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OUR HOPES FOR PHILIPPINE FARMERS AND OUR PRAYERS FOR COFFEE FOR PEACE

by Jonathan Cranston



The PBCI/CFP Team and the Dubria family in front of the Dubrias' home, where we spent Saturday night, Sept. 28

On the 28th and 29th of September, a group of us from PeaceBuilders Community and Coffee For Peace got the chance to visit some of the graduates of PBCI's Peace And Reconciliation course. These PAR alumni are coffee farmers who now supply the CFP warehouse and coffee shop. Visiting their village gave the PBCI/CFP team the chance to strengthen our friendship with these farmers and provide further instruction in the best methods for cultivating and harvesting premium, high-value coffee.

On the evening of Saturday, September 28, the PBCI/CFP team's Isuzu Trooper, parked beside the cinderblock and sawali home of Joe Randy and Marivic Dubria, was the only operational four-wheeled vehicle in the village of Purok Pluto. CFP Warehouse Manager Byron Pantoja, his veins filled with ice water, had piloted the bucking Trooper and the jostled team over the dilapidated dirt road as it wound upwards into the foothills of Mount Apo, to the west of Davao City. A ways down the hill from the Dubrias' house, the team had passed the only other vehicle in the area: a jeep so badly stranded that we had to squeeze past it a second time on our way down the hill the next afternoon.

After spending Saturday night with Joe Randy, Marivic, and their two children, we rose early on Sunday, hung the plastic collection buckets about our necks, and accompanied a group of Purok Pluto's farmers into the coffee fields to observe and participate in the harvest of the coffee cherries which the farmers were to deliver to Coffee for Peace's Davao office the next morning. As we followed the farmers down the slope into the rows of coffee trees, the chilly morning fog lifted to reveal a marvelous view of blue mountains surrounding the glinting water of the Gulf of Davao. Soon the high mist burned away, and the brilliant upland sunlight cast black shadows beneath the leaves of the coffee trees, and made the red cherries gleam like cinders. The team's two Caucasian members had forgotten our sunscreen, and

our skin was swiftly baked to a salmon hue which amused the farmers. The PBCI/CFP team and the farmers filled their buckets with red coffee cherries and trooped back up the slope to the shade of Lyn's Store.

Sitting beneath the roof of an open-fronted shed attached to the store, Marivic, Pluto resident Joy John, and store proprietor Lynlyn Panolino removed green, damaged, and rotten cherries from a pile of reds heaped on a net. I sat down beside them with my notebook, and they told me a bit about the customs of coffee harvesting. In order for the owner of a coffee field to bring in a harvest, she usually needs three harvesters in addition to herself. These extra hands receive their pay in coffee: one kilogram out of every five that each harvests. Harvesters of vegetables, on the other hand, are paid in cash: 15 pesos per bundle of spring onions, or 150 pesos for a day of pulling carrots. The harvesters' willingness to be paid in coffee reveals their high regard for coffee as a commodity whose value is proven and generally invariable. An old man looking on as the women sorted cherries gestured toward the pile. "So much money here," he said. Marivic gleefully quoted Dire Straits' description of affluence which begins "money for nothing..."



Yet, as the women described their farming life, they expressed frustration at the broad reality of hard work for small returns. In America, they asserted, if you have a vineyard or a farm, you are the rich person. But not here. "Why is that?" demanded Marivic turning on me suddenly and gazing intently in my eyes. I had to tell her that I have no idea.

The next morning, at the PeaceBuilders and Coffee for Peace offices in Davao, Marivic's brother-in-law Ariel Dubria and his wife Nening were in good spirits. They were collecting their check from CFP, and taking part in the wet-processing of the coffee cherries which they and their fellow farmers had just brought from Purok Pluto in the farmers' own truck. Nening told me that the money from CFP helps them a lot. Coffee pays better than vegetables, and whereas vegetables can only be harvested once every three months, coffee harvests come every two weeks. Ariel says that, by participating in the wet-processing conducted at the Davao office every time he and the farmers deliver a shipment, he is learning enough that he will be able to wet-process coffee cherries in Purok Pluto once the Department of Trade and Industry gives the farmers a pulping machine. When that happens, the earning power of these farmers, who today live in dirt-floored shacks and must haul their produce down to the passable sections of road on horses and overladen scooters, will increase enormously. With support and training from PBCI/CFP, and with assistance from the Department of Trade and Industry, they may one day be able to claim a just recompense for their labors. 📌



Leading the instruction of the Purok Pluto farmers were Dawn Albert Pates and Byron Pantoja, both PBCI/CFP veterans who have recently stepped into new leadership roles at CFP. They told ICT Staff Writer AJ Block about the motivation behind their work with coffee farmers and their plans for the future of CFP.

