

# Supreme Court chief launches Moral Force Movement

by EDU PUNAY  
Philstar.com

A new movement pushing for a moral force aimed at combating widespread corruption in government was formally launched with its founder, Chief Justice Reynato Puno, calling on Filipinos to choose leaders who are "true, good and right" in next year's polls.

Although Puno refused to name any of the hopefuls for the national elections to keep their social movement non-partisan, he was clear in laying down the standards in choosing transformational leaders that would address pressing social and political problems of the country through "revival of moral virtues and ethical principles embedded in our Constitution and rooted in our customs and traditions."

He cited as an example of a transformational leader the late President Corazon Aquino, who demonstrated to Filipinos that "it is not love of power but power of love that secures the thrones of leaders."

He said President Aquino's leadership could be compared to those of the late Pope John Paul II in Poland, Mahatma Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King Jr. in the US, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

"The leaderships of these legendary figures were effective, empowering and ethical. They were effective because they directed their reforms to the need for moral revival. They were empowering because they removed the blindfold on the eyes of their people and inspired them to change society. They were ethical because they prevailed over their opponents without aping their immoral ways," Puno said in his speech during the launch of the Moral Force Movement held at the Far Eastern University in Manila.

Transformational leaders, according to Puno, are those who induce followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization or the greater whole and appeal to their moral values to mobilize their energy and resources to reform institutions.

Transactional leaders, in contrast, motivate their followers by appealing to their self-interest.

A transformational leader inspires, develops



POWER OF LOVE: Chief Justice Reynato Puno says the nation needs the 'power of love,' not 'love of power,' during the launch of the Moral Force Movement. Philstar.com Photo by Edd Gumban

and empowers followers.

The core group has also decided that it will not only focus on searching and electing transformational leaders in the national level but will be targeting all elected posts from the *barangay* level to the highest elected post of the nation.

Asked if he could see any of the presidential hopefuls qualifying for such standards, the chief justice said May 2010 is "still a long way" off and that hopefully a transformational leader would be found among the candidates.

"This is a social movement—nothing political. We are not endorsing any particular individual. I hope I would not be asked to make any comment on the political landscape," he explained.

He lamented that moral transformation in government is necessary since the country is "now putrefied by politics where power is put above principle" and being "run to the ground by an economy infested by greed."

Puno even likened the "moral deficit" of government to the cases of the Roman Empire in Italy and Ming Dynasty in China, whose leaders succumbed to "virus of greed, self-absorption and complacency" and were "corrupted by absolute power."

But the chief justice believes that the moral decay

in government and society can be addressed without marching in the streets or raising clenched fists.

"We need only to be still wherever we are and listen to the whispers of our conscience, reminding us of our timely and timeless moral values in life... Let us not just stay neutral in this fight, for the surest way to lose a fight against evil is through the conspiracy of silence," he explained.

He called on Filipinos to become responsible citizens and support the cause of their group, which will first focus on good conduct of elections next year and selection of transformational leaders.

He also advised voters not to vote for candidates who bribe, lie and cheat.

The launch of MFM was attended by hundreds of students and concerned groups from different sectors. Participants were each given a white rubberized wristband representing the movement.

Puno was also joined by members of the movement's advisory council whom he had personally chosen, among them Henrietta de Villa, chair of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfre) and Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV); Msgr. Gerry Santos, director of Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines; Ret. Gen. Jaime Echeverria, president and chair of Association of Generals and Flag Officers; and Dr. Emerito Nacpil, retired bishop of United Methodist Church who now serves as director of Wesleyan College of Manila.

Dr. Milwida Guevarra, former finance undersecretary and now director of Synergia Foundation; FEU Institute of Law dean Andres

Bautista; Marixi Prieto, chair of Philippine Daily Inquirer, and Noorain Sabdulla, an outstanding student awardee who became student council president of Catholic school in Cabanatuan City also were members of the advisory council.

Members of the council unanimously agreed with the need to elect transformational leaders as key to alleviate poverty and address problems, including corruption.

De Villa, for her part, is hopeful that more Filipino voters would become responsible with the official start of MFM's campaign.

"This is the start of change from graft and corruption, confusion and conflict. May Filipino voters will be finally awakened," she stressed.

While the task to mold responsible voters is already being performed by groups like PPCRV, the MFM is aimed precisely at uniting these groups with similar objectives to be able to solidify their efforts, according to SC spokesman lawyer Jose Midas Marquez.

The core group has "set parameters for the moral force movement with the purpose of making the people aware of what's been happening and to do something about it."

Puno earlier vowed that the movement would not be anti-administration or pro-opposition but rather "a positive-neutral constructive."

Earlier, Puno lamented how the country is now perceived in the world as a "moral pariah."

He said Filipinos have wit-

nessed moral decadence and leprosy, referring to corruption in government that he likened to the corruption in England at the time when the United Methodist church was founded by John Wesley in the 1700s.

"We are cast as a moral pariah. What a tragic social landscape for the only Christian country in southeast Asia," he said.

Puno had lamented how corruption in the country has been "deforming all its institutions, undermining our stability and security and preventing our socio-economic development."

**Serve the people**  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) president Jaro, Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo reminded all the candidates seeking the presidency and vice presidency that their desire should be to serve the people and not turn the 2010 elections into a gimmick to promote their personal and political party's interest.

