



Episode 0: Pre-season with Red Constantino

Episode release date: September 14, 2019

url: <https://agam.ph/podcast-video/>

Note: *Transcripts may contain errors so we encourage you to listen to the audio, which convey emphasis and feelings that are not apparent in the text. Oh, and don't forget to cite the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities and the Agam Agenda for any quotes taken from the transcript. Enjoy!*

Padma Welcome to Agam, the Climate Podcast. A literary podcast about climate, consciousness, and crisis but without jargon. We live in a time of uncertainty. Our future is still being written, which means, there's still hope. Here we host conversations with writers and artists, whose stories we need to guide the way. I'm Padma Perez with Joseph Lyons. Thanks for joining us.

Joseph Welcome to episode zero. Our pre-episode of the new Agam podcast and thanks for taking a few minutes to learn more about the podcast and what the listeners can anticipate. We're also joined by a special guest, Red Constantino, who is our inspiration and original old school OG climate leader. (**RED laughs in the background**) This podcast is part of a larger Agam creative process based on the Institute of Climate and Sustainable Cities. My name is Joseph Santos Lyons and I'm one of the co-hosts and originally hailed from Oregon in the United States but I am living here in the Philippines for the last year and looking forward to collaborating and creating and building this new, this new space together. My other co-host is here with me and I will let her introduce herself.

Padma Hi I'm Padma Perez, I'm the co-host for the Agam podcast on climate change without the crutch of jargon. As Joseph said, we've been working together to put together a creative collaboration process involving writers, poets, photographers, visual artists, to start a conversation on climate change. I'm an anthropologist. I'm a Baguio girl, a mother, and a writer. And today, we are joined by Red Constantino who's the Executive Director of the Institute of Climate and Sustainable Cities, which published the first climate literary anthology, Agam: Filipino Narratives on Uncertainty and Climate Change. It won three national book awards in the Philippines and has been launched in cities all over the world. Red, kamusta?

Red Mabuti. Thanks for having me.

Joseph Red, we're super excited to have you here with us in our pre-episode. We'd love you to share a little bit about yourself and ICSC to give our listeners some context.

Red I had the organization which I joined as a member of the board, in 2005 or 2006. And I took up the executive post in 2010. And from then on, we've grown from a team of three people to at least probably 30 now. I'm the father to two children; one is turning 17, the other is turning 21 this year. And the husband of another activist who's working with another international non-government

organization working on related issues like climate and inequality. I love riding bikes. I love reading. And when I'm not working, I'm sleeping; at least trying to sleep.

Joseph Oh yeah, sleep. That is important. I hope you keep getting enough sleep and renew your incredible energy and deeply valued international leadership. Thank you, Red and thank you Padma for your introduction. Okay, so we're going to take the next few minutes to share our vision for the next Agam podcast and what listeners can expect in the coming months. So, Red why a podcast? And why a podcast that features writers and poets on climate change?

Red We cannot leave this struggle over a very real future to policymakers and scientists alone. They have done what I think they can, in terms of providing the strong message based on evidence to what's coming our way or what's already on the way. But this has not, and I think cannot, capture what is required at the moment, which is when you're confronting a crisis that is threatening the very viability of a future that we can imagine. If our public is able to imagine the end of the world so many times because of movies or books, but are unable to imagine how we end what is harming us now, then this is what we always say in Agam, this is the time when the poets are needed. When the world of literature and creativity will be required that goes beyond the time span of this or that issue and dives and pulls in a big part of the public towards depths or heights that they perceived but they haven't really felt they belong to.

Padma So the podcast is going to feature contributors to the first book, reading their work and also talking about how they engage with, with Agam and other engagements outside of their work for Agam or writing about the environment or climate change. So, we're really excited to listen to their stories and hear their views and their experiences and also, hear them talk about their creative process and, and why they do what they do. And we think that this is gonna be an incredible resource for students everywhere, not just for readers of the book but for people who have an interest in storytelling. So, we're also working with the Far Eastern University, to put out minisodes or 3-minute podcast segments by students and that's also going to be really exciting and interesting. And the whole point of doing this, so you have an AM radio show that starts a conversation and people leave home, or leave the radio and are still talking about what they heard on the radio and we're hoping to do the same with this podcast, where people leave the podcast and start talking about climate issues and their own experience of it.

Joseph So the things that you've shared that really struck me, one is that, when the poets speak, the people would listen and this really lift up an issue in ways that sometimes, politicians and scientists cannot always reach.

