

# MAPALAD ANG INYONG MGA APO

## Sulat Para Kay Lolo at Lola Beterano

ni XIAO CHUA

Mahal naming Lolo at Lola:

Kayo raw ang aming *hero*!

Pero sa aming henerasyon, ang *hero* na alam namin ay si Hercules, malakas na Diyos ng mitolohiyang Griyego, o si Rizal na super galing, o si Superman, Batman o Spiderman na may angking lakas. Ang hirap palang maging *hero*. Kailangan sikat, naaalala.

Kayo po, di naming madalas maalala, pahalagahan. Marami sa amin hindi alam ang nagawa niyo.

Pero kailangan naming matutunan na ang bayani pala, bago dumating ang mga *conquistador*, ay ang mandirigma, ang ordinaryong timawa, ang hangaway, ang mangangayaw, ang bagani—kasama sa bayan at nagsisilbi sa bayan nang walang hinihinging kapalit. Walang pakialam kung sisikat, basta't ipinaglalaman ang mga bagay na pinakamahalaga sa Pinoy—buhay, ginhawa at dangal.

Mas ok pala ang konseptong Pinoy. Sapagkat tulad ko ngayon, noong tumawag si Inang Bayan sa inyo noong 1941, kayo noon ay isang anak, isang ama, isang ina, isang estudyante, isang manggagawa, isang magsasaka. Napasabak sa lupit ng digmaan at mula “boys and girls” ay napaaga ang “maturity” patungo sa pagiging ganap na lalaki at babae. Napatunayan niyo na hindi man kayo mga Superman, pwede maging bayani.

Pero may mga nagsabi, talunan raw kayong mga bayaning Pilipino. Ang nagligtas daw sa Pilipinas mula sa mga Hapones ay si MacArthur at ang mga Kano.

Ngunit kung malalaman ang tunay na pangyayari, winner kayo lolo at lola...

Ang saya at ang payapa ng buhay niyo, imahe ng kaastigan ang ating pangulong Quezon, protektado tayo ng pinakamalakas na bansa. Ano ba ang laban ng mga Hapones e ang liliit nila, ang rurupok ng mga produktong mula sa kanila.

Iyon pala, matagal na nila tayong inoobserbahan. At noong 8 Disyembre 1941, tayo ay kanilang sinorpresa.

Ang lakas pala ng mga Hapones. Natameme si MacArthur at hindi nakakilos agad sa mga unang oras na iyon. Panahon iyon ng Kapaskuhan ngunit kailangan niyong iwan ang inyong pamilya. Pero excited kayo. Sa inyong kabataan akala ninyo piknik lang ang digmaan.

Ngunit hindi pala madali. 12 bala lamang ang ibinigay sa inyo nang salubungin niyo ang malaking pwersang Hapones sa Lingayen. Kinailangan niyong umurong. Sa sobrang laki ng pwersa ng kalaban, kayong lahat na mga pwersang Pilipino at mga Amerikano ay pinapunta sa Bataan at Corregidor para mas maka-*focus* sa pagtatanggol kay Inang Bayan.

Nangako si Presidente Roosevelt na magpapadala sa inyo ng pagkain, mga gamot at karagdagang pwersa. High morale kayo. Hindi makapasok ang mga Hapones sa Bataan. Sumuko na ang lahat ng bansa sa Timog Silangang Asya sa Hapones, tayo na lang ang hindi. Ginagamitan pa kayo ng *psy-war* ng propagandang Hapones, pinapakitaan kayo ng mga larawan ng inyong pamilya at ng mga seksing babae, pero hindi kayo umuwi.

Pero nag-iba ng isip ang gobyernong Amerikano. Ang mas masamang kalaban, si Hitler muna, ang tatalunin. Wala pa lang pagkain, gamot at mga karagdang pwersa na paparating. Tila ininwan nila ang mga Pilipino at ang kanilang sariling kababayan dito sa Pilipinas. Umalis man sina MacArthur at Quezon, nanghihina man kayo, gutom, sabik sa yakap ng inyong pamilya, at nakikita na namamatay sa inyong harapan ang inyong mga kaibigan, hindi kayo umuwi. Patuloy kayong lumaban. Sa kawalan ng bala, naghuhulog na lamang kayo ng malalaking bato mula sa Bundok Samat upang labanan ang mga Hapones.

