

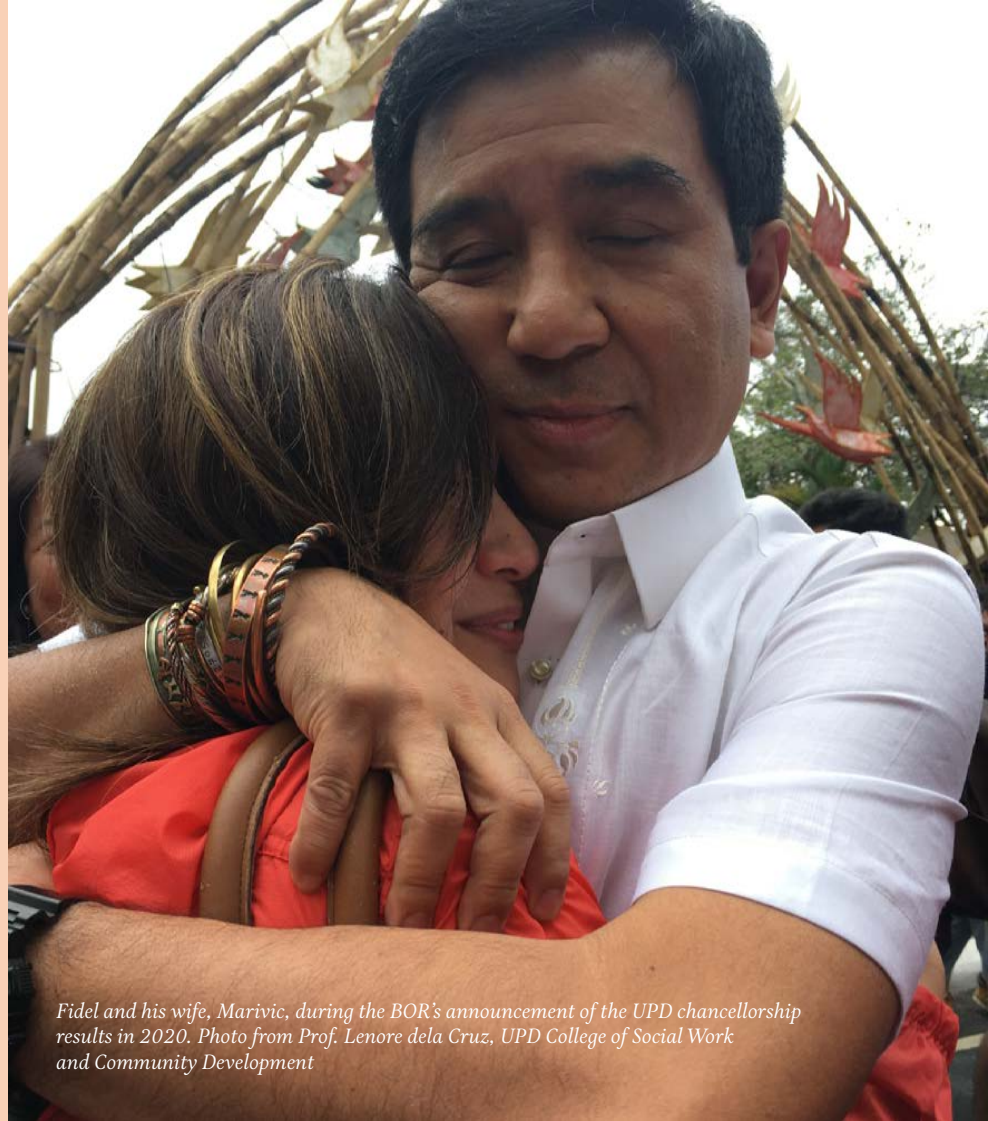


Fidel with his son, Anton, and wife, Marivic. Photo by Jefferson Villacruz, UPDIO

UPD and BY BINO C. GAMBA the Nemenzos

Fidel R. Nemenzo, DSc, the 11th chancellor of UP Diliman (UPD), is a third-generation Nemenzo.





