

SEBASTIAN DUTERTE



BY MICHELLE ANGELA OROSA CARAG

While his father, presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte had been busy making headlines with his controversial pronouncements throughout the campaign season, Sebastian Duterte—or “Baste”—had unintentionally developed his own strong following, mainly because of his irresistible rugged appeal.

But more than that, perhaps what is even more commanding about the 28-year-old is that despite the ‘chill’ vibe he usually exudes on a normal day, he automatically assumes a more reflective personality when he takes the stage during campaign sorties. A well-spoken young man, his relatability and confidence, combined with his genuineness when he delivers his message, compel people to listen—and that contributes greatly as to why his social media followers are continuously swelling even up to this day.

But despite his growing popularity that’s been furthered by becoming an official member of the first family and having newspaper and magazine features one after another, Baste still remains unfazed by how much his life has changed. In fact, he still counts himself as an ordinary citizen of this country.

when he was younger while his father was the tough-talking, feared mayor of Davao City, Baste states that he was pretty much an ordinary kid who always hung out with his friends around the neighborhood, and enjoyed fishing by the river with bamboo fishing rods that he would make.

He was just 11 years old when his parents separated, but Baste didn’t let their family problems define his life.

Instead, he let the experience teach him to be more self-reliant.

“*Malungkot talaga*, but it really didn’t get to me because my father was always there,” he shared about his parents’ split, in an interview with the *Philippine Star*. “*Nagpapakita siya. Pinapatawag niya ako.*”

Baste had initially spent his high school years in the Ateneo de Davao. As a student, Baste confesses that he was never the studious type, and had just happily scraped by with 75s and 78s. But because his strict father wasn’t pleased with his performance at school, Baste was sent to Manila to finish his final year in high school in San Beda College, where his older sister Sara was taking up Law at the time.

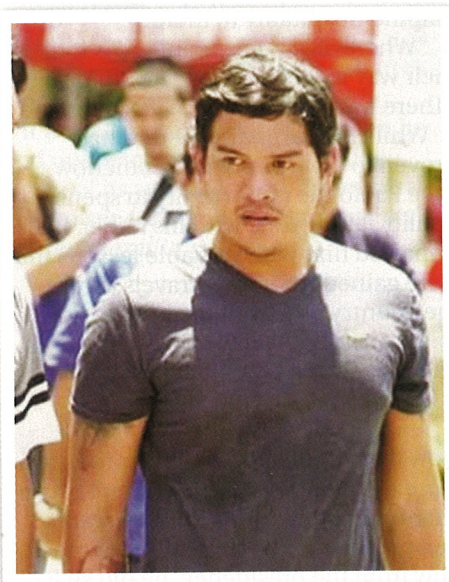
However, the fast-paced life in the metro didn’t suit him well so after graduation, he moved back to Davao for his college education. There, he decided to try his hand in the medical field, so he took up Medical Technology in San Pedro College.

“*Gusto kong maging doctor kasi walang doctor sa family. Puro lawyers,*” he shares.

But because he couldn’t stomach dissecting animals anymore, he transferred back to the Ateneo De Davao, where he took up Political Science.

This move was inspired by his father, who taught him one of the political concepts that he presently holds dear—social equality: “Whatever you are in society, you always have to consider everyone around you as an equal. You have to treat them as equal human beings.”

Now that he’s a full-grown adult, Baste reveals that he and his father seldom talk, but it was only because he already knows what his father expects of him.



Baste’s photos were all over the internet during the election season. Even he was surprised by the sudden media attention especially on social media. With the growing media attention, Baste remains humble. He lives by his father’s advice, sharing, “Like, do not be *hambog*, do not disrespect people; things like that. *Alam ko na ano ‘yung tama, alam ko na yung mali. ‘Yung tama, ‘yung yung ine-expect niya sa akin.*”

Raising Baste

Baste is the youngest among three children of the former Davao City mayor turned newly-elected president, and a former flight attendant of German descent Elizabeth Zimmerman. He grew up in a modest, three-bedroom house located in the humble outskirts of Davao City. If not for the security detail that would always follow him around



Baste takes a selfie with Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, his dad's running mate during one of then—Davao mayor Rodrigo Duterte's campaign sorties. Baste campaigned for his father tirelessly during the election season, giving speeches and interacting with their supporters. "The entire campaign was crazy," shares Baste.

"I know what he wants, I know what he needs me to do, *alam ko na 'yun eh*, because I really know the guy," he explained. "Like, do not be *hambog*, do not disrespect people; things like that. *Alam ko na ano yung tama, alam ko na 'yung mali*. *'Yung tama, 'yun 'yung ine-expect niya sa akin.*"

But being the son of Rodrigo Duterte is never easy, especially if the strict city ordinances that your father has implemented in your city go against the things you enjoy. Baste shares that he smokes cigarettes, enjoys fireworks, and drinks, but at the end of the day, he understands that these rules exist for the benefit of everyone.

While there were times when he broke those rules himself, he always insisted to be penalized for his violations, just like everybody else in Davao.

Fighting for change

Nowadays, Baste lives a very simple life that's marked by his passion for surfing (he spends most of his days hanging out by the sea). He is also a father to a five-year-old daughter with an ex-girlfriend, and a two-year-old son with his present partner. He also runs a junk shop business to support his own family.

Preferring to be by the sidelines, he has no plans of following in his family's venture into politics. But when his father answered the people's heed for

him to gun for the presidency, Baste didn't hesitate to step up and help in the campaign. "The entire campaign was crazy," he told the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. "Before that, I was never involved in politics. I really didn't understand the situation, but I just needed to do what I had to do: I wanted to help my father. That's all. It's that simple."

But craziness aside, the campaign period had proven to be so memorable for Baste, because it was the biggest task he had ever undertaken in his life. For someone who used to detest speaking in front of a crowd, he has proven to be a very effective speaker, because he always gets people listen to what he has to say.

But overall, what really warmed Baste's heart the most is the fact that there are still people who willingly voted for a candidate who didn't have to buy their principles, especially because throughout the campaign period, all their party could ever offer their supporters are Duterte ballers, and a brand new feeling of hope that change is indeed coming very soon.

The elections may have already been over with, but Baste is well aware that there are still detractors who cannot wait to see his father fail.

But for the new president's youngest son, what matters is that his father is ready to give his best to fix the country and give a better future to every Filipino—whether he voted for Digong or not. ☆

Baste

THE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECT

In such a short span of time, Baste has transformed from an ordinary private citizen to a social media rock star. Because he does not have Twitter and Instagram accounts, fans have flocked over to his Facebook account (wherein his friends' list had ballooned to 5000, rendering him unable to accept any more friend requests) and his official Facebook page, which now boasts of over 250,000 followers.

Aside from being the subject of an election-related fan fiction written by Joana Marie Jarin Venegas that has become hugely popular on Facebook, videos featuring Baste have also become a hit and have amassed overwhelming numbers of views. One such video is that of him adorably blowing his fans some kisses, which garnered over 1.4 million views. Another is a video of him showcasing his vocals by singing "Drive" by the American rock band Incubus. This clip received more than 400,000 views.

On top of that, Baste would also set aside time interacting with his fans by personally leaving entertaining replies on the comments they post on his wall.