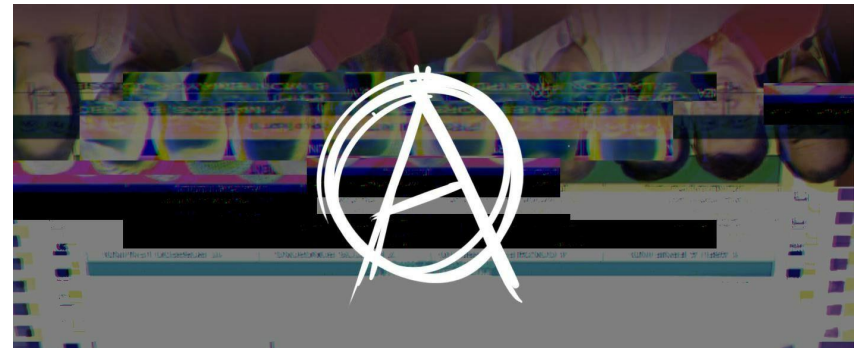


Bandilang Itim
Magkaugnay ang ating Pakikibaka
Towards Anarchy in the Archipelago
Para sa pagpapalawig ng kaisipan ng kalayaan



Theses on Halalan 2022

KonTRAPolitiko



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March 2022

bandilangitim.xyz

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A clear commitment towards the lateralization of power into autonomous affinity groups (among other units) would do more for the struggle than laughably marginal concessions within liberal (representative) democracy.

For one, it generalizes a threat to state power. Repression of activism will still be present, but this sidesteps the scapegoating of legal organizations and activist groups—forcing broader authoritarian measures in its stead.

Accelerating these conditions may seem counter-intuitive, but it also lays out the state's antagonism in ways that become increasingly untenable. Resisting the "communism" of the haunted "Communist Party" is a clear message. Resisting a vague, ambiguous other is not.

People could only go so far before realizing that the state's actions are against their personal, and collective, self interest. Assuming minimum viability, this draws the public's subjectivity past prior lines of pseudospeciation—affording some degree of headroom for meaningful solidarity.

You do not have to be a communist, anarchist, or name brand radical to stand for yourself—you just have to stand. At the cost of necessitating greater volitional understanding of autonomous struggle across affinity groups, more paths open up for the public to act upon its discontent.

people’s stupidity, egotism, nor being inherently evil; they are products of the systemic and structural failures of the state in making the people feel like they have power, and that they have a stake and say in the way we run things.

Even more important to our cause as anarchists and abolitionists, these should be taken as signs that the views and experiences of the people are closer to our ideals than we anticipated—that the people do not only already disregard and find superfluous (if not downright obstructive) our formal institutions, but also find ways to function and live despite them.

Thesis 18: You cannot vote away capitalism and the State and Duterte is here to stay.

People are already declaring their vote for Pacquiao, Isko, or Leni. Vote for whoever you like, but the result remains the same: wage-labor, rule of capital, and the violence of policing, all of which we cannot vote away. You cannot vote for a free society.

Duterte might leave come 2022, but Duterte is unfortunately here to stay. The police and military have already been consolidated, police powers have already expanded. Even with a return to liberalism, its power will not be dismantled by a vote. You cannot vote out the police.

Thesis 19: We need not a “unified opposition,” we need autonomous struggle.

If we are being perfectly honest here, it is not the lack of a “unified opposition” so much as a need for progressive movements to assert distributed loci of resistance against capital and the state.

Decentralization is not a fundamentally “good” thing, in that it’s a structural trait, and not a moral position. But one needs to understand that there are clear mechanical benefits to acephaly that insulate radical currents from the suppression or co-option of singular leaders or groups.

ing the Everyday: An Introduction to the Sociologies of the Unnoticed, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Thesis 17: Apathy towards electoral democracy and its institutions is not apathy towards all of politics. The apathetic and the Other are not enemies, but people with real, valid grievances against formal institutions who are not given space or voice by the system, preyed on by politicians who use discontent for their own ends. 19

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Editorial note from *Bandilang Itim*

This is an edited anthology of collected notes from comrades critical of Halanan 2022, the 2022 Philippine General Elections. “KonTRAPolitiko” is not an organization, nor is it our collective name. Rather, KonTRAPolitiko is the name we give to our anger: “Kontra” meaning “against,” “TRAPO” meaning “traditional politician,” and “politiko” meaning politician. Thus “kontra-politiko” could be translated as “anti-politician.” We the authors are not all anarchists, but we are united in our anger and contempt of the politicians. Because this is an anthology of sorts, certain themes in some theses are repeated in others, but on a whole we have tried to curb repetition and arrange these in a thematic way.

