



EMBRACING HISTORY AS A PEOPLE

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

We as a people share a common history. Since we basically have the same ancestors, the same race and the same culture, it is natural that our history is one and the same. The inability to accept where we came from and where we've been smacks of plain arrogance. We can not say that we are historically unique; that may be true on a personal level. But on the communal aspect, our histories are almost always nearly identical. The way we responded and reacted to stimuli in the past may have been different, but the destiny that came out of those reactions all contribute to the same outcome: the present.

Exploring our common history allows us to learn from one another's experiences. We can explore the past together with a clear perspective. There's no use for throwing brickbats at one another. We need to see our past mistakes as stepping stones to get to where we are now. Well, maybe not exactly stepping stones but as booster shots—picking up where we left off and moving forward and upward from there. We should never let history drag us down.

At specific points in my own country's history, there were instances when our integrity as a people was strewn and spilled into the spotlight. Fortunately, a great many inspired and inspiring individuals chose to show the world that we couldn't be easily put down as a people. Great men and women of history went out and showed everyone else that if we were worthy to be called citizens of a great country, we needed to rise up to the occasion as they did.

Bravery and a genuine sense of self-sacrifice were the elements that brought bloodshed at particular points of my country's history. But they were also the very factors that brought freedom and democracy that we now enjoy. Perhaps, we have not completely shaken off the tyranny, foreign rule and influence that have managed to permeate our very culture. But that fact should never hinder us from moving forward as we should.

I believe that our history as a people has made us what we are now. That history has enabled us to face the present with valuable lessons on what has been and what needs to be. Unless we learn to accept past mistakes as our own and become responsible for what we did, we can never learn to take full responsibility for the present and what is to come.

Many of us resort to finger-pointing when specific blunders in the past are brought up. That's not the attitude. It neither solves problems nor makes things better in the present. It will also never guarantee a perfect future. A sense of accountability should be part of how we learn lessons from the past.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What specific points of your country's history are you most proud of?
2. What specific points of your country's history are you most shamed by?
3. Why should we learn both from the bad and the good in our history?
4. Do you believe that a country's progress into the future depends on its people's ability to learn from the past? Justify your answer.
5. How can history be made in the present?