Tech Tales Youth

Films about Digital Rights in Thailand and the Philippines
About Tech Tales Youth


Tech Tales Youth brings young filmmakers’ creative voices into the digital rights movement, broadening their knowledge of how human rights and digital rights are intertwined and how they can utilise filmmaking for impact and advocacy.

The films from the Philippines cover stories on digital labour, new money and platform accountability, access to the internet and digital technologies by marginalised groups, and disinformation contributing to historical revisionism. The impact of doxxing on women, the importance of data privacy, and accountability of the state and private companies are portrayed in the films from Thailand.

The short films comprising Tech Tales Youth, conceptualised and directed by ‘Digital Natives’, contribute to the alternative cinema of Thailand and the Philippines. The collection creatively employs various storytelling genres such as narrative fiction, documentary, and animation to raise awareness and advocate for digital rights.

This Tech Tales edition emphasises mentorship and peer and community support through meetings facilitated by impact production resource persons and through learning sessions. The film collection will contribute to growing the digital rights movement not only by bringing in new allies and audiences to the space but also by creating more digital rights films that the movement can leverage for its advocacy efforts.

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EngageMedia is a nonprofit that promotes digital rights, open and secure technology, and social issue documentary.

Combining video, technology, knowledge, and networks, we support Asia-Pacific and global changemakers advocating for human rights, democracy, and the environment.

In collaboration with diverse networks and communities, we defend and advance digital rights.
Foreword

_The medium is the message_- this McLuhan slogan is more relevant than ever in many ways. Writing about the challenges and opportunities with respect to the convergence of media, information technologies, computation, and global network communication is no doubt important; however, screening the topics off- and on-line speaks immediately to the notion that the medium is truly the message. Our lives have been transformed by the adoption of the digital, and it is through the digital that we need to speak about transformations.

The Tech Tales initiative is cyber-culture praxis. The Tech Tales series is effective in communicating the challenges of information and communication technology (ICT) adoption because it uses the very medium that is the subject of focus. Written reports alone cannot convey the complexities and nuances of the issues at hand, and words alone cannot compete with the grip that multimedia now has on our attention (economy). Moreover, the Tech Tales Youth initiative allows EngageMedia to stimulate and encourage aspiring filmmakers to grapple with issues that directly and indirectly impact the production, distribution, and consumption of their medium of expression. Young filmmakers bring (re)fresh perspectives on tech adoption and its impacts on socio-economic, cultural, and political life. Young filmmakers are at the forefront of adoption, at the nexus where tech and culture meet and as such are the vanguard artists in meaning making for society.

Understanding rights in the face of tech adoption, and fostering young creators in understanding rights - these are the two main drivers for why we have invested resources and years into the Tech Tales initiatives.

In this context, even the term "filmmaker" is telling about our moment of transition and the need to understand it. As McLuhan noted, new media technologies make art forms of preceding media technologies. The "movie" - or moving picture - is the technological form that persists in our adoption of new formats and means of production and consumption, and "film" is archaic. This transition and grappling with metaphor is exactly the task of our Tech Tales Youth Initiative - we hope to mentor and inspire a next generation of artists in taking up the charge of constructing definitions through playing with the medium and returning to us some sense making of the challenges of the day.
Films about Digital Rights in Thailand and the Philippines

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Digital Labor
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Thailand

Thanakorn Yangmeesuk

Patipat Oakkharhaphunrat

Weeraya Vichayprasertkul

Philippines

Kristine Camille Sult JV Sangalang

Jaime Morados

Kat Catalan

EJ Gagui
The Tech Tales Youth initiative empowers young filmmakers to create engaging human rights stories in the digital age. Through the mentorship program, participants develop their filmmaking skills and learn to harness the power of film as a positive tool for change. Impact production in the various stages of film development was the initiative’s core, making it unique compared to the previous edition. The films created by these young filmmakers are geared towards creating real-world change and raising awareness of digital rights in Thailand and the Philippines.

To foster awareness and advocacy around digital rights in a localised context, and as part of impact production, young filmmakers participated in the Digital Rights Asia-Pacific 2023 (DRAPAC23) Assembly in Chiang Mai, Thailand, last May 2023. During DRAPAC23, the filmmakers actively engaged with regional changemakers and joined 24 workshops and panel discussions on digital authoritarianism and media censorship. They also attended storytelling and impact production workshops by Picture People, EngageMedia, Sunflower Film Organization, and WITNESS. This experience helped the filmmakers immerse themselves in the digital rights ecosystem and gain valuable insights on effectively communicating digital rights issues through their films.

After the Assembly, the filmmakers reflected on their experiences, researched digital rights topics, and crafted their story concepts. EngageMedia gave them creative freedom to choose from various genres, ensuring alignment with their selected topics.

**What is impact production?**

The creation and management of strategic campaigns of social action and movement building around films to contribute to positive change — is crucial to successful advocacy work.
Between June and November 2023, the filmmakers developed plans for their films’ impact campaign, which included identifying impact goals, target audiences, potential partners, and outputs and activities. To guide them, EngageMedia conducted online learning sessions on strategising for impact and introduced the filmmakers to the Video for Change Impact Toolkit resources:

- Impact Campaign Builder
- Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool

In keeping with the project’s collaborative spirit, we held multiple discussions with each filmmaker to share insights, address queries, and guide them through their impact campaign plan to find advocacy partners and engage with the public on digital rights issues. By amplifying young voices, Tech Tales Youth brings new allies and audiences while producing more relevant digital rights films that existing rights movements can use.
Working on the impact campaign plans with the young filmmakers has motivated and inspired us. It was evident that digital rights issues significantly impact the everyday lives of the filmmakers, and they showed eagerness to support their peers, family, and community in this advocacy.