Thesis 1: Halanan 2022 is a game of musical chairs for the elite.

Trip to Jerusalem is the general Philippine term for a game of musical chairs. For those unaware, the rules are simple: if there are thirteen people playing, there are only twelve seats readily arranged in a circle. Players go around the seats dancing to a tune, and when the tune stops playing, everyone has to find a seat for themselves. Whoever does not have a seat loses. A seat and a person gets eliminated until only one remains. The game ranges from fair to outright dastardly depending on who’s playing. Some people can dance too close to the chairs, maybe mess up their rhythm so that they can line up perfectly to a seat. Of course, you have seen or heard about people who straight up yank seats out so they could get their own, much to the chagrin of the person behind them. It is all in harmless fun and games though.

But then you realize that party game you played at birthday parties years ago is a perfect metaphor for the elections we have been dreading. Many candidates enter the field to get a shot at the mercy seat of Malacañang,¹ each representing their own tribe of Philippine politics. Yet, the chances at the seat grow slimmer and slimmer every month as someone falls back because of some godforsaken backroom dealing, or perhaps

¹ The presidential palace.

rather than an invitation to understanding a reality outside our (perhaps electoral) own. Interventions such as voter’s education initiatives and efforts towards political information bombarding rely on this assumption that the people are passive, maleducated, misinformed, and unable to discern right from wrong. However, these assumptions also rest on a more fundamental view: that politics and the political solely concern the formal institutions above our everyday experiences, and thus begin with voting rights and end with reaching out to representatives in the hopes that our outrage are at least acknowledged and at most heard. The effect of this view is immensely disempowering, perpetuated and ensured by the way its implications and assumptions are acted out by those who originated and believe them.

In treating not only apathy but even support of other, perhaps more evil, candidates as an invitation to understanding, then, we are asked to listen to the stories, opinions, experiences, and realities of those who do not see, experience, and do politics the way we do. We will then confront a truth that we often neglect and even reject: that people typically focus and act on the things that personally concern them—not because they are selfish and misanthropic, but because it is only in their own affairs that they can feel and act on their power. What is most immediate and accessible to people has more direct, tangible consequences on their lives. An excerpt from an interview highlighted in Maureen Baker’s “Motherhood, employment and the ‘child penalty’”¹⁴ reads: “My children come first. I’m not accountable to any government. I’m accountable to my children.” Derek Schilling, in his chapter on the French sociologies of the quotidian, writes that Michel Maffesoli would “[argue] that the masses, quite to the contrary, prove their wisdom whenever they turn a deaf ear to the politicians: aware from experience of how empty most campaign promises are, they will not invest themselves in a cause that will likely produce few tangible rewards before it is replaced by another, no less transient cause. ... For even as they appear to subscribe to official values, the masses keep their distance, viewing as suspect all top-down attempts to unify the social whole around an ideal.”¹⁵ In sum, apathy and opposition to our view and brand of politics should not be taken as the

¹⁴ Page 222. Maureen Baker. 2010. “Motherhood, employment and the ‘child penalty’.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 33(3):215–224. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2010.01.004

¹⁵ Pages 205–206. Derek Schilling. 2009. “French Sociologies of the Quotidian: From Dialectical Marxism to the Anthropology of Everyday Practice.” Pp.187–210 in *Encounter-*

college graduates) and Leni Robredo supporters mean that they are actually kind, respectful, understanding human beings in real life precisely because they are highly educated and voting for the lesser evil, when in fact their conduct and interactions with those who differ in stance and opinion from them will show that, at least in the context of electoral discussions, they are anything but.

