

Delivered at the 20th anniversary celebration of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program at the Evans School of Public Affairs

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I am a Humphrey Fellow, Nothing Humphrey is Alien to Me

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One of the first things we learned as Humphrey Fellows at the University of Washington was to give an elevator speech for thirty seconds to one minute. I am pleased to say that tonight I have been given special permission to talk a bit longer than that.

My dear friends, tonight is the culmination of the journey of fourteen fellows representing thirteen countries. From the time we faced the interview panel, the rigorous screening process, the English language examination, and the flights that lasted long hours from thousands of miles away, this chapter of our amazing journey is about to conclude.

On behalf of the 2007-08 fellows, I would like to express our appreciation for honoring us with your presence as we celebrate twenty years of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program at the University of Washington.

In September 2007, the Evans School of Public Affairs and the University of Washington welcomed fourteen very distinct and unique individuals, each one a leader in his or her own right. We were greeted warmly by faculty members, coordinators, fellow students, and new friends.

The Humphrey Fellowship has been a turning point in the lives of all the fellows. If Forrest Gump were here, he would have aptly described how I feel right this moment, “The Humphrey Fellowship is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re gonna get.” Our journey has been meaningful in countless ways that will never be easy to describe.

Our Humphrey year is nearly over, and what a year it has been. We are privileged to become members of a very exclusive club – only 173 fellows representing 85 selected countries were admitted last year.

And what a program we were in. A program that allowed us to reinvent ourselves in the manner that best suited us. A program that made us look inside ourselves to see the real us. A program that allowed us to design our future in the direction we want to pursue. A program that enhanced our skills to communicate our passion with an even greater fervor.

It has been a year of discovery – of ourselves and others. For those things that may need to be changed, we can innovate. For those that are not available, we can create.

We know that we are more equipped with knowledge from which we can draw. We are more empowered by the skills we learned and relearned. We are better individuals ready and eager to face the challenges and opportunities ahead.

With more knowledge comes greater responsibility. After all the things we learned, validated, and confirmed during the past months comes more work for all the fellows.

We are not here just to watch events happen. We are not here just to excel. We are not here just to make a living.

We are here to make meaningful and lasting changes by remaining true to our core values of learning, humility, honesty, and integrity. We are here to help and make the world a more sustainable environment within which to live.

When the tough gets going, and we know there will be tough times, we have to draw from our inner strength and continue with our fight for human rights, justice, peace, and compassion.

As we return home to our countries, please give us your best wishes as we work for better governance, lasting economic prosperity, and peace in our homelands—including my beloved Philippines.

We hope we will always be worthy of the prestige of carrying the badge of Hubert H. Humphrey, an illustrious son of this country whose name and legacy will be part of all the fellows.

To the people of the United States of America, we thank you for opening your homes and hearts to all of us. To the State Department and the International Institute of Education, thank you for believing in us and supporting us.

To the faculty, students, and staff of the University of Washington and Evans School of Public Affairs, the ties that bind us will continue years after we leave the campus and your sacred halls.

Thank you Dean Sandra Archibald, Sanjeev Khagram, Nancy Campbell, Diana Fletschner, Ken Peavler, Bill Center, Micheala Leslie Rule, and Alix Furness.

Thank you to all those who accepted us for a professional affiliation, we hope you will accept more fellows in the future.

To our host families and the people of Seattle, the Emerald City, your warmth and hospitality exceeds the rain and cold temperature that your beautiful city is known for. Seattle will always be home for us.

My personal thanks to the Filipino community in Seattle—*Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.*

Our appreciation to our families and loved ones back home who endured, or enjoyed, a year of our absence.

To all of you who have made our journey very memorable, we only have endearing words and thoughts.

Let me end by paraphrasing Publius Terentius Afer's famous line from his play titled *Heauton Timorumenos*, "Humphrey Fellow sum: Humphrey nil a me alienum puto." I am a Humphrey Fellow, nothing Humphrey is alien to me.

Mabuhay po kayong lahat!

Long live University of Washington.

Long live Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

Long live my Hubert Humphrey co-Fellows.