ANC Interview with Atty. Koko Pimentel by Karen Davila

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**On the 2007 Elections**

Q: What was it like knowing that you had won but could not take your seat?

A:The feeling of helplessness, but of course, the anger was there. Why am I so helpless? I’m a lawyer. I was a son of a seating Senator, and still I could not fight the system. And of course the disappointment.

Q: How bad did it get? Not a lot of people know what it’s like to be unjustly treated.

People tell you, don’t protest anymore. Nothing will happen to your protest. The realities in seeking justice, you need money. But I was ready to handle my case. It was a good thing then practicing election lawyer Leila de Lima took on my case. She was the lawyer of Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, but she saw what was done to me. That’s why she took my case. The winning protest petition was drafted by Leila de Lima.

Q: What does your experience teach politicians?

Number one lesson here is that the politician should aspire to win elections fairly, squarely and honestly. If there is no mandate from the people, accept it. That’s the reason why we are campaigning very hard to win the hearts and minds of the people tapos pala regardless of their votes, you will get the position. That should not be the case.

Q: Do you feel that if you did not carry the name Pimentel, you would have won?

That’s my name. What else could I have done or should have done. My name’s Aquilino Pimentel III.

Q: You feel that was an advantage?

Yes, it was an advantage. I campaigned alone. I did not campaign with my father. I gave them my own legislative agenda which was quite different from my father. In the campaign, I focused on science and math. And then of course, justice.

**On Miguel Zubiri’s resignation**

Q: What do you make of SenatorMiguel Zubiri’s resignation? Did you expect that to happen?

In all honesty, we did not have it in our radar that he would resign.

Q: But apparently, he took out his counter-protest like two or three weeks before?

We thought it was a delaying tactic. That’s why we immediately filed a counter to dismiss his counter protest, claiming that this is another delaying tactic because of the way it was phrased. When he filed his motion and manifestation to inform the SET that he was ordering not to report, he used lack of money as the reason. His lawyer said that we are freezing the proceedings indefinitely. When we read that, that is a malicious way of actually benefiting Zubiri. If you delay and freeze, he was the one sitting, so he was the one who benefited . That’s how we reacted.

Q: Seeing him on TV, I was with you that day, what do you make of it now?

In all honesty, when I heard the privilege speech, a lot of things were omitted. A lot of things which were factual or which I wanted to hear were omitted. When I heard his post-speech interviews, there must also be a reason why he omitted. When this was supplemented, I felt satisfied and I felt his sincerity.

Q: Do you see it also as a sacrifice on his part?

Yes, because it is a difficult decision to resign in a position you are already occupying and I’m sure he’s also enjoying. He should let go. There is a little confession there, an implied confession, to confess right before the entire nation that your mandate is tainted. Actually, he did not use those words but implied, that was the message of his speech.

**Online Questions**

Q: Do you believe Senator Migz had a hand over the election fraud in 2007? Who do you think orchestrated the fraud, if there is?

I’m not sure but there was fraud. Maybe it was all the way up.

Q: Are you happy that Sen. Zubiri resigned?

Happy in a sense that the resignation will have a practical effect on my protest. It will expedite my four-year old struggle.

Q: If you are in the position of Migz Zubiri, will you also resign as Senator?

Actually, hindi na ako aabot sa ganung posisyon. Because from the start, I would have rejected the tainted votes. You campaign at the ground level to win the hearts and the minds of the people and not manipulate the results.

Q: How much did you spend in 2007?

Between 20-30 Million. Sa tingin ko, only Trillanes would have spent less. I would have been second. It was also the time of the opposition in 2007. So we really did not have to spend. People really came out to hear us, to see us and to vote for us.

Q: Will Koko assist or join the DOJ in filing criminal actions against GMA and her allies in connection with the 2004 and 2007 Maguindanao poll fraud?

Actually, I am publicly offering myself as a resource person for the 2007 fraud with the DOJ and Comelec joint committee.

Q: In 2004, you did not run?

I didn’t run but I also campaigned for FPJ. My father was the one who was the candidate. I saw with my own two eyes how the people reacted to FPJ. When they had eight-hour caravans, the city would stop or be in a stand still when FPJ was in town while his opponent, nobody would even notice that she was in town. And yet FPJ would lose, impossible.

Q: Now do you believe that FPJ would have been a better president than GMA?

Yes, because of the motivation.

Q: But people criticized his capacity?