Sabi niyo, kung hindi lamang sumuko ang mga Amerikano, lalaban kayo hanggang sa huli, patay kung patay! Bakit? Dahil iniisip po ninyo ang buhay, ginhawa at dangal ng inyong mga anak at inyong mga apo? Alam niyo po ba na dahil sa inyong patuloy na paglaban ay nakapagtransmit pa nang mahalagang impormasyon ang Monkey Point Station sa Corregidor na nagamit upang magwagi ang pwersang Amerikano laban sa mga Hapones sa Coral Sea at Midway at sa kalaunan, mapagwagian ang buong digmaang Pasipiko?

Bumagsak man ang Bataan, sumuko man ang Corregidor, tayo pa rin ang pinakahuling bansa na sumuko sa Hapones sa Asya. Sabi ng Primer Ministro ng Britanya, Winston Churchill, kayo ang “Greatest Warrior in the World.”

Pinalakad man kayo sa Death March sa ilalim ng araw ng tag-init sa loob ng tinatayang 133 kilometro, gutom at uhaw man, tinulungan niyo ang kasama niyo na nanghihina na magtuloy, ayaw niyong mapahamak sila, mabayoneta sila. Mas paglalakbay tungong kamatayan ang tiniis niyong gutom, sakit, init, at sikip sa Kampu O’Donnell, kung saan araw-araw ang prusisyon ng patay na katawan ay hindi matapos-tapos.

Pero hindi kayo talunan. Oo marami ang nalagas, pero dumami ang Bataan at Corregidor sa inyong mga gerilyero sa mga probinsiya sa buong bansa! Iba’t ibang grupo kayo ng mga kabataan at mga kawal, marami sa inyo, mula sa iba’t ibang kolehiyo at pamantasan sa bansa. Ang laban ay itinuloy niyo, mga Marking’s, mga Hunter’s ROTC, mga Hukbalahap, at iba pa.

Pinalaya niyo ang mga bayan bago pa man dumating ang Kano. Napadali lamang ang kanilang pagpasok at pag-“liberate” sa atin dahil sa inyo. At liban sa karahasan ng mga Hapones, ang pagbomba ng Kano sa Maynila ang nagsulot upang ito ay maging “Second most destroyed Allied city in the world.” Tila nakasira pa sila.

Sa pelikulang “The Great Raid,” bidang-bida ang mga Kano sa tagumpay sa pinakamalaking POW camp ng mga Hapones sa Cabanatuan. Pero sa totoo lamang, malaki rin ang papel ni Kapitan Juan Pajota at ang mga gerilyerong Pinoy sa operasyon. Maging sa Bataan at sa Cordillera, sumama rin sa laban ang mga mandirigmang Ifugao.

At marami pang tagumpay, sa Bessang, sa Kiangan. Noong Setyembre 1945, sa inyo sa USAFIP-Northern Luzon sumuko si Hen. Yamashita, pero bakit sa mga aklat at pelikula, ang mga Kano ang bida? Kasama po sila, katuwang, pero hindi po sila ang dahilan.

Hindi po! Ang pag-aalay ninyo ng inyong kabataan ang nagpalaya sa amin.

