

# Senen Bacani

## Sowing the Seeds of Peace and Development



Senen Bacani (R) examines bananas that helped transform the livelihood of thousands of Filipinos.

*“My East-West Center experience primed me to be more sensitive to cultural differences in dealing with people, and at the same time made me more cognizant of the inter-relatedness of different events in the world and their impact on countries and their people.”*

**Senen Bacani**  
Philippines  
1966, M.A.

As Secretary of Agriculture to President Corazon Aquino, Senen Bacani visited every province in the Philippines.

Wherever he traveled, he witnessed the poor in the countryside struggling to raise enough to feed their families.

Bacani’s father was a doctor and many of his patients would present farm produce as thanks for the medical care they received. That memory and seeing first hand the agricultural needs of the rural poor compelled Bacani to work for shifts in policy and programs — and later when he re-entered the world of agribusiness, to provide employment and management opportunities to alleviate poverty in rural areas in the Philippines.

Most notably, on Mindanao, he launched a venture that brought not only jobs but peace where there had been years of unemployment, crime and inter-ethnic conflict.

After receiving an M.B.A. from the University of Hawai’i in 1968, the EWC grantee spent a successful 20-year career with Dole Food Company, including as country manager of Dole in Costa Rica and then the Philippines.

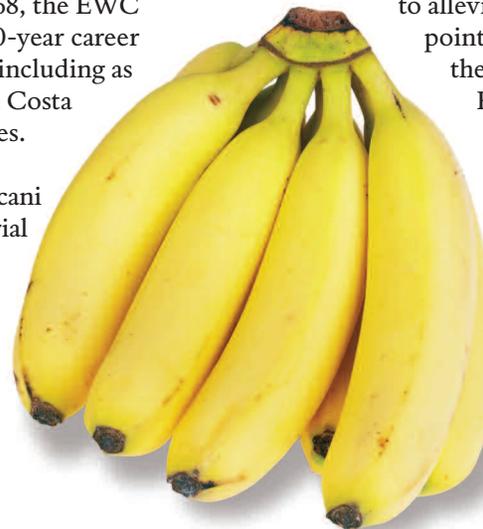
In 1993, after serving in Aquino’s administration, Bacani started his first entrepreneurial venture, which managed corporate banana farms. It was step one of a business plan that linked development with peace.

While with Dole, Bacani took note of the potential of Mindanao: fertile land, the right climate and an available workforce. He approached Chiquita Unifruitti International to invest in banana farms in a predominantly Muslim area on Mindanao.

In 1996, La Frutera, Inc., the first large-scale banana plantation in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, was formed. Today the plantation is one of the top 10 banana producers in the country, exporting Cavendish bananas to Japan, Korea, China and the Middle East. Perhaps more significant, with Bacani as chairman and president, La Frutera’s success has transformed the once war-torn area. It employs some 1,745 people — 90 percent Muslim and 10 percent Christian. Among the staff are former rebels of the Moro National Liberal Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Bacani’s hope is that La Frutera’s success will inspire other companies to see how providing jobs, especially in rural areas, is a sustainable way to alleviate poverty — and strife. At one point when conflict intensified between the government and the rebels, La Frutera workers rejected efforts to rejoin rebel forces. That affirmed Bacani’s belief that “peace and development go together.”

“We cannot keep on waiting for peace to come first,” he says. “The reason there is no peace is that there is no development.” ♦



# Muhammad Yunus

## Nobel Laureate and Banker to the Poor

**Muhammad Yunus**  
Bangladesh  
1973, Workshop

During a field trip to a village, Muhammad Yunus and students in his economics class at Bangladesh's Chittagong University encountered a woman who made simple bamboo furniture. The villager explained that she bought bamboo to weave into stools by borrowing money at a high interest rate from moneylenders. After repaying the loan, there was little profit left to feed her family.

Yunus discerned that if people could borrow at more advantageous rates, they would have a better chance of lifting themselves out of poverty. A very small loan could make a multitude of difference for families in the poorest villages

across Bangladesh. The visionary economist reasoned that providing even the slightest economic cushion would encourage initiative — and be a first step toward achieving his dream of “creating a world without poverty.”

But traditional banks considered it foolhardy to make loans they deemed had little chance of repayment. So the professor made his first loan, \$27 US, from his own pocket, to village women who were bamboo furniture makers.

That loan in 1974, during a famine in Bangladesh, was the beginning of Grameen Bank, which means “village bank.” Formed in 1983 by Yunus, the bank provides “micro-loans” or microcredit to the poor — primarily women —

to launch their cottage industries, encourage village-level enterprise, and put them on the path to sustainable futures.

It was the beginning of Yunus’ goal of “putting homelessness and destitution in a museum so that one day our children will visit it and ask how we could have allowed such a terrible thing to go on for so long.”

The third of 14 children, he was guided by his father to pursue higher education. Yunus received his B.A. and master’s degree from Dhaka University, then a Ph.D. in economics from Vanderbilt University through a Fulbright Scholarship. In 1973, he came to the East-West Center to participate in a leadership seminar.

