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The 'Virgin' Candidate

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Sept. 14 (PinoyGlobal) - The declaration of Sen. Noynoy Aquino to run for president last September 9, 2009 has caused reactions from people who strongly support his candidacy as well as from those who believe that he is not qualified and winnable. The other day, an Internet blogger told me bluntly, "I have already explained why Noynoy is not winnable, but you have not cited a single reason why he is."

I thought about it and I have many reasons why Noynoy is winnable. However, since he asked me to cite a "single reason," I weighed all my reasons -- and there are many -- and selected a "single reason." And here's what I told him:

"You asked me for a 'single reason' why Noynoy is going to win and that is CHANGE. Noynoy is the only candidate that can truly say that he's for CHANGE. His 'inexperience' would even help him. He is a 'virgin' candidate who would not sell out to special interest groups. And best of all, he gives HOPE to our people who have suffered too long under Gloria's corrupt regime."

I call Noynoy a "virgin" candidate not because he is a bachelor but because of his "virgin" political life-- clean and free of scandals.

Born Benigno Simeon Cojuangco Aquino III, on February 8, 1960, "Noynoy" was born into an old political family. However, his early life was insulated from politics because of the incarceration of his late father, Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., when the dictator Ferdinand Marcos declared

martial law in September 1972. Noynoy was only 12 years old then. In 1980, Ninoy was released from prison on the condition that he and his family will go to exile in the U.S. and never return home. But after a few years in exile, Ninoy decided to return home to lead the fight for freedom and democracy. On August 21, 1983, an assassin's bullet killed him instantly as he stepped down from the airplane at the Manila International Airport, now the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

His widow, Cory Aquino, went home to pick up the pieces. In 1986, the "People Power" revolution toppled the Marcos dictatorship and Cory ascended to the presidency. The following year, Noynoy nearly lost his own life during one of the seven coup attempts by rebel soldiers. He was hit by five bullets but survived. However, three of his four escorts were killed and the fourth was wounded. A bullet is still embedded in his neck today.

In 1998, Noynoy was elected to the House of Representatives. He was reelected in 2001 and again in 2004. He served the House as Deputy Speaker from 2004 to 2006. In 2007, Noynoy was elected to the Senate for a six-year term.

Noynoy demonstrated his leadership in various capacities with the Liberal Party. He served the party as Secretary General from 1999 to 2002, Vice-President of the Luzon Liberal Party from 2002 to 2004, Secretary General again from 2004 to 2006, and Vice Chairman of the party from

2006 to the present.

It was not an easy road that Noynoy took to reach where he is today. The road was pockmarked with banishment, tragedy, and other setbacks. But it was an experience that tempered his psyche, strengthened his character, and emboldened his determination to succeed in all endeavors that he pursued in life.

And it all began on August 25, 1975, when Ninoy wrote his son Noynoy a letter from his detention cell in Fort Bonifacio. Ninoy wrote, "You are my only son. You carry my name and the name of my father. I have no material wealth to leave you. I never had time to make money while I was in the hire of our people. For this I am very sorry.

"The only valuable asset I can bequeath to you is the name you carry. I have tried my best during my years of public service to keep that name untarnished and respected, unmarked by sorry compromises for expediency. I now passed it on to you, as good, I pray, as when my father, your grandfather passed it on to me.

"Forgive me for passing unto your young shoulders the great responsibility for our family. I trust you will love your mother and your sisters and lavish them with the care and protection I would have given them."

Ninoy concluded his letter by saying: "The only advice I can give you: Live with honor and follow your conscience. There is no greater nation on earth than our Motherland. No greater people than our own. Serve them with all your heart, with all your might and with all your strength. Lovingly, Dad."

It was a covenant between father and son. For 34 years, Noynoy kept and treasured his dad's letter. He carried the name he inherited from his father, untarnished, respected, and unmarked by compromises. And should he be elected the next president, Noynoy will serve our Motherland and our people with all his heart, with all his might, and with all his

strength -- just like the way Ninoy wanted it to be.

Indeed, Noynoy will become the instrument of CHANGE, just like Ninoy could have been had he not met his death in the hands of military assassins on that fateful day in 1983. Four years later, Noynoy was shot five times by rebel soldiers. But fate spared him from death. It wasn't time yet for him to die. He still had an unfinished task to accomplish. And he was prepared to carry out that task.

The passing of his mother, former president Cory Aquino, on August 1, 2009, has put that task squarely on Noynoy's shoulders. There was no turning back. It was his calling and on the 40th day of Cory's death, Noynoy stepped up to the plate and declared his run for the presidency.

It couldn't have happened at a more opportune time. With poverty level at 40%, hunger at 60%, unemployment at 25%, and the poor eating "pagpag," the Philippines needs a leader who would truly make a change, not only in terms of economic progress, but would also change the character of the nation. And what a better way to achieve that than to have a leader with moral integrity and impeccable character.

In a recent survey conducted last September 5 and 6 by Social Weather Stations (SWS) among 1,200 respondents in vote-rich Luzon, an overwhelming 50% of the respondents said they would vote for Noynoy. And that was before Noynoy formally announced his presidential bid. Indeed, the wind of change is now blowing in Luzon and will soon reach the Visayas, Mindanao, and the far-flung Sulu archipelago.

And there is no doubt in my mind that Noynoy would manifest the character that the people would expect -- nay, demand! -- of their leader. The people have suffered long enough that promises made by the presidential candidates are not good enough. They want a "virgin" candidate -- untarnished, respected, honest, and someone who will change the character of our nation. Noynoy is that man.