Kilala namin ang mga pangalan ng mga bayani ng digmaan—Jose Abad Santos, Hen. Vicente Lim, Capt. Jesus Villamor, Sgt. Jose Calugas, Tomas Confesor, Guillermo Nakar. Ngunit kayong mga lola beterano ay hindi pahuhuli sa kabayanihan. Mula sa mahalagang papel ng panggagamot, pagbibigay ng pagkain, pag-espiya hanggang sa paghawak ng sandata nariyan kayo: Magdalena Leones, Remedios Paraiso (alias Commander Liwayway ng Tarlac at Pampanga), Felipa Culala (alias Dayang-dayang), Celia Mariano, Yay Panlilio, Josefa Capistrano, Conchita Sunico, Maria Orosa, Josefa Llanes Escoda. Maging ang Haponesang nakapangasawa ng Pinoy, si Masay Masuda Almazan, ay tumulong na mailigtas ang napakaraming buhay mula sa kalupitan ng mga Hapones sa San Narciso, Zambales.

Lolo at lola beterano, sana maalala naming mga mas bata na kayo ang dahilan kung bakit pwede naming gawin ang ibig namin. Bagama’t mahirap pa rin ang bata nating bansa, maaari pa rin kaming magkaroon ng buhay, ginhawa at dangal dahil isinakripisyo ninyo ang inyong kabataan, ang ginhawa at saya nito, at ang mismo niyong buhay. Kung wala kayo, wala kami.

Mapalad ang inyong mga apo. Kung ako ang inyong apo, ikukuwento ko kayo sa mga kaklase ko.

Sabi ni Andres Bonifacio, “Ampunin ang bayan kung nasa ay lunas ‘pagkat ginhawa niya ay para sa lahat.” Salamat po at inampon niyo ang bayan. At dahil inampon niyo ang bayan, apo niyo na kaming lahat. Karangalan po ito at saludo po kami sa inyo.

Dahil ang laki ng utang namin sa inyo, dapat naming itanong, ano ba ang dapat naming gawin upang maging karapat-dapat kami sa sakripisyo ninyo. Bata lang kami, walang kapangyarihan, walang pera, balak pa naming layasan ang bayan at ang iba sa amin nais pang kalimutan na Pinoy kami.

Hindi po sapat na bigyan lamang namin kayo ng tamang kompensasyon. Kailangang ipagpatuloy namin ang inyong pagmamahal sa bayan sa aming henerasyon. Subalit kailangan ba naming magbuwis palagi ng buhay sa pagmamahal sa bayan? Hindi kailangan sabi muli ni Bonifacio, “Ang kasipagan sa pag hahanap-buhay ay siyang tunay na pag ibig at pag mamahal sa sarili sa asawa, anak at kapatid o kabayan.”

Ito ang aming panunumpa sa inyo aming lolo at lola, at sa aming bayan. Sa aming maliit na paraan, sa aming makakayanan, itataguyod namin ang buhay, ginhawa at dangal tulad ng ginawa

niyo noong panahon ng digmaan. Hindi namin mamaliitin ang kayang gawin namin bilang mga indibidwal.

Dahil sa totoo lang, bago kayo naging bayani, kayo muna ay isang anak, isang ama, isang ina, isang estudyante, isang manggagawa, isang magsasaka.

Bakit mahal ko ang bayan ko? Dahil sa inyong mga mandirigma na nagsakripisyo ng lahat para lamang ako ay mabuhay—ang mga hangaway, ang mga Katipon, ang mga gerilyero, ang mga lumaban sa diktadura, ang kawal na patuloy na nagbubuwis ng buhay upang ipaglaban ang kalayaan.

Kami rin, mandirigma laban sa korupsiyon at kahirapan. Ito ang panata namin. Sana maging *proud* din kayo sa amin.

Nagmamahal,  
Ang inyong mga apo

[Post Script: NOONG PEBRERO 2011, MAYROON NA LAMANG NALALABING 28,158 NA BETERANONG PILIPINO NOONG WORLD WAR 2.

IPAKITA NATIN SA KANILA NA HINDI NASAYANG ANG KANILANG MGA SAKRISPISYO PARA SA ATIN.]

