

ACHR SAYS GOODBYE TO THREE FRIENDS

In a network as large and as old as ACHR's, it's to be expected that we would lose some friends along the way. Twenty-five years, after all, is enough time for young activists to become middle-aged, for middle-aged activists to grow old, and for old activists to become extinct. But somehow, the past few months have brought an unusual concentration of extinctions, and we have three good friends and teachers to mourn.

CELIA TUASON (October 14, 1960 - October 9, 2014)

We just got word that Ceila Tuason, one of the national leaders in the Philippines Homeless People's Federation, has died on October 9th, after struggling against cancer for some time. In the Philippines federation, most of the national and local leaders are women, and they have an affectionate tradition of referring to these leaders collectively as "the mothers." Most of them are, in fact, mothers, and, like Celia, have numbers of children to look after. But the "mothers" appellation also honors the kind of mother-like strength, gentleness, intuition, warmth and capability these women bring to the difficult work they do with their communities and with the larger federation, in their struggle against poverty. For many ACHR members, Celia has for some 16 years been one of the smiling faces who welcome guests who visit Payatas and Tandang Sora Avenue, and has been a graceful, patient, articulate and soft-spoken presenter of stories about the federation's savings program, housing projects and other federation initiatives. Over the years, Celia has represented the Philippines federation on many ACHR exposure visits and meetings, as well, over the years. Most recently, she traveled twice to Bangkok, in February and March 2014, as part of the Philippines team who took part in the ACHR-IIED poverty line study, even though her strength was visibly diminished.

(Ruby writes about Celia) Celia was born on October 14, 1960 in the province of Isabela, north of Manila. Celia was a dedicated wife to her husband, Roland, who is a carpenter, and mother to two children: a son Kristopher Ronn, 26, who is a nursing graduate, and a daughter Carmela, 17, who is now in her first year of architecture school. Between 1990 and 2000, Celia and her family lived in one of the informal settlements that was dangerously close to the mountain-like garbage dump in Barangay Payatas. After the garbage-dump tragedy in July 2000, she and her family were able to join the Golden Shower housing project nearby, which was one of the Homeless People's Federation's first on-site housing redevelopment projects, in which 520 very poor families (many of them working as garbage-pickers on the dump) negotiated to buy the land they had been squatting on for 20 years and fully redevelop their housing and infrastructure.

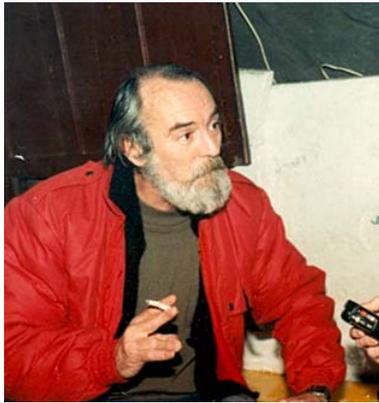


Celia started her work with communities in 1993, in Payatas, with Father Norberto and the Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation (VMSDFI). She worked as a volunteer on a VMSDFI micro-credit program that was modeled on the Grameen Bank system. After some time, they found that the program would require a lot more staff and budget, if it wanted to expand. So instead they decided to modify the program so that extra staff and budget wouldn't be needed. About that time, a learning exchange visit to Mumbai, India gave the program staff an alternative idea about saving - not through staff-run micro-credit schemes but through savings groups that the community people managed themselves. That was when the community savings process started in Payatas. In 1995, Celia became one of the first leaders to head an Area Resource Center (ARC) or savings group satellite, which the communities within the Homeless People's Federation continue to manage to this day. The creation of savings groups began to spread to other regions in 1997, and Celia was among the lead promoters of the program, providing orientations and hands-on training to poor communities in other cities on how to start savings and keep their records properly. For over 16 years, Celia's main task with the HPFPI was focused on savings:

implementation, monitoring, capacity-building of ARC community personnel on simple bookkeeping and record-keeping. She was also in charge of managing the funds from ACCA.

Photos: The top photo shows Celia working with Jockin on the model house that was built in Payatas for the launch of the federation's Security of Tenure campaign in November, 2000. The middle photo shows Celia happily receiving contributions for the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA) fund, at the UPCA launch in Quezon City in March, 2012. The last shows Celia and Deanna on a field visit to the Homeless Network's first housing project in Bangkok, during the Poverty Line Study meeting in March 2014.