The economist credits his mother with instilling a desire to aid the less fortunate. As a child he noticed she never turned away the destitute who knocked on their door for help. Influenced by this compassion, Yunus has forged a micro-credit movement. Today you can find replicas of the Grameen Bank model in more than 100 countries spanning every continent.

In Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank has more than 1,000 branches, serves more than 2 million borrowers in 37,000 villages and provides more than \$2.5 billion in micro-loans. Women comprise 94 percent of the borrowers, and nearly 100 percent of the loans are repaid.

In 2006, Muhammad Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the Grameen Bank “fueled by the belief that microcredit is a fundamental human right” and the impact the innovative banking program has had on allaying global poverty. ♦



PHOTO: ANDY WETTLER/SWISS-IMAGE.CH

# Manmohan Singh

## Navigating India's Path to Globalization

**Manmohan Singh**  
India  
1964, Trade

When Manmohan Singh was tapped as Finance Minister in 1991, India's economy was sliding toward bankruptcy. Singh swiftly instituted reforms that liberalized the economy and placed the South Asian nation on the path to globalization. Under his stewardship, the economy revived and grew at an annual rate of 7 percent.

However, quiet, brilliant economists don't usually make successful politicians. So no one expected Singh to emerge as India's prime minister in the nation's 2004 elections, let alone be re-elected overwhelmingly to a second term. But that's exactly what happened in May 2009, when more than 400 million voters in the world's largest democracy gave Singh's Congress Party its biggest election victory in years.

Singh, who had already made history as the first Sikh to hold the nation's top post, became only the second prime minister — Jawaharlal Nehru was the first — to win another five-year term.

Upon Singh's re-election, an Indian political analyst explained on National Public Radio, "The Indian electorate preferred him because he was low-key, he seemed different. He was an educated man who was known for his scholarship, and it kept his voice and rhetoric at a low level."

Born in Gah (now part of Pakistan), Singh's family moved to Amritsar in 1947, displaced by the partition at the arrival of India's independence. Life was extremely difficult. At times, the family couldn't afford food or electricity. Young Manmohan walked to school barefoot; he studied under a street lamp.

Hungry to learn, he applied himself to his studies, graduating from Punjab University, then attending Cambridge and Oxford universities on scholarships, where he distinguished himself in economics. After returning to India to teach at his alma mater, he came to the East-West Center for a program on international trade. Soon after that he joined the Delhi School of Economics, during its golden era — and began his ascent as an economics reformer.

In 2004, when Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi nominated Singh to be prime minister, observers considered it a gamble that the low-profile economist could win. But he did, and his election eased tensions between the Congress Party and India's Sikhs.

In a notoriously divisive political climate, he steadied India's economy — which grew more than 8 percent when Western economies took a nose dive. And in 2009, Singh earned a clear-cut mandate from Indian voters to continue both economic and much-needed social reforms. ♦

*"I was at the East-West Center in 1964. I enjoyed my time there very much and believe that its mission now is even more important than before."*



*"I knew I wanted a vocation that involved living and working abroad among different societies and cultures, particularly in Asia. The East-West Center experience cemented that commitment and, together with the University of Hawai'i, gave me the tools (language, area studies, contacts) to achieve my goals."*

Ambassador Pamela Slutz and her husband with the Dalai Lama.



# Pamela Slutz

## An Ambassador's Life at Full Gallop

**Pamela Slutz**  
United States  
1970, M.A.

Pamela Slutz has ridden across the steppes of Mongolia on horseback, under blue skies and vast horizon that reminded her of the American West. That was when she was U.S. ambassador to Mongolia (2003-06) and had the privilege of hosting the first visit to Mongolia by a sitting U.S. president and first lady.

During her tour in Kenya (2006-09) as deputy chief of mission, she climbed to the summit of Mount Kenya and tracked wildebeest across the Serengeti, enjoying vistas that again reminded her of the American West.

In December 2009 she took over as U.S. ambassador to Burundi, her second post as head of embassy. Burundi is a continent away from Asia, where Slutz has spent a majority of her career — Jakarta (twice), Shanghai and the American Institute in Taiwan, in addition to Mongolia.

However, her first Foreign Service post was in Kinshasa — then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Each assignment has had its rewards. In Mongolia, she was instrumental in



channeling assistance to the first-ever shelter for abused women in Ulaanbaatar. She worked to empower women, particularly in the political arena, encouraging the passage of legislation mandating that 30 percent of the seats in the nation's parliament go to women. Kenya presented an entirely different set of challenges: threats to Americans from terrorists in Somali, violent crime and civil unrest.

Burundi is proving to be no exception. Slutz has observed elections in Kenya, Mongolia, Taiwan and Indonesia — not all of which went smoothly. In mid-2010 Burundi is to hold its first democratic elections since 1993. She and her embassy team are well positioned to support and monitor the elections.

