

Florentino-Hofileña should be commended for writing the book. As mentioned earlier, it is not easy for a journalist to talk or write about the corruption gripping the media industry. Writing about the corruption of media is an important bold step toward finding solutions to the problem. Solving the problem is important because given the extreme influence of media in shaping people's opinions, it would be tragic for the public to make choices based on information that are skewed in favor of those who can pay if corruption remains unabated. The book is very well-written. The author's strength as an investigative and reputable journalist is evident in the book. She was able to interview sources who are in the know on how corruption is committed in the different media. These sources would not have spoken if they were not interviewed by a seasoned and credible journalist. Likewise, the author ably documented the cases of corruption. As contentions are backed by reliable documentation, the book did not hesitate to identify erring media players.

The book should also be commended for its recommendations on how to address the problem. It would be interesting to make a follow-up report on how the efforts of news organizations at instilling ethical codes among journalists have been faring so far. Have the television networks and majority of tabloids where corruption is more rampant during elections followed the lead of these organizations? What steps have been taken to realize the book's suggestion of including other sectors such as campaign strategists and political parties in efforts to curb the systemic problem of corruption? A follow-up report on these initiatives and whether these have made significant inroads would be very interesting. Hopefully, there would be more good news to write about than the bad. —**MA. GLENDA LOPEZ WUI**, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY.

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***Papogi, the imaging of Philippine presidents.* Directed by Butch Perez. Philippines: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004. 58 minutes, Filipino, color.**

Papogi, the imaging of Philippine presidents, produced by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) tells the story of how Philippine presidents manage their political images. Directed by Butch

Perez, and hosted and written by Jose Javier Reyes, the documentary narrates the image management of some Philippine presidents during election campaigns and when they assume presidency. The documentary likens politicians to *artistas* (actors) and presidential elections to big movie productions. Capitalizing on Filipinos' love for movies, presidential candidates manage their images *ala artista* to capture people's imagination. Reyes surmised that probably because of poverty, people turn to movies and *artistas* to forget, albeit temporarily, their harsh conditions. The problem, however, is that the masses lose sight of the distinction between the surreal, escapist showbusiness and the real world of politics. Hence, they tend to vote into office politicians who can capture their imagination like the *artistas*.

The story begins with Manuel L. Quezon, whose charisma rested on his American looks (white *mestizo* and *Americana* suits) and his perceived ability to hold his own against the Americans. Recognizing the power of mass media, he utilized newspapers and radio to sell himself to the public, as what is being done by American politicians at the time. According to presidential historian Manolo Quezon, President Quezon was even the one who made press releases about himself, mostly revolving around stories about his being a hit among the Americans (with the story about American ladies wanting to dance with him when he went to a ball in the United States) and about his not being a pushover vis-à-vis the Americans (with the story about him welcoming Governor Leonard Wood in his underpants when the latter visited him at home). The documentary also pointed out it helped that Quezon was a fair-skinned *mestizo* like the *artistas* being idolized by the masses.

After Quezon, the documentary focused on Ramon Magsaysay. The election of brown-skinned Magsaysay first broke the tradition of electing a fair-skinned *mestizo* to the presidency. He captured the people's imagination because he was down-to-earth, young, and energetic unlike his fellow contenders. During his stint, he opened Malacañang to the public as a fulfillment of a campaign promise. As one commentator in the documentary said, if Quezon projected that he was equal to the Americans; for Magsaysay, it was more of Filipinos being equal to each other ("*wala nang amo*" or no more masters). Magsaysay brought politics to the popular taste. People danced to his campaign sorties' ditty *Mambo Magsaysay*, much to the chagrin of his political opponents who saw in this the cheapening of the whole political exercise.

Although the Americans supported Magsaysay because of his perceived capability to curb the Huk rebellion, it is incorrect to solely attribute his presidential win to Washington. For one of the documentary's commentators, even without the American support, Magsaysay would still win the presidency because of his popularity. Many presidents after, he is still considered the most well-loved Philippine president.

