

ARE WE TOTALLY FREE?

by:

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“Sabihin mo sa ating kababayan, hindi nakakamit ang Kalayaan sa pag-aaruga sa kanilang mga mahal sa buhay, kailangan nilang magbayad, dugo at pawis, kailangan nilang tumalon sa kawalan.” (tell our countrymen that freedom is not achieved by protecting their love ones, they have to pay the price, blood and sweat. They have to jump into abyss.)

-General Antonio Luna (from the 2015 epic war movie Heneral Luna)

Written this Independence Day. What is the concept of the word freedom for you? Was it we are free from any foreign intervention? Or was it we are free to express our opinion on the government or institution where we are belonging without the expense of others? Or was it we are free to read, watch, and listen to the things that we want without the fear that we may get arrested for doing it?

For the record June 12, 1898, is only our Independence Day against Spanish rule. July 4, 1946, is the day wherein we are free from any foreign regime. But on May 12, 1964, President Diosdado Macapagal, moved that the celebration will be June 12 and the 4th of July will be the Filipino American Friendship Day. So, if we will consider 1946 as the beginning we have our own sovereignty, our country is more than seven decades free. In the aftermath of the so-called “EDSA Revolution”, we can even conclude that our country is not free. That’s why I have some ideas in my mind and I don’t think that we are totally free.

There are several factors that I consider why our country is not totally free, regardless that there is no foreign rule in our country we are not free in terms of the following:

Poverty – Due to high inflation rates and ratio of unemployment, this country is beaten by poverty and because of necessity there is a big rate of unemployment wherein according to PSA the unemployment rate is 4.2% or 2.18 million Filipinos and underemployment is 14.4% or approximately 457,000 Filipinos in this country, that's why are not free because of poverty.

Peace and Order – Most of the crimes committed is because of poverty, 105,568 cases of crime were recorded last second quarter of 2022, and PNP records theft, rape, and physical injury as the top 3 most prevalent crime committed as the main reason is poverty. Criminals often result into those crimes if they can't sustain their needs or fund their vices.

Foreign Intervention – for the record our country was invaded by three nations recorded by Spain (1603-1898), the United States (1898-1946), and was intervened by Japanese in World War II (1941-1946) that's why colonial mentality is shown in most of the Filipinos. In the past few years, the issue is the South China Sea dispute. Despite the Hauge ruling last 2016. Beijing did not recognize international ruling because of their so-called historical "rights" and provoking to escalate the tension by making artificial islands on Spratlys. Recently last April-May 2023, Filipino and American forces conducted joint training in our country. To make the story short, we are not free from any foreign intervention.

Ignorance and Lack of Education – In my own opinion, this is the main source of the problem, we are not free because of these factors. As of UNICEF Report based on US Agency for International Development in November 2021, the number of out-of-school youth increased from 16.9 percent in January 2020 to 25.2 percent in April 2020, and due to the pandemic, 1.1 million learners did not enroll due to a lack of internet access to accommodate online learning. Those youth disadvantaged with quality education can

have a potential removed from them. Those youth can be potential in nation-building, be a part of a working force, and can be potential leaders. Ignorance and lack of education can result in poverty and dilemma regarding peace and order and poor leadership. There must be an improvement in our educational system, there must be support for our teaching force, support for the learners, and ensure the right career path after graduation so that we can have a high morale and productive workforce. As Jose Rizal said that “Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life but is life itself.”

As General Luna said in the first paragraph, each on us must give a great sacrifice in order to make this country free. As leaders of the country, we must lead without any hidden interest, “Bayan Muna, Bago Sarili”. As working adults, we must give our best on our craft. As Student, we must study hard and embrace all the learning as much as we can, as our teacher are equipping us towards the future. As a Filipino, we must show excellence in all the things that we are doing to stand up in the world with dignity and pride.

The Official Website of DepED Division of Bataan

With the dilemmas and insights that I’ve stated, do you think that our country is totally free?

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