

Written by

Friday, 30 December 2011 12:27 - Last Updated Friday, 30 December 2011 12:46

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**The News UpFront: (TOP STORY) as of Friday, December 30, 2011**

The martyrdom of the Philippines' foremost hero Jose Rizal is remembered today, the 115th year of his execution by musketry at the old Luneta in Manila.

In Madrid

where he studied and lived, he is celebrated with a monument, an exact replica of the one in Manila

. In San Diego, Carson and Los Angeles

, California

, Rizal is no big time; he's a sentry watching 24/7 over shoppers at three Filipino-Chinese owned fishmarkets.

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*A MARTYRDOM 115 YEARS AGO*

**Some Remember Jose Rizal, Some Dishonor Him**

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**By ROMEO P. MARQUEZ**

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At a press conference on June 25, 2011, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Philippine Senator Edgardo J. Angara, accompanied by Senator Franklin M. Drilon, said he would initiate an investigation into why the national hero Jose Rizal has been demoted to a sentry in San Diego, Carson and Los Angeles, California, by having his busts in three Filipino-Chinese owned fishmarkets. What has happened since then?

Jose Rizal: Hero or Security Guard?: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bd0ueBILMbw>

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TORONTO - While in Madrid two months ago, I felt a bit surprised to find a monument of Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero, in one of the major thoroughfares of Spain's capital city of about five-million residents.

The question came to mind: Why would a colonizer that had convicted Rizal of rebellion and sedition in a mock trial and had him executed honor him with such a memorial? That question finds currency in view of today's observance of Rizal's death 115 years ago.

My personal guess is that Spain was trying to atone for the sins of the past, namely, the execution of Rizal and the many abuses and atrocities he had exposed that Spain had committed in the more than three centuries it ruled the Philippines.

The monument, an exact replica of the original at Manila's Luneta Park, stands at the corner of a net-enclosed football field facing the semi-residential, semi-commercial Avenida de Filipinas.

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I had planned to trace Rizal's footsteps with a professional guide but the Philippine embassy indicated it had no time to help me, so it endorsed someone I needed to pay. I didn't have the extra money. I figured that whatever amount was involved was best spent on my own discovery in my own sweet time.

I managed to visit some of the places Rizal had lived in and frequented with young Filipino reformists, notably the apartment close to Ateneo de Madrid, the Hotel Ingles and the sidewalk eatery adjacent to his residence.

More than a century later, all the structures still stand among a row of high-rises in the narrow, cobbled streets of the city.

The apartment-hotel has been converted into apartment rooms. One room that makes for a studio is occupied by a bunch of eight Filipinos. However, it's made smaller by an old sofa, a television, a refrigerator and a computer table which serves also as dining table.

Not far from his residence is the Ateneo de Madrid where he, according to some accounts, watched theatre and did research. Also close is the former school, now the Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando.

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Hotel Ingles, founded in 1853, remains a landmark in the neighborhood. On the ground floor is a marker celebrating Rizal, one of its esteemed guests.

The community within all these historical landmarks is called Barrio de las Letras which saw the likes of painters like Pablo Picasso and Juan Luna.

Rizal's monument is the most visible sign of a shared past between the Philippines and Spain, and ironically, a grim reminder of Spanish brutality against one who was essentially its own, for Rizal had strongly resisted armed struggle against Spain, advocating instead in making the Philippines a province of Spain.

If Rizal had been Spain's most loyal son, why did the Spanish authorities order his death by musketry? Was Rizal's eloquent portrayal of repression personified by the governors-general, the Guardia Civil, the friars and the swinging upper class of Philippine society in his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* constituted acts that warranted his death?

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In that context, I am moved to believe that Spain must have been swayed to erect that monument, not so much to honor him as to be a subtle reminder of over three centuries of repression and exploitation.

Rizal's literary genius is enshrined in a farewell poem, *Mi Ultimo Adios*, written on the eve of his execution, which is well recognized by

Spain

. A brass replica - one in Spanish and another in Tagalog - mounted on granite stone stands on both sides of the monument. # # #

## **Additional story and videos in Madrid:**

1. Retracing a Part of Philippine History in Madrid: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4qCQQJ2C90>

2. The Philippine Hero in Madrid: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYjRO3Z5Xe8>

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3. Retracing a Piece of Philippine History at Digital Journal: <http://digitaljournal.com/article/314424>

**To view my other channels, here are the links:**

**1. For Filipino community news, visit The Filipino Web Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/FilipinoWebChannel#g/u>**

**2. For mainstream news in Canada and the United States, visit The Gotcha Journalist's Currents & Breaking News Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheGotchaJournalist#g/u>**

**3. For Filipino entertainment news, visit The Filipino Web Entertainment Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/FilWebEntertainment#g/u>**

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**For other stories and photos, please visit:**

1. <http://currentsbreakingnews.blogspot.com/>

2. <http://torontonewsroom.blogspot.com/>

3. <http://timecircumstance.blogspot.com/>

4. <http://travelsthemes.blogspot.com/>

5. <http://gotchajournalist.blogspot.com/> .

PHILIPPINE VILLAGE VOICE/The Filipino Web Channel - Redefining Community News

Currents & Breaking News

Volume 5, Issue No. 23

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/ News That Fears None, Views That Favor Nobody /

OPINION/COMMENTARY

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