

**THE YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT****Speech of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos  
Awarding Ceremony of Ten Outstanding  
Students of the Philippines  
Malacañang Palace  
August 17, 1992**

PRESIDENTS AND GOVERNOR-GENERALS HAVE COME AND GONE THROUGH THESE PORTALS -- SOME STAYING ONLY BRIEFLY, AND OTHERS MUCH LONGER THAN WE WANTED -- BUT IN THE END THE WORDS OF ECCLESIASTES HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY IMMUTABLE: "ONE GENERATION PASSES AWAY AND ANOTHER GENERATION COMES. THE SUN ALSO RISES."

WE WHO ARE PRIVILEGED TO LEAD THE NATION TODAY SEE IN OUR YOUNG AWARDEES THAT NEW SUNRISE. AND THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY AND THEIR GENERATION WILL ALSO TAKE OVER. AND ALL OVER THE LAND, HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IS REVIVING AMONG OUR 62 MILLION COUNTRYMEN.

HOPES FOR RENEWAL NATURALLY COME WITH A NEW GOVERNMENT ENTERING INTO OFFICE. BUT AS WE KNOW ONLY TOO WELL, THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY FULFILLED. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, WHEN THE NOVELTY WEARS OFF, WHEN THE CRAB MENTALITY TAKES OVER, HOPES AND DREAMS WITHER ON THE VINE AND NOT MUCH IS ACCOMPLISHED.

IT IS BEST THAT WE ACKNOWLEDGE THIS AT ONCE, SO WE CAN BETTER COMPREHEND AND ACT UPON THE CHALLENGES BEFORE US. AND SO WE WILL FULLY APPRECIATE HOW PRECIOUS AND FLEETING IS THE OPPORTUNITY WE HAVE NOW.

OUR COUNTRY HAS A SORRY HISTORY OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT APPEARED AND WERE NOT EXPLOITED. LIKEWISE A HERITAGE OF DIVISIVENESS AND LACK OF UNITY BEHIND NATIONAL GOALS THAT HAS SQUANDERED PRECIOUS TIME, ENERGY AND RESOURCES. WE CANNOT, WE MUST NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

IN A MEMORABLE ESSAY, ONE OF OUR FOREMOST WRITERS NATIONAL ARTIST NICK JOAQUIN ONCE DEPLORED THAT OURS IS "A HERITAGE OF SMALLNESS." SOCIETY FOR US IS A SMALL ROWBOAT, THE BARANGAY. GEOGRAPHY IS A SMALL LOCALITY: THE NEIGHBORHOOD OR THE BARRIO. AND COMMERCE IS THE SMALLEST DEGREE OF RETAIL: THE TINGI AND THE SARI-SARI STORE.

WE ARE, HE CONCLUDES, A SMALL NATION, NOT SO MUCH IN TERMS OF TERRITORY BUT IN TERMS OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUR DREAMS.

YET HOWEVER PENETRATING THIS VERDICT, THIS IS HARDLY THE SUM OF WHAT WE ARE AS A PEOPLE AND WHAT WE CAN HOPE TO BE AS A NATION.

THINK BACK A MOMENT AND RECALL. THIS NATION CAME TO BIRTH FROM THE TOILS AND STRIVINGS OF VERY YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN. MEN LIKE RIZAL, DEL PILAR, BONIFACIO AND AGUINALDO WHO IN THEIR 20'S KEPT THEIR APPOINTMENTS WITH HISTORY AT AN AGE WHEN OUR YOUTH TODAY ARE JUST COMING OUT OF COLLEGE AND BEGINNING THEIR FAMILIES.

THOUGH YOUNG IN YEARS, HOW MIGHTY WERE THE VISIONS OF OUR HEROES. THEIR LIVES WERE TOUCHED WITH FIRE, SUCH THAT THEY FACED THE WHITE MAN'S ARMIES AND STEEL AND FOUNDED THE FIRST REPUBLIC IN ASIA.

AND MANY HAVE BEEN THE OTHER OCCASIONS -- IN WORLD WAR II AND AT EDSA -- WHEN OUR PEOPLE ROSE TO HEROISM IN PEACE AND IN WAR AND COMMANDED THE IMAGINATION OF THE WORLD.

IF OUR COUNTRY HAS BEEN WRACKED BY CRISIS, IT IS SURELY NOT FROM ANY FUNDAMENTAL FAILINGS OF THE INDIVIDUAL FILIPINO OR OUR CULTURE, OR BECAUSE OUR HERITAGE IS SMALL. RATHER IT IS MAINLY BECAUSE WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE MAINSPRINGS OF OUR NATIONHOOD. WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY THROUGH THE FAILURE OF LEADERS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF GOVERNMENT.

IF THUS WE ARE TO RISE AGAIN AS A NATION -- TO THE PROGRESS THAT IS WITHIN OUR TALENTS TO ACHIEVE -- IT WILL BE BY RETURNING TO THE ROOTS OF IDEALISM AND PATRIOTISM THAT MARK OUR HISTORY. WE HAVE TO LOOK AT OUR COUNTRY AND OURSELVES AFRESH -- IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT THIS NATION MUST HAVE LOOKED TO OUR YOUNG HEROES OF LONG AGO, WHO BELIEVED THAT PROGRESS WAS THE INEVITABLE LOT OF OUR RACE.

WE HAVE TO LOOK AT OUR FUTURE IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT A YOUNG MAN OR WOMAN LOOKS AT TOMORROW AS HE OR SHE COMES OUT OF SCHOOL -- WITH DARING, HOPE AND WILL.

THIS IS THE CHALLENGE WHICH THIS ADMINISTRATION IS RESOLVED TO MEET -- WITH YOUR HELP.

