

REFERENCE AND RESEARCH BUREAU
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE

**SELECTION AND PROCLAMATION OF NATIONAL HEROES
AND LAWS HONORING FILIPINO HISTORICAL FIGURES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No law, executive order or proclamation has been enacted or issued officially proclaiming any Filipino historical figure as a national hero. However, because of their significant roles in the process of nation building and contributions to history, there were laws enacted and proclamations issued honoring these heroes.

Even Jose Rizal, considered as the greatest among the Filipino heroes, was not explicitly proclaimed as a national hero. The position he now holds in Philippine history is a tribute to the continued veneration or acclamation of the people in recognition of his contribution to the significant social transformations that took place in our country.¹

Aside from Rizal, the only other hero given an implied recognition as a national hero is Andres Bonifacio whose day of birth on November 30 has been made a national holiday.²

Despite the lack of any official declaration explicitly proclaiming them as national heroes, they remain admired and revered for their roles in Philippine history.

Heroes, according to historians, should not be legislated. Their appreciation should be better left to academics. Acclamation for heroes, they felt, would be recognition enough.³

¹ In Search of National Heroes, The Manila Times Internet Edition, by Augusto V. de Viana, Aug. 25, 2002, p. 2.

² Ibid, p. 3.

³ Ibid, p. 5.

1. SELECTION AND PROCLAMATION OF NATIONAL HEROES

1.1 National Heroes Committee

On March 28, 1993, President Fidel V. Ramos issued Executive Order No. 75 entitled "Creating the National Heroes Committee Under the Office of the President". (ANNEX "A")

The principal duty of the Committee is to study, evaluate and recommend Filipino national personages/heroes in due recognition of their sterling character and remarkable achievements for the country.

1.2 Findings and Recommendations of the National Heroes Committee

In compliance with Executive Order No. 75 dated March 28, 1993, the National Heroes Committee submitted its findings and recommendations. (ANNEX "B")

1.2.1 Criteria for National Heroes

The Technical Committee of the National Heroes Committee held a series of meetings on June 3, 1993, August 19, 1993, September 12, 1994 and November 15, 1995, defining, discussing and deliberating upon the merits of the various definitions and criteria of a hero. The Committee adopted the following criteria as basis for historical researchers in determining who among the great Filipinos will be officially proclaimed as national heroes:

CRITERIA FOR NATIONAL HEROES

(Adopted by the Technical Committee of the National Heroes Committee on June 3, 1993, Manila. Members of the Committee included Drs. Onofre D. Corpuz, Samuel K. Tan, Marcelino Foronda, Alfredo Lagmay, Bernardita R. Churchill, Serafin D. Quiason, Ambeth Ocampo, then known as Dom Ignacio Maria, Prof. Minerva Gonzales and Mrs. Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil)

1. **Heroes are those who have a concept of nation and thereafter aspire and struggle for the nation's freedom.** Our own struggle for freedom was begun by Bonifacio and finished by Aguinaldo, the latter formally declaring the revolution's success. In reality, however, a revolution

has no end. Revolutions are only the beginning. One cannot aspire to be free only to sink back into bondage.

2. **Heroes are those who define and contribute to a system or life of freedom and order for a nation.** Freedom without order will only lead to anarchy. Therefore, heroes are those who make the nation's constitution and laws, such as Mabini and Recto. To the latter, constitutions are only the beginning, for it is the people living under the constitution that truly constitute a nation.
3. **Heroes are those who contribute to the quality of life and destiny of a nation.**

(As defined by Dr. Onofre D. Corpuz)

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR HEROES

(Adopted by the Technical Committee of the National Heroes Committee on November 15, 1995, Manila)

1. A hero is part of the people's expression. But the process of a people's internalization of a hero's life and works takes time, with the youth forming a part of the internalization.
2. A hero thinks of the future, especially the future generations.
3. The choice of a hero involves not only the recounting of an episode or events in history, but of the entire process that made this particular person a hero.

