



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*On the Occasion of the 4th Philippines I Transform Young Leaders
Conference (PITYLC)*

19 September 2015

Baguio City

KEYNOTE MESSAGE

by

LEILA M. DE LIMA

Secretary

Friends, ladies and gentlemen, our leaders of tomorrow:

Isn't it wonderful to be here in Baguio on a cold September morning before a gathering of young people?

When I was as young and as starry-eyed as you are, we were told that there are two reasons why people come to Baguio.

First reason: to find true love.

Second reason: to fix a broken heart.

Finding true love. Sana, sa pagpunta ninyo dito, matagpuan ninyo ang hinahanap ninyong ... forever more.

At sa mga nandito ngayon na merong kailangang i-fix na broken heart, ito lang ang masasabi ko: move on, my dear, move on. Ang experience of a broken heart ... pinagdadaan lang 'yan – hindi tinatambayan.

Experience of a broken heart? That experience should do three things for you – one, make you stronger; two, make you ... wiser; three, make you ... braver.

Mas malakas. Mas matalino. Mas matapang.

Siguro, ang tanong ninyo, paano naman nalaman ni Secretary Leila ang mga bagay na 'yun.

Let me tell you this: 'pag pag-ibig ang pinag-usapan, hindi lang ako survivor. I am winner ... I am a victor.

At dapat ... kayo din.

I did not come here this morning, to talk about love ... romance ... forever-mores or broken hearts.

The purpose for my being here is to talk about leadership and that much-talked about but apparently less-appreciated principle called ... accountability.

Now, it so happens that leadership and accountability have a lot in common with the very same principles that apply to ... and govern intimate, affectionate, loving relationships among human beings.

The failure in the exercise of leadership and the failure to uphold the principles of accountability result in broken hearts. Such failures break the hearts of groups and of teams. They break the hearts of organizations. They can break the heart of a people ... of a society ... and even ... of a nation.

Kung hindi mo maisip na durugin ang puso ng taong mahal mo ... ang bansa mo pa kaya?

So, let's talk about that principle of accountability in its simplest terms.

Here's a way to understand it.

When a team ... or an organization ... or a nation chooses us to assume a leadership role, in more ways than one, it gives us ... its heart.

That heart contains a valuable element. It is called trust. Tiwala. In leadership ... as in all human transactions and relationships ... trust ... tiwala ... is an important and indispensable element.

Take trust or tiwala out of the equation and you merely prove ...
... na wala talagang forever.

There is a basis for that trust. It's called ... accountability. We trust because we know that the person to whom that trust is given understands one thing – that she or he ... is accountable to us – that she

or he is aware of the responsibility they have to answer for every action and decision they take ... and make.

Para din lang sa pag-ibig.

'Pag sinagot kita ... may sagutin ka.

At 'pag hindi mo nasagot o sinagot ... lagot.

People ask me : "Leila, to whom are you accountable?"

My answer is this: there are three parties to which I am answerable. They all begin with the letter "C".

First, I answer to ... conscience.

Second, I answer to ... the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.

Third, I answer ... to the constituents of the leadership which appointed me to my post.

Conscience. Constitution. Constituents.

Question: is it important to know to whom one is accountable?

Yes. Of course. Very important.

Knowing to whom one is accountable does several powerful things.

It keeps you focused on your mission.

It gives you the energy and enthusiasm to fulfill that mission.

It provides you the courage ... the courage that one needs especially when the fulfillment of your duty and the pursuit of your mission is under fire and obstacles are thrown your way.

Tatanungin ko kayo. May picture bang nakatago sa wallet ninyo?

Next question: kaninong picture ang nakatago sa wallet mo?

Ang magsabing picture ng parents niya ang nakatago sa wallet niya ... is either a very good child ... or a liar.

In all likelihood, the picture in your wallet is the picture of your special someone. And, in all likelihood, you keep that picture in your wallet for two reasons.

