be enshrined with this thought in mind, then let that vision be to provide a balanced point of view on all issues, through the efforts of the individual writers.

But I believe foundation of balance has already been set for this collaboration, but we certainly need to do more in order to incorporate the views of other sectors of our society. This shall be achieved in due time.

With Regards to News

An informed citizenry is better equipped to tackle the issues of the day, to ponder the problems and solutions that are inherent in these news stories. When there are breaking news, and when news is coming at us at a fast pace, we have to be able to cover it, so as to provide a starting point for discussions.

Thus our informed readers is able to discern for themselves and able to formulate a better opinion on

matters of great importance.

When our writers and contributors have specific articles focused on current events, this is important because it gives our readers a better understanding of what is happening in and around our nation, as well as towards what is happening globally.

And so we also have to face the fact that globalization has taken place, and if we want to stay relevant and know why policies in of The United Nation's and World Trade Organization and ASEAN can affect us, then we must stay informed. We have to realize that trade policies with other countries can affect us too. And why our micro economic factors tis tied to the macro economic factors of our nation, and in the end, it can all tie up to the global economy.

This is basis enough, in my view, as to why we should keep aware of global news, but certainly have a focus on our local events.

Information is the key that stops us from believing mere propaganda,

With regards to Politics and Social Commentary

This is where the bulk of Filipino Voices is centered and focused on. With such a diversity of topics that can be discussed under this umbrella, we can cover many issues that face our nation. We provide much leeway as to the topics that can be discussed and written about, but of course the three most important subjects will always be that of News, Politics, and that of Social Commentary.

Further Editorial Policy Thoughts

Each contributor has a specific passion, and because of this, I feel, that we can gain enough insight, into many aspects of current events, news, politics, and society.

Many of the writers were chosen because they have a certain niche in which they can contribute. There are those who can provide input from the perspective of a teacher, a former professor, a student, a lawyer, and engineer, a journalist, and even in the field of IT. We are going for maximum diversity, so that views and opinions are seen from all angles.

Thus, we have a microcosm of a democracy that has been formed through a blog. A collaborative effort, where voices can be heard, where discussion is encouraged, and where what is important to one person may not necessarily be important to the other.

There is a need, for many to try to zero in on what exactly Filipino Voices should have as a mission or ultimate goal. And I have remained steadfast in the fact, that it should be to spur on debate, discussion, dissent, and discourse on the issues, and even current events that are happening to all Filipinos.

Six months into this blog, tensions are already high, and this is because we have put forth some of the most passionate individuals in the blogosphere. This was to be expected, and I would not have it any other way.

But because we are such in an infancy stage, we have yet to truly get a feel of what works, and what doesn't. We have yet to truly appreciate in hindsight, because that hindsight is only six months old.

We will not be replicating mainstream media, because frankly, mainstream media has too much red tape and policy to jive with what blogging should be. Freedom of expression through the untainted writings of our contributors, that is the ultimate method in our madness.

Thus, we must be able to adapt to the situation at hand. Because we are a growing collaboration, we have more than enough firepower, for lack of a better word, to dive into many aspects of the news, politics, government, and social concerns.

But as I have said, I am only the editor not chief, we are in this together, lend me your voice and your thoughts, for yours is as good as mine. And an open door policy is always encouraged, and even public dissent is never out of bounds.

In all honesty, I'd rather that each writer battle out their views and opinions, their analysis and points of contention, rather than everyone agreeing on everything. There is respect in knowing that we can count on each other to be critical, not of the person, but on his arguments and his views. This is the hallmark of what distinguishes Filipino Voices from other collaborative blogs, because it is a collaboration of a dysfunctional family. Where dissent, as I always say, is appreciated because it is non-conforming.

Let the cream of the crop, in terms of ideas, solutions, and views, rise to the top, not because they are propped up by agreeing followers, but because that certain view or opinion has withstood the fervent attempts of its detractors and oppositions.

This is a collaboration like no other, because it is not a right-wing blog, it is not a left-wing blog, neither is it a conservative or progressive blog, it is a blog that is rooted in one overarching goal, to discuss and exchange ideas, providing the reader, a rare glimpse of different views in one place.

