

The SP Lopez Legacy: Issues and Challenges

CONCEPT PAPER

Objective: To discuss and debate the contemporary relevance of six major themes which are associated with former UP President Salvador P. Lopez.

1. *Democratic consultation in UP* – SP Lopez established a system of democratic consultation in which decisions such as promotions and appointments were made through greater participation by the students, faculty and administrative personnel. Eventually the UP Board of Regents was reorganized to include student, faculty and worker regents.
2. *The UP System* – SP Lopez was responsible for coming up with the idea of what we know now as the UP System, consisting of several autonomous UP campuses in the country.
3. *Literature and society* – SP Lopez posited that art must have substance and that the adherence to "art for art's sake" is decadent. His essay, "Literature and Society" provoked debates. The discussion centered on engaged or committed literature versus the art for art's sake literary orientation.
4. *Progressive diplomacy* – As delegate to the United Nations, and as DFA Secretary, SP Lopez espoused a moral diplomacy that included staunch opposition to apartheid, keeping the peace in Southeast Asia, and championing civil rights.
5. *Freedom of information* – SP Lopez championed freedom of information during his time, both domestically and internationally.
6. *Peace and human rights* – SP Lopez was an ardent defender of human rights and made distinct contributions to their protection during the times when the writ of habeas corpus was suspended and when martial law prevailed. He was also a peace advocate.

Accordingly, the conference will identify and analyze various issues that either bring about innovations and progress in these thematic concerns or supply hurdles that have to be confronted and surmounted. Acknowledged experts in these key thematic areas will be invited to prepare papers and present them in the conference. Each paper presentation will be subjected to critique by a panel of reactors.

Conference themes: The key thematic areas and some of the issues that may be discussed are as follows:

Democratic Governance in the Academe: A Critical Assessment – Is UP democratically governed today? Is it reflected in the transparency and accountability of decision-making? Does the consultation process generate a wide range of benefits and services that touch the lives of UP constituencies? What participatory processes have been instituted and have they been efficacious? Is a democratized Board of Regents more effective as a university policy-making body? Has the democratized atmosphere engendered social movements within the university? What lessons can the UP impart to other universities?

The UP System: Significant Issues in Governance, Leadership and Financing – What are the key leadership problems and prospects associated with UP's continuing role in national development, which has been reaffirmed in the 2008 UP Charter? Do the UP campuses provide exciting environments that foster world-class educational and research opportunities? Is the unwritten policy of not leaving any campus behind a reasonable measure that ensures overall academic excellence, or does it make some campuses uncompetitive? Is the system financially viable? Is it conducive to diversity and to freedom of expression, critical inquiry, civil dialogue?

Engaged Art and Literature: Do They Matter Today? - How is the “commitment” discourse shaping up in an age of liberalization and globalization? How does art and politics interact and overlap today? What is the difference between art “inspired by politics” and art “in the service of politics”? How much art should be committed today?

Progressive Diplomacy : Adopting a Global South Perspective – Has Philippine diplomacy and foreign relations made major steps forward in championing Global South issues, like fairer trade and aid, greater espousal of diversity and non-discrimination, access to inexpensive services, regional integration and South solidarity, and opposition to North “bullying”?

Freedom of Information: The Struggle Continues – Today, despite constitutional guarantees, there is still no freedom of information act. The absence of this statutory requirement makes government abuse of power, corrupt practices, and irregularities easier to get away with. At the same time, while every government department should operate with full disclosure, other measures, such as the Human Security Act and repressive policies during the GMA administration, have clouded prospects for a more liberal and tolerant political discourse atmosphere.

The Elusive Search for Peace, Justice and Human Rights - Gross human rights violations, racism, media suppression, and bigotry still occur around the world -- both near and far from home. At the same time, the threat of violence persists. Where there is injustice, there is conflict, which arises from an oppressive social system of power that reinforces differences between groups and allows one group to privilege itself over others. Conflict at the local and international levels stems from exploitation, poverty, corrupt governance and dehumanizing beliefs. What are the challenges in peace, justice and human rights advocacy that need to be addressed forcefully? What safeguards have to be established to strengthen human rights, while weakening the forces that perpetuate their violation?

Publication: The conference papers will be compiled in a book subtitled “essays in honor of SP Lopez”, which will be widely disseminated to policy-makers, academics, and researchers.