First, to give you that much-needed inspiration.

Second, to remind you of your accountability to that person.

As a leader, you keep that picture not just in your wallet. You keep that image ... in your heart.

That image in your heart is that of your team. Or of the organization you lead. Or of the Nation you are sworn to serve.

I, too, have that image in my heart. It is the image of eight rays of sunburst in the azure sky, and the first three bright stars of a red twilight. Remember this image of our nation and our flag. That is the image of the country I serve. And as of now, my country is suffering.

You can call me names. You can disparage me in social media. You can ridicule me or threaten me all you want.

I don't care.

As long as that image of the red, white and blue with the three stars and a sun is there in my heart ... hindi mo ako puwedeng takutin at pigilan sa tungkulin ko.

Throughout my five years as Secretary of Justice, I was confronted with a lot of situations where powerful and influential individuals or groups were involved. During these occasions my resolve to do what is right was challenged and tested. What I do during these challenges is refresh the image of our suffering people in my mind and then proceed to do what is simply right and apply the law.

The first was the investigation on the Luneta Hostage-Taking Incident, which involved Generals of the Philippine National Police, a Deputy Ombudsman, Mayor Alfredo Lim of Manila, and other executive officials. The investigation resulted in the overhaul of the government's crisis management system in order to better respond to similar events in the future. Several officials were also disciplined, either suspended or dismissed from the service.

After that was the attempted flight of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from the country, just when criminal charges for election fraud were about to be filed against her. Of course, the government did not allow Ms. Arroyo to leave the country, which would

have otherwise made it impossible to put her under trial for the criminal cases eventually filed against her. Ms. Arroyo's trial is still ongoing and she is still presently detained because the offenses charged against her are non-bailable crimes.

One of the biggest undertakings of the DOJ was the investigation of the Napoles PDAF Scam, and the filing of plunder cases against three incumbent senators and several congressmen for the misuse of their PDAF allocations. As you well know, Senators Jinggoy Estrada and Bong Revilla continue to be detained for the non-bailable offense of plunder, while Senator Enrile was recently allowed to post bail by the Supreme Court despite the fact that plunder is a non-bailable offense and despite the absence of any prior determination that the evidence of guilt is not strong. In the meantime, Janet Lim Napoles has already been convicted for kidnapping Benhur Luy, the PDAF Scam whistleblower, and is now already serving her sentence, among the many that she will soon be serving simultaneously in prison.

In between these major issues were several other major incidents and issues, equally explosive and sensitive. Just to name a few – the Atimonan massacre, the Balintang Channel incident, the Mary Jane Veloso case, the big drug lords in the National Bilibid Prison or the “Bilibid 19” and the latest, the INC episode.

People tell me that my handling of those issues and investigations make me controversial. But I never asked to be controversial. These things just fall on my lap. I just have to fulfill my mandate the best way I can without fear or favor.

All of these achievements involve the performance of my job as Secretary of Justice to exact accountability from our public officers. The most important part of this job is to show our public officials that if they steal the people's money, they will go to jail. And although we have not completely removed corruption from our system, we have made it difficult for public officials to return to the old ways of unmitigated plunder of the government coffers through kickbacks and commissions. This is accountability as it should be. You commit a crime, you must pay. We must show our people that crime does not pay, and that criminals go to jail. Why? Because this is the right thing to do.

There are those who still feel that they are above the law, that they are exempt from the law. They feel that because of their position in society or their wealth they are privileged and entitled. They feel that they are different from the rest of us, and that for them the law does not apply. There is no attitude more destructive of our social fabric than this sense of entitlement. Self-entitlement is the very anti-thesis of selflessness and patriotism and the very negation of accountability. If the Philippines is

truly going to be a modern country under the rule of law, the powerful and influential in our society should be stripped of their sense of entitlement and privilege insofar as the equal application of the law is concerned. The law protects us all equally, or it protects no one at all. And for those who choose to enter government and become public officials, a higher standard is demanded from them than the rest of the people. This is why public service entails the utmost in transparency and accountability.

