

Active Vista International Human Rights Film Festival

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ACTIVE VISTA was established in 2005 by DAKILA – Philippine Collective for Modern Heroism (DAKILA), an organization building a movement of heroism towards social transformation.

DAKILA is a pioneering non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Philippines that has been actively working in the forefront of using creative and innovative forms in human rights education and advocacy work. It is a collective of artists, students, professionals and individuals committed to advocating social consciousness formation both among their industry peers and their immediate audiences.

DAKILA cultivates one’s innate heroism, organizes communities of “heroes” and creatively fosters social involvement by building one’s capacity to make change, influencing individuals and groups to be part of the movement for change, and taking on advocacies and social concerns to bring about strategic actions that make real change.

It was founded by Lourde de Veyra – a multi-awarded writer, journalist, spoken word artist, and pop culture icon; Noel Cabangon - a musician-activist; Ronnie Lazaro – a veteran actor, Buhawi Meneses – a rock star bassist of popular band Parokya ni Edgar; and Tado Jimenez - the late comedian-activist. Its artist-members come from various fields of arts as filmmakers, visual artists, musicians, actors, etc. from all over the country.

It is involved in the advocacies for climate justice, human rights, good governance and the campaigns to end human trafficking and gender discrimination; ensure just and lasting peace; promote road safety; and institute political, cultural and electoral reforms.

Active Vista

Active Vista is a word play on ACTIVE (dynamic) and VISTA (viewing), the dynamic way of viewing films. It sounds similar to the Filipino word for activist (*aktibista*). Active Vista (AV) brings attention to stories of human rights struggles to enable the public to help dismantle barricades that hinder

the pursuit of human rights. It adopted a vision of a society that respects, upholds and values the dignity, rights and freedom of its people.

It aims to:

- Raise awareness on social issues and concerns by providing platforms to effectively inform the public on prevalent social conditions;
- Provoke discourses on human conditions to enable the public to understand the political, economic, social and cultural causes and impact of human rights violations and to arrive at shared visions and solutions to address it;
- Foster a culture of human rights by influencing a new generation of advocates through the use of arts, media and popular culture as weapons to inform, enlighten and empower them;
- Empower the public to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights by inspiring them to recognize and fulfill their human responsibility to contribute to transformative social change;
- Gather individuals and groups to collaborate on human rights education and drive support towards the cause;
- Reach out to the broadest audience possible to develop a critical citizenry and open new platforms of expression and democratic participation; and
- Popularize the concern for human rights through narratives of human struggles so that the public may be able to empathize with the struggles and embrace them as their own.

The Active Vista Journey

Active Vista started as the advocacy film festival of DAKILA. The first edition of the festival was organized in December 2008 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the theme, “Cinema with a Conscience,” it brought together filmmakers, members of the civil society, government officials, business people, members of the academe and youth to spark the conversation on the power of cinema not only to entertain but to educate.

Active Vista bannered the theme, “True revolution begins in the imagination,” in its second edition in 2010 and expanded its program by having film screenings, three batches of advocacy filmmaking workshops held na-

tionwide and a film competition that encouraged young and aspiring filmmakers to tackle human rights issues and concerns.

Active Vista in 2012 bravely went to the extreme as it traveled to twenty cities across the country bringing about more than sixty human rights films to 22,000 audiences nationwide. Its advocacy filmmaking program trained fifty-five aspiring filmmakers and gave production grants to ten short films exploring the human rights issues of the festival theme, “Projecting Truth”.

Active Vista expanded its program in 2015 through the “Bayani Ba ‘To?” (Is This A Hero?) roadshow on history and heroism that presented the phenomenal film, *Heneral Luna* and engaged the partnerships of forty schools nationwide, making its mark in the field of audience development and human rights education in the Philippines.

Active Vista transitioned as an institutional program of DAKILA and transformed as a center for human rights education in 2016. It presented the 2nd edition of its “Bayani Ba ‘To?” forum presenting the film, *Ang Hapis at Himagsik ni Hermano Puli* (The Agony and the Fury of Hermano Puli) complemented with the discussion on *Heroism X Pag-ibig*. It included in the program a series of Youth Leaders and Educators Forums nationwide.

The 4th edition of Active Vista was launched in February 2016, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the historic EDSA People Power Revolution, the culmination of the series of civil resistance against human rights abuses during the Martial Rule that led to the restoration of democracy in the Philippines. The festival with the theme, “Truth X Imagination” opened simultaneously in key regional cities nationwide – Manila, Iloilo, Cebu, Dumaguete and Davao.

Since 2008, Active Vista has screened one hundred eighty-two films (eighty-five Filipino feature full-length films; sixteen international feature full-length films; thirty-three Filipino short films; eight international short films; forty Audio-Visual Competition Short Films) that were watched by 111,979 people (2008 - 3,500; 2010 - 28,737; 2012 - 22,500; 2015 - 20,480; 2016 - 36,762) in forty-two key cities and provinces nationwide. It has given workshops to 149 aspiring filmmakers across the country. It has engaged the partnership of 446 organizations – twenty embassies and international non-governmental organizations, twenty government agencies, thirty-two local governments, eighty-two local NGOs, eighty-two schools and universities, one hundred four academic institutions and student groups, sixty-two

media associations, and forty-four private businesses and companies – into human rights advocacy promotion.

Human Rights Education

In 2016, Active Vista evolved into a learning institution to address the pressing need for human rights education and to encourage social advocacy involvement in the Philippines. Active Vista facilitates the process of empowering citizens to become agents of social change. Its mission is to empower the public into contributing to relevant social transformation through education.

Active Vista believes in the importance of the recognition, understanding and respect for human rights as the integral foundation of a truly progressive society. It utilizes the power of transformative learning both in content and in pedagogy as a tool to empower citizens and the nation to develop and progress. It incites the value of shaping critical thought, encourages dynamism in views, and fosters spaces for discourse as fundamental requirements in addressing methods and directions of social transformation and as steps towards the education of its audiences as citizens. Active Vista recognizes the strength of creative expression whether in the arts, media or popular culture as modes of education in shaping public consciousness and action.

Active Vista implements the following programs:

1. Ibang Klase! Alternative Education Program;
2. Film and Human Rights Program;
3. Art and Advocacy Lab;
4. Human Rights Festival.

Ibang Klase! Alternative Education Program

Active Vista pursues relevant lifelong learning through the pursuit of knowledge, skills, values, and practices that form critical thinking, progressive ideas and creative innovations. “Ibang Klase!” (Different Class) is the alternative education program of Active Vista that aims to instill public awareness on their rights and responsibilities as citizens, raise their consciousness on social issues, and foster involvement in social transformation.

The program drives the collaborative effort of educators, artists, media practitioners, development specialists, cultural workers and human rights

advocates to contribute to the shaping of an empowered citizenry by conducting trainings, seminars, workshops or forums and providing learning materials, creative toolkits, and study guides in educating the public on social issues and concerns in both classroom or alternative classroom setting, in multi-disciplinary subjects and through multiple approaches.

The program consists of the following core components:

- *Pagpapakatao 101* (How To Be Human) - a course on the basic concepts of human rights and advocacy undertaken within the framework of social change. Participants through the course explore how human rights are essential to one's everyday life, livelihood and lifestyle. It takes the participants into the journey of one's humanity—using history, the universal principles of human rights, the Filipino psychology and culture—as lens;
- *Bayani Ba 'To?* (Is This a Hero?) - a roadshow forum that sparks discussions on valuable insights that impart the value of heroism to students from the lessons of history towards the realization that the deeds of heroes are not hackneyed fables but real, breathing examples of how to live their lives;
- *May K!* (Have the Right!) - offers a variety of educational courses anchored on the universal principles of rights, freedom, truth, reason, justice, independence and social progress. The courses provide basic knowledge on social issues, incite discourse and critical analysis, empower individuals to take stands, and develop strategies for action. Courses include *KASAYSAYAN*, a crash course on history designed to elicit critical discourse in examining the nation's past and identity as a nation in order to understand present societal issues and explore path to nation-building; *KULTURA NG KABAYANIHAN*, a course on reclaiming the concept of the *bayani* (hero); the Filipino culture of *bayanihan* (community spirit) and the formation of the *bayan* (nation); *KABATAAN AT KINABUKASAN*, a course on child rights; *KABABAIHAN*, a course on women's rights; *KASARIAN*, a course on gender rights; *KLIMA AT KALIKASAN*, a course on the impacts of climate change and the environmental degradation to humanity; and *KAPAYAPAAAN*, a course on peacebuilding.

Film and Human Rights Program

Active Vista provides access to a Film Catalogue of a wide array of socially relevant films and an opportunity for schools, organizations and

communities to screen them. The films are complemented with discussion guides, which are intended to spark meaningful discourse and provide a human rights lens on the social issues touched by the film. It brings these films to places where they are not readily available to spread awareness on human rights concerns, encourage conversations on the issues, and foster participation in nation-building.

Since providing access to socially relevant films is the heart of Active Vista, it carries out imperative and continuing educational work through its Film Screenings in schools, communities, public theaters and alternative spaces to promote audience development in both film and social advocacies. Screenings are complemented with forums aimed to elicit meaningful discourse, facilitate critical reflection and encourage concrete action.

