

Rejecting a Culture of Death

Privilege Speech by Rep. Bienvenido Abante
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REP. ABANTE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank my good friend, Congressman Plaza, for being prudent enough to allow me to deliver my privilege speech.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the support of the Holy Cross Parish under Parish Priest Dan Abalon, the Holy Spirit Parish under Parish Priest Tom Arcilla, the Ascension Parish, the San Roque Parish from Diocese of Caloocan, the Alliance of Families, COURAGE. COURAGE, Mr. Speaker, for the information of a lot of people here, some members of which were former gays, Mr. Speaker, who are with us.

And of course, the Pro-life, Philippines. I do not also want to forget the wholehearted support given to me by my friends and by our pastors and bishops of the "Bible Mode" of the Believers League for Morality and Democracy and the Alliance of Baptist Councils and the International Baptist Missionary Association and the Christian Leaders for Good Governance even, Mr. Speaker, the PCEC and the Baptist Bible Fellowship of the Philippines of which, if we are going to number them all, would be around 35,000 churches all over the country in support of what I am going to deliver now, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to tell all our congressmen that we have churches all over the country, in every district, and that because of these two bills I will be exposing, our churches all over the country have decided to come together as one to rebuke public officials who would in any way support such bills, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to put that on record.

I would like to speak, Mr. Speaker, on the subject entitled: Rejecting a Culture of Death.

Last Tuesday, what had transpired in this august halls of Congress broke the impasse that has been haunting the controversial issue on House Bill No. 634 or the Anti-Discrimination Bill that was passed by the Committee on Human Rights which was then chaired by our distinguished colleague, Akbayan Party-List Representative Loreta Ann Rosales.

When I started wearing the colorful hat as Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, I made a covenant to set a new direction that opens up new paths in our pursuit of truth and justice without sacrificing morality.

Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, if I had acted beyond what is expected of me as a dignified Member of this institution, I deeply apologize. I do not wish to put all of you between two fires but I wish to speak today on a personal and collective privilege.

Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, I have rejected House Bill No. 634 as soon as I had closely studied all of its features and learned that there is nothing in this bill that would ameliorate the lives of the present generation of Filipinos or even the generations that would come after us. Thus, approving House Bill No. 634, Mr. Speaker, would mean death to the ideals and aspirations enshrined in our Constitution; death to a just and humane society that promotes the common good; death to the most cherished Filipino values of Godliness and moral rectitude.

Mr. Speaker, this bill profusely treads on an anti-discrimination framework and its proponents have ceaselessly harped on their assertions, that the so-called lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and intragenders, or LGBTI for brevity, have been heavily discriminated upon by society.

But first, we have to deal with definitions because definitions are important when it comes to human rights. It is often the definition that decides whether someone has a human right or not; whether that someone has the right to protection, to a fair trial, to life.

From the Human Rights Resource Center, "human rights" is defined as: "Those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity. To violate someone's human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being."

To advocate human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected.

Based on this definition, Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, the proponents of this bill might as well enlighten us if indeed their rights are being trampled upon, so much so that they cannot live in dignity. If that is so, can they honestly say that they, who have exposed themselves to belong to the GLBTI have been subjected to mockery and shame? What discrimination are they harping on? From what do they need to be protected?

In this bill, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, by proposing to penalize acts which they claim to be discriminatory against them, they are, in truth and in fact, creating another facet of discrimination, and this time, a discrimination is directed against the straight-laced men and women in our society who have equally

valuable rights as the LGBTI. The rights of the so-called "straight sexes" will thereby be impaired in dire contravention of the equal protection clause under the bill of rights.

