

# The GMF Learning Process: Impact, Influence and Responses

By Rae

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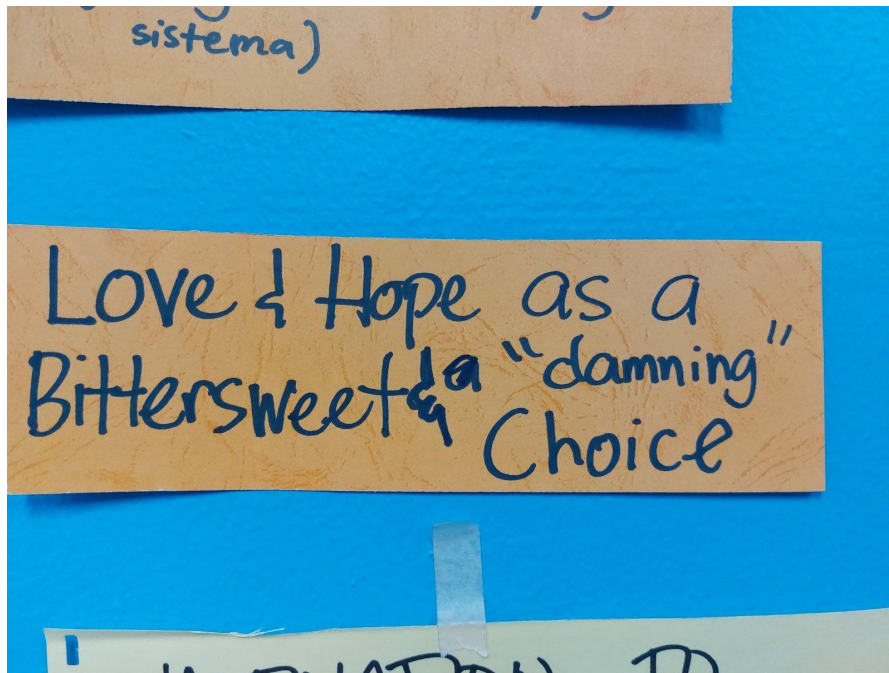
## Introspection and Intentional Advocacy through Reflective Writing (Journaling and Blogging)

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The GMF journey really required us to re-explore how we choose to live, and the particular advocacies we take part in as expressions of ourselves, and our unique callings within community as eco-socio beings. At times, I wonder if the sole purpose was to confuse for the mere sake of being counter-mainstream. Still, the disturbance and confusion became meaningful as I was forced to re-examine and be more at peace with how I seek a spirituality and interconnection within and between the realms I take part in and feel strongly about.

Introspection was concretized and made “archivable” for future reference and further processing through journaling. Journaling became a necessary outlet I ended up looking forward to as it allowed me the necessary space to feel deeply, and be intentional about my life. It became a space for gratitude, questioning, vulnerability, prayer and hope. Through it, I was more attuned to the motions within, the inclinations and deep promptings I would have otherwise overlooked had not journaling been a requirement of GMF.

Bloggging was another exercise we were required to do. I’m still challenged with bloggging about the various concepts and processes I have encountered both in GMF and other visceral experiences. But at the very least, us being constantly challenged to blog was a timely way for me to work on a gut feeling of mine: that there is place for vulnerable sharing within public domains, whether in-person or virtual. Bloggging was challenging because aside from the goal of being an authentic voice, the intention to really connect to the reader/receiver is very present as well. Aside from the GMF blogs, I was also managed to be more courageous in posting on my personal Facebook as well. As an advocate in the Philippines, Facebook can be a way to reach different audiences, including marginalized sectors who depend on it for updates, news and entertainment. Sadly, this dependence on social media, particularly Facebook, has also led to the spread of populism and historical distortion, but that’s another matter. The GMF process of linking, reflecting and questioning gave me that extra push to write and share about current issues in my own sphere of influence, which led to both public online exchanges and confrontation that I’m glad to have taken part in, if only to encourage both critical thinking and compassion albeit online as the first step.



Through introspection and writing, I'm more aware and at peace with the reality that to love and hope are bittersweet and even damning choices. To love and hope is to question the culture of death and apathy, which would inevitably lead to vulnerability

and risks. But as we get closer to the core of our being, it evidently becomes a meaningful bet worth taking.

### Historical and Intergenerational Solidarity through Lakad-Pamana/Heritage Walks and Historical Immersions

One particular gem from my GMF journey is my personal discovery of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Though the pedagogies we have encountered with Gandhi (Non-Violence) and Mandela (Reconciliation) are interconnected with Freire's, my current experiences and processing regarding my nation's struggles with historical distortion, the misconstrued political context and populist thinking wherein ethics and critical thinking are pit against each other, have made my exploration of Freire timely to my processing. One particular Freirean concept that I strikes a chord would be about how each is a historical agent – we are a product of history, and we can opt for a meaningful struggle as historical agents through the intentional growth of our humanity and compassion. And thankfully, nothing is clearly cut in stone in terms of history, we still have agency and a potential to be in solidarity across generations as we take part within liberation. This lens enables me hope and prevents me from being overwhelmed with the humongous systems that have really led to an ongoing and insidious eco-socio crisis, by seeing that my awareness and dedication to be an agent of history counts because at the end, solidarity cuts across generations and will always bear meaningful fruit.

