

A Matter of Respect and Acceptance

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In a world filled with violence and chaos, people could only think of peace as too ideal. It is something people only hear during beauty contests when judges ask the contestants what they want and they would simply answer “world peace”. But should it really stop there? Should we just talk about peace and keep it abstract? Can we not do anything to achieve it?

Coming from one of the most dangerous places in the country, Mindanao, specifically Zamboanga Peninsula, I have experienced firsthand the terror brought about by different rebel groups who keep their camps in the place. I was a senior high school student then when a rebel commander was killed in our town. People panicked and our small town was immediately crowded with soldiers putting our town on red alert. I never thought I would be able to experience it in the province. Then and there I realized how serious the terrorism and peace problem in Mindanao is. I thought of the rebel groups—MNLF, ASG, etc., and I ask myself, why are they doing it? The media and the government say it is because of the issue on ancestral domains, others say they just simply want to terrorize people. But what is it really?

Why can there be no peace in Mindanao? I ask myself further. Is it really because of these rebel groups? Is it because of the government? Or is it simply because of us? Mindanao is a rich island. Maybe not in monetary terms but in culture and people. We are very diverse. Christians, Muslims and Lumads have made our Mindanao their respective dwelling place. But because of the difference in culture, conflicts rise between these groups, building and creating tensions which later results to chaos and war. This, I believe is the root cause of the peace and terrorism problems. Therefore, if we want to achieve peace, we should start on the ground.

It is all a matter of respect and acceptance. Respect on other people’s culture and acceptance of our differences. It is only by doing this do we start solving the problem and it is only by doing this that we could slowly achieve peace. And why should we vie for peace? For years, chaos and lack of peace have never done us any good. In fact, all it gave us was harm. A lot of people have lost their fathers, brothers, even their mothers and sisters in this unending war. Children have died too. And should we just allow it to continue? No. too much collateral damage has been done. Progresses have been stopped for God-knows-how-long and it would continue to be that way if we do not do anything about it. We created these problems. Therefore we should be able to solve it too.

I will start doing it by respecting other people. And from there, inspire others, perhaps my classmates, to do the same. Peace is more than just words. It is something we should not just preach about. It is a tough quest and success is still questionable. But those things should never be reasons for us to stop or not even try.