EngageMedia believes that by providing the Tech Tales Youth filmmakers with tools and resources, they will be empowered to execute the impact of their films through filmmaker-led activities in the coming months. We hope that by giving them more opportunities to engage with their communities following the premiere, they will realise the power of short films to bring about social change and see themselves not only as filmmakers but also as advocates for the rights of marginalised communities in their countries.

We hope that digital rights groups, freedom of expression advocates, and other change-seekers will support the Tech Tales Youth filmmakers in achieving their dream of creating social impact to safeguard human rights and democratic ideals in their communities.
Suspecting that cybercriminals have illegally accessed the personal data of millions of Thai citizens, filmmaker Min launches a daring investigation to expose how criminals wreak havoc in the digital realm.

Digital Rights Lab

Directors
Weeraya Vichayaprasertkul

Genre
Documentary

Country
Thailand

Digital Rights Issues
New Money and Digital Safety and Security
Synopsis

Thailand has been grappling with a surge in cybercrime, which has led to substantial financial losses for thousands of victims. The success of these cybercriminals hinged on their access to people's personal data, prompting the director to be deeply curious and worried about their tactics and how they could also cause her harm.

In her quest to uncover the truth, she personally initiated a series of daring social experiments, beginning by acquiring a new phone number and waiting to receive calls and messages from unknown contacts. Tracing her encounters with potential scam calls, she discovers the intricate web of cybercriminal operations behind the facade of online platforms. She then attempts to purchase data from websites that openly trade in personal information, further unmasking the illusion of data security.

The social experiment illuminated how weak personal data protections can cause damage to a person's life. To raise awareness about these dangers, the director interviewed digital law expert Saiiltorn Thongmeensuk, Ph.D. for insights on how various sectors can protect their personal data and digital rights.

About the Filmmaker

Weeraya "Min" Vichayaprasertkul is a co-founder and video producer for EcoCupid, a platform to promote hidden environmental projects from Southeast Asia through multilingual media content. She is a freelance producer, creative, and TV host. Since she started her career five years ago, she has won global awards for her documentary work focusing on environmental, educational, and social movements. She was a documentary film mentor for Earth Journalism Network grantees at Internews.
Director's Intention

Over the past two to three years, I have personally experienced harassing calls from call centre syndicates weekly and witnessed friends losing money due to internet data breaches. These experiences led me to question the security of the personal data we entrust online.

As a documentary filmmaker, I typically tell other people’s stories. But this time, I took the courage to document my own. As an avid Internet user, I personally underwent social experiments to uncover how cybercriminals operate online, so that people are aware and vigilant against illegal data trading.

The latest statistics show that there are over 5.3 billion Internet users worldwide, which is more than 65% of the global population. I want to advocate for cybersecurity in this vast online world, and I believe that our collective voice will help make the internet a safer place.

Weeraya “Min” Vichayaprasertkul
27 yrs. old
Target Audiences

Main
Thai general internet users between the ages of 18-40

Secondary
Media and digital rights advocates in Thailand

Tertiary
The Inspector of the Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau in Thailand

Impact Goals

- Viewers of the film have reduced risk of property damage by explaining and exposing the methods of personal data theft through the documentary.
- Relevant authorities become aware and influenced to take action, e.g. shut down websites, apprehend perpetrators, through a social media campaign.
- An institution is involved in creating a wider campaign centering around digital rights and data theft issues.
In the digital realm, a sinister nexus has emerged, linking call centre gangs, online fraud, data breaches, and the sale of personal information online. This complex web of criminal activity poses a significant threat to individuals and businesses alike, demanding a concerted effort to expose, combat, and prevent the exploitation of sensitive information, especially in Southeast Asia. In Digital Rights Lab, filmmaker Min exposes how one can fall victim to the flourishing market for personal data, and the frustrating lack of safeguards and accountability measures that have allowed digital fraud to persist for years.

Call centre gangs have become notorious for their sophisticated schemes, preying on unsuspecting individuals through phone calls and phishing scams. According to a recent report by BioCatch, there has been a 200% increase in voice scams between 2022 and 2023, most of which are run by call centre gangs in Southeast Asia. The Thai Cyber Security police have sought to crack down on these gangs, with their most recent arrest seizing over 300 million baht in evidence. Operating with a level of organisation that rivals legitimate businesses, these criminal networks employ tactics ranging from impersonating trusted entities to manipulating victims into revealing sensitive information. These gangs are typically staffed by victims of human trafficking, representing a disturbing intersection of exploitation and modern technology.
Digital Rights Lab found that most personal data came from e-commerce platforms, exposing the weaknesses in e-commerce data privacy and online security systems. This treasure trove is sold on the dark web, a hidden corner of the internet inaccessible to conventional search engines. Here, a thriving economy fuelled by stolen data flourishes, providing a haven for criminals to monetise the information extracted by call centre gangs and through online fraud.