Fidel and his wife, Marivic, during the BOR's announcement of the UPD chancellorship results in 2020. Photo from Prof. Lenore dela Cruz, UPD College of Social Work and Community Development



The Nemenzo family during Dodong's investiture as the 18th UP president in 2000. Photo from the UPDIO archives

The Nemenzos of UP are scholars, educators, and administrators in the University.

According to Fidel, the Nemenzos first came to UPD in the late 1950s. His grandfather, Francisco Nemenzo Sr., was a zoology professor and is acknowledged as the father of Philippine coral taxonomy. He was also the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) from 1963 to 1969. His grandmother, Catalina Alfara-Nemenzo, was a senior librarian at the UP Library. Both retired from service in 1969 and went back to Pinamungajan, Cebu.

Fidel's involvement in political activism may be attributed to his parents' influence. His father, Francisco "Dodong" Nemenzo, professor emeritus of political science, was the 18th UP president (1999-2005), the 3rd UP Visayas chancellor (1989-1992), and CAS dean (1976-1981). His mother, Ana Maria "Princess" Ronquillo Nemenzo, is a known feminist and anti-poverty activist. Both were political prisoners during the Martial Law years.

As a young family of scholars, the Nemenzos put down their residential roots in UPD, moving from one "area" to another. Fidel was one of "mga batang UP" who grew up and spent their childhood on the campus.

Dodong and Princess Nemenzo have two sons, Fidel and Leonid, and a daughter, Lian. All three children studied in UP, from nursery to college. In UPD, they would first live in a house in Area 17. The house is long gone now, being in the place where the Institute of Civil Engineering presently stands.

In 1969, the Nemenzos moved to the "sawali cottage" of Fidel's grandparents in Area 14. They moved again in 1970 to Area 1 because their house in Area 14 was totally destroyed by typhoon Yoling.

Childhood friend and fellow "batang UP" Paul Jose Encarnacion described Fidel as a critical thinker who shunned dogma,



Clockwise from left:

Francisco Sr. Photo from Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo

Nemenzo siblings (Fidel, Lian, and Leonid) in 1969 and recreated in 2019. Photos from Lian Nemenzo-Hernandez

Dodong and his wife, Princess. Photo from the UPDIO archives



“wanting to discover and learn things himself” and had diverse interests—from mathematics to music, literature, and politics.

As an activist, Fidel is often asked about that one fateful day in 1984.

“Sept. 27, 1984. A week before that ay may violent dispersal sa Mendiola kaya nagsagawa kami ng isang indignation rally. Habang nakabarikada ang campus, may UP contingent na nagmartsa papuntang Mendiola, pero hinarang na kami sa Welcome Rotonda. Doon ako nabaril sa lugar na iyon,” explained Fidel.

Fidel was shot in the back and the bullet exited his chest. Wounded, he, along with some of his companions, hid in a house nearby. “Duguan ako noon at hindi kami makalabas sa bahay dahil maraming sundalo sa labas. Akala ko roon na ako mamamatay.”

It took around 45 minutes before his companions were able to get in touch with personnel of a service vehicle of a certain radio station. He was rushed to the nearest hospital, the United Doctors Medical Center, where he would spend four days in critical condition and recuperate for three weeks.

When asked what he was thinking during those critical moments, Fidel said that he thought of his favorite food and wanted to see his close friend and “biggest crush,” Marivic. She was a UP student leader and one of those overseeing the barricades at the University Avenue when Fidel was shot.

“The campus was barricaded twice—during the 1971 Diliman Commune and during our time, in 1984. All entrances and exits of the University were blocked. There were hardly any classes held at that time. It lasted for a week, at kasabay noon 'yong unfortunate na pagkabaril kay Fidel,” Marivic said.