But you could always delegate. So if you start with a good, correct and proper motivation, then you can do wonders for the country.

Q: Why did you choose FPJ?

He was a simple person. The way he was thinking that he could solve the problem of the masses. We had access to him.

Q: Why not GMA?

I believe she illegally sought the power from Erap. Erap did not resign. Actually, I identify myself with Erap because he was also a victim of injustice and I identify myself with FPJ, a victim of electoral fraud.

Q: What’s your stand on political dynasties?

On dynasties, that was asked to me way back in 2007. I thought about the issue. You know, it’s difficult to legislate it. These are the combinations that I have thought about: you now prohibit the brother of a sitting official from running, but I’m estranged from my brother, “kaaway ko ‘yan, kalaban ko ‘yan.” It’s unfair. We will make the exception, “except when they are enemies or estranged from each other” put that, they will now pretend. It’s very difficult to legislate. That’s why it’s important that we have clean and honest elections so that the actual sentiment of the people will be reflected in the results.

Q: What would be your priority bill and why?

It would have to do with electoral reform and I consider myself an expert in the field. And then, the greater cause of justice and local government. I reviewed my campaign commitments in 2007, I also mentioned the youth, so I should not forget the youth and of course the OFWs.

Q: What’s you stand on the FOI (Freedom of Information Bill)?

Any initiative that will promote transparency, I will support.

Q: Why are taking your oath taking in Mati, does that have something to do with you losing in your hometown, Cagayan de Oro?

No, nothing to do with 2001 elections. That is already Jurassic history. In Mati, because of my extraordinary performance in Mati eventhough I was not able to campaign in Mati. This is my gesture to show to the people of Mati and Davao Oriental that I appreciate their support.

Q: There was cheating everywhere not just in Mindanao, how sure is Atty. Coco that he is legitimately entitled to that position?

Well, I am very sure because I did not cheat.

Q: Your lead was 257,000. Where was this count?

My lead was made possible because of the fact that a lot of votes were being subtracted from Zubiri’s vote.

Q: Do you agree what your father said, that we should be a Federal parliamentary form? Your father advocated this system.

Yes, this is also the belief of PDP Laban, my political party. We have that in our party constitution.

Q: Are you for or against the RH Bill and Why?

Against. I will use policy consideration and practical reasons, not biblical. I am against spending hundreds of millions of pesos for condoms, IUD’s and pills. It is better spent on some priority needs of the country.

Q: Do you believe using the condom is a Sin?

No. We can educate our people to limit the number of children because it affects the quality of life. Educate.

Q: When you’re very poor, you won’t spend for pills.

We already have the Conditional Cash Transfer (CTC). That’s supposed to help the poorest of the poor. I am agreeable to using the mass media to educate the people. That’s one way of measuring whether the education part is working or not. They should voluntarily set aside a portion of what they have to buy this commercial products because they believe in what they have been told.

Q: Kaya ka lang nag hahabol sa pwesto ay gusto mo ring mangurakot katulad ng iba. How would you change that mind set?

Malayong malayo po yan sa aking puposes at hindi po yan ang reason. At any rate, tinipid nga namin lahat ang kamapanya ko tipid at protesto ko tipid. So wala akong hahabulin at wala akong hahabulin. I also want to live a simple life. Money will not be my temptation.

Q: What will be your first move in your first day at the Senate?

If they allow me to deliver a speech, I would like to do so.

Q: Would you like to head the electoral reform committee?

Yes, if possible. I will ask for that if they will allow the asking of the committee on chairmanship. Justice and science and technology.

Q: Do you think do you have allies in the senate?

Yes. I have natural allies. For example, Serge Osmeña, he is a member of my party and also my ninong. Chiz Escudero, we ran together in 2007. Pia Cayetano, a product of the UP College of Law and Alan Peter. Sonny Trillanes, I like his no-nonsense approach and this guy has no private stand, his public stand is his private stand. That is also what I want to do.

Q: Do you think you will get along with Sen. Enrile?

Si Senator Enrile has a grandfatherly attitude and he wants to help everybody so it is a matter of paying him some courtesy and respect.

Q: Naging mabuting senator si Zubiri. Malaki ang kanyang bubunuin para mapantayan ang performance nito.

I go back to the basic question. Did he even have the right to report to the Senate on day 1? My point is, he had no right.

Q: What kind of Senator would you want to be?

A simple one, approachable one, one who would listen and think and search for the solutions on real problems.

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