The Film Education Program of Active Vista cultivates the marriage of film and advocacy in educating its audiences. It organizes activities geared toward the development of film's innate value as an educational medium that can be utilized to shape critical thought, influence culture, and foster social consciousness and action. It supports initiatives to help develop the film industry and its members as relevant allies in social advocacies. Through its Film Workshops, Active Vista focuses its lenses on real stories that impact social change in a series of filmmaking workshops and master classes that feature story development, film production, mentorship guidance, pitching and social impact planning. Active Vista initiates efforts to strengthen filmmaking as its ally in projecting truths on human struggles. It supports filmmakers in endeavors to provide knowledge and skills to effectively churn out their visions and wield them toward inspiring real world change. Through its Film Lab, Active Vista endeavors to support film ideas with clear social impact goals. It helps find ways to mobilize resources to support the development, production, promotion and distribution of these films. It actively seeks to screen relevant and compelling socially relevant films to broader audiences.

Art and Advocacy Lab Program

Active Vista is fueled by creative expression. Creativity allows audiences to understand concepts and conditions on human struggles and enables them to convey their insights and convictions on the social cause. Active Vista provides avenues for creative endeavors that shed light, spark discourses, and magnify actions. It conducts trainings, mentorship programs

and workshops for students, artists, educators, activists and development practitioners on the use of art, music, design, photography, storytelling, videos, digital media and other emerging platforms for social advocacies. It breeds a new generation of advocates whose fresh views and innovative approaches to human stories will inspire revolutions of the mind and create movements. It encourages new paradigms and forms of aesthetic expressions in telling stories in the context of advocacy.

The Active Vista Lab consists of three pioneering programs:

Heroes Hub

The Heroes Hub is a Fellowship Program of Youth Advocates for Human Rights. It takes root on the concept of the KATIPUNAN (Assembly) and aims to impart how the concept of heroism has translated to today's youth. The Fellowship Program aims to empower the Filipino Youth to be agents of social change. It offers a transformative learning process through the pursuit of knowledge, skills, values, and practices to form the youth's critical thinking, progressive ideas, and creative innovations which are fuel to their development as citizens and their participation in nation-building. It is a continuing learning process wherein the youth are given opportunities to connect, collaborate and create with their fellow youth. It provides spaces for immersion, discourse, expression and innovation to happen. It is an avenue for developing and nurturing ideas into action.

The Heroes Hub is a series of learning sessions designed to build the capacity of selected fellows in human rights advocacy work through especially designed courses, skills training and creative workshops to be held for a year. A variety of experts from the field of human rights, arts, and media guides, trains and mentors youth participants of the program.

Digibak: Digital Activism

Digibak is a portmanteau of "digital" and "tibak" (Filipino slang for activist). Digibak empowers advocates in using digital platforms and technologies for social advocacies. It banners the assertion that human rights are the same offline and online. The program develops support to digital media initiatives through a rights-based approach to further social advocacies. It addresses concerns on the prevailing culture of hate, violence, harassment and abuse online and the pressing digital human rights issues such as the online sexual abuse of children, fake news and trolls, online harassment

and bullying of women, LGBTQ+, children, use of cyber libel in the Cyber Crime Law to silence political dissent and activism, and Cyber Tokhang. The course provides

- an overview of the power of digital media;
- a presentation on basic tools on digital media and platforms;
- workshops on effective digital media communication;
- discussions on digital safety, security and protection; and
- training on pro-active digital engagement to counter discrimination, violence and abuse online as well as in promoting advocacy causes.

MartialLaw.ph

The MartialLaw.PH, a Digital Museum of Martial Law in the Philippines, is a virtual space serving as a living memorial to a pivotal period in Philippine history and serves as a platform to provoke critical reflection, inclusive learning, and vigilant remembrance through the multi-faceted lens of artistic expression. Education on the Marcos Era Martial Law, and the concepts and implications of martial rule are made available to the public through engaging platforms and in forms designed to spark their interest. The online hub is complemented by on-ground forums, exhibits and performances aimed at educating the youth on the country's dark past in the hope that in remembrance and understanding they take active vigilance in upholding the nation's democracy and freedom.

The Digital Museum of Martial Law in the Philippines was founded on 21 September 2016 by Dakila. MartialLaw.ph's digital exhibitions are being propagated, curated, and maintained by Active Vista while actively seeking individuals and groups who would like to contribute or collaborate in the endeavor.

Human Rights Festival

Active Vista reaches out to the broadest audience possible by continuing to explore various avenues for citizen engagement in its work. It seeks audiences beyond traditional public spaces and in remote areas through artistic endeavors and innovative initiatives to develop a critical citizenry and to open new platforms of expression and democratic participation. The Active Vista Festival seeks to bring attention to stories of human struggles through the arts as it presents a plethora of events to celebrate human rights.

The 4th and 5th edition of the Active Vista marked its transition from a film festival to a human rights festival, from a program of DAKILA to a learning center for human rights education. The transition of Active Vista came at a time when the human rights situation in the Philippines worsened with the rise in the death toll brought about by the war against drugs under the new administration. The 4th edition of Active Vista was launched before the 2016 Presidential Elections and culminated on Human Rights Day 2016. The 5th edition was held at the height of the attacks on human rights by the President's proclamations against human rights defenders. The 5th edition launched Active Vista as a Human Rights Festival departing from a mere film festival. The 5th edition of the film festival happened from 22 November – 10 December 2017 and became a celebration of human rights amid attacks on human rights and dignity.

The 2016 Active Vista International Human Rights Film Festival was held during the 22-27 February 2016 period and coincided with the 30th anniversary of the historic EDSA People Power Revolution. It had the theme: "Truth X Imagination" which calls for using imagination as a weapon against forgetting truth.

The 2016 Human Rights Film Festival had the following objectives:

- To educate a broad range of audiences on the importance of human rights in nation-building and social progress;
- To spark public conversations on global and local human rights issues;
- To mainstream human rights education in formal and alternative classroom setting; and
- To develop a new generation of human rights filmmakers.

According to Dakila Executive Director, Leni Velasco,¹

The greatest enemy of history is time. Thirty years ago, the Filipinos through collective action succeeded in getting rid of a fascist dictator, marking the end of a dark era known for its grave abuses and human rights violations. Thirty years ago, that was the narrative. Is it still the same one told today?

Active Vista sought to remind the public especially the younger generation who may not fully understand yet the importance of the EDSA

Revolution that truth was both in the obvious and the obscure. The problem was that “people had become afraid of the truth because it was a reflection of who we were and the society we built,” Velasco explained. She further explained

But truth, no matter how ugly, no matter how difficult, needs to be seen. Because it is only in acknowledging truth that we are liberated and are empowered to transform it. Active Vista hopes to be that undertaking – a platform to exorcise historical amnesia and usher this new generation into an understanding of the true essence of EDSA. The power of art is its ability to change perception, to change how people view the world. Active Vista inspires to do so through cinema, one viewer, at a time.

The Festival also welcomed the solidarity of its international guests, Anna Har, Festival Director of the Freedom Film Festival in Malaysia, and celebrated New York-based literary writer, feminist and human rights activist, Ninotchka Rosca. In ending, Velasco said, “Active Vista call on all Filipinos – young and old, the passionate and the disheartened, the dreamers and the realists, – to make imagination your weapon against forgetting truth.”

The films of the festival were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Relevant human rights messages;
2. Artistic excellence;
3. Ability to engage audiences; and
4. Accessibility of films.

For the Festival Opening, the Festival Committee selected a controversial and risky choice for an opening film - *EDSA XXX*. This premiered in 2012 at the Cinema One Originals Film Festival (an annual film festival organized by a major television station and film production network in the Philippines) and was shown at international film festivals like the Rotterdam International Film Festival. Its filmmaker Khavn dela Cruz is known as an avant-garde filmmaker.

EDSA XXX was chosen primarily because the opening of the 4th edition of the Festival coincided with the 30th anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution in the Philippines and the film’s messages dwelled primarily on the theme. *EDSA XXX* as opening film has the ability to engage

its audience, though some might find it alienating for the general audience because of its highly non-stereotype and artistic treatment. A musical about aliens does not fit rightly into the ordinary Filipino audience especially in a film that discusses the EDSA revolution.

However, the Festival Committee aimed to make a statement through the opening film. It aimed to shake the Filipino audience regarding 1) the key message of the film: “Nothing Ever Changes in the Ever-changing Republic,” and 2) the existence of different types of human rights films. The Festival Committee believed that while the film challenged the audience to think beyond the experimental treatment of the film, it also challenged the human rights community to expand beyond stereotypes of what a human rights film should be.

EDSA XXX took the audience forward to 2030, the year of the 44th anniversary of EDSA revolution to pose the question, “Have you ever wondered why nothing changes despite countless presidents?” The answer was given in the form of an absurdist cross between low-budget science-fiction musical and crazy political satire.

