

# Hector & Teresita Villacorta: First Family

CARISSA VILLACORTA



Who cares? These are the two root words of living a healthy life. This is the question we must answer positively in order to have a happy and fulfilled existence. And even though we may think sometimes that no one cares what we think, say or do, we will be surprised that they actually do. Our family, our friends, acquaintances, strangers, the general public and God. At least one cares. And as long as there is someone in the world who thinks the world of us, we are more than fine.

In the concrete jungle that is also the lion's den; that is also the heartbreak island; that is also called New York, you really need people to turn back to so that you don't become a lion yourself. In the city that reveres independence above all, sometimes you just need people to tell you what to do. In the city that allows you to do what you want, go where you want and be who you want, you need to make sure that you can live with what you did, where you went and who you became.

Though the ultimate decision lies in you, sometimes, you don't want to think anymore, or think at all. Sometimes, you want other people to decide for you because they know what's best for you, and you know that they have your best interests at heart. They've had your heart and you've had theirs since the day you were born. They are your parents. And in the midst of people who want you because of what you can do for them, these are two people who live for what they can do for you.

My parents have always been my mentors. From the moment they told me I could write when I was 11. To the moment they told me I could fly when I was 22. They have always been my moral compass when the noisy city can get my values eschewed. I always try to keep my values intact and my sanity in-check, so I always make a point to see them at least once a year in Manila or call them once a week. When in dire need of 'rehab,' I go to the satellite home in Long Island where

my sister lives. That is the closest I will get to Bagtican, our street in Manila, where I grew up and where my parents still live.

One great bonus that I get when I go home is that my grandmother lives there too. At 92, she can teach you everything there is to learn about the world. And yet, she's still learning too. From her arts and crafts to life lessons - to her, life is full of mystery, suspense and discover, and she is eager to uncover.

My next mentors are my siblings. Thankfully they are older than me, so I can always turn to them. I think siblings are the greatest gifts in the world, and I would want to ensure that every child has a built-in friend or two.

So my mentors are my family, the first family in my eyes. When people say that people are like family to them, they must have a real-life reference of what family means and does. And thankfully, I have a great model to base on.

*Carissa Villacorta is the author of Surreality (UST Publishing House, 2006) and in 2007, at 28 years old, was named one of the 100 Most Influential Filipinas in the States. From 2002–2008, she worked in the Community and Cultural Affairs Department of the Philippine Consulate General in New York, organizing events and coordinating projects for the Consul General and Deputy Consul General. She is also featured speaker in several TV and radio shows, panels, and events.*

