From Beauty Queen to Rebel Hero: How Remedios Gomez-Paraiso Came To Be

by Clarisse Santos

She was the town’s darling, the daughter of the then mayor of Mexico, Pampanga. She was a normal girl—makeup, perfumes, dress-making, and dancing piqued her interest. She was also a title-holder. But on March 2, 1942, makeup turned into guns, dancing turned into fighting, and the beauty queen gained yet a new title: Kumander Liwayway.

Remedios Gomez-Paraiso, also known as the Philippines’ Joan of Arc, was a force to be reckoned with as she promised to avenge the death of her father against the hands of the foreign invaders. This sparked the flame in her heart and later on, she decided to join Hukbalahap or Hukbong Laban Sa Hapon.

Image Credit: Rejected Princesses.com
While she led her troops to many successful battles, it was not an easy road for her, being a woman and all. She didn’t become commander overnight. She first served as a nurse and helped assist the sick and wounded rebel army. Even though serving as a nurse, her dedication and passion to defeat the invaders never wavered, and the higher-ups noticed. She was then given her own squadron in just a few months and that’s the start of her journey as Kumander Liwayway.

Badass doesn’t even begin to cover it. **Kumander Liwayway** never backs down in a fight. In the Battle of Camansi, she refused to run away, despite being outnumbered and stood her ground as a true commander. With her calm and bold attitude, she and her squadron got a hold of the situation and even before reinforcements came, they’re only an inch away from winning.

**Kumader Liwayway**‘s statement as a commander also sparked a handful of issues within the rebellion and the military. Though seeing them mostly as unfit, ‘forest wives’ who can’t handle guns and xxx, let alone, lead a squadron, they have seen a significant rise in numbers of women joining the revolution. Despite the discrimination and endless prejudice is thrown at her and the other women at the troops, **Kumander Liwayway**, being the feminist, she is, didn’t back down. She even challenged a commander, who disrespected her, to a duel with his innuendos. It’s safe to say that her love for makeup, dresses, and perfumes didn’t interfere, even once, in her duty as a commander.

During her journey in Huk, she didn’t only flourish as a commander and fighter, but also as a wife and a mother. Her ups made her strong, and her downs, stronger. She was captured by double-crossing troop members, twice. The first one was while on her way to get treated from malaria, she was detained and charged with accusations such as rebellion, sedition, and insurrection, but she was released shortly after proving herself to the media. The second was even worse: her husband died, she was left to be the mother of her children, and she was thrown into solitary confinement. Though she was also released shortly after, she did not rejoin the rebellion and instead, took on the job of being a single mother.

**Kumander Liwayway**‘s parting from the rebellion wasn’t the end of her fight. Even after the war, she was still a headstrong advocate for her fellow comrades, even before [she died in 2014](https://www.letsgopampanga.com/kumander-liwayway-2724/).

Fearless. Goal-driven. Beautiful. This feminist who gets herself made up before every battle, never forgetting her signature red lipstick, was one of the highest-ranking female commanders of Huk. She fought for her father, she fought for the country, and most importantly, she fought for her right to be her—and that’s more than enough for her to be remembered forever.

Ref. : [https://www.letsgopampanga.com/kumander-liwayway-2724/](https://www.letsgopampanga.com/kumander-liwayway-2724/)

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