Marivic is Ma. Victoria Raquiza, PhD of the UPD National College of Public Administration and Governance. She met Fidel in 1983 through a high school

*UP employees and students
barricade the University Ave.
intersection to protest
student fees hike.*

*Photo by Amor Villamor,
sourced from the UPD Main
Library Archives Section*



friend, who was his classmate in a math class. As friends, Fidel and Marivic were drawn together by their activism and love for ideas. They also had “shared imagination for all kinds of adventure.” They were married in 1993.

A NEW EXPERIENCE. Marivic entered UP in 1980. Coming from an all-girls high school, she developed “culture shock” during her first few weeks in UPD. Studying with a diverse student body was very new to her.

“It was a good shock in a way because of the cross-class diversity in the classroom. People going to class in T-shirts, ‘tsinelas,’ ‘maong’ pants, and those who were willing to dress up. All classes, all cultures, and languages, lahat andito sa UP,” Marivic said.

Her activist involvement started when she volunteered for the UP Student Council while attending lectures and discussions on Philippine society, Marxism, liberation theology, and other political and socioeconomic issues. She studied sociology in UP, completed graduate studies, and joined the UP faculty. She is also co-convenor of Social Watch Philippines, a non-governmental organization (NGO) promoting sustainable development and other justice-related issues.

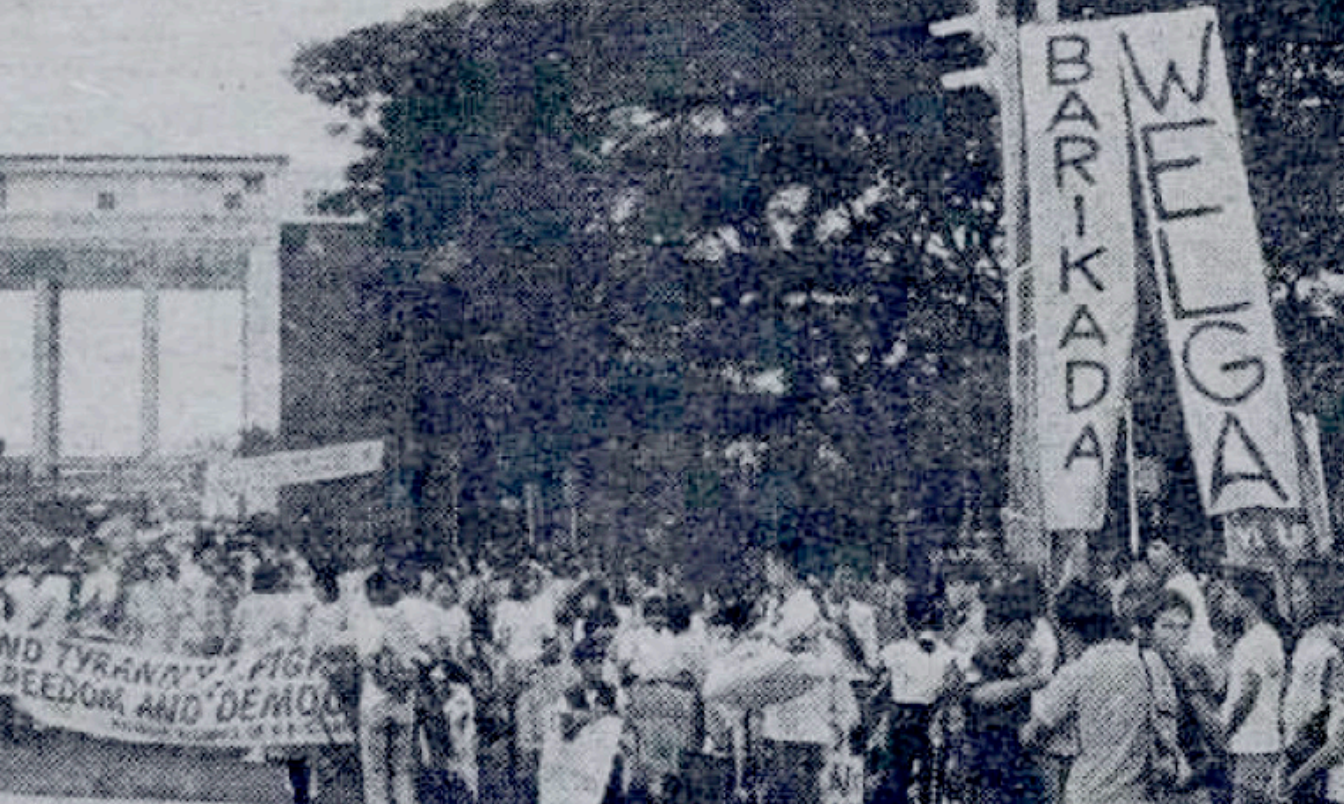
NEXT GENERATION. Looking back, Fidel said he is very thankful that he survived that 1984 incident. He married his close friend Marivic, and for three years, they lived in Tokyo where he did his doctoral studies. They are now parents to a fourth-generation Nemenzo: Julio Anton Mulawin R. Nemenzo.

