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Whistleblowing: The Media Perspective in the Philippines

Melinda Quintos de Jesus
Executive Director
Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility
The Philippines

Introduction

This paper presents the experience of “whistleblowing” in the Philippines using a framework of analysis that incorporates various aspects of democratic development, but with particular interest in the press or news media and the role this plays in the political system and society at large.

The discussion will include a brief review of the country’s history and political development, an assessment of the Philippine press media, both print and broadcast, quality of governance, the laws and current attempts to improve legislation on this issue and the character of civil society. These societal aspects constitute a coherent prism with which to view the phenomenon of whistleblowing.

The paper reviews the bills currently being discussed in Congress to promote the practice of whistleblowing. It describes how civil society groups have exerted pressure to counter corruption, with some concentrating on whistleblowing. It gives special attention to the role of the press and the two ways in which the press is engaged in the practice of whistleblowing. First, the press itself does the whistleblowing with investigative reports which reveal information that those in power may wish to keep hidden from the public. Second, the press reports the testimonies of whistleblowers.

The paper is written as a journalistic report, as the writer has no academic credentials. It does not discuss what the literature on the subject has already established quite clearly—the definition of whistleblowing, the political context in which it occurs in different countries, the experience of the whistleblower (motivation, risks, rewards and punishments), among others. It does not prescribe strategies to encourage the practice.

Background on CMFR

The work of the Manila-based Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility (CMFR) informs this discussion. CMFR is a non-stock, non-profit private foundation which I helped to establish in 1989 and where I have served as executive director since its founding. The general objectives of CMFR are to promote press freedom and to establish mechanisms for self-regulation as way of encouraging professional ethics and values in the conduct of journalism.

The objectives of CMFR are incorporated in three main program lines. The first is a continuing and sustained media monitor which critiques the performance of the press and publishes its findings in a monthly periodical, the *Philippine Journalism Review Reports*. In this connection, CMFR conducts training in media ethics and various issues as the news reflects current needs, such as peace reporting, gender-based reporting, policy news and election reform. It convenes roundtable discussions as controversies arise to promote more informed press reports and commentary in the press.

The second stream is the Jaime V. Ongpin Awards for Excellence in Journalism, an award program to recognize the best in-depth reports of the year. The awards single out for recognition two categories which examine and explain issues and developments. Investigative journalism sheds light on things that those in power may wish to keep hidden from the public. Explanatory journalism clarifies programs and issues. Both help to promote good governance.

The third program line involves the promotion and protection of press freedom. CMFR provides a data base which it started in 1991, an analytical monitor of threats and attacks against the press and journalists, including the killing of members of media and press. CMFR sends out Alert reports to international media “watchdog” organizations: the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) of which it is a founding member, the International Freedom of Information Exchange (IFEX) based in Toronto, Canada and the Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), based in Paris.

CMFR has played a critical role in pursuing legal actions to check political power as it impinges on press freedom, such as the collective filing of a suit against the president's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, who, since 2003, has filed 11 cases against 46 journalists in the Philippines. CMFR also serves as the secretariat of the network of media organizations called Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists, Inc., which raises funds to assist besieged journalists and the families of victims as well as litigation of cases.

All three program lines are linked organically to the issue of whistleblowing. The institutional role of the press as a watchdog of power makes the press an institutional whistleblower. In providing investigative reports, the press often depends on whistleblowers in government as well as in the private sector. Such reports often occasion reprisal against journalists who expose misconduct and wrongdoing, and they are especially vulnerable in the countryside, where forces more easily resort to violence against the press. The awards programs encourage vigilance on the part of the press so that it can continue to serve the institutional role to speak "truth to power" and to check abuse of power in all place of society.

These activities have also produced a body of knowledge about the interaction of the press with other communities representing other institutions. While it focuses on media development as an aspect of democratic growth, CMFR engages government bodies, the academe, and other civil society groups.

Developing countries usually exhibit institutional and structural weaknesses in society which can hold back the growth of democracy. For example, elections in the Philippines often result in the election of candidates who do not have the qualities necessary for public office. The two reasons for winning are patronage and popularity. Those who are elected do not always have the required qualities of competence, experience and integrity. Furthermore, many politicians seek public office not out of a desire to be of service. Rather they regard public office as a resource to be exploited to increase and expand both power and wealth. Democratic elections often raise politicians who are incompetent or corrupt, or both. Like all other subjects of study, whistleblowing must be understood as a reflection of the larger system of corruption that persists in countries like the Philippines.

