

*Department of Political Science
Ateneo de Manila University
Elections 2022
Why Leni -Kiko?
Working Paper Series no. 3*

An Opportunity for Feminist Governance

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**An Opportunity for Feminist
Governance**

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Preface

This is part 3 of a series of working papers on the 2022 Philippine National Elections. Each essay reflects the individual faculty's specialization and research interest.

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When one talks about feminist governance, it pertains to improving the situation of women --- still considered as vulnerable and marginalized in many settings. That is why there is prioritization of training and mentoring of women leaders and ingraining in them the practice of transformative feminist leadership --- a type of leadership that seeks to change the systemic and systematic decay of the political.

Feminist governance foregoes patriarchal and aggressive engagements and instead applies feminist methodology such as gender analysis in the calculation of best possible actions. Socio-economic targets are by no means gender-blind --- they should be specific and implicit in achieving gender equality. It should underscore bringing people together instead of polarizing the polity. And finally, the ethic of care should form part of the frame of how things are done. Feminist governance is about values carried by the leadership. It serves as a compass to guide action in policy formulation and policy

implementation. For example, as applied to *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, the basic consideration would be that of mainstreaming gender in the ideals of Filipinos being strongly rooted (*matatag*), comfortable (*maginhawa*), and secure (*panatag*). This essentially means that key components of these ideals must, at the very least, apply gender analysis --- where are the women, men, LGBTQ community in the improvement of priority sectors (i.e. housing and urban development, manufacturing, connectivity, education services, tourism and allied services, agriculture, health and wellness, and financial services). In other words, feminist governance, as applied to *AmBisyon Natin 2040* normalizes gender in achieving goals. Unfortunately, at this point in time, this is not the case.



For one thing, despite decades of implementation of gender and development (GAD), gender mainstreaming, and laws

seeking to address sexual and gender-based violence, misogyny still envelopes Philippine governance and politics. Take the current electoral politics, for example --- there is no scarcity of insulting one's gender, of proliferation of fake news and fabricated lewd videos. Even prior to the election period, there have been so many gender stereotypes hurled at female leadership.

Sexual and Sexualized Politics

An outstanding female candidate for the upcoming presidential election has been at the receiving end of the continuing sexism in Philippine politics and it has been highlighted more so during this election period. Disregarding her position as the second highest leader in the land, Vice President Leni Robredo had been called a lot of names, and all her accomplishments have been reduced to merely nothing, because as they say – “*babae kasi*”. But even before the election, women in politics had been receiving different levels of sexist remarks,

some even spewed by the president himself. In one instance, the president implied that VP Robredo goes home really late (unbecoming of a female, as he put it) and even accused her of going home to a congressman. He also mentioned that she cannot be president because she is weak. These remarks are now dangerously being echoed and embraced by the Filipinos who have long since internalized misogyny and sexism.

Aside from the lies and fake news directed towards VP Robredo, her children are being victimized as well. Just recently, a fake sex tape of one of the Robredo daughters made its presence on social media platforms. Fake news peddlers have claimed that it was an old sex tape showing VP Robredo's eldest daughter. Critics of VP Robredo and supporters of her opponents immediately latched on to the news to further taint her and her family's name. While it was proven fake, this action still reeks of sexism, as men are usually celebrated for their sexual engagements while women are heavily castigated for it. Women are always at the shameful end of

these issues while men are given a free pass as it is considered their “nature” to be sexual. It seems like our society truly believes that they could, and they should control women’s bodies and sexualities.

Unfortunately, the culture of patriarchy is still dominant in our country. Women are still being used as entertainment during campaign sorties. They are asked to dance in their underwear, asked to perform sexual dances amid jeering and cheering of men, and asked to use their bodies to command attention and to provide amusement to the audience. This has been going on for years already and it needs to stop now. We should promote dignity and respect to all genders and stop treating women as objects that can be controlled. During elections or not, we must always uphold and demand for respect and equal treatment regardless of gender.

Opportunity at Feminist Governance

As Michelle Obama in the context of ‘dirty politics’ once said, “when they go low, we go high”. And this is exactly what VP Robredo has done. She has promoted and fostered “*radikal na pagmamahal*” and even asked her supporters to practice it as well. She has always convinced them to fight the dirty with dignity, to combat the lies with truth. She embraces all colors, and continues to maintain that she will serve everyone, regardless of who or what they believe in. This is a leader that truly embraces unity – in her actions, words, and in her solid platform. VP Robredo is a leader that embodies feminist governance, and most importantly, feminist care. She has proven this in her term as the Vice President, especially in how she makes sure that everyone receives the care they need, her track record will speak for that. We are now given an opportunity to elect a leader who will not turn a blind eye to gendered problems. A leader who understands how it feels to be marginalized because you are a woman, a

mother, a widow, who have raised daughters who faced the same gender issues we have experienced. It is high time we talk about gender as a component and a big factor affecting different sectors. Let us elect a woman (who even organizes her grocery list using google drive) who we can trust to make the right decisions for us.

Babae para sa babae, babae para sa lahat --- this is the opportunity for feminist governance.

About the Authors



Dr Veneracion-Rallonza is a feminist political scientist and an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at Ateneo de Manila University. Her research interests and advocacy efforts include women in politics, women's human rights in armed conflict situations, transnational women's movements, international norms against wartime rape and sexual violence and women's politics at the margins.



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