

# GIVE UP TOMORROW

A tropical storm beats down on an island in the Philippines, two sisters leave work and never make it home.....

Paco Larrañaga, a 19 year old student, is sentenced to death for their rape and murder despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence. Seven years in the making, the film reflects schisms of race, class and political power at the core of the Philippines' tumultuous democracy that clashing families, institutions, and individuals face over Paco's freedom.

## WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

"Jaw-dropping... hard to turn away from" *New York Times*

"Documentaries about abuses of justice abound, but few present complicated events in so concrete, linear, and compelling a fashion" *Variety*

"As well paced and engrossing as any thriller while incalculably more harrowing... An incredible story, beautifully and persuasively told" *The Guardian*

**"WHAT IS REALLY  
GREAT ABOUT  
THIS FILM IS  
ITS CAPACITY  
TO TOUCH AND  
ACTIVATE PEOPLE  
AND COMMUNITIES  
ACROSS  
CONTINENTS."**

PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

THE IMPACT

**FIELD GUIDE**

& TOOLKIT

## WHO SAW IT

“WHEN I SAW THE FILM I WAS ACTUALLY ANGRY. I COULDN’T BELIEVE THAT THIS HAD ACTUALLY HAPPENED, SO I SAID ‘INSTEAD OF SITTING AROUND... COMPLAINING ABOUT SOMETHING WHY DON’T I GET UP AND DO SOMETHING MYSELF’. WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT (TREKKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO) WAS SOMETHING PACO’S ALWAYS WANTED TO DO THAT CONCRETED THE IDEA”

Grainne McHugh who trekked the 356 mile pilgrimage to raise funds and awareness for the Free Paco Now campaign.

### **COMMUNITY SCREENINGS**

USA: 50+  
Philippines: 45+ (inc. American Embassy)  
Spain: 20+ screenings  
ROW: 125+ screenings

### **OTHER ONLINE STRATEGY**

**Paco’s message from Death Row:**  
54,731 views

**Free Paco Now campaign video:**  
7,649 views

**Philippine premiere:**  
6,810 views

**POV site:**  
23,975 views

### **CINEMA**

Initially scheduled for a single screen in the Philippines over one weekend but was eventually rolled out to 15 cinemas over 3 weeks

### **70 FESTIVALS**

in 35 countries  
Premiere Tribeca Spring 2011

### **175 CINEMAS**

in 175 cities internationally

### **1.7M TELEVISION**

Broadcast in 9 territories  
including US, Spain

### **4.2K DVD**

USA, Spain, Philippines

### **18 AWARDS AND PRIZES**

18 Awards including 7 Audience Awards, 4 Human Rights Awards.

### **90K ONLINE TRAILER**

90,000 views

### **126K WEBSITE**

www.GiveUpTomorrow.com 71,487  
www.FreePacoNow.com 55,176

### **6K EMAIL LIST**

6653 views

### **7K SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

Facebook (*Give Up Tomorrow* & Free Paco Now): 6367

Twitter (@GiveUpTomorrow & @FreePacoNow): 1278



## **THE CAMPAIGNERS**

The campaign to free Paco has been personally and professionally driven by the filmmakers Michael Collins and Marty Syjuco for 9 years. They had a personal interest in the story: Syjuco's brother is married to Paco's sister, Mimi. Their efforts have been amplified by working closely with a range of partners to leverage international networks that cross borders.

## **CAMPAIGN AIMS**

This campaign is particularly unusual in that it happened in two stages, firstly using a short advocacy video in 2005, which would subsequently form part of the content of the second stage; a feature length film.

The filmmakers had made huge strides with the video but the release of the feature documentary in Spring 2011 was intended not only to reenergise the Spanish public but also to engage a

truly global audience, build capacity through human rights partnerships, and put the Philippine justice system in the spotlight.

## **HOW THE CAMPAIGN WORKED**

The filmmakers' fight to save Paco's life started in 2004, when the Supreme Court of the Philippines sentenced him to death row. His family and lawyers had exhausted all legal channels in a hostile public, media and political climate. As a last resort to save him the filmmakers appealed directly to the Spanish public, Paco being a dual Spanish/ Philippine citizen.

**“THE FILMMAKERS MADE HUGE STRIDES ON THE JOURNEY TO SAVE PACO’S LIFE AND GAIN RECOGNITION OF HIS INNOCENCE BEFORE THE FILM WAS EVEN RELEASED. “**

After their first production trip to the Philippines from Dec 2004 to March 2005, the filmmakers joined and helped publicly launch the campaign to free Paco that was underway in Spain. They moved to Barcelona in the Spring 2005 and formed a low key grassroots coalition of core members: Paco's aunt, cousin, Spanish lawyer, and the





filmmakers. They reached out to a number of organisations for help and amongst the many that responded was Fair Trials International who became a campaign partner.