How is this possible, Mr. Speaker, Your Honors? Please allow me to illustrate for purposes of clarity. Let us imagine a scenario in a workplace, there are two persons whom we may call Pacquiao, as a straight male, and the other, Morales, as a homosexual. Both Manny and Morales are eligible for a job promotion. Their supervisor whom we may call Arum hates homosexuals and thus, chooses Pacquiao to go up the corporate ladder. Under House Bill No. 634, Morales could pursue charges against the supervisor, and the latter maybe penalize for his personal preference in favor of the straight male. However, let us try to reverse the situation at this particular example. What if the supervisor chooses Morales, the homosexual, over Pacquiao, the straight guy? Does Pacquiao who was discriminated against in this instance, have a cause of action against the supervisor? Under House Bill No. 634, there is no pain of penalty against the biased supervisor.

This is the clear and unequivocal illustration of the discrimination that will be engendered by this bill, giving an unwarranted bias in favor of the so-called LGBTI to the extreme prejudice of the so-called straight men and women. The Constitution, Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, provides that no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws, and this bill must not pose as an exception to the rule. Equal protection requires that all persons or things similarly situated should be treated alike both as to the rights conferred and responsibilities imposed.

Further, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations General Assembly set forth the following, under Article 29: 1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of each personality is possible; 2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society; and 3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Thus, it is not a valid argument, Mr. Speaker, to accept that the LGBTI are victims of discrimination without this bill, and that this bill, by itself, will cure the perceived discriminatory practices against them. Judicial wisdom has it, and I am not a lawyer, Mr. Speaker, that a law may appear to be fair on its face and impartial in appearance, yet if it permits unjust and illegal discrimination, it is within the constitutional prohibition.

And how does the bill define discrimination, Mr. Speaker? It states that, and I quote: "Discrimination shall be understood to imply any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which is based on any ground such as sex, sexual

orientation, gender identity, whether actual or perceived, and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by all persons of an equal footing of all rights and freedoms.”

The phrase “whether actual or perceived” brings too much vagueness on the bill. Perception which is a very subjective mental activity involving our senses is highly discriminatory, Mr. Speaker. What I may perceive as a discriminatory behavior may not be in fact discriminatory by your own perception. This then creates anomalous circumstances which can be as numerous as the perceptions our minds could think of. Mere perception brings chaos into the daily grind of our life. And this is related to what the Book of Genesis tells us, Mr. Speaker, that during the time when there was no written law that the people begin to look into the imaginations of their minds. They begin to depend on their own consciousness. And what happened, Mr. Speaker? Perceptions became the order of the day.

What exacerbates the issues further, confusing and chaotic as they are, are the definitions ascribed to sexual orientation and gender identity. The bill defines sexual orientation as, I quote: “The direction of emotional sexual attraction or conduct which can be towards people of the same sex, referring to homosexual orientation, or towards people of both sexes or bisexual orientation or towards people of the opposite sexes or heterosexual orientation.”

On the other hand, gender identity refers to the, and I quote: “Personal sense of identity as characterized by manner of clothing, inclinations and behavior in relation to masculine or feminine conventions. A person may have a female or male identity with the physiological characteristics of the opposite sex.” Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, with these definitions phrased as they are, we are creating an anomalous situation that not only blatantly violates the equal protection clause, but gravely blurs the substantial distinctions between and among human beings. To recognize the existence of other sexualities by legislation is to legitimize the superficial differences between and among sexes whether by nature or by personal choice. And by doing so, superficial differences, fleeting as they are, breed an unnatural classification of persons who are given a special treatment with this bill. And so where can we find equal protection under this ploy?

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, please allow me to question the constitutionality of this bill on moral grounds. The Philippine Constitution, beginning with its Preamble and Sections 12 and 13 in Article II, including a full article about the family in Article XV, is replete with provisions that guarantee the sanctity of the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation and the development of moral character. Perhaps it should be interesting to note for your information, that when American society defines a family, they define a family as two persons and a pet. Is that how the Filipino culture defines a family, Mr. Speaker?