This study examines responses of government, in particular laws and legislation, of the press and of civil society. In its conclusion, the paper will recommend some activities or initiatives that will help strengthen the collective capacity to check corruption and remove its most debilitating impact on development and democratic practice.

History and Background of the Philippine Press

The Philippines was a colony of Spain for 400 years. The first publications produced by Filipinos were revolutionary in purpose. The *La Solidaridad* was published by Filipinos studying and living abroad, whose ideas were inspired by the same ideals of liberty and equality which fired the French Revolution. The periodical was smuggled into the colony and read by the educated classes. These ideas seeded the armed revolution against Spain which succeeded in 1898 to proclaim a Philippine Republic, the first Asian country to establish its independence from colonial control.

But the global landscape did not favor the republic. After her defeat in the Spanish-American War (April-Aug. 1898), Spain ceded the territory to the United States. Filipinos waged war against the new colonial power but were defeated. The country became an American colony and more than 40 years under America left it with a legacy of elections, of republican government and of an active free press.

The press in the country took on various aspects of the American model. The press evolved as a business enterprise and depended on profits. In many cases, established businesses established a newspaper company which often served the owners' political and commercial interests. This pattern was reflected also in the growth of broadcast media. Unlike many other countries in Asia, radio and television in the Philippines were developed by the private sector as enterprises designed to make profit and dependent on profits from advertising and circulation revenues.

However, these conditions did not hold back the growth of a professional editorial community, proficient in the production of news and commentary. The press exudes a free-wheeling and provocative editorial style. Three daily newspapers published from the national capital of Metro Manila lead in circulation and advertising revenues. Five other newspapers have some policy influence although they have smaller circulation. Popular tabloids have little political news, but enjoy mass following.

The Constitution of 1935 enshrined the protection of the press from government interference. The 1987 Constitution does the same. Through the years of independence, Philippine newspapers have served as "watchdogs" of the exercise of power and journalists report with an adversarial stance toward incumbent officials.

The years of the Marcos dictatorship disrupted what could have been a progressive cycle of press development. Martial Law and the set of repressive rules routed the free press system. A system of licensing permitted only Marcos' family and friends to own newspapers. Privately owned television stations and radio stations were allowed to operate only if these did not cross the imposed limits for coverage.

An alternative press began to challenge the controls and tested government tolerance for critical reporting and commentary. The political assassination of an opposition leader, former Senator Benigno Aquino Jr., sparked a broadly supported protest movement which eventually eroded the hold of government on the situation.

The fall of Marcos ushered a new era of press freedom. The 1987 Charter restored press freedom as a basic right. The media explosion after 1986 also recovered a lively and provocative style of news and commentary. Democratization under the leadership of Aquino's widow, Corazon Aquino, made the press a central factor in post-Marcos politics. Soon television and radio increased its programming for news and public affairs. The press remains at present a vibrant and vital presence, and becomes a force that affects the course of public affairs, for good or bad.

Issues and Concerns

Press freedom is the saving grace of the Philippine press. The institution is fraught with problems.

Commercialism

Producing and distributing different news products, the press constitutes a commercial activity. News organizations are businesses that make profit from revenues of advertising and circulation. Such commercialism can get in the way of the quality of the news service. Seeking greater profits, news organizations tend to favor the coverage that will draw popular following.

Political and Vested Interests

Some owners are aligned with political factions. Government controls three television stations but these have very low audience ratings. Media owners include those aligned with political factions or parties or with other vested interests involving other businesses. The media economy therefore can be highly politicized, affecting the independent and autonomous processing of news and information.

Media and Corruption

In many ways, the media mirror society. More than just reporting on the events and developments of the society in which the press operates, press conduct reflects the character of that society, its strengths and its weaknesses.

Political and business groups vie for their share of media space and time, or assure a more sympathetic treatment of their news by paying for it. "Payola" or "envelopmental" journalism demonstrates how the media can also be engaged in the same cycle of corruption that journalists are expected to expose. Corruption in government can be reported from two perspectives: one favoring the accused, the other diametrically opposed. Media publicity can often tend to confuse readers, watering down the impact and credibility of well investigated reports.