They smuggled a hidden camera into the maximum security Bilibid Prison and recorded a desperate message from Paco which went viral in 2005. Newspaper QUE and Amnesty Spain ran signature campaigns. They created a short advocacy video that aired on Spanish television in November 2005. This resulted in an incredible response:

1. Hundreds and thousands of signatures delivered to Spanish congress
2. Politicians from Spain flew to the Philippines to visit Paco on death row and meet the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
3. Paco became the face of Amnesty International's signature campaign against the death penalty
4. Human rights groups demonstrated outside the Philippine embassy in Madrid with giant lethal injection needles, and delivered 210,000 signatures asking the Philippine President not to kill Paco

Three months after the video Fair Trials International filed the appeal on Paco's case to the UN and received a rare swift response that they would take on the case. It's fair to say Fair Trials brought Paco's case to the UN

as a result of a collaborative effort of many likeminded NGOs and activists of which the filmmakers were a key part. This has set the stage for the collaborative nature of all the activity throughout the campaign.

The public outcry worked. In October 2005, the King of Spain, Juan Carlos and the President of Spain, Jose Luis Zapatero, asked the President of the Philippines for leniency in Paco's case.

In June 2006, the Philippine President abolished the death penalty on a publicity trip to Spain. While larger political forces motivated this, the filmmakers could, at least, be said to have contributed to the

conversations that led to these changes. In the same year the United Nations Human Rights Council ruled that Paco's conviction was unsound, a ruling that was subsequently ignored by the Supreme Court in the Philippines.

In October 2009, Paco was transferred to Spain on a prisoner exchange treaty.

**“ON  
RELEASE THE  
FILMMAKERS  
HAD TO  
ENGAGE  
A GLOBAL  
AUDIENCE TO  
ACTION.”**

However, Paco remained in prison in San Sebastian and faded from public view. Public opinion remained hostile in the Philippines. The coaccused defendants remained incarcerated.

So much had already been achieved, but the feature documentary created new opportunities: for greater awareness, for deeper engagement, for a truly global reach.

# THE CAMPAIGN

The team decided to launch the feature documentary in the US and Spain before taking on the Philippines, as they were sure that they would be dismissed as biased insiders in the Philippines. The film launched at the Tribeca Film Festival in Spring 2011 – attended by the elite of New York’s intelligentsia and independent media, as well as the most influential of the Filipino-American (Fil-Am) community. It’s worth noting that members from partner organisations attended, many having flown in specially, including Larry Cox, Exec Director of Amnesty International USA and representatives from Reprieve, Fair Trials International, QUE newspaper and Equal Justice USA. This started a legitimised conversation about the broken justice system in the Philippines in which their evidence was taken seriously as a robust investigative case study.

The filmmakers also launched the second Free Paco Now campaign in April 2011 to coincide with the Tribeca premiere.

Their next focus was Spain where awareness of Paco had lapsed since the grassroots Spanish campaign helped get him off death row and transferred to a Spanish prison. Launching *Give Up Tomorrow* in Valladolid in October 2011 raised awareness that there was still much more to be done.

From then on the filmmakers distributed and collected letters from audience members at screenings, or organised

volunteers to do this. Audiences were also encouraged to write postcards to Paco.

The filmmakers would put the letters in an envelope and send them to Paco’s cousin in Spain who would then divide them and send them on to the Spanish President incrementally so that even if screenings weren’t taking place, the letters would be consistently arriving.

Amnesty International was a major partner for the film’s theatrical release in Spain in June 2012 as they mobilised their membership base in Spain. The team continues to contact local chapters of AI for each scheduled screening, so they can be present to sign up audiences to lists and actions at the local level.

As the film won awards around the world it began to make front page news in the Philippines. The country was watching and listening to how the rest of the world regarded the Philippines as a place to be a citizen. The Philippine media and public began to voice their concern and the stage was set for the film’s packed and controversial premiere in Manila.

Before the theatrical release in the Philippines a private screening was held reaching out to the country’s mainstream media including well known media personalities whose sensationalised, irresponsible reporting had influenced the case against Paco initially. This was typical of the filmmakers’ consensus building approach throughout the campaign.



