

Written by Bobby Reyes

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* Columnist Tony Abaya reportedly asked former President Joseph Estrada about ex-President Cory C. Aquino's apology over her role in the EDSA-II revolution that resulted in his ouster. Mr. Abaya asked if the apology raised his (Erap's) morale and those of his supporters. Former President Estrada was said to have replied: "Tony, the issue of morality had nothing to do with it."

* "Perhaps when Nick Joaquin talked of 'a heritage of smallness,' he was referring to the current crop of Filipino national leaders, as magnified by a moral dwarf of a President, a midget both literally and figuratively." – Bobby Reyes, in his article, [Nick Joaquin Stereotypes the Filipino People and Forgets to Discuss their Heritage of Greatness](#)

* In January 1949, the Senate President Jose Avelino of Samar asked rhetorically, "What are we in power for?" Mr. Avelino was speaking at a party caucus in Malacañang and expressing his resentment over the investigation of some officials' moneymaking activities. He was lecturing then President Elpidio Quirino on the realities of Philippine politics. The two leaders did not realize that several journalists were present and they reported the incident.

* Then Senate President Avelino was reported to have said further: "Why should we pretend to be saints when in reality we are not? We are not angels. When we die we will all go to hell. It is better to be in hell because in that place there are no investigations, no secretary of justice (and) no secretary of the interior to go after us. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made a distinction between the good crook and the bad crook. We can aspire to be good crooks."

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* President Quirino was reported to have told Mr. Avelino: “I am no saint ... but when public opinion demands an investigation, we have to go through the formality of ordering one.”

* Approximately 11 years later, then President Carlos P. Garcia’s Executive Secretary Juan Pajo apparently repeated Mr. Avelino’s rhetorical question, “What are we in power for?” Secretary Pajo’s remake of Mr. Avelino’s words was one of the reasons President Garcia lost the 1961 presidential election to then Vice President Diosdado (Cong Dadong) Macapagal.

* Now, 60 years later, Cong Dadong’s daughter, Czarina Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has apparently not heard of the misadventures of Senator Avelino and Executive Secretary Pajo. Or does she like to be the poster girl for that now-infamous 1949 unquotable quote?

* Did you know that both Czarina Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Czaritso (sic) Mike Arroyo are Ateneo de Manila alumni? That Jose P. Rizal is the most-famous and foremost Ateneo alumnus? That Dr. Rizal never became President of the Philippines? That there were other brilliant Ateneans who sought the presidency in the persons of Raul Manglapus and Raul S. Roco but the two lost badly in the presidential elections? It seems that the moral of their presidential stories is no Atenean named Raul can make it. Though, as Erap Estrada said, “Morality is not (again) the issue, as Raul Manglapus and Raul Roco were decent guys and absolutely-good Catholics.”

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* But did you know that Czarina Gloria is the only the second Ateneo graduate to make it to the Philippine presidency? The first one was Joseph Estrada. President Erap spent eight years at the Ateneo. As Messrs. Manglapus and Roco, Czarina Gloria, Czaritso Mike and other Ateneans probably liked to tease when Erap was still the President: “Yes, Mr. Estrada spent eight years at the Ateneo de Manila. He spent one year in Grade One and seven years in Grade Two.” # # #

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