Despite its weaknesses, the press has been able to report on corruption in high places. News reports investigate and expose what public officials wish to keep from public light. Public affairs programs probe and inquire into the issues, forcing politicians, and business and civic leaders to participate in public debate and discussion. The live airing of sessions in Congress provides the public direct access to politics in action. Investigative reports reveal wrongdoing and incompetence in public office, searching out and verifying facts. Journalists usually report the information “whistleblowers” disclose, through public hearings or exclusive interviews.

But journalists who dare to probe and report on sensitive issues involving people in power are at risk. Political motives figure in the violence perpetrated against media members and the libel charges filed to silence media critics. In the Philippines, criminal libel laws make possible imprisonment of journalists for defamation.

Journalists are more at risk for reporting on sensitive issues when they work in local areas, especially in the cities and towns where local kingpins feel they can control the situation and cover up their efforts to suppress their critics.

Killings of Journalists

The Philippines has gained notoriety as being among the most “dangerous assignments” in the world. Thirty seven journalists have been killed in the line of duty since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo came to power in 2001—almost half of the total number of journalists killed in the line duty (75) since the restoration of democracy since 1986. There is a count of killings that date back to pre-Martial Law years, but there was no way to keep count of these attacks during Martial Law.

The motive for killing journalists and media practitioners are often related to their critical commentary or exposés. The majority of victims worked in the provinces, where the perpetrators can more easily cover up the tracks that lead to their discovery. Those who work in national news organizations are seen to be less vulnerable to reprisal for their work.

The killings are part of the broader culture of lawlessness and impunity, and the failure of the legal system. Police investigation is hampered by lack of resources. Few witnesses ever want to come forward with information that will allow the case to prosper in court. This failure of the judicial system is central to the larger problem of corruption. Police failure may be due to political pressure. When the cases get to court, delays buy time for those charged. Judges as well as witnesses can be bribed.

The country’s boast of having the “freest” press in Asia has lost its luster because of the killings and the prevailing culture of impunity. In the latest reported survey of Freedom House, the Philippines is ranked only as “partly free.”

Civil Society

Civil society organizations (CSOs)—also called non-government organizations (NGOs) and/or peoples’ organizations (POs)—constitute forces of change that operate outside the agencies of the state. These work within the framework of the law. CSOs represent society’s response to various interests, issues, needs and concerns and often operate on a voluntary basis. The phenomenon indicates a degree of citizen engagement without which democracy cannot fully develop. These groups usually work on areas that state agencies may not be able to serve adequately, or act as pressure groups to force the state to act on problems.

All over the world, there are many kinds of CSOs reflecting a diversity of thematic concerns: human rights, education, elections, general public welfare, and the needs of the poor and marginalized. NGOs also arise from shared affinities or professional interests, including sports and other recreational activities.

In many democracies, civil society activities supplant or fill in the gaps of state sponsored public service. These become political as necessary. CSOs can work in concert to push for change or to support political leaders who they feel will facilitate the changes they seek.

The roots of CSOs in the Philippines go back as far as the era of the Spanish rule. The first organizations in the country to provide welfare and charity were the Roman Catholic Church and other religious orders. In the 1950s, international associations gained higher profile as professionals and those engaged in business saw the potential of networks formed by international associations such as the Jaycees, Lions, and the Rotary.

During the period of Martial Law, these groups tended to operate only as social clubs. But the CSOs acquired stronger political color during the early eighties when the movement against Marcos engaged their members. Workers' unions, women's groups, professional organizations joined the demonstrations on the streets, providing the non-partisan but political force which would eventually bring down the dictatorship in February 1986.

The fall of Marcos and the quick change of government in February opened up space for the expansion of NGOs and their different activities. CSOs grew by the thousands during the administration of Corazon Aquino which relaxed the restraints in the formation of social, cultural, religious, non-stock, and nonprofit groups.

They continue to operate in the different areas of concern, joining citizen volunteers in addressing issues of poverty and other social, economic, and political inequities. The Philippines is described to have a large, vibrant, and active civil society sector uncharacteristic of most developing nations. The estimated number of CSOs is 500,000 of which only a small fraction is registered and about 3,000 to 5,000 considered "development-oriented." (Asian Development Bank, 2007) CSOs played a visible role in the fall of two corrupt presidents: Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada.

