



About Stereotypes and Prejudices on Being Cebuano

The Philippines is an archipelago composed of 7,107 islands and countless ethnic groups that further divided the country into several distinct regions based on religion, culture, language and even socio-economic status. In this case, a particular specimen on the country's divisiveness lays on the rivalry between Tagalog and Visayan speakers, which centered on the great cities of Manila and Cebu.

Stereotypes and prejudices are brought up because certain groups tend to classify what is different from their own. And so Manilenos tend to classify themselves as different than their Cebuano counterparts. Of course ethnic groups view themselves better than any other ethnic groups. With this given fact, Cebuanos are not spared from such biases.

Cebuanos are highly regionalistic, which means that they are very proud of their craft; from guitars, to local bands, and designers. Since Cebuanos speak a dialect, Bisaya; they insist on speaking this to just about anyone (except foreigners, of course). But if someone from the National Capital Region (Manila), speaks to them in Tagalog (dialect in Manila-national language as well); they would rather reply in English than speak Tagalog. This can be attributed to the fact that Cebuanos - more often than not - speak a dismal Tagalog, so they are "ashamed" to speak it. Cebuanos also are a very proud people; they don't aspire to act like someone from Manila. (Which is often the case for people from other parts of the country). They think highly of themselves and show this by "loving their own"; which explains the refusal to speak Tagalog.

In this case, Cebuanos' hard Tagalog accents are often ridiculed because they (Manilenos) think that we speak their language in a funny way. That is why there is this typical "yaya"/"katulong" type of Tagalog and of course Manny Pacquiao's ever popular Tagalog in GenSan Bisayan variant of an accent. We inherently promote such stereotypes because we don't give dam'n if actors/actresses in popular telenovelas bastardized our language (Cebuano) in their shows. Though its a common belief that most household helpers in Metro Manila are Visayan, its just a bad idea to brand them as mere lowlifes. As Sun-Star columnist Atty. Pachico Seares would say, "A Visayan maid is inevitably branded and made the butt of jokes by the way she speaks."

We have made Aling Dionesia a celebrity out of her ethnic peculiarity. And in the history of movies and television, film producers (majority are Manila-based) have propagated the so-called sidekick genre wherein it is dominated by Visayan-speaking actors like Dencio Padilla and Amay Bisaya. Another fact that most Visayan speaking actors and actress don't play their ethnic background in a major motion picture.

Cebuanos are stereotyped negatively because of the way they speak the national language. Bisaya sounds "angry" when spoken and when a Cebuano attempts to speak the softer, mellower Tagalog, the results are quite disconcerting. Because of this, Cebuanos are judged as "walang modo" because of the absence of "po" and "opo." On the other hand, a positive stereotype is that Cebuanos are gifted musicians OR great boxers. Usually, when someone meets a Cebuano; it is not surprising to hear this; "So, you must play a mean guitar."

Cebuanos are the hardest to please; when it comes to musical performances. It is often said that when a band becomes famous in Cebu; it will surely be popular in any other part of the country. Cebuanos are not generous with applause and only applaud with gusto for performers that they think deserve their applause. Otherwise, it's just the cricket sound that you're gonna hear. No wonder when some popular actors or actresses go to Cebu, they are hardly noticed.

Cebuanos sometimes feel that there is some sort of Manileno conspiracy when a competition pits both ethnic groups in the field of politics, sports and contests. Even the National Statistics Office doesn't have records on the total number of Tagalogs and Visayans in the country -- I guess they all know that there are more Visayans than Tagalogs.

However, as we go along, Cebuanos can be further characterized to several sub-cultural entity if I may say. When go to Colon Street, Junquera Street, Ayala Center and SM City, you can find these ubiquitous colorful characters that shape Cebuano life:

The istambay are more common than rats in the stinky sewage canals and the cockroaches in the gutters because the moment you ride a jeepney or go to your dependable sari-sari store, they are always there. Believe me, they are everywhere! They typically wear a faded old shirt, usually a sleeveless basketball shirt, with shorts and sandals (flip-flops).

These guys hang around at a street corner doing absolutely nothing, purportedly waiting for job opportunities -- in other words "delihensya." The concept of "standing by" is actually a standby's pretext for hanging around with other istambays and doing nothing all day. They not only sit around talking, smoking, reading newspapers, playing cards, or getting drunk. They elevated the art of doing nothing to new heights: a group of istambays will go for hours on end just sitting or squatting, undertaking no activity whatsoever except occasionally shifting position slightly, and watching the world go by.

Bayuts are the people that also shaped our lives in a different way. These guys from the so-called third sex are also a diverse bunch of transvestites, cross-dressers, closeted gays, double-blades and tomboys. They try to live normal lives like you and me but their "deviances" has become subjects of ridicules such as their ever-popular gay speakesy. Even heterosexuals adopted some of the words of their invented lingo. But homophobia still plague them and most of the targeted subgroup are the so-called "chick-logs" -- literally means gay cross-dressers mistaken as a hot and sexy woman.

The vast majority do adopt certain female characteristics while not attempting to hide their original maleness and in this case, a bayut may sport a typically male haircut, but speak in a feminine way.

Lastly, we can always see these women in malls and Internet cafes. Hand-in-hand with their Caucasian lovers. The typical foreigner's wife/girlfriend/lover/sex slave is embedded in our minds wherein we typically see them as gold diggers who spend most of their time in the chatrooms looking for prospective "American" husbands twice their age. Somehow, its a difficult to differentiate them with prostitutes even though the way they are doing is tantamount to pimping themselves to a loveless marriage just to better themselves. In reality, many Caucasians are characterized as ex-felons, Vietnam war veterans, escaped child molesters and sex addicts who are looking for a good time in Cebu finding suitable sexual partners to satisfy their lost carnal urges.

In an online forum focusing on the rift between Cebu and Manila that resulted in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's election in 2004, I can compare this Cebuano pride with the Basque separatist movement in Spain. In this sense, many Manilenos believe that speaking Tagalog is what "normal" Filipinos do. One reason why GMA had captured the hearts of the Cebuanos is because the fact that she simply spoke in "Cebuano."

When Manilenos go to Cebu, they speak Tagalog without bothering to learn the language. Even some friends oof mine, who are already working have started to speak in Cebuano because I don't talk Tagalog in front of them, thats why they decided to learn the language. But most of the Manilenos don't!

I'm happy that we are not in the Balkans wherein stereotypes can often lead to bloodbath, ethnic cleansing and genocide. We don't speak like Cerge Remonde or a Manny Pacquiao because our vocal cords are designed differently.

We are not subhumans but we can't compare ourselves to those different than us because we have our own traits that makes us special.

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