



Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines

Let justice be the tie that binds us as a nation: No to a hero's burial for Marcos! CEAP Statement on House Resolution 1135

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent- the LORD detests them both.

Proverbs 17:15

Last week, more than 200 members of the House of Representatives filed a resolution urging President Benigno S. Aquino III to allow the burial of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos at the Libingan ng mga Bayani (LNMB). In this resolution they said that “he was a well-decorated soldier, a veteran of World War II, and a survivor of the Bataan Death March.” They also noted that “he was the longest serving president of the republic and built the modern foundations of the Philippines.” According to the signatories, Marcos “served his country the best way he knew how and remained a Filipino patriot to the end of his life and in death deserves to be honored as such.” They say that the burial of Mr. Marcos at the LNMB “will not only be an acknowledgement of the way he led a life as a Filipino patriot but will also be a magnanimous act of reconciliation which will strengthen the bonds of solidarity among the Filipino people.”

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), the largest educational association in the country, believes that these exaggerated claims about Marcos cannot be farther from the truth. They do not at all justify a hero's burial for him.

Was Marcos really a “well-decorated soldier”? He may have been a war veteran just like many Filipinos of his generation. But a hero certainly he was not. The elaborate tale of the so-called “Maharlika” guerrilla unit which Marcos supposedly organized and led has been definitively exposed by American historian Alfred McCoy as a total fabrication in a well-researched study 25 years ago. He revealed that official US military investigations into the “Maharlika” story soon after World War II already dismissed this claim as a fraud. Why should we now give the perpetrator of this lie a hero's burial?

He was indeed the longest serving Philippine President. But this was because he declared martial law, used military repression to silence opponents, destroyed what was then an imperfect but working democratic system, and perpetuated himself in power through an authoritarian constitution which was never legitimately ratified.

How can his supporters claim that Marcos “built the modern foundations of the Philippines” when he presided over the country's near economic collapse under the burden of behest loans and corrupt practices which to this day our nation has not fully recovered from? Have Marcos, his family and cronies been made fully accountable for the serious charges of plunder -- the amassing of ill-gotten wealth that sank the Philippines, while our Asian neighbors took off economically during his tenure?

Did Marcos really “serve” the country? Was he truly until his death a “patriot”? While we cannot divine and judge his personal motives, the terrible suffering and damage wrought by Marcos's 14 years of authoritarian rule is undeniable. The recent compensation given to the many victims of martial law, though symbolic in monetary terms, is damning proof that the Marcos regime was guilty of gross human rights violations. Is this the sort of person we want to see interred among genuine servant leaders and patriots?

The Libingan ng mga Bayani is hallowed ground meant for true heroes. It was established as a memorial to pay fitting tribute to the gallant Filipino men and women who have brought honor to the country by fighting for freedom and democracy.

How can we bury among our heroes the very man whose dictatorial regime we rejected and ousted during the EDSA people power revolution 25 years ago? It will be nothing less than a desecration and nullification of the Filipino people's long struggle and victory for democracy which we are proud to have gifted the world as an example of non-violent political change.

As we celebrate Araw ng Kagitingan to commemorate the heroism of those who fought fascism during World War II, let us not make a mockery of the service and sacrifice of Filipino war veterans by giving a hero's burial to someone who is not only a fake war hero, but was also responsible for undermining democracy and development during his long tenure as authoritarian ruler.

We call on the members of the House of Representatives who signed this resolution to seriously consider withdrawing their signatures. We urge you to understand the true meaning of service, patriotism and heroism. We challenge you to rise to the challenge of statesmanship and not be swayed by facile political collegiality and false notions of "reconciliation" and "solidarity".

We call on all those who genuinely value freedom and justice, particularly those who suffered the ravages of Martial Law, to speak out against this resolution. Let us demonstrate to the signatories that we find their proposal utterly repulsive and demeaning.

Finally, we call on our schools to be ever vigilant against those who seek to revise and reinterpret history to suit their selfish interests and agenda. The teaching of Philippine history should precisely be strengthened to enable our people, especially our youth, to separate truth from falsehood. We need to understand our struggles, failings and triumphs as a people for us to build national institutions that promote genuine freedom, justice and solidarity.

The House signatories claim that the Marcos burial is meant as "a magnanimous act of reconciliation which will strengthen the bonds of solidarity among the Filipino people." But let us remember the words of St. Augustine: "Charity is no substitute for justice withheld." Let justice be the tie that binds us as a nation.

CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

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