

My Cup of Tea

A Young Patriot's Tale

By: Ryan M. Paren

Ryan, 20 year old, is a senior Broadcast Communication student at the University of the Philippines in Miagao, Iloilo.

He says " I know being patriotic has less to do with where one lives or works. As for my mother, the country lost one great skilled individual, but she gave her country a family with a bright future ahead of them.

It is no secret that most Filipinos harbor the desire to get out of the country in the hope of improving themselves and upgrading their families' socio-economic status and living standards. Years before, I remember that every time a friend or someone I know leaves the Philippine shores, I wished him or her all the best, yet at the same time felt not a pang of envy, only sadness for the lost of one more talent. I thought that the sad plight of able-bodied Filipino workers abroad – a massive exodus of educated people who find menial jobs in other countries, and the lost of highly skilled individuals weigh our country down and condemn her to stagnation. Through time, I realized that what I thought was incorrect for these Overseas Filipino Workers or Expat Pinoys have played a major role in national development – with their remittances ranking as one of the greatest contributors to the country's economic growth and salvation.

Indeed, it is right to say that being patriotic has less to do with where you live or work, but more on what you contribute to the motherland. This is true for my very own mother is one of those who chose this path of working abroad and be one of those who are called, the Expat *Pinoys*. This is her cup of tea – her guiding belief that made her work harder in a foreign land for us and for the homeland, the Philippines as well.

This made me ponder on some thoughts. Being a son of an Expat Pinoy, I believe that I also have a pivotal role in the society – a responsibility of doing things for the country and the society just like my mother and the other Filipinos here and abroad, gearing towards the building up of the nation. With this, I gathered all my thoughts, and made myself ready in preparing my own cup of tea.

In our country today, I am one of the youths – who are said to be the crucial segment of our nation's development. My contribution therefore for nation building, which is usually referred to as a constructive process of engaging all citizens in building social cohesion, economic prosperity and political stability in an inclusive and democratic way, is highly needed. How? What is then my role for our country's development? In nation-building?

First, the most basic of all, is to accept the fact that whatever I am today is because of the country and the society. Hence, giving something back to the society is a must. Being able to study for free in the most prestigious state university in the country is one privilege and opportunity that I myself am experiencing at the moment. Thus, giving back something, for me, means studying very hard or being academically excellent, thus not to place into waste the Filipinos' money or taxes allocated for my studies, and also the financial support from my parents' hard work which enables me to study. But this doesn't mean focusing on my academics alone and neglecting my social responsibilities as a citizen of this nation. While maintaining myself as academically excellent, I take part in various debates, forums, activities, and discussions about various national and local issues that affect the lives of the Filipinos. Being involved, active and sensitive to these issues, and doing something about them are big contributions to the growth of the not just my whole – being but of the nation as well. *“Mula sa Masa, Tungo sa Masa”* as what my socio-civic political organization in the university believes in.

Second, I believe that in working on anything in which I can interact with the surroundings and can help make it better is also a role that I am taking in as a person and citizen of this country. Thus work of helping needy students and citizens in my own little way such as guiding and leading new students in the university and mentoring them, helping the aged in crossing the streets, doing volunteer works in the communities, etc. are but little actions that result to big impacts to the lives of these people and the country as well.

Third, I believe that cleaning the surroundings, and the environment – thinking on improving them, writing about them and telling others about them can also be a part of my work for the society. Joining the race for environment conservation has been a passion that I myself have – even strengthened more after receiving the award as one of the Bayer Young Environment Envoys in the country for this year.

Fourth, in the economic aspect, the simple way of asking for a receipt every time I purchase something, buying Philippine made products and preferring them above foreign goods are little ways in contributing something to the country.

Fifth, we can't deny the fact that we need young leaders that will also take part in leading the way for a brighter future of our country. Having blessed with the opportunities that developed my leadership skills, I believed that it is a must for me to share what I've learned and experienced to other young people like me. These stories I had and knew from others can possibly inspire those young people and enhance their potentials for the good of the country.

Sixth, we know that everyone of us needs to be politically involved. This is one responsibility and role we have in the development of our nation. As a youth, one basic role I have is being involved during the country's national and local elections. Casting my vote is a form of exercising my right to choose the leaders whom I believe can bring the country and its citizens into a better state. In today's challenging times, with our country in the midst of economic and social crises, it is undeniable that we need good leaders who can be trusted. We should always remember that the fate of our nation lies in our hands.

Lastly, as one of the future new graduates of the country, I am well aware that I will be one of the millions who will compete for better job opportunities in various companies and working places here and abroad. A few will be lucky to get into well established companies in the country and be well compensated. Others will apply to any job openings in the country despite making themselves underemployed. A lot more will be some of the millions who will resort to apply in any work abroad, be employed in menial jobs in foreign lands and receive better pay; rather than to stay in the country, be employed, yet earn a meager salary or worse, be unemployed. Because of this sad reality, it seemed that going abroad after graduation is the best solution to escape from the seemingly sad fate awaiting me and my fellow youths or graduates. However, I believe that rendering service to the nation by working here in our homeland is one best way that I can play a major role in nation-building. There is nothing wrong with working abroad as what my mother, and others do and/or planning to do; it's just not my cup of tea. Idealistic it may seem, yet I always believe on what we call "*Return of Investment.*" I believe that my country has invested a lot on me, and it is just proper for me to give something in return. As an old quote goes, "*To whom much is given, much is expected in return.*" At the same time, I always look at the bright side of life here in our homeland. I know that our country has a lot of potentials that need to be unleashed, waiting to be discovered and developed. That is why I am doing my best to learn a lot in school and in the various activities I am taking in, for me to make myself ready in searching for those, and in facing the real world that awaits me.

Being a son of an Expat Pinoy, I am filled with dreams not only for myself but also for my family and country, the Philippines. As one individual who has realized the responsibility and commitment vested upon me as a citizen of this nation, I do believe that yes, I have this duty to make myself an example for others for them to also realize that they have to take part in the building up and developing our nation.

With these thoughts and ideals, it is indeed true that I have this pivotal role in society, in our country. I have been playing my role already. Now is the time for me to help others realize the role that they too have for our motherland. I have prepared my own cup of tea. Its time I help others prepare theirs.