

Urban poor in philippines

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The squatters in the Philippines have wreaked havoc in the country and they are out of control. The problem is quite obvious and the solution is staring everyone in the face; there are just not enough public servants with enough guts to address the issue. But someone has to put an end to the vicious cycle of squatting particularly in Metro Manila where most poor Filipinos from the provinces seem to converge. Arrogant Filipino squatters The squatters or illegal settlers need to move out of wherever they have been squatting for years or even decades because they simply do not belong there.

They have long enjoyed their stay, living on abandoned or unoccupied areas of land without being asked to move out. Some of them clog the rivers not just with their garbage, but also with their human waste, which eventually result in the flooding of the streets and residential areas of the cities specially in times of heavy rain. As long as the squatters remain where they are and are allowed to flourish, the Philippines will not reach its full potential as a business hub that finds favor in the eyes of foreign investors. Squatters indiscriminately dump waste onto Manila's waterways.

In other words, the activities of the people squatting are foul. They have no concern or respect for the rights or property of others and have total disregard for the environment and welfare of other people. Some squatters can also be quite arrogant, defiant and selfish when law enforcement agencies finally clamp down on their illegal activities. One video shows illegal settlers berating the court sheriff and demanding to know when and if they are going to be paid by cash or check before they agree to being relocated. Some even joked that the check better not bounce.

They appeared to be enjoying their few minutes of fame in front of the camera relating their tales of woes. One wonders why the news crew tends to focus only on their plight and not the story behind why they were allowed to stay there for so long. There is a lot to be said about why they were allowed to stay squatting to begin with. The squatter problem in the Philippines has been made complicated by misguided Filipinos who think that it is the Philippine government's soleresponsibilityto provide housing, educationandhealthfor them. Not only is this notion unsustainable, it is an unfair burden on taxpayers.

Retired Chief Justice Reynato Puno recently said that “ Filipinos must be able to demand from their government their right to housing, education and health, or these socioeconomic rights would remain mere words on paper. ” While Puno's sentiments seem noble, Filipino taxpayers simply cannot afford to fund the growing number of Filipinos living below thepovertyline. Some of these squatters, despite living in tiny quarters no bigger than a box, have no qualms about multiplying at a fast rate. Perhaps they have been led to believe that their children can be used to gain access to hand outs from the government.

Filipino politicians do not help solve the problem of squatters at all. If anything, they actually contribute to their proliferation. The root cause of the squatter problem seems to be the lack of urban planning from each Barangay and weak enforcement of the law by members of various agencies who are not doing their jobs properly. Obviously, they did not nip the problem in the bud. Had they been doing their jobs, they could have easily

evicted the first squatter before they multiplied and became the enormous problem they are today.

Apparently, there are times when the law enforcement agencies that include the police and the court sheriff are helpless in certain situations. They are supposed to act independently from elected officials but are unable to do their jobs until they get instructions from city Mayors who hold off on evicting squatters during election season or when their popularity is waning. This was evident when Davao Mayor Sara Duterte assaulted a court sheriff 2011 because the latter initiated the demolition of shanties in Davao's Agdao district without her go signal.

She said that she felt compelled to punch the sheriff to prevent violence from ensuing. The irony in justifying the Mayor's actions escaped her and a lot of people who supported her when she attracted criticism. Duterte's actions probably made a lot of squatters think they need to be handled with kids' gloves. These politicians have emboldened squatters who are now quick to throw a tantrum and use violence whenever they are dissatisfied with the government's approaches and arrangements to relocate them.

Bianca Gonzalez: the long-awaited messiah of anti-squatter activism! Lately, the squatters' sense of entitlement and tough stance have finally caught the attention of some of the members of the upper and middle class who are fed up with the troubles they are causing. A celebrity and social media activist, Bianca Gonzalez have spoken out against the way the Philippine government treats squatters like "babies". She is getting a lot of kudos for her

unwavering stand against the lack of fairness in how the issue is being handled.

She highlighted that law-abiding citizens work hard to save money to be able to buy property legally but still get taxed for it while squatters don't even pay anything to stay in illegally occupied lands. It's been noted that a lot of the squatters show their arrogance while demanding compensation from the taxpayers. Speaking of babies for that matter, some people who can't afford to feed themselves shouldn't have more babies. It has come to the attention of many Filipinos too that a convoluted law on squatters introduced in 1997 has made it difficult for the government to evict squatters.

Republic Act 7279 merely punishes the “ professional squatters”. They are defined by law as those who can afford to pay for legitimate housing or those who have received housing units from the government but have sold or leased it to others so they themselves can settle illegally again in another urban area in order to deceive the system by asking for more compensation. In other words, most squatters don't even get penalized anymore for their illegal activities. They even get rewarded for wreaking havoc in the community.

No wonder a lot of Filipinos would rather stay as squatters and have adopted a squatter mentality. Who can solve the squatter problem in the Philippines? Certainly, the incumbent President Benigno Simeon “ BS” Aquino cannot solve it. Someone even said that the Aquino-Conjuangco clans also act like squatters who have occupied Hacienda Luisita for decades. Violence and intimidation were key to helping them keep the lands that were meant for

the poor farmers. BS Aquino seems more preoccupied with his popularity than providing a permanent solution to the country's long-standing issues.

He will not risk the wrath of the squatters because the Liberal Party still needs to get their votes in the next Presidential election. The President could even increase the number of recipients of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) or dole outs to the poor as a way distracting them from the lack of progress during his term. The reaction of the members of the thinking class is long overdue. They need to step up and call out what the government is doing, which is simply coddling the squatters. Philippine politicians need to quit being overprotective of people who abuse the system just to get the votes in the next election.

This abusive behavior from both the public officials who buy off votes using tax payer's money and squatters who take advantage of the situation need to end lest every corner of the country get run over by squatters.