CSOs in the Philippines are in the forefront of a movement calling for greater social accountability. CSOs deliver the services that the government is unable to provide. In this sphere, they become informed about what keeps government from providing such services, which often enough involves corruption. It is only natural then, that CSOs also conduct advocacy campaigns, monitoring various aspects and processes of government in general, and even more active "anti-corruption" programs that also help curb the wrongdoing in government. Their importance is most notable in the promotion of citizen awareness of government failure, either through incompetence or corruption. CSOs, which hold substantial data and information on salient issues, are possessed of an impressive bank of knowledge and expertise. As such, CSOs can provide large influence in the formation of public policies.

CSOs have encouraged whistleblowing, which has proven as an effective tool against corruption. CSOs provide assistance to whistleblowers and support future ones; run campaigns for public awareness; and push legislations for the support and protection of whistleblowers. A number of organizations have focused on whistleblowing. Among these are Whistleblowers' Association (WBA) and Public Service Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK).

Given that the Philippines has no clear policies on whistleblowing, PSLINK recognizes the vulnerability of whistleblowers to threats, harassments, and attacks. PSLINK helps whistleblowers financially through a small fund which runs on contributions. PSLINK also provides legal assistance.

Former and current Senate witnesses on alleged corruption in government formed the WBA as they grew tired of begging for donations and asking for help and support from other people. The witnesses support Sen. Panfilo Lacson's Whistleblower Act of 2008 and are now looking for someone in the House of Representatives to file a counterpart bill.

Values, spirituality and faith have also figured in the correction of society's ills. In an effort to encourage transparency and accountability in governance, the Philippine Province of The Society of Jesus and the Office of the Ombudsman published "Aha! A Citizen's Primer on *Whistleblowing" through the Ehem!* Aha! Technical Working Group. Ehem! national coordinator Ronnie V. Amorado wrote in the primer,

* *Ehem* is the Tagalog expression that approximates the clearing of the throat indicating either emphasis or critical subtext.

"Aha! means to expose an anomaly, or disclose a malpractice." (Ehem! Aha! Technical Working Group, 2006) The primer is a result of a series of focus group discussions with whistleblowers and other stakeholders. The primer serves as a practical guide for potential whistleblowers and anti-corruption advocates. The guide also describes spiritual and secular tools and procedures to combat corruption and aims to create opportunities for an ethical and spiritual whistleblowing.

Who are the Whistleblowers

In the open and contentious political environment in the Philippines, information about corruption and wrongdoing flow through institutional channels provided by the press. But these also flow quite freely through the informal means, such as talk in social gatherings and coffee shops that constitute a rich load of rumor and gossip. Such ceaseless exchange on insider information proves that "whistleblowing" is well developed as an activity. But not all insiders sharing information are willing to be quoted, to answer questions, and to put their knowledge on the record.

The accounts of those who have done so indicate a degree of corruption in high places so significant as to hold back the potential for development.

Case Study One

Transparency International interviewed Annie Geron, a union member since 1987, about her exposure to corruption in the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). She was the senior technical education and skills development specialist at TESDA's Office for Non-Formal Technical Vocational Education and Training (ONFTVET). TESDA's mandate is to encourage the full participation of and mobilize the industry, labor, local government units and technical-vocational institutions in the skills development of the country's human resources. (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, 2007)

She filed a complaint against the director general of the agency in Oct. 2006 when she was union president of the Samahang Malaya at Nagkakaisang Kawani ng TESDA (Association of Free and United Employees of TESDA). The group is an affiliate of the Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK), an umbrella organization of public sector unions and associations that represent more than 80,000 government workers in the Philippines.

Geron's complaint was preceded by another involving 12 different allegations of misuse of public funds concerning the same official which had been filed by another group with no less than the Ombudsman and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission which works under the Office of the President.

She discovered the misuse of funds in TESDA as she examined documents of the transactions involved in a government project.

Geron, who has worked in government since the 1980s, represents the kind of "whistleblower" who gains the information about wrongdoing as part of the job. She was not party to the questioned transactions and had no axe to grind. Still, she was placed under preventive suspension for 90 days without pay, during the investigation. She was barred from entry to her workplace and transferred to another office in the agency where she was working. When she refused transfer, she was charged with gross insubordination. When she led a series of peaceful actions to protest, she was charged with grave misconduct. In March 2007, she was removed from the payroll.

