

**“Survival-At-All-Cost”**  
(Or, How To Run One’s Country to the Ground)

*Hyatt 10 statement read by former Education Secretary Florencio “Butch” Abad at the Black & White Movement’s August 30 forum*

The impeachment process may abruptly end this week. It will likely end without the parties in the case being given the opportunity to present the substantive issues underlying the amended impeachment complaint, as well as, the evidence supporting them.

For this reason, we, the ten cabinet secretaries and key officials who resigned last July 8 and who appealed to PGMA to voluntarily relinquish the Presidency, would like to take this opportunity to share with you information that will explain further our decision to resign, information that the public must know.

In our resignation statement, we expressed alarm over the “survive-at-all-cost” policy that the President had adopted in dealing with the crisis. We were afraid that from then on decision-making would be dictated not by the demands of reform and good governance but mainly by political accommodations to serve the ends of day-to-day political survival.

We saw this policy at work in a number of incidents at the height of the crisis; allow us to cite some of them:

1. We took issue with the President about her reliance on parallel groups making decisions and operating without transparency and any accountability, except perhaps to her. We complained that this manner of operation was confusing and resulting in said groups working at cross-purposes with offices with the mandate to perform their functions. For example, we were surprised in one meeting where the President admitted having to rely on Rep. Ronnie Puno as “crisis manager” at the height of the Garci tape crisis when there were people in the Cabinet who could be just as, if not more, competent, to handle the situation.

We wondered: Were other parallel and unaccountable groups relied upon by the President to help her out at other instances, particularly in the 2004 elections?

2. During a meeting between a small group of Cabinet secretaries and the President, the group insisted that apart from convincing her husband, the First Gentleman, and their son, Rep. Mikey Arroyo, to go on self-imposed exile, she should also consider giving up certain officials closely identified with the First Gentleman. When the president pressed them for names and the group mentioned the name, Ephraim Genuino of Pagcor, the President’s response almost floored them: “I need Genuino because he provides me with support. He takes care of media and the bishops for me.”

We wondered: What did the President mean by those words? What role do Genuino and Pagcor play for the President in relation to the media and the bishops?

3. On July 5, in a Cabinet meeting a week after her “I am sorry” speech, the President expressed remorse over her public statement on the Garci tape, chastised

those of us who insisted on her speaking about the tape and complained that she drew more flak than public sympathy for her apology.

We wondered: Did she make the admission on the Garci tape out of a sincere desire to tell the truth? Or, was the apology made out of fear that some Cabinet members might resign if she did not? Was this the reason why a majority of the people viewed her public apology as insincere?

In the same Cabinet meeting, the President announced, in light of what she perceived as escalating attempts to destabilize her government, a new framework for governance – national security.

Again, many of us wondered: Was the President now confusing her own survival with that of the state, so that any criticism directed at her would now be viewed as attacks on the security of the state itself? Is this new doctrine what drove ISAFP agents to raid the San Mateo apartment of Mr. Tabayoyong without any legal justification and in clear violation of Mr. Tabayoyong's constitutional and political rights?

The latest issue that has hit the headlines—the resignation of SBMA Chairman Francisco Licuanan—again graphically illustrates this “survival-at-all-cost” syndrome. This time, the cost is competence and professionalism in governance, the ability of the government to attract highly qualified and dedicated men and women of integrity from the private sector to serve in government. It was not enough that Mr. Licuanan had to be sacrificed to give way to what is generally suspected to be an impeachment quid-pro-quo. Unable to explain Licuanan's abrupt resignation, unnamed Administration officials had to resort to lies—that “he did not have a taste for the bureaucratic life” and that the workload at SBMA was “too stressful” for him—fabrications that Licuanan politely rejected as “wrong impressions.”

Again we asked: How many more competent and deserving people in government will be sacrificed and how many more juicy positions in government will be doled out in exchange for support in the impeachment process?

Today, the House Committee on Justice may finally decide to consider the original Lozano complaint as the appropriate complaint to be discussed in the ongoing impeachment hearings. The vote will mean the exclusion of the amended Lozano complaint, which was originally endorsed by 43 representatives (and which we are told has since increased to more than 70 as of yesterday) and where a number of individuals and organizations were co-complainants.

We have serious reasons to doubt that the Lozano complaint was simply a solitary effort by Atty. Oliver Lozano to impeach the President. It more likely appears to us to have been part of a grand plan, known or not known to Attorney Lozano, to frustrate the impeachment process right from the start. If this is true, we feel this is yet again another scheme perpetrated to ensure the President's survival, at the cost of the integrity of the Constitutional process of impeachment.

We are bothered by these thoughts because of an incident that occurred on that memorable night of June 27, right after the President made her now-famous “I am sorry” speech before our people. For this purpose, allow me to recognize an eyewitness to an exchange between the President and a key Cabinet official

regarding an impeachment complaint that was filed in the morning of that day, former DSWD Secretary Dinky Soliman.

Like you, we are disturbed by questions arising from said incident: Was it a coincidence that Attorney Lozano filed his impeachment complaint in the morning of June 27, and in the evening of the same day, PGMA made her "I am sorry" speech on the Garci tapes? Or, was the weak and possibly defective-in-form Lozano complaint part of a grand conspiracy to frustrate and preclude the filing of an honest-to-goodness impeachment complaint that the Palace anticipated would arise from the public admission made by the President on the Garci tapes? If that is so, were Attorney Lozano and party-list Representative Marcoleta aware of such a plan? If that is so, is this the reason why anti-impeachment proponents in the House Committee on Justice have adopted a very restrictive and narrow interpretation of the impeachment rules and the Constitution to favor the consideration of the original Lozano complaint to the exclusion of the substantial amended complaint?

These are questions we have raised just on this particular incident. We have more to ask as we did earlier. And, more important, you too, citizens of this country, have your own questions that deserve answers. You deserve the truth, no less.

Right now, the venue where we can demand answers, testimonies and evidence from all parties is the impeachment trial, the only constitutional process available and acceptable to many to ferret out the truth. What happens when the House Committee on Justice votes to consider only the original Lozano complaint and subsequently acts to throw it out on a technicality? What do we do next?