## ONLINE TRENDS

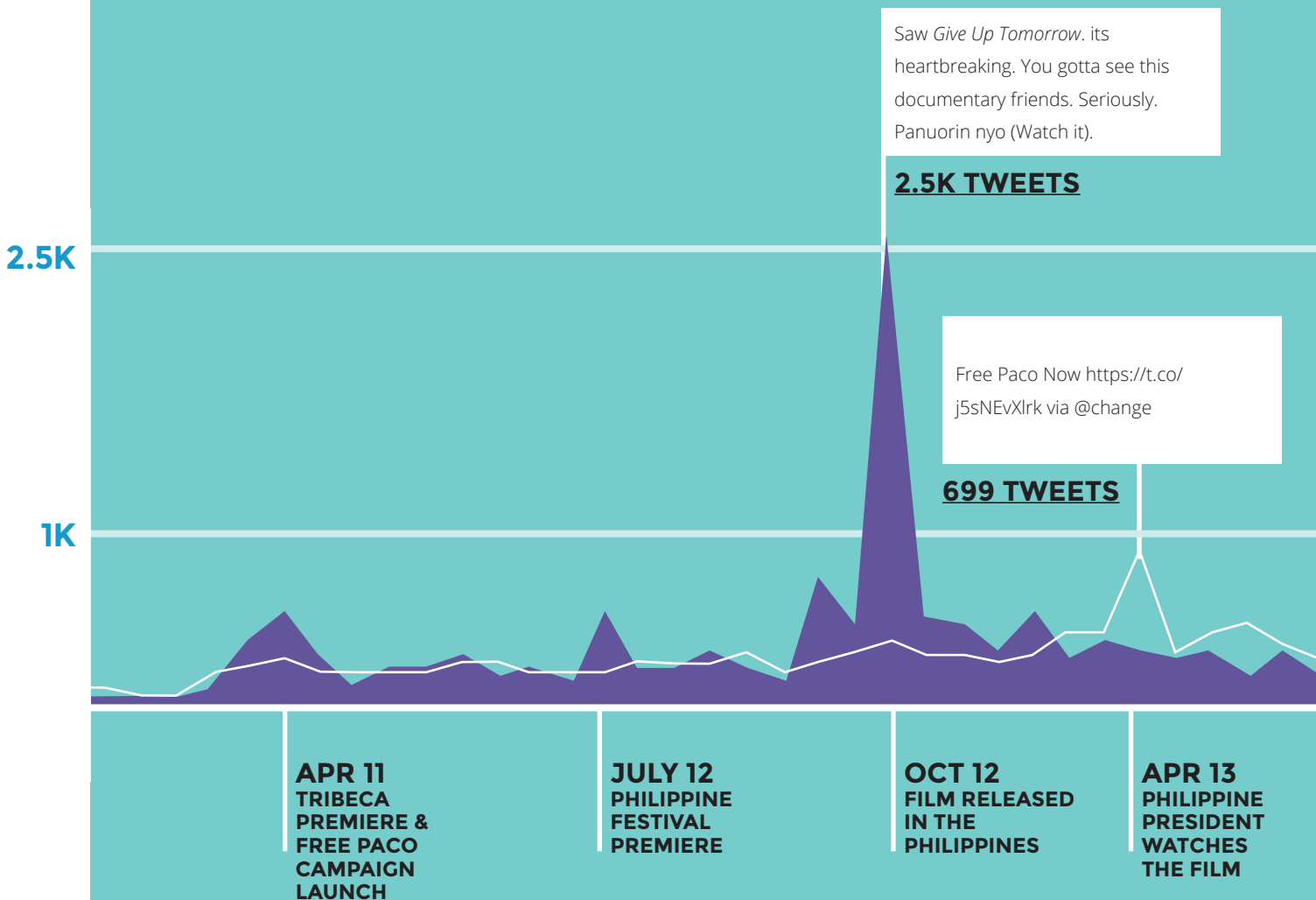
1. "Paco Larrañaga" peaked and plateaued in April/May of 2005 due to release of "Paco's Message on Death Row" video in Spain.
2. "Free Paco" peaked in October 2011 and spiked to 80 in October 2012 due to the Philippine theatrical release.
3. "Give Up Tomorrow" peaked at 100 in October 2012 due to theatrical releases in NY and Philippines, and POV broadcast premiere.
4. "Chiong Case" spiked to 54 in August 2012 after the Philippine festival premiere, and again in October 2012 with the theatrical release.

## FACEBOOK POSTS

1. July 2012, Philippine Festival Premiere: Facebook posts' reach jumped from roughly 2,500 to 27,000 people, and leveled out at 14,000. By September 2012, this increased to 40,000 with sustained media coverage.
2. October 2012, Philippine Theatrical Release: Facebook posts' reach jumped from 40,000 to 172,499 with nearly 20,000 unique users at one time.

GiveUpTomorrow.com hits soared from 184,778 hits in September 2012 to 711,946 hits in October 2012.