It is actually this vehemence in moral supremacy and antagonism of the Other that further cements the unpopularity of and low support for the chosen lesser evil candidate among the people. After all, who would want to vote for someone supported by the most obnoxious, inconsiderate, condescending person you have ever talked to? More than that, who would want to vote for a candidate supported by someone that you hate *precisely* because how they interact with you makes you hate them? Supporters and campaigners for “lesser evil” candidates neglect that the most important and effective way to gain support for one’s cause is to build bridges, not to shit or piss on or burn them. Relationships are not only personal, after all; they are political, and have great political effects. The Invisible Committee did once write, “Those with shitty relationships can only have a shitty politics.”

The way the diehard supporters of the liberal democratic—as opposed to authoritarian democratic, at least—candidates engage with their perceived Others, in our observation, can be broadly categorized into the poles of conversion and antagonism, and between these extremes is a whole spectrum of possible combinations. Three subtypes in this spectrum tend to be most observable: benevolent conversion, where supporters take a Catholic approach and act as missionaries spreading the good word of their savior-styled candidate; *parinig*,¹³ a soft kind of antagonism that relies on loudly hinting criticisms and insults at a perceived Other; and blatant antagonism, which is “stooping to the level” of the perceived Other by throwing them insults and other harmful acts and comments. Despite these differences, they have in common the view that the Other occupies a lower position morally, intellectually, and politically due to the Other’s support of enemy candidates or the Other’s “apathy.”

This perceived apathy of the Other, however, remains unproblematic and shallowly understood by liberal-electoral democrats. Or rather, it is seen solely as an illness that requires treatment and fixing,

¹³ “Hinting at.”

just lost their chance because they are staggering in the polls. At the end, when the music stops playing and the bread stops flowing, there remains only one to rule them all. The game of parties stop and so does all the competitiveness. Now, everyone is buddy-buddy and cooperating, doing their best to further their own interest, until another game plays again.

With the filing of candidacies and the inevitable early campaigning, it looks like we have started our Trip to Jerusalem. Let’s meet the players, shall we?

Thesis 2: While standing for nothing, the Marcos-Duterte tandem presents a very real threat.

Partisan politics is particularly volatile and high-stakes, but many politicians are not playing with chips on a table; rather, it’s the lives of over a hundred million people amidst a continuing health crisis, and the social ecology of a whole archipelago. And who else to join the fray than the son of a dictator who took a bit from the fruit of the forbidden tree of lust and greed?

On October 6th, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (BBM) filed his candidacy for President only replying matter-of-factly like it was obvious a thief wanted to grace Malacañang again. He was officially endorsed by the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan,² the political party of Martial Law.³ “Bagong Lipunan” was the dictator’s “New Society,” and this “Movement for the New Society” delightfully takes a page from every nostalgic and ultranationalist strongman by calling for a Philippines “made great again.” And his run echoes much of the same sentiment, if not just general lack of clarity about anything. No slate, no policies, nothing.

Yet, at Sofitel, where the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) decided to set-up, an emergency text alert system (normally used for the national disaster management agency) was hijacked ostensibly showing a support for BBM, president-in-waiting. Audacious as it may be, it is an indication that his camp has the resources, the mobility, and of course, the manpower to mount a campaign as brazen as this. You can just

² Movement for the New Society.

³ Martial Law is the period of dictatorship under Ferdinand Marcos Sr.

check Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok too. Now BBM has allied with the Sara Duterte, the daughter of the fascist-in-chief Rodrigo Duterte. The so-called Marcos-Duterte “axis of evil” presents a very real threat to Filipinos.

Thesis 3: The people who campaign for Duterte and Marcos are not misguided: they are authoritarian without apology.

People say the ableist things about Duterte supporters and Marcos apologists, but these supporters of Duterte and Marcos are not “stupid.” We recall that a certain valedictorian who shall not be named is actively a Marcos apologist, a historical revisionist, and a Sulu monarchist to boot. This valedictorian is emblematic of who we are fighting against. These people are not “stupid,” they are intelligent, wealthy, and actively malicious in their authoritarian intent.

Thesis 4: Marcos’ no-negative campaign is an illusion of professionalism.

Bongbong Marcos knows exactly what he is doing. Not only does he know his supporters well but also the social and political climate of the Philippines. He is not underestimating his enemies and the Filipinos, which is why he is doing a no-negative political campaign. It goes along with his strategy of being selective on which interviews or debate-forums to attend. He already knows the consequences of his strategies, which among them is his enemies calling him a “coward” and “incompetent.”