The scale and complexity of these operations underscore the need for vigilance and awareness among the public. Businesses need to fortify their digital defences, implementing robust security measures such as encryption protocols, two-factor authentication, and continuous monitoring to protect customer data and thwart the efforts of cybercriminals. The government too must play its part, such as by ensuring the implementation of the Personal Data Protection Act, issued in June 2022 to regulate the spread of personal information online, and conducting user education campaigns to empower individuals to recognise and report suspicious activities.

The combination of call centre gangs, online fraud, e-commerce data privacy, and the sale of personal information on the dark web poses a significant threat to the integrity of the digital ecosystem. As technology advances, so too must our collective efforts to combat cybercrime. Strengthening cybersecurity measures and fostering awareness are paramount in safeguarding the digital infrastructure that underpins our modern way of life.
Lugal Abu (Grey Area)

Two Aeta indigenous students navigate modern education through digital technology and the internet amid the struggle to maintain their traditional way of life for survival.

Directors
EJ Gagui

Genre
Documentary

Country
Philippines

Digital Rights Issues
Access to the Internet & Digital Technologies
Synopsis

Sitio Haduan is a remote barrio in Mabalaot, Pampanga in Central Luzon and is home to an indigenous Aeta community. The aggressive development of the nearby Clark City has impacted their way of life and survival. In parallel, indigenous students adapt to the lowlanders’ lifestyle, using smartphones and social media.

The film delves into the experiences of two high school students from the Aeta community. Jonathan, 16, was born with a weak heart barring him from strenuous activities. He is determined to keep up with his studies and become a teacher someday, redefining the hunting and farming role usually expected from men in his community.

Sally, 17, was forced to work and clean houses at a young age due to poverty. But she believes she deserves an education and wants to prove to her family that it will be worth it for their future. Now starting 8th grade, her goal is to become a doctor someday.

The film portrays how students like Jonathan and Sally grapple with the complexities of modern education and development projects that push them further into the margins. It highlights the effects of these changes on their surroundings and how they affect their lives.

About the Filmmaker

EJ Gaquii is an independent Filipino-Kapampangan filmmaker. He co-founded a regional-based mini-film company, Eximious Produkt, to showcase his visual practice of combining fiction and documentary in narrating the everyday miracles, revelations, history, and crises within his hometown. His first short film Ing Tianak was selected as a finalist of the Film Development Council of the Philippines’ Mit Out Sound 2021. His second short film, Rock in a Windless Wadi, premiered at the Opening Scenes competition at Visions du Réel 2022 and won Special Mentions at the Gawad Alternatibo and SeaShorts Film Festival.
Director’s Intention

In Lugal Abu (Grey Area), I want to discuss the rights of indigenous youth to access digital technology and the internet for education. Education – whether formal or informal – is a basic need, and without it, we may never realise our rights and how we can fight for them. I was also inspired by Zig Dulay’s short fiction film Black Rainbow about an Aeta student from Porac, Pampanga who eagerly wanted to be educated to understand a contract his parents were being forced to sign.

Technology can assist us in our daily lives, and it should be accessible to everyone, especially in these modern times. When I joined Project Kaluguran, the only active organisation supporting the children of Sitio Haduan in their education, I was exposed to the realities faced by the indigenous community, and their struggles with the education system became clearer to me.

I have witnessed how they coped with accessibility difficulties. In 2016, the students were involved in a land fight when Aqua Planet, a foreign-owned large waterpark, was built inside their lands, taking away the students’ convenient access to school. Because of this, students have to walk for almost two hours every day just to be able to study. The so-called “development” in a nearby city further restricts access and people’s rights.

The film intends to open doors for additional support for Project Kaluguran and other indigenous organisations to help children obtain the resources they need for better access to digital technology. This could also spur the government to provide additional support. Moreover, helping the Aeta community will contribute towards preserving the environment and their history and culture.

EJ Gagui
23 yrs. old
**Target Audiences**

- **Main**
  - Indigenous communities, indigenous students, teachers

- **Secondary**
  - Non-government organisations, civil society organisations, local authorities

- **Tertiary**
  - Digital rights advocates and general public

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**Impact Goals**

- Increased solidarity and awareness on the importance of access to the internet and understanding one’s digital rights in the Aeta community and other indigenous communities.

- The Aeta students and teachers are provided with their technological needs and equipment that supports their education.
Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, with target 4.5 zeroing in on marginalised communities, including indigenous peoples. In the Philippines, the government has enacted policies and programs geared towards the needs of indigenous communities: Republic Act 8371 recognises indigenous communities’ right to education in their own languages and in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods, and the education department’s Indigenous Peoples Education Program has already served 2.529 million indigenous peoples in the first decade of implementation. However, barriers to quality education remain, particularly the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources in more remote areas and difficulties in adapting to digitalised ways of learning.

In central Luzon, indigenous communities live alongside massive development projects and modernisation initiatives; an example is the development of the state-initiated New Clark City in Pampanga, said to be the country’s first smart and “climate-change resilient” city. However, these urbanisation projects do not necessarily translate to communities having adequate access to modern technological conveniences. The digital divide remains; this was especially apparent with the COVID-19 pandemic prompting a shift to online learning modes, which meant that those with limited technological access, knowledge, or skills were left behind.
Lugal Abu shows how education, digital technologies, and the betterment of life are intertwined: students take great lengths to go to school, seeing education as a pathway for achieving their hopes and dreams – earning more, and becoming a teacher or a doctor. But while they are within reach of the up-and-coming urban areas, they still struggle with understanding and accessing the digital technologies needed to achieve their goals and navigate modern society.

