

Radio Dramas for Peace by Cebu Youth

There are many efforts in the Philippines to advocate for understanding and peace between Muslims and non-Muslims. Media plays a crucial role in this initiative -- though it has been criticized as highlighting the violent image of Muslims and their conflict with Christians, it also has the responsibility to also tell the countless stories of peace, respect, diversity of ethnic groups and triumphs of the Muslim people.

"In the media, we report and comment on the news, yet we do not have a full understanding of the situation. It is a shame when the media becomes an agent for misinformation and discrimination between the two religions", relates Atty Ruphil Bañoc, Station Manager of DYHP Cebu City.

Radio is arguably one of the most effective means of communication because it reaches a large and diverse audience. Low levels of literacy and lack of access have made newspapers, print media, television and the internet a less effective medium.

Studies have shown that in Asia, Africa and Latin America, radio dramas have successfully brought about positive social change. Stories that are broadcast over the radio on various issues can make a difference in society by making its listeners aware of the issues and changing their perceptions on this. "Radio dramas can help shape the minds of the listeners," says Mel Estonilo, Mass Communications Professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman Campus.

With the support of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Probe Media Foundation and DYHP station - Radio Mindanao Network in Cebu, came up with the project, "Youth Radio Dramas for Peace".

Last August 29 to 30, 2008, a dozen young people from various organizations in Cebu were gathered for a radio drama workshop focused on Muslim and Christian understanding.

Mr. Rey Tabudlong of the Kids for Peace Foundation in Cotabato City shares with the participants and radio drama practitioners that the topic is quite difficult to discuss. He adds, "In our projects with Kids for Peace, we strive our best to break the misconceptions against the two religions and we also want to stress that the war in Mindanao is not between Muslims and Christians but a war for land and domain."



Participants are guided in scriptwriting by a radio drama

The youth and DYHP radio drama practitioners participated in an intensive workshop on Muslim and Christian issues, peace and radio drama production. By the end of the workshop, the youth participants produced three interesting radio drama segments on the theme. Ms. Melba Estonilo, along with the DYHP producers, writers, effects artists and technicians, supervised and guided the youth in coming up with the segments.



One story was an exciting tale of inter-racial kidnap and ransom, the other on arranged marriage and cultural differences and the last was about young love brewing between two teenagers from different religions, which allowed them to see beyond the veil of misconceptions.

Mr. Francis Esparin, In charge of the drama block at DYHP commented that the stories produced by the young people had good efforts, but had some technical problems. Kasim Lauto of Kids for Peace in Cotabato said that he liked the story entitled "Tundong" because "they conquered the discrimination".

Tonton of Christ for Asia won Best Actor for his kidnapper role in the drama

Ms. Estonilo encouraged the group by sharing, "Radio dramas need writers whose passion fuels their imagination and creativity in order to use the medium to change people's lives. It is important to listen to as many radio dramas, welcome ideas from actors and technicians, and talk to the audience."

The "Radio Dramas for Peace" workshop marks the beginning of a series of youth dramas on the issue of Muslim and Christian Understanding. The young participants' inputs have provided fresh new concepts and unique angles for possible storylines. And the seasoned writers, technicians and producers, with their knowledge and expertise in radio drama production, are inspired to create entertaining stories to be aired by the end of the year.

