



A Question of Heroes

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Through his critical essays on ten key figures in Philippine history, Nick Joaquin provides a fresh point of view on Philippine heroes and their role in the Philippine revolutionary tradition.

A Question of Heroes Details

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From Reader Review A Question of Heroes for online ebook

Jason Sta. Maria says

This book is a must read for every Filipinos who really wants to know the real story of our history. There are lots of different, hidden and underground stories in this book about the real scenarios and personalities of our heroes. I have already had a conversations with different Historians and History Majors regarding the real story of our history but I found out that there's really a lot of hidden stories out there and there's a lot of stories that the average Filipino didn't knew or taught from school, some of the stories were just scripted and not real. But I didn't mean that all of them are not real but there's really a lot of important things that we should know. That's why I really recommend this book for every Filipino whom is concern about our history.

Michael Nelmida says

A different angle of Philipline History.However,I think Rizal's Retraction should be added,Aguinaldo's faggotism and A.Luna association with Ysidra etc.This consequently can burn the flame better,questioning their heroism.

Jane Glossil says

A must-read collection of personal insights on our national heroes and our history. Thought-provoking.

Heroes are still humans after all, contributing the better and worse versions of themselves to the history of this nation. History is always painful, but the pain should hold a promise, otherwise these heroes, these persons, would have fallen for a continuing battle that remains uncertain when to be won.

(The longer and more personal review is unfit for posting. :D)

Gena Myrtle says

I've read (or heard) somewhere that the problem with historians is that they view history as problems confronting people, not people confronting problems. Nick Joaquin, perhaps the first ever in the country, did the latter. Joaquin narrated history in terms of our heroes' (or anti-heroes') character, and his painting of each person's strengths and shortcomings offers a deeper insight on what hampered whatever Filipino dream for national democracy and independence there was. Again, they were people confronting problems. And the same problem for all ten heroes in this book was faced differently according to class and character, which Joaquin effectively whipped with his wit.

I do wish, however, that Nick Joaquin did not entirely exclude the proletariat (not even a chapter for Emilia Jacinto?). I think he may have praised the ilustrado class too much, dismissing the "ignorant class" as those who failed the 1896 Revolution in Manila, deserted Aguinaldo and Luna around 1898, and only emerged as the continuing (and dying) revolution come 1900s under Artemio Ricarte. After two essays of Bonifacio, he was merely referred to later on as the pompous Supremo who proved nothing in the San Juan Battle. But from what I read, the Revolution of the Ilustrados that Nick Joaquin so revered as what ignited the whole

struggle was a series of self-interests, personal vendetta, and bad decision-making by the "intellectual class." If anyone failed and killed the revolution, it was Aguinaldo. I actually disagree with Joaquin on the part where he said the middle class did not abandon the revolution of the masses since the middle class started it in the first place, but it was in fact the petty clan and class wars of the bourgeoisie that augured the doom of the revolution.

But that's just my view of the story and I'm no Nick Joaquin; I'm only his reader. Still five stars, because, duh, Nick Joaquin. A must-read for every Filipino.

K.D. Absolutely says

A very educational read. Nick Joaquin (1917-2004) was one of the National Artists of the Philippines so even if he did not use footnotes and references in this book, I could not help but believe him. After all, he was born in 1917 that was just about 2 decades after the Spanish-Filipino and Filipino-American wars. He also wrote many other great books, both fiction and non-fiction. So, I think he was credible enough to convince anyone that the events and claims he mentioned in this book actually happened or were the general opinions of the majority of Filipinos during that time. In short, I think Nick Joaquin was a believable historian even if I did not know him personally since I only started reading his works after he died or to be exact, when I joined Goodreads 3 years ago.