In an interview with the Church-run Radio Veritas, Archbishop Lagdameo said that he noticed that there are many people who want to become president and are already spending millions of pesos for their campaign.

"When they talk, they say that they are motivated to serve the country. I hope that this is true. But this is not what is being projected to today's youth. To them, it appears that politics is no longer a show of statesmanship and of selfless service for the country. This has now become a personal or party business," he said. ■

## New law vs election cheaters sought

by JOSE RODEL CLAPANO  
Philstar.com

FORMER President Joseph Estrada asked Congress to pass a new law that would impose maximum penalty against election cheaters.

"Congress must pass a new law that would make election cheating a heinous crime. Election cheating is suppressing the will of the people. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, the voice of the people is the voice of God," Estrada said in a telephone interview.

He noted that each election held in the country has been marred by fraud. He even cited the case of his closest friend, the late movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., who ran but lost to President Arroyo in the 2004 elections due to alleged massive cheating.

"Election cheating has been prevalent in the country, that is why we have a bad government. The law imposing the maximum

penalty against election cheating must not only be applicable to mayors, governors, lawmakers, but including the president. There must be no exemptions when it comes to the violation of the laws," Estrada said.

The former president has consistently declared that he will try his best to unite the opposition into supporting a single presidential candidate in 2010.

But he admitted that his effort to unify the opposition has turned from dim to impossible.

Estrada said the opposition must learn its lesson from the 2004 presidential elections where many ran for president.

He said the more presidential candidates fielded by the opposition, the easier it would be for the administration to cheat.

Another Erap presidency? However, an official of the Catholic Church met with skepticism Estrada's pronouncement that he

was already 99 percent sure to run for president in 2010.

Speaking on the Church-run Radio Veritas, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo said the former president may be sure of running, but the question is, are the Filipino people ready for a second round of his administration?

"We should not only look at this from the perspective of is he (Estrada) ready, the people should also be ready for him," Bishop Pabillo said, adding that the Filipino people already had a taste of the Estrada administration.

In Estrada's desire to return to public office, the bishop reminded the actor-turned-politician that he should not only think about getting his vindication, because becoming president should mean so much more.

"Will the country improve if he becomes president? Would he unify the opposition? It is possible that instead of unifying

the opposition, it would further cause division among them. That is why we should not only think about what would be good for one's self but what would be for the common good of the people," said Bishop Pabillo.

The people should also take into consideration Estrada's capability to lead the country. "They should look at his track record and remember what happened to him before."

Meanwhile, the Consortium on Electoral Reform has warned that the 2010 local and national polls might still be plagued with flying voters as the Commission on Elections (Comelec) has failed to cleanse the voters' lists. ■

## NPC: Full slate in 2010 polls

by GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.  
Inquirer.net

THE Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. vowed to field a full national ticket for president, vice president and senators with Senator Francis Escudero as its front-runner to be the party's standard bearer.

Danding's son, Pangasinan Representative Mark Cojuangco, said that it was high time that the NPC field its own candidates, considering the imminent change of administration.

"We will definitely have our own team for president and vice president," replied Cojuangco when asked in dzMM's "Dos Por Dos" if the NPC was willing to form a coalition with Lakas-Kampi or former president Joseph Estrada with Escudero as the vice president.

Cojuangco said it was a two-horse race for NPC's standard bearer, Escudero and Sen. Loren Legarda, with the winner likely to be picked based on their performance in the latest survey prior to the November deadline in the filing of a certificate of candidacy.

Cojuangco said Escudero has so far had the upper hand over Legarda in the popularity ratings.

Cojuangco fawned over Escudero during his visit to his hometown last week. He likened Escudero's public charisma to that of Estrada and the late, losing presidential bet Fernando Poe Jr.

As Escudero's popularity grows, so does the number of his critics.

Camiguin Representative Pedro Romualdo of Lakas-Kampi claimed that Escudero could be a vice president but not president because of his sparse track record. In a statement, Romualdo claimed that the Lakas-Kampi candidates Vice-president Noli de Castro, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman Bayani Fernando were better choices

than Escudero for president.

Even NPC's Isabela Rep. Giorgidi Aggabao said many sectors did not see Escudero as a presidential candidate and

even Estrada saw him as a running mate.

But Cojuangco was unfazed, saying Escudero's youth was a plus. ■

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**SPEAKERS:**

**Dado Banstao** is the managing partner of Tallwood Venture Capital, a firm focusing on semiconductors and semiconductor related technologies. He is credited with developing several key semiconductor technologies and is regarded as a Silicon Valley visionary.

**Winston Damarillo**, CEO and Founder of Simula Labs ([www.simulalabs.com](http://www.simulalabs.com)), a Marina Del Rey-based firm that is developing companies based on open source software. Winston is the founder of Gluecode, which was purchased by IBM last year, and a former venture capitalist at Intel Capital.

**Sheila Marcelo** is a seasoned entrepreneur whose passion for business and family led to the founding of Care.com. She also served as an executive at several successful consumer internet companies including: Upromise and TheLadders.com.

**MODERATOR:**  
**Eric Manlunas** is the Founder and Managing Director of Frontera Group, LLC, a boutique venture capital firm focused on investing in early-stage emerging companies. He is a two-time start-up veteran turned venture capitalist with a strong passion for early-stage investing.

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