

**STATEMENT OF LOLA
FELICIDAD DE LOS REYES***

I, Felicidad De Los Reyes, was born at Masbate, Masbate, on November 22, 1928. My father, Teodoro Barberan, was a tailor and my mother, Albina Sedenio Barberan, helped him with earning money by assisting. I was the ninth of ten siblings in my family. My family was not rich at all but no scarce of meals a day. I think we were a averaged family in Masbate at that time. For my part I had a happy younghood life because my grandparents cared me so much.

My father owned a tailor shop at Milagros, 28 km. away from Masbate. On April 1941, for my memory, a whole of our family moved there.

During our stay in Milagros, my father brought us to Tinaklipan for evacuating from the attack of Japanese military troops. My father thought that place was safe because it was surrounded by a river within a forest. But around April in 1943 we backed to Milagros since the Haponesta, who cooperated with Japanese Military, instructed us to go back there.

The class of Milagros Elementary school was reopened from June 1943. I started schooling there as a second year student from the month of August 1943. Then I was already 14 years old who was relatively late for schooling since I had long been under the care of my grandparents. In Milagros

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Elementary school there were four classes from grade 1 up to grade 4 which consisted of around 25 students in each class amounting to around 100 student in all. The school building was located inside the relatively vast ground. That ground was surrounded by the mangrove tree having around 2.5 meters high which was inside of the fences made of barbed wire. There was only one gate in the ground of the school.

In school we learned even reading and writing of Japanese besides English. I remembered that we used a text book of Japanese Language for Japanese grade 1 student. There was a drawing of a dog, to my memory, in page of that text book.

After starting the war the Japanese troops reached even Milagros. I saw them at Milagros for the first time. I remembered them wearing the cap with hanging clothe.

The Japanese army stationed at the temporary building constructed by themselves at the back of the school building inside the school ground. To my estimation they were more than one hundred including official soldiers. The Japanese often trained themselves by marching or so in the vacant area in the ground.

As soon as I started schooling, one day, my class teacher announced the holding of cultural performance which would be held at municipal hall on the second friday of September to us students. The cultural performance was to be held for welcoming and seeing off the Japanese officials. I was assigned to perform a dance and sing a song in that occasion. After that announcement we practiced the dance and songs until the day of the cultural performance.

In the morning of the first Monday of September, while we had a class of translating from English sentence into Japanese, three Japanese soldiers entered into our class. One of them, who

looked like a officer wearing a rank medal on the shoulder, introducing himself as Mr. Suzuki, said to us, like, we should become friends and maintained our friendship, they come to class routinely, we would held the cultural performance at municipal hall and so on. The officer whose name is Suzuki, sometimes visited our class and taught us Japanese and songs afterward.

On the day of the cultural performance the Filipinos who were working at municipal hall or police station announced the starting time of performance as four o'clock in the afternoon by striking cans with stick. After class I proceeded to go there with my teacher and classmates. Other male and female students and their parents also went with us to the venue for performance.

When we arrived there, we found the banner written as welcoming of Japanese military in English hanging on the municipal building. At the back of the municipal building where was the venue for cultural performance there were a lot of Filipinos and Japanese soldiers. At the beginning of the cultural performance a looks-like high ranking officer delivered a speech in Japanese which meant as, "the new government is established and the state of peace and order is also returned to this town by the cooperation of Filipino people. We thank you very much. We hope you cooperate us more than ever, and so on." We could understand his speech through interpretation. I joined the group performance of traditional dance with other five girls. Then I sang a song as a solo performance. That song starts the next sentence; *Miyo tokai no sora akete!*

In the third week of September four Japanese soldiers arrived at our school during our class. One of them entered our class while other three soldiers were waiting outside class. That soldier who entered into class explained that he was a

messenger of Mr. Suzuki and they would come back to our class for calling a student. After that he went back.

On the following day the Japanese soldier would come back to our class and took out female student from a class. I could not understand why they took out female student. When I asked a female student, who were taken out by the Japanese and attended a class again after some day of absence, she just answered that she was given a toy with a disgraceful facial expression. And I also knew some girls were never come back again to the class after the taking out by the Japanese.

