

College of Law
University of the Philippines
26 May 1983

The Members of Class '83
College of Law
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

Through: The President
Senior Council

My dear fellow students of Law,

First of all, I should like to express my sincerest thanks for the kind invitation (conveyed to me this morning through the Office of the College Secretary) to attend your recognition day ceremonies this coming Sunday, 29 May 1983. I must say most emphatically that I find your invitation exceedingly gratifying. This is so for the reason that since I had my faculty status changed (shortly after the declaration of martial law in 1972) from that of a regular member to lecturer, such invitations have become rather all too rare.

Even so, however much I appreciate your invitation I am nonetheless constrained to decline it. This is because I am told that the affair will be held not at Malcolm Hall (which I like to refer to fondly and somewhat reverentially

as our ancestral home), and not even in the Diliman campus (or in any other campus of the University), but at the Meralco Theatre.

Why the Meralco Theatre of all places? Why outside the UP campus at all? Why, since notwithstanding a long and pitiless summer, the Diliman campus continues to be one of the few truly beautiful spots in the country - and this, largely because of the unartificial, untouched, unspoiled and still largely natural appearance of Diliman's surrounding greenery!

As a gesture of protest -- but with all due respect and with assurances of my deep and abiding paternal affection for all of you -- I reiterate that I must regretfully decline your invitation.

Perhaps, I owe you an explanation for this seemingly unseemly display of distemper and peevishness.

For my part, if there are any activities which are uniquely peculiar to the University, these would be (aside from classwork) the commencement exercises, both at the college and the university levels, and all other activities associated with commencement -- such as, for instance, your recognition day exercises this coming Sunday. Accordingly, I submit that such activities should be and are most appropriately held at and celebrated on campus, and not elsewhere.

Incidentally, I am also informed that this year's University commencement exercises will not -- repeat, not -- be held on campus, but at the plushier and in the glossier premises of the PICC. To my knowledge, this will be the first time that the University commencement exercises will not be held in Diliman since the main university campus was relocated at that place in 1949. At last, a tradition which is now more than three decades in the making is about to be broken!

And for what? Or should the question rather be: "For whom?"

Let me for once be bold and forthright. Permit me at least this once to forget the time-honored motto of the law profession, which finds expression in the scornful comment that for us lawyers, prudence is not merely the better part, but rather that prudence is indeed all our valor.

Having thus set prudence aside, permit me to articulate the whispered question of many alumni who have expressed both anger and sorrow over the somewhat cavalier and seemingly careless abandonment of the now 30-year old tradition of holding the University commencement exercises only on campus.

Is such abandonment for the convenience of Imee? Or of the President, Ferdinand E. Marcos of the Class of '39, her illustrious father -- and who is without any doubt, the most eminent and the nonpareil among the alumni? Or the First Family?

I must admit that these questions which trouble some alumni trouble me as well. For I confess, readily and without embarrassment, to being naive and simple-minded, and also to being somewhat sentimental and romantic. Accordingly, despite the chastening years, I continue to believe in, and to cling rather stubbornly to, the visionary -- and some would add, quixotic, but nonetheless engaging and heroic -- notion that the University of the Philippines and perhaps, too, the College of Law, is larger than any individual, however eminent, however powerful, and however lofty he or she (or they) may be.

In all sadness, I must admit that this engaging and romantic notion is about to be exposed as being at best an agreeable illusion. For apparently, it has now come to pass that it is the University, and the College of Law as well, which must arrange their affairs so as to suit those of particular individual(s) -- although one must add, so as not to distort the picture, of some very exceptional, extraordinary and uniquely accomplished individual(s).

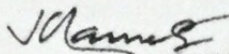
In these rather disordered and disoriented times, not a few misguided individuals claim to discern in this unsettling development -- of a once proud and honored institution being made to yield to an admittedly incomparable and extraordinary individual(s) -- a subtle and insidious effort to humble the University, so that once sufficiently humbled, it may at last be shamed into renouncing its perverse if prideful pretension to being the conscience of the nation, or worse, the brave and gallant citadel of dissent, and worst still, the "home of lost causes".

My hope is that this alleged process of humiliation is untrue, or if true, will not be pushed too far to the point where both the University and the College of Law may become so abased that neither may even qualify to become minor adjuncts of the University of Life.

Despite my deepening sadness, may I nonetheless wish each and every one of you my warmest congratulations.

God speed and good wishes!

Yours sincerely,


JOSE C. LAURETA
Professorial Lecturer

cc: Mr. Edgardo Angara
President
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Miss Irene Cortes
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Mr. Froilan Bacungan
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