

Reflection: Ronnel DelRio

Being born sans material wealth is challenging enough yet being born deprived of senses is way tougher. But for someone who was born blind, Ronnel del Rio grew up teeming with vision. What he lacks in eyesight, he makes up with will power.

While poverty or mere apathy would stop people for dreaming big, del Rio did not let his disability limit him in life. Unlike most of his peers who would feel content earning a living through alms, del Rio would set high goals and reach for them . In fact he is now looking at pursuing a doctoral degree after being considered as the first blind Filipino to have earned a graduate degree. At 48, del Rio has a master's degree in Management Technology from the University of La Salle in Lipa, Batangas , a province 90 kilometers south of manila.

But make no mistake about it: del Rio's ascent to the academic ladder was not easy. Obviously, del Rio had more challenges to face than an average student in order to go through elementary, high school, college, let alone, graduate school. Before he obtained University, del Rio said he had to massage at least two patients every day to secure his allowance for the following school day. Despite

securing a scholarship to fund his college tuition, he still had to work and study at the same time to afford the expenses of going to school.

Kristina arce Reflection: Ana

Ana Kristina Arce is a Filipina born deaf but pursued her dream of living a normal life. She amazes lots of people from the fact that in the Philippines, having disabilities are not easy. Public facilities for people with disabilities, are not functioning well. The worst, they face discrimination from other people.

Growing up, she studied in a school that most of the students are either deaf or have a problem with hearing. Even inside the class there's a discrimination happening. Communicating with other students inside the class is quite difficult because they don't know how to communicate with each other. Her hearing classmates didn't include her in class projects and activities even though she wants to participate. She felt stuck and disappointed.

She finds her place in De La Salle-College of St. Benilde School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies. She found an environment that she was welcome. She felt loved and cared that the school was like a family. She learned true things about a Deaf person and became a part of the Deaf community.

She pursues her master's degree to be equipped with more knowledge and to help other Filipino Deaf

community. She believes that other Deaf Filipino should improve their lives.

She became the first Filipino to be awarded the World Deaf Leadership Scholarship at the Gallaudet University in Washington.

Her goal now is to teach and help hear fellow Deaf to become empowered.

Reflection: Gilda Quintua

To run her business and talk to people, Gilda uses her hands – either through pen and paper or Filipino Sign Language. The definition of a successful Deaf Entrepreneur, she runs a travel and tour business called Nakahara Lodging and Travel Agency. Catering to those like her, it's primarily a travel service for deaf people around the world, through they also provide services for hearing people.

Drawing inspiration from foreign deaf friends, she and her fellow deaf Pinoys met in tourist spots, and she decided to set up her own business starting in 2004. A travel agency like any other, she's known for her reliable arrangements and service which she describes has "age-old" Filipino hospitality.

Pushing through discrimination and barriers, she managed to learn the ins and outs of booking flights, accommodations, and tour management.

In 2007, she was recognized at the Go Negosyo Caravan for people with Disabilities in De Salle-College of St. Benilde. But, as she said in her interview with Manila Bulletin, representing the fellow deaf is its own reward.

“As a deaf person in this kind of business, I am proud to say that I have crossed the border of so called limited access. I honestly worked hard to achieve my goals. I wanted to show the world that we are not cut off from mainstream society and we are capable of regularly doing and keeping our jobs like the rest of hearing and speaking people.”

Aside from all of this, Gilda has helped establish a deaf organization in her province of Eastern Samar.