Case Study Two

Rodolfo Noel "Jun" Lozada Jr. is a different type of whistleblower. Like Annie Geron, he worked in a government agency, as president CEO of the state-owned Philippine Forest Corporation (PFC). But his "discovery" of wrongdoing differs significantly from Geron's case.

According to his own testimony, Lozada was included in the discussions of government projects. His experience in this area suggests that he knows how money is made from government projects, how it is "hidden" or "disguised" in the money flows and he is often privy to the distribution of funds through

bribes and “kickbacks” in project implementation. Lozada has not come to the role with clean hands, being seen as having something to gain in the process.

Although his role was not well known, he was called to testify in the Senate hearings on National Broadband Network –Zhong Xing Telecommunications Equipment Company Limited (NBN-ZTE). The government contract was reported to have involved huge amounts of payments to those involved in making this transaction possible, a transaction that implicated the president as she signed the contract in April 2007.

Lozada’s appearance was much awaited by everyone following this case, because he was projected to have more direct knowledge of the involvement of public officials in the scandal. He told all higher officials, the director-general of the National Economic Development Agency (NEDA), who had invited him to be a consultant to the NBN-ZTE, his superior, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, and others he knew in government that he did not wish to testify and to help him get out of this situation.

He left for Hong Kong on Jan. 30, 2008 precisely to be out of the country for some time, hoping that the invitation to testify would go away. When he did return after six days waiting in Hong Kong, Lozada arrived in Manila where he was met by men in plain clothes who escorted him through a route in the airport reserved for officials and was not seen by family members who were there to meet him. He was escorted to a vehicle and with three other men, was driven out of the city without being told of their destination. Lozada texted his family on the cellphone to tell them where he was. His family immediately contacted the media about the situation. They also filed a petition for amparo with the Supreme Court for his protection.

The media bombarded the different government offices, including the police, airport management and Malacañang to ask Lozada’s whereabouts. They aired these interviews live and before noon, the public knew that Lozada was “missing.”

Later on, Lozada would relate that after some time, he was driven back to the city so he could meet with a lawyer who instructed him to sign a prepared affidavit after which, he was told he could go to his family. He asked that he be taken to the school run by the La Salle Brothers, where his sons were studying and where he sought shelter for his entire family.

His family called the media to a pre-dawn press conference where he described his experience after being met at the airport. This was aired live on television. That morning, the public already knew about Jun Lozada and awaited the more detailed testimony in the Senate.

Lozada openly admitted his participation in the cycle of corruption. While some in government capitalized on this fact to mar his credibility, the admission helped to convince the public about the truth of what he had to say. In his testimony, he named those he saw during the talks and he shared his views about the participation of the different players and the substance of the talks. He named the amounts sought by officials as part of their share of the funds. But he had no direct information that linked the president herself to the scandal.

Nevertheless, what he did have to say clearly showed that Malacañang officials had something to do with the plan to keep him from testifying and that the drive that took him from airport was part of a larger plan to silence him, one way or another.

Lozada is the kind of whistleblower who knows about wrongdoing because of direct involvement in questionable transactions. Their involvement however enhances the projection of their act as “truth-telling.” How else can one discover about these things, unless one has been a participant in the activity?

Lozada is therefore not one of a kind. In fact, with so much corruption going on, the “whistleblower” has been, more often than not, someone who had benefited in some way from the corrupt practice.

Case Study Three

The most sensational of the type played a key role in the scandal and crisis that brought down President Joseph Estrada. The whistleblower was a close ally of the president. Luis "Chavit" Singson, a politician from the North, revealed all he knew about payments made to the president from illegal gambling profits. Singson had been linked to illegal gambling in his province of Ilocos Sur. But this made his testimony credible.

Singson went on to win the Ilocos Sur gubernatorial elections in 2004. He had become an ally of the current president and as a local kingpin, continues to exercise enough power and influence to figure in the play for power in national office. After losing as an administration candidate in the 2007 senatorial elections, Arroyo appointed him as deputy national security adviser in Sept. 2008.

Laws and Legislation on Whistleblowing

In the Philippines, there are laws that protect and reward people that provide information against bribery and other corrupt practices.

Republic Act No. 6981, "The Witness Protection, Security and Benefit Act", encourages individuals who have witnessed or have knowledge that a crime has been committed to testify before a court or quasi-judicial body, or before an investigating authority. Approved in April 1991, R.A. 6981 protects such individuals from reprisals and from economic dislocation.