Coffee For Peace Warehouse Manager Byron Pantoja and Coffee For Peace Shop Manager Dawn Albert Pates entertaining the kids of Purok Pluto (photo by Jonathan Cranston)

INTERVIEWS WITH CFP WAREHOUSE MANAGER BYRON PANTOJA AND CFP SHOP MANAGER DAWN ALBERT PATES

By AJ Block

AJ asked newly appointed CFP Shop Manager Dawn Albert Pates: *You have worn a lot of hats in your time at PBCI and CFP, first as a volunteer and then in an official capacity since 2013; what are you excited about in taking on the manager position of what is a very visible component of the mission?*

Dawn: Mhm! So even before [becoming manager] I was already doing minimal tasks and now that I'm manager I am excited because there is more structure and more things to do. But since this is a food and beverage service and you are also carrying a mission with you, [the question is] how are you going to transmit that to the customer, because it is one of our goals that our consumers be educated. So, I am looking forward - I am excited - for the curious customers coming here asking, "Why is this Coffee for Peace?" and then learning together about this industry. Also, since social enterprise is something new here, I am excited to meet likeminded people who [will] come here and support us.

What do you think is important about connecting CFP customers - and coffee consumers in general - to the source of their drink?

The importance of that is a consciousness that my future is related to the future of my producers, you know? There would be no development if I am the only one succeeding and my producers - where my drink comes from - are still living below the poverty line. I think that is it, the consciousness that each one of us is connected. Sometimes we have that messianic complex of helping this cause, helping that cause, but it is actually helping each other - it is journeying together. I do not understand just giving because it makes you feel good, it is a shallow satisfaction; but when you are doing something that can affect not only your future but others' too, I think that is the best thing one can do.

AJ asked newly appointed CFP Warehouse Manager Byron Pantoja: *How has your role with CFP and PBCI evolved during your time here?*

Byron: Well when I first got here I was on vacation and I became a barista, just helping out at the shop and working there. From that role I became manager and took on day-to-day duties, and then decided to change the menu, the pricing system, and to train the staff to bring it up a level because I got some training from SCAA - the Specialty Coffee Association of America. So I



trained the baristas and we started a barista club here in Davao and started visiting other coffee shops, and we all got better at becoming baristas, and from there we started processing the coffee. In 2011 we wanted to franchise but decided not to and instead encouraged others to open up their own restaurants and buy our coffee. We landed our first wholesale client, Casamunda, which was a restaurant that used to be down here. Then we encouraged my mom's sister to open up La Taza in Manila, and then my cousin took up becoming a barista and was able to meet other people in his barista school - the Philippine Barista Academy - who opened up coffee shops, one here and one in Manila. So then my role went from manager, to roaster, shipping and receiving, taking orders, and the coffee shop and warehouse duties.

But now just recently Dawn has taken over the coffee shop because she is better at front of house business, handling customers, networking, that sort of stuff; and I am better at making systems and getting people to do tasks, so now I am warehouse operator and in charge of trading and training baristas and the purchasing - so all the behind the scenes stuff.

How would you like to see the full potential of the CFP vision become reality during your time as an operations leader?

I would like the farmers to see value in quality not just quantity and I'd like to see all of us, the farmers and the shops, have good quality coffee that we can process and sell together or individually. It would be nice if we could have all the coffee sold under one label of Coffee for Peace and with a transparent payment scheme, so that if they are the ones doing most of the work and all we do is put our label on it, then people still know CFP for what we are doing in the area.

I'd like to see this company, on our end, to expand the coffee shop and become one of those third wave cafes. Right now we can serve only one type of coffee, which is the Mt. Apo product. But if all the farmers are roasting and making their own coffee, then we could have that single-origin coffee and display it in the shop so that the shop is not just a showcase of their work but a place where people can really experience Philippine coffee from different regions and know that it is quality. Then we could up the game for the restaurant thing. Then for the wholesale factor, we want the farmers who are capable - and willing - to have their coffee shipped abroad so that their livelihood gets better and our business grows and everyone wins. ☑

"Our very special guests — our farming community partners from Mt. Apo — traveled for more than 3 hours from the mountain to deliver two tons of coffee. They enjoyed our signature drink — the Mudslide — made from their coffee. Most often, the farmers who produce the second most traded liquid in the world have never tasted their own crop as it is served in a coffee shop. As we journey towards sustainable and inclusive growth, farmers are our empowered partners — not mere suppliers. Choosing to support them is choosing to help these communities build their own vision of their future. Drinking a cup of Coffee For Peace coffee is a JUST choice." **Dawn Albert Pates**



(From left to right) Jelsyn, Kuya Allan, Kuya Fred, Sonny and Byron are the Warehouse and Trading team. They are responsible for the coffee processing, sorting, roasting and trading. We are confident that the coffee we serve has been meticulously processed and is freshly roasted.