THIS I DARESAY IS THE CHALLENGE TOO WHICH THOSE OF THE NEW GENERATIONS MUST STRIVE TO FILL AS THEY RISE TO THEIR PLACES IN OUR SOCIETY.

OUR MANY MISFORTUNES NOTWITHSTANDING, WE ARE AN ACHIEVING AND GIFTED PEOPLE. WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT.

I SEE NO MORE VIVID EVIDENCE OF THIS THAN THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS COMING TO ADULthood AMONG US -- IN THEIR DEMONSTRATION THAT EDUCATION IS POWER, THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE OLD BELIEFS, THEIR EAGERNESS TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW WAYS AND NEW THINGS, THEIR DARING TO THINK BIG, AND THEIR REFUSAL TO BE DAUNTED.

IT IS OF THIS STUFF THAT WE MUST BUILD OUR FUTURE.

PEOPLE ARE THE KEY. AND IN THE MEASURE THAT WE EMPOWER MILLIONS OF FILIPINOS -- WITH EDUCATION, HEALTH, SELF-RELIANCE AND OPPORTUNITY -- SO WILL THIS NATION RISE TO THE GREATNESS WE CAN ATTAIN.

IT IS THE GOOD FORTUNE OF THE NEW GENERATIONS TO COME TO ADOLESCENCE AND ADULthood AT A VASTLY DIFFERENT TIME WHEN DEMOCRACY ONCE MORE REIGNS IN OUR COUNTRY.

THOUGH CLEARLY MANY PROBLEMS REMAIN, THE CONDITIONS ARE NOW SUCH THAT WE HAVE A REAL CHANCE TO UPROOT THEM.

THIS IS A TIME WHEN WE ARE ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT THAT NOW GIVES MORE IMPORTANCE TO ORDINARY FILIPINOS; THAT SHOWS THE WAY TO OUR PEOPLE TOWARD THE FUTURE THAT THEY ASPIRE FOR

THROUGH PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT.

THIS IS A TIME WHEN THE YOUTH OF OUR LAND CAN APPLY THEMSELVES WITH VIGOR TO THE TASK, NOT OF QUARRELING WITH GOVERNMENT, BUT OF WORKING WITH IT FOR A CHANGE.

THE HOUR HAS COME TO BURY THE STEREOTYPES OF THE PAST. THE STEREOTYPE OF THE STUDENT WHO FEELS COMPELLED TO MARCH AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF OUR SOCIETY. AND OF GOVERNMENT AS AN INEFFECTUAL MACHINERY THAT CAN DO NOTHING OR ACHIEVE NOTHING.

I SAY TO ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, WE CAN DO MUCH, AND WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER.

IN OUR CITIES AND COUNTRYSIDE, I INVITE YOU TO TAKE PART IN BUILDING THE NEW PHILIPPINES THAT IS WITHIN OUR CAPABILITY TO ESTABLISH BEFORE THE CENTENNIAL OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE IN 1998.

IN THE PAST, WE DID NOT PROGRESS MUCH PROBABLY BECAUSE WE SET OUR GOALS TOO LOW, OR BECAUSE WE WERE RETARDED BY PARTISAN RIVALRIES AND POLITICAL ENMITIES.

TODAY, OUR GOALS MUST BE MOVED HIGHER; OUR VISION MUST REACH FARTHER INTO THE FUTURE; AND OUR PACE MUST BE FASTER.

IN MY INAUGURAL ADDRESS, I COMMITTED TO "WIN THE FUTURE" FOR OUR PEOPLE. EDUCATION IS AMONG THE FIRST STEPS TO THIS END. MY ADMINISTRATION WILL PROVIDE AT LEAST ONE COMPLETE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN EVERY BARANGAY. THUS, EVERY CHILD BETWEEN THE AGES OF 7 TO 12 WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETE AT LEAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLING.

RECENTLY, I AUTHORIZED SECRETARY ARMAND V. FABELLA TO REPROGRAM THE BUDGET OF THE DECS AND THE STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SO THAT MORE FUNDS MAY BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE NEEDED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL ELEMENTARY GRADE SCHOOL TEACHERS. FROM THE PRESIDENT'S SOCIAL FUND, I HAVE ALSO INCREASED THE SHARE OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR FROM ONE-THIRD TO AT LEAST TWO-THIRDS OR ROUGHLY ₱20 MILLION A MONTH TO ACCELERATE THE CONSTRUCTION OF 2-ROOM SCHOOL BUILDINGS IN THE 6,000 BARANGAYS WHERE SUCH FACILITIES DO NOT EXIST. I GUARANTEE THAT BEFORE THE END OF MY TERM, UNIVERSAL AND HIGHER QUALITY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO EVERY FILIPINO CHILD IN ALL OUR 42,000 BARANGAYS.

SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION WILL ALSO MERIT OUR URGENT ATTENTION. FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE PROVIDED WITH THE EMPHASIS THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE EXPOSED MORE AND MORE TO TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC LEARNING. THERE WILL BE INCREASED ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION. TO THIS END, I AM GLAD THAT SECRETARY FABELLA HAS LIBERALIZED THE CUT-OFF GRADE FOR THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION (NCEE). LET THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN COLLEGE DETERMINE THEIR ABILITY OR INABILITY TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF A COLLEGE DEGREE.

OUR AWARDEES TODAY AND THEIR MENTORS ARE NOW FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE TO HELP MAKE THE FUTURE A BRIGHTER ONE FOR FILIPINOS. WITH DETERMINATION. WITH COURAGE. WITH ENTERPRISE.

THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO WIN THE FUTURE.

AGAIN, I CONGRATULATE EACH OF YOU FOR YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS. AND I HONOR YOU FOR WHAT YOU

STAND FOR IN THE YEARS TO COME.

MABUHAY KAYONG LAHAT, AT MARAMING SALAMAT PO.

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