EDSA XXX Director, Khavn, explained²

Cinema is not there to be pleasant. It is there to stir, disturb, provoke, to punch the status quo instead of one’s time card, to stop the hiding behind sterilized, anesthetized, spineless art and calling it a fearless struggle for change. Cinema is a rupture and a revolt — a daily, hourly, minutely questioning of what’s right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, until the profane becomes the sacred. The profane is the sacred.

In 2016, Khavn made headlines by performing a thirteen-hour live piano film scoring. He set the record for the longest film concert as he unveiled his thirteen-hour autobiographical film *Simulacrum Tremendum* at the 45th International Film Festival Rotterdam.

EDSA XXX was screened on 24 February 2016 at Cinema 4 of Shang Cineplex, Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong City. The screening was attended by prominent human rights defenders like Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chairperson Chito Gascon, then Secretary Ging Deles of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), members of the different United Nations agencies led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Philippines (Mr. Ola Almgren), members of the diplo-

matic community led by the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Mr. Jaco Beerends), artists, filmmakers and celebrities like Jun “Bayaw” Sabayton, Ronnie Lazaro, Lourde de Veyra, and Aljur Abrenica, star of the historical epic, *Hermano Puli*.

For the second screening, Active Vista presented Jun Lana’s *Barber’s Tales* in partnership with the National Youth Commission, represented in the screening by then Commissioner Dingdong Dantes. In a statement, Commissioner Dingdong Dantes said³

This generation – our generation should learn from the patriotic sacrifice of each and every Filipino during that era, and embed the lessons of the People Power Revolution with our everyday lives. Because by doing so, we will be able to value, protect and be responsible [for] the democratic rights that we cherish today.

Today, the responsibility of keeping the faith and fire alive is upon us, the responsibility of building our nation from the winds of change the EDSA Revolution lent us. We are often charged [as] entitled, convenience-seekers and unconcerned. If only to prove them wrong, today presents to us an occasion to hold on to the promises of the bright future because of EDSA.

Festival Director Leni Velasco further added

Active Vista deems that films like *Barber’s Tales* are essential viewing especially for the youth of today who only get an idea of Martial Law through dusty history books and documentaries—and now, more than ever, through social media. Amidst those who blur, twist, and rewrite history in favor of the oppressors, it is high time the youth are engaged into an enlightening discussion on the essence of human rights and the dangers of having them taken away. The freedoms and rights enjoyed today can only be truly appreciated if there is a full understanding of how they were fought for. It is through this that history will not be forgotten in time.

Active Vista screened Pepe Diokno’s *Kapatiran*, which provided the fraternity system’s violent initiation process and hazing as the metaphor of violence of Martial Law, in partnership with the United Nations initiative “Re:PubliKo.”⁴ on 26 February 2016.

The three international films in the program tackled some of the most pressing human rights issues in the Philippines - historical revisionism and extra-judicial killings (EJKs) through *The Missing Picture* by Rithy Panh, cyber Martial Law and internet rights through *CitizenFour* by Laura Poitras, and lesbian-gay-bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) and persons with disabilities (PWDs) rights issues through *Margarita with a Straw* by Shonali Bose and Nilesh Maniyar. They were screened on the last day of the festival opening run, 27 February 2016, at the UP Film Center.

The 2016 Film Festival opened in five key regional cities nationwide including Manila, Iloilo, Davao, Dumaguete and Cebu and then travelled to different universities and communities until 10 December 2016, International Human Rights Day.

Ara Chawdhury's *Miss Bulalacao* in Cebu, Pepe Diokno's *Engkwentro* in Iloilo, and Chuck Gutierrez's *Iisa* in Davao were all simultaneously shown on 27 February 2016.

Active Vista: Bridging the Narrative of Truth from Imagination to Awakening

Crucial to the transition phase of Active Vista were the consistent screenings and discussions beyond the festival opening. In 2016, after the Festival Opening in February 2016, Active Vista established partnership with the University of the Philippines Film Institute through regular screenings of human rights-themed films at its Cine Adarna.

In March 2016, in celebration of women's month, Active Vista screened *Margarita with A Straw* by Shonali Bose and Nilesh Maniyar again at the Cine Adarna. The film strongly relayed the message of women empowerment with its main character overcoming her physical disabilities and insecurities in achieving what she wants. The audience was particularly struck about the outstanding performance of the lead actress and the effective portrayal of the film on issues of LGBT PWD.

In July 2016, Active Vista screened *Stranger by the Lake* by Alain Gourgaine, an award-winning and critically acclaimed film, in line with the LGBT pride month. A short open forum was conducted after the screening with panelists, Ron De Vera and Cha Roque from the LGBT community and Kristine Kintana from the film community. The audience was shocked with the film's boldness and disturbed by the story. The discussion afterwards truly helped in processing the issues raised in the film.

In September 2016, Active Vista screened *Engkwentro* by Pepe Diokno and *The Sheik and I* by Caveh Zahedi. In commemoration of the declaration of Martial Law, Active Vista screened *Engkwentro* in three major cities – Iloilo, Cebu and Metro Manila as a very timely film as it dealt with the reality of vigilante and EJKs in the country while *The Sheik and I* strongly tested the extent of freedom of expression especially when faced with religious and cultural perspectives. The audience received the *Sheik and I* very well as it discussed taboo topics on artistic expression.

Engkwentro drew so much reaction from the audience. Some members of audience who watched the film in Iloilo inquired if the organizers were critics of President Rodrigo Duterte as the film clearly portrays the issue on the Davao Death Squads. A few even went to the extreme and criticized the screening as propaganda against the government. In Cebu, the post-screening discussion was guided by panelists from the Children’s Legal Bureau of Cebu who were experts on the issue of EJKs and children in conflict with the law in Cebu. In the UP Film Institute screening, audiences were very silent after the screening. However, they stayed for the discussion with panelists from representatives of human rights organizations. Many questions were raised on the issue of EJKs brought about by the government’s war against drugs.

During the UP Film Institute discussion, I-Defend, a civil society coalition organized to defend human rights and dignity, represented by Budit Carlos, gave a comprehensive framework on human rights vis-à-vis the state-sanctioned EJKs. Ms. Pilgrim Gayo, Country Director of Terres de Hommes expressed how personal the film was for her because she worked with child victims of the Davao Death Squad during her stint as Executive Director of Tambayan Center for Children’s Rights in Davao. Mr. Jim Libiran, filmmaker and actor of the film, shared his thoughts on the issue of EJK. One important thing to note was raised by film critic Noy Lauzon who pointed out that the audio of the Mayor’s speech in the film were based on actual audio of a speech delivered or an interview by then Mayor of Davao and now Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. The audio was used in a scene where a fictional politician was delivering a message regarding his vision of a new society. The scene is a parallelism of the late dictator President Ferdinand Marcos vision of Bagong Lipunan (New Society) during Martial Law in the Philippines. The iconic scene is chilling given the present context

of President Duterte's positioning on a possible Martial Law rule under his term.

A special screening of *Tigbao* was also held at the Holy Angel University and coincided with their commemoration of Peace Month. Renee Karunungan of DAKILA and Jay de Jesus and I-Defend discussed issues on human rights especially EJKs and Martial Law. The audience were enlightened on the real situation during Martial Law which most Millennials perceived as genuinely a good time in the history of the country. Some educators raised questions on the need to teach Martial Law to today's generation of youth to counter perceptions that Martial Law is good for the country.

Bunso by Ditsi Carolino and *Boys* by Mischa Kamp were screened for the Active Vista run in November 2016. *Bunso* played a huge role in the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Act in 2006, which was meant to protect children in conflict with the law through programs for their rehabilitation and reintegration to the society. The recent discussions on lowering the age of criminal liability for children (from fifteen years old to nine years old) made the *Bunso* screening relevant as it showed the lives of three children in prison for committing petty crimes. Unfortunately, the screening of *Bunso* came a day after the burial of former President Ferdinand Marcos that caught the nation in surprise and sparked overnight protest actions and likely affected the number of people in the audience.

Truth X Imagination towards Truth Awakening: Ushering the Active Vista Human Rights Festival

After a successful 2016 film festival run, Active Vista celebrated International Human Rights Day 2016 through the *Alab ng Puso* (Rage of the Heart) concert in partnership with the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines. The concert-festival mobilized musicians, artists, and human rights advocates to celebrate human rights amid the onslaught of attacks against human rights and dignity. The concert-festival fueled the conviction of transforming the film festival into an annual festival for human rights utilizing various art forms. The social-political context of the country has given birth to a resurgence of socially-relevant art and Active Vista saw this as an opportunity to complete its transformation.

The new Active Vista was launched on 8 August 2017 through a gathering of partners, networks, and allies that support the human rights cause.

Representatives of various communities – government, media, film, civil society, academe and youth – were present to celebrate the occasion. Chairperson Chito Gascon gave a moving speech that expressed the CHR’s support to the Active Vista endeavors. He paraphrased the famous line from Star Wars *Rogue One* film to express his point:

It is the time to build an alliance, built on solidarity and values to push back all the wrong things happening today. Planting the seeds of change and revolution, imparting the values of human rights are important. All Rebellions are built on hope.