(As defined by Dr. Alfredo Lagmay)

1.2.2 Historical Figures Recommended as National Heroes

On November 15, 1995, the Technical Committee after deliberation and careful study based on Dr. Onofre D. Corpuz' and Dr. Alfredo Lagmay's criteria selected the following nine Filipino historical figures to be recommended as National Heroes:

- a. Jose Rizal
- b. Andres Bonifacio
- c. Emilio Aguinaldo
- d. Apolinario Mabini
- e. Marcelo H. del Pilar
- f. Sultan Dipatuan Kudarat
- g. Juan Luna
- h. Melchora Aquino
- i. Gabriela Silang

1.2.3 Status of the Report/Recommendations Submitted by the National Heroes Committee⁴

Since the submission of the report/recommendations by the National Heroes Committee to then Secretary Ricardo T. Gloria of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports on November 22, 1995, no action has been taken. This was probably because this might trigger a flood of requests for proclamations. Another possibility is that the proclamations can trigger bitter debates involving historical controversies about the heroes.

2. LAWS HONORING/COMMEMORATING FILIPINO HISTORICAL FIGURES

2.1 Heroes

2.1.1 Jose Rizal

- 2.1.1.1 Decree of December 20, 1898, issued by General Emilio Aguinaldo, declared December 30 of every year a day of national mourning in honor of Dr. Jose Rizal and other victims of the Philippine Revolution

⁴ Interview with Prof. Augusto V. de Viana, Chief, Research and Publication Division, National Historical Institute, January 9, 2003.

2.1.1.2 Act No. 137, which organized the politico-military district of Morong into the Province of Rizal, was the first official step taken by the Taft Commission to honor our greatest hero and martyr

2.1.2 Andres Bonifacio

2.1.2.1 Act No. 2946, enacted by the Philippine Legislature on February 16, 1921, made November 30 of each year a legal holiday to commemorate the birth of Andres Bonifacio

2.1.2.2 Act No. 2760, issued on February 23, 1918, confirmed and ratified all steps taken for the creation, maintenance, improvement of national monuments and particularly for the erection of a monument to the memory of Andres Bonifacio

2.1.3 Other Heroes

2.1.3.1 Act No. 3827, enacted by the Philippine Legislature on October 28, 1931, declared the last Sunday of August of every year as National Heroes Day

2.1.3.2 Proclamation No. 510, issued by Pres. Fidel V. Ramos on November 30, 1994, declared the year 1996 as the year of Filipino Heroes as a tribute to all Filipinos who, directly and indirectly, gave meaning and impetus to the cause of freedom, justice, Philippine independence and nationhood

2.1.3.3 R.A. No. 9070, April 8, 2001, declaring the eighteenth of December of every year as a special working public holiday throughout the country to be known as the Graciano Lopez-Jaena Day

2.2 Other Historical Figures

2.2.1 R.A. No. 6701, February 10, 1989, declaring September One of every year, the death anniversary of Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan, as Gregorio L. Aglipay Day and a special non-working holiday in the Municipality of Batac, Province of Ilocos Norte

- 2.2.2 R.A. No. 7285, March 24, 1992, declaring February Nineteen of each year as Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon Day a special non-working holiday in the Province of Aurora in order to commemorate the birth anniversary of Doña Aurora Aragon Quezon, the first President of the Philippine National Red Cross, and Foundation Day of the Province
- 2.2.3 R.A. No. 7805, September 1, 1994, declaring January 28 of every year as a non-working special public holiday in the City of Cavite to be known as Julian Felipe Day
- 2.2.4 R.A. No. 7950, March 25, 1995, declaring December Eighteen of every year as "Araw ng Laguna" and a special working day in the Province of Laguna and the City of San Pablo to commemorate the memory and death of the late Governor Felicisimo T. San Luis
- 2.2.5 R.A. No. 9067, April 8, 2001, declaring April 15 of every year as President Manuel A. Roxas Day which shall be observed as a special working public holiday in the Province of Capiz and the City of Roxas

HISTORY:NATIONAL HEROES, HISTORICAL FIGURES
RRB/LRS

RHAB/DOP/mti
1.16.03