## KEYWORD MENTIONS ONLINE ( TWITTER )



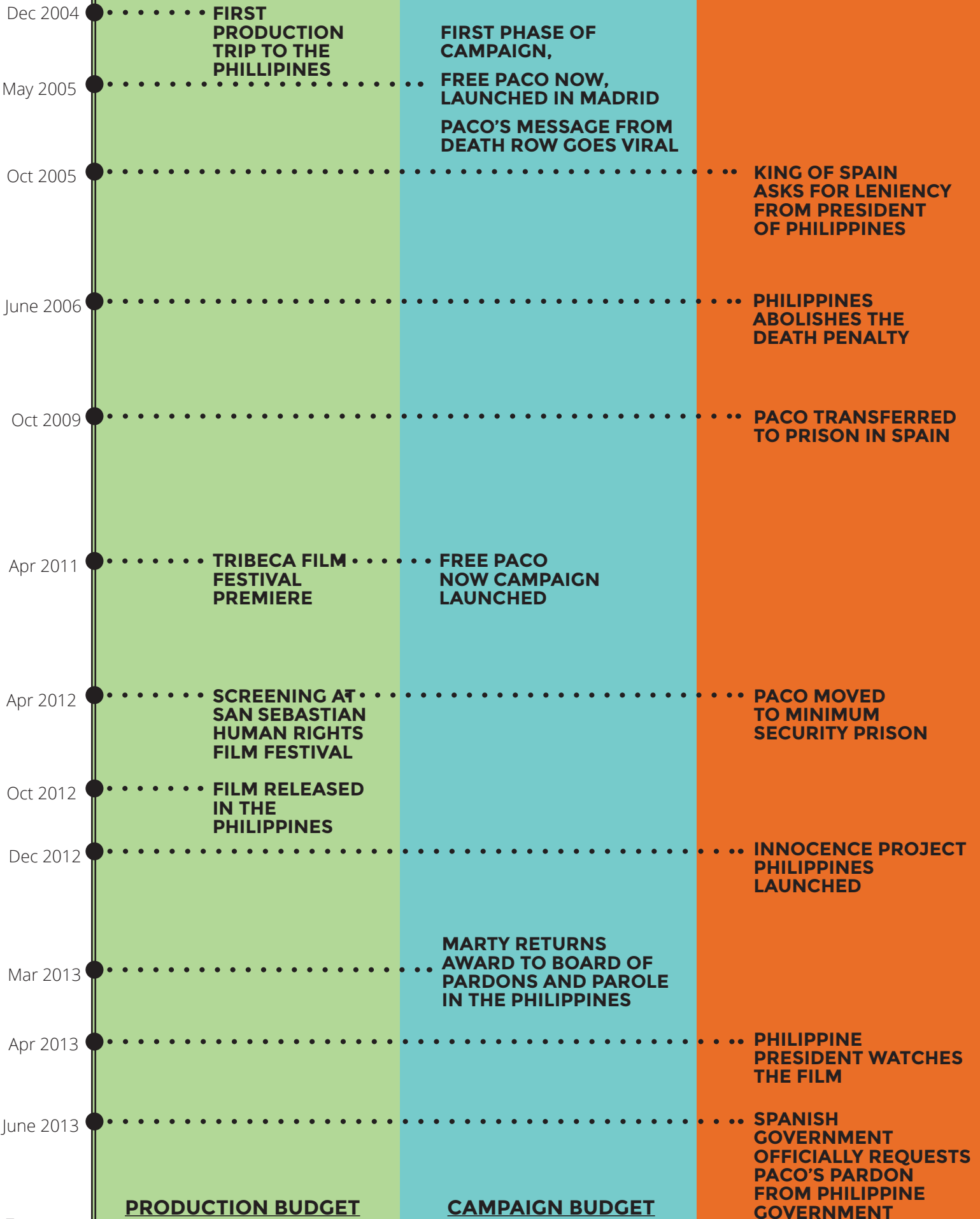
## KEY

- "GIVE UP TOMORROW" (TWITTER)
- "FREE PACO" (TWITTER)

## THE FILM

## THE CAMPAIGN

## IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS



## THE FREE PACO NOW CAMPAIGN

Although Paco remains in prison in Spain, actions taken in that country have resulted in significant freedoms for him.

The letterwriting campaign generated an incredible response considering the lack of resources behind the effort:

\*10,560 emails to MEPS

\*4,960 emails to President of Spain

\*1,397 downloaded to President of Spain (since there is an option to send this same letter via email on the same page, the filmmakers believe that most of those who downloaded it had the intention to duplicate it and share it with others)

\*6,000+ (estimate) physical letters signed after screenings and mailed to the Office of the President in Spain

This took place over two years until, in June 2013, the Spanish government announced that they would officially request Paco's pardon from the Philippine government.

There was global awareness of Paco's plight. Celebrities like American actor Matthew Broderick, Japanese artist and peace activist Yoko Ono, fashion activist Bethann Hardison and American actor Fisher Stevens showed their support for the campaign through tweets, signing the petition and by sharing a photo whilst holding a sign saying 'Free Paco Now'.

*"Documentary films are quickly becoming the voice of activists. This is one of the must sees. Made with passion and love for justice."* Yoko Ono

Thanks to a special screening at the San Sebastian Human Rights Festival in April 2012 (where the film won an Audience Award), attended by the Prison Warden and Prison Review Board, the decision was made to change Paco's prisoner status and he was moved to a minimum security prison two days after the screening. He is now given furloughs to attend culinary school, has gained his driver's license and maintains an apartment outside, but must still sleep in prison every night. Paco even has a girlfriend.