It was her interest in Asia that brought Slutz to the East-West Center, where she specialized in Indonesian studies. “My heart has always been in Asia,” she says of her passion for the region, which she traces to her childhood as a “diplobrat.” She spent the formative years of her childhood in Thailand, where her father was a Foreign Service officer, then in college visited her parents posted in Indonesia. “I just fell in love with the people, the cultures, the islands,” she says of the largest of Southeast Asian nations.

Before she retires to the Texas Hill Country, where she and husband (retired Foreign Service Officer) Ronald Deutch are building a home, she hopes for one more State Department posting in Asia to complete a career she describes as “living her dream.” ♦



# Ashok Malhotra

## Educating the Poorest Children in India's Remote Villages



**Ashok Malhotra**  
India  
1963, Ph.D.

Ask Ashok Malhotra about his arrival at the East-West Center in 1963 and the decades melt away:

Once again he is a young grantee from the Birla Arts/Science/Engineering Colleges at Pilani, Rajasthan.

It was the beginning of a five-decade adventure that has enabled Malhotra to effect change in amazing ways across borders, continents and oceans. His proudest accomplishment is the non-profit Ninash Foundation, established in memory of his late wife, Nina, whom he met at the EWC.

Since it was founded in 1996, the Foundation and students from the SUNY College at Oneonta campus have assisted in building four Indo-International Schools in impoverished villages in Rajasthan and Gujarat, India. More than 900 underprivileged children — mostly female and the socially outcast — have received a free education and the school employs 20 teachers and staff who otherwise would be jobless. The Foundation's mission is to achieve 100 percent literacy in the villages where these schools are located and then adopt this model for the rest of India.

After completing his EWC studies, Malhotra joined SUNY College at Oneonta, where he was asked to start a philosophy department. Influenced by his EWC experience, he created a program offering Eastern and Western philosophies, and introduced Asian philosophy and religion components into the undergraduate curriculum.

In 1979, he started the SUNY Oneonta Study Abroad Program in India. More than 200 students, faculty and community members have participated in the program. He's been an active member of the SUNY Press Editorial Board, encouraging the publication of books on Asian

***"The EWC experience got me out of my box and spread the entire world in front of me. I felt that I did not belong to any one country and at the same time, I belonged to the entire world and to the entire human race."***

*Sutras and Tao Te Ching* into language easily understood by undergraduate students and a general audience.

In 2006, the '60s alumnus established the Ashok Kumar Malhotra Seva (Compassionate Service Award) to reward and encourage public service. Each year a scholarship is given to one or more international students with outstanding academic achievements and a record and intention of being involved in continuing community service in the U.S. and/or the Asia Pacific region. ♦

Studies. The SUNY Press is one of the largest publishers of books on Asian Studies in the United States.

As a member of the National Endowment for the Humanities board, he advocated funding for projects such as the EWC Asian Studies Development Program. He's translated the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yoga*

# Margaret Valadian

## Advancing Civil Rights for Australian Aborigines

**Margaret Valadian**  
Australia  
1967, M.A.

When Margaret Valadian started school, Aborigines weren't provided opportunities to pursue higher education in Australia, let alone expected to excel academically. But Valadian changed that. She stood out from her earliest school days in Brisbane, aspiring to a career in education when Aborigines could not obtain scholarships for teacher training.

A casual comment from an elementary school teacher that she was good in math, along with her mother's encouragement, fortified Margaret's determination to further her education. In 1966, she received a bachelor of social studies in social work from the University of Queensland, becoming the first Aboriginal woman university graduate.

But it was her experiences outside Australia — including at the East-West Center, where she received a master's in education; and at the State University of New York, a master of social work degree — that put her on a path to advance the development and education of Aboriginal people.

As she traveled across the U.S. in the '60s, she observed the fervor of the civil rights and community organizing movements. She visited a voter registration campaign in the South, minority welfare programs in New York, Chicago and the Southwest. She worked summers at a Native American school, attended the Saul Alinsky Institute for Community Development, the Highlander Folk School in Alabama. Earlier she had spent a summer in Papua New Guinea, where students trained at a specially designed college to learn administrative skills.

"It was not until I became involved in other indigenous communities," she says, "that I saw the need to focus on change as a more appropriate policy and program direction."

These experiences provided a framework for the customized, non-formal education programs of the Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute she founded in Sydney in 1978. Her hope was to create "a vehicle for bringing change to the lives and aspirations of disadvantaged Aborigines." Students told her the program "made it easy for them to understand the material they were learning."

*"EWC staff and students worked together to undertake a wide range of initiatives. The success of these activities confirmed the importance of having a strong belief in what you want to do, having confidence in how you approach your goals and the value of collaborative teamwork."*

The institute was soon recognized as the national education institution that provided participants a sense of self-confidence, purpose and direction, and the foundation to pursue their interests. Under Valadian's guidance, the organization pioneered development education and management training so that Aborigines could run community organizations as councilors, youth workers, teaching assistants and health workers.

Valadian went on to work with the University of Wollongong Aboriginal Education Center and to establish the Indigenous Social Development Institute at the turn of the millennium until her recent retirement. ♦