*Si Michael Charleston “Xiao” B. Chua ay kasalukuyang Pangalawang Pangulo ng Philippine Historical Association at nagtuturo ng Kasaysayan sa Pamantasang De La Salle Maynila. Siya ay mapapanood bilang isa sa mga panelista sa unang reality political talk show sa telebisyon sa Pilipinas, ang The Bottomline with Boy Abunda. Ang “Mapalad Ang Inyong Mga Apo” ay isa nang dokumentaryo na idinirehe nina Xiao Chua at Irineo Hernandez, III at isang produksyon ng Multi-Agency Task Force for the 2011 Observance of the Araw ng Kagitingan and Philippine Veterans Week.*

# BLESSED ARE YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

## A Letter for Our Veteran Lolos at Lolas

By XIAO CHUA

Dear Lolo and Lola

They told us that you are our heroes!

But for our generation, the hero we know of is a Hercules, a powerful deity in Greek Mythology, or a José Rizal who is super intelligent, or a Superman, Spiderman, or Batman with unique powers. It seems hard to become a hero. You have to be famous, remembered.

But we do not always remember you, we do not, always care for you. Many of us don't even know what you have fought for.

But we have to learn that the Filipino hero, "bayani," before the Spanish colonizers came, was the ordinary soldier, *timawa*, *hangaway*, *mangangayaw*, *bagani*. It didn't matter to them if they will be known, as long as they were fighting for the things most important to them—life (*buhay*), well-being (*ginhawa*) and honor (*dangal*).

The Filipino concept of "bayani" has more meaning for us. Because just as I am today, before the Motherland called you to serve her in 1941, you were back then just a son, a father, a mother, a student, a worker, a farmer. Exposed to the horrors of war, and matured instantly from little boys and girls to real men and women. You proved to us that even if you were not supermen, you can be heroes.

But some people tell us that you, Filipino veterans, lost the war. That the real liberators of this country were Gen. Douglas MacArthur and the Americans.

But if we're going to know the real story, lolo and lola, you are victorious!

Your life then was happy and peaceful, the image of our President Manuel Quezon was that of a strong leader, and we were protected by the mightiest country in the World. How can the Japanese fight us if they were shorter, their products we thought were all substandard.

But they've been watching us closely for quite some time. And on 8 December 1941, they caught us by surprise.

The Japanese forces were surprisingly strong. MacArthur wasn't able to act decisively in those early hours. It was Christmas time but you have to leave your families. And you were excited. In your youth, you thought that war was just a picnic.

But it was not to be easy. Only 12 bullets were given to each of you when you confronted the large Japanese forces in Lingayen. You needed to retreat. The enemy's number was so large

that you, the Filipino-American forces, were sent to Bataan and Corregidor to concentrate in defending the Motherland.

US President Franklin Roosevelt promised to send you reinforcements of food, medicine and additional forces. You were in high morale. The Japanese cannot enter Bataan. All of Southeast Asia already surrendered to the Japanese, except Bataan and Corregidor. Japanese propaganda even used psy-war techniques like showing you pictures of families and beautiful women, but you didn't go home.

But the American government changed their policy to prioritize the greater enemy—Hitler first. There will be no reinforcement of food, medicine and additional forces. They left the Filipinos and even their own countrymen here in the Philippines. Even if MacArthur and Quezon left, even if you were getting weaker, more hungry, longing for the embrace of your loved ones, and seeing your friends die in front of you, you didn't go home. You continued to fight. Lacking of bullets, you just used the big rocks from Mt. Samat against the Japanese.

You told us that if the Americans didn't surrender, you were going to fight to the death! Why? Because you were thinking of the life, well-being and honor of your children and grandchildren? Did you realize that because you continued fighting, the Monkey Point Station in Corregidor was able to transmit important information crucial to the victories in Coral Sea and Midway, which was decisive to the eventual victory in the Pacific?

Bataan fell, Corregidor surrendered, we were still the last country to surrender to the Japanese in Asia. According to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, you were the "Greatest Warrior in the World."

Even if they made you walk in the "Death March" under the heat of the summer sun for about 133 kilometers, hungry and thirsty, you still helped your weak comrades to walk on, you didn't want them to be in trouble, bayoneted. The real death march was when you suffered hunger, disease, and the heat in Camp O'Donnell, where every day, the procession of dead bodies never ended.

