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Gina Lopez's Seacology Prize

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Flooded by so much false information, we see the march of events through a glass darkly. We see things imperfectly, and often miss the brighter side of life around us.

I want to direct attention today to the good news that Filipino environmentalist and former environment secretary Regina "Gina" Lopez will be presented with the prestigious Seacology Prize this year.

I find this cheering because I was one journalist who was captivated by the zeal with which she battled the scourge and depredations of mining in the country I bought into her message that it was "now or never" for the nation to correct the terrible toll that mining was exacting from the country and our posterity.

Gina fought a good fight, but she was battling powerful forces who were deeply entrenched in Congress and in the government that she was serving. She was rejected by the Commission on Appointments.

It gives me great pleasure therefore to note that there is one fight of Gina's that is not lost. It won attention and recognition in the international community.

I refer to Gina's untiring fight for the rights of island communities and their island environment. She has been selected to receive the 2017 Seacology Prize, which carries a \$10,000 award money with it. The prize, now on its

27th year, is awarded annually to someone who has shown exceptional achievement in preserving island environments and culture.

According to Seacology's executive director Duane Silverstein, "Gina Lopez has shown the vision and courage the Seacology Prize is meant to honor. "She has fought for the Philippine environment and to give island communities there a voice in the decisions that affect their natural resources and their lives."

With the Seacology prize, Gina is fittingly being honored for her work to preserve and defend our island ecosystems.

Gina said in a statement: "I am honored to receive an award for something I believe in and from an organization doing so much for island ecosystems,

"The Philippines is a country of 7,000 islands, and I hope this award will affect the entire country. And because the Philippines has so many diverse ecosystems, and so many animals and plants that occur nowhere else, saving our islands has direct global impact as well."

As a native of one of these islands and ecosystems, I share some pride in this award with Gina. I believe it is vindication for her work and the rightness of her labors for people and country.

The struggle against the mountain killers abides. It's still "now or never" for our people.