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# Politics has role in plantation play

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## The Honolulu Advertiser entertainment

Hawaii's labor movement has inspired a historical play that depicts plantation life in the 1930s and the emergence of the ILWU in 1935.

"Ti Mangyuna: Those Who Led the Way," which combines drama, music, dance and comedy, is the result of two years of research and writing by a committee.

The play came about because the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP) wanted to contribute to the 75th anniversary of Filipino immigration to Hawaii in a manner that would be educational as well as have popular appeal, said Helen Toribio, KDP member.

"Ti Mangyuna," supported by ILWU Local 142, has been touring the state since October, playing to 5,000 in Honokaa, Naalehu and Hilo on the Big Island; Waimea and Lihue on Kauai; Kalihi and Waialua on Oahu; and on Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

The tour winds up with performances at 7 p.m. tonight and tomorrow at Leeward Community College Theatre. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children, students and senior citizens.

Participating in the research and script-writing were: Ermena Vinluan, artistic director of Sining Bayan (Filipino-American Performing Arts Company), who is from the Bay Area; Dean Alegado, instructor in the University of Hawaii ethnic studies program and chairman of the local KDP; Davianna McGregor-Alegado, UH Hawaiian ethnic studies instructor; Cliff Ahue, choreographer, a former ethnic studies lab assistant; and Raymond Camacho, technical director, from the Mainland.

Because the play recounts the labor movement in Hawaii, the group interviewed Filipino labor organizers and their families, including Carl...

It was the last strike solely along racial lines.

Afterward, a multi-racial union of sugar workers was formed — the birth of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) here.

The play is being presented by the KDP, which Toribio describes as a "community-based activist organization" concerned with issues affecting Filipinos nationally, such as minority discrimination.

"We support the Philippine Resistance against the Marcos regime in the Philippines," she said. Toribio said the KDP is regarded as anti-establishment — "We're notorious for being anti-Marcos."

It is just this political persuasion that often puts the KDP at odds with the Philippine Consulate in Hawaii.

Vinluan said that at many of the Neighbor Island stops, the theater group received reports of Filipinos being phoned and asked to "boycott" the show. At times, the group has had trouble making leaflets from its sponsors available at performances.

Vinluan and Toribio said the "harassment" is the work of the Philippine Consulate here. A consulate spokesman, however, denies such interference.

Vinluan said: "We feel it's a question of the democratic rights of these sponsoring organizations to make their identity, their association with the play known.

"It reminds me of the Philippines. I have friends who are artists, writers, film and theater directors who have been harassed, arrested



Ermena Vinluan  
Artistic director



Helen Toribio  
Member of KDP

Vinluan and Toribio said the play has been warmly received on its Neighbor Island tour, and folks have been drawn to the production by the opportunity to see their own plantation life depicted in art. Many

have said they identified with various characters in the play. Toribio said.

And in a case of life imitating art, the theater group met a real Carlos and Michiko on Kauai.



"Ti Mangyuna" actors reenact the 1937 May Day workers rally.



ILWU Local 142 and a leader of the Vibora Luviminda strike of 1937 — the focus of Act II of "Ti Mangyuna."

The drama is somewhat based on Damaso's life.

The writers also used oral histories from plantation workers and managers and newspaper accounts of the period, particularly from the Voice of Labor and Ti Mangyuna, a progressive pro-labor newspaper published from 1948 to 1958 and edited by the Rev. E.C. Yadao. The play's title is taken from the newspaper.

"Ti Mangyuna" tells the story of a Filipino worker, Carlos, working on the Puunene sugar plantation in the 1930s. The racial conflicts of the time are heightened by the romance and marriage of Carlos and Michiko, daughter of a Japanese luna.

Meanwhile, the laborers have organized a secret Filipino-only labor group called Vibora Luviminda. According to the program, *vibora* means "viper," the nickname of Artemio Ricarte, a respected Filipino general in the Philippine Revolution of 1896 and the Philippine-American War. *Luviminda* is taken from the names of the three major regions of the Philippines — Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

In 1937, Vibora Luviminda went on strike for three months on Maui.

their ideas in articles and through artwork, Vinluan said.

Meanwhile, Larry Zapala, press attache with the Philippine Consulate here, said he is "not aware" of any actions by consul officials to undermine the play.

"I'm not even aware of their putting on this show," he said. "If there is anything (being done to interfere), it is not the consulate."

Vinluan said that despite the controversy "the play can stand on its own. It's very powerful.

"The play talks about injustice and how Filipinos have a legacy of fighting injustice."

In part, Vinluan said, the play is a commemoration of the "heroism of the ordinary man and woman."

She said the production is viewed in different ways: "Folks in the ILWU like it because they see it as a labor history play. Some teachers see an ethnic history play. Others see it as a homegrown play because of the pidgin. But it's all part of it being a 'political play.'"

It is a "political play" in the sense that it discusses interracial unity and the need to be organized, and criticizes the establishment, represented by the Big Five, plantation bosses and the Filipino labor commissioner. But Vinluan said the writers have not filled the play with "rhetorical or stereotypical political language."