“Transparency” and “accountability” have thus become articles of faith for the *Daang Matuwid*. For my part as the Secretary of Justice, I have always tried my best to be both transparent and accountable in all my actions. I have adopted much-needed reforms in order to restore the integrity of the Department. I have made adherence to ethics a non-negotiable, taking a zero tolerance position on wrongdoers among Department employees. I have put in place mechanisms to reinforce the skills and build the capacity of our prosecutors and lawyers. I have also enhanced the efficiency of the criminal justice process by promoting the use of information sharing mechanisms among stakeholders.

And because of all that I have seen and experienced first as the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights and now as the Secretary of Justice, I have supported and will continue to support amendments to a number of proposed laws that will strengthen and improve our criminal justice system.

Many things have been said about leadership. It has been referred to as the ability to influence the course of things ...or the ability to command the thoughts and actions of others.

But here’s something even more important that must be said about leadership: that it is the ability to put oneself last and put others first. This is what we call SELFLESSNESS. A true leader must live by the dictum of “Country above self”. He must not be afraid to do what is right even if it is unpopular. He must set aside personal ambition and personal considerations for the greater national interest.

That ability to put others first is founded on the dictates of conscience ... on the mandate of the law ... and of the aspiration of the people and Nation one serves.

Sure – a leader commands and influences. But she or he is a servant first.

And one cannot serve and be accountable to those she or he serves ... unless one first falls ... in love.

Let me repeat what I said at the start of my address.

I said there are two reasons why people come up here to Baguio.

First, to look for true love.

Second, to fix a broken heart.

At the end of the day, those are the very same reasons why you, our young leaders, have gathered here today.

You have come here to find true love – to discover that wonderful love affair with your people and your country.

As you fall in love with your countrymen, you gather the strength and the conviction to serve them. To serve without asking much in return. To serve without condition.

To put our time, talents and treasure at the disposal of our Nation.

You have gathered here in Baguio to look for true love. Question: could it be that the true love we are all looking for can be found in the service of our Nation?

Let me quote from someone who gave his all so that this, Our Nation, may be free. His name – Andres Bonifacio.

And, I quote:

*“Aling pag-ibig pa ang hihigit kaya
Sa pagkadalisay at pagkadakila
Gaya ng pag-ibig sa tinubuang lupa?
Aling pag-ibig pa? Wala na nga ... wala.”*

Second reason: people come here to fix a broken heart.

Maybe, you are gathered here today for the very same reason. You are here to fix broken hearts.

Maybe, not your broken heart – but the hearts of close to 100 million Filipinos which have been broken by disappointment and betrayal by so-called leaders who failed the difficult test of accountability.

Maybe, you are here to find out how you can fix the nearly 100 million hearts broken by those who failed to account for the financial, material and moral resources placed at their hands by those who voted for them ... but which they simply pocketed and plundered?

A broken heart heals when it can believe again ... when it can trust again.

Now, my dear young leaders, play your part in mending our people's broken heart.

You can do much to make that happen.

First, make sure that those who have betrayed our Nation's trust and have broken our people's hearts are never voted into public office again.

Second, make sure that when your time comes to take care of our country's financial, material and moral resources, you would take good care of them. That you would remember to exercise utmost care. That you would be accountable for them.

When our nation's coffers are plundered and when those expected to lead do not exercise accountability, our people's trust is betrayed. The pain of betrayal is excruciating. That pain is felt not just by the heart but also by the soul.

Our hope is in your generation. You hold the future in your hands.

Heed our people's call. Listen to their voice.

If you want to lead, then fall in love with them.

And once you have fallen in love with our people ...

... then heal their broken hearts.

'Pag kayo na ang namumuno sa ating bansa, tulungan ninyo kaming muling maniwala ... na merong forever.

God bless our Nation.

-000-