



WHY PREJUDICE HURTS

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I think it was a few weeks ago when a government official from my country took offense on the way a major city had been misrepresented as being the Gates of Hell by a well-known bestselling author. A few years back, too, a video was made by a foreigner on why my country was hated not only by that foreigner but probably many other foreigners as well. Left and right, those from my country have gotten pelted with various hurtful observations and conclusions. Sadly, such observations have been immortalized in this highly-technological age through the internet. Easy to access for the curious searchers, those write-ups, works and videos have streamed into the consciousness of the whole world.

I made it a point to watch the video and read the book in question. While it is true that the video creator and book author did not have good words for what they saw, experienced or heard about my country, the realist in me sees what was in the video and the book as a way for my fellow citizens and I to strive harder to gain better recognition for the more praiseworthy things about my country and its people.

We may not be First World, but we still have good old-fashioned beliefs and values. We consider family as the most important basic unit of our society and many among us work hard to keep our Christian values intact. While it is true that our streets are dirty and our level of education may be sub-par, our country is still able to supply brains and manpower to many countries that have very exacting standards on the kind of people they employ from outside. The strongest resource that my country has is manpower. We may be tied to labor, and overseas work may be the brightest aspect of our economy next to business process outsourcing industries. But we work hard to deserve what we get paid, and we strive to deliver more than expected to impress our employers.

My country has been under foreign dominance for so long, but I believe time will come when people from my country will be able to get recognition for having achieved independence and self-sufficiency at last. The road will be long, and even our children's children might not even be able to see its end. But time will eventually come when we will be able to overcome all the unwanted prejudice associated with my country and its people. We will become a nation capable of cleaning its streets, fixing its horrendous traffic problems, feeding its people and giving jobs to its citizenry. That day will come, and hopefully, the prejudice dies with its coming. There will be no greater pride in me than when that day finally comes.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do people often react to being the subject of prejudice?
2. Why do you think it's not easy to belong to a third-world country?
3. Do you believe the prejudice against a third-world nation like the Philippines is justified? Why or why not?
4. What is the common source of the world's prejudice on countries belonging to the Third World?
5. Would a First World leader turn a Third World country around more effectively? How?