

and ruthless. The reason it can induce efficiency is because it penalizes inefficiency, i.e. market pressure is both the good and the dark side at the same time. As an example, take the excellent volume by Paul Kennedy, “The rise and fall of the great powers.” He explores how, starting 1500, fractious, war-torn principalities of Europe were forced to compete against each other and managed to overtake a unified, complacent China over the next 200-300 years.

Fourth, what does this book say about the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium? “If one believed the doctrine of imperialism, what can one say about the emergence of new players such as China and India – as Japan had before them? Will power be distributed? Will there be clashes, cooptation, or absorption? Who will colonize whom?”

Having posed these questions, I end contentedly with the thought I have fulfilled my teacher’s duty—that is, I have given you a very interesting and exciting homework.—CAYETANO PADERANGA JR., PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.

## NOTE

1. Others look at the more benign results and take a Cassandra-like stance.

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**Beyond Conspiracy: 25 Years after the Aquino Assassination. Directed by Butch Nolasco. Written by Ruben Tanco. Foundation for Worldwide People Power.**

For what purpose do we look back? What do we gain, and at times lose, from revisiting certain aspects of our history?

There can be no doubt that the assassination of Benigno ‘Ninoy’ Aquino, Jr. has been decisive in our nation’s history. But just as it is decisive, it is also marred with unresolved controversies. Though the incident goes down in history as what catalyzed the series of events that led to the EDSA People Power, memories of August 21, 1983 are now already vague, if not forgotten. For generations born long after Ninoy’s assassination and EDSA People Power, the real cause of Ninoy’s death may not even be important anymore apart from the usual curiosity conspiracies invite. The documentary *Beyond Conspiracy: 25 Years after the Aquino Assassination* offers a memento that reminds the older

generation, and informs the present one of a tragedy that scared the nation's imagination, and at the same time, roused a people from stupor and stirred them to defy with audacity, and ultimately bring down a dictator. The effort to painstakingly gather and piece together relevant materials from the past, and present them as a compelling case examining the incident is worthy of commendation. In fact, such endeavors that capture and present history in new forms, utilizing the various means modern day technology provides must be promoted. As a society modernizes, so must the ways of presenting history—the means of remembering—in order to continuously capture the interest of generations.

The documentary promises to shed light on three issues: why was Ninoy killed; who was responsible for his murder; and whether justice will be served. Divided into two parts, the first part traces the rise of Ninoy in national politics, emphasizing the role he played in the anti-dictatorship struggle, which in turn contextualizes his brutal death at the then Manila International Airport. The second part deals extensively with the circumstances surrounding his assassination. By examining who could have possibly had the motive and gain for his death, the means and opportunities to carry out the plot, and the power to maintain a cover-up, much like a crime scene investigation, it arrives at the then President Marcos as the plausible suspect. Supported by eyewitness accounts, experts' analyses, video footages, and photographs, it presents a strong and clear case pointing to a military conspiracy. Twenty-five years later, a few soldiers remain in prison, but no evidence directly implicating Marcos has ever surfaced. No high ranking official from the military has ever refuted the stance that it was Rolando Galman, the 'communist', who assassinated Ninoy. More importantly, the answer to whether justice will ever be truly served remains inconclusive. And so with a somber mood, the documentary ends with these few phrases, "the soldiers who have chosen to waste their lives in prison rather than to reveal the whole truth of what happened on August 21, 1983 would caution us, do not cross these invincible forces in our society, they can always get away with murder."

This brings us back to the questions posed earlier. Why do we have to look back at Ninoy's assassination in the first place? What is there that needs revisiting? These are the questions the documentary fails to answer. As it promises to go *beyond* the conspiracy, it fails to actually do so. To go beyond the conspiracy behind the Aquino assassination would be to identify or examine the reasons as to why the case remains

unresolved and how these explanations can possibly link the assassination case with recent controversies in Philippine politics and society. Thus, the documentary ends where it should have just begun. This makes the documentary an unfinished journey in the revisiting of Ninoy's assassination. Though packaged differently, it told the same thing with little hindsight.

As Nietzsche reminds us, history must be critical. When we revisit our past, we must be prepared to reexamine it. One who surveys the past according to him, "must have the strength...to shatter and dissolve something to enable him to live: this he achieves by dragging it to the bar of judgment, interrogating it meticulously and finally condemning it (quoted in David 2004: 25)." This is the major shortcoming of the documentary as laudable as it may be. It loses its radical edge when it fails to express moral indignation by matter-of-factly presenting narratives. It proceeds from the assumption that evidence alone can convey emotions and judgment. It is passive in calling for a resolution to this and similar cases. It falls short of explicitly questioning the institutions implicated throughout the course of analyzing the Aquino assassination case.

There are three issues that need reexamining. The first deals with the role of the military in Philippine politics and society. Why did the military act as an accomplice to the cover-up, and yet also played a crucial role in bringing down the Marcos dictatorship? What is so significant and at the same time flawed about the military that enables it to maintain a dual role of friend and foe? Second, the incident also puts our justice system into question. Aside from the tokenistic mention of elites and cliques in our politics, the documentary could have probed deeper into the state of our justice system—what influences it, what has changed or has endured throughout the years, such that despite twenty-five years it has been for the most part ineffective in serving justice. And lastly, it fails to consider the role of the Filipino people in allowing, wittingly or otherwise, for the case to eventually die down unresolved. The last two perhaps are closely intertwined particularly when related to recent events. An answer to both questions may perhaps explain why 'conspiracies' such as the 'Hello Garci' scandal, the fertilizer fund scandal, and the numerous deaths of activists, journalists and the likes, have remained unresolved. Also, it might shed light as to why in the same manner that the cronies of Marcos were able to creep back into power, we see ousted President Joseph 'Erap' Estrada convicted of plunder, gradually easing back in to politics.

Our memories are mediated by the reality we want to believe in. It is truly ironic that we often celebrate or commemorate EDSA People Power, yet remain silent about the crucial incident that directly preceded it. What does this silence manifest? Is it the calm acceptance of defeat against the powers that be? That we religiously laud our capacity to rise to greatness as a people in the wishful thinking that one day we could relive the sense of pride that comes with it; and for a fleeting moment, forget about the powerlessness that pervades our daily lives.

The documentary is perhaps reflective of a deeper malaise among the many. We fail to question our institutions, and in questioning proceed with the necessary steps towards rectification. We earn no hindsight in looking back. We do not learn, and in cases that we do, we learn so little. And more importantly, we do not guide ourselves with a purpose as to why we need to look back. That is what is so important about remembering: that we have so much to gain, and so much to lose at the same time.

In a sense, one purpose of looking back at Ninoy's assassination is essentially to reassess the very institutions implicated in the incident. It is important to know and realize that we have, for such a long time, moved from one unresolved case to another—to the detriment of our society. We have not made murderers, charlatans, and thieves accountable. But more importantly, we have not as a people discussed our perspectives. What do we want to gain in looking back? What new life do we want to nurture as we revisit our past?

To remember is to *re-member*, to recompose ourselves based on the truth and wisdom that history grants to those who bravely ask who they were and what they have done, even though the tragic truth might shatter them. Yet, by remembering, we can gather ourselves anew to tread the days ahead—with the resolve to become worthy possessors of a future others have died for.—**MARIA FLEURDELIS R. TANYAG, BA**  
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## REFERENCE

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