There are about 85.16 million internet users in the Philippines, but majority is concentrated in urban areas. In geographically isolated areas, electricity and communications infrastructure remains limited, even more so access to online classes and digital learning materials. At the height of the pandemic, government workers and teaching volunteers banded together to help reduce the potential learning losses among isolated Aeta communities in Pampanga through makeshift learning centres, solar-powered teaching aids, and digital literacy training.

One such initiative to support the education of indigenous communities is Project Kaluguran, which assists the Aeta community in Sitio Haduan in Mabalacat, Pampanga. Its scholarship initiative aims to empower students to fulfill their dreams and support the next generation of students pursue their education. From 10 scholars in the first batch of the project, over 20 scholars are now being supported by the program.

Similar initiatives, both from the government and private sector, are essential to close the digital divide and provide quality education to indigenous communities amid an increasingly digitised learning environment. Online learning modes and digital literacy skills are critical in today’s education landscape, and the challenge is to ensure that those who already face significant barriers to basic education do not fall further behind.
Doxxed

After her personal information was published online and a barrage of harmful messages targeted at her, a journalist must survive the threat of someone out to destroy her life.

Directors
Thanakorn Yangmeesuk

Genre
Fiction

Country
Thailand

Digital Rights Issues
Digital Safety and Security, Gender Justice
Synopsis

Jane is a political and human rights journalist who maintains an active online presence. She frequently posts pictures and checks in at various locations during her daily routines. She also hangs out with her close friend, Dee, to whom she confides about her work.

One day, Jane’s editor calls her in for a discussion and tells her that she has been doxxed. Jane is harassed by individuals and groups sending threatening messages and posting harmful information about her. Initially suspecting Dee to be the source of the info leak, she realises that she is mistaken after narrowly escaping from a man dressed in black who threatened her while on her way home.

Now determined to find the source of the leak, Jane finds an account that had collected her previous posts, including information about other people in the news agency. The discovery made her realise that the culprit must be someone in her workplace.

About the Filmmaker

Thanakorn "Meen" Yangmeesuk is a young director and writer born and raised in Bangkok, Thailand. As a passionate cinephile, he always finds an opportunity to learn and practice making films while studying in the Department of Communication Arts and Information Science at Kasetsart University. He is very passionate about telling stories through various genres of cinema. His first short film as a director and writer, One Use (2022), was part of the CCCL Film Festival Official Selection 2023.
Director’s Intention

The film Doxxed is about the security of personal data in the digital world. Most of the time, people share personal information online without knowing it can have harmful consequences. Doxxing is a common occurrence in Thai society, and I have seen many activists, journalists, and others who have been subjected to this type of cyberbullying. I hope that those who see my film will take the message to heart and think carefully before sharing any information online.

Thanakorn Yangmeesuk
21 yrs. old
Target Audiences

Main: Thai female users of the internet
Secondary: Digital rights advocates, feminist groups
Tertiary: General public

Impact Goals

- The viewers of the film are more aware of how doxing works and what its implications are, increasing their vigilance and knowledge on protecting their personal data online.
- The intersection between gender and digital rights are more discussed to address the common issues faced by women in the digital realm.
Doxxing, short for “document tracing,” is the act of revealing an individual’s private or personal information, such as their home address, phone number, or email, often to intimidate, harass, or silence individuals. In Thailand, nearly 500 people accused of opposing the monarchy found their personal information published on Google Maps. This invasion of privacy can wreak havoc on one’s physical and mental well-being, as Doxxed illustrates: in the film, Jane suffers online abuse, fears real-world stalking and violence, and is subjected to the paranoia of not knowing who to trust.

Doxxing has a gender aspect to it, as it disproportionately affects women. In the era of digital journalism, female journalists who are vocal about sensitive issues or challenge the status quo are often targeted by online trolls and hate groups who seek to undermine their credibility and instil fear. This insidious practice poses a grave threat to the safety and well-being of women in the field, silencing their voices and penalising free speech.
Doxxing is not just an isolated practice but is part of a broader pattern of online abuse and misogyny. When female journalists are doxxed, it sends a chilling message to others, dissuading them from speaking out or covering contentious issues. The fear of being targeted can lead to self-censorship, hindering the free press and the essential role it plays in democracy.

Many organisations and digital platforms have recognised the gravity of this issue and are taking steps to combat doxxing. Social media platforms are working to improve their reporting and moderation systems, and some countries have implemented legislation to address online harassment. However, the battle against doxxing requires collective efforts from all stakeholders, including governments, tech companies, and the public.

In the face of this growing threat, female journalists must also take steps to protect themselves. This includes safeguarding their personal information, being vigilant about online security, and seeking support from their employers and colleagues. Media outlets play a crucial role in raising awareness about this issue and fostering a safer environment for their employees.

As society grapples with the implications of digital media, it must also confront the gender-based harassment and abuse that permeate this space. To protect the voices of female journalists and uphold the principles of a free and open press, concerted efforts must be made to combat doxxing and create a safer online environment for all journalists, regardless of their gender.
This Is How Her Home Was Built

Julia, a young woman lost in her city, witnesses the rise and fall of various versions of her home. As the lines blur between truth and fabrication, she must navigate the fragmented pieces of her existence to find a sense of belonging and understand the truth about her home.

