

The Philippines after Haiyan/Yolanda - Writing a Good Song: A Challenge Amidst Challenges

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I wish I could write a love song for my loved ones and compile at least two or three songs before the year 2013 ends. Well, more or less it is thirty days before we cross the year 2014. It is a challenge for me now to fulfill that plan following the suffering of the peoples and communities in the Philippines and the world.

For four consecutive years, deadly year-ender typhoons hit parts of the Philippines. Notably, year after year the damage has become intense and widespread.

While the rest of the country are on the healing process from the fears and worries from the two-week stand-off between the government forces and the Moro National Liberation Front in the south of the country and the 7.2 magnitude killer earthquake costing lives and properties, last 7th November a super-typhoon hit parts of Mindanao and mainly Visayas region that displaced around four million of the 13 to 14 million affected population. More than 5 thousand now were reported dead and counting as the clearing operations progressed.

Prior to these sad incidents were the massive and widespread corruption debate involving top political leaders and institutions while more than half of the Philippine population are living in poverty and hunger – a disaster that the masses are facing on a daily basis aside from the high living standards with a low purchasing power.

How can I write a happy song?

Day by day after the super-typhoon, finger-pointing and blame game of politicians and leaders are prevailing while most of the survivors and victims are dying with hungry stomachs. The ineffective and inefficient response from the government mechanisms has worsen the peoples' situation.. While the rest of the Philippine political leaders are crying for unity and cooperation, it cannot be seen in their actions. The Philippine President has put the blame over the local government units of the areas affected. Local leaders also appealed and cried foul over this since they themselves were victims and in a helpless situation since their response structures and machineries were destroyed and wiped out by the typhoon. To cover the late and lousy response of the government national mechanism, the Honorable Senate President Franklin Drilon turned his eyes to the survivors who looted and ransacked establishments for food and other means to survive – that they must be held accountable and what the survivors had done was unacceptable. Instead of fast-tracking the food distribution and relief assistance, military and police were deployed first and somehow a de facto command to shoot and arrest the looters for civilians since government troops cannot secure all areas. To the last minute, the government's loyalty belongs to the capitalists and the elites.

Class Relations: The Poor are the most Vulnerable

While it is true that rich and poor suffered the same experience from super-typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan,

the case of the poor is serious and during the recovery and aftermath they are the social section that would rely on their own arms to rebuild their lives. They are those who have no economic resources to rehabilitate the trauma and no resources to recover fast. They are those who have no friends with fresh environment and comforting mechanisms to lean with. They are those who work to live prior to the devastations.

They are those who have been facing economic and political marginalization even prior to the calamity. They are those without political connections to protect and be prioritized. They are the unemployed and underemployed, the reserve army of labor.

They are the deprived section of the society from social services. Their vulnerabilities put them in a more vulnerable situation.

Migration and Displacement

It is aching inside me when a father of two missing sons interviewed in television informing his wife abroad about what happened to their kids. What do we expect would be the feeling of a mother to hear that sad news? Helpless and away from home and the only reason to work abroad is for a better future for her family, now what?

It is no secret that Mindanao and Visayas are the two key regions that Overseas Filipino Migrant Workers are coming from. Economically, they were displaced. And politically, they are! They are contributing much of their remittances' taxes to the Philippine purse but received very little and poor service, aside from the corruption and malversation by the honourable public "servants".

Some of the typhoon Yolanda survivors now wanted to leave the region and heal the wounds and trauma somewhere. Most of them went to Cebu and the National Capital Region to be with their relatives, but it is public knowledge that there are survivors that do not have relatives out there and just wanted to try a chance of surviving the metro. Aimless and armless, they wanted to brave the cities to survive.

Laws and Inconsistencies

We lauded the policy-makers, advocates and champions after the passing of Organic Agriculture Act (RA 10068) , the same with the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management was sealed, Waste Management Law, the Clean Air Act and the rest of pro-environment laws and legislations - remarkable achievements!

Contrary to these laws were the Philippine Mining Act and allowing still chemical fertilizers to be available and even government agencies were instrumental in the distribution and promotion and the land conversions and logging concessions, etc.

I cannot count how many songs were already written to promote, protect and preserve ecology. Even in some peace negotiations, this agenda have been included. Even in street chants and agitations, somehow this has become the loudest chant internationally - Ecology over profit!

I noticed that the people are encouraged and educated on disaster preparedness because disaster is unavoidable and will really happen. Yes, it is true. Massively exploiting and destroying the environment will really bring disasters to its peak. There has been no position from the national government (the past and the present) to scrap the mining act of the Philippines, instead it invited more investors to exploit more and encourage fossil fuel-operated power generation plants to generate electricity. All in all, the song of the government framework in dealing with the environment is the music of profit and capital.

Vultures Strike and waiting

Grandstanding politicians and opportunists victimized the survivors more.

No one can question the flooding aids from foreign countries shipped by their war ships and delivered by their armies. The intention at hand is very noble which is to help the survivors since the direct government cannot attend the whole situation. United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan, Israel, China and other world powers are all responding thru their men in uniform, why so?

Most of these world powers were also the top carbon emitter without even considering of lowering it or reducing. Simple science proved that the impact of global warming and climate change is at its worst and carbon emission is a big contribution to this adding the extractive and exploitative policies and programs towards environment.

World Bank and Asian Development Bank offered loan Billion dollars to the Philippines. Historically, these two institutions are known mechanisms that effectively trapped developing countries to indebtedness with no options left to get out, particularly the Philippines.

Are these countries are here to help or to maximize the situation to establish their presence and diplomatically in place influence?

Writing what Song?

We are poor, deprived and neglected
We are poor, hit by disaster in all forms
We need food, water and medicines
We received press briefing and political maneuvers

Ineffective and inefficient they are
They can't accept, so they blamed - we are
We loot food and ransacked stores
If arrested, we will be tried by their justice

Dead bodies and destroyed properties
Scattered everywhere, smells no air
Price freeze? State is useless
Till the end, defended the elite and the capitalist

Can't rely on their mechanisms
Can't rely on their instrumentalities
For many times
Same old stories we heard

Accounting of victims,
System installations and the rest
So many excuses, so many alibis
Grandstanding of politicians prevailed

Capitalist manoeuvres
Elites take over
Ondoy, Sendong, Pablo and Labuyo
Here comes Yolanda
Earthquake and all the rest

Mine all the mountains
Cut all the forests
What else?
Mass grave?
Massive exodus?

See the shit?
The Honorables in Suit
They carry suit case with documents
Sealed to offer you coffin and death certificates
They celebrate!

Su P. Remo, 25 November 2013

P.S.

* <https://www.facebook.com/lanog.mindanao>

* Note: The author is responsible of the whole article.