



## THE ROLE OF CULTURE TO ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL IDENTITY

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo  
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas  
B.S. Medical Technology

Culture defines a race. It creates the diversity that exists among different races and sometimes even within a particular race. Human beings could not have survived throughout the ages without some semblance of culture. We naturally prefer to be recognized based on our concepts, traditions, knowledge, beliefs, arts, and other elements that make up our culture. Culture establishes a race's identity.

A few years ago, there was this person who got sensational criticism for saying that my race had no identity in the world. No matter what arena there was, according to that person, no one could really find anything significant being contributed by someone from my country. That really hurt for many in my country. I believe that individual was heavily criticized by many from my country for what was deemed callous and cruel in his/her remarks. (Honestly, I don't remember the person's gender anymore.)

However, those times have slowly gone. Those times when my country couldn't even be located on a standard map by foreign people, have eventually given way to due recognition. Gradually, many citizens of my country have been able to establish an identity for my race quite distinct from that of our neighbors. True, we may still have one of the largest English-speaking populations in the planet, but many of our local song writers and artists have learned to create works maximizing our native language. Of course, those songs might have a smattering of English or some other foreign language at certain points, but those songs still carry the pride of the brown race. They speak of the angst of people in my race, how we value relationships and other such inspirations for songwriting.

My race has always been great with adapting to everything foreign. We are able to take a language, imitate its nuances then infuse it with our own brand of adapting. We embrace other cultures and readily make them part of our own, of what we are. My race is good with that and it is what makes us special and extraordinary. Maybe we are a nation of great imitators and pretenders. But that's precisely why our chameleon-like properties can not be duplicated almost anywhere.

We have our culture, yes we do. Any foreign tourist can visit our museums for a glimpse of that. The reason why our racial identity can not be so easily established is because we have been under so much tyrannical rule since the beginning of time. That has made our culture a huge mixture of other cultures. Although foreign influences have continued to be enmeshed within our culture, we still wish to be recognized by our own identity. We want people everywhere to remember us as the race that tried hard and made it, not the race that died down unto itself. We have a culture that's uniquely our own and we certainly deserve our place in the sun.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What contribution/s does culture have on national pride and identity?
2. What are the elements of culture?
3. How can national identity crisis be overcome?
4. Is it bad when racial culture is heavily influenced by foreign culture? Why or why not?
5. Are you proud of your culture? How do you show this pride?