Director
Jaime Morados

Country
Philippines

Genre
Fiction

Digital Rights Issues
Disinformation, Youth Engagement on Digital Rights Issues
Synopsis

In This Is How Her Home Was Built, Julia, a young woman living in Manila, embarks on a poignant journey to unravel the intricate web of conflicting narratives that shroud the true origins of her beloved home. Reality, lies, and myth merge into a complex mosaic, mirroring the challenge to distinguish fact from fiction in a world saturated with manipulated narratives.

As Julia endeavours to discover a sense of belonging and unveil the true history of her home, she becomes a universal allegory of the struggle to untangle the layers of deception and manipulation that obscure her understanding of historical and contemporary events in the Philippines. With this realisation, she contemplates the profound consequences of disinformation and fake news on young people in society.

About the Filmmaker

Jaime Morados is a Filipino director and producer from Biñan City, Laguna. His works have been selected and awarded in local and international film festivals. He won the Jury Prize at the Binisaya Film Festival for his film Protacio and the Bum (2021), and Best Picture at Montañosa Film Festival. He is also known for his short film Ang Pagligtas sa Dalagang Bukid (Saving the Country Maiden, 2022), which was part of the QCinema International Film Festival in 2022.
Director’s Intention

Since I was nine years old, I have always been hooked and fascinated by Philippine history. But as I enter adulthood, I have been lost in an environment where fake news and disinformation lurk around every virtual corner. It’s like a sneaky parasite that not only affects our news feeds but also transforms our home into an unsafe environment. Friends and family members who were once fierce activists against the Marcos dictatorship have been led astray by false narratives and historical revisionism, which have been instrumental in successfully restoring power back to the Marcoses. This is the power of fabricated stories.

With my film, This Is How Her Home was Built, I aim to pull back the curtain on the danger of disinformation. Fake news is not just a tiny blip on our screens; it’s a sinister force that distorts our past and confuses our present. My film aims to become a rallying cry to question these narratives, navigate the maze of fabricated tales, find our way back home to the truth, and embrace our roots – flaws and all – while working to make our country a better place.

Jaime Morados
21 yrs. old
Target Audiences

Main: Senior high school students
Secondary: Media literacy teachers
Tertiary: Young audiences

Impact Goals

- Senior high school students in Manila play a more active role in advocating for truth and battling disinformation and fake news, through initiatives in the classroom.

- Media and Information Literacy teachers are better equipped to teach their students about disinformation and historical revisionism through the integration of digital rights resources into their class lessons or activities.
Confronting Fact and Fiction Amid Information Disorder

Disinformation and fake news have long been buzzwords in the Philippines, used to label almost anything going against one’s beliefs or mainstream viewpoints. While some may use the term innocuously, information disorder remains a serious plague on society: recent political events have shown how bad actors can successfully wield disinformation narratives to cast doubt on established facts, convincing the public – especially the younger generation and those unaware of their history – that “alternative truths” exist, all while hiding their real political agenda.

This is How Her House Was Built highlights how the political is personal, visualising the protagonist’s fears and confusions amid a confusing swirl of competing voices. It portrays how twisted narratives sow confusion, replace fact with fiction, and bury historical accounts to hide ugly truths and project images of a better, shinier new society.

The 2022 elections show how deeply disinformation has taken root in the Philippines and how it has become inextricably linked to historical revisionism. Fake news, digital black ops, and the gaming of social media algorithms were wielded to rewrite history, whitewash brutal legacies, and, most alarmingly, win the presidency for Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the man who plunged the Philippines under authoritarian rule. According to the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, the online disinformation campaign for the Marcoses’ comeback to power has been running for at least a decade.
Even before Marcos' victory, the disinformation machinery had been in full swing, with Big Tech playing a role as social media algorithms feed into the vicious cycle of subverting fact and sensationalising fiction. Filipinos trying to look for credible information are bombarded by confusing messages: some saying journalists and historians are not to be trusted, others presenting fabricated sources as the real, hidden truth. A common message especially targeting students and the youth is questioning what they know of history when they weren't even born at the time. All of this makes it even more challenging to sift through the noise to arrive at the facts.

Despite this bleak picture, civic resolve and resistance to these threats to democracy remain. The 2022 elections may have been a victory for fake news peddlers, but it has also demonstrated a much more engaged citizenry interested in engaging in political discourse. For some of the younger generation, it has also been a kind of political awakening.

The film portrays disinformation as parasites that slowly but steadily attack the foundations of the Filipino people's history. While the shiny veneer of a flawless, picture-perfect society may be tempting, it urges audiences to critically examine the narratives they encounter and push back against the war on facts and democracy.
Black Hole

A mysterious mutilated arm emerges from a black hole, forcing a young man to confront the sins of his military officer father who had sold other people's private data for personal gain.

Directors
Patipat Oakkharhaphunrat

Genre
Fiction

Country
Thailand

Digital Rights Issues
Youth Engagement on Digital Rights, Digital Safety and Security
Synopsis

A black hole mysteriously appears in the middle of a house. A man cautiously approaches and reaches into the hole. He pulls out a severed arm tightly holding a phone. Suddenly, the phone rings, and an unknown caller tells him ominously that his military officer father was a national disgrace and that he will be remembered as his bastard son. The call abruptly ends, and the phone lights up.

Accompanied by images of violent protests, a news announcement reveals how a high-ranking military soldier had taken the personal information of conscripts and sold them to a call centre gang.

The man goes back to find the mysterious black hole again in the middle of the house. Bending down, he stares into it, seeing images of the masses of the past and present, and a battle that repeats itself endlessly.

