
“A NATION'S BREATH”

EDSA is not just a road. It is a whisper that became a roar, a fear that became a flame, a nation that became a voice.

When we say “EDSA,” we often think of black-and-white photographs, folded newspapers, and pages in a history book that smell like dust and time. We imagine crowds frozen in grainy images, hands raised, faces blurred by motion and memory. But EDSA was never meant to stay still. It was never meant to be framed and hung on a wall as something finished, complete, and untouchable. EDSA was meant to move. It was meant to walk through generations, to breathe in new lungs, to speak through new voices, to challenge new silences.

What does courage look like when you have nothing but your body to stand between a tank and a dream? What does unity mean when your only weapon is a prayer, a hand to hold, and a voice that trembles but refuses to fall silent?

In 1986, ordinary people became extraordinary, not because they were powerful, but because they were brave enough to be together. Students stood beside workers. Nuns stood beside soldiers. Mothers stood beside strangers. The air was thick with fear and faith, with sweat and song, with the quiet understanding that something fragile and fierce was being born on the pavement of a nation.

In the rhythm of footsteps and the rhyme of heartbeats, the people wrote a poem on the streets:

“We stand,we stay,we will not stray. We fear,we fight,we choose the light.

We fall,we rise,before their eyes. We claim this land,with open hands. ”

These were not just chants.They were promises whispered to the future.

Yet EDSA was not perfect.It was not clean.It was not simple.It was tangled with hope and haunted by limits.It opened doors,but it did not magically heal every wound behind them.It showed what was possible,but it did not guarantee what would follow.And perhaps that is what makes it so painfully human.Because revolutions,like people,do not live on ideals alone.They live in choices made after the cheering fades,in decisions made when no one is watching,in values tested by time,comfort,and temptation.

Former Senator Benigno “Ninoy”Aquino Jr.once said,“The Filipino is worth dying for.” These words,often repeated,were not meant to be poetic ornaments for speeches.They were meant to be a challenge,a demand placed upon every generation that follows.When thousands gathered along EDSA,unarmed and uncertain,they were not just responding to a political crisis.They were responding to a moral call-one that asked whether a nation could still believe in itself(Thompson, 1995).

Corazon Aquino,standing before a wounded and weary country,reminded the people that "The power of the people is stronger than the people in power."Her words echo through time,not as a slogan,but as a warning.Power that is not watched can grow cruel.Authority that is not questioned can grow deaf.EDSA did not merely change a government;it changed the relationship between the governed and those who govern (McCoy,2009).

The scholar Benedict Anderson described nations as “imagined communities”—groups of people who may never meet, yet are bound by shared stories, symbols, and struggles (Anderson, 1983). EDSA became one of those defining stories for the Filipino people.

In the age of digital media, the story of EDSA exists alongside countless other narratives—some honest, some distorted, some deliberately deceptive. As historian Alfred McCoy warns, power does not only operate through laws and armies, but through the control of memory itself (McCoy, 2009). What a nation remembers, and how it remembers, can determine the direction it takes. Silence can be as powerful as speech. And forgetting can be as dangerous as oppression.

Charles Tilly reminds us that social movements do not succeed only because people gather. They succeed because people continue—because they build organizations, protect spaces for dialogue, and sustain the moral energy that first brought them together (Tilly, 2004). EDSA, then, is not only an event to be commemorated. It is a process to be renewed.

We cannot speak of EDSA without naming the darkness it rose against.

Martial Law under Ferdinand Marcos was not simply a chapter of “strong leadership” or “necessary discipline.” It was a season of silenced voices, shuttered presses, detained bodies, and frightened homes. It was a time when power was wrapped in promises and delivered in fear, when criticism could cost a future, and when truth itself became a dangerous thing to carry.

I do not write this with polite distance. I write it with moral anger.