Red One thing that is quite interesting is really how we can recreate the way that people approach the climate crisis that goes beyond simply counting gigatons reduced of CO2 because, I think there's a story behind a lot of these things that ultimately will spell the difference between how active people will get in transforming their society. This is first of all a crisis not only of climate but it's a crisis of politics, because of the way that it's been run. The assumption is, people can carry on with indifference because, their government or some business will take care of their needs but it's also a crisis of economy, thinking that we can run all the economies in

a way that kicks to the future the problems that we create today. It's also a problem that goes to the heart of the first book which is, it is folded around uncertainty and, uncertainty not as something that's bad. Uncertainty as something that's good because the common instinct of people is that uncertainty is something to be concerned about, if not frightened. Because of many things that the dark might bring. The difference there is that, I think, uncertainty is something that is good because we know for sure that the bad guys haven't won yet. The future's not written. It's the conceit of our certainties that have led us to the mess we're in right now to begin with. The certainty of knowing that, tomorrow will be the same as yesterday, which is a life that is divorced from nature. When they talk about nature and society, they make the first mistake already, which is it seems like we're apart, when we're not.

Joseph So there's a separation there?

Red The separation and the disconnect is also a large part of a mindset that is so deeply embedded that we haven't -- we no longer question this reality. Only when it bites us.

Padma There's a meme that was going around on social media and it's a sketch of someone who looks obviously indigenous or tribal and, she's holding up a sign that says "We're not defending nature. We're defending ourselves." And I posted that and the interesting reaction was that, people immediately assume that it was only about the indigenous and I had to make a point and say, "No, no, no. This is about everybody. It's not just about, like the image may show an indigenous person but it just goes to show how deeply ingrained that thinking is, that everyone assumes that this was about somebody else.

Joseph Could you say a little bit more about why a podcast? Why is this a medium and what we're hoping to move forward, in terms of the Agam process?

Red We've always had this practice in terms of AM radio where early mornings are defined by a conversation between a, the moderator from the AM radio program, early morning like three or four in the morning. People call in and ask questions or hold a back and forth about certain issues. Maybe it's about farming, maybe it's about soil, maybe it's about the weather, maybe it's about uhh, politics; but they do hold that, in a, in a way that I think is still quite dominant in terms of Philippine media. I think a podcast more than anything else is about a conversation. If you're trying to create something that is not part of the normal then a conversation is a means by which others can understand how you eventually arrived at the final product. A podcast gives us that space, especially from the Philippines' side. And you cannot spell these out the way you develop a policy or the way you use political space or arenas, or science for that matter, in a way that allows readers to understand. You have to grasp all the story behind what you've just encountered.

Joseph So, looking ahead, we are planning to record and put out one or two episodes per month and we're excited to be able to have this pre-episode out for our listeners to hear a little bit more about what the Agam podcast will be about. Padma, maybe you can say a little bit more about some of the first round of authors we're getting the chance to hear read and have more of a conversation with.

Padma Okay, so, we have Merlinda Bobis, she was born in Legazpi and she describes herself as somebody who grew up at the foot of a volcano and that's Mayon Volcano. She talks a lot about rivers and water in her works. So we will be hearing more about that soon. We will also be talking with Arnold Azurin, an anthropologist who also writes about water and rivers in Agam. We'll be talking to him about history and his work as an anthropologist and his views on what's happening nowadays. We have Susan Lara coming on board, a short story writer and mentor to many young Filipino writers. Also, Marjorie Evasco and many, many more. And as the next book begins to take shape, we'll be hearing from more and more people around the world. So this is going to be a place to listen to stories, not just from the Philippines but from elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa and in Latin America.

Joseph And lastly, I would like to say we would love your questions, your feedback, your ideas that you would like us to engage with through the Agam process, here on this podcast or other ways. You can find a Contact Us form on Agam.ph. You could also leave a comment here to reach Padma and I as we build out this new podcast. And for listeners, we'd love for you to like our website, our page, Agam.ph. We also have Facebook and you can follow along there to hear about the next episode that's coming out. And to subscribe on Itunes, and other services to receive our podcast directly.

Padma Thanks for listening to Agam, the Climate Podcast, a podcast about climate change without jargon. Continue the conversation with us next episode. We are a part of the Agam Agenda, out of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities based in the Philippines. You can hear past episodes and engage online with us on Facebook, Twitter and Agam.ph. That's A-G-A-M.PH. Special thanks to Ground Bravo Studios, Far Eastern University, and you, our listeners for your support.