

Three Generation of Nation Building

By : Ma. Lesley F. Pascual

Ma. Lesley F. Pascual is a lady who's always been on top of her game. She was the Class Valedictorian in high school and graduated Magna Cum Laude in college. She is now on her second year as a student of medicine at the Dela Salle Health Science Institute.

As a student of medicine, Lesley believes that what differentiates the best doctor from a great one is the latter's passion for social transformation. While she understands the sacrifices that her parents make to enable them to realize their dreams, she wants to stay in the country to be an instrument of that social transformation. To heal not only wounded bodies, but to heal even wounded souls.

I will never work in a foreign country like my parents....

Let me tell you about a story that started 30 years ago. There was this young man who opted to stop his college degree at his third year because an opportunity to work abroad came knocking at his door. He was a working student and had his whole family of eight depending on him, leaving him with very little freedom to choose. Two years later, he met this beautiful lady and they married and had a child immediately. Not long after, his wife also accompanied him overseas for a year, it was 1986 and they already had two children. She again joined him in 1991, and by this time, the youngest of their already four children was only two years old. She came back for good in 1994 while the husband on the other hand, continued to harvest on greener pastures. At one point or another, the family attempted to immigrate to a foreign land and at some points, they tried to make it work so that they can all be together and stay here for good. However, fate has not been kind to their endeavors and so until now and until the head of the family is old enough to retire, they would have to be separated from each other.

This is not an extraordinary story; it is actually the history of a lot of Filipino families. However, what is written above did not reveal the soul of the story which actually lies between the lines. Between these lines are sweat, blood and tears; between these lines are letters of yearning, pictures of encouragement and recorded tapes of hope; between these lines are wives having to go through difficult pregnancies without their husbands; between these lines are children not recognizing the face of their father who has been gone too long and left even before they became conscious of the world; between these lines are graduation ceremonies of children who graduated with honors but can not take

a picture with their parents beaming with happiness; and between these lines but the space between cannot actually hold, are myriads of sad things.

Now, there is another story which started 20 years ago when a girl was born in a humble family somewhere in the crowded streets of Caloocan City. She was the third child of two overseas workers. The next 11 years of her life did not make much visible impact. She was reserved and not the top-of-the-class type. However, she had the makings of a hard worker who values education and reveres the Almighty. In those first years, a seed was sown in rocky ground, a seed whose roots had to fight hard to thrive. Providentially, it did, as the accounts of the next years prove. For her secondary education, her parents had to transfer her as well as her siblings to another school because of financial challenges. This proved to be divine intervention because it was on this new ground, that she finally broke out of the soil, grew and blossomed. She started to tell the world of her unspoken dreams and visions. She finally believed and trusted in what God has given her as gifts. Fortunately, the people believed in her as well and so until now and until she is alive, she will make a difference.

Again, the accounts abovementioned is not an extraordinary story; it is the history of a lot of children out there who have parent/s working abroad. However, what is written above is just part of the big picture. It lacks a very important factor which made the seed succeed. It did not mention what weathered the seed so that it came out strong and sure. Weathering came in many forms, it could be in the form of media who continuously bombards the public with portrayals of children rebelling against their parents who work abroad; it could be in the form of low expectations that young minds would not understand and be mature before their age does; and it could be in the form of misguidance, misunderstandings and the strong pull to be passive and selfish. These factors are what cradled the seed. The seed did not have any choice but to allow these things to nourish it lest it will perish. She, along with others, went against the current and proved herself mature enough to understand; she saw how her parents gave up their dreams so she can shoot for the stars; she looks forward to the future smiling because she knows she will be able to make her parents proud of what she will become; and she hopes to effect change and protect the next generation so they won't have to experience the same thing. The weathering came in as watering.

She was I, I am from the story above. I am a child of overseas workers. The first story is that of my father and mother. Unlike the popular portrayal of children who have parents working abroad, I never hated my parents or questioned them why they left, and as for my father, continue to leave. I understood beyond what is expected of me and I was inspired by the sacrifices they were willing to make so that I can realize my dreams. Moreover, I am overwhelmed by the truth of their happiness in all that I can be even if it means giving more of themselves. I did not allow the usual and the apparent situation to get the best of me, in fact, I made the situation work to my advantage and so now I can have a positive role in curbing that same situation.

Furthermore, I believe that I would not be what I am today, if not for the situation. I am a student of medicine, who vows to stay and serve the less fortunate after getting my degree amidst the disproportionate compensation here and the shining opportunities abroad. I am the president of the medical student council, not because the load of studying medicine is not enough to fill my hands but

because I believe that what differentiates the best doctor from a great one is his passion for social transformation. A great doctor knows that the current gloomy health situation in the country is not caused by pathogens alone but by a lot of factors like corruption and poverty; and he is willing to address them. Lastly, I pursue academic excellence because as an extension of God's healing hands and as caretakers of not just wounded bodies but wounded souls, no less is acceptable. I am this empowered because I fully understand what it is like to be lacking and I know that I am even more fortunate than at least a million more Filipinos and so I pledge to take part in realizing the next story, the most important story, a story from the future.

The third story is about a child who is going to be born approximately ten years from now. The child will be born in a humble home on a certain province. Her parents are hand in hand in raising her up, teaching her about life, about God and about nationalism. She would not have to learn from the situation but will learn from her parents. They will be teaching her about love and giving so that she will grow up with so much love in her heart, she can not wait to share it with others. She will be empowered and excellent not because the times had been rough on her but because she wants the good times to last.

I envision that the third story will not be a rarity; it will be the rule rather than the exception. She will not be alone, they will be many. They will be the next generation of Filipino, Filipinos who love and are proud of their country; Filipinos who care not only for their own good but for the good of other people; Filipinos from which a good government can come from; Filipinos who would stay and consider serving their countrymen an honor; Filipinos who are Filipinos not only by color, not only by features, not only by blood or by birth, but Filipinos who really are.

Three stories, three generations. I am in the second story, I am the second generation. I know what happened in the first story; I came from the first generation. Thus, I will help realize the third story; I will uphold the third generation. This is my role as a child of this present. I am creating a crack and I strongly believe there are many others who are doing so as well, together, we will shake the world.

I will never work in a foreign country like my parents... that is not disregarding the nobleness of what they did but actually a testament to what they have achieved in me.

I will never work in a foreign country like my parents.... I will stay here and be part of the solution.

I will never work in a foreign country like my parents... that is my role.