

# Editorial: Lessons from Edsa

Sunday, February 21, 2016



“NEVER AGAIN. A coalition against the ascendancy of dictatorship quoted George Santayana in recalling the 30-year-old lessons of Feb. 25, 1986. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again.”(File Foto)

IT WAS an unexpected lesson that emerged when a class of Mass Communication undergraduates at the University of the Philippines Cebu tossed around the question, “When was martial law declared in the country?”

In groups, the students were discussing the evolution of development communication. To focus the discussion on the controversial split of communication as a tool for promoting community development and the state use of information to silence dissent and manipulate truth, the teacher referred the class to the period under the Marcoses.

The most valuable insight came as the students wondered aloud and then guessed the date when President Ferdinand E. Marcos imposed martial law. Not one of the students—all Millennials, all born years after the Marcoses ruled and the end came for the conjugal dictatorship with the Edsa People Power revolution—knew the answer. In the classroom, only one did: the teacher who was then seven years old on Sept. 21, 1972 when all civil liberties were frozen as the country was placed under one-man rule.

## **Power of recall**

Three days from the publication of this editorial, the country will observe the 30th anniversary of the Edsa People Power Uprising. As holidays go, the day will simply be welcomed by many as an opportunity to take a break from school and work.

For others, Feb. 25 is a call to recall the past and uphold the lessons culled from a milestone marking the Filipino people's peaceful toppling of a dictatorship.

The Filipino people's appointment with Feb. 25, 1986 is also a challenge to prevent a return of what is arguably the darkest period of Philippine history.

Thirty years after citizens, armed with only rosaries and flowers, stopped the tanks rolling on Epifanio delos Santos Ave. (Edsa) from squashing a popular revolt and a military rebellion against Marcos, the Edsa People Power Commission (EPPC) encourages Filipinos to honor the role of heroes in protecting freedom and democracy.

The EPPC is not only highlighting the men and women who made Edsa People Power a milestone in civil disobedience. It also pinpoints the potentials of the current generation to be catalysts of social change.

## **Stake in the future**

The challenge for memory warriors to guide the youth in a critical appreciation of the Marcos years to prevent the return to Malacañang of the Marcos heir, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., through his vice-presidential bid in the May 9 election is taken on by a coalition behind the Campaign Against the Return of the Marcoses to Malacañang (Carmma).

Leading a march-rally on Feb. 25, the Carmma published a full-page advertisement on Feb. 9 in the Philippine Daily Inquirer to counter the historical revisionism disseminated through social media.

Created by social media influencers, pro-Marcos memes and posts are convincing many Millennials to view martial law as beneficial to the country for imposing the discipline and order of the Marcoses' version of the "Bagong Lipunan (New Society). As cited by the Carmma, one of the "sins" of Bongbong, who claims to be a "guiltless son" even as he attempts to revise Philippine history, is to rationalize his family's 21 years of dictatorship, which left at least 3,000 people dead, more than 30,000 victims of human rights violations, and a foreign debt of \$27 billion.

To prevent the re-ascendancy of the Marcos family 30 years after they fled Malacañang and to deepen the youths' participation as contemporary heroes in passing on the flame of the Edsa People Power Revolution to shield and promote freedom and democracy, every citizen should share the stake in reliving the lessons of history: the genuine one that can be verified by those that lived through the era and other forms of documentation.

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