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IMPACT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECT ON THE LIVES OF THE FARMER BENEFICIARIES, A REACTION

“The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program is the redistribution of public and private agricultural lands to farmers and farmworkers who are landless, irrespective of tenurial arrangement. CARP’s vision is to have an equitable land ownership with empowered agrarian reform beneficiaries who can effectively manage their economic and social development to have a better quality of life.”-Department of Agrarian Reform

In other words, RA 6657 or CARP provides farmers agricultural lands and the privilege to use them for their own good. I have looked up some testimonials given by agrarian beneficiaries on the internet and I am happy to know that CARP has made a great, positive impact in their lives. Most of these inspiring stories were about a 360-degree turn in their lives, living it from rags to riches – riches that are beyond measurable. One of these is the story of Mr. Exequiel C. Bahalla who, from being a farmer with little education, became an owner of a three-hectare rice land and eventually became a successful farmer with great knowledge on agriculture, earning himself the title “Magsasaka Siyentista”. Another is the story of 60-year-old Mr. Alfredo Malunes, another CARP beneficiary. While having attended only a few years of primary education, he is now facing a better future as a member of a multi-cooperative in Palawan.

As beautiful as these testimonials sound, there are still other farmers out there who cannot give their own share of success stories. Many of them are still working under the scorching heat of the sun or the sickening drops of rain without receiving incentives. Farmers, above many sectors in the Philippines should be receiving proper recognition and benefits for their undaunted devotion to contribute to the country’s food bowl. Nonetheless, it is very heartwarming to know that the government continues to support our farmers through CARP. The testimonials are indeed inspiring, reminding me that there is no “little education” when it comes to success.

Reference for inspiring stories: www.dar.gov.ph

AGAW-LUPA, A REACTION

I would like to begin by saying that the video clip is heartbreaking. Hacienda Dolores, a vast landscape featured in the video “Agaw-Lupa” has been the center of agrarian dispute between the people of Porac, Pampanga and two of the biggest land developers in the country- Ayala Land and Leonardo-Lachenal-Leonio Holdings (Leonio Land). Since 2005, when the 761 hectares of Hacienda Dolores was exempted from the agrarian reform, it has lost the spirit of a happy community. Families are now suffering from the disappearance of their formerly abundant rice fields and vegetation, as well as their livestock which were once their major source of living. Now, farmers were forbidden to step on the soil they were once tilling.

I feel the people of Porac’s burning desire to get their lands back. They wanted their lands to be covered by the agrarian reform, so ocular inspections were set in 2011 but were unfortunately postponed many times until today; worse, the “authorities guarding” the land cut trees and burned the crops so the land would appear unproductive. I do not see any valid reason why the residents were not shown the deed of sale if the vast portion of the Hacienda was really sold to Ayala Land and Leonio Land. What seemed to infuriate me more are the complaints of the residents regarding the harassments, intimidations and violent threats that they have received from these so-called “authorities”. On the other hand, I am impressed that the residents were wise enough not to fight back violently, for they believe that it is against the will of God.

These people are dreaming of getting their lands back to them; restore what was lost and rebuild what was broken in their lives. This time, they are more than willing to toil their soil again. I see no valid reason to deprive our dear farmers their right to produce crops in their own land. Farming is their life. Farming gives life to a great percentage of the human population. Stop them from farming, we also lose much.

I really hope that agrarian disputes are settled—fair and square—that there’ll be no more stealing of land, and that truth be always considered.

Video: The Struggle of Farmers in Hacienda Dolores: Agaw Lupa
(https://youtu.be/Zf_owl4bIZM)

CHANGING LIVES: A RESEARCH ON HOW COOPERATIVES MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

Prior to the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s, people have already mastered working using their bare hands. With the advent of technology and the application of its complex advancements, factories rose to prominence and machines became almost a necessity. This provided a rough change in jobs and in the way workers perform them. Unfortunately, many people had no choice but to rely on these factories as their main source of living since they cannot plant crops in the city. However, there had been no equal advantage between capitalists and workers - where the former just got richer and the latter just got poorer. There was nothing for many workers but low pay and mistreatment. Even children and women had been subjected to labor in unacceptable conditions.