DAKILA President Lourde Veyra gave a witty speech which mocked government pronouncements on the “importance” of human rights and the controversial allocation of zero budget to CHR by the House of Representatives (lower house of the legislature). Actor and DAKILA founder Ronnie Lazaro opened the launch. Representatives of long time partners of Active Vista also gave solidarity messages. Among them were Sam Chittick, the Country Representative of The Asia Foundation, Atty. Arpee Santiago, the Executive Director of the Ateneo Human Rights Center and filmmakers Ria Limjap, Babyruth Gutierrez and Moira Lang. The launch was sponsored by Active Vista partner in film distribution, T-Rex Entertainment, producer of the historical film *Hermano Puli*.

The transition of Active Vista into a human rights center of DAKILA was a product of a summing up of Active Vista’s work and DAKILA’s experience in human rights work in the Philippines since 2008. Active Vista as a biennial film festival from 2008 to 2012 was successful in broadening audiences but much thought was spent on its sustainability as a program. The hiatus in 2013-2015 provided Active Vista a much needed reflection on its strategies and tactics to develop the program.

History, Human Rights and Heroism Forums through Cinema

In 2015, as a result of its previous work in screening socially-themed films, the producers of *Heneral Luna* approached Active Vista to tap into its large network of schools and explore the potential of schools into helping the marketing of a historical film to youth audiences. In the recent history of Philippine cinema, no historical film has really become a blockbuster. The result was an eye-opener not only to Active Vista but the film industry as a

whole. The work done by Active Vista was a game changer. It shaped new ways in film marketing and distribution in the Philippines.

Active Vista started to work on historical films as early as February 2015 as it sealed partnerships with schools all over the country in securing a forum on heroism complemented with a fifteen minute preview of the film. It tested the waters with a youth forum organized in May 2015 in Metro Manila which tapped youth leaders as the first batch of audience. Active Vista started its school tour in June 2015 and the tour lasted till September 2015, a day before *Heneral Luna* was screened commercially in theaters.

Overall, Active Vista reached around thirty-six schools from as far as the North (Ilocos Norte) to the South (Davao). It organized around four special screenings of the film. The audience responded positively to the film and both educators and students were won over by the discussions that followed the fifteen minute preview of the film. Historians were brought in to provide the much needed context of the discussions. As a result, the “Bayani Ba “To?” roadshow transformed audiences into advocates of the film and fans of history.

This impetus provided the much needed support when the film was finally screened in commercial theaters in September 2015. Its first day of showing did not fare well, and thus limited screening was made on its second day, a practice that was usual for films that were not doing well in attracting audience to the theaters. What saved the film and helped make it a blockbuster phenomenon was an army of advocates – educators, school administrators, students – who saw the preview of the film and demanded that it be shown in their local theaters. Those who followed the innovators were not disappointed with the film product. Thus, word of mouth on the excellence of the film exploded. Social media amplified the buzz on the ground. What happened was a phenomenon, a historical film that reaped box office success and changed the game of how independent films could be a commercial success.

More important than commercial viability, *Heneral Luna* created a hunger among audiences for quality, relevant films in the local industry. It raised the level of how independent films should be marketed to reach broader audiences. It made producers realize that the taste of audiences are evolving and forced them to make quality and relevant films. It impacted on how films were distributed and made the industry aware of how a cartel, traditional and conservative industry practitioners, have been preventing

independent films to flourish. It challenged audiences to seek films that did not conform to traditional films they had been fed in the past. And Active Vista was in the right place at the right time.

In 2016, coinciding with the resolve of Active Vista to organize the 4th edition of the festival despite challenges in resources, the producer of another historical film approached the organization to help market the film, *Ang Hapis at Himagsik ni Hermano Puli*, hoping to ride on the success of *Heneral Luna*. Active Vista partnered with T-Rex Entertainment to present the 2nd edition of the “Bayani Ba ‘To Forums” which featured a short preview of the film *Ang Hapis at Himagsik ni Hermano Puli* (The Agony and Fury of Hermano Puli) and sparked a conversation among the youth on the importance of history, human rights and heroism in today’s time.

Much like the strategy explored for *Heneral Luna*, the Forums held after the movie screening featured a panel of resource persons – a historian, an educator, a representative from civil society/media/government, an artist and a representative of Dakila. Forums in forty-five schools, four Educators Forums and two Youth Leaders’ Forums were organized. The Forums reached 21,829 audiences, 1,080 educators and 500 youth leaders.

In the post-screening discussions, audiences mostly reacted on the need for more historical films. Audiences were ecstatic on the lectures of historians delivered in pop culture format as it allowed them to understand the film in the context of history and the present human rights situation. The forums were complemented by distribution of study guide to educators. Educators appreciated the format as it provided them with inputs on how to use film in their classes. Most students appreciated the pop culture format of the discussions and the interesting information that historians shared. Most people in the audience were very much engaged in the discussions – questions covered film production, history and human rights issues. Most of those who participated in the Youth Leaders’ Forum and some who attended the school forums joined DAKILA and signified their intent to be more involved in socially-relevant endeavors. Most educators expressed their interest in continuing to organize the forum. Most partner school administrations and departments asked to formalize and schedule regular forums with Active Vista in their schools.

The roadshow forums of Active Vista were deemed as a pioneering effort in audience development especially among the youth. Many audiences reached by the forums expressed interest in continuing relevant programs

similar to Active Vista in their specific schools and communities. Many schools became aware of utilizing films in their social consciousness programs and academic subjects. The initiative also paved way for local efforts to hold forums and screenings on human rights issues.

The endeavors with Artikulo Uno (now TBA productions) for *Heneral Luna* and T-Rex Entertainment for *Hermano Puli* paved the way for a large network of educators, another layer of audiences in the Active Vista fold. The forums held among educators reinforced the previous assessment of Active Vista on the need for materials and more innovative platforms for human rights education in the country.

Supporters

Active Vista has garnered the support of like-minded organizations, institutions and individuals through the years. In its past editions, it has been supported by the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, the National Commission of Culture and the Arts, the National Youth Commission, the Film Development Council of the Philippines, University of the Philippines Film Institute, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Australian Agency for International Development, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the Canadian Embassy, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Asia Foundation, and Movies that Matter. Active Vista boasts of partnerships with human rights and civil society organizations, schools and universities nationwide and media institutions. In 2015-2016, it started partnerships with production outfits like TBA Productions and T-Rex Entertainment. Active Vista maintains close partnership with the filmmaking community.

Active Vista Human Rights Festival 2017

Active Vista opened its 5th edition on 22 November 2017 with the theme “Truth Awakening,” as it shed light on versions and visions of truth towards a tempestuous awakening of a generation that responded to the call of the times. The Active Vista Human Rights Festival celebrated the triumph of humanity amid the surge of a social storm drowning freedom, tearing human rights and dignity. The Festival reclaimed heroism as it commemorated heroes who shaped the nation’s history on Bonifacio Day and invoked the

spirit of *Bayanihan* (community spirit) as it united in solidarity with the world in celebrating the International Human Rights Day towards building a true nation of heroes.

The 5th edition of Active Vista had the following objectives:

1. To raise awareness on human rights issues and concerns by providing knowledge on human rights in accessible, credible and relevant manner;
2. To counter the prevailing culture of hate, violence, false narratives, fake news and alternative truths by providing platforms for critical discourse on human rights and democracy;
3. To build the capacity of the public to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights through creative avenues for involvement; and
4. To organize a broad-based public support by engaging the youth, educators and artists through the use of arts, media and popular culture for the human rights cause.

The 2017 Active Vista Human Rights Festival featured human rights film screenings, art exhibits (“Moving Pictures: Artists for Human Dignity” and “Desaparecidos”), theater play (“Tao Po”), talks and workshops on human rights, a Youth Empowerment Summit, human rights short film competition, bike ride (*Padyak para sa Karapatan*), and a concert (*Alab ng Puso*).

Festival Program 2017

Active Vista featured the best human rights-themed films that brought to the Filipino audience a world-view on the human rights situation through moving images of truths on important global and local issues. The festival presented films that dealt with the following issues: Environment and Climate Justice; Gender Rights, Equality and Empowerment; Social Progress with Social Justice; Empowering Vulnerable Sectors; Reclaiming Spaces of Freedom; Waging Peace; Truth, Justice and Historic Memory; and Democracy and Good Governance. The festival screened international full-length films in a commercial theater in Shang Cineplex in Mandaluyong City and local full-length films in the new alternative film space, Cinema Centenario in Quezon City, all in Metro Manila. It also brought to key regional cities – Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Iloilo and Bacolod, a special screening of *Smaller and Smaller Circles* in partnership with TBA Productions.

The Festival opened with the Philippine premiere of the multi-awarded documentary film, *Motherland* by Ramona Diaz. *Motherland* explored the Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital in Manila, named as the busiest maternity ward in the world. The screening was a by-invitation event and attended by representatives of festival partners from the diplomatic community (officials of the Dutch, French and Argentinian embassies), representatives of the Commission on Human Rights, representatives of other partner organizations (the Asia Foundation, LIKHAAN and many others), artists, filmmakers, educators and staff members of the hospital.

After the screening, an open forum with Director Ramona Diaz, a representative from the hospital and Dr. Junice Melgar from LIKHAAN ensued. The audience expressed gratitude to Director Diaz for showing the real situation in the hospital especially regarding indigent women.

