I already established a name in the business sector when I decided to actively pursue my long-time passion: advocating women’s empowerment. In the early nineties, I joined the National Council of Women in the Philippines. The first few years were very challenging. At first, I did not know how to merge the world of business with the concerns of women. I also still felt the need to prove myself worthy as a defender of the cause.

Just like our national hero, Jose Rizal, had his mother, Teodora Alonzo, as his first and greatest teacher, and in the same way that Helen Keller had Annie Sullivan, I consider Ms. Helena Z. Benitez to be my mentor. When everyone else doubted my capabilities, Tita Helen, as she was fondly called, expressed her belief in me and even told me that I seemed to have the purest intentions in helping others, especially women. When others discouraged me from going on further, she urged me to continue my work and my advocacy for women’s empowerment. When people tried to bombard me with negative thoughts, she would inspire me to continue with what I believed was just and right.

Tita Helen is the epitome of a true leader. She has a long-term vision of what she wants to do for others and an undying commitment to make a difference in other people’s lives. She inculcated those principles in me. She constantly reminds me up to now that I should always think strategically and have a long-term vision because whatever I do today will have bearing on what will transpire in the future. Because of her, I imbibed the idea that it is in going out of ourselves to make a difference in other people’s lives that we find meaning in life.

More than her intellectual capacity, what is really admirable about Tita Helen is that she is very generous and selfless. Despite her stature,
she finds time to impart the lessons she has learned in her long years in public service, most especially in her work for women. This way she victoriously enjoins more people to partake in the work toward gender equality and women's empowerment.

When the President appointed me as Chairperson of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), I bravely embraced this as a challenge and as one of the best ways to work with and for women. Up until now, I still go to Tita Helen for words of wisdom when making important decisions in pursuing the work of the Commission. She unselfishly gives me her time to listen and offer advice. Now in her golden years, she is not as physically strong as she was years ago but her strength in spirit and character can definitely inspire anyone to go out of themselves and touch other peoples' lives.

As I remain committed to work for the transformation of women's lives, I also dream that I can also be to others what Tita Helen is to me—a teacher, a second mother, and a friend.

Formerly the Chair of the Commission on the Role on the Filipino Woman, a position she cherished on account of its importance to the welfare of women and children, Myrna T. Yao, currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Richwell Trading Corporation, a family-owned corporation, and is the exclusive local franchise holder of Mattel, USA, makers of Barbie dolls. Myrna also has a special devotion to the Blessed Mother and Child, and is presently involved in the construction of a Catholic Church in their honor in North Luzon.