**"I INVITE YOU TO WATCH  
GIVE UP TOMORROW AND  
CONSIDER THE MOUNTAINS OF  
EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONIES  
THAT WERE SILENCED AND  
IGNORED BY THE COURTS AND  
THE MEDIA. I PRAY THAT GOD  
WILL GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH  
TO ADMIT A MISTAKE WAS  
MADE. AND THE COURAGE  
TO PROVE THAT YOUR  
DEPARTMENT ADMINISTERS  
JUSTICE, AND DOESN'T JUST  
ADMINISTER PAPERWORK."**

After the theatrical release in Spain in June 2012, the Queen of Spain visited the Philippines and appealed to the Philippine President for clemency for Paco.

By April 2013 events had moved so fast in the Philippines that the President had watched the film. This was the result of Marty spending six months in the Philippines targeting the most influential members of society and making them allies – especially those with the President's ear, like the American Ambassador who hosted a private screening at his residence.



In March 2013 Marty had been given the Aning Dangal trophy in recognition of his film, which he promptly returned in protest to the Board of Pardons and Parole in a public appeal to them to review Paco's case favourably. Each member received a DVD with a protest letter, the package also being sent to the Secretary of Justice, the President and key people around him.

Two days later Secretary of Justice Leila de Lima publicly responded by saying the President had the final say on Paco's pardon request – essentially passing the buck to him. "The final decision rests on the President. And a favorable recommendation from BPP is not a mandatory prerequisite for the President to exercise his power to grant clemency. We thus transmitted to the Office of the President nonetheless the plea for clemency in behalf of Mr. Larrañaga for the President's consideration," she said.

This created wide press coverage resulting in the Philippine President finally viewing the film during Easter Holy Week.

## **THE PHILIPPINES - MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY**

Following the screening for media opinion formers organised by the filmmakers Teddy Locsin, a prominent journalist who had been one of the worst perpetrators of trial by media, said, on camera: "They have always been innocent and their guilt was never proved beyond reasonable doubt. They have never been guilty... this was a trial by publicity." Locsin praised the filmmakers for sticking to their story for seven years as he remarks how in week to week journalism conclusions are often reached unscrupulously.

Carlos Celdran, a cultural icon and social activist asked the audience: "How did we all believe that they were guilty? We all did. Back then I drank the juice." He goes on to talk about how everyone allowed it to happen and to question the ethics of what was allowed to be shown on TV at the time.

The self reflection by the Philippine media about their own actions, as well as the justice system of their country, was an unexpected gain of the campaign.

"I felt helpless. Injustice can happen to anyone in this country."

"Give Up Tomorrow is a must-see for everyone - specially journalists!"

– Karen Davila, TV journalist  
Twitter followers: 960,243

"This must be watched by every Filipino."

– Carlos Celdran, artist/activist  
Twitter followers: 191,106

"It was so difficult... to go against what was fashionable: to simply crucify Paco. That was the reality of the time. And as a member of the media I would like to say sorry."

– Leo Lastimosa, Philippine journalist

"What if you only knew part of the story... what if everything you believed in is not exactly true... what if, just what if, you misjudged someone? What if Paco Larrañaga was indeed innocent?"

– Nadia Trinidad, Philippine journalist

"Incredible film! Thanks for the ride! Glad we watched Give Up Tomorrow together"

– Tweet by Tim Yap, TV Host and Celebrity  
Twitter followers: 1,047,459

## **BEYOND PACO - INNOCENCE PROJECT PHILIPPINES**

The Philippine Innocence Project is a network of law school clinics, scientific and academic laboratories and nongovernmental organisations, that seeks to make justice accessible for wrongfully convicted persons.

The Ford Foundation hosted a screening of Give Up Tomorrow at the New York Paley Center of Media as part of its Philanthropy NY series. Maddy deLone, Executive Director of the Innocence Project joined the team on the post

screening panel. After seeing the film, Maddy organised a private screening for the Innocence Project New York office. She was so moved by the film that she began collaborating with Attorney Ted Te, leading to the founding of the Innocence Project Philippines Network in December 2012. Today the IPPN is launching in Colleges of Law across the Philippines and recruiting students in an active development phase.

Dr Cora de Ungria of the DNA Analysis Laboratory at the University of the Philippines, the main instigator of IP in the Philippines states, "We have been trying to find ways to start an Innocence Project since 1999 after the execution of Leo Echegaray....some people listened while others did not. This film was so compelling that one can no longer turn one's face away from reality."

Going forward the team will be able to measure the number of students enrolled in

the Innocence Project Philippines Network (IPPN) and in the number of cases investigated, as *Give Up Tomorrow* inspires students and new related media is developed.

Fragmented human rights groups joined forces, with real, concrete gains for thier campaign that will be long-lasting, as the film becomes part of a higher education curricular innovation in the Philippines, to help strengthen judicial and media reform from the ground up.

## **CAMPAIGN PARTNERS**

Fair Trials International, Reprieve and Amnesty International use the film to lobby for Paco's pardon. Commission Against the Death Penalty, The Innocence Project, and many anti death penalty NGOs use the film to campaign against the death penalty.





