

Spring 2022



FRIENDS OF THE FILIPINO
PEOPLE IN STRUGGLE

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Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle
coast salish territories

Blueprint for Revolution

The NDFP and the
strategy for
national liberation
in the Philippines

in
this
newsletter

an interview with
NDFP Spokesperson
Coni Ledesma

"Why I support the NDFP"
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Tim Louis

upcoming FFPS events



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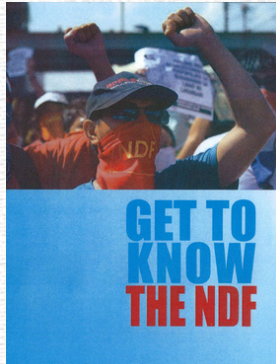
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Get to Know the NDF - Upcoming Program Study

The Filipino people's struggle, both in its hundreds of years of anti-colonial tradition and especially in the last 50 years of struggle for national liberation from U.S. imperialism, is a beacon of hope to the oppressed and exploited people of the world.



Saturday, April 23
5-7 PM, Vancouver
In-person. Please RSVP to friendsinstruggle@gmail.com for location and more details.



Contribute your media savvy skills!



If you're interested in learning more about our work at Friends and the struggle in the Philippines, and putting that knowledge into practice, why not try your hand at social media content?



Write to us at friendsinstruggle@gmail.com!

Revolution Selfie: The Red Battalion

On Sunday February 6th, FFPS hosted an online film screening of Revolution Selfie, Steven De Castro's sharp, playful and poignant introduction to the revolution in the Philippines.

This honest engagement with the the revolutionary movement really exposes why, even after 50 years of armed struggle, peasants, workers and progressive intellectuals and activists continue to join the revolution. Its not only about the conditions of semi-colonial and semi-feudal oppression and exploitation that continue to shape Philippines society. Its also the vision of a liberated future, and the new relationships of reciprocity and collaboration being forged in organized communities in the countryside, within the New People's Army and in the whole revolutionary movement, that keep this struggle relevant and vital. There's so much to learn here! Contact us if you'd like to attend a future screening.



[Watch the trailer here!](#)



Building a new life in the guerilla areas: an interview with Coni Ledesma

In January, I met online with Coni Ledesma to learn about the social and economic changes in the guerilla areas that the New People's Army defends and supports. Speaking directly with a Filipino revolutionary who has dedicated her life to a communist future for the Filipino people, and all people around the world, was immensely inspiring. From our position in imperialist Canada, it can be challenging to envision what change can look like and what strategy we should adopt to get there. Though conditions in the Philippines are quite different than our own here, we have so much to learn from our comrades who have more than 50 years of experience, struggle, and successes waging a people's war and developing the foundation for new democracy.

I joined Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle not just because I feel a responsibility to be in solidarity with all exploited and oppressed people around the world who face imperialist aggression in their daily lives. As an Indigenous (Diné and Yurok) person involved in Indigenous struggles and working class organizing in our local area, I have received such warm comradeship and principled solidarity from Filipino comrades. Being welcomed into a network of Filipino organizers has connected me with a community of anti-imperialists who continue to teach me about disciplined struggle and a strategy for liberation. Most importantly, they have taught me about revolutionary hope.

The struggle in the Philippines – though protracted and far from determined – is a bright light and a strong example of what is possible when the principles of the united front of mass organizations, with the leadership of the party and the offensive and defensive power of a people's army, are set in motion. It is a beacon of hope for us in the imperialist core that motivates us to throw our lot in with all oppressed and exploited peoples, in the Philippines and beyond, by organizing ourselves to conspire against imperialism, including its manifestation as settler colonialism, at home. – Natalie Knight

Coni Ledesma is a spokesperson for the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, and a member of the NDFP panel for the Peace Talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

What are liberated and semi-liberated areas in the Philippines?

Formally speaking and to be very exact, there are no liberated areas because a liberated area really means that the forces of the government of the Republic of the Philippines cannot enter. But there are places at different stages of development, the guerilla fronts – more than 110. These guerilla fronts are centres where the new government is taking place. In reality, there are 2 governments right now in the Philippines: the Manila government or Duterte government, and the areas where there are organs of political power being built in the countryside.

Some guerilla areas are quite big, and some areas eventually merge with other guerilla fronts. We have guerilla fronts in 90% of the provinces in the Philippines, in the north, middle, and south of the Philippines. But that doesn't mean that every province has many fronts. Negros Island, for example, has many guerilla fronts.

In all the guerrilla fronts, revolutionary land reform is undertaken. This means that the campaign to get greater benefits for the peasants from the landlords is a major part of the work. The maximum program of land reform is being undertaken in some areas, which means land is distributed to peasants for free, and a new life is happening for the people living there.