The Preamble is a living testament of our recognition of an Almighty God in a direct and personal way. In imploring the aid of Almighty God we manifested our unfaltering reliance upon Him and we recognize the reality that it is God Who guides the destinies of men and nations. In crafting laws, therefore, we must be guided by what is right before God. This bill, once signed into law, will encourage social aberrations as well as moral decadence through unconventional lifestyles that will come to pass as acceptable norms of conduct should this bill become a law.

There is even a group of gays and lesbians, for your information, Mr. Speaker, in the USA, who opposed their Gay Rights Law because they said it will create special interest groups. Are we imitators or original Filipinos here, Mr. Speaker?
(Laughter)

Let me share with you, the observations lesbian activist Camille Paglia offered and I quote, "Homosexuality is not normal." That's what she said and she is a lesbian activist, Mr. Speaker. "On the contrary, it is a challenge to the norm. Nature exists, whether academics like it or not and in nature, procreation is that single relentless rule that is the norm. Our sexual bodies were designed for reproduction. No one is born gay." She said that "the idea is ridiculous. Homosexuality is an adaptation, not an inborn trait."

If I may quote, Genesis, Chapter I, when it spoke of creation, the Bible says, "Male and female created Eden." I do not find in the Bible that God created male and female and the in-betweens. (Applause) Mr. Speaker, I find in the Bible that God created Adam and Eve. I do not find in the Bible that God created Adam and Steve. (Applause) And I quote further, Mr. Speaker, "Is the gay identity so fragile that it cannot bear the thought that some people may not wish to be gay? Sexuality is highly fluid and reversals are theoretically possible. However, habit is refractory. What do I mean? Headstrong, obstinate, wayward. Once the sensory pathways have been blazed and deepened by repetition, a phenomenon obvious in the struggle with obesity, smoking, alcoholism or drug addiction, helping gays to learn to function heterosexually, if they wish, is a perfectly worthy aim." She added, and this is a lesbian activist, "Current gays cannot insist that homosexuality is not a choice, that no one would choose to be gay in a homophobic public society but there is an element of choice in all behavior, sexual or otherwise."

Mr. Speaker, my being a male is not my choice, that was Divine choice.
(Applause) Women being women is not their choice, that is Divine choice, and no human being has the right to go against God's choice, Mr. Speaker.
(Applause)

John White said, and John White was a former homosexual, who had a born-again experience, and I quote, he said: "Once I experienced physical pleasure with a member of my own sex, I am more likely to want to experience it again."

The more frequently I experience it, the more fixed will the pattern become. What I do determines what I am, just as much as what I am determines what I do." It has been written, Romans 1:18, 27-28 "For the wrath of God", and what is the "wrath of God"? That is more than anger, Mr. Speaker, " is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . . for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was meet." God created only two genders -- male and female. And both in the Bible and the Qur'an homosexuality and lesbianism are sins and abominations unto almighty God. (Applause) There are many references. . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Espinosa, E.R.). Excuse me, excuse me, may we now request the gallery not to be clapping. Okay. Please proceed.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you. There are many references in the Qur'an, Mr. Speaker, which have been cited as referring to gay and lesbian behavior. Some obviously deal with effeminate men and masculine women, and I would like to quote from Sura 4:20-21 of the Qur'an, and I quote: "Against those of your women who commit adultery, call witnesses four in number from among yourselves, and if these bear witness, then keep the women in houses until death release them, or God shall make for them a way. And if two men of you commit it, then hurt them both; but if they turn again and amend, leave them alone, verily, God is easily turned compassionate."