In the afternoon of Wednesday of the fourth week of September, near closing the class, two Japanese soldiers came to school. And one of them entered our class, and announced like "number seven". Then the class teacher said to us, "Now is the turn of number seven, you will be given a toy." For my part I felt a afraidness but I followed this Japanese out of class. I actually kept the plate of number seven in the hand even though I could not remember well when I got it, whether they had distributed them to me before or just distributed to me after calling the number seven.

Arriving at the gate of school building we were joined by one more Japanese soldier and then we proceeded to the temporary building stationed by Japanese soldiers. During our walking to the building, even though I was the only female student who were brought by them to that building, I thought other female students also were brought by them so that I felt no worry. But when we arrived at the entrance of the temporary building I began to feel worriedness since there seemed like no other female students were joined to come there. I resisted not to be brought inside the building but the two soldiers held my arms and shoulders and brought me forcibly into an office-like room inside the temporary building.

Inside the room there were around ten Japanese soldiers including a officer-like one. But Mr. Suzuki was not there and no one who was familiar to me were not also there. I felt worriedness more and more then I tried to go out that room. I threw the number plate at the officer-like soldier and then one of them slapped me on the face. Two Japanese soldiers took me out from the room into the corridor and forced me to walk to another room by pulling my hair. I resisted them more severely by shouting, my elbow-attacking to them and so on since I felt more worriedness, but the Japanese soldiers warned me pretending of punching on me and actually they did slapped me on the face several times during forcing me to walk.

This two soldiers pulled me in front of a small room, pushed me inside the room and locked the door from outside. The room is small and its floor made of hard wood. The one corner of this floor of the room had a small hole measuring about 30 or 40 centimeter by one side length since it seemed like scarce of wood materials. This hole became my toilet during my detention later. The ceiling and wall of this room made of zinc panel which had a shape of wave.

Inside the room there was a window. It had no glass but a stick measured a human-arm-like round placed outside the window. The scale of the window measured almost the scale of my face.

After pushed into the room, a little while later, it got dark outside. In the room there was no equipment for lighting. But later I found there were gas lamp in the corridor of the building. When it became dark inside the room, three Japanese soldiers came to the room. They wore military uniform. I felt scared so much of what they might do to me. One of

them pushed me down on the floor. I thought, at that time, that Mr. Suzuki should help me, then I asked them to call him. But they did not answer my request at all by any expression. I resisted them and tried to get up but only to be kicked on my right side waist by them. While another one pushed me on the shoulder and the other one held my legs, remained one raped me.

The Japanese soldiers were so strong that I could not resist them. This was the first experience for me so that I happened to become unconscious during the raping by the first soldier. When I become conscious, I found a soldier raping me. Two other soldiers had already gone out from the room. When I pushed him away, the Japanese went out from the room without attacking me since he had looked like finished already. During that day I heard the shouting of another woman from anywhere else inside the building. I thought there were another one who were suffered from same kind of atrocity like that of mine.

In the following morning a Japanese soldier brought me a meal but I happened to lose my appetite because the meal ingredient of rice and vegetable looked like the one of feeding for pig. During my detention they did not give me other meals except for a breakfast. But I did not even eat the breakfast so that I lost my energy to stand still at the time when I was released.

During the second day I was detained inside this small room. Around eight o'clock in the evening three Japanese came in the room. They were totally different from the ones who had come yesterday night. They wore a upper jacket without sleeves and a G-strings. These three soldiers raped me alternately like happened last night. These Japanese had a powerful strength and I lost my strength so that I was not in the

condition of resisting them at all. After they finished raping me, another two soldiers came and rape me in the room. I was raped by five soldiers during the day as a total.

I thought how I could escape there. But I heard the Japanese guard on duty talking and laughing each other outside the room then I thought it was difficult for me to escape there. I could not sleep that night because of the pains of my body.

In the following morning, on the third day of my detention, I did not eat a breakfast served by the Japanese. But I made an effort to drink a cup of coffee because I knew my body had lost a strength. In the morning I asked a Japanese who brought a breakfast for releasing me from the room by all my efforts but he just showed me the sign expression by hand meaning "you should stay here!" I kept shouting for asking my release while hitting on the wall of the room for all the day long. But the only reaction I could heard was laughing of Japanese soldiers so that I felt dishonored by them.

