

## ON AMPA: WHAT IT MEANS FOR ASIANS IN DIASPORA

By Nikki Celis

While I wasn't awarded for my piece, "Spam," it was a pleasure to be seated among some of Alberta's most established writers, editors, and publishers.

To be able to be considered for an award is more than I could have hoped or as it does show that there are people interested in what I have to say as a Filipino and Asian-Canadian.

It shows there is room and opportunity to have a South-East Asian voice within the Canadian literary consciousness.

That there is a way to bolster the lack of self-esteem and a lack of self-assurance that I find prevalent within my own cultural heritage—cut down by generations of Spanish and American colonialism and post-colonialism.

Aside from Alex Tizon, there are no prominent Filipino writers or role-models for people like me to look up to—unless you do the research. Many like me feel so removed from this notion of belonging, of having a place, that we feel like we're forever transient and never whole.

The late Czeslaw Milosz wrote, as a companion to Josef Koudelka's *Exiles* (1988), "Exile is a test of internal freedom and that freedom is terrifying. Everything depends upon our own resources, of which we are mostly unaware and yet make decisions assuming

our strength will be sufficient.

"The risk is total, not assuaged by the warmth of a collectivity where the second rate is usually tolerated, regarded as useful and even honored. Now to win or to lose appears in a crude light, for we are alone and loneliness is a permanent affliction of exile.

"Once Friedrich Nietzsche exalted the freedom of height, of loneliness, of the desert. Freedom of exile is of that lofty sort, though it is imposed by circumstances and, therefore, deprived of bathos. A brief formula may encapsule the outcome of that struggle with our own weakness: exile destroys, but if it fails to destroy you, it makes you stronger."

With "Spam"—for those who choose to read it—I hope that it provides a starting point for young Filipinos to look inside ourselves and to explore an identity that we so easily choose to throw away.

If it isn't something to look up to, I would hope that it would at least spur many Filipinos like me to do remarkable things, because many of us sometimes fail to realize that they can do it, too



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### MUSINGS OF THE EDITOR

It's exciting to bear witness to many of our writers going on to achieving great things of their own design.

There's something to be said about seeing writers, both old and new, contributing to the lexicon of Canadiana.

Particularly among Calgarians, where much of technology has taken over the need to pick up a book and read something so carefully crafted by our community.

Everybody has the ability to write, and through practice and dedication, the ability to write well.

We value the work of writers, poets, and essayists who have at one time hidden their writings under their mattress for fear of showing their thoughts to the world.

How are we to improve the quality of Canadiana if writers are too shy to showcase their work to a platform?

We encourage everyone to take part and contribute. Whether you're meant to be published in our magazine or not, there is merit to anyone's writing.

- Editorial Team