Quoting from the Shari'ah, it says and I quote: "homosexuality . . . is an abomination and a grave sin. In Hadith, Muhammad clarifies the gravity of this abomination by saying, and I quote: "Allah curses the one who does the actions or homosexual practices of the people of Lut", end of quote. Repeating it three times, saying in another Hadith, and I quote: "If a man comes upon a man then they are both adulterers." Here, he considered homosexuality tantamount to adultery in relation to the Shari'ah punishments because it is an abomination on the one hand, and the definition of adultery applies to it on the other hand . . . As for lesbians, Muhammad said about them, and I quote: "If a woman comes upon a woman, they are both adulteresses." The homosexual receives the same punishment as an adulterer. This means, that if the homosexual is married, he or she is stoned to death, while if single, he or she is whipped 100 times." That's the Shari'ah, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot legislate on these. To abet sin and ungodliness is to invite the wrath of God upon ourselves and our God-loving nation.

From the US conservative politics website, political analyst Amy Hess said, and I quote: "Vast numbers of Americans oppose homosexual relationships because they view these relationships as immoral. While the "Christian right" is singled

out by gay rights activists, religious Christians are not alone. The teachings of the three most prominent religions in America, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, all declare gay and lesbian sexual behavior to be immoral.” She also wrote that, and I quote—ako po ay nagquo-quote ha. Hindi ako nagsasabi. I quote: “Americans may be willing to allow gays and lesbians to live their lives as they choose, with a view that it is a free country. But religious freedoms of vast numbers of Americans will be put in jeopardy if same sex relationships, marriages are legalized. People who see homosexuality as immoral may be forced to deny their consciences and recognize a same-sex marriage just because the state says so.” We fear to suffer the same fate that befell Sodom and Gomorrah, and lately, New Orleans, Mr. Speaker.

We have to unmask the evils that this bill surreptitiously hides under a cloak of legitimacy. Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, let me emphasize the fact, without being pedantic, that the essence of legislation is to craft new laws that would cater to the needs of men, to promote the common good, and to establish order and maintain harmony in society. My perusal of the Constitution has revealed that its substantial number of principles and state policies are already enshrined in it, such as Sections 11, 15, 18 and 26 of Article II, and the Declaration of State Principles and Policies. There are pertinent articles on labor, the Civil Service Commission, health, education and military service, applicable provisions in the Labor, Civil and the Revised Penal Codes, special laws on anti-sexual harassment, an Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and other existing laws including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article I of which states that, and I quote: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Article VII states, and I quote: “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.”

So, what more laws do we need? We have enough laws to guide us as far as human rights is concerned. Mr. Speaker, I will never discriminate because it is against the love of God. And God’s love can even change lifestyles. I have seen in my own ministry, as a Bishop, hundreds of lesbians and gays, who have known Christ as their Savior, have changed their lifestyles, Mr. Speaker. And that is true. And I can present some of them even here. Even the United Nations Charter speaks of, I quote: “Promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

Mr. Speaker, to pass this bill into a law is a futile exercise of our legislative mandate. Let us focus on more significant endeavors now that the Thirteenth Congress nearly draws to a close.

Mr. Speaker, I was told that the Lagablab Organization has declared an open war against me. That they will even campaign hard against me in my district. That I

might not be voted upon. Huwag naman, Mr. Speaker. Hindi ko sila kaaway, Mr. Speaker. But you know what, even if the Lagablab group has declared an open war against me, I declare to them the love of God because God loves them very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to beg the indulgence of the Members of this plenary for I am now about to end my speech, Mr. Speaker, and I beg their indulgence, I wish to speak on an equally significant bill that is now pending in this plenary for interpellations, House Bill No. 3773 or the Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act.

Mr. Speaker, albeit House Bill No. 3773 is not referred to my committee, I feel emboldened by the fact that this bill needs to be unmasked for what it really is, in the same manner that House Bill No. 634 was stripped of its hidden agenda. House Bill No. 3773 has the same deceitful mask of falsity as all of you may not seem to realize. The bill is anti-family, anti-Filipino and anti-Constitution. The bill rests on faulty premises and clearly shaky grounds, and I will tell you why.

I was told, why was I against the United Nations treaty? Why? It came to our attention that whatever the UN says is right, that whatever the UN says, we must follow. Don't we have our own nationalistic fervor, independence as Filipinos, that we can go against the United Nations when we feel that they are not right, Mr. Speaker?