Ferdinand Marcos was a master of information dissemination and regulation, fully believing that the one who controls the media, controls the minds of the people. To help him win in his first attempt at the presidency, he chose as vice-presidential mate the owner of a powerful media outlet. Through the use of the media, he created images about himself sometimes bordering on mythologies. His movie biography, *Iginuhit ng Tadhana* (Destined by Fate), starred no less one of the most popular movie love teams at the time, Luis Gonzales and Gloria Romero. Marcos and his spin doctors impressed upon the people his heroism during the World War II and his exceptional brilliance. Later in his term, questions about his war exploits and military medals surfaced.

After the declaration of Martial law, Marcos put a noose to press freedom while he and wife Imelda controlled the media to put out positive releases about them. They created the impression that they were the mythical *Malakas* (strong) and *Maganda* (beautiful) after the Filipino folklore. He runs and takes care of the basic needs of the nation, while she takes care of the cultural needs. While he was able to use the media to his advantage, it also ironically contributed to his downfall. During the 1986 presidential campaign, although he vehemently denied news about his illness, his bloated face and bandaged fingers splashed on television and newspapers could not belie his true health condition. Moreover, through the efforts of the alternative press, the public learned of the vast wealth of the Marcoses acquired through questionable means. The death of his political rival, former senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, finally wrote the finis to his reign. The image of Ninoy lying dead in a pool of blood at the airport tarmac mobilized public sympathy for the former senator and anger against Marcos who was widely perceived as the one who orchestrated the killing.

The widow of Ninoy, Corazon "Cory" Cojuangco Aquino, became the rallying symbol of protest against Marcos. Cory projected the effective image of the suffering widow and mother that we all emphasize

with in our culture. The handlers of Cory emphasized her being simple in character, in contrast to the excessive Imelda, to galvanize opposition against the Marcoses. Cory's campaign banner, *Tama na, sobra na, palitan na!* (We've had enough, it's time for change!) was the rallying cry of the growing number of the disgruntled. Accusations against Cory about her inexperience in government service was thrown back at the administration with the spiel that she is indeed inexperienced in committing corruption and other unscrupulous practices of those in power. The campaign against Cory that she was unfit for the presidency because she is just a woman was "downright down the drain," resulting in the loss of millions of women's votes from Marcos. When the results of the 1986 presidential elections were rigged, the EDSA revolution was launched with the help of the media. Jaime Cardinal Sin called on the people through the media (mostly radio) to protect the defecting defense secretary Juan Ponce Enrile and general Fidel Ramos from military attack.

Fidel Ramos' image at the start of his presidency was not very clear. Although he was one of the EDSA heroes, public endearment did not automatically pass on to him. Hence, he just won a slim margin over his closest rival in the presidential race. It was only during his presidency that his image was eventually molded. He was later on projected as disciplined, hardworking, a diplomat and a coalition-maker. However, the documentary noted that despite his image, people were more excited about his vice-president, the actor Joseph "Erap" Estrada.

Estrada provides a counterpoint to the traditional politicians who speak English and have college degrees. People find common identification with Estrada. His nickname Erap, which is *pare* (peer) spelled backwards, conveys that he is one of them. The masses feel empowered with Estrada in Malacañang believing he is one of them even though he belonged to a well-off family. Estrada's various movie roles as one of the *masa* (masses) helped a lot in his ascension to the presidency. Like in the movies, the masses saw in Erap a savior who will save them from troubles and poverty. That is why when the media exposed the wrongdoings of Erap, they were not easily convinced.

PCIJ should be commended for the documentary. Shown just before the May 2004 elections, the important purpose of the documentary is to educate the people and make them aware and discerning of the images being projected by presidential candidates in their campaigns. As Reyes stated toward the end of the documentary, the media is very powerful; what they convey can be taken as the truth.

Hence, it is very important for people to be more discriminating. Should we take as given the images that are fed to us by the candidates?

The documentary is likewise very helpful as it touched on a topic that is rarely presented on television. Because of the mass following of television (in the country's urban areas, over 96 percent have access to television, while in Metro Manila, 98 percent according to a 2002 survey by Nielsen Media Research cited in Florentino-Hofileña 2004, 26), many are then educated about the subject matter of the documentary particularly with regard to the image-making ventures of presidential candidates and presidents to sell themselves to the public. The interviews with historians and image/media consultants effectively explained the images created by and for the presidents and why were they created.