Like his father, Anton is another “batang UP.” He grew up on campus and studied in UPD from nursery to college, graduating cum laude in 2020 with a bachelor’s degree in economics.

Anton said that in his first three years in UPD, his family lived at the Hardin ng Rosas before moving to Area 1. He remembers his neighborhood as a close-knit community.

“Iyong sa simula, noong bata pa ako, medyo close-knit kasi hindi lang ako iyong anak ng mga professor dito sa Area 1. Usually, kami ang magkakasamang naglalaro at naglalakad para mag-explore ng ‘gubat’ dito, at mga ravine at terrain ng UP. So, mayroon naman akong sense ng community sa campus noong time na iyon. Eventually, umalis na sila [childhood friends] at ako na lang ang naiwan dito,” Anton said.

Like any “batang UP,” Anton has his own favorite hangout where he and his friends played games.



“Nag-hang out din kami sa Academic Oval at Sunken Garden. Doon kami naglalaro ng luksong baka. Sa bandang kanan ng University Avenue going to Quezon Hall, may open field doon. Dati, mayroon doong mahabang pipe, the white one. Tinatawid namin iyon, at naglalaro na rin kami roon. Ginagawa namin iyon usually during our spare time. Nagha-hang out din kami sa mga bahay ng friends ko dito sa Area 1, also playing Filipino games,” he said.

Anton shared some of his fond memories living in UPD.

“Hindi naman siya regularly ginagawa, pero noong UP president ang lolo ko, during ordinary days lang like on a weekend, doon kami nag-o-overnight ng mga pinsan ko sa Executive House. Doon kami naglalaro. Mayroon doong circular driveway, doon kami nagkakarera. Naghahanap kami ng mga grasshopper doon sa cliff or iyong papabang part ng Executive House,” he shared.

Anton also shared that, during the Christmas season in his elementary years, he would go caroling around Area 1.

Now working for an NGO, he shared some of his thoughts on the changes in UPD.

“Hindi ko siya masabi or masagot objectively, pero one notable thing ay ang greenery sa campus. In some parts, naging mas green pa, like around the track and field oval. Dati medyo barren, iyong daang pababa roon dati ay medyo rocky, pero ngayon maayos na. In some parts, medyo na-develop na iyong fields like doon sa tabi ng Meralco station. May construction ngayon doon at may mga bagong infrastructure. As a college student, kami iyong few batches na nakita pa ang CASAA [College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association], Faculty Center, and Shopping Center. So, parang malaking milestone sa akin iyon kasi noong bata pa ako, doon ako kumakain sa CASAA with my high school friends. Noong college [student] na ako, may ilan akong classmates na hindi alam kung ano ang CASAA kasi nga hindi na nila ito naabutan. Malaki din ang improvements ng buildings dito,” he said.

Anton is also like many other “batang UP” who have a deep connection to the university campus.

“It’s good to see so many new infrastructures, although gusto ko rin sana makita na maregenerate o mapalaganap pa iyong flora and fauna sa UP,” Anton said.