The bill is neither about responsible parenthood nor about population management. House Bill No. 3773 is really about population control, moral and social decadence, promiscuity, violations of constitutional principles, and yes, legalization of abortion.

The bill proposes an underlying formula that population growth stunts economic growth. Malthus has been dead ages ago, and what went with him was the myth that a large population growth is directly related to underdevelopment. In fact, globally, there is no clear and proven link between the two, and competent research will show that poverty incidence in the Philippines actually declined and is inversely proportional to the growth of population. From 1961 to 2000, our population increased from 27 million to 76 million and still growing. And yet, poverty incidence decreased from 59 percent to 34 percent based on family income and expenditure surveys.

Economic growth is largely dependent on a variety of dynamic factors, such as what? Sound economic policies and stable political climate backed with good governance and effective program implementations.

Second, this bill explicitly encourages a two-child policy as the ideal family size, and it even entices those families who would adhere to it with scholarship grants at the tertiary level. It is neither mandatory nor punitive, as the bill wittingly

states. But this is a discriminatory norm. It is much like dangling a carrot to the poor who are beaten by the proverbial stick, as they are in effect compelled to reduce their family size to only two children in the future such that they would be eligible for free tertiary education, as in the case of China's one-child policy which was recommendatory in the beginning but later became mandatory and punitive. Third, this bill promotes promiscuity, particularly among the youth of today and encourages infidelity even among married couples by cultivating an over-the-counter free sex mentality with condoms and other contraceptives being made accessible to almost everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I am not a holier-than-thou attitude person. I understand reality, but I also understand truth. I am a man, and I have lust in my heart. I still lust on women, Mr. Speaker. But even if this is reality to me, truth tells us that we ought to live according to God's will.

Scientific evidence proves that the proverbial pill is carcinogenic and causes adverse complication. I know of a friend who died of cancer because she took for many years contraceptive pills. Women's health is virtually damaged with the continued use of IUD and other contraception devices, exposing them to urinary tract infections and related diseases.

Corollarily, Mr. Speaker, the bill proposes to bring mandatory sex education into the arena of a children's classroom, who are as young as fifth graders up to fourth year high school students, their minds lose the innocence of their youth, and now replaced with lust for sexual gratification. There is no clear-cut evidence that would link responsible sexual behavior to sex education in the classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

Let me remind my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that my children are not owned by the State. That it is the responsibility of the family to teach their children discipline not the State, Mr. Speaker. And that there should not be any law that will ultimately pass, Mr. Speaker, even invading the privacy of the bedroom. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this would rob the parents of their primary duty to educate and rear their young in the best possible way they know, as they are the best authorities when it comes to their children's civic efficiency and development of moral character.

You might say I am old fashioned in a modern world. Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to be so.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this bill has definitely laid down the premises for the virtual promotion of the use of contraception and abortifacients, or devices or drugs which make the uterus hostile to implantation. And all of these invariably lead to abortion.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution enshrines the sanctity of family life, and equally protects the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception (Article II, Section 12). Moreover, the State shall defend the right of the spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood (Article XV, Section 3).

But responsible parenthood as defined in this bill is unacceptable by the standards set in the Constitution. By the moral uprightness that is envisioned by it, and by the deeply-ingrained Filipino culture of Godliness and closely-knit family ties.

Mr. Speaker, Your Honors, and our guests in the gallery this is the moment of truth. Do not be deceived by the wicked ways of the wise in this world--as the woman's womb is pierced by the fangs of abortion, destroying the beauty of life within, the spirit of darkness reigns like a cultural death, and we are eternally plunged into the unfathomable pits of sin.

If we ever approve these bills I have mentioned, we are opening a Pandora's box that will eventually destroy our beloved nation morally, socially, emotionally and our God-given faith.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good day to all. (Applause)