If there is a greater goal, in a collective sense, above that of providing independent thought and analysis, independent interests through our writers, is that of the most general term of them all, and yet, one that should be on our minds, since it is therefore our growing responsibility, and that is of making a difference, through taking stands, not only in at FV, but by taking it beyond the realm of the virtual and into reality.

I do get a sense, that while the end goal is the same, to make a difference, by discussing relevant issues of the day, the way we go about pursuing this goal is different. And that's fine, this is what is supposed to be happening. If one view, one style, one interest were served at FV, it would cease to be a plurality of voices, and become singular altogether.

And so, if it is an issue that needs to be discussed, then be prepared to spend hours on end, in writing about that issue, otherwise, if you want it handed down and simply placed into the fold of FV, you may be disappointed. Take action, that is the key step. If there is a void, then take responsibility.

If there is one thing that is required, and that is passion, I reiterate this much during discussions, because in the end, this is what will finally show up, this will be the main factor towards the longevity of Filipino Voices. Those who are in it for other reasons, I'm sorry, but it will show up eventually. Call it the ultimate test, not hazing, just a clear indication if one is truly serious about the issues, or just wants to serve up an intellectual bonanza to claim the medal of genius and overlord of all discussions and debates.

We must, and this is imperative, go above our own selfish desires, and see the responsibility that has been thrust upon us. While it is good to dwell on the events of the day, let us not be dictated by these events, or we will forever be chasing stories, instead of making them. Forever covering stories, instead of digging deeper and finding the true issues that lie behind all the events that make up the day.

Yes, we are Filipino Voices, but as we move ahead, let us realize, that as we grow, as our influence widens, there is a need to step back and internalize, just what is truly in the service of The Filipino. Must we write about what interests us, as compared to what is important.

And yet, that is subjective, as with anything that is written in the scope of opinion. And in the end, we must move for self editing, because we are not mainstream media, we don't want to be reincarnate of the beast, rather we are going for an evolution, a step above. A service that has not been rendered upon to the Philippine public, and a service that is most needed, if we are truly to differentiate ourselves.

Having balance is a big responsibility on our part, as Filipino Voices becomes more widely viewed, we need to be able to realize that we also cater to many of those who don't necessarily agree with our own individual point of views.

The editorial policies are more geared towards the collective rather than that of the individual writers, again this ties in with what The Wisdom of The Crowds thought process.

But as for the writings of individual writers, I'm sorry, but you must defend your views yourself, for in the end, it will be a test to the true merits of your argument, the true merits of your interest and conviction.

And of course, a fair warning to anyone, contemplating FV suicide, don't take the plunge unless you have some thick skin my friend, it burns, when the discussion gets heated, I'm sure there are no permanent animosity, but such is the result when so much passion runs in the veins of so many of our readers, writers, and contributors.

There are no rules, no tightropes that we must walk. Most everything is permissible within the confines of our laws that is.

We make it easy for your views to be heard, for your articles to be published, no hassles, no worries, concentrate on what you are good at, and hopefully that means writing interesting, thought provoking, and relevant articles on issues, and maybe sometimes non-issues that are also important to you.

The readers is the main beneficiaries, write for them, and not only for yourself. Enjoy what you do, because ultimately, we must realize, that we are all in this together, and that in unity there is beauty in knowing that all the bases are covered, and we can truly represent the voice of The Filipinos, which in the end can lead to fruitful discussions.

An Imposition That Can Lead To Censorship

This is where it all starts, as to why so many journalists struggle with their work, the imposition of a strict editorial oversight over their work, by their editors, which is to have them on a short leash, reporting on things only the editor decides is relevant.

To impose on the writers, what they can or cannot write about, can lead to a case where cautious writers will be the hallmark of Filipino Voices. The turmoil, here, is caused when there is a lack of consensus as to what should and should not be written about.

But, the clear solution is that if you write about it, then own it, defend it, and know that you will be challenged. Criticism is our friend, without it, there can be no growth, there can be no realization, there can be no enlightenment, and we will be fools in the end, agreeing to agree, not knowing, we are fools.

