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From Hopelessness to Hopefulness

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Dec. 22 (PinoyGlobal) - A survey conducted by Pulse Asia on October 22 to 30, 2009 showed that 86% of Filipinos look forward to the year “with hope” while seven percent will face the year “with apprehension” and another seven percent “without hope and without apprehension.”

By contrast, last year’s survey showed that 78% looked forward “with hope,” 11% “with apprehension” and 11% “without hope and without apprehension.”

In 2007, the survey showed that 84% looked forward “with hope,” 9% “with apprehension” and 7% “without hope and without apprehension.”

In 2006, the survey showed that 85% looked forward “with hope,” 8% “with apprehension” and 6% “without hope and without apprehension.”

In 2005, the survey showed that 70% looked forward “with hope,” 20% “with apprehension” and 10% “without hope and without apprehension.”

Looking back at these figures, it makes me wonder what were the factors which caused people to exude optimism that they would be better off the following year?

Let’s take a look at the events that happened in each of the previous four years:

In 2005, the country was rocked to its foundations with the

exposure of the “Hello Garci” election cheating scandal and other anomalies that almost ejected President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from the presidency. Fortunately for Gloria, but unfortunately for the country, former President Fidel V. Ramos and then Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. -- like the Lone Ranger and his sidekick, Tonto -- came to her rescue just as she was about to flee from Malacañang to join her husband Mike and son Mikey who left earlier into self-exile in the U.S. Gloria survived her crisis but the country was never the same again.

In 2006, the scandals settled down a little bit providing the people with some relief. They thought that the worst had happened and that things were going to get better. But it turned out that 2006 was the lull before the big storm to come.

In 2007, amidst the “economic boom” loudly trumpeted by Gloria, the people’s mood changed from optimism to pessimism. “Hope” slid down 1% below the 2006 mark. It was the year when the ZTE-NBN scandal erupted which implicated Gloria and Mike for allegedly receiving huge “advance commission” -- or kickback -- from China for the approval of the multi-million dollar project. It was also the year when Gloria tried to “sell” the Spratly Islands to China. It was also the year when Gloria tried to sell huge tracts of agricultural lands -- which is forbidden by the constitution -- to China. It was also the year when Gloria was exposed by Gov. Fr. Ed Panlilio for bribing congressmen and governors. Indeed, it was the year when Gloria earned the ignominious title of “Most Corrupt President in the History of the Philippines”

and the Philippines' distinction as the "Most Corrupt Country" in Asia.

In 2008, "hope" went down by 0.6%. And what could have been the factor that caused "hope" to slide down? What came to mind was Gloria's incessant attempts to perpetuate herself in power beyond 2010. And the "economic boom" that Gloria touted in 2007 burst like a balloon full of hot air. The hangover from the previous scandal-ridden year had, in my opinion, caused the highest percentages, 11% each, for "without apprehension" and "without hope and without apprehension." As a consequence, it caused the lowest "with hope" percentage, 78%, since the "Hello Garci" scandal in 2005. Indeed, it was the year when the people's optimism was doused with the cold reality of hopelessness.

But this year, "hope" dramatically increased to its highest level since Gloria came to power. Why? In my opinion, former President Cory Aquino's death brought to the consciousness of the people the ideals that she and her martyred husband Ninoy Aquino stood for. Strangely, the evil Gloria was juxtaposed to the saintly Cory in the people's minds, thus putting Gloria in a bad light. Like a bad karma, everything that Gloria did rubbed the people the wrong way. And to make matters worse, Gloria's expensive dining spree at the pompous Le Cirque restaurant in New York City while the country was mourning Cory's death infuriated the people. They perceived Gloria as callously insensitive and disrespectful of Cory.

It didn't therefore come as a surprise that right after Cory's burial, a popular clamor began for Cory's only son, Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, to run for president. Spon-

taneously, Noynoy became the symbol of hope... and change.

After nine years of Gloria's presidency, the thought of her stepping down from power next year gave a glimmer of hope that next year might be better than the previous years. Indeed, the survey has manifested that hopelessness has given way to hopefulness.

With the presidential elections coming up in May 2010, the people will have a rare opportunity to elect a leader -- amongst the eight contenders -- who could deliver them from the corrupt regime of Gloria.

But the people need to use their heads this time and vote for the candidate who has a compassionate heart for the powerless poor, not for the traditional politicians who glibly make the usual promises and buy their votes for a day's meal.

Indeed, next year could bring forth the change that would improve the people's lives, not the Charter change that Gloria futilely pursued to perpetuate herself in power. It could be the year when the people can begin to truly enjoy the abundance of their patrimony and the product of their labor.

May the spirit of Christmas enlighten and guide the Filipino people on the right road to peace and prosperity next year. It's time for the people to seize the moment and transform their lives from a decadent state of hopelessness to a promising future of hopefulness.