To put this into practice, aside from reading history books and looking into the historical roots of current events with a keen interest in mapping out and learning of historical injustices and healing, I have been intentional in seeking in-person historical encounters. Recently, I have gone to historical landmarks and sharing sessions about one of our nation's darkest historical chapters, Martial Law from 1972 to 1986, under the fallen dictator, Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the late father of the current president of the country. In addition, I have went to lakad-pamana or heritage walks by heritage advocates who are able to tie historical injustices, past and neo-colonialism, and meaningful achievements of those who have gone ahead to our ongoing challenges and discernment as a people. Definitely, we have to go beyond nationalism, but to look into colonial heritage also shows how struggling peoples across the globe are comrades in the fight for a more just and compassionate world.

In addition, a wonderful surprise was how my seeking out these historical immersions opened up opportunities to bond and process with friends from different advocacies and realms, and even with some family members who share a dedication to historical justice.



Me at the Wall of Remembrance at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (Monument to the Heroes), which serves as a museum, monument and historical research center in Quezon City. This photo was taken by activist friends who work for the rights of the Lumad, a collective term for indigenous communities in Mindanao.



The Inang Bayan (mother land) Monument at Bantayog. This photo was taken on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, during a commemorative event marking 50 years after Martial Law was signed into law by Marcos Sr. on September 21, 1972.



First part of the museum tour at the University of the Philippines – Diliman with friends. This one is an exhibit about urban agriculture. After this, we went to gallery which exhibits the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses.