Around nine o'clock in the night on this day, a little later than yesterday, three Japanese soldiers came to my room. I asked them for not touching me. But they just laughed at me and raped me the same way like last few days. I lost my strength more and had a high fever so that I felt despared of my future. All I could do then was to pray for God.

In the following morning, on the fourth day of my detention, which means the Sunday morning of the fourth week of September, one soldier opened the door of my room and came in. I could not stand up immediately due to lack of my strength so that I stood up by leaning the wall gradually. He looked at me and started laughing. I felt shaking of my body due to strong angry so that I protested him severely by saying "You are not human! You are beast!" Not minding my protest, he

proceeded to take me out from the room and bring me up to the entrance of the building. There waited an officer-like soldier and said to me, "Do not tell anyone what happened to you here! If you do so, we shall kill your parents." Then the officer gave me a fan. I accepted it.

After going out the entrance of the building I proceeded to the gate of Milagros Elementary school. My dress was so disorder that I tried to fix it for looking as nothing happened to me when someone saw me in the day. I had to rest five times in the way before reaching the gate even being not far distant from the entrance of the building since I was already tired ultimately. After I went out the gate of the elementary school, I proceeded to go home bringing the fan which was given by the Japanese soldier. But since I lost my strength and had no will to make up my mind to face up then my foot moved forward slowly. I could finally reach my home around eight o'clock in the evening.

When I came home, there were my mother and younger brother in the house. Upon looking at my face my mother questioned me worriedly where I had been. But I did not like to answer that question then I proceeded to change my dress in another room silently. After a while Mother questioned me again where I had been. Then I explained her what had happened to me all in all. My mother and I could not help but weeping each other.

Then we promised each other not to tell my father about the event since at the time when my father would know the happening to me he might report to the Japanese military to protest and then they might kill him. But in the long run my mother told my father of the happening. He looked like imagine already such kind of happening occurred to me. My elder sister, Angelica Barberan, was also raped by Japanese soldiers. It occurred to her

even before I was victimized in the Japanese building. On their way to buying a film with her husband, a photographer, when they were passing by a check-point and failed to make a bow before the Japanese soldier, my elder sister was raped by them while her husband was tied his both hand up and tortured by them.

As for the fan given by the Japanese to me, I threw it outside in our house.

I stopped attending the school from the following Monday. I returned to the school as a second year student in the year of finishing the war.

In 1946 our house was devastated by a typhoon. Then we moved again to Masbate. After enrolling in the elementary school in Masbate, I finally graduated from there in 1950 at my age of 21. Then I proceeded to go to high school but I quitted schooling in January 1952.

I thought I was not able to become friends like other people and should be shameful for meeting with others because I was not virgin any more, so that I sometimes thought of committing suicide. But when I considered the sorrow of my parents I could not commit such a thing.

In January 1956, I got married with Inocencio De Los Reyes. He was a driver of well-off family. He was not critic in temper then we had six children. One of our children was dead around the age of 3 but we have been happy because we were blessed with many children.

Sometimes I recalled the atrocity perpetrated by the Japanese soldiers. On such an occasion I tried to forget it by indulging in domestic work and so on. Even now I have headache frequently due to harm inflicted to me by the Japanese.

My husband died in 1965. It was often said that any husband did their own favorite way without thinking a wife but my husband did not criticize me even when I rested myself in the house. Because of his good character, I had a happy married life.

We moved to Antipolo in 1983 as the present address. Now I am living with my two unmarried sons and a married daughter. My other children were already married and they are living separately. All of my children are earning by themselves to live. I also engage in sewing the clothes as a job.

When I saw a TV program where a victim like me by the Japanese are given a chance to come out and suing the class case, I decided to come out. But it was needed a courage to show publicly my own experiences which have been annoyed me. At present we often stage a rally for protesting in front of Japanese Embassy in Manila. There I not only feel a strong solidarity with other members but also have a complicated feeling since I have to always recall my annoying experience and I have to listen the sad experience of my fellow women during the rally.

I demand the Japanese Government to pay an apology and enough compensation. And I would like also to appeal the stopping of waging violence against women by any agencies in the world.

(Sgd.) FELICIDAD B. DE LOS REYES