

WALA LANG

A Muslim Woman High at Global City

by

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The American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald observed, “[T]he very rich ... are different from you and me.” Friends doing volunteer work assure me, so are the very poor. Many are contented with their lot, with no inclination to learn a marketable skill—reluctant, unable or fearful to exert serious effort and rise above poverty.

It was therefore a pleasure to listen to Norhata A. Arpa, a graduate of Escuela Taller de Filipinas, a voc-tech school that offers specialized courses in masonry, woodworking and wall finishing needed for the proper restoration of old churches, fortifications, homes, and other parts of our tangible heritage. Escuela also offers TESDA-accredited courses in modern construction skills—plumbing, electrical and carpentry.

Ms. Arpa gave some advice to the August 2015 graduates.

In Tagalog, Ms. Arpa related how she was the youngest in a Muslim family and grew up fatherless. He died when she was three and with her mother sickly, she knew only poverty from birth.

She continued in English, paraphrased as follows:

What we have achieved so far is the result of sacrifice and willingness to improve. We need to continue setting goals and to continue achieving in order to have a brighter future.

I completed three technical courses at Escuela Taller: National Certificate II in Electrical, Carpentry and Plumbing, over one-and-a-half years. After I graduated, I was hired as an on-the-job trainee of AAA Plumbing Services, Inc., a contractor for the installation of plumbing and automatic fire sprinkler systems.

Women working in the field of construction are rare. I began work as a plumber—a tubero—which was not easy considering that my co-workers were men. I steeled myself and met all trials and difficulties. Someone asked me why I chose to be a construction worker. I answered that I knew I could do it—chipping walls of toilet-and-baths with ball hammer and cold chisel to imbed water supply pipes and roughing in PVC sanitary lines while on top of scaffolding. Nothing is impossible if one is determined.

I have been five years in this field. After working as plumber, I was promoted to Quality Assurance supervisor. Although a high school graduate among engineers, designers and architects, I did not hesitate to accept the job. My employers have confidence in me and I try to live up to their expectations. I keep trusting in God.

I also went back to school. I attended evening classes and after two years, earned a Diploma in Information Technology. This was last year and now I’ve become Project-In-Charge of a 36-story building rising in Bonifacio Global City.

Hindi naging hadlang ang aking pagiging Muslim na babae para isakatuparan ko ang aking pañgarap.

The success of our lives depends on the decisions we make. If we want change then we must set a plan to achieve it. He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish little in life.

May Escuela Taller be the stepping stone in the pursuit of your dreams and may they come true.

Notes: (a) Escuela Taller de Filipinas Foundation, Inc. was organized by the Philippine and Spanish Governments. Courses are offered at its main campus at the Revellin de Recoletos, Victoria Street, Intramuros and at its Bohol Branch in Dauis, Bohol; and (b) Ms. Arpa's description of her background: Lumaki akong walang kinagisnang ama. Namatay ang aking ama noong ako ay may tatlong taong gulang pa lamang. Sadyang napakahirap ng buhay namin. Ang nanay ko ay walang trabaho at laging nasa bahay lamang sagpagka't siya ay may sakit. Ang mga kapatid ko naman ay may kanya-kanyang pamilya Nagsumikap akong itaguyod ang aking sarili para sa aking kinabukasan at upang matuluñgan na rin ang aking magulang. Bagama't ngayon ay nakikitira lamang kami ng aking nanay sa bahay ng pañganay kong kapatid ay patuloy pa rin akong nagsusumikap para mabigyan ng sariling bahay at lupa ang aking magulang.

Comments are cordially invited, addressed to walangwala888@gmail.com