Naturally, most Filipinos—successfully groomed to be pro-government in the heart and mind—find activists, protestors, and rallyists annoying and noisy. Anyone who fights an authority, especially an authority that aligns with pro-government Filipinos, are seen as an eyesore because they are also taught to see anger as “unattractive”, “uncool”, “ungrateful”, or “unprofessional”. To them, anger is anger, justified or not. It is for this reason why Marcos has garnered popularity despite the mountains of factual evidences gathered against him and his family.

Thesis 17: Apathy towards electoral democracy and its institutions is not apathy towards all of politics. The apathetic and the Other are not enemies, but people with real, valid grievances against formal institutions who are not given space or voice by the system, preyed on by politicians who use discontent for their own ends.

In the first place, if we want to pin the blame of the great masses’ rejection of and refusal to at least support the “lesser evils” of the elections and at most participate in our organizations and movements, we must necessarily look at the very supporters and campaigners of these candidates, the very organizers of our spaces. We must pin the blame on *ourselves* for being unable to become allies and friends and comrades to the great many whose valid complaints, struggles, and hardships have never been articulated or given voice to by our efforts and movements. In our belief in our own intellectual—and thus moral—ascendancy, we are unable to recognize that we spit the same vitriolic, harmful, divisive, or backhanded comments as those we hate (but who might, in fact, be the very people we need to bring into our spaces and movements).

For example, the supporters of Leni Robredo, previously known as *dilawans*¹⁰ but now rebranded as *kakampinks*,¹¹ like to hold their educational attainments, institutional affiliations, and thus voting patterns above their enemies (be they the Duterte Diehard Supporters,¹² the Marcos supporters, the Leody supporters, or basically literally anyone else who does not support Leni and her slate), equating their level of education and supported candidates to the morality they possess, and this abstract morality to the kind of human being they are in actuality. That is to say, *kakampinks* think that their being educated (as they are typically

¹⁰ “Yellows.”

¹¹ A word that combines “ally” with “pink,” the color of her campaign

¹² “DDS” is also the acronym for Duterte’s assassins, the Davao Death Squad.

align with yourself. No politician can ever hope to represent you and the fullness of your needs and desires. *But they can lie to you.*

If we are to wait for leaders to do the right thing, we shall wait forever. You need no-one's permission to act now, and to do what is right.

Thesis 16: The problem is not the voter but the concentration of power.

The upcoming elections is shaping up to be the largest voter turnout in Philippine history. All candidates from reactionary to liberal repeat tired refrains: "register to vote" and "vote wisely." If BBM, the son of the dead dictator wins, he would win with unprecedented legitimacy.

Everyone wants to fund more and more voter's education campaigns, yet are not not tired of "vote wisely"? The problem is not "vote wisely," it's that concentrated power such as a presidency should not even exist to begin with, and that we are not given real choices over the power over our own lives. If BBM wins with that legitimacy, we must then question the legitimacy of voting.

Why is it that we have to concentrate so much power into a presidency? It is not enough to think about our ballot, we must question why is it that we give so much power to institutions that are essentially unrecalable and are dictatorial in practice.

With Marcos only attending favorable interviews or popularly known as the "Babackout Muli" strategy, his image remains squeaky clean in the minds of his supporters. They don't have to think about the issues against him because he is also not talking about it. He only talks about his platform, his plans for the Philippines if he wins the presidential elections.

By appearing to be the presidential candidate who gets attacked from almost all sides, Marcos gains their sympathy and absolute willingness to ignore attacks against him and to listen to him and only him instead.

Thesis 5: The so-called "opposition" is more Duterte in new guises.

On the other end of the bourgeois political spectrum, there is a motley of oppositionists ranging from opportunists who would otherwise be massively loyal to Duterte to the vanguards of liberal and "progressive" politics; the inheritors of the *Daang Matuwid*.⁴ It would be easy to lump in the other candidates together as they fall in the same category: former Duterte enablers. These include Ping Lacson, Isko Moreno, and Manny Pacquiao. Pacquiao is the *worst offender* of them all. As before 2021, he was firmly a PDP-Laban partisan and an erstwhile fierce supporter of the President. Isko and Lacson are much of the same. In favor of the administration's policies, providing votes and fresh faces for rotten politics, they only change their tune when the opportunity presents itself for greater power for themselves. No amount of window-dressing can hide the homophobia, militarism, or populist pandering and posturing. They are the Duterte administration's alternate candidates whether they admit it or not.

