

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Thursday, 16 June 2011 12:17 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 June 2011 13:12

Two Sorsogueñas Are Becoming Folk Heroes and May Be Called Someday the Filipino Versions of Erin Brockovich (www.brockovich.com)

By Lolo Bobby M. Reyes of Sorsogon City, Philippines, and West Covina, California

Part VI of a Series on “Saving Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay”

{xtypo_quote}This reminds me of a lady in California who fought so hard against a utility company that polluted the land. Her life was made into a movie starring Julia Roberts back some years back that she won an Oscar award for it. Remember the name? – Sir Martin Celemin, a Knight of Rizal {/xtypo_quote}

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Sir Martin Celemin, KOR, my comrade in the Order of the Knights of Rizal, Las Vegas (Nevada) chapter, posted a note in the Facebook:

QUOTE.

Dear Sir (Lolo) Bobby:

I commend you for your great and heroic efforts to protect Sorsogon Bay from pollution coming from the BacMan geothermal plant. Sorsogon is a province I wish to visit someday. I am originally from Misamis Occidental, a northern province

of Mindanao

. I go home almost every year, so perhaps one these visits will include Sorsogon. What is your birth town? As fellow member of

KOR and DOMs, I admire your "guts" in fighting a large conglomerate. This reminds me of a lady in California

who fought so hard against a utility company that polluted the land. Her life was made into a movie starring Julia Roberts back some years back that she won an Oscar award for it.

Remember the name? I forgot it. Perhaps, a Philippine movie or documentary can be made on the fight to save

Sorsogon

Bay

. With my warm best wishes.

UNQUOTE.

In turn, I replied: “Thank you, Sir Martin, for the kind words. The CA-based environmentalist's name is Erin Brockovich. Eventually we can make indeed a movie or documentary film to highlight the efforts to ‘Save Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay.’ We will invite you to its gala premiere if it is done. :-)”

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The fight to “Save Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay” is now getting international attention – thanks to our website and the Facebook. Well-meaning Overseas Filipinos like Sir Martin Celemin are responding to this fight in Sorsogon Province to protect, and preserve, the environment. It is a Win-Win situation and crusade for Mother Earth. In turn, good people like Dr. Edwin Aroma, a former president of the Cebu Brotherhood, Inc. (CBI), of Southern California and the National Cebuano Association of the U.S.A. (NACUSA), are forwarding links to this series to their own e-mailing lists. Yes, there is tremendous strength in numbers, per the doctrine of the Power of Ten.

Eventually Sorsogonans will ask: “**Arin** (*pun intended*) **si Brockovich?**” (Who – among the Sorsoguanas – is Brockovich?).

In Part II of this series, I identified a Sorsoguan environmentalist, Pilar Alindogan Gabito, as my source of additional data for Sorsogon Bay. She is the Executive Committee president of *Ugnayan ng Maralitang Mamamayan sa Sorsogon Bay, Inc*. (UMASA-SorBay). She is also the daughter of one of my mentors on Sorsogon ecology, Tio Pando Gabito (now deceased).

In Part III of this series of investigative reports, I discussed the efforts of another Sorsoguan, Sonia Lariosa, who is fighting the EDC for damages to her rice field in Sorsogon City and those of the other farmers in her barrio. The landowners claim that their rice fields are being destroyed by the untreated waste waters coming from the BacMan Geothermal Plant (BGP). The waste waters also destroy the land and watershed areas along the banks of Kawayan River

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, a tributary of
Sorsogon
Bay

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Even if Sorsogon City is not a big metropolis, Pilar Gabito and Sonia Lariosa never really got to know each other. Well, this writer introduced them to each other through Facebook and they had lunch last Monday (Philippine time) in Sorsogon City. Now the two groups (Pilar’s fishermen/shellfish dealers and Sonia’s farmers) have formed an alliance to save, and protect, Sorsogon Bay

.

The two ladies and several other Sorsogonans whom this writer tapped to help the Sorsogon’s “Brockovich-like Soul Sisters” are now forming a Coalition of the Willing (COW) to lay siege on a conglomerate of The Imperial Manila (TIM). I have been telling my fellow Sorsogonans that if we don’t unite and win, Uncle TIM will proverbially hang us individually – if they cannot hang us together. We, therefore, have to fight Uncle TIM as an army of environmentalists protecting the patrimony of our province. It is as simple a strategy as a unified force. The Lopez conglomerate cannot win if we get an overwhelming majority of Sorsogon’s 800,000 population and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of the Overseas-Filipino workers and immigrants to join our EDSA ReVOTEvolutionary “Army.” EDSA refers of course to this writer’s definition as the acronym for “Economic Development and Social Advancement” for our people, especially in the rural areas.