The filmmakers have very effectively created a political campaign across borders, channelling public feeling generated by the film towards concrete political goals. Already the campaign has done much to improve Paco's quality of life and they have managed this through their own personal energy in partnership

with other NGOs, on modest resources.

A long term legacy of the campaign in the form of the Innocence Project Philippines Network will address the systemic roots of injustice in that country for years to come.

**“THIS SENSITIVITY AND CUSTOMISED  
APPROACH TO DIFFERENT GROUPS  
FOLLOWING A PREDEFINED STRATEGIC  
TIMELINE FOR OUTREACH IN  
DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC AREAS  
AND AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS  
CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPACT THE FILM  
WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE.”**

**PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

# TEAM BIOGRAPHY



## DIRECTOR

MICHAEL COLLINS is an Emmy® nominated filmmaker, devoted meditator, and founder of Thoughtful Robot, a production company based in NYC committed to crafting compelling social justice films that galvanize change. Michael's short film *Gerthy's Roots*, shot on location in Haiti and made possible by the Mandela Day Tribeca All Access Award, won the Belief Matters Award and was selected for the Media that Matters collection. *Give Up Tomorrow*, his documentary feature film seven years in the making, premiered at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival and won the Audience Award and a Special Jury Prize for Best New Director. The film went on to screen in over 70 festivals in 35+ countries, winning 18 major awards including seven Audience Awards, four Human Rights Awards and the Activism Award at Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival.



## PRODUCER

MARTY SYJUCO is a multi-awarded producer whose dreams came true with an Emmy® nomination for Outstanding Investigative Journalism. Originally from the Philippines, he moved to NYC to pursue his passion: documentary filmmaking. In 2005, he produced the one-hour film *Atrapado en la Injusticia* (Caught in an Injustice) broadcast on Spanish national television. The evolution of the story and the reception and acclaim spurred him to expand the short into a feature-length documentary, *Give Up Tomorrow*, about an innocent young man sentenced to death in the Philippines. To this *Give Up Tomorrow* has been broadcast in nine territories, including BBC, Canal+ and PBS, as part of POV's 25th anniversary season.



# AWARDS & PRIZES

Winner, Heineken Audience Award, **TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Special Jury Prize for Best New Director, **TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Audience Award, **SHEFFIELD DOC/FEST 2011**  
Winner, Activism Award, **TRAVERSE CITY FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Audience Award, **ANTENNA SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Audience Award, **VALENCIA HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Best Documentary, **ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011**  
Winner, Human Rights Award, **DOCS BARCELONA FILM FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Editing Award, **SALEM FILM FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Audience Award, **MOVIES THAT MATTER FESTIVAL THE HAGUE 2012**  
Winner, Audience Award, **SAN SEBASTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Human Rights Award, **LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Audience Award, **LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Human Rights Award, **GALWAY FILM FLEDH 2012**  
Winner, Special Jury Award, **DMZ KOREAN FILM FESTIVAL 2012**  
Winner, Best Documentary, **NATIONAL FILM SOCIETY 2012**  
Winner, **ANI NG DANGAL (HARVEST OF HONORS) AWARD 2012**

## NOMINATIONS:

Outstanding Investigative Journalism, **EMMY AWARDS 2012**  
Best Newcomer, **GRIERSON AWARDS 2011**  
Audience Choice Prize, **CINEMA EYE HONORS 2012**  
Amnesty International's Media Awards Nomination for Documentary 2012  
INPUT Selection for Highlights of Public Media, **EL SALVADOR 2013**

# CREDITS

## **FREE PACO NOW CAMPAIGN TEAM:**

Michael Collins	Anna Morris
Marty Syjuco	Stephanie Beesly
Carmen Vicencio	Ria Limjap
Tracy Fleischman	Carlos Celdran
Lisa Smithline	Rica Villalon
Sara Kiener	Racqui Garcia
Tatat Cardona	Chona Lopez
Maisha Ortoll	Loida Lewis
Sarah de Mas	Carissa Villacorta
Faisal Saifee	

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## At Large 'Give Up Tomorrow'

By Rina Jimenez-David  
Philippine Daily Inquirer  
10:05 pm | Monday, July 23rd, 2012

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As the open forum following the Philippine premiere of "Give Up Tomorrow" was winding down, a young man stood from his seat and made his way toward a microphone. Audience members taking a look at him gasped in recognition. "It's Hubert Webb!" my seatmate whispered, and indeed it was one of the more famous ex-prisoners of recent times.

Webb, for those who've forgotten, was imprisoned for 15 years at the New Bilibid Prison, convicted along with five coaccused for the 1995 "Vizconde massacre," where a mother and her two daughters were killed in their Parañaque home. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled with finality on the case, acquitting Webb and his coaccused. And so, perhaps more than anyone else at the audience that Sunday evening, Webb knew whereof he was speaking, having 15 years' experience with the state of the Philippine justice system, including the role of media and politics. But he kept his opinions to himself.