Then of course, there is Leni Robredo. There is no denying, her message and her programme can restore a pre-Duterte liberal idea with respect for the "rule of law" and "democratic processes." At the very least, it would outwardly seem like the tension that has nearly cracked the archipelago into many pieces feels like easing. However, her campaign is the continuation of the pseudo-progressive, neoliberal status quo we have that has not resolved *any* of the deep-seated political, economic, or social

⁴ "Righteous path," the policy of the previous liberal administration under President Noyonoy Aquino.

issues that has faced this country since People Power,⁵ or indeed, since the *beginning* of the Republic. It is still insufficient to actually addressing military overreach, the War on Drugs, class war by capital on labor, and the ever-increasing attacks of civil and human rights and their defenders. Not to mention, her senate slate consists of many more traditional politicians, outnumbering the otherwise progressive candidates and not containing any representatives from the labor sector. No wonder the National Democratic union Kilusan Mayo Uno were partial to Pacquiao. It only took a whole year for them to finally to bet their chances on Leni. Even then, they're not officially included in her slate!

In the end, none of the candidates answered the root cause of political alienation and social struggle: the domination of institutions over individuals. The State over citizens; the late-capitalist system over workers; the social status quo over women, Indigenous Peoples, queer folk, the disabled, etc.

Thesis 6: “Let Leni Lead” empowers no-one but herself, her sponsors and the patriarchal system.

The presidential candidate and current Vice President Leni Robredo abusively invokes feminism and the LGBTQIA+ community for her political campaign. She has been specifically wrongly using “women empowerment”, wherein she declares that she can help Filipino women in their struggles by giving them jobs without any mention of increasing the salaries of all, except that of the teachers. Women are paid lower than men for the same job. Is it really about helping women or is it about serving herself and her sponsors? If she really is for women empowerment, why is she not for legalizing divorce and abortion? As a human rights lawyer herself, she has admitted in witnessing these struggles of women in her career. Are their struggles not enough reason?

Leni has been promising LGBTQIA+ communities empowerment and a country free of discrimination, all while only “supporting” same-sex unions, which is not a definitive position at all. Her campaign is all about

⁵ The “People Power Revolution” is the liberal revolution that ousted the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr.

question how that person will be able to campaign. It makes you wonder: can the elections really proclaim to be “democratic” if the barrier of entry is so high?

Thesis 14: To be excited for a politician is to deny our own agency.

Instead of being excited for yet another politician, it would be preferable to see people excited for the prospects of their own power and agency, rather than the images of power forwarded by mediators and their ballot boxes.

The hashtag #LabanLeni2022 (Leni Fight 2022) is particularly pathetic. Where once activists shouted “Makibaka, wag matakot!” (Struggle, be not afraid!), this was recuperated to become the liberal cry “Maki-Leni, wag matakot!” (Be for Leni, be not afraid!). A cry to struggle has been recuperated for *magkapersonalan*—mere personality politics.

Filipinos have learned nothing from the Joe Biden campaign in the United States. To vote for Biden supposedly was a vote for harm reduction, but there is no real difference between Biden and Trump. Both Biden and Trump are rapists, run concentration camps, ignore the student debt crisis, and fund policing. Just in the same, Leni’s campaign is all the same. Just look at her position on the War on Drugs: she wants a War on Drugs “with tweaks.” Her positions are no different from Duterte’s, only that she “tweaks” it with her pink colors.

Thesis 15: Politicians can never represent the fullness of you.

Let it be said that no president after the 1987 Philippine Constitution has ever won at least 50% of the vote. “Winnability” in the Philippines is the victory of the largest minority vote. “Democracy” as the rule of the majority has always meant minority rule for it is always the representatives and not the electorate who rules.

Politicians only represent and serve themselves and their platforms; democracy here means you get to choose which personalities seem to

for this. Elections, what they really are, is simple. Elections were made for those who claim to have authority and want to claim authority. It is a tool to fool people to fall in line and to be complicit to bowing down to rulers, obeying whatever comes from above, whatever comes from the elected officials.

