

The Doctor Is In



By
Dr. Erie Agustin
Columnist
FILIPINO TIMES
New York-New Jersey

Philippine Popcorn

NEW YORK, NY September 11 (PinoyGlobal) - Eight months before the presidential elections, candidates for the highest office of the land are popping up like popcorn. People are confused on who is who: who is for whom and who is for what? With so many candidates it is so hard for us to comprehend what each individual aspirant stands for on important issues that affect our country. It's also scary that some groups will use a camouflage technique, meaning they will use somebody with a better image and if they win they can continue with their evil doings. They will be a king maker instead of a king, when they can no longer be king.

Here in the United States, there are only two candidates after the primaries, and the people have plenty of time to really know their candidates and make a wise choice, without vote-buying. We will know through the media, like newspapers, radio and television coverage of their debates, their platforms of government. It is a fair game if you think about it. Compared to Lebanon where elections are so expensive because voters openly sell their votes from \$500 up to \$800, our country is not far behind, in fact it is already going in that direction.

We only have a very limited period of time to choose our president. Let us therefore have guidelines based on the important issues that affect our country, and whoever becomes president should work on them. Each individual candidate should address these issues during the campaign so the electorate will be aware of their solutions.

These issues include 1) Good governance (corruption), 2) Environment (infrastructure, pollution control) 3) Economy

Dr. Erie Agustin graduated in Medicine at the University of the East in 1980. From 1984-1988 he was a Rural Health Doctor in Pangasinan. He came to the US in 1988, and was an ER doctor at Wyckoff and Parkway Hospitals for many years. In 2003, he opened his own clinic which thrives until the present day.

(creation of wealth, poverty aid and taxation), 4) Well-being (access to health care and security) and finally, 5) Education (schools, textbooks and teachers).

Corruption: A good presidential candidate should be clear on what he is going to do about corruption, which starts from the very bottom with the policemen going up to the very top like the president. As of now our countrymen think that corruption is normal because it is the only system they see and nobody has been punished for being corrupt. But here in the U.S. we have comparisons. Sometimes we ask ourselves how come they don't do this in the Philippines, when in America, governors, senators, congressmen, mayors and businessmen are fired or jailed for their wrongdoings. In China corrupt officials are even put to death, and mayors who use government funds in gambling are sent to prison, while in the Philippines the president gives money to our officials to gamble in Las Vegas.

Corruption starts with the policeman who asks for a hundred pesos for a traffic violation instead of giving a traffic ticket to the offender, to government officials who receive money from special groups so they can continue with their illegal activities like jueteng, sabong and prostitution operations, to BIR officials who receive money from private companies to evade taxes, e.g. Lucio Tan with his Tobacco and Alcohol industries, to regulators who receive bribe money from people who want to have permits and licenses without having to comply with the regulations and finally, to the president who has to travel to other countries to receive money from a foreign company having deals with the Philippine government.

Therefore, a presidential candidate should clearly state that all corrupt government officials or private individuals will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law just like how the government dealt with the protestors in the streets against the lavish spending on presidential dinners in the U.S. They were

kicked, hit with clubs and put in jail.

A president must categorically say that all government transactions should be in checks, not cash, so that there will be proper accounting and a paper trail. There should be no more money inside brown paper bags given to officials.

All government expenses should be available on the Internet in order for the people to know where their money goes. If we build a five-kilometer road worth five billion pesos and this is seen in the Internet, then the people will never allow it.

People involved in corruption should be in a national data bank so that the electorate will know that their elected officials are honest. These are only a few of the possibilities within which we can check or minimize corruption.

Corruption caused the stagnation of our growth as a nation. We have the resources, the people and knowledge on how to be a progressive country like Singapore, China and Japan. But because of corruption we are no different from Zimbabwe when it comes to economic development. Sen. Trillanes has written a very good thesis on corruption. Although he cannot run for president because he is still below forty years old and still languishing in jail, we can nevertheless use his ideas or advice on how to tackle corruption.

We will follow this up with an analysis on the environment, the economy, well-being and education in our next issue.