

Maria Gonzalez Goolsby: UnionBank of the Philippines

JUSTO ABOITIZ ORTIZ



Someone once said, “Very few men are wise by their own counsel, or are learned by their own teaching, for he that was only taught by himself had a fool for his master.” Role models make known to us just how far we can go with what we do, and I consider myself fortunate to have worked with one such role model.

Maria Gonzalez Goolsby is no ordinary person. She fascinates with her boundless energy and passion so great that it could only be generated by a deep love and intense commitment to a higher purpose. What this purpose may be has not been revealed to me, but as an outside observer, friend, and co-worker, it is in its tireless pursuit that she manifests behavior from which I have gained much insight, but also many a sleepless night.

And so, from Maria, I now know that the Jesuit spirit of MAGIS—always more, always greater—must define our life’s journey. Enough is never enough, I’m told. In constantly reaching out for the possible we, hopefully, will make a difference as we leverage our core talents with passion, energy, and persistence. But change will never be easy. We face challenges, failure, rejection, all the time. These are the moments when the fears that haunt us, and our vision, collide, but when we have passion, we remain undaunted, and nothing can stop us from stepping out and seizing the day.

From Maria, I also now know that essential to building an institution of enduring greatness, is a higher purpose—a purpose going over and beyond simply obtaining profit. Our business strategies and operating practices must endlessly adapt to a fast changing world, but adapt we shall. Through it all, we must maintain a constancy of purpose through the changing times and through economic cycles. It is not our unique talents nor special circumstances that ensure greatness, but our purpose.

Guided by this, as Chairman and CEO of UnionBank, I set out with our team to determine our purpose. We have done so based on a simple truth—UBUNTU—a Zulu word that articulates what is universally, and throughout history (the most primitive societies have been aware of it for centuries), known, that a person is a person only through other persons, that we are human only if we belong. We thrive only in a community. Thus, UnionBank's purpose is to enable communities through smart banking in the spirit of UBUNTU!

From Maria, I further now know that when passion for a purpose wanes and cannot be rekindled, then one must find another purpose to be passionate about. To just carry on from the inertia and memory of a former passion is a waste of energy, an obstacle to serial achievement and the maximization of our potential as human beings and as a community.

Once upon a time, Maria was in academe, holding the distinction of being the first woman Chair of any academic department at the Ateneo de Manila University (she was Chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department). Serving in that capacity for a number of years, she proceeded to become Professor and Research Director at the Ateneo Professional School of Business, starting, concurrently, her banking career as Human Resource Director.

She put her career on hold to become the able support, as an expat wife, to her husband, Jack, Founder and President of Johnson & Johnson, Indonesia. Returning to the Philippines with Jack, she resumed her human resource and bank administration career at various banks, settling, finally, in 1993, at UnionBank, as Senior Vice President. Accomplishing that, she proceeded to become Head of UnionBank's Corporate Philanthropy and Social Responsibility (CPSR) Unit.

More specifically, Maria has poured all her energy and passion into The UnionBank Learning System: Developmental Reading Integrated with Values Education for Good Citizenship which integrates a Multimedia Teaching Video Set, a self-instructional Teacher's Handbook which empowers the teachers, and the Student's Workbook which DepEd NCR Director Dr. Teresita Domalanta commends in the following words: "It was the first time in the history of the entire Philippine educational system that schoolchildren signed ownership on a book that was personally issued free to each child... to become

the learner's property to share with his or her family." From its launch in 2007, down to the present Schoolyear, which began in June 2010, this Learning System would have benefitted over 1.4 million primary public school pupils.

The UnionBank Learning System was awarded the first-ever Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) CSR Leadership Challenge Special Award for Education. Cited as "UnionBank's Gift to the Filipino Nation... this noble undertaking puts into action UnionBank's commitment to mobilize its resources for the betterment of society by shaping the young who will be tomorrow's leaders."

UnionBank's CPSR Unit is composed of an intrepid trio of kindred spirits who believe that while the choice of the gift of their work is not theirs, they have everything to do with the use of this gift. Their strategy of execution consists in: doing what they are supposed to do, when they are supposed to do it, in the way they are supposed to do it—with joyful passion, patient endurance, and fervent prayer.

From Maria, I now know that the fervor of our passion and the relentlessness of our energies are what see us through the uncertain outcomes and unexpected consequences so typical in our working and personal lives. As Arnold Toynbee said, "Enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligent plan for carrying that ideal to practice." So, while we cannot predict the future, we can be prepared to meet it head on with passion, energy, persistence, and a plan.

What next, Maria?

Maria responds:

As an anthropologist, I find the reality of UBUNTU in societies of diverse cultures—that all men have a rational human nature, that we are ultimately, a SOLIDARITY of one family. To be family, we strive to live in:

"Omnibus Amare, Omnibus Servire"
In everything love; in everything serve
"Omnibus Amare, Servire Domino"
In everything love and serve the Lord.

It is a refrain that pursues me and keeps me going. In the end, it is all summed up in the Lord's Prayer—the *Pater Noster*.



Maria Gonzalez Goolsby



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