Obedience is the goal of elections, it wants you to respect whoever wins the election and then wait for the next elections, to give you hope that if you just voted for “the right person” then things will be alright, that your neighbor struggling in poverty will be saved, or that people who are addicted to harmful drugs will be saved, or that people who struggle with their mental health will be saved, or that your life will be better.

Will you just keep on voting and hoping that “the right person” will come until you grow old and die? Or will you cherish what little time you have left on Earth to live your life the way you want it to be, to live out your dreams?

Why not stop relying on elections or waiting on the government to pass a bill when you can take matters into your own hands and make changes happen? Possibly with help from other willing people around you if you want. Let us do away with elections, and with government systems altogether, and once again assert ourselves as owners of our lives and that no one has the right to rule, not even democratically elected officials.

Thesis 13: Elections are the domain of the already-wealthy and powerful.

One of the problems with the Philippine electoral system is that in practice, in order to run for office, one would need to have power and resources behind them. Instead of representation of a certain sector, experience in governance, organizing or something similar, or even just a platform, what seems to matter more when it comes to elections is how much backing and support, particularly financially, a candidate has.

The electoral system we have allows people with plunder and corruption charges to run, because they have the machinery to do so. In the meantime, when a person from the working class expresses their intention to run, while some see it as inspiring, many others see it as a nuisance or

giving good “empty” promises to communities and minorities while leaving half of the people in the country to remain miserable.

With the Philippines being a heavily religious country, the elections being a popularity game, and neoliberal economics being taught in schools and universities, it’s clear that Leni is only serving and empowering the current status quo. The status quo that has only brought misery and poverty to all.

Leni is not aiming to bring about change. She’s aiming to continue the reign of patriarchy and of the elites in the Philippines, which has been made clear in her stand on divorce and abortion, most especially the War on Drugs and NTF-ELCAC. Instead of putting an end to it, she wants to add her tweaks of more enforcement and closer surveillance, which does not make it any less immoral.

She tries to fish for sympathy and gather votes by using the fact that she’s a woman running for a political position that has been long dominated by men. She, along with her supporters, has been misconstruing Feminism for a movement in which women should be the one to dominate or do things because they think it’s the men that has been doing it all wrong; without even considering for a moment that being a woman does not automatically make them a feminist, and that it’s something to do with the system itself. They think that maybe, *just maybe*, if a woman runs the country, things *will* change.

It does not matter if it is a man, a woman, or a queer that runs the Philippine government, the system remains the same and the maddening cycle goes on repeat.

Thesis 7: National Democracy offers no solutions.

In the 2016 elections, Duterte bribed the National Democratic left with empty platitudes. For this the National Democratic left blinded themselves to Duterte’s naked fascism and abandoned their original candidate Grace Poe. Duterte rewarded them with positions in government and peace talks, but what can be given by the State can be taken away. Suddenly out of favor with Duterte, the left repeated their tired refrain: “US—[insert president here] Regime.” It is now clear they have been used.

In desperation, the National Democratic left now hitches their wagon to any and all bourgeois allies as long as they are anti-Duterte.

In their blind opposition to the fascist-in-chief Duterte, National Democracy now backs the *haciendera* landowner who has become the *de facto* leader of the liberal opposition: Leni Robredo. Their goal is clear: to gain “ascendancy” over the opposition’s campaign—to cite one of their internal strategic documents—to catapult yet another bourgeois faction into power. Robredo gives no concessions to the National Democratic Left because it is clear that she has their unconditional support. Where once they sold out the working class to fascists for unhonored concessions, now they sell out the working class to liberals for nothing.

Thesis 8: While the campaign of *Manggagawa Naman* may be good for expanding the political imagination of Filipinos, it will be limited by structures of domination.

“*Manggagawa Naman*”⁶ and the campaign of Ka Leody de Guzman has been groundbreaking in many ways. This is the first time a labor leader gunned for the highest office of the Republic. Ka Leody de Guzman is the former President of the socialist trade federation Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, who was active during and after Martial Law, and has been a perennial workers’ rights candidate under Partido Lakas ng Masa, one of the descendants of the Rejectionist left after the early nineties. Those familiar with the Philippine left and anti-authoritarian field would listen to him and identify his labor activist roots. The language he uses is ideological and direct, as you would expect from any unionist, and his critique is well-established: removing Duterte is not enough, we need to change the elite-dominated capitalist system.