About the Filmmaker

Patipat Oakkharaphunrun is a filmmaker who creates experimental work, short films, and documentaries, and loves to explore new ways of storytelling. He is interested in stories of adolescent movement, maturity, growth, memory, and metaphysics and likes to observe the possibility of things around them in order to realise the impermanence of life. He believes that movies have the function of conveying the truth in an aspect of life.

Cast

Brother
Atipat Lertkornkitja
Father
Thaksakan Phsauakpharakpicha
Mother
Benjawan Phnuphisain
Sister
Benchita Mayara
Soldier’s hand
Kongphop Ampansuwun
Voice of soldier
Ponst Phubadedachawat
Voice of news reporter
Bunipon Yenjit

Crew

Director and Writer
Patipat Oakkharaphunrun
Producer
Sutichai Teudit
Co-Producer
Arianchaya Thimthong
1st Assistant Director
Sira Tongorn
2nd Assistant Director
Avirada Paiyasak
Director of Photography
Supawich Aree
1st Assistant Camera
Peay Paksupap
2nd Assistant Camera
Satit Padjaiyung
Videoman
Pisawat Takpliman
Slate & Report
Emwika Thaworn
Digital Imaging Technician
Jirawat Bunrat
Electrician
Ponst Phubadedachawat, Thinnaphat Watchana, Natthawut Khampa, Kasidech Pulphothong
Soundman
Jinnatat Kopolrat
Boom Operator
Adisorn Sangtubtim
Art Director
Apiwat Yungikan
Prop Master
Yutthana Sonkeua
Art Crew
Acuyporn Aekkachai, Phumlin Chaimut
Costume
Chalisa Burkhil
Makeup
Attaya Jantattanaoichai, Netnapha Chuchod
Production & Location Manager
Watcharin Silthikarnna
Production Assistant & Casting
Arunee Sangthong
Catering
Murath Khosin
Continuity
Measa Sangaram
Film Score Composer
Yutthakarn Suikawpong
Film Editor
Saksri Vongtaradon
Visual Effects
Bunipon Yenjit
Sound Mixer & Translator
Suphakon Mekwat
Colorist
Prachchaya Chorboonklang
Patsonn Hundee
Director’s Intention

*Black Hole* may not paint the future of Thailand, but it wants to draw a picture of the present. Many people suffer today due to the past actions of others, resulting in our generation bearing the sins of the generations before us.

This film tackles the unauthorised collection and misuse of personal information, shedding light on the dark underbelly of data theft and its potential dangers. Through the story of the protagonist and his father’s involvement in illegal data trafficking, I aim to raise awareness about the ethical implications surrounding digital rights.

The film is also the story of a young person trapped in the trauma of the past, angered by the injustice passed down from generation to generation. The question for us is: Is it possible for us to overcome this trauma? I made the film as a contemporary record of the power to question abnormalities that result in injustice, against outrageous and unrighteous acts.

Patipat Oakkharhaphunrat
21 yrs. old
Target Audiences

Main: Young creatives, film enthusiasts
Secondary: Thai digital rights advocates
Tertiary: General young audiences in Thailand

Impact Goals

- Young creatives are influenced to be more involved in digital rights and film advocacy and are provided with resources or modules on digital rights.
- Increased actions by the Thai general public to secure their information online.

Scan to see trailer!
Empowering Youth in the Digital Age
Advocating for Digital Rights and Addressing Generational Trauma

In an era dominated by technology, the commodification of personal data has become a lucrative industry, with individuals often unwittingly trading their privacy for the convenience of online services. Data privacy violations have far-reaching effects, ruining one’s sense of identity and agency. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, youth engagement in these issues has become paramount to safeguard personal information and ensure the protection of digital rights.

Black Hole is an abstract look into the impact of data privacy breaches through the lens of generational trauma. The film was influenced by recent events in Thailand when it was reported that a military commander sold the personal information of Thai civilians to cyber-criminal syndicates. In recent years, instances of authority figures – whether in familial, political, or professional spheres – leveraging their positions to perpetuate unfair advantages and stifle dissent, have been documented by the younger generation. Political structures in Thailand have also witnessed instances of older leaders exerting their influence in ways that may undermine democratic principles. The film tackles both digital rights and generational trauma, reflecting on the betrayal that Thai youth may be feeling towards their elders who made questionable decisions without regard for the impact on the younger generation.
Generational trauma can be perpetuated in various ways, such as through cyberbullying and online harassment, leaving victims to carry the psychological scars of these experiences well into adulthood. Addressing generational trauma necessitates fostering a supportive digital community where young individuals feel heard, understood, and protected.

Creating safe spaces for open dialogue can help alleviate generational trauma. Initiatives like Youth Connect Thailand and mentorship programs by non-government organisations like Child's Dream provide counselling services, educational resources, and experienced mentors to guide individuals through various life challenges. Mental health hotlines, online support groups, and school-based counselling services offer additional avenues for support, fostering a sense of community and providing coping strategies. Government-led initiatives further contribute to building awareness, reducing stigma, and creating a supportive environment for young individuals.

In line with confronting the shortcomings of the older generation, young people should be empowered to make better decisions related to upholding human and digital rights. To enhance understanding of digital rights issues, digital literacy programs should be seamlessly integrated into educational curricula, offering a multifaceted approach to equip students with essential skills for responsible digital engagement.