Can you tell us more about this new life – what do peoples' daily lives look like in the guerilla areas where there is people's government?

In the barrios or villages, people are organized: peasants, women, and youth. Women are organized into NDF organizations like Makibaka. There are also cultural organizations, organizations for peasants, and even



organizations for children.

It is from these organizations that people learn how to build their lives. It is a very democratic process. The New People's Army and the NDF organizations all support the people to build their lives.

Remember, these villages are in far flung parts of the Philippines. The services of the government of the Republic of the Philippines hardly reaches them – some villages don't have schools, and very little medical and social services. So it is the people themselves who have to build and develop these services.

There is a very feudal culture in the countryside prior to the NPA arriving. Women are second class citizens; they work in the field all day and when they get home they still have to cook, clean, do housework, and take care of the children. But in the guerilla fronts, the women have learned to show leadership. They elect their own leadership in the NDF organizations and many of the leaders are women. These women begin to realize their role as women.

I remember that there was one woman who said that what she liked about the new life was that she and her husband shared household responsibilities. It seems small, but that is big – any woman knows that is big!

So there are little victories, little forward steps, that turn into big steps.

What role does the New Peoples Army play in the guerilla fronts?

These guerilla areas must be protected, and this is why you need the New People's Army, to protect the people. Aside from the NPA, you also have militias that help the people. In the guerilla fronts, there is a centre of gravity or core supported by the NPA. And then you have an outer circle of militias. It is like a widening circle of people building their new lives.

It is the role of the New People's Army to protect the people. However, they are not fighting all the time – they also help with production. The NPA helps peasants and farmers with harvesting and planting, and building a new

society.

During the pandemic there have been a lot of natural disasters, typhoons. The NPA helps people to rebuild their houses, to replant crops, to take care of the damage. These are many of the things that have been taking place.

NDF people and NPA medics also teach the people hygiene, primary health care, and acupuncture. Health is so important! In some areas, NPA medics, doctors, and dentists have trained people to do basic dental care, basic operations like appendectomies, and helping in childbirth. And now with the pandemic and Omicron, they are taught how to build their immune systems using herbal plants.



Coni Ledesma speaking from the Netherlands at the launch of FFPS-Coast Salish territories in October 2021

In remote areas where they cannot afford to go to a hospital, they are able to get primary care in their community, even dental care. This is a huge improvement in the people's lives that would never have happened if the NPA wasn't there.

Education is another piece. It used to be that children could go to school in the barrios, but because of the pandemic schools have been closed. So NPA members have begun to teach the children in the guerilla areas so their education can continue.

Education happens in the NPA too. Many of the members of the New People's Army come from the peasant class and they are illiterate. There are literacy and numeracy classes that take place in the NPA, so there is a whole educational process.

I'll give you an example. My husband and I were in a guerilla zone many years ago, and there was one NPA member who was very good at massage and acupuncture.



As we were leaving the guerilla zone that day, there was suddenly an eruption of applause from his comrades. Why? Because this comrade learned to write his name! He was learning to write. Can you imagine the kind of dawning of knowledge for him? This is taking place in the countryside all the time.

Can you describe what agrarian reform looks like in the guerilla fronts?

75% of Filipinos are peasants. And most of the peasants don't own the land, they till the land for the landlords. Usually 70% of the produce goes to the landlord and 30% is kept by the peasants to eke out their living.

The NDF program calls for revolutionary land reform, and this happens in steps. We work to raise the percentage of what the peasants get. They start negotiating with the landlord. In some cases they have gone to 50-50: 50% of the produce goes to the peasants, and 50% goes to the landlord. That is a big step forward.

The highest goal is the free distribution of land, and we used to think this would happen only when there is nationwide victory. But now I've heard that in certain guerilla areas, they are already able to achieve the maximum. This means they are highly consolidated, and they are able to give free distribution of land to the peasants. In addition to revolutionary land reform, the objective is that the peasants work in a collective so that their production is more efficient and higher.

What does it look like to have people's government in guerilla areas happening at the same time as the Philippine government?

First of all, the Philippine government wants to destroy the whole revolutionary movement: the NPA, the NDF, and the Communist Party. Members of all these groups and the NDF organizations are all clandestine – you can't go around saying you are a member because you will be targeted with your life. So the officials of the New People's Army and the organs of political power do not openly declare themselves.

We do not talk about where the guerilla areas are, or the scope of them. The intelligence of the Armed Forces of the

Philippines tries to locate them, but we don't openly announce where they are. This is where tactical offensives take place, and so you know there is a guerilla front near these tactical offensives.