"I met Paco in Muntinlupa," Webb began, referring to Paco Larrañaga whose struggle for justice and vindication was the subject of the compelling documentary. Expressing appreciation for what the documentary makers were trying to do, he concluded: "The best defense is letting the world know what really happened."

It seemed a rather lame conclusion, especially after the rather subtly powerful exposition of "Give Up Tomorrow." But the rousing applause that accompanied Webb as he made his way back to his seat seemed to express the audience's sympathy not just for Webb but also for Larrañaga; for anyone, for that matter, who ends up paying the price for a miscarriage of justice which takes place astonishingly frequently in this country.

...

Friends from Cebu, even while the trial of Larrañaga and his coaccused was going on, confessed to being "torn" by the case. Of course, they felt sympathy for Thelma and Dionisio Chiong, who lost their daughters Joy and Jackie when they disappeared one rainy night in 1997.

But they also knew Margot Larrañaga, mother of Paco, one of the more prominent suspects arrested for the kidnap-murder of the Chiong sisters. "She has always been low-key and supportive of civil society causes," recalled one of my friends of Margot, who belongs to the politically influential Osmeña clan of Cebu and is married to a former pelotari, Chuchu Larrañaga, a Spanish citizen.

Indeed, one of the more enduring themes of the coverage of crime in the Philippines is that of a rich, influential man (or group of men) who takes advantage of his social cachet and political influence to commit a crime or crimes, confident of getting away scot-free with the help of heavyweight relatives and friends of the family.

From the Maggie dela Riva rape case to the Vizconde, Hultman and Chiong killings, focus has invariably been thrown on the personalities of the accused, and the interlocking ties of wealth, politics and connections that serve as protective nets. Which may explain why, in any case where scions of prominent families are involved, public sympathy and media coverage invariably fall on the victims, who are presumed to be embroiled in a "David and Goliath" battle.

...

But as "Give Up Tomorrow" shows, sometimes, we may need to question, if not abandon this knee-jerk analysis, even if our natural sympathies are for the underdog, and our sense of justice is aroused by what appears to be a railroad of injustice.

Director Michael Collins and producer Marty Syjuco (who is a distant relative by marriage to the Larrañagas) spent more than seven years working on the film, their first. "We were approached by the witnesses," Collins recalls of the time they decided to take on the project, referring to classmates of Larrañaga at the Center for Culinary Arts (CCA) in Quezon City. Some of these classmates were able to testify that Paco was with them in class on the day of the crime, and even had photos to show that he was with them in a bar on the night the Chiong sisters disappeared. Ultimately, however, their testimony was disregarded.

"We were reading the operating handbook of the camera on the flight to Manila," the pair also confessed, adding that they had no idea of the extent of commitment their project demanded. They would visit Manila five times in all, they recalled, conducting more than 100 interviews. They included Thelma Chiong, "who wanted to air her side," but not David Rusia, the "star witness" who claimed to have been part of the group of accused and turned state witness, although fellow detainees testify that he was tortured into confessing. "We searched for him everywhere and even went to his home in Bohol, but he seems to have disappeared," Syjuco said.

...

"Give Up Tomorrow" is taken from an interview with Paco who said that his main tactic of survival while in prison was living day to day, "worrying only about how I was going to survive that day." He told his companions, he said, to "give up tomorrow," and concentrate on living only for the moment.

It seems a most cruel existence, but I suppose it works for Paco, who to this day spends his days in a Spanish jail after winning extradition, though he cannot yet win parole until he admits his guilt. (Syjuco said they recently received word that the Spanish courts were ready to waive this requirement.)

But ordinary Filipinos, who have set their roots in this country, cannot but send out tendrils of hope and optimism, if only to survive the daily tribulations we are subject to. This is why "Give Up Tomorrow" left me weary and strangely depleted. The movie's themes may have been "plucked from the headlines," but they are themes we choose to push to the back of our minds, if only to enable us to move on and function in this country.

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6. By any other name
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MOVIE REVIEW

Putting Philippine Justice on Trial

'Give Up Tomorrow,' Directed by Michael Collins



Paco Larrañaga, left behind bars, in a scene from the documentary "Give Up Tomorrow."

By NICOLAS RAPOLD

Published: September 30, 2012

The miscarriage of justice recounted in "Give Up Tomorrow," filmed over six years, is so comprehensive as to be disorienting. Paco Larrañaga, a Filipino-Spanish student from a privileged family who was convicted in 1999 as the ringleader of a 1997 double murder and rape of two sisters in the Philippines, was, for starters, miles away on a different island when the crimes took place, according to 35 witnesses.