I am not sure if these are spoilers because this book is about history. Is listing down what you learned from a history book considered as spoiling the next reader? It's debatable for me because these things, if indeed true, should have been taught to every Filipino child in school because they are very important to all of us. Why? Because we call these people our heroes and we, just like any other races in the world, need to have someones to look up to. Someones who belong to our own race and who we think emulate the traits and values that we consider important to us as a nation. These men whose lives were scrutinized in this book fought for our independence from foreign colonizers. We were taught when we were in school that they were the great Filipinos. However, Nick Joaquin, in this book gave the other "side" of them. Call it humanization or showing their less-heroic angles but the revelations in this book are nevertheless, very intriguing if not enlightening.

Here were those that really struck me:

(1) The failed attempt to revolt in *Noli* was based on what happened to **Padre Burgos** who was one of the Creoles that got the ire of the Spanish friars. Padre Gomez and Padre Zamora's involvement in the foiled Cavite mutiny was both unclear since they were just based on unfounded testimonies.

(2) *La Solidaridad's* ultimate objective was for the Philippines to get equal footing with that of Spain and not for Spain to grant total independence to the Philippines. In a way, the *illustrados* (rich Filipino kids who could afford European schools like **Marcelo H. Del Pilar**, **Graciano Lopez-Jaena** and even Rizal) are seen as pro-Europe and not really pro-Philippines.

(3) **Jose Rizal** was an anti-hero. He did not support the Katipunan uprising in 1896. He was in ship on his way to support Spain in Guam when he was arrested. Weeks before his death by firing squad, he wrote the Filipinos to put down their arms. Although his claim that the Katipunan could not win the revolution because they did not have the right armaments was proven true, his actuation was truly anti-heroic.

(4) **Andres Bonifacio** was a stubborn, self-centered, spoiled brat who threw himself around when he lost the battles in Caloocan and San Juan in Manila. During the Tejeros convention, he usurped the presiding officer

role and instead of mediating between the Magdalo and Magdiwang factions, he sided with the later and tried to steal the leadership from Emilio Aguinaldo. He even tried to pit the Cavitenos against the Bulacaneos instead of working towards their unification.

(5) **Emilio Aguinaldo** was not prepared to lead the nation since he was only used to lead a provincial *cavatismo* army. He was gullible enough to believe the verbal promises of the American generals. He was also very trusting and lack the sense of urgency and military prowess to anticipate the next moves of the Americans. That was why he lost the campaign for Philippine independence.

(6) **Apolinario Mabini** might have all the brain but he did not have the heart to lead. He was cold, apathetic and considered himself blameless as far as the reason for the failed revolution was concerned.

(7) **Antonio Luna** was killed because of his arrogance and hot temper. He was the slapping bastard. There was a possibility that his death, by hacking his head with a bolo, was with the permission from Emilio Aguinaldo because there was a rumor of his planned *coup* to wrestle the leadership from Aguinaldo.

(8) There is a big possibility that the big part of the heroism **Gregorio Del Pilar** was fictional. He was young and good-looking and a darling of the press. His death could attest to this. Newspapers picture him as a great romantic lover and said something like his heroic deed of fighting till his last drop but in reality he was killed because of his negligence or even stupidity.

(9) **Artemio Ricarte** was said to be the one who took the cudgels from Emilio Aguinaldo when he was captured and pledged allegiance to the Americans. However, his succeeding actions became shady especially when he went into self-exile in Japan that people could interpret as fighting the Americans but working with another colonizers, the Japanese forces. He died of ripe age, 80+ but not many people found his intent as really pro-independence.

So, if there is really nobody worth our unquestionable admiration among the roster of heroes we met in our textbooks in school when we were small children, then what do we do? Do we need to drop that long-held belief that they were good men worth emulating? My answer is no.

Like all of us, they were but humans. They were not perfect so they committed mistakes. For all we knew, they might not really aspired to be admired as some of them could have just been incidental heroes (example: Padre Gomez) or product of fictional writings (example: Gregorio del Pilar). However, they still died for our country during that pivotal points in our history. Not all of us are willing to die for our country, right? That for one is good enough for me to admire them.