Leni stalwarts and centrists in general scoff at the campaign, saying it will divide the field. Even in good faith, many question the winnability of a candidate that lost the senatorial race in 2019. Usually in bad faith, certain activists grounded on National Democracy question a socialist

⁶ “Workers now.”

We hardly hear about the alternatives of the reality we have been contained in. But when we do, we hear it from the so-called terrorists, the enemies of the government. And being groomed to be pro-government, young and naive as we were, we shut them out like the good Filipino citizens we are and never for once think of the possibility that the government—that we have loved and defended so much—is the real terrorist.

We get so confident in our education to the point that we think could make a difference if we participate or become part of the government. Or we get so confident in Politicians having degrees and experiences under their belt that we put our lives into their hands. All while not taking into account that it is the government that also decides what we should learn in schools and universities. With that said, none of us are apolitical; and most of us are victims being doomed to propagate false beliefs.

So when we hear a Politician declaring that they can help lift us out of poverty, out of unemployment, know that it is a blatant lie. Again, it is the government that created poverty and unemployment in the first place. What the politician means to say is that they can give us jobs because they are connected and sponsored by the rich and elites who run the businesses. Or they themselves owns businesses. Yes, we can get a job, be employed and try to get out of poverty; but there is no guarantee when our wages/salaries remain the same. There is also the abundance of unemployed people ready to be plucked from to replace us by the time we are slowing down. The only way to get rid of poverty is by abolishing the government. And it all goes the same for the political, economical, and social issues we face today.

Thesis 12: Elections are tools of authority for facilitating obedience.

Ah elections, seen by many as a tool to enact change by voting for other people, — flesh and blood—to represent them, to make decisions for them, to rule over them.

For decades, in the Philippines, people have been doing this over and over again, in the hopes of changing their lives or the lives of the people around them for the better or for the worse. But the Philippine elections are not designed to give power to “the people,” no no it was not made

with united thunderous voices all roaring empty promises. A dramatic scenery that has been going on for decades.

Without being given a chance to enjoy the clear skies, we have learned to live in darkness; where our well-being, hopes, and dreams diminish. Where generations of old and new have been made incapable of love and freedom; but have been made capable of misery and violence, of repeating the same maddening cycle of replacing the rotten with another—the Philippine electoral politics.

The elections is a critical part of the Republic—Presidential system of government that we have here in the Philippines. Like all types of government, it is founded on grand lies, millions of corpses, and public deception. It is rotten to its core. It has been creating poverty and diseases since its establishment. It has been making us subservient, unemployed, sexually impotent, impulsive, self-hating, distrustful, and over-all miserable; which begs the question: How ever can elections solve the issues we are facing today?

It cannot and that is exactly why it still remains today. If voting can bring about the change we need, it will be made illegal. Anything that can bring systematic change is illegal or hindered by having to ask a permit from the Philippine Government. It is never about us having a better life, no. It is about the government staying in power. It is about protecting and enabling the oligarchs, elites, and political dynasties on enslaving the majority of us to satisfy their greed. It is about giving us false hope and the illusion of choice and change; letting the majority vote anyone from the new set of their puppets every 3–6 years.

From our childhood to the present day, we have been trained to be good Filipino Citizens in our homes and schools. We have been exposed to cultures, traditions, politics and economics that heavily favors the government. Just so when we get sincere and passionate enough to bring about change, all we could think of is the following:

- to vote for a politician;
- to become a politician;
- to become a lawyer or eventually, a judge;
- to join the police or army.

candidacy as being “out of touch” with the material conditions of the working class. Yet, there exists a certain clamor, especially among younger progressives, for this campaign, perhaps similar to the Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn crusades that signalled a new brand of leftism worldwide.

Surely, one can question their agenda, the economics of the wealth tax, the ability of curtailing the army and police (or at least NTF-ELCAC⁷), or the sincerity of participatory budgeting, workplace democracy, and universal healthcare. It is true: a De Guzman presidency will still preside over a Philippine Republic, and will always run the risk of a reactionary whiplash even within an erstwhile socialist government. Domination can and will always exist with dominating structures. But his critiques of elite democracy, the blinding lights of personality politics, and the cyclical nature of politics are refreshing, and perhaps, an indication that more and more people are recognizing that the Republic is not a thing of the people as we were told it was.