Another law, Presidential Decree No. 749, grants immunity from prosecution to bribe-givers and accomplices who serve as witness in bribery and other graft cases against public officers.

In the Philippines, public disclosure of bribery and other corrupt practices to media appears to be the most common form of external whistleblowing. The Shield Law (R.A. No. 53, as amended by R.A. No. 1477) protects journalists from revealing the source of any news report or information related in confidence "unless a court or a House or committee of Congress finds that such revelation is demanded by the security of the state." (Kabatay and Teodoro, 2006)

The above laws, however, do not specifically protect and support whistleblowers.

The Philippine legislature is bicameral, with a Senate whose members are elected nationally and a House of Representatives who are elected by district.

In the present 14th Congress, eight bills propose legal frameworks with which to address the issue of whistleblowing in the Philippines. There are at least five bills currently pending at the House of Representatives. At least three senators have filed their own versions designed to provide protection, support and encourage potential whistleblowers.

In the 13th Congress, at least three bills acknowledged and encouraged the media as a whistleblowing channel. None were passed. At least four of the present bills ignored the role that the media plays as an external whistleblower.

Promoting A Culture of Transparency and "Candor"

Unfortunately, not every law that is passed assures to improve the correction of a problem. Filipinos have become cynical about the legal approach, even if they accept that a law is a good place to start. The passage of a law is only one of the many steps that can lead to change.

Already, there are quite a number of laws designed to curb corrupt practice, among them, R.A. No. 3019 (Anti-Graft And Corrupt Practices Act) which was enacted in 1960 and amended in 1975, R.A. No. 6713 (Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees) passed in 1989 and Executive Order No. 12 (creating the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission) passed in 2001. But surveys have also shown that public perception notes the continuing growth of corruption. Laws can be

ineffectual because other mechanisms or instruments in the system are weak or flawed. Laws are reduced to statements of aspiration, of an unrealistic ideal.

The judicial system is saddled by enormous difficulties. It has not helped that the “hidden wealth” charges against Marcos are still in the courts. Estrada was convicted and placed under house arrest, but he was recently pardoned by Arroyo as she was fending off impeachment cases filed against her in Congress. Arroyo herself has been the center of serial scandal and controversy. The growing cynicism about lawmaking and its potential to correct the ills that afflict the socio-political conditions in the Philippines is one of the major factors working against change.

As corruption seems embedded in the political culture and system, the potential of whistleblowing recedes.

The political culture has to change in an organic and systematic manner. Whistleblowers will always be vulnerable with the conditions as they are. Even the laws will not make much difference, for so long as the culture remains the same.

Whistleblowing in countries where there is little law enforcement will not prosper for so long as whistleblowing results in the loss of livelihood and the peril to life. Conditions as they are will always place the whistleblower at risk. Like Annie Geron. And Jun Lozada.

Recommendations

Involve the Media

Specific to the concerns of this panel, the dialogue on corruption and whistleblowing should involve the active interaction with media communities. The participation of the media could open up space for reporting of various efforts and activities to promote whistleblowing and protect whistleblowers.

Manuals on how to work with the media will also help potential whistleblowers to come out in the open. Case studies should be shared internationally. Different countries can determine what they can apply with effect in their environments.

Publicize International Conventions

International conventions, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and other agreements that oblige state parties to check corruption should be well publicized, again through the media. News organizations should be encouraged to hold public discussion and debate about the issue so that the public can gain a deeper understanding of the issue and problem.

A Foundation Based on Values

Warren Bennis in his book, “Transparency”, presents three essays on “creating a culture of candor” which also serves as a title of the lead essay. In his preface to the book, he notes how the word “transparency encompasses candor, integrity, honesty, ethics, clarity, full disclosure, legal compliance, and a host of other things that allow us to deal fairly with each other.” (Bennis, et al., 2008)The wholistic view emphasizes the importance of leaders and leadership and their role in promoting a culture of candor. He sees candor as an essential element without which individuals as well as organizations cannot flourish.

I think this insight should guide all efforts at curbing and countering corruption as well as promoting efficient and effective governance that is anchored on public service. Processes and procedures that seek to lessen corruption need to emerge from a social consensus on how we wish to conduct ourselves as a people and society.

Without this foundation, everything else are mere tools that can be ignored, individually or collectively. Scholars and experts should identify how this consensus can be established so that laws, customs and values can cohere and find expression in national character and culture.

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