Consequently, amidst the uncontrollably growing poverty and crisis, cooperatives were founded throughout the world, beginning in England where the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society was founded by a group of 28 people who were workers themselves. A cooperative is an organization of people brought together by their common bond of interest. Cooperatives allow its members to access many privileges. Members can invest their own capital, gaining as much as they can from it. They are encouraged to patronize their own products and services and as a result, they get useful benefits. Members become part and co-owners of their businesses and there are patronage refunds provided and distributed equally to them. There are reserve funds which comprise the 30% of their total fund which are distributed to several national services like education and community development; the other 70% is comprised by the net surplus funds which are also equally distributed among co-owners. Perhaps the most important privilege of joining a cooperative is the opportunity to earn money through the services that they offer.

With all these privileges, it is easy to discern what has been the impact of cooperatives to the lives of its members. Many of those who joined the cooperatives tell in their testimonials that cooperatives have indeed created a huge positive impact on their lives. Many lives were changed and redirected to success. These cooperatives provide services which are both beneficial and recreational, letting the members enjoy their privileges. Some people who had little to no

education were given the chance to prove their skills and capabilities when they joined their respective cooperatives. Many claim that joining the cooperative boosted their confidence and gave them the will to live. Since a cooperative is an organization, members were able to share their strengths to one another, thus strengthening the cooperative as well. These are the positive impact on the lives of many members of a cooperative. However, not everyone who joined a cooperative had their equal share of enjoyment. Cooperatives also feature their loan benefits, but those who took this eventually had their loan as a burden to their backs. Many people were not successful in their businesses, so they were unable to pay their loaned money. Nonetheless, this was just one of the very few negative impacts to the lives of those who joined a cooperative.

Humans are indeed intelligent creatures; having this idea of devising a way on how to enjoy their privileges as workers. Cooperatives, judging by its impact to majority of those who joined, are very beneficial to its members as they are provided the chance to hone their skills while sharing a common bond of interest with each other. It not for the cooperatives, many people could still be contemplating on how useless their lives are; but cooperatives gave them hope to start anew and focus on becoming successful. Truly, the dark moments of the Industrial Revolution are over, for cooperatives have shed light to those living under the shadows of mistreatment and low pay, now many people are taking the beautiful path to success.

Reference: <https://www.facebook.com/izzaybenedicto/videos/1670501439648289/>

www.dar.gov.ph

A REACTION ON THE “HACIENDA LUISITA” STORY

Jose Cojuangco Sr., the father of the late president Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, bought the Hacienda Luisita from the Spaniards in 1957. According to the Central Bank Monetary Board resolution, the Cojuangcos have to distribute the land to small farmers. It was then amended that the land “shall be sold to tenants, should there be any” (GSIS Resolution No. 356, February 5, 1958). However, they have failed—or should I say refused—to do so, resulting in a great dispute between them and the farmers. Two years later, on the 22nd of January, the Mendiola massacre happened. Few, among many protesters who were demanding the fulfillment of the Aquino government’s promises regarding land reform, were killed. Fifteen years later, another group of protesters seemed to have experienced the history repeated, as they became victims to another massacre which happened in the bountiful but controversial land of Hacienda Luisita.

Until today, the ghost of Hacienda Luisita massacre’s memory still haunts those who survived. I cannot blame those farmers who had been there on that fateful day of November 16, 2004. Who among them would have thought that by just complaining about the unjust decision of the prominent family, they would be trapped in a gruesome situation? *“Seven people dead and 121 injured, 32 from gunshot wounds...”* report says. These people, inflamed with their burning desire to get a firm grasp of what they truly deserve, got nothing but horrendous treatment.

Personally, it really horrified me as I scanned the articles regarding the Hacienda Luisita story. Honestly, chills are seeping up my spine as I type these words. There were mixed emotions rummaging through me—pity, anger and confusion—I just cannot help but stare in awe as I was reading the story. Each side has their own variation of the story but I think what caught me better was the story of the farmers. However, I am not closing my perspective to any point-of-view that will be proven right. Hacienda Luisita had been a cradle of dreams—created as well as broken—and will always be until the end of time. Until justice is served, no one in that place will gain peace of mind.