But you are not losers. Yes so many fell, but Bataan and Corregidor only became many with you, the guerillas in the provinces around the country! You came from different groups of young people and soldiers, many of you from different colleges and universities in the country. You continued the fight, Marking's, Hunter's ROTC, Hukbalahap, and many others.

You liberated the country even before the Americans came. Their return and "liberation" of our country was made easier because of you. And aside from the Japanese atrocities, the American artillery bombing of Manila made it, "Second most destroyed Allied city in the world." It seems they helped in the destruction.

In the film, "The Great Raid," the Americans spearheaded the victory to liberate the biggest Japanese POW camp in the Philippines. But in fact, the role played by Capt. Juan Pajota and his Filipino guerillas was crucial in the operation. In Bataan and in Cordillera, the Ifugao warriors joined the fight.

And more victories happened, in Bessang, in Kiangnan. In September 1945, Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita surrendered to you, forces of the USAFIP-Northern Luzon, but why is it that in books and films, only the Americans were the victors? They were with us, we were partners, but they weren't the reason.

No! We became free because you sacrificed your youth.

We know the names of the heroes of war—José Abad Santos, Gen. Vicente Lim, Capt. Jesus Villamor, Sgt. Jose Calugas, Tomas Confesor, and Guillermo Nakar. But you veteran lolas will not be left behind with your heroism. From your important role in healing the sick, giving of food, spying to your participation in the armed struggle you were there: Magdalena Leones, Remedios Paraiso (alias Commander Liwayway of Tarlac and Pampanga), Felipa Culala (alias Dayang-dayang), Celia Mariano, Yay Panlilio, Josefa Capistrano, Conchita Sunico, Maria Orosa, and Josefa Llanes Escoda. Even the Japanese who married a Filipino, Masay Masuda Almazan, helped in saving so many lives from the brutality of the Japanese. in San Narciso, Zambales.

Veteran lolos and lolas, we hope that we, the younger generation, will remember that you are the reason why we can do what we like. Even if our young country is still poor, we can still have life, well-being and honor because you sacrificed your youth, its well-being and joys, and your own life. We will not be here if not for you.

Blessed are your grandchildren. If I am your grandchild, I'll tell my classmates about you.

Andres Bonifacio, the Father of the Filipino Nation, said, “[Adopt] the country if your desire is to end your suffering, for her progress is for all.” Thank you for adopting our “bayan.” And since you adopted our country, we are all your grandchildren. We are honored and we salute you.

Because we owe you so much, we have to ask, what should we do to be worthy of your sacrifices. We are only young, we do not have power, we do not have wealth, we sometimes even desire to leave this country forever and some of us want to forget we are Filipinos.

It is not enough that we give you proper compensation. We need to continue your love of country in our generation. But do we need to always die so we can show our love for country? Not so, as according again to Bonifacio, “Diligence in the work that gives sustenance to thee is the true basis of love—love for thine own self, for thine wife and children, for thine brothers and countrymen.”

This is our pledge to you, our lolos and lolas, and to our “bayan.” In our own little way, with our best, we are going to promote life, well-being and honor as you have done so during the war. We are not going to belittle what we can do as individuals.

Because in fact, before you became heroes, you were first a child, a father, a mother, a student, a worker, a farmer.

Why do I love my country? Because of warriors like you who sacrificed everything so I can live—the *hangaways*, the members of the Katipunan, the World War II veterans, those who fought against tyranny, and the soldiers who continue to offer their lives to secure our freedom.

We are warriors against corruption and poverty. This is our pledge. I hope you also become proud of us.

Love, your grandchildren

[Post Script: IN FEBRUARY 2011, THERE WERE ONLY 28,158 LIVING WORLD WAR 2 VETERANS.

LET US SHOW THEM THAT THEIR SACRIFICES FOR US WERE NOT IN VAIN.]

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