This book is a MUST read for all Filipinos. Quite an appropriate read for Rizal Day, that is today, December 30th. More appropriate for National Heroes Day, I would say. Just the same, I am glad I read this book. Thanks, Jzhun.

Emy Ruth says

Heroes are not just wax figures we adore and worship; more than anything, they are human beings first and are therefore prone to mistakes and failures. What makes them heroes are not the achievements they did, but mainly by how we want them to be-- strong, undaunted, smart, fearless, and many more. The sad but also beautiful realization is that our heroes are a reflection of the whole Filipino race-- fearless but doubting, strong but weighed too much by our pakikisama, resilient to a fault, and smart but easily conquered by our

ties to patronage. Unless we conquer or even use our weaknesses to something good, we'd end up blindly following people who promise more but never deliver.

Topel Viernes says

This book, written by a personal favorite, sheds light on the obscurities of our Philippine history, a palliative to the widespread brainwashing of the inaccurate accounts of our history books. It is spot-on with how unwarranted the adorations and "canonizations" our society have bestowed upon some of our heroes. Joaquin excellently recounted Burgos' sectarian uprising as a prescient to the Filipino nationalism's rise, the valiance of the Propaganda movement, Aguinaldo's superior captaincy, Luna's cunning and cerebral generalship, and the last and least-celebrated (if at all) Filipino revolutionary Ricarte.

A common underlying theme, our heritage of smallness, comes to life on every page. The book has made a bold claim that this had preempted their ideologies taking form and grander dreams for the country. The book is in a higher league from other historical accounts because of its balanced, explicit details on the protagonists' works, shortcomings, and surprising eccentricities, as well as applying a systematic thinking approach between events and the equally important figures that shaped them. Joaquin effectively refuted the romanticism that plagued our history with his own distinguished brand of wit and facts from the most revered historians and academicians. A must read for EVERY FILIPINO, bar none.

Autumn says

Any of you who have an ebook version of this book?

Aida says

nick joaquin should be read by pinoys. he provides an excellent combination of storytelling and history. led an interesting bohemian life. this is history by one of our finest writers.

Lik Castañeda says

It's an interesting read about the less known (and mostly controversial) details in the lives of our national heroes taught to us in history class. Although it's hard to believe which account Nick Joaquin (and including him) cites has the most accurate record, he writes his essays in a convincing way for me, with occasional memorable comments like "Who would want a cry of Kangkong" on his essay about Bonifacio.

It made me question our heroes, but they didn't choose to be made as our heroes today. Perhaps it is a question of how we glorify our heroes.

It's also a good refresher of Philippine history for me, and I wished I've read this years back.

Tatoosh says

An excellent introduction to some of the most prominent historical Filipinos. He provides a fairly well balanced viewpoint and cites his reasons for supporting one or another view about individuals that are controversial.

He is a very good antidote to the over-emphasis place on Renato Constatino's book, A Past Revisited. Joaquin finds the actions of individuals and groups to be that of obvious self interest and does not blame them for that in general, but acknowledges differing agendas.

Where he finds faults, he discusses them, Aquinaldos failure to take Manila and his reliance and preference for his clan and friends at the expense of effective leadership. And again he balances Mabini's accusations with his own failure to balance competing interests.

I have read this book once now and often refer back to it as pursue other authors biographical works about the individuals Joaquin discusses.

Lyden Orbase says

I've learned so much stuff that weren't taught in school. This is recommended to those who like controversies in history.

Thank you, Nick Joaquin.

John Santos says

A very interesting perspective of many of the Philippines' heroes. I especially liked how the individual essays were organized in such a way that often two intertwined personalities are juxtaposed to one another. It gives a good way to see their how their lives compare to one another.

Markie_pikachu says

bb

Darlene A says

from burgos to ricarte. the revolution that was started by the ilustrados. from spanish to japanese occupation i question myself are we really free?
