

Preface

Titled “A Centennial Conversation: Women Contesting Fundamentalisms and other Forms of Intolerance,” the sixth lecture in the UP Centennial Lecture Series was an important dialogue among various Filipino stakeholders that would have been difficult, even impossible, to carry through had it not been done in the UP. The UP Centennial Lecture was a series of lectures convened by the Office of the UP President to allow for a deeper examination of the complex issues confronted by the UP and the country.

The choice for the topic of the sixth lecture, which fell within the celebration of national women’s month, was rather bold given the current cultural climate as well as the established influence of the Catholic Church on many aspects of our social life. Nonetheless, it was a highly significant topic with national implications. In fact, it was high time that it be discussed in public and at the level it was presented.

“Women Contesting Fundamentalisms” examined the complex intersections of

4 Preface

fundamentalist beliefs, religious fundamentalisms, women's human rights and public policy. Specifically, the lecture had the following aims: (1) to examine the intersections of women's bodies, human rights, and fundamentalisms; (2) to critically scrutinize the nuances and interrelationships of the new forms of conservatism in the country; and (3) to analyze how these shape international and domestic policies that limit women's choices and access to information and services.

The panel of lecturers was convened by Dr. Carolyn I. Sobritchea, professor of Philippine Studies at the Asian Center, UP Diliman and former director of the UP Center for Women's Studies; the two other members of the panel were Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio, professor of women's studies at the UPD College of Social Work and Community Development and current director of the UPCWS, and Ms. Reihana Mohideen, a long-term feminist activist for women's rights, whose work in Afghanistan and Pakistan has brought her in contact with the everyday challenges of Muslim women living in contexts of religious fundamentalism.

The invited panel of reactors was composed of Ambassador Rosario G. Manalo, a veteran diplomat and chairperson of the High Level Task Force on the Drafting of the ASEAN Charter and Ms. Rina Jimenez-David, a columnist for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, national chairperson of the national women's group, Pilipina, and president of the women's political party, Abanse! Pinay.

Held on March 11, 2008 at the National Institute for Science and Math Education Department (NISMED), the lecture had a high attendance of over 200 students, faculty, university administrators, government officials and the officers and staff of various NGOs, despite a cancellation of classes on that day because of a transportation strike.