On 23 November 2017, another screening of *Motherland* was held in partnership with Grrrl Gang Manila. The screening was opened to the public with Dumagat women in the audience supported by LILAK, an organization for indigenous women's rights. After the screening, Director Diaz, with Red Tani from Filipino Freethinkers and Rash Caritativo from DAKILA answered questions from the audience. One of the key issues brought up during the open forum was on how the Reproductive Health Bill (RH bill) could help improve reproductive health and family planning education in the Philippines. Red Tani emphasized that RH bill was about having informed choices. The Dumagat women talked about their experience of being discriminated in hospitals, making them opt to rely on their own methods.

The screening of films continued on 27 November till 10 December 2017. See Table 1 for the list of films shown.

Table 1. Films shown during the 2017 Festival⁶

Film	Story	Screening Date
<i>Blanka</i> , Kohki Hasei (2015) – Philippines/Japan	A film about a homeless girl looking for a mother figure. ⁶	27 November 2017, co-presented by the Asia Foundation, which launched its own campaign for children's safety online, the AlamBaU.ph, during the event
<i>Small Talk</i> , Hui Chen Huang (2016) - Taiwan	A documentary film of a personal journey of the filmmaker regarding her mother as she came into terms with her sexuality and motherhood.	28 November 2017

<i>Die Beautiful</i> , Jun Robles Lana (2016)	A film about a Filipino transgender woman who suddenly died and was "presented as a different celebrity on each night of her wake" ⁷⁷ according to her wishes.	29 November 2017, part of the "Gayborhood Night: Bongga Ka Die (Beautiful)" event
<i>Batch '81</i> , Mike De Leon (1982)	A film of an "unflinching study of the joys of submission." It portrays the "somasochistic initiation rituals of a college fraternity [that] become a metaphor for the Philippines of Ferdinand Marcos." ⁸	Cine Adarna, UP Diliman, Quezon City, 1 December 2017, co-presented by the Film Producers Society
<i>Respeto</i> , Treb Monteras (2017)	A film that tackles the "complex issue of human rights violation across two generations, musically connected by the vibrant and socially-conscious use of language." ⁹	Cinema Centenario, 2, 9 - 10 December 2017
<i>On the Job</i> , Erik Matti (2013)	A film about "prison inmates who are regularly let out of jail to perform dirty jobs [kill people]. [The film tells] of a corrupt system in the government." ¹⁰	Cinema Centenario, 3 December 2017
<i>Last Supper No. 3</i> , Veronica B. Velasco (2009)	A film that presents a humorous look at the circuitous path the Philippine legal system takes to obtain justice. ¹¹	Cinema Centenario, 4 December 2017
<i>Jay</i> , director Francis Xavier Pasion (2008)	A film about a gay TV producer documenting the family of a gay hate crime victim, who intruded into the private grief of the victim's family and found the secret life and love of his subject. ¹²	Cinema Centenario, 5 December 2017
<i>Bunso</i> , Ditsi Carolino (2003)	A documentary film on three young prisoners with "horrendous living conditions [inside the prison] and [who] speak openly about their lives behind bars and back at home, including stories of poverty, domestic abuse, drug use, petty crime, and abandonment." ¹³	Cinema Centenario, 6 December 2017
<i>Himpapawid</i> , Raymond Red (2009)	Inspired by a true news account, this is the astounding story of a lone deranged hijacker who has struggled to survive in the chaos of modern Philippine society. ¹⁴	Cinema Centenario, 7 December 2017
<i>Engkwentro</i> , Pepe Diokno (2009)	A film about a young gangster who is plotting to flee town to avoid being killed by the city's crime-fighting death squad, but before he runs away he must dodge the attack of a rival gang. ¹⁵	Cinema Centenario, 8 December 2017

The post-screening open forums raised comments on different issues:

- The vulnerability of children to trafficking especially those who were neglected, abandoned, and those living in the street (*Blanka*);
- The irony of promoting brotherhood through a cycle of violence in hazing rites of fraternities, and the reality that who you know mattered more than what you do (*Batch '81*);
- A film's (*Respeto*) ability to bring to young audience the topic of Martial Law especially in relation to the current situation;
- The state of the judiciary in the country (*Last Supper No. 3*);
- Media sensationalism (*Jay*) and questions on where to draw the line in media ethics;
- Important role of films in the passage of laws (the Juvenile Justice Act in 2006 in the case of *Bunso*) and their continuing relevance to the current times; and
- The general comment on the need to use films to encourage people to take part in social change.

Short Film Competition

Active Vista feature short films that tell compelling stories of people whose freedoms and rights are trampled upon and give voice to those who suffer in silence. It presents aspiring filmmakers whose fresh takes and innovative approaches to human rights films inspire the revolution of the mind and create movements. The Active Vista Award is presented to filmmakers and human rights defenders whose creative works pay homage to the protection





and promotion of human rights. It is a tribute to their excellence in marrying their art and advocacy.

Filmmakers are encouraged to submit films that discuss human rights issues including violence, justice, tyranny, historical revisionism, right to life, right to information, LGBT, social acceptance, poverty, right to equal opportunity, freedom of expression, human dignity, migration, anti-colonialism, education, labor rights, human trafficking and slavery, and the war on drugs and extra-judicial killings. The call has successfully gathered sixty-four entries from filmmakers coming from different regions, sectors, and genders, with genres covering comedy, drama, action, animation, satire and experimental.

All submitted films become part of the Active Vista International Human Rights Film Festival's archive for internal research, or academic purposes and film catalogue. The films can be shown publicly as long as the filmmakers are informed of the screenings. The short films in the Active Vista catalogue have study or discussion guides.

Ten finalists were recognized at the Alab ng Puso concert on 9 December 2017 at Times Square, Araneta Center and the trailers of the films were also shown to the concert audience. The formal awarding was held at Cinema Centenario on 10 December 2017, with the screening of the ten films. Lourde Veyra, President of DAKILA, and filmmaker Sherad Sanchez gave the awards to the winners and shared some inspiring messages.

Active Vista awarded the Best Film to *Si Astri Maka Si Tambulah* by Xeph Suarez for giving a peek on the fate of transwomen in the Muslim community, the second Best Film to *Aliens Ata* by Glenn Barit for sharing a poignant tale on different kinds of loss; and the third Best Film to *Retrospektib* by Daryll Jameson Apaga for taking the audience into a brave harrowing, yet comical journey through the nightmares of dictatorship.

Art Exhibit: Moving Pictures: Artists for Human Dignity

Recognizing the universal power of the photographic image as it relates to truth and accessibility, the series of art exhibitions dubbed as *Moving Pictures* has been mounted by Active Vista since 2008 for public awareness, discussion, and education. The photographic images' capacity to *move* a person to critical thinking and action, as well as their easy translation to print and digital format (and the ease of transporting them from one location to the other), create *Moving Pictures* a viable platform for social issues which affect the society.

The 2017 edition *Moving Pictures* was in partnership with *HUDYAT Artists for Human Dignity*. *HUDYAT* which translates to either "signs of the times" or "alarm," cast the note on the 2017 *Moving Pictures* event. This edition focused on human dignity as the basis for unconditional respect for human rights, which must be accorded to all persons despite their age, gender, health standing, economic situation, ethnic or social origins, political or religious beliefs, or criminal history. See Table 2 for the list and description of photos exhibited:

Table 2. List of photos in *Moving Pictures 2017*

Photo	Theme and short description
#BAbaLIkanTAyongDelubyo, AG Saño	Environment Photo about the commemoration of the 4 th year of the destruction brought by Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan. The photo shows how brutal mother nature could be if global warming would persist as a result of human activities, primarily, the burning of fossil fuels.
<i>Creativity, Not Conflict</i> , Nikki Luna	Women's rights Photo of Rashida, one of the kids at the evacuation center inside the provincial capitol of Marawi city. Nikki used the programs of #StartARTproject in teaching kids how to take portraits of each other. The kids from different areas in Marawi were brought together as <i>bakwits</i> (displaced kids or evacuees). After getting to know each other, Nikki asked the kids to draw a friend (or make a new one). The project taught the kids to learn more about each other's story, family history, connecting and realizing they were not alone.

