

Community Meeting (April 18): Community engagement through comics (Althea Balmes)

Description

Presenter: Althea Balmes

Notes

Video Recording

- Komik (comics)
- long history of komiks in the Philippines
 - first known comic was by Jose Rizal, Philippine national hero, about a monkey and turtle (Si Pagong at Si Matsing) and has become folklore
 - <https://sirmykel.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/jose-rizal-ang-pagong-at-ang-matsing.pdf>
- many American influences on the comics
 - partially due to American GIs who came to the Philippines
 - made stories that by nature of the situation in the politics and economy of the Philippines, it has always been a political act — celebrating the culture and telling their stories but also criticising foreign powers
- Kwentong Bayan: Labour of Love
 - literal translation: community stories
 - tell stories and have political awareness
 - tell stories about caregivers in a way that hasn't been told before
 - empowering caregiver workers in Canada
 - had to learn the ins and outs of the caregiver program
 - had to challenge assumptions and biases about the program and migrant workers
 - gathering of elders
 - meet with caregivers and allies who will provide support and guidance on how these stories are told
 - collaborate on stories being told through our lived experiences and perspectives
 - reciprocal relationships, invited to and participating in each other's events
 - it's not just about the subject or the researcher, but building a community with different types of people, also crossing intergenerational boundaries
 - learn about issues that matter to them and to the community and the reasons why they matter – and when we can, help out
 - workshops and clinics
 - workshop covered
 - why should they support refugees
 - why is their situation as migrant workers different from someone who is coming as a refugee
 - clinics
 - tax clinic
 - self defence class
 - in partnership with Combat Science: Warrior Arts of Asia
 - useful for caregivers who live with their employer and who's home/work becomes a dangerous place
 - lots of power in learning about how they build community
 - Advocacy and Leadership training at George Brown
 - for caregivers
 - helping caregivers transition to another job/career
 - caregivers have a hard time getting education or getting Canadian credentials
 - practical and theoretical curriculum
 - Community presentations
 - fun community events
 - June 12 is Philippine independence day
 - takes place in Earl Bales Park
 - one activity is street theatre where they'll put on a skit that covers an issue that a caregivers may face
 - e.g. a caregiver who paid an agency to come to Canada but had no job when they came
 - Marching in the Pride parade
 - Labour+Love: A Celebration of Caregivers
 - provided another opportunity for caregivers to perform their street theatre to cover issues they face
 - learning community history to tell the stories in the comics
 - learn the stories, reflect, and collaborate on them
 - understand that they aren't from the caregivers perspectives, but from the perspective of someone who has inside and outside perspectives about the caregiver program and the Filipino community
 - weave facts into narrative and reflect on the consequences of leaving the country
 - have learned a lot of history about caregivers in Canada. This is shared through their comics.
 - One of the their comics on the history of caregivers was turned into wall murals displayed at various galleries
 - poster included in <http://graphichistorycollective.com/projects/remember-resist-redraw>
 - <http://graphichistorycollective.com/project/poster-3-caregiving-work-canada>
 - Contributed to "Drawn to Change Graphic Histories of Working-Class Struggles"
 - make history accessible, make worker's movements are more accessible to the public
 - <http://graphichistorycollective.com/books/drawn-to-change/kwentong-bayan-labour-of-love>
 - Balakbayan exhibit at the Workers Arts & Heritage Centre in Hamilton
 - <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/kwentongbalikbayan/>
 - also providing workshops for caregivers
 - there's always a community engagement presentation or aspect to it

- at A Space Gallery, it became a community hub for those who wanted to use the space to hold their own events during the reception
- Part of her job as an illustrator is to show all the emotions that one would feel as the mother/caregiver or her child, and to represent all of the different actors in these stories
- Part of their work as storytelling is not judging people of their privilege, and sometimes it is hard to not have a moralistic story being told; there has to be a holistic understanding of the community
- Main work is to celebrate this Filipino-Canadian culture because of their situation here, that different things can happen in a racialised community but talk about why that happens with compassion and empathy; it is not just about statistics or the difficulties or struggles that the individual characters face, it's about everything else about it that influences it