

How local can a Foreigner become in the Philippines?

October 30th, 2010 | Author: Matt

Over the last few years I have seen and experienced things which sometimes amaze me how difficult things can be and how hard some people let it affect them. I met someone less than two years ago that tried to help the poor in Cebu and soon realised the tide ran against him to the eventual point of a mental breakdown. I have met people who have extended their hands out in friendship and too help to find it snatched. The same experiences I have had myself as you reach out to help and it could be a simple thing such as giving out a Mcdonald's meal to kids to find they rip it apart snatching for as much as they can or to offering assistance for a major project to find the first thing people are thinking is how they will personally benefit. There was something that came up a while ago when I said to my wife how can you tell the difference between a fundraiser that a foreigner is doing and one being done locally the answer was the foreign one isn't for the benefit of the organisers its normally charity.

Now for me in the time here I have found its more like a hammer and chisel every time you think your working your way through things at a steady pace you hit solid rock that will slow you down but you will eventually get through it. The thing is to only deal with things in bite sized chunks and also not to get involved if you don't want to.

I find most things Filipino's want to do themselves even if they will never get it done. So in most cases its better just not get involved at all. I do offer advice when asked but as you live here longer you realise the world isn't yours to save on top of that you physically can't do it all and in a lot of cases people don't want you to. A prime example of this is salaries where a lot of foreigners will pay more than the local rate for staff then you will here Filipino's on a similar or better financial standing than yourself complain your making them look bad. Doesn't mean stop doing it just be aware that often people don't like you helping!

So can a foreigner be local? personally I think most will always be outsiders and in most cases its better for the foreigner that way. I recently engaged in trying to start a project at a local town plaza involving restructuring which came back with mainly people saying I shouldn't do it as it made the local politicians look bad as its their job even if they're not doing it. So in most cases I would say stick to things in your own neighbourhood and only if you feel like doing it or has some benefit for yourself as well as the community. I think its the only realistic way to approach it and be aware your an "outsider" and with that word you can use it to your benefit the same way others use it against you.

Ref.: <http://tropicalpenpals.com/blog/things-related-directly-about-the-philippines/relationships-things-related-directly-about-the-philippines/how-local-can-a-foreigner-become-in-the-philippines/>