This patiently linear [documentary from Michael Collins](#) chronicles the jaw-dropping details of Mr. Larrañaga's arrest and trial after the deaths of Marijoy and Jacqueline Chiong. We learn of a surprise witness for the prosecution who confessed after reportedly being tortured and of unusual bureaucratic involvement by the president of the country at the time, Joseph Estrada, whose personal secretary was a sister of the victims' [mother](#). (Mr. Collins's producer is related through marriage to Mr. Larrañaga.) The corruption of the investigation and the ensuing trial was considered so dire that Spain and the [United Nations Human Rights Committee](#) agreed to take action.

The parade of fresh outrages, recounted by Mr. Larrañaga's family and through bewilderingly pervasive camera coverage (including grisly crime scene photos), has a dual effect. It makes "Give Up Tomorrow" hard to turn away from first of all. And also, out of the police and trial proceedings, sensational news media coverage and political maneuverings, a revealing, culturally specific snapshot of the Philippines emerges — albeit taken from its worst side, hobbled by legacies of its colonial past and the continued strife of the present.

That is why [Mr. Collins's treatment](#), though jam packed, leaves one itching to understand more about the bigger picture and the political and social connections involved.

**Give Up Tomorrow**

*Opened on Friday in Manhattan.*

Directed by Michael Collins; director of photography, Joshua Weinstein; edited by Eric Metzgar; music by Adam Crystal; produced by Marty Syjuco; released by Thoughtful Robot. At the Producers Club IndieHouse, 358 West 44th Street. In English, Spanish, Cebuano and Tagalog, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 35 minutes. This film is not rated.

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## Did justice sleep?

FROM THE HEART By Gina Lopez (The Philippine Star) | Updated October 14, 2012 - 12:00am



Paco Larrañaga (standing, right) behind bars, being interviewed by a news reporter, shortly after he was arrested for the kidnap, rape and murder of two sisters in the Philippines. Photo by Arni Aclao

A few months ago, my brother was talking excitedly about a film called Give Up Tomorrow which has won many awards overseas — 16 to be exact — and how it depicts the sad state of our Philippine justice system.

I finally saw the documentary last week. From beginning to end, I was in shock. How can this be happening? Sure, Paco Larrañaga — the subject of the film who was accused of rape and murder of two Cebu girls and sentenced to life in prison — has a swagger, a "bad boy image," but one can't convict based on that. How can a person commit a crime when there are 40 eyewitnesses that say he was in Quezon City when the crimes were happening in Cebu?

In the decision of the Regional Trial Court, the late Judge Martin Ocampo said it was physically possible for Paco to have taken a private plane to Cebu and then flown back in time to take his exams in Quezon City at 7:30 in the morning. Huh? If Paco was really bad, why couldn't he just have raped someone in Manila? Or Quezon City? Why would he fly all the way to Cebu to rape someone, throw her in the ravine and then fly back to attend his exams? It just did not make sense. Another question that nagged at me after watching the movie is this: How can it be verified that Paco was in Cebu when there was no physical evidence that he hired a private plane? Where are the flight records, receipts, or pilot affidavits? In fact, Paco's name was not in any of the manifests of any ships and commercial airplanes going to and from Cebu at that time.

I guess what really convinced me of his innocence was hearing the teacher of Paco Larrañaga talk. Chef Rowena Bautista had testified that she saw Paco at 6:30 p.m. coming down the stairs of their school in Quezon City. This is the exact time that Paco was allegedly in Cebu, according to the prosecution witness. I like to think I can tell if someone is lying or not. Well, more often than not, I can! And I could tell she was telling the truth. I also met Paco's parents. They seemed such decent people. And Paco's sister, Mimi — my goodness, she's a sweetheart! So how can a family like this breed a cold-blooded killer that deserves a death penalty?

In the film there are statements from the United Nations, from Fair Trials International, Amnesty International, Reprieve, the European Union, and these are unbiased professionals with nothing to gain from defending Paco. They all say that the Supreme Court decision was flawed. However the investigation by legal experts from international groups was completely ignored.

What was also interesting to me is that after his two daughters went missing, Dionesio Chiong decided not to testify against his boss, who was under investigation for being a drug lord at that time. The other two who testified against this alleged drug lord were eventually found dead, executed in horrific circumstances. So one begins to wonder.

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The film has people like one of the lead investigating officers, Pablo Labra, who can't even "recall" the clues that led him to conclude that Paco was the culprit. He really seemed like a flake. Several times the judge was caught sleeping on the bench — while deciding on lives. Sleeping?

The Chiong family needed to vent their angst. That's understandable. However, if one looks at the circumstances, it seems that they have chosen the wrong person. In contrast, Senator Serge Osmeña was in the auditorium when I watched the film. The mother of Paco is his first cousin. He purposely did not involve himself in the proceedings so that if

Paco was found innocent, it would not be misconstrued that it was due to his interference.

Because there are so many issues, I became curious; so I asked for a copy of the Supreme Court decision. According to the Supreme Court decision there were over 20 prosecution witnesses that claimed they saw Paco in Cebu that day. I wonder how the Supreme Court came up with this statement

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