

## **The Philippines in Denial**

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It isn't new to hear that the Philippines is a country filled with beauty. Ranging from different tourist attractions of stunning mountainsides, distinctive hills, seamless volcanoes, scenic beaches, and much more, the Philippine islands are undeniably gifted with masses of natural resources. The Filipinos have probably gotten so full of these compliments, that it isn't special for their ears to pick up those childish chuckles of tourists while celebrating vacation on the white sands of Boracay, or for their eyes to see hundreds of visitors bathing in the crystal clear waters of Palawan.

It's reassuring for a Filipino to hear all of this—for his nation to be called the Pearl of the Orient, to know that throwing a seed somewhere in his motherland simply means a new tree planted, to live in a place like this means heaven on earth. Yes. It is reassuring for the Filipinos.

To be reminded by what beauty the nation holds, it wouldn't hurt to throw a small wrapper of candy on the sidewalk. It wouldn't hurt to spit a small chunk of phlegm on the road. It wouldn't hurt to cross the other side of the road while the stoplights are red. It wouldn't be much of a problem to be comfortable amidst everything around. The country is rich, gorgeous, and peaceful. Come on now! The Philippines hasn't been independent only until recently. Given that, the Filipinos deserve to uphold the freedom that's been seized from them for hundreds of years.

Current President Rodrigo Duterte states that the problem with this country is the excessive usage of drugs. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) says it's the increasing pollution in the country. The Department of Education (DepEd) says it's the rotting educational policies. All the congressmen, the senators, the other departments, they all have a share of the problems.

I am a regular high school student, and I have to agree on that part of the reality and the density of these problems. However, I disagree with the proposition that any of these is the real dilemma that haunts this nation.

It upsets me to see the Filipino people blaming the government to what disasters the country is going through. Alright, it's no question that the government of the Philippines is imperfect, flawed, and, as sad as it may get, corrupt. The Filipino people have acceptable roots for their blame, and therefore it's not wrong to rebel against such a government. Yet, the faultiness and the inadequacy of the government—the Filipino people continue to let it blind them and feed their luxury of living the free life of free people. They continue to deny it in themselves that the real problem of the country is the lack of urgency and the overconfidence in themselves, the people, over problems of the country.

The problem of the Philippines on why it is deteriorating, why it's facing different environmental challenges, why it's experiencing cultural depletion, why it's lagging behind other nations in different aspects such as technology, is because of the denial of the Filipinos. As I said, the people continue to harm the country out of too much confidence. It is unknown to them that throwing that one piece of candy wrapper caused the flooding of their *barangay* that cost lives and property. It is unknown to them that spitting out that chunk of phlegm caused others to experience that flu they were experiencing. It is unknown to them that crossing the other side of the road while the stoplights were red cost them their life and instigation of those hour-long traffics. It is unknown to them that this stagnation in their comfort zones, may it have been caused by foreign influence or thirst for finally receiving that snatched freedom from them, needs to stop.

The hard part about this problem is that there is no one solution that can elucidate it. It's something that can't be deliberately served to the people. Additionally, it hurts to say that the problem is continually growing, and in an exponential rate. The people of the Philippines are fed up with the stereotyping of the wealth of the country, how it is indestructible and free, yet again feeding the comfort of the people. This contentment and ease of the people is accompanied by their sightless affection on the large influence of mass social media which has a great deal to do with the slow death of culture and tradition, the country's continuous worsening of pollution, the country's overpopulation, the lack of basic materials for learning of numerous public schools, and serious poverty.

As people complain about the murky waters of Manila Bay or perhaps its filthy streets, they do not realize the reason of it. In the first place, the garbage was thrown little by little by themselves, and they all clumped up to what is now the polluted city of Manila. The

overpopulation of the country is caused by improper family planning. The lack of foresight is evident to the people.

Why do we continue to lose our identity as Filipinos? It's because of the undying, unconditional, and the unconventional hospitality of the people to the foreigners, to the point where we, ourselves, lose a part of us.

The discipline of the people is too much to ask. "The Philippines is a democratic country, the power is held by the people, therefore, the people are free to do what they wish." If this continues to be the mindset of the Filipino people during the next century, the Philippines will never progress. Amidst freedom, there must be an idea of limitations. We must know when to do something and when not to. Yes, we are free. But how about our motherland that gave us the freedom? She deserves the respect we ought to give her as to be able to progress like other countries.

Our country continues to ask for aid, for help from other states to solve its problems. Though, the only assistance we'll ever be receiving from them is economic, military, and different support programs that is manifested only by our government. There's one thing they can't give to us ---- the cooperation of our society. I am in no position to say that I am well aware of all the problems the country is facing. I am merely a student who describes the authenticity of his environment. However, I am well aware of the capacity of the Filipino, for the reason that I've seen and experienced the amiable aftershock of the movements of the early Filipinos, from the liberty I encounter today, fought by Filipino movements from the Spanish, the American, and Japanese colonial times, to the existent proof, the writings of Jose Rizal, of the ability of a Filipino to fight, create, and progress.

We blame it on our leaders. We continue to rally for a problem that we've caused all along. We continue to create that zone of comfort that's been keeping us and will keep us asleep of reality longer than the colonial times of our country—our contentment without consideration of others and the future, our denial of the truth.

Denying will only cleave us of development. It's our move that's going to make it count. Let's start today.