FATHER JOHN DALY (November 21, 1935 - June 2, 2014)



We have also gotten word from friends in Korea of the death of Father John Daly, who helped transform the housing rights movement in South Korea from protesting evictions to developing solutions to evictions, in the form of the country's first community-planned and built housing projects. The ideas Father Daly helped pioneer, in three important projects in the late 1970s and early 80s (Bogum Jahri in 1976, Han-Dok in 1979 and Mok-Dong in 1985), were like lightning rods for squatters, renters and evictees in a city whose affordable housing options were dwindling day by day. Hundreds came to Bogum Jahri, which became a living classroom for people to visit and learn how much poor people can do themselves - with only a very little money and the power of their cooperation and their collective spirit. But this brief flowering of new possibilities was soon swept over by even larger and more brutal waves of eviction in the late 80s, which inspired the formation of ACHR (in which Father Daly was key), as a means of bringing experience from the rest of Asia to assist the Koreans in their struggle. Here are some remembrances from some of Father Daly's friends in the ACHR network:

(Fr. Mun-su Park in Seoul) In 1971 when Fr. Daly was novice master of Korean Jesuits, he took training in community organization, and sent all his novices to live for a time in public housing or squatter settlements. On the first day Fr. Daly went to live in the squatter village along Chongkye Stream, he met Je Jung Gu, and the two of them experienced such a deep sense of shared thought and feeling that they spent the entire night talking. This was the beginning of a friendship that came to have a significant effect on the history of Korea. When Park Chung Hee issued emergency decrees to solidify his dictatorship, all the activists in the Chongkye Stream squatter settlement were arrested and the people's movement, lacking leadership, scattered. Fr. Daly and Je Jung Gu realized that the Alinsky method of confrontation had prevented the formation of leadership among the squatters themselves, so they began anew in the squatter settlement in Yangpyong-dong, Seoul, by living quietly with the residents as neighbors. They prepared one room for Je Jung Gu and his wife, Shin Myong Ja, one room for Fr. Daly, and one room to be used as a small gathering place for residents. Many residents would drop in there frequently for a cup of tea and conversation.

In 1976 the Yangpyong squatter settlement was scheduled for demolition. The idea of moving as a group to a new location came up, and, as a clear sign of the level of community dialogue that had been achieved, 170 households agreed to join in a community project to build their own houses. It was quite daunting for these families to consider moving to an abandoned grape orchard in Shiheung, more than an hour from Seoul by public transportation. In a spirit of hope, they named their planned village Bogum Jahri, which means "*place of good news*". In 1980 I interviewed some of those families. "It was difficult," many of them said, "There were fights every day." The people agreed, though, that what most gave them hope to continue building their houses and new community was the dedication of Fr. Daly and Je Jung Gu, and seeing them joining in brick-laying. (Je Jung Gu later wrote a book called *Laying Bricks with a Priest*). There was also a second Bogum Jahri community built nearby at Han-Dok. By today, though, the original residents of both of those communities have scattered, and the modest houses that people built with their own hands have been replaced by tall apartment blocks. The only remaining community is the third one, named Mok-Dong Village. The elected leader of Mok-Dong Village told me at the funeral that Fr. Daly was like a mother to their village.

(Hyo Woo Na in Seoul) Fr. John V. Daly, whom we call Jung Il-woo in Korea, was a guru of the poor in Korea. Born in Illinois, USA, the son of a farmer, Fr. Daly joined the Catholic Jesuit order at the age of 18. After graduating from St. Louis University with a degree in philosophy, he taught philosophy at Sogang University in Korea for three years from 1960. He finished his study in theology in USA and then came back to Korea in 1966. Although he had taught spiritual theology, the thought that he was preaching only with his lips haunted him a long while, and he eventually found his way to the shabby makeshift towns of squatters and evictees in Chongkye in Seoul in 1973, where he built solidarity with them. He was always on the side of the weak after that. Despite of continuous threats of deportation, his affection to Korea and friendship with colleagues here deepened as time passed.

(Kirtee Shah in India) Fr. John Daly's passing away brings the curtain down an era. I saw him as a hero and the project at Bogum Jahri as his most heroic act. He came to participate in the seminars ASAG organized in five cities India the mid 1980s, on "Shelter for the Urban Poor: Local and International Experiences". Wherever John spoke in those seminars--Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Chennai - he was an instant hit. He spoke with clarity and passion, and his story had a powerful message: be one with those you are working with, live with them as they live, see them as change agents, trust them to solve their own problems. With his colored beard and shining eyes, he looked like a film star. And he related with people with immense warmth. Three decades have passed since then. A few years ago, I went to see him in Seoul; he was not the same charismatic person, but the fire was still burning. I will not forget his passionate embrace. It was wonderful to have met you and known and admired Fr. John Daly. Though we lived far apart and did not connect much in later years there was still a great feeling that persisted.

