

PROTECTING THE CHOICE OF THE FILIPINO

***Opening Remarks for the Online Forum entitled
“Curbing the Pandemic of Disinformation: What
Really Happened During Martial Law”***

**By Amb. Albert Del Rosario
Chair, Stratbase ADR Institute
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With the rise of social media in the 21st century, disinformation through fake news has become a plague to society.

Disinformation through fake news destroys facts on which we rely to make informed decisions. By destroying the foundations of our decisions, we hurt ourselves and gravely undermine our efforts to build a better country to enable us to pursue truth, justice, democracy and the Rule of Law.

It is, therefore, imperative that we make a strong and collective effort to put a stop to disinformation through fake news, which are corroding the pillars of our nation.

Once institutionalized and spread on a large scale, disinformation through fake news will bring a catastrophe to our country, as our national decisions will be based on lies. Our countrymen will be prejudiced by misguided decisions brought on by disinformation.

At this point, we are on the brink of a tragedy caused by disinformation through fake news. After their disgraceful exit from the Philippines in 1986, the Marcos family, through their candidate, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr., is dangerously poised to assume the Presidency by spreading the lie that the Marcos dictatorship was a “golden era” of Philippine history. This shamelessly contradicts well-settled court rulings, based on judicially considered evidence, which effectively proved that the Marcoses embezzled considerable wealth from the Filipino people.

Would it not be to our eternal shame as a people, once admired by the world for our bravery in peacefully ousting a dictator in 1986, only to elect his unrepentant son, who continues to enjoy a lavish lifestyle riddled with vices, funded by the people's money?

Even before Bongbong Marcos's candidacy for the Vice-Presidency in 2016, the Marcoses, through the ill-gotten wealth belonging to the Filipino people, have consistently spent considerable sums of money on influencers, fake news peddlers, troll farms and online platforms to paint, not only a rosy picture of Bongbong Marcos as a leader, but also to retrofit the tarnished image of the Marcos family.

By means of disinformation through fake news spread by them, the Marcoses managed to hijack the minds of vulnerable Filipinos and exploit the weak educational system of our country, which is unable to instill a strong historical awareness among many of our

countrymen.

Even President Rodrigo Duterte, whose daughter is running as Bongbong Marcos's Vice President, cannot understand why some Filipinos would vote for Bongbong Marcos.

In a televised address in November 2021, President Duterte described Bongbong Marcos as a “weak leader,” a cocaine user and a child of the rich who has no achievement to show in life, except to rely on the name of his Dictator-Father.

In President Duterte's own words: “*Kaya nga nagtaka ako, anong nagawa, anong gawa ng taong 'yan? I'm just asking. What contribution has he made para sa Pilipinas?... Bakit ang Pilipino parang lokong-loko na supporting? Magtanong lang ako sa inyo, ano ang ginawa n'yan? Nagdo-droga 'yan ng cocaine ang tirada n'yan* (I am puzzled, what has that person done? What contribution has he made for the Philippines? Why are Filipinos fooled into supporting? I will just ask you, what has he

done? He uses cocaine).

As to President Duterte's question on why Filipinos are fooled into supporting Bongbong Marcos, much of the answer lies in the efficacy of the Marcoses's use of disinformation through fake news, to the prejudice of the Filipino people.

The upcoming May 2022 Elections will be a critical juncture in Philippine history which will determine whether or not the Marcoses will be restored to power.

Filipinos will be faced with a momentous choice: to elect leaders with the discipline and integrity to genuinely help our country, or to elect one who represents the sins of the past, a convicted tax evader who claims as his inheritance the ill-gotten wealth belonging to the Filipino people.

We believe that it is our sacred duty to vote wisely because our country's future is at stake. The future of our children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors is at stake. In addition, for this May 2022 Elections, we must do what we can to combat disinformation through fake news which maliciously distorts the choice of the Filipino people in the election of their leaders.

In the long run, we should set up effective institutions that will combat, penalize and eradicate disinformation through fake news.

The decision-making process of the Filipino people is a sacred and critical part of democracy. Disinformation through fake news undermines that democratic decision-making process, thereby preventing Filipinos from making better choices for their own welfare.

It is, therefore, imperative that we protect how Filipinos decide because our collective decisions will determine the future of our

country.

For the upcoming May 2022 Elections, it is crucial that we vote wisely and help our fellow countrymen vote wisely.

The Philippines will change in three weeks on May 9, 2022, and it is our fervent hope that such change will lead to a better future for all Filipinos. END