

Five African Proverbs that Describe Jotique Lamigo

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My family and I have been in Zambia, Africa for more than three years now. In our three years here, I've learned a few African proverbs and I will share five of them with *kuya* Jotique in mind and in heart. (Note: the term “kuya” is a Filipino term of respect that is used for an older relative or friend).

1. *“When you run alone, you run fast. When you run together, you run far.”*

I have always been puzzled why *kuya* Jotique was so committed to linkages, networking, collaboration, and convergence when with his experience, leadership, passion, expertise and influence he could have just steered an organization. He could have “disciplined” me/us with this mindset and avoided the politics, countless meetings, heartaches, rumors, etc. but NO - his heart was always for learning and serving together, for suffering and celebrating together.

2. *“You learn a lot about a man by his behavior when hungry.”*

Ayay-yay-yay-yay! I was with *kuya* Jotique on a regular basis from 1997 to 2006. He was serving as CRWRC Philippines country consultant and I was serving as national coordinator for the Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines National Diaconal Association (CRCP-NDA). We often traveled out of town and even out of the country and I would say again – Ayay-yay-yay-yay! You'll never go hungry when you're with *kuya* Jotique. My first Pala-Pala experience was with *kuya* Jotique. My first expensive Manila restaurant experience was with *kuya* Jotique. My first taste of how big an American pizza and steak were was with *kuya* Jotique. My first American buffet was with *kuya* Jotique. So okay, what's the point? *“You learn about a man by his behavior when hungry.”* I never got to know him in this sense because we were never hungry!

3. *“It is better to walk than curse the road.”*

Kuya Jotique always saw the glass half full not half empty and he would always bring this half full glass to a community that is thirsty. There were so many disappointing and discouraging things that happened in ministry during our years together yet *kuya* Jotique was always hopeful and will always say *“Tsip... hang in there. Lilipas din yan (it will come to pass).”*

Two or three times I was really very discouraged and was contemplating quitting and his words were... *“Tsip stay put ka lang. There's already transformation happening in the communities. I will be talking with this so and so.”* When I consulted him about our moving on (even before applying for this Zambia position) his words were *“Tsip, you've done your part and it's now*



Eli Toribio (right) and Joe Lamigo (left) in Bangladesh in 1997.

time for you to move on. Huwag kang mag-alala, kami nang bahala dito (don't worry, we'll take care of this) (referring to diaconal ministry of CRCP).

4. “A strong bull is seen by its scars.”

Journeying and serving with him through Diakonia Filipina I have been privileged to know him in a sense through things being said about him by others and how he responded to these. He would openly share it with me and not fight back even though some of the things were hurtful. He took the punches and just continued to soldier on. *Kuya Jotique* would always deal with church and NGO politics, conflicts, etc. with a great sense of humor. He joked a lot, even when we were discussing (and were already involved in) sensitive issues.

5. “I am because we are; we are because I am. Or Ubuntu”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa explained “ubuntu.” In the following explanations I will put *kuya Jotique*'s name in place of the person being referred to.

“Kuya Jotique who's with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for kuya Jotique has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed... Kuya Jotique always speaks about our interconnectedness. He is known for his (and Arlyn's) generosity. When kuya Jotique does well, it spreads out; it is for the whole humanity.”

Nelson Mandela also explained *ubuntu*, but I will put the *Lamigos* instead of an African village:

“A traveler through a country would stop at the Lamigos and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the Lamigos give him food, entertain him. ... The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?”

“(Kuya Jotique) lavished gifts on the poor— A generosity that goes on, and on, and on. An honored life! A beautiful life!” (Psalm 112:9 MSG) We celebrate you, kuya Jotique!