Because the pain of that era did not live only in statistics and court records-it lived in families who waited for fathers who did not come home,in students who learned to whisper instead of question,in communities that learned to look away instead of look up.As Thompson(1995) and Bonner(1987)document,authoritarian rule under the Marcos regime was sustained not only by force,but by a culture of intimidation that seeped into everyday life.

Hatred of injustice is not the same as hatred of people.My anger is not aimed at names in a family tree—it is aimed at a system that treated human lives as expendable and dissent as a crime. It is aimed at a legacy of abuse of power that must never be allowed to return,no matter what colors it wears or what promises it makes.

To remember Martial Law honestly is to refuse to romanticize it.Today,I ask myself—quietly at first and then with a kind of ache that sits in the chest:

Where is EDSA now?

Is it only in monuments and murals,carved in stone and painted in bright,brave colors?Is it only in anniversaries and speeches,recited by voices that echo but do not always act?Or is it supposed to live in our daily lives-in the way we speak,in the way we listen,in the way we treat those who have less power than we do?

Because People Power does not end when the crowds go home.It does not dissolve when the candles burn out or when the last song fades into the night.It continues in classrooms where students question instead of copy.It continues in communities where neighbors help instead of judge.It continues in families where stories are told,not to glorify the past,but to guard the future.

If EDSA was a spark, are we the fire?

If EDSA was a promise, are we the ones who keep it alive?

If EDSA was a prayer, are we the answer?

We live in a time where truth can be blurred and bent, where noise can drown out meaning, where it is easier to scroll than to stand, easier to laugh than to listen, easier to forget than to remember. Information travels fast, but wisdom often limps behind. Opinions are shared in seconds, but understanding takes years.

In this landscape of flashing screens and fleeting attention, EDSA feels almost fragile—a memory competing with memes, a lesson competing with likes. And yet, perhaps that is exactly why it matters more now than ever.

Because EDSA reminds us that change does not begin with a viral post. It begins with a human being who decides, quietly and firmly, to care. It begins with trembling hands that still choose to reach out. It begins with voices that crack but continue to speak. I believe EDSA is asking us a hard, uncomfortable, and deeply personal question today: Are we brave enough to care when caring costs us something? Not just to remember, but to act. Not just to admire, but to continue. Not just to celebrate, but to protect.

Because freedom is not inherited like a family heirloom, safely stored in a box and taken out only on special occasions. It is earned, protected, and renewed by every generation. It is a living thing—one that can grow stronger with attention, or weaker with neglect.

And if we treat it lightly, we risk losing it quietly.

To the youth,to the dreamers,to the doubters,and even to the tired:EDSA is for you.It is not a relic meant only for those who lived through it.It is an invitation meant for those who will live after it.

It is a reminder that your voice matters,even when it shakes.That your presence counts, even when it feels small.That your courage-no matter how quiet it seems-can stand against something much bigger.

We often look back at the people of 1986 with admiration,sometimes even awe.We call them heroes.We place them on a pedestal in our minds.But perhaps the most powerful truth is this:they did not know they would be called heroes.They only knew they could no longer be silent.

And that is the challenge EDSA places before us now.

Will we wait for history to choose us,or will we choose,ourselves,to be part of it?

Let EDSA speak in the way we treat the poor,the way we protect the vulnerable,and the way we demand honesty from those who hold power.Let it speak in the way we correct falsehoods, even when it is awkward.Let it speak in the way we listen to stories that are not our own.

Because memory is not passive.It is an act of responsibility.

To remember is to promise that what happened before will matter to what happens next. And so I choose to believe that EDSA is not behind us,fading into the sepia tones of old photographs

Let us answer-not with nostalgia,but with responsibility.Let us respond-not with applause for the past,but with action in the present.Because history does not only ask to be remembered.It asks to be continued.

And in that continuation,in that fragile and fierce space between what was and what will be,EDSA waits—not as a monument of stone,but as a living,breathing challenge.

Let EDSA speak.And let us be brav enough to listen.