The presentation is very lively and the video clips about the past presidents are very informative especially for the younger generation who were unable to see in action the likes of Quezon, Magsaysay and Marcos. Moreover, the presentation of movie clips juxtaposed against the images of our presidents in the same era is entertaining and enlightening. Reyes is an effective narrator with almost never a dull moment in the presentation. The documentary's lively ditty composed by the noted musician Ryan Cayabyab is also worth commending.

However, just like other television presentation where time is limited for more in-depth analysis, some of the assertions of the documentary came off as too sweeping. For example, one gets the impression that too much credit is given to media for the making and unmaking of presidents. Recent studies on media influence show that news consumers do not necessarily internalize all the news presented to them. Moreover, some have shown that interpersonal discussions of issues outweigh media influence (Graber 2004, 548).

In the case of the two EDSA revolutions that unseated presidents Marcos and Estrada, even though media have projected the excesses of these two leaders, still a large proportion of the masses are not convinced about the faults of these two leaders. For one, they hardly participated (at least physically) in the two revolutions. For another, the election to office of the close relatives of these two leaders may show that the indictment of the latter via media may not have seeped through the consciousness of the greater segment of our populace.

Moreover, the audience may get the impression that the not so positive trait of being so fond of *artistas* and movies, and the tendency to extend the admiration of the surreal to the serious and real world of politics is true only among Filipinos. If we go by media accounts,

presidential candidates in the United States, supposedly a mature democratic country, also conduct their campaigns very much like movie productions no different from the Filipinos. Moreover, political discussions in the US have been turned into infotainment especially on television. One study conducted on the US media decried how “television tends to convert coverage of law and politics into forms of entertainment for mass consumption” (Balkin 1999, 393).

The documentary chose to focus on just a number of Philippine presidents probably because of time constraint. However, the documentary was not clear on why the featured presidents were chosen. Prominently absent are the presidents in the early years of the Third Philippine Republic, namely Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, and Carlos Garcia. The documentary could have provided interesting tidbits about these presidents. For example, according to one account Roxas won the election because his competitor Sergio Osmeña “refused to campaign, and would not leave the palace,” burying himself in state papers in Malacañang. In the case of Quirino, who is now regarded as one of the best Philippine presidents, it is said that his being “aloof” cost him the presidency (Cortes, Boncan and Jose 2000). The documentary could have provided the information of how people glossed over the achievements of competent presidents because of the latter’s refusal to engage in *papogi* ventures.

Also worth commenting on are the parting shots of the media consultants of the presidentiables. One of them said that Filipino voters are intelligent and that what they see in campaign advertisements they tend to verify in other fora. In other words, they may not readily believe one’s advertisements if what they see in these projections do not concur with what they see in other fora. This was buttressed by another publicist who said that to be believable to the people, the images conveyed by politicians should be consistent with how they conduct their lives otherwise people will not believe their campaign projections. But one wonders whether this is really now the case with the Filipino electorate or just a wish on the part of the media consultants. More importantly, we can extrapolate the following from these pronouncements which media consultants should ponder on: Should they help create positive images for presidentiables or presidents even though they know that these do not reflect the reality? Is monetary remuneration their primary consideration in servicing clients? Some of the media consultants interviewed in the documentary are widely known to have serviced unscrupulous politicians.

Despite its inability to go into more in-depth analysis as the case with most television presentations, the contribution of the documentary cannot be belittled. At this time when the quality of officials we elect to office leaves much to be desired, the significance of educating the voters cannot be overemphasized. The effort of PCIJ of not just limiting its advocacy to the print medium but utilizing the more popular television is therefore commendable. —**MA. GLENDA LOPEZ WUI**, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY.

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Shiela S. Coronel, Yvonne T. Chua, Boomba B. Cruz and Luz Rimban. *The rulemakers: How the wealthy and well-born dominate the Congress*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004. 270 pp.

Article 11, section 1 of the Philippine Constitution explicitly states that a “public office is a public trust.” This Constitutional provision firmly underscores that public post is not “a property nor a position of power, honor and prestige” but a modest and sacred privilege to serve the country and the people (De Leon 1991, 383). Placing high premium on the principles of accountability, transparency and responsible governance, such provision reminds public officials of the great duty conferred upon them, that is, to promote and prefer the common good over private interests.

Most government representatives however are more oblivious than ignorant of this simple mandate. And because this political mockery contaminates and corrupts even the highest organs of the government, this has spawned public criticisms and diverse initiatives investigating