

*Introduction*

## Women, Resistance, and Revolution: Tandang Sora's Legacy to Philippine Society

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**ACCORDING TO THE 2010 GENDER GAP REPORT** of the World Economic Forum, the Philippines ranks 8th among 135 countries included in the study on gender gap. What is more impressive is we are Number One in the entire Asian region. Four key areas were considered to measure the size of the nation's gender gap: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

As Filipinos, we are aware of this certainty. In politics or the academe, in our Armed Forces or as overseas workers, there seems to be no barrier to any sector where a woman chooses to enter. Didn't we already have 2 female Philippine Presidents? Besides, our most critical government offices are headed by women—the Supreme Court, the Office of the Ombudsman, The Justice Department, and the lead collector of taxes, the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Even in history, we never lacked for women leaders. During the resistance against foreign powers, Gabriela Silang and Agueda Kahabagan took up arms to fight them. During the Revolution of 1896, Gregoria de Jesus and Teresa Magbanua joined the menfolk in warfare. During Martial Law, student leaders like Lorena Barros, Liliosa Hilao, and Jessica Sales spoke up against the dictatorship and the harsh military rule. These heroes died in the peak of their youth.

Melchora Aquino (more popularly known as Tandang Sora) stands out because she displayed bravery at the advanced age of 84 years. She got involved in battle not as a soldier but as supplier of food and equipment. She showed patriotism by remaining silent during interrogation and kept the secrets of the Katipunan which led to her exile to Guam. In short, Tandang Sora went beyond the parameters of a stereotypical hero, may it be female or male. These qualities heightened her legacy for the modern-day Filipinos.

Truth to tell, a hero cannot be created nor judged based on physical strength and youthfulness. It can however be measured by strength of character and depth of love for country. These values can be gleaned for the two articles written by Janet Reguindin-Estella and Nancy Kimuell-Gabriel. In Reguindin-Estella's essay, she discussed the ways to incorporate Tandang Sora's biography in teaching history and in the process make an example of how a woman's bravery can be shown during a time of crisis in Philippine society. Teachers play an important role in teaching history by transferring the knowledge to elementary and high school students, using the biography of Philippine heroes not just to be looked upon as idols, but as someone they should emulate on proper values and integrity. Likewise, in the essay of Kimuell-Gabriel about the women leaders of Tundo, the lives of Ka Trining, La Leleng, and Ka Feling are woven into the history of the struggle within their locale, becoming wells of inspiration for their strength, and paragons on how to lead meaningful lives within a society that abandons their citizens. Like Tandang Sora, they are ordinary folks who rose to the challenge of abuse and took a stand for the welfare of the larger community.

The women of Philippine society, then as now, young or old, leaders or ordinary folks, reflect the legacy of the life of Tandang Sora. Like our forebears, we continue to struggle and work to ensure a bright future for our country.

Thank you, Tandang Sora!