



Concerned Artists
of the Philippines (CAP)
#39 Sct. Bayoran, Quezon City
email: concerned_artists_phil@yahoo.com

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Dear friends and colleagues,

This is to reiterate that the group of Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) who were at the Culture Summit yesterday are NOT trouble makers and did not go to the venue to disrupt the convention, contrary to what was announced by Ms. Cecille Guidote and Ms. Gigi David to the plenary. Fact is, we were rough handled by KALAHI Arnis martial artists and hotel security personnel and bodily dragged away from the convention hall.

Particular to the claim of Ms. David that she was strangled by one of our artists, our photos will prove that Ms. David was the one who squeezed tight the cheeks of one of our artists.

We also take this opportunity to register our indignation over the violence wrought on our physical beings and our right to expression. We were armed only with our props—2 masked and some painted kraft paper, a megaphone and 100 copies of statement. Even if our production is far behind the 6 million-peso budget of the NCCA's Anti-corruption Conference, we do not deserve savagery, more so one instigated by a culture and arts institution

In all honesty, we had planned to do a 5-minute lightning performance during lunch break. The technique is unconventional by mainstream standard, yet the artistry is legit and the messages are sane, analytical and valid.

Our artists went up to the 3rd floor lobby at about 12nn. They quietly put on their costumes and prepared their props, then waited outside the hall for the right timing— not during the speeches of speakers; in-between open forum participants.



Ms. David at left. WHO STRANGLED WHOM?



After a few minutes, I noticed that the usherettes were “reinforced” by 2 arnis artists at the door. I constantly went in and out of the hall to relay to the performers what was going on inside. The waiting took quite awhile as, as much as possible, we would like to come in at a moment when no speaker would be interrupted.

At about 12:55pm, when I came out of the hall, I saw Ms. “Josie” with a hotel security pointing to our performers. At this point, we surmised that we have to make our move. Then Ms. David approached us asking, “Why are you doing this to our country?” She had to repeat the question several times as we were dumbfounded. Could not get the context of her question— why were we doing WHAT to our country?

When several more hotel security closed in, that gave us the cue. The performers fixed the final touches of their props and prepared to enter the hall. Meanwhile, Ms. David was still at it—”Why are you doing this to our country?” but this time, her arms were raised to the side *patintero* style. At some moments, she changed dialogs — “*Maawa kayo sa Pilipinas!*” (Huh?) “*Nakakahiya sa mga foreigners sa loob.*” (Now I get it.)



Arnis warrior in blue. Performing artists vs martial artists.

Then, as I gave the signal to “Go!” (not “*sugod!*” ha, as Ms. David claimed I shouted), all at the same time— the arnis artists and hotel security pushed the group away from the door (closed by this time); grabbed our props; physically dragged us further away; Ms. David collapses by herself.

More security personnel came in; police was called; other arnis warriors (this time) joined to support their 2 comrades. We held on to each other to protect each other.

Some arnis warriors held something by their hands which looked like flashlight (something hard). Then they gave a sudden strong push and/or pull and/or shove, after which one of our artists got a bloody brow (trauma from a hard object). It also sent our bodies out of balance, hitting and breaking the frames of paintings by the side. They were trying to wrestle our most expensive piece of technical equipment—the megaphone.

All this time, arnis and security personnel received encouragement from people (with NCCA convention ID) who were swarming around us shouting “*bakit nyo ginugulo ang convention!*” or “*hwag nyong guluhin ang convention!*” I wanted to freeze the scene and shout straight to their faces—HELLO!

Obviously, the arnis warriors and security wanted us out of the venue as they were pushing us towards the stairs. No match—our artists are trained in performing arts not martial arts. It was during this time that a hotel security held me by the neck.



When our group was a half-step from the edge of the stair case, more sympathetic colleagues physically closed in to our ranks, while their shouts of “*huwag niyo silang sasaktan,*” “*pabayaang silang magpahayag*” became more aggressive. The relentless support pressured the arnis warriors and hotel security to use their logical senses, enough at least to stop the pushing, loosen their grips and, particular to the arnis warriors, run out of the scene.



The mix of people who were swarming around us by this time was unanimous— *sige, magpahayag na kayo*. Presumably artists that they are, they must understand that, right at that moment, under the conditions we were subjected to, performing was not an easy task to do.

Then, Ms. Guidote talked with us about protocol and offered us a performance slot after the presentation of *Anatomiya ng Korapsyon* that evening. Obviously, she missed the strategy of our artistry.



Hotel security in white and light blue barongs

She left us with Ms. Malou Jacob to talk more on the incident and its precedent. No problem with this as we maintain a warm and cordial relationship with Ms. Jacob. What was objectionable is that Ms. Guidote left us to go back to the session hall and announce to the body that CAP artists were trouble makers wanting to disrupt the convention.

True— our position on corruption and culture are at opposite poles with those that the NCCA convention and the GMA administration espouse. This can be summarized as:

1. Corruption is not the cause of poverty. It is the country's neocolonial ties with the US that is keeping the country underdeveloped.
2. The corruption-riddled scandal GMA administration has no moral authority to initiate anti-corruption drives; and
3. No anti-corruption drive which is initiated with the government will succeed because how political and economic power is gained and maintained is at the root of corruption.



Photos by Crown Dolot

Why did the NCCA prevent us from expressing these? At this point, I can only think of no. 3.

We trust in your understanding and continuous solidarity.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie L. Po
Secretary general