The active engagement of today’s youth in digital rights matters is imperative for a healthier civic space. Doing so is not just an investment in their future but a safeguard for the digital well-being of society as a whole.
Nanay (Mama)

Separated by poverty, Nanay Linda’s long-lost sister makes a return with a fateful phone call. She must then contend with survival, motherly instincts, conflicting emotions, and the trappings of the digital age all in one ordinary morning.

Directors
Kristine Camille Sulit
JV Sangalang

Genre
Fiction

Country
Philippines

Digital Rights Issues
New Money and Digital Safety and Security
Synopsis

Mama Linda, now in her early 60s, has been peddling home-cooked food in an urban poor community in Manila where she and her daughter also live. While resting after a day’s work one quiet morning, her silence and peace is disturbed by a call from a man who introduces himself as the neighbour of her long-lost sister, Gloring. He delivers devastating news: Gloring is in the hospital and urgently needs money.

Despite her suspicions, Mama Linda hurries to the corner store to arrange a wire transfer. The young storekeeper, Rose, is initially hesitant but eventually agrees to help out. Unfortunately, their suspicions are confirmed – it’s a scam. Mama Linda’s daughter, Melody, arrives home to piece together what happened and find a way to recover the money.

About the Filmmaker

Kristine Camille Sult is a communication, film, and multimedia instructor at Mapua University, CIIT College of Arts and Technology, and iAcademy. She was Deputy Film Festival Director at the 2018 Quezon City International Pink Film Festival. As a filmmaker, she became a delegate for Platform Busan at the 2022 Busan International Film Festival. Her latest short film, Read-only Memory (co-directed with David R. Corpuz), won 1st place in the Experimental Category of the 34th Gawad Alternatibong.

Her co-director, JV Sangalang, pursued a career in media and journalism after attending a free basic filmmaking workshop in 2015. At the heart of all his endeavours is his activism, which also led to professional opportunities, such as being a writer for organisations like the Philippine Safe Abortion Advocacy Network. As a member of the urban poor group KADAMAY, he makes sure his activist ideals and goals are embodied in his work.
Director’s Intention

JV’s grandmother was recently a victim of a scam that resulted in a five-figure amount being stolen from her. Our film is for marginalised and vulnerable communities, especially the elderly, who are often targeted by scams done through digital means. Through this film, we hope not just to help people identify common scam tactics more effectively, but also to inform communities about the ways they can protect themselves from potential digital crimes.

With social media, digital platforms, and mobile payment methods increasingly gaining traction across all demographics, it is all the more crucial to empower segments of the population who may be lagging in digital literacy knowledge and skills.

On a grander scale, we hope this film will contribute towards influencing tech and telecommunication companies to implement protection systems for their users and improve the reliability and responsiveness of their customer helplines.

Kristine Camille Sult 28 yrs. old

JV Sangalang 29 yrs. old
Target Audiences

Main Urban poor communities in Manila, particularly elderly people
Secondary Tech companies, digital rights advocates
Tertiary General public, youth

Impact Goals

- Increased awareness among Manila’s urban poor, particularly the elderly, about their digital rights, and signs of scam calls and possible fake social media profiles.
- Youth and digital rights advocates support the call for tech companies to improve their customer service and customer protection.
Digital Fraud and Exploiting Loopholes in Financial Systems

In Nanay (Mama), an elderly woman falls victim to a scam call towing away her hard-earned savings – to the frustration of her more digitally-savvy daughter. The film is not merely a warning about the financial dangers that lurk online, but a critique of the systemic issues that allow these to happen and leave victims with little recourse for redress.

As digitised financial transactions become more commonplace, so does the prevalence of financial scams. Filipinos have lost at least P155 million due to scams in 2023, and the country has consistently ranked among the top countries in Southeast Asia reporting high rates of fraudulent digital transactions and phishing attacks.

While mobile banking and online financial services promise ease of use and convenience, those who lack digital literacy often get left behind. The elderly are particularly vulnerable, with opportunists preying on their limited knowledge of how online scams work through digital apps. For the marginalised and those living in poverty, these can translate to their life savings and retirement funds wiped out with one simple click.
The Philippine government has sought to enact various policies to address digital fraud, but these laws are either problematic - infringing on privacy and digital rights as in the SIM card law – or are inadequate to stop scammers. For instance, the cybercrime law is geared towards protecting systems of financial institutions, while provisions in the Financial Consumer Protection Act still leave room for scammers to target individuals. Additionally, the Philippines’ strict bank secrecy laws pose challenges to authorities running after fraudsters who immediately transfer funds into different bank accounts. This was the case in a May 2023 incident when users of the popular payment platform Gcash reported anomalous transfers to two banks. Some funds were not recovered as the fraudsters had already withdrawn a portion of the stolen money.

Most advice on preventing scams puts the onus on the user, telling them to be wary if the scammer gives limited information, plays with emotions, and emphasises a sense of urgency to resolve the situation. Popular mobile payment platforms and financial institutions regularly post advisories on common scam tactics and emphasise the importance of being digitally literate to prevent falling victim to scams. The reality, however, is that the majority of the general population still lacks digital literacy skills: as of 2019, only 6% of Filipinos 15 years old and above have basic internet skills, while only 2% have standard digital skills. Among age groups, the young (10-14 years old) and the elderly have the lowest digital literacy rates.