(Arif Hasan in Karachi) Fr. John was one of the early fighters for the rights of the poor. As a young man, I was greatly inspired by him, especially when he visited Karachi and gave us ideas on how to deal with the eviction issues we were facing at that time. There should be a way by which we can honor those who, like Father John, have been our role models and have contributed to the evolution of thought and action for equity and justice in a hostile world.

PATRICK MAGEBHULA HUNSLEY (1958 - August 3, 2014)

And lastly we say goodbye to the extraordinary Patrick Magebhula, one of the national leaders in the South Africa Homeless People's Federation and a frequent visitor to Asia, where his vivid stories and clear messages made him as popular as a rock star on the Asian urban poor exchange circuit. We can't reproduce that marvelous voice or those skittery eyes and gestures of his, but we can reproduce a specimen of Patrick's way with words. Here is a specimen from the presentations Patrick made during the second Asian People's Dialogue in Jakarta, in September 2002:

My father had five wives and five houses. I am the eldest from the first family. So I am the head of my family. My father had about two hundred cows, and about 500 sheep and goats and about 120 chickens behind the house. But when I was five years old, he passed away, and all his brothers and sisters took all these cows and sheep and goats and chickens and divided them amongst themselves, and I ended up living in a squatter settlement called Inanda, near Durban. In 1989, when the Asian people were having their first People's Dialogue in Korea, in South Africa, we were all still doing *Oiye-Oiye!* We were all fighting for a new South Africa, demonstrating, fighting, shouting. At our first people's dialogue in South Africa in 1991, I met Somsok, Jockin, Gregor, Sheela, Mama Iris, Rose - I met a lot of people there. And you people here in Asia said to us in South Africa, "*Hey don't just scream and shout, why don't you save something? Save some money, you know? Come together, talk, build houses and negotiate for land. Do something!*" Some of our people from the shack settlements went to the Grameen Bank for exposure, some went to Mumbai for the Mahila Milan savings schemes, some came to Thailand to look at financial systems - and we saved.



Our problem is that we poor people like to sit and wait. And then after two or three years, someone gets evicted, and then we all stand up and fight. When that is finished, we go back and sleep for another five years. And then there is a flood, and we all get up again and fight - fight the water, fight the local government. And then we sleep for another five years. That's our problem. All the time we are sleeping, the government and big businesses are looking at us sleeping and listening to us snoring. "Oh, they're sleeping," and they say, "Hey you know what? Let's build a hospital here. Let's build a hotel and a shopping center there. Let's chase these sleepers away." We're sleeping, and the problem is we don't think when we're sleeping! What we are proposing to you is, can we meet every day, can we save every day? Can we meet continuously and do the thinking and get organized? When the government thinks we're still sleeping, can we go to the government and say, "*How about giving us this piece of land? How about we build this sewer together? How about we build this clinic together?*" Can we put programs on the government's table?

(From Joel Bolnick in Cape Town) Patrick Magebhula Hunsley, my comrade, my brother and my very special friend, has been dodging bullets all his life - literally and figuratively. He survived being stabbed in the lung. He survived vicious assaults. He survived stints in reformatory and in prison. He survived being forced into joining a zulu nationalist vigilante gang. He survived a prolonged fight in the shacklands of Inanda to bring a progressive civic organization into being in his settlement. He survived wave after wave of attacks from forces of reaction and crime to unseat him. He survived alcoholism. He survived TB. He survived HIV. He survived being a poor man in the shacklands of South Africa.

Today he breathed his last. The accumulated batterings of poverty wore him down. It is a miracle that he lived for 56 years. It is impossible to imagine a future without him - without his marvelous sense of humor, his poetic soul, his fiery oratory, his capacity to find common ground with one and all, his deep compassion for his fellow human beings. A flawed genius has passed on. My life will be immeasurably poorer as a result, and on a far grander scale so too will be a movement that shares his dream for a just and equitable world in which poverty and exclusion, oppression and intolerance are consigned to the past. For the next few weeks there will be mourning for Patrick in hundreds of informal settlements, backyard shacks, pavement dwellings in dozens of countries. There will be mourning for him in places of power where his sparkle and his candor, his determination and his unwavering commitment earned him enemies but won over many, many more.