INSIDE THE MIND OF JUAN DELA CRUZ: THE ELECTION CULTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES

by:

Michael L. Cacayan
Orani National High School Parang - Parang

Last 13th of May the all so hyped Philippine election presided once again with all its controversial glory. As always, the issues and hullabaloos surrounding the event flared up TV headlines and newspaper front pages. The candidates and aspiring officials were placed under the scrutinizing lenses of the public eyes. Every detail and every flaw were magnified out of proportion.

Yet regardless of the neat-picky attitude of some Filipinos toward those they place upon power, the results of the election were far from desirable, according to numerous online news websites. Candidates were shaded all colors and characters were painted in many different ways. Some victorious ones were duded as contemptible, with past issues and political crimes weighing down the scale.

But against the elephant that is the political culture of the Philippines, how does Filipinos really choose their officials? Many would input that it all depends on the highest bidder, of who offers the highest price while some others would suggest that it is all about who has the catchiest giggles. From the very beginning, Philippine elections were something almost synonymous to controversy and without any better word, dirty. This year however the political dispute was in a whole league of its own.

It is really troubling to think that some Filipinos were that shallow in terms of electing political figures. Although the there are no definite proof or so some people say, that some of the electoral winners were criminals and that they deceive the country by lies. The mere fact that some of them were convicted, regardless of the issue of innocence,
is something that should be looked upon. If normal citizens were placed under the scrutiny of NBI and Police background check when applying for an entry level job, the same regard should be placed upon those who aspire to run for position on our government. After all they were the ones in charged of the lives of millions of our country men.

The election has a very long-lasting effect, in can span from three to six years depending on the term length of the officials in question. Three to six years is a very long period especially for a country like the Philippines. That duration can affect so many sectors that can decide the make or break of certain aspects of our community.

Take education for example. With new elected officials sitting on power the projects and initiatives could possibly change faster than a rouge bull seeing red. Some programs could be discontinued and another could be launched. These kinds of drastic changes can affect the over-all progress and development of a child. It can add more years on the educational years or it can be discouraging them from finishing school all together. Although all hypothetical, the bottom line is that we can’t over exaggerate the importance of choosing and electing the correct and worthy officials. It is a process that should be though to students from a very young age. Partly the process of electing and choosing leaders is already part of the educational sector since there are student organizations of which students themselves battle for position within the school. But even in those small school elections traces of the ‘dirty politics’ culture can be seen already. With some students giving away flyers with candies, or using the ‘I know’ and ‘I’m related to’ tactic for winning. It is like teaching students to be dirty politicians early in life. This kind of activities are essential for the social growth of students, that is also the reason why it should be regulated and supervised accordingly.

Being able to judge a character and choose wisely politically is something that should be ingrained to the minds of young students so that when they are old enough to actually vote they would know how to be selective and perceptive in choosing who they
It would actually really help also if the SK elections are standardized correctly so that it will show good examples to the young voters.

Issues and controversies in politics inevitable, it is part of a deep-rooted culture. Trying to suddenly uproot a huge tree is an impossible task especially if you’ll do it by hand, but it does not hurt to prune the branches every so often to avoid the shade from killing the little plants underneath.

References:

Philippine Political Culture and Governance

by Cristina Jayme Montiel

http://primer.com.ph/blog/2016/02/04/philippine-elections-the-culture-the-drama-the-battle

www.rappler.com/election/2019