<i>Outtake from Signos (2009-2016),</i> Veejay Villafranca	Climate change Photo shows children playing around a dredged fishing boat by the shores of Tacloban bay, amid possible trauma and psychological stresses caused by Typhoon Haiyan.
Untitled photo, Hannah Reyes Morales	Child rights Photo of Ann, fifteen years old, with her new-born baby in her home in Manila, where one in five girls is a mother or pregnant. The photo is part of the project which follows the lives of girls in Manila who are coming of age, with a baby in tow.
<i>Police Shadow,</i> Raffy Lerma	Right to life Photo shows the lifeless body of an alleged drug pusher, Jesus Jonas, lying on the street after he was killed in a police buy-bust operation at Barangay Del Monte, Quezon City on 8 October 2016.
<i>Contagious!,</i> Rick Rocamora	Prison rights This photo shows the detainees in Police Station 9 of the Manila Police Department. The photo is part of "Bursting on the Seams" documentary project about conditions in Philippine detention centers.
<i>Conjugal Dictatorship,</i> Luis Liwanag	Martial Law This photo shows deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos sharing a moment of laughter during one of the presidential sorties in late 1984.
Untitled photo, Jes Aznar	Children and armed conflict Photo about peace shows children inside the stronghold of Kumander Tata, a local warlord, in Reina Regente in Maguindanao in 2009.
<i>Children Bathing in Murky Estero Waters,</i> Nana Buxani	Children Photo shows children under a bridge along R10 in Tondo, Manila.
<i>Justice for Kian, Justice for All,</i> Eloisa Lopez	Killing by the police Photo of the slain teenager Kian Loyd Delos Santos who was killed on 16 August 2017 in what police called a "shooting encounter" near his home in Baesa, Caloocan city. CCTV footage and witnesses, however, revealed that he was dragged from one alley to another, past a basketball court, and into a dead-end corner where he was asked to run with a gun – and when he did, was shot. His death caused national outrage in the government's one-year old drug war.
<i>Ama Mi,</i> Xyza Bacani	Migrant workers Photo shows migrant workers in Hong Kong holding hands while praying in Saint Joseph church. Religion plays a very crucial role in nurturing the enduring spirit of Filipino migrant workers wherever they are.
<i>"Maruja" Santos, 58 years old, Al "Carmen Dela Rue" Enriquez, 73 years old, Aton "Maricel Soriano" Libaton, 58 years old, Geloy Concepcion</i>	LGBT Photo about three of the last remaining Manila Golden Gays. They are Filipino gay men who perform in drag, and were residing in the Home of the Golden Gays in Pasay City before it was disbanded. Homeless with no means of support, they go through these hardships of survival with their human dignity intact.

<i>Dockworkers</i> , Neil Daza	<p>Labor rights</p> <p>Photo shows dock workers carrying cement bags manually to waiting trucks in Zamboanga Pier. Dock workers who are constantly exposed to hazardous working conditions usually do not have insurance or health benefits and are paid way below the minimum wage.</p>
<i>Pamaas</i> , Efren Ricalde	<p>Indigenous people's rights</p> <p>Photo shows Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, a ninety-two-year-old woman <i>lumad</i> leader presiding over the <i>pamaas</i> – a ritual of the indigenous peoples in Mindanao asking the spirits for justice against the hardships caused by US imperialism to their communities. The ritual involved smearing the palms of <i>lumad</i> leaders with blood from a chicken slaughtered during the ceremony.</p>

Moving Pictures was first placed during the Active Vista International Human Rights Festival Opening on 22 November 2017 at the ShangCineplex, Shangrila Mall. After the film festival opening, the exhibit was moved to the University of the Philippines, Manila (23 – 25 November 23), University of Makati (28 November - 2 December 2017), and De LaSalle College of St. Benilde in Taft, Manila (4 – 8 December 2017). The exhibit was displayed at the Commission on Human Rights for the rest of the month of December.

DESAPARECIDOS (THE 'DISAPPEARED')

Toym Imao

“Absence remains an open wound. But despite it, the desaparecidos remain present in our hearts and minds. Despite efforts to eradicate their existence, they will never be forgotten”.

- Artist Toym Imao

Toym Imao made forty-three figures to represent those left behind by victims of forced disappearance. Forty-three represents the number of years since Martial Law was declared until 2015 - the time when the installation was completed by the artist. Empty and hollow, each figure represents a year since Martial Law was declared. Instead of portraits and picture frames, the figures hold empty niches, signifying death, the lack of closure, the emptiness, the hollow feeling, and the gut-wrenching pain those left behind must deal with. The exhibit was displayed at the BGC Arts Center in Taguig City on 24-26 November 2017 and co-presented by the Hudyat Artists for Human Dignity and the Juana Change Movement.



Theater: Tao Po! (Mga Monologo)

Active Vista staged a four-part monologue on human rights and EJKs entitled “Tao Po!” on 26 November 2017 at BGC Arts Center.

Juana Change, the main character in the monologue, focused on her husband and son, both victims of summary killings, a photographer whose sanity was questioned by the newspaper that employed him, the apparent double life of a policeman sworn to uphold the law, and a hitman, paid to violate it, and a young girl paying tribute to EJK victims haphazardly buried in the notorious Tokhang Wall. Mae Paner played Juana Change, with script by Maynard Manansala and direction by Ed Lacson. The play was shown at BGC Arts Center to around three hundred people and was co-presented with Juana Change Movement, SPEAR and the Temperamental Brats.

Film Talk: How to Watch a Film?

A question of ways rather than a title for instruction. “How to Watch a Film” offered articulated points on how film can ignite the discourse on human rights by offering perspectives and contextual talks on the nature and opportunities in filmmaking. Film as a set of moving pictures is innately human as it captures perspectives of reality-immersive and offers familiar yet not necessarily comfortable ways of seeing life. The effect of watching a film is always up to how it is digested and read in numbers of ways, but through



utilizing the lens of being human, film can always trigger critical thinking, influence culture and ignite social consciousness and action. With speakers whose experiences are founded on the practice of filmmaking and film criticism, the talk provided an experience for the audience to understand and appreciate film through the lens of humanity.



Speakers included filmmakers Sherad Sanchez, Monster Jimenez, Erik Matti and film critic Philbert Dy. The talk was co-presented by Pineapple Lab and Rogue Magazine and was attended by one hundred twenty people who were selected from hundreds of applications to the open call.

This forum was held on 26 November 2017 in Pineapple Lab, Makati city.

Youth Forum: Heroes Hub, Youth Empowerment Summit

The first Heroes Hub took place during the celebration of the heroism of Bonifacio, the father of the Philippine Revolution, on 30 November 2017 with three-hundred youth leaders joining a conference that 1) discussed the heroic journey of Filipino heroes who have shaped the nation's past; 2) determined the prospects and challenges of the present state of the country; and 3) explored visions and versions of truths in the struggle to build

a true nation of heroes. The Heroes Hub: Youth Empowerment Summit ran from 1 pm – 7 pm on 30 November 2017 at Novotel Manila Araneta Center, Quezon city with speakers including Professor Michael Charleston “Xiao” Chua, Lourde de Veyra, Raffy Lerma, Mich Dulce, BP Valenzuela, Juan Miguel Severo, Chai Fonacier, and Atty. Pochoy Labog.

Heroes Hub: Youth Empowerment Summit started as an initiative of Dakila and Active Vista to form a network of youth leaders in Metro Manila and empower them with discussions and creative platforms to further their advocacies.

Specifically, the program aimed to:

1. Pay importance to the role of the youth in shaping discourse on pressing social issues and in formulating actions towards the common good;
2. Empower the youth towards the realization of the importance of recognizing, upholding, and protecting human rights;
3. Serve as a platform for formulating, exchanging, and collaborating creative ideas, innovations and practical solutions that can address societal concerns and problems;
4. Redefine the concept of heroism through upholding, protecting, and defending the rights and welfare of others;
5. Amplify the voice of the youth in social issues by engaging them in movements geared towards nation-building; and
6. Inspire the young generation into contributing to efforts geared towards the promotion of human rights, freedom and democracy.

An online call for participants yielded a total of five hundred forty-five applications. The organizing committee selected two hundred fifty applicants based on the following criteria: 1) understanding of heroism, 2) knowledge on human rights issues and 3) participation/involvement in related initiatives/activities. Fifty slots were reserved for event partners from youth organizations.

The program started with opening remarks by the Executive Director of Active Vista, Leni Velasco. She cited the importance of the gathering and invited the audience to participate and ask questions for the duration of the summit. Professor Michael Charleston “Xiao” Chua gave a presentation entitled “Hapdi X Kiro: Pains of the Past” that provided the audience with a context of heroism in history. He also narrated the journey of the Filipino

heroes, as well as the struggles they faced. Mr. Lourde de Veyra discussed the struggle of the Filipino nation at present, and how millennials can help shape and stir discourse and commit to their own acts of heroism.

After setting the context of the past and present, artists/activists using their creative platforms provided their presentations. This started with Raffy Lerma's talk on "Moving Pictures: Witnessing the War on Drugs" where he shared the stories of his nightcrawl as a photographer for Philippine Daily Inquirer with a beat on the war on drugs. This was followed by Juan Miguel Severo's talk, "Words that Speak: Marrying Art and Advocacy," on his experience on using spoken word to pursue his personal advocacies. Fashion Designer and Feminist Mich Dulce also shared her passion for advocating women's rights in her talk, "Fashion and Passion: Advocating for Women's Rights."

Artist/musician BP Valenzuela shared her insights, "Rights and Rhythm: Let's Talk About Equality," on fighting for equality. She also performed her music on stage to help inspire millennials on using music as a tool for advocacy. Actress Chai Fonacier's "Dealing with Diversity: The Truth about Regionalism" explained how stereotypes among people coming from different regions had divided views and opinions among Filipinos. Lawyer/musician Pochoy Labog's "Pursuing Justice: Understanding the Rule of Law" shared his experience as a human rights lawyer and provided basic knowledge on how to uphold, protect, and defend human rights in the context of the law. The event ended with a speech from Dakila's OIC Executive Director Rash Caritativo, who reiterated the importance of living a life of heroism, and launched the Heroes Hub Fellowship Program that would run on 2018.

