

Lakas and the Makibaka Hotel

Anthony D. Robles

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Carl Angel, Illustrator

Eloisa D. de Jesus, Translator

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The roof leaks and mice run across the floor in the Makibaka Hotel, but it's home for Lakas's new friends. Will they continue to have a home?

Lakas, a Filipino-American boy, meets three men whose small income barely covers their rent. Each double page contains English text, a Tagalog translation, and at least one illustration. *Makibaka* means "struggle," an important concept for Filipino Americans struggling to obtain their rights. Lakas instigates a struggle against powerful financial interests to protect his friends from eviction.

"This is my lucky nickel," Lakas tells the new hotel owner. "Let's flip for it. Heads, my friends can stay. Tails, they have to leave." The landlord replies, "This is not a game, little boy." An illustration shows the landlord, in a suit consisting of one-thousand-dollar bills, putting the nickel into his pocket. Lakas frowns, holding out his hand for his only nickel.

In another illustration, Lakas, singing into the microphone of a karaoke machine, heads a march with his friends. Signs read, "Struggle, don't be afraid!" and "No Evictions." The narrator says, "People stopped and stared and then joined them as they marched."

The author and the illustrator collaborated on a previous book, *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish / Si Lakas at ang Isdang Manilatown*, which de Jesús helped translate. Robles, a native of San Francisco with immigrant Filipino grandparents, is an activist and a poet. He self-published *Enemy Lines*, and his poetry has appeared in *The Asian Pacific American Journal*, *Pinoy Poetics*, and many other publications.

Incomplete words and pictures appearing on city buildings in the illustrations reveal Angel's occasional collage technique. This Filipino American, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Academy of Art College, has designed books, including *Seven-Card Stud with Seven Manangs Wild*. His previous book illustrations include *Willie Wins*, which won a Children's Books of the Year award from Bank Street College and *Xochitl and the Flowers / Xochitl, la Niña de las Flores*, an Américas Award Honor Book. Many San Francisco Bay Area galleries and museums have exhibited his artwork.

This book will stimulate readers ages eight or nine to place human values above financial gain, while even children as young as six will identify with Lakas's determination to help his friends. The artwork's bold appearance and strong colors will draw the reader's attention. Children of Filipino ancestry will appreciate the Tagalog translation.

Young readers will learn that obtaining human rights requires a struggle. They must be ready for that challenge.

NORMA D. KELLAM (August 18, 2009)

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