



The Filipino American Library (FAL) Gift To
UCLA's Asian American Studies Center

The Board of Directors of the Filipino American Heritage Institute (FAHI) and the Filipino American Library (FAL) would like to take this opportunity to clarify our status with regards to the FAL. We hope that this statement explains our position in broadening the scope of the FAL and serves to assuage any concerns which may exist regarding this transition.

The FAHI Board is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to insure maximum usage of this extraordinary resource, a private collection augmented by private donations and serviced by volunteers. The goal is to ensure the preservation and usage of the collection for generations to come and to be of service not only to the geographically local community but to the broader world community. For if the word is not read, it is not alive.

As part of its strategic analysis, the Board has determined that the FAL has reached its fourth level of growth. It must now choose to remain in its current situation, renting a space at a non-profit's building, with a part-time administrator and a part-time librarian with only a dozen users a month, despite a diligent board's efforts over the past 20 years to increase outreach. Or it can move into a new era by partnering with a major institution of higher learning - like UCLA - where the FAHI Board can focus on raising program funds for book acquisitions, preservation, digitization, transnational exchange of speakers series, and access by worldwide users.

WHY UCLA AND THE PRESENT:

Currently, the FAHI board is negotiating with UCLA, as it believes that UCLA is strategically positioned as a center for Filipino American Community leadership training, intellectual development and transnational exchange on a broad scale.

UCLA has a rich history of Filipino and Filipino American Studies-related research, publications, course offerings, student/community leadership development activities, and community service in the field. Numerous leaders in academia and the community received some of their earliest training at these UCLA institutions.

Since the Filipino American Library is a 5,000 book strong collection, and reported as a jewel of a collection by credible historians and librarians, the use of these special collection books by scholars and by the community would enrich and synthesize the common experiences of Filipino Americans in the United States and around the globe. Additionally, it would place this collection at the forefront for intellectual and artistic production, leadership development and community service in the field, activities at which UCLA excels over most institutions.

Additionally, the FAHI board selected UCLA because of their track record as diligent stewards and outstanding custodians of special collections, recently recognized and reported in the Los Angeles Times' Feb. 1, 2005 issue.

These needs were succinctly put by Howard Chua-Eoan, News Director for Time Magazine and one of the FAL Spirit Awards recipients (October 2004) who wrote: "We (Filipino Americans) need this repository for our history - a history that has its own distinct epic quality, one that sets it apart from and yet makes it a part of the saga of immigrant peoples in America. We are so inundated with information that we often think it is automatically preserved. History needs its conservators in order for new generations to discover the full dimension of the truths of which they are a part."

THE PAST.

Helen Brown, using her inherited family library collection from her Thomasite father, and opening it up for larger community use, more than 20 years ago, founded the library. Its first level of growth at birth has its placement at the Filipino Christian Church's basement, with books collected in cardboard boxes, with no rent payments, and no staff. There was only a simple desire to be a source and repository for the study of one's identity and awareness as a Filipino, the beauty and riches of its culture and heritage. As NVM Gonzalez wrote in his book, *Work*

on the Mountain, it is critical for a group to insure “the inherited deposits of experience, banked answers to life's riddles, motifs of initiations and discoveries.”

Its second level of growth led to a new rented space with volunteers manning the library space in a 300 sq. ft. strip mall space, with funds raised by a volunteer board through garage sales and other community activities.

Its third level of growth saw the move of the library into a 1,000 sq. ft. space, supported by donations and corporate-giving, enabling the library to have a part time administrator and part time librarian and volunteers. Helen Brown’s individual act of noble generosity attracted donations of time, talent and treasures from more community members. This enhanced special collection is now a more valuable gift to a major institution, thanks to the many volunteer staff, board members, and other founders of this library who sustained the existence of this special collection and perhaps seeded this new culture of bayanihan and giving back to the community. Some of them deserve to be mentioned: George Brown & family, Tania Azores, Ming Menez, Enrique B. Delacruz, Dennis Arguelles, Mark Pulido, Eloisa Borah, Sam Balucas, Lee Respicio Colomby, Cisa Payuyo, Van Dichoso, Ted Benito, Tessie Dery, Candice Clarke, Florante Ibanez, and Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz.

THE FUTURE.

While the FAHI Board made an important and difficult decision of gifting this special collection to UCLA, the board remains committed to the community by having selected portions of this collection to reside in select community locations, yet to be determined. Currently, FAHI board is negotiating with several community groups to create a Filipino American Reading Room in Historic Filipino Town. This Reading Room would house more popular reading materials and media tools for the community.

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