Thesis 9: Entering the State makes one bourgeois.

Did not Rosa Luxemburg say a century ago, to the effect, that the “entry of a socialist into a bourgeois government is not a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state?”⁸ Ironically, Mikhail Bakunin would very much agree: “The new worker deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, living and soaking up all the bourgeois ideas and acquiring their habits, will cease being workers and statesmen and become converted into bourgeois, even more bourgeois-like than the bourgeois themselves.”⁹

Indeed, it has been proven true time and again. So-called progressives in Congress and Senate have time and again voted against workers and against ecology. Witness the darling social democrat Risa Hontiveros voting for the approval of the Bulacan Aerotropolis—a bourgeois project that has actively destroyed marine habitats and bird sanctuaries.

⁷ “National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict,” the anti-communist agency.

⁸ Rosa Luxemburg. 1899. “The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case.”

⁹ Mikhail Bakunin. 1869. “On the Policy of the International Workingmen’s Association.”

Now the Laban ng Masa left attempts a presidential campaign with Ka Leody that has no chance of winning the elections. They are very much aware of this and these particular leftists understand that their goal is propaganda, not winning. Yet what these leftists do not understand that all leftists who capture State power become State socialists. In doing so they cease to develop the capacities for the working class to build power and instead develop the capacities of the State to carry out its functions. Wherever the left wins State power, social movements become subordinated to State power and lose their agency.

The State is the graveyard of social movements. We saw this in Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Nepal. Evo Morales built a highway destroying indigenous land funded by a “worker’s” administration in Brazil, the same indigenous bases that brought Morales to his presidency. Venezuelan communes are constantly at the mercy of Bolivarian bureaucrats who restrict their agency. The Worker’s Party of Brazil killed their social movement bases by subordinating them to the State. Nepali Maoists moved into masions and actively suppressed strikes after winning power. The same will happen in the Philippines if any left faction wins.

Thesis 10: The party games of the elite have real consequences.

Many of these politicians taking a stab at elected office are making a party game out of something that will define our standards and quality of life for the next three to six years. But the stage at Sofitel was not only the playground for the rich and wealthy. If politics can be used as spectacle for the ruling class, chances are the dispossessed will use that spectacle as well to raise their concerns. We have had candidates that used the filing as protests against the War on Drugs, the mismanagement of the pandemic, and the general lack of representation of marginalized sectors. Tarpaulins, pictures, mystical names, and simple statements; that is their manifestation of the power of the people. Individual it might seem outwardly, but no less powerful, and more representative than the tens of trapos who ran subsequently to better press.

And like clockwork COMELEC declared many of these candidates nuisances, even if many of them had noble aspirations and platforms.

That there is a group that can dictate who can and cannot represent the voting constituency shows just how much of a sham the democracy we have actually is.

If you feel alienated, apathetic, or even hopeless about the coming elections, you are not alone. There is a good enough reason for you to skip going to the polls for every reason you should vote in May. If you’re under the belief that your choice will not matter and the game of politics plays out in backrooms and highrises, or that organizing campaigns can translate to organizing long-lasting efforts towards progressive and sustainable change, then do what you will. Agitate, educate, and organize as much as you please.

Whatever your actions will be, one thing is clear: It is not just political power that is on the line, it is the whole interconnected system of institutions that force us to act against our own interests, to the benefit of political and economic elite on top. Human domination will continue; rich over poor, politician over citizen, straight over queer, man over woman, Manileno over the indigenous, etc. It is easy to focus on the game of musical chairs, but the music will stop eventually, and the reality will come out to look like not much has changed at all.

The common adage is that the only way to win is not to play. Though in this case, we could be better off finding other ways to disrupt the game, or make it useless.

Regardless, it is safe to say that the party games have begun. Let us hope the players remember that the fate of the archipelago is not a game for them to mess around with, or they might just find the seat they have been eyeing yanked from beneath them.

Thesis 11: If elections ever changed anything, they would make it illegal. The promises of politicians are lies, pure and plain.

Yet another set of storm clouds cover the clear skies of the Philippines once again. Pouring waves upon waves of lies and deceit on the millions of Filipinos thirsting for change. Drowning their desperate screams and cries