The Heroes Hub will continue as a formation program through a series of learning sessions designed to build the capacity of selected fellows in human rights advocacy work through especially designed courses, skills training and creative workshops to be held for a year. A variety of experts from the field of human rights, arts, and media will guide, train and mentor the youth participants of the program. The call for the Heroes Hub Fellowship was announced during the 2017 Youth Summit. The fellowship will start in March 2018 and end in December 2018. Only thirty fellows will be selected for the 2018 Heroes Hub Fellowship Program.



Alab ng Pusong Concert

Active Vista Human Rights Festival organized the 2017 celebration of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2017. The celebration consisted of a bike ride called “Padyak para sa Karapatan” (Bicycle for Rights), and art and music festival called “Alab ng Pusong” which showcased performances, exhibits and events as platforms for public involvement in the human rights cause. The concert was co-organized with DAKILA, I-DEFEND Philippines and the Commission on Human Rights.

The International Human Rights Day celebration supported the start of a year-long campaign by the United Nations to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The celebration came at a very delicate time in the Philippines, with a European Union report on worsening of the human rights situation in the Philippines as a result of the government’s war on drugs.

The bike ride consisted of a twelve-hour, three hundred-kilometer ride that started on 8 November 2017 from Nueva Ecija province to Quezon City. From Cabanatuan city in Nueva Ecija province, the cyclists passed through the provinces of Tarlac, Pampanga and Bulacan and finished at the “Alab ng Pusong” concert in Araneta Center in Quezon city. The route covered the military camp in Nueva Ecija where staunch human rights advocate, the late Senators Jose “Pepe” Diokno and Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino were detained in solitary confinement during Martial Law period on charges of subversion. The bikers passed the Capas National Shrine (a memorial for the Allied soldiers who died during the World War II) in Tarlac province to pay respect to

those soldiers. The bikers proceeded to the newly-installed statue of Senator Diokno at the Commission on Human Rights grounds. The bike ride was inspired by the life and work of Senator Diokno who was regarded as the Father of the Human Rights Movement in the Philippines.

The Alab ng Puso concert featured performances by some of the country's top artists - Hilera, Sandwich, Bullet Dumas, Noel Cabangon, Bayang Barrios and Naliyagan Band, Cooky Chua, Gary Granada, Ourselves the Elves, BLKD, Aia de Leon, IV of Spades, Brass Pas Pas Pas Pas, Tanya Markova, Oh! Flamingo, Flying Ipis, Alfonso Manalastas, Juan Miguel Severo, Louise Meets, Abby Orbeta, and Jun "Bayaw" Sabayton.



Evaluation and Impact Analysis

Curriculum Development

As a result of the Active Vista efforts, more young audiences became aware of various human rights issues and concerns. The increased level of awareness is evident through the questions raised during forums and through their posts in social media. The most glaring measure of increased awareness of audiences were on the issues of Martial Law, EJKs, enforced disappearances, torture, LGBT, historical revisionism, women's rights and child rights which are also the most pressing issues in Philippine society in the past two years.

School institutions, realizing the need for alternative platforms for social consciousness formation and human rights education, proposed to

Active Vista a sustained and deeper partnership. Most of them have formal agreement that makes Active Vista their partner in human rights and media education for the next three years at the very least. This strategic partnership allows educational institutions to plan activities and projects with Active Vista and formally integrate them into the school calendar and curriculum. Partnership with educational institutions varies depending on the department or office of the school institution involved – arts and culture office, college department (mass communication, film, social sciences and education), office for religious formation, volunteer and advocacy programs, and student affairs office.

Educational institutions found resource materials for classroom use through the films presented, and enabled them to explore alternative forms of education that can be integrated in their curriculum and cultural and formation programs. Educators, on the other hand, were presented new approaches and relevant content they can use in human rights education. The pop culture format done through the Active Vista forums increased interest among educators on using media, art and pop culture in their education pedagogy.

Human Rights Advocacy

Civil society and human rights organizations have also benefitted from the innovations and creativity of Active Vista as a platform for social consciousness formation and human rights education. Active Vista allowed caused-oriented groups to widen their audience and reach. Their involvement in Active Vista opened up new audiences for their advocacies and gave them a platform to build awareness on their causes. For example, the partnership with Filipino Freethinkers on the screening of *CitizenFour* and *The Sheik and I* opened discourses on their advocacy for freedom of expression and internet rights. The partnership with I-Defend allowed them to broaden their public and mobilize wider support for the advocacy against EJKs.

Active Vista has also influenced government institutions especially the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) into developing more innovative and creative platforms for human rights promotion. The film festival, organized in partnership with CHR, was designed to address negative public perception on human rights by utilizing arts through a musical concert and influencers in mainstreaming human rights concerns to the Filipino public. Active Vista

is working with the Commission on Human Rights on developing materials utilizing films for their education program. There is also a plan to jointly organize a conference of educators to discuss how to teach human rights in the classroom with films as teaching/learning material.

Audience Development

Active Vista through its partnership with the Film Development Council of the Philippines and Cinema Centenario enabled the promotion of the *cinematheques* (small movie theaters) and alternative spaces in other cities in the country as venues for screening films by educational institutions to teach about human rights and social issues.

The Active Vista screenings of international full-length films contributed significantly in exposing the Filipino audiences to a worldview on human rights and gave them insights on innovations by other countries on methods that facilitate social transformation. This is especially needed at a time when the country is bombarded with negative public opinion on the importance of human rights. The worldview presented enabled Filipino audiences to see human rights as a global concern, to realize that human rights violations happen to anyone anywhere, and to empathize with human rights struggles outside the country. The existence of a human rights film festival is a strong statement in itself to help inspire the Filipino public towards involvement in the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines.

Film Development

Filmmakers and independent film producers have become more involved in audience development as a result of the partnership efforts with Active Vista. The filmmakers and producers now see Active Vista as an effective tool not only in developing film audiences but also as alternative platform for film marketing and distribution. The large mass base of the Active Vista Film Festival helps films reach their target audiences in a manner that mobilizes ground support for independent socially-relevant films.

The most conspicuous evidence of Active Vista's contribution to the film industry is its success in empowering audiences into demanding corporate movie theater owners to screen independent socially-relevant films. With this influence, Active Vista is sought by filmmakers and producers to

help mobilize audiences through initiatives aimed to educate audiences of the power of cinema and the importance of its social messages.

Active Vista has also become a partner of several filmmakers and film producers into strategizing relevant content and key messages of their films. It is currently working with filmmakers and producers to develop a comprehensive human rights film catalogue that shall be made available to schools and communities. This initiative will help independent film producers in distributing their films to a broader public and at the same time allow Active Vista to utilize the films for human rights education.

Community Efforts in Human Rights Education

One of the striking contributions of Active Vista is the strengthening of linkages among educators, advocates and filmmakers. This is especially evident in the regions where local filmmakers, film communities and festivals are connected to educational institutions and groups through the Active Vista. This allowed the filmmakers and film community in the area to tap into schools to widen their audience reach. At the same time, educators and schools gained access to film materials in their local context that they can use in teaching. Active Vista paved the way for these linkages to happen as evident in its regional screening efforts. For example, in Cebu, Active Vista helped forge partnership among the Binisaya Film Festival, the Motion Picture Society of Cebu and the Coalition for Better Education. Active Vista has been working hand-in-hand as well with the film community involved in the Mindanao Film Festival in Davao, Cine Magis in Cagayan de Oro and Cine Kasimanwa in Iloilo.

Solid working relations with the film community allowed Active Vista to get the members of the film community to sit down and discuss relevant human rights issues that affect the industry. The strength of Active Vista is its ability to gather film industry practitioners from groups and circles with differing stands or affiliations because it is seen as a neutral entity with a shared advocacy. As an advocacy-based film festival, Active Vista's interests lie beyond artistic cliques and business interests. This is especially evident in Active Vista's successful attempt in convening personalities in the film industry in a forum on the state of human rights in the film industry and its partnerships with various independent film producers, film festivals and filmmakers.

Active Vista has also contributed in forging stronger relations with other human rights film festival in Asia through its partnership with the Freedom Film Festival in Malaysia. The ties created strengthened cooperation among Asian countries on utilization of films as avenues for human rights campaigns and education. Freedom Film Festival Director Anna Har is a member of the Advisory Council of Active Vista and graced the festival opening in 2016. Active Vista representatives, on the other hand, attend the Freedom Film Festival. This partnership contributed to the expansion of the Human Rights Film Network in Asia. This is very beneficial to Southeast Asia as the countries in the subregion collectively face human rights issues in the process of integration as one ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

The 2017 Active Vista film festival bannered the use of documentary films in human rights education. The capacity of documentary films to surface truths in human conditions is a natural ally of the festival in its human rights education work. The film, *Motherland*, is an excellent example of the strong impact documentary films can create among audiences. Active Vista has supported documentary films such as *Sunday Beauty Queen* by Babyruth Villarama, *Bunso* by Ditsi Carolino, *Kano* by Monster Jimenez, Nick and *Chai* by Wena Sanchez. In May 2017, Active Vista participated in The Good Pitch Project Southeast Asia which paved way for its active involvement in the documentary film scene in the country. In December 2017, it co-organized a Master Class of Ramona Diaz with the Dokyupeeps and the UP Film Institute.

