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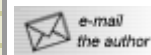
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GLOBAL NETWORKING

Love of country



Rodel E. Rodis

THE ANALOGY of the Philippine protagonists racing furiously to the edge of the cliff in a deadly game of chicken is only a perception from a distance. Up close and personal, a more appropriate analogy would be the biblical story of the two women who appeared with a baby before King Solomon asking him to decide who was the true mother of the child. When King Solomon ordered the baby to be cut in half, the real mother cried out that she was willing to give up her claim if the king would spare the child's life.

Instead of two, however, there are scores of women and men in the Philippines who claim to be the real "mother" of the "child." Who should the baby Philippines be entrusted to? Who truly loves the Philippines -- President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo or her increasing legion of critics?

The statements of former President Cory Aquino, Liberal Party and Senate President Franklin Drilon, the Makati Business Club and the 10 members of the President's Cabinet who resigned all asked President Gloria to make the "supreme sacrifice" and resign for the good of the country. The gist of their plea was: "Madame President, if you truly love the Philippines, you must resign to restore confidence in the government and to move the country forward from its present state of turmoil and paralysis."

President Gloria's response was to plead with her critics to stop their destabilization campaign. The gist of her message was: "If you truly love the Philippines, you must stop all your actions and pronouncements which are disrupting the economy and promoting civil war."

It's as if the two women who stood before King Solomon were asking the other to prove her love for the child by giving up her claim. "If you truly love the baby, then you wouldn't want the child to be harmed, would you? So give up your claim to the baby in order to save the baby!"

What if the burden of proof changed and each of the parties were required to prove how much each loved the country instead of daring the other to prove his or her love for the Philippines? But that begs the question. Do they truly love the Philippines?

In his 1987 Atlantic Monthly essay, "Damaged Culture," James Fallows observed that there was a noticeable lack of nationalism, or love of country, among Filipinos compared to other people in other countries. One American he met in Manila explained that "This is a country where the national ambition is to change nationality" citing a 1982 survey of 207 Filipino grade school students who were

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asked their preferred nationality. Less than five percent (10 students) answered "Filipino."

Nationalism is valuable because, as Fallows wrote, "it causes people to look beyond themselves rather than pursuing their own interests to the ruination of everyone else." Japan is strong because its ethics dictates that all Japanese deserve decent treatment. In contrast, Fallows notes, Filipino culture places more importance on loyalty to one's family, compadres, and members of his or her region rather than to the nation or people as a whole.

"When observing Filipino friendships," Fallows wrote, "I thought often of the Mafia families portrayed in *The Godfather*: total devotion within the circle, total war on the outside. And since boundaries of decent treatment are limited to the family or regional group, they exclude at least 90% of the country. Because of this fragmentation -- this lack of nationalism -- people treat each other worse in the Philippines than in any other Asian country."

Most Filipinos will tell you that the main cause of poverty in the Philippines is the endemic and systemic corruption in the Philippines. It is so demoralizing, in fact, that because of it, many Filipinos want to "change nationality."

But a Korean student by the name of Jaeyoun Kim begs to differ. In his essay which has been circulating in the Internet for years, Jaeyoun wrote: "Filipinos always complain about the corruption in the Philippines. Do you really think the corruption is the problem of the Philippines? I do not think so. I strongly believe that the problem is the lack of love for the Philippines."

"Let me first talk about my country, Korea. It might help you understand my point. After the Korean War, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world. Koreans had to start from scratch because the entire country was destroyed completely after the Korean War, and we had no natural resources. Koreans used to talk about the Philippines, for Filipinos were very rich in Asia. We envy Filipinos. Koreans really wanted to be well off like Filipinos. Many Koreans died of famine."

"Korean government was awfully corrupt and is still very corrupt beyond your imagination, but Korea was able to develop dramatically because Koreans really did their best for the common good with their heart burning with patriotism. Koreans did not work just for themselves but also for their neighborhood and country. Education inspired young men with the spirit of patriotism... Many Korean scientists and engineers in the USA came back to Korea to help develop the country because they wanted their country to be well off. Though they received very small salary, they did their best for Korea. They always hoped that their children would live in a well off country."

Jaeyoun Kim's fervent message to Filipinos is this: "Please love your neighbor and country... If you have a child, teach them how to love the Philippines. Teach them why they have to love their neighbor and country."

We can follow Jaeyoun Kim's advice and teach our neighbor and children why and how to love the Philippines. But can we teach love of country to the leaders of the Philippines?

Send comments to Rodel50@aol.com.

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