The people's government is able to exist because they are clandestine. In the people's governments in the guerilla areas, there is progress. The organs of political power take on the responsibilities that the Philippine government shirks.

Are there new challenges being faced by the guerilla areas and the New People's Army?

Since 2017, there has been an increase in bombing by the Philippine government. They have acquired drones and over 500 bombs from the United States. The people have had to survive – the bombs kill people, destroy the land, the crops, and sometimes it's difficult to make the land fertile again. This has been happening all over the Philippines. So you have this man-made disaster alongside the typhoons and natural disasters.

The bombings are in compliance with Duterte's order to "flatten the fields" and destroy the New Peoples Army. This is his target. But in 1962, Marcos also had this plan. So it has been more than 50 years, and they still cannot succeed!

It has been 53 years of struggle. It is a struggle of generations really. And yet, the motivation and inspiration to go on is in the young people now. If there was no NDF, NPA, or Communist Party, the intensity of the exploitation and oppression in the Philippines would be even worse. It is due to the struggles of workers, the strikes, the demands for change, the building of the guerilla fronts and multiplying of them – all of this in the past 50 years has not allowed the exploitation and oppression to go on unabated. The NDF, NPA, and Communist Party allow the people to build new lives.

The people are determined. They continue working, they continue with their daily lives. Their courage is very admirable!



"Why I support the National Democratic Front of the Philippines..."

with Tim Louis

In each issue of the FFPS-CST newsletter, we will highlight members of our local community who support the NDFP and hear in their own words why they are in solidarity with the Filipino struggle.

Gandhi said "Poverty is the worst form of violence." He also said "Earth provides enough to satisfy every person's need, but not every person's greed." These two quotes are the foundation of my unqualified support of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. [NDFP].

The NDFP was founded on April 24, 1973. It is a coalition of revolutionary social and economic justice organizations, agricultural unions, trade unions, indigenous rights groups, leftist political parties, and other related groups in the Philippines. It seeks to bring an end to the 'worst form of violence' - poverty.

The infant mortality rate in the Philippines is 21.6 per 1,000 live births, 4.2 in Canada. You may think this disparity is an unavoidable result of the enormous difference in size of economy. Now, let me tell you that Cuba's infant mortality rate is 3.8. The difference between the Philippine's infant mortality rate and Cuba's infant mortality rate is therefor 17.7. With 1.5 million births per year in the Philippines, approximately 26,000 infants die needlessly every year

Over 17 million people in the Philippines live in poverty.

Two in every three Filipino households do not have enough food.

In the Philippines, two in every ten children under the age of five are underweight.

The violence of poverty permeates every city, village and household in the Philippines. We must all support the NDFP in its just struggle to bring an end to this form of violence.



Penny Parry and Tim Louis

Tim Louis is a practicing lawyer who has been actively involved in Vancouver civic politics for over forty years. Tim has lived and worked in Vancouver all his adult life. From his early days as a law student at UBC – during which time he co-founded Vancouver's custom transit service for people with disabilities [HandyDART], through to his terms as an elected official on both Park Board and City Council, Tim has listened to, and advocated on behalf of, communities across Vancouver.

Tim and his lifelong partner and collaborator Penny Parry are both members of the Friends of the Filipino People in Stuggle - Coast Salish Territories Council.



What is FFPS-CST?

The Vancouver chapter of Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle launched in militant solidarity on Coast Salish Territories in October 2021. Also known as the Friends of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (FNDFP), Friends is a mass solidarity organization with chapters internationally to promote and support the people’s movement of the Philippines, led by the NDFP.

Executive:

Natalie Knight, Chairperson
Raquel Park, Organizational Officer
Martha Roberts, Political Officer
Aiyanas Ormond, Treasurer

Advisory Council:

Ray Bobb, Chandu Claver, Charlotte Kates,
Hanna Kawas, Marion Kawas, Diane LeClaire,
Tim Louis, and Penny Parry

Contact us at:

friendsinstruggle@gmail.com



FFPS-Coast Salish territories launch, October 2021

Long Live International Solidarity!

Join us! - as Friends we are...

- United in the belief that the Filipino people as a sovereign people have a right to struggle against US domination and struggle for genuine social change and against oppressive rule.
- Committed to supporting the National Democratic Front of the Philippines as a people’s movement advancing toward national and social liberation and promoting the realization of their 12-Point Program and hereby unite ourselves under the banner of the Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle.
- Committed to supporting the mass movement of all the oppressed peoples of the Philippines in their aspiration to: build a true people’s democratic government; promote and uphold the social welfare of the oppressed classes through programs for genuine agrarian reform, livelihood development, literacy & education, nutrition, sanitation & health; and to defend their movement and aspirations on all fronts from any attacks.