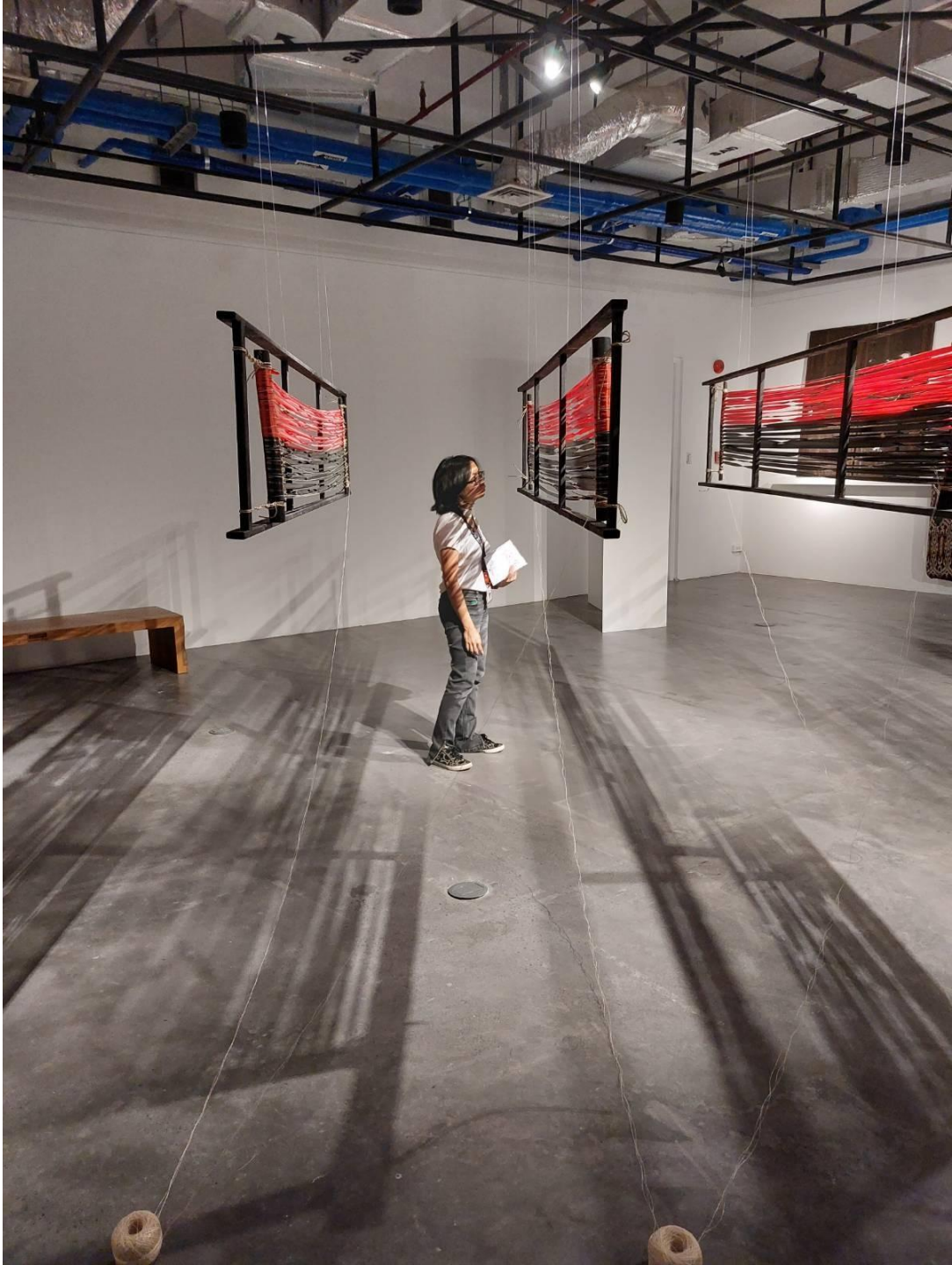


A friend and I joined a lakad-pamana across the historic area of Tondo. The heritage walk was led by passionate heritage advocates. Tondo is a historically rich district, and undervalued melting pot of cultures and sectors. Because of its various industries, settler and worker communities, it served as the base for workers' rights and struggles.



Tao sa Tao (Person to Person) was a meaningful event wherein survivors of Martial Law shared their life stories, particularly their activism during pre-1972 declaration, until the toppling down of the dictatorship in 1986.







These last two pictures were taken with a fellow GMF fellow and friend, Marnie. We visited the Weaving Women's Words on Wounds of War (WWWW), an exhibition of "women who endured the punishing impact of impunity during the Martial Law regime."

### Eco-Socio Immersions through Eco-Adventures and Seeking

Gratefully, GMF served as a space to see ecology, humanity and all other beings as interconnected and interdependent. It spoke to my desire to find the convergence between environmental work and human rights work. I think I'm closer to this in my desire to learn, grow and contribute within the realm of ecological justice and healing. Of course, easier said than done. After all, as I have discerned this as a vital part of my being, I am certain this will be a lifelong journey.

Aside from listening to one's deep self, we're also encouraged to really listen and dialogue with ecology. During the fellowship, and prior to the landmark and heartbreaking elections of our country during May 2022, I was blessed to find time to listen and dialogue with Mother Earth/Sea. "Until when would you put me off?" was

what I heard. And I've been putting off my seeking of a deeper growth in ecology for far too long, staying within the relative "comfort" of my current human rights work when deep down, I know I'm seeking convergence, and not just to "transfer" to environmental work. All struggles and concerns are interconnected, and I feel troubled with how environmental and social concerns are addressed in silos, the opposite of the reality of interconnection.

To further heed the call by the "still small Voice," I'm going on a retreat inspired by Laudato Si' from Jan 7-12, and have sent in my application for a master's or graduate diploma in environment and natural resource management. As I've learned from GMF and my studies at Loyola School of Theology, there is a spirituality that beckons me to this expansive realm of ecology.





A picture of the foliage surrounding the rivulet wherein Marnie and I had our forest bathing in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range, particular in the province of Rizal.



Mind-blowing mycelium from bokashi composting! Composting speaks to me because unlike other activities, its immediate purpose is to nourish Mother Earth through her soil. A form of “giving back” or rejoining her cycle.

Trans-Exploration of Emancipation and Conscientization

Though I know I would have to transition to more “deepening” work, my GMF journey really validated the challenging reality how all struggles and seeking are truly interconnected. I’m still careful of the temptation of “trying to do everything” as I’m fascinated with interconnection and the myriad of meaningful struggles and emancipative movements, both spectacular and wonderfully everyday initiatives. And so, I have embraced the current chapter of “trans-exploration” of listening and exploring the different struggles for emancipation, and the continued initiatives for conscientization to have these wounds and victories become shared and engrained realities for all.



Pictures of the young adult novel *We Call Her Ina Bai: How Strong Women are Made*, and *Lumad* coloring book. I’m volunteering my time to learn with Manobo youth (an indigenous group from Mindanao) as a tutor, in addition to helping sell these books to help share the heart-wrenching, necessary and courageous stories of their tribe, particularly that of their strong women leaders. Through my encounters with them and

of how they fight for love of family and their ancestral lands and culture, despite continued harassment from armed agents, compassion and a form of necessary courage and hope grows within.



Thankful for friends and mentors who have welcomed me into the advocacy realm of inclusion and empowerment of homeless families and individuals. Sharing about this with Dr. Nat, I am still yet to find a holistic and intersectoral approach to this. In a nation that is preoccupied with the everyday grind and survival, homeless struggles are so easily sidelined. Heartbreaking too is the fact that many of them do not believe they deserve better, and have the potential to liberate themselves. Above is a picture of a Christmas party held with partner homeless families and fellow advocates. We know we have a long battle ahead, but we could celebrate the meaningful wins such as to be able to celebrate life despite all else.





**Vollies General Assembly  
October 8, 2022**

Again with Marnie (but not picture above), we've explored feminist peer counseling as another pathway to explore healing within the realm of gender inequality and gender-based violence.

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