The film shows that beyond strengthening one’s digital literacy skills, accountability and liability must also be shared and shouldered by other stakeholders. Both the government and major financial institutions bear a responsibility to make it harder for scammers to exploit loopholes in the system while providing more accessible paths for victims to file disputes and resolve complaints. Technology providers too must ensure that their security measures are adequate and that their services are user-friendly and easily understandable for different demographics and age groups. These systemic problems must be addressed to protect those already on the sidelines of society.
On Our Own Time

Three delivery riders in Metro Manila record a day in their lives, revealing their challenges as digital app-based workers ‘gamified’ by delivery companies. As the day ends, the riders take a breather and talk about a range of topics – including how to counter tech-driven exploitation.

Director
Kat Catalan

Country
Philippines

Genre
Documentary

Digital Rights Issues
Digital Labor
On Our Own Time follows “Dave”, “Johnnie”, and “RA” as they document a long work day as delivery riders in Metro Manila. In the process, the riders reveal the problems they usually face with the delivery app and how they work around exploitative schemes and technical issues.

Like many Filipinos, the three riders went into app-based delivery companies such as Lalamove to cope with the job losses and economic shock brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as the economy returned to “normal” and more digital platforms emerged as competition, they found their earnings cut in half despite following stricter standards and working longer hours.

To relive their stress from a day’s work, they usually come together with other riders in their respective tambayan (resting spot) and swap stories — from how they deal with technical glitches in the app to frustrations with customers and company management. As they search for solutions, they weigh the possibilities of organizing platform workers and building a community in both digital and physical spaces.

The short documentary film offers an inside look not only into the platform workers’ daily struggles but also their perspectives on finding hope and solidarity with each other to demand better working conditions.

Kat Catalan is a young labour rights advocate and filmmaker in the Philippines. She graduated from the University of the Philippines Film Institute and joined independent productions and local film festivals since she was a student. In 2020, she won 3rd Place in the Documentary Category of Gawad CCP Para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Video. She currently works as a freelance video editor and animator. She is a member of the political film collective Mayday Multimedia, a community media outfit focusing on workers’ issues.
Director’s Intention

Organising is crucial for app-based workers to realise and defend their digital and labour rights. However, they are up against largely unregulated tech companies that keep platform workers as a large yet fragmented workforce to rake in higher profits.

With only an app as their “boss”, workers have no clear body to address their grievances to, much less negotiate with. Threats of getting banned, as well as narratives of individual diskarte (resourcefulness), have also caused many to be skeptical, unaware, or afraid of exercising their right to organise. Nonetheless, they have found ways to get around these obstacles by making informal groups online and in person to support each other.

On Our Own Time delves into the digital and physical spaces where workers discuss their common struggles and provide mutual support. At the same time, it urges workers to strengthen their collective voice, critically analyse their working conditions, and steer their innate unity towards the assertion of their rights.

Kat Catalan
24 yrs. old
**Target Audiences**

**Main**
Platform workers (courier, food delivery, transport)

**Secondary**
Labor groups and institutions, digital rights advocacy groups, trade unionists and activists

**Tertiary**
Digital platform user-customers (youth, students, professionals)

**Impact Goals**

- Platform workers are assisted by digital rights advocates to address their issues at work through a possible worker-operated grievance mechanism online.

- Digital platform users-customers and general audiences are better informed on the everyday struggles of platform workers.
Gamified Lives in the Gig Economy

On Our Own Time questions the gig economy narrative and explores the realities of precarious app-based work by following the day-to-day lives of three delivery riders. In the film, audiences see how these workers’ lives are seemingly gamified, as they risk life and limb to earn a living while their means of earning is at the mercy of companies raking in profits from exploitative working conditions.

Unlike typical jobs, workers in the gig economy are paid per task rather than hourly or monthly wages. However, its promise of flexibility and the efficiency of matching workers with clients through a digital platform has contributed to its popularity worldwide. In the Philippines, control over working hours and earnings above the transportation industry mean were cited as the main benefits, according to an ADB study of delivery riders. App-based work has especially helped cushion the impact of economic shocks during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for those laid off from formal employment.
However, the framing of platform-based workers as independent and resourceful contractors controlling their own time and earnings obscures the risks. Without employer-employee arrangements, the gig economy also does away with many labour safeguards affecting nearly half a million Filipino riders and drivers.

Because they are not considered employees, riders and drivers shoulder the costs for fuel, vehicle repairs, and communications costs for using digital booking platforms. This can cut into their earnings, which vary because of the precarious nature of task-based work and competition with other apps and drivers. The film highlights several other issues: technical glitches that affect riders’ ability to secure bookings, physical exhaustion and unhealthy working conditions, the lack of safety nets in case of accidents, and a rating system that lacks transparency and fairness. One bad review or a single mistake can mean loss of work, without adequate means to contest complaints. Workers bear these costs and risks, even as the businesses that operate these platforms rake in high profits: the ride-hailing and taxi sector recorded $625 million in revenue in 2020, while food delivery sales reached $1.2 billion.

A 2022 report by Fairwork Philippines found that the majority of gig economy platforms do not meet basic standards of fairness. It urged authorities and tech platforms to work towards stronger labour protections. Platform workers themselves have also sought to band together to help each other, staging events and protests to call for better working conditions. But challenges persist in their attempts at labour organising, as they not only face systemic barriers skewed against them and the diskarte (resourcefulness) narrative associated with the gig economy, but also the economic reality of having to depend on precarious work.
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