A Modest Track Record of Sorsogon’s “Brockovich-like Soul Sisters”

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It was the UMASA-SorBay under the leadership of Pilar Gabito that lobbied very hard the Sorsogon City Council for a public hearing before it would vote on a request by the Lopez Conglomerate’s Energy Development Corporation (EDC) for a City Council Endorsement of the Expansion Project at the B
GP

. According to Ms. Gabito, only Sorsogon City Council Members Nestor Baldon and Peter Ravanilla supported them in their lobby for the council to do public consultation first before voting on the EDC request. The City Council approved the Endorsement in a railroaded process probably for “tens of thousand\$ of reason\$,” as some local pundits have claimed.

This writer posted in the Facebook that is not too late for Sorsogon local-government officials to support the “ SOS Bay Project” and join the environmentalists in filing cases against firms and individuals responsible for the ecological rape of Sorsogon Bay and the Kawayan River. He pleaded online for the LGU officials to join the suits as co-plaintiffs or even as state witnesses or they would be made co-defendants in the various suits that the COW is preparing to file both in Philippine and American courts of law.

T he “Brockovich-like Soul Sister” who knows more about the BGP is Sonia Lariosa. She used to be a member of the Provincial Monitoring Task Force (PMTF) for the BGP

. Before she was pressured to leave the PMTF, it was renamed the “BacMan Geothermal Monitoring Task Force.” Before the expansion of the second phase of the BGP

, they renamed it again to “BacMan Geothermal Multi Monitoring Task Force.”

As of now the head of the task force is no other than the director of the Region V of the [Philippine-Environmental Management Bureau](#)

(EMB).

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Ms. Lariosa talked this week with one of the committee members, Ms. Irma Guhit of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA). Ms. Sonia asked her “what are the mechanics now when there is a complaint with regard to the effect of the ongoing earth moving and construction of EDC.” Since Ms. Lariosa was told that even if she has the damaged rice fields tested (soil test) by another agency, the EDC would not accept it because they need to follow the “Protocol.”

So what is the “Protocol”? Ms. Sonia asked Ms. Guhit and she told her to get a complaint form from the DENR, Sorsogon Office. What is so sad no one from the DENR office in Sorsogon City knows that such form exist and the person in charge was not around according to one of the staff members. Ms. Lariosa was told to wait. She waited patiently for 30 minutes. A lady employees came down from her upstairs office and she was asked by the DENR staff if she had any idea about the complaint form. She told Ms. Lariosa that she must get the form in Legazpi City office of the EMB, which is some 60 kilometers away. In short, everybody at the said office is giving Ms. Lariosa the run around.

By next installment of this series, we will post other discoveries made by Ms. Lariosa, Ms. Gabito and their supporters.

(To be continued . . .)

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Editor’s Note: Here are links to the previous articles in this series:

[The “Save Our Sorsogon \(SOS\) Bay” Initiative \(Part I\)](#)

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URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/the-save-our-sorsogon-sos-bay-initiative>

[Sorsogon Bay: “So Near, Yet So FBAR.” The “Red Tide” Ban by the BFAR Must Be Lifted \(Part II\)](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/sorsogon-bay-so-near-yet-so-fbar-the-red-tide-ban-by-the-bfar-must-be-lifted>

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[“Back to BacMan,” Tracing to the Geothermal Plant an Apparent Cause of Pollution in Sorsogon Bay \(Part III\)](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/back-to-bacman-tracing-to-the-geothermal-plant-an-apparent-cause-of-pollution-in-sorsogon-bay>

[Ultimatum Given to BacMan Geothermal Plant to Treat Waste Water Before Emptying It into a Sorsogon-Bay Tributary \(Part IV\)](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/ultimatum-given-to-bacman-geothermal-plant-to-treat-waste-water-before-emptying-it-into-a-sorsogon-bay-tributary>

[Sorsoganons Got Guts and Know How to Face Death Honorably \(Part V\)](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/ecology-and-the-environment/sorsoganons-got-guts-and-know-how-to-face-death-honorably>

More On the “Save Our Sorsogon (SOS) Bay” Advocacy: “Arin si Brockovich?” - MabuhayRadio

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