Summary

The most significant contribution of the 4th and 5th editions of the Active Vista International Human Rights Film Festival is in sparking the national conversation on human rights issues and concerns at a time when human rights are threatened and maligned in the country by the state itself. The value of the voice of Active Vista in the promotion of human rights is in its attempt to counter negative perception of human rights especially among the younger generation whose concept and understanding of human rights need to be addressed.

In summary, the impact of Active Vista 2016 - 2017 can be measured in two fronts – its impact on Philippine film industry and on the human rights movement.

Perhaps, the immense value of Active Vista in the film industry is that it represents the much needed programs that the film industry needs: 1) audience development; 2) alternative film distribution; 3) marketing platform for independent cinema; and 4) champion of the film industry on human rights issues vis-à-vis commercialization of films, consequently, art.

On the other front, the significant contributions of Active Vista in the human rights movement are the necessary elements that the human rights movement needs especially at a time when human rights are being attacked: 1) increased public awareness on human rights issues and concerns; 2) broadening of public support on human rights protection and promotion; 3) integration of human rights education into educational institutions through alternative platforms; 4) capacity-building of educators in pedagogical approaches to human rights education; 5) innovations and creativity in education programs of government institutions and human rights organizations; and 6) popularization of human rights through arts, media and social influencers.

Challenges and Gaps

With the election of the new President and his stance on human rights, there is an alarming culture and mindset being developed among the youth brought about by 1) the loud voices of non-respect and non-recognition of human rights; 2) the chilling effect of the atmosphere of hostility and bullying which silences the public in expressing opinions or dissent to issues; 3) the culture of violence perpetuated by the state on its stand on extra-judicial killings of alleged drug addicts, gender violence (slut shaming, harassment) and human rights in general.

There is also a widening distancing of young people in the Philippines from the human rights cause. This is evident in the lack of awareness of Millennials on the perils of Martial Law and dictatorship rule as clearly depicted in social media conversations, in the large youth support for the candidacy of the late dictator's son as Vice President and of the youth opinion on clear violations of human rights for the sake of national discipline and progress.

The social realities in the Philippines present a downtrodden state of human rights and human dignity as Filipinos fall victims to the culture of violence perpetuated by the state, a corrupt system of governance, poverty

and injustice. The state of human rights in the Philippines has two opposing faces: historic and trailblazing policy developments on the one hand and, on the other, the long and continuously growing list of victims of human rights violations from the Marcos era to the present administration of President Duterte.

The Philippines is a State party to almost all core human rights international instruments and has enacted landmark human rights legislations that have been the product of years of steadfast lobbying by human rights defenders and civil society organizations. While the human rights violations have sharply declined since 2006 before Duterte was elected President, the improved normative and legal framework has not been able to completely stop the human rights violations in the country. With the current administration, the past gains of the human rights movement in the country are in danger of being lost again.

Human Rights and the Youth

The Youth Sector forms a large percentage of the voting population in the Philippines. However, they remain marginalized, with no genuine youth representation in governance. In the local government, youth elected into the local government council and youth organizations are often used by traditional politicians to serve their own self-interests. Youth participation is limited to token representation and as an afterthought in the political process. While the youth is a major stakeholder in political processes, their voices are often ignored. The derailed enactment of a Magna Carta of Students has deprived students genuine representation in the school governing or tuition fee board, limiting participation of student governments as organizer of school events like sports festivals or fairs. Student-Youth have no voice in drafting school policies or participating in decision-making in matters that affect them.

In broader society, there is no genuine youth agenda in political platforms and programs. Laws and policies affecting youth are decided by older people. In media, youth are stereotyped as Millennials who have no concern for social issues and nation-building. Youth are seen as a large market but it is the traditional institutions, media and corporations who dictate the needs of this market.

According to a study by the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance, human rights education in the Philippines is currently at an appreciation level only. Human rights education may have been integrated into the curriculums but there is lack of emphasis on the need for citizens to assert and protect these rights.¹⁶ In addition, there are only two educational institutions, which have established dedicated entities for human rights research and education - the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights and the Ateneo Human Rights Center, which are both law school-based institutions.

With the passage of landmark legislations such as the Martial Law Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act of 2013 whose Section 27 mandates human rights education program to be implemented across all educational levels, there is an opportunity to integrate into the school curriculum human rights education to pave way for a more sustained and strategic approach in the formation of young people into responsible citizens who respect, uphold and promote human rights.

While various stakeholders are working for a more strategic approach to human rights education, the most pressing need is the existence of alternative platforms for human rights education for the youth. More importantly, there is a need to explore more innovative and creative human rights education platforms and strategies.

Culture and the arts shape society and society shapes culture and the arts. The intertwining relationship is crucial in addressing methods and directions in social transformation especially in the formation of the social consciousness of the youth. With this, utilizing art, media and popular culture is important in building the capacity of young people to understand human rights as an integral foundation of responsible citizenship and nation-building so that they are empowered to participate in democratic spaces and contribute to social development.

Institutional Efforts

In this context, the challenge for the Active Vista is to sustain and increase its efforts on human rights education. While 2016-2017 marked the year of Active Vista's transformation from being solely a biennial human rights film festival to becoming a human rights education institution of DAKILA, the challenges that emerged during this period require more than that. There is

now a need to build Active Vista as an alternative center for human rights education utilizing the arts, media and popular culture. There is now a plan to make its flagship program, the Active Vista International Human Rights Festival, a premiere human rights festival in the country that consolidate efforts of artists and human rights activists in responding to the call of the times.

Active Vista aims to become the center of human rights education in the country both through grassroots and media education. More importantly, Active Vista aims to institutionalize programs on human rights education that effectively reach a broader public to counter attacks on human rights and shape public perception on the importance of human rights in nation-building.

The biggest challenge faced by human rights defenders in the Philippines is on how to win the battle for the hearts and minds of the people. While human rights defenders have been persevering hard to defend, protect and promote human rights at all fronts, the key to defending, upholding and protecting human rights lies in the education of the people on the importance of human rights in their lives, livelihood and lifestyle. Active Vista aims to be the facilitator of this learning process for people to understand the critical value of human rights on the road to genuine national development.

Endnotes

1 See Active Vista Film Festival: "Use Imagination As A Weapon Against Forgetting Truth" - DAKILA, Human Rights Online Philippines, 26 February 2016, <https://hronlineph.com/2016/02/26/press-release-active-vista-film-festival-use-imagination-as-a-weapon-against-forgetting-truth-dakila/>.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Re:Publiko, a project supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was a week-long knowledge-sharing event that offered 2,500 people, mostly youth sector, the opportunity to learn about the challenges to good governance, and encouraged them to hold leaders accountable, participate in public discourse, and be more engaged. See UNDP Philippines website: http://www.ph.undp.org/content/philippines/en/home/operations/about_undp.html.

5 To watch the movie trailers, see Lucia Edna P. de Guzman, "Get Woke! Active Vista Human Rights Festival," *Business World SparkUp*, <http://sparkup.ph/fresh-active-vista-human-rights-festival-film-fest-indie/>.

6 See Kaori Shoji, "Director Kohki Hasei's 'Blanka' finds the strength of a young girl on Manila's mean streets," *Japan Times*,

3 August 2017, www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/08/03/films/director-kohki-haseis-blanka-finds-strength-young-girl-manilas-mean-streets/.

7 Die Beautiful, Tokyo International Film Festival, <http://2016.tiff-jp.net/en/lineup/works.php?id=12>.

8 Batch '81. 1982. Directed by Mike de Leon, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/calendar/events/3956.

9 Rome Jorge, "Respeto: Cinemalaya award-winning indie film that's Martial Law education for the hiphop generation," *adobomagazine*, 14 September 2017, <http://adobomagazine.com/philippine-news/respeto-cinemalaya-award-winning-indie-film-thats-martial-law-education-hiphop>.

10 On the Job. 2013. Directed by Erik Matti, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/calendar/events/3118.

11 Last Supper No. 3, Cinemalaya, www.cinemalaya.org/films/new-breed/last-supper-no-3.

12 Jay by Francis Xavier Pasion at Cinema Centenario, www.facebook.com/events/279970155857250/

13 *Bunso* (The Youngest). 2004. Directed by Ditsi Carolino, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/calendar/events/3123.

14 *Himpapawid* by Raymond Red at Cinema Centenario, www.facebook.com/events/1371268226333135/.

15 *Engkwentro* (Clash). 2009. Directed by Pepe Diokno, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/calendar/events/3123.

16 See Maricel T. Fernandez and Alex B. Brillantes, Jr., *The State of Human Rights Education in the Philippines: Issues, Concerns and Directions*, Commission on Human Rights, 2012, www.ombudsman.gov.ph/UNDP4/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-state-of-Human-Rights.pdf.