4. Closing Thoughts

FV, in the end, is bigger than any individual writer or contributor. It shall embody voices from all sectors, such that all is represented. Its focus is to instill knowledge, and provide analysis, through the articles of writers and contributors.

In the near future, and as we move ahead, we will, and shall, as in the beginning, manifest our destinies, not only in the online world where our articles can be found, but in the physical world, where we are and will be making a difference.

Sometimes, a vision, need not be a set of guidelines towards an end goal.. It can be a continuing focus.. and as such, the focus should also be on serving The Filipino people. It shall be open to interpretation, such is always the case with FV. Because, even in our vision, debate is still key.

This is ongoing, and the best organizations are always those who are versatile, able to adjust to the changing times. For us to be relevant, we must realize and know our audience, we must keep with the pulse, or fade into obscurity.

We must be open to marketing ourselves, we must be able to inform, but keep the attention of our readers too. It's a delicate balance, but a balance that must be made. A message is only as good if this message is heard. If no one is listening, then we will have failed.

We have tackled the wisdom of the crowds, and how the concept lends FV the kind of basis to which a growing collaboration is needed to better understand the issues.

We have also tackled citizen media, of which FV, by independently reporting and analyzing the current issues that we find ourselves with, can be a strength for the future of this collaboration. It is also a wake up call, for us to realize that even with the success of FV, we have much to do, we have individual sectors to tap into, and we have the citizenry for us to rely on towards the better understanding of overlooked issues.

We are moving away from the more traditional structure of an overseeing Editorial Body, and we are moving towards the independence of each writer, contributor, and reader, in order for us secure a vast resource of untapped citizenry waiting to contribute to a more democratic information age.

Rest assured, by doing all of these things, we can keep our independence, we can keep our uniqueness, we can remain relevant, and we can stay and continue to grow as an influential collaboration, with a reach as unlimited as we allow ourselves to have.

Making a difference isn't easy my dear friends, colleagues, and readers. But if we must do all of these things, then it shall be done.

We are moving from not only contributing, but participating in a greater dialogue, and whatever you want this dialogue to be, your space is reserved here, at Filipino Voices, be heard, or "forever hold your peace".

Remain engaged, or stop complaining about our nation's lack of progress.

If you can't so much as participate in the change, then you, by default have become the agent of stagnation.

And so, this is our challenge, our responsibility. To stay a cohesive unit and still remain independent of each other. Participate online as we deliver service offline. To provide not only hard hitting and passionate thoughts and opinion, but to give a platform where discussion, debate, and even dissent is encouraged.

To remain focused on our own passion and interest, but to always remember that there is a greater vision of service to our fellow Filipinos. This service is rooted in providing knowledge and letting our readers decide and discern for themselves. If knowledge is key to our collaborative, then so too must understanding.

At the end of the day, we challenge each other, but in hopes of keeping our union strong and unwavering, we must be able to sit down and realize that in our difference, we are united in our love of our people. The strength and longevity of this collaboration is tested when after all is said and done, when we have finished the debate and the discussion, that we are able to sit down over a cup of coffee, and are magnanimous in our resolve to uplift our nation.

This is Filipino Voices a collaboration of passionate Filipinos who has realized that the pen is truly mightier than the sword, who tackles the issues of the day. News, Politics, and Social Commentary shall be our bedrock and our focus. And because we fervently believe in the independence of our writers to choose and decide for themselves the course that they pursue, nothing is set in stone, it is just a guide. There is a choice that each writer must make, and the writer will always be free to speak his/her mind, without the pressure of an editorial body.

As we move forward my dear colleagues and our readers, we realize that there are much more in store if we believe that this is the start of something great that will help lead to a positive change in helping our nation and our people. We can make an impact, we are doing so now, and it will always be our choice to keep on keeping on.

As a part of new media in The Philippines, we are on the cusp of an upward trajectory, where our reach is only as limited as our resolve to move forward.

Good things lie ahead, a difference we are making, a wonderful journey with great colleagues and friends, and it all started back in April of this year. Imagine the possibilities in the months and years to come.

5. The Challenge

With all this said, here's a challenge for the writers, contributors, and readers, write a one paragraph vision, encapsulating your sentiment as to what FV should be and should stand for.

References: Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wisdom_of_Crowds]