

## Meeting Recca

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For someone who loves literature—I am a Comparative Literature graduate, and a composition and literature teacher—I am deeply aware of moments when words fall short. This is probably inappropriate to say at a book launch, but today I am in a unique position to review a special book—one that understands that it, on its own, is not the tribute, but the lives that it brings together in its pages.

I never met Recca, but each time I attend a gathering commemorating her, I am always struck and deeply moved by the continuing vividness of her life—of her—in the lives of others. In the same way, this book curates poems, essays, letters, political statements, reports, articles, and photographs to insist upon the fact of Recca's history, upon the truth and reality that such a life had been lived. Of a little girl who grew up, saw the world and didn't look away; who read books and wrote letters and gossiped with friends; who, probably between class recitations and paper submissions, went out on the streets to raise her fist and cry out for justice; who one day made a choice, bought Coke and chocolates as instructed, and brought these with her to the Cordilleras, where she met the warriors who would become her comrades; who learned a new language in a new land in order to teach and learn from the masses; who learned the new eloquence of strategies and formations and the smell of gunpowder; who eventually died deep in the heart of the mountains that had scarred her, taught her, strengthened her, and loved her.

I never met Recca, but confronting her now, in the pages of this book, I begin to see our lives in tangents. Recca served in the Cordilleras. My political awakening was during a Cordillera Day, year 2009. I have met people whose lives she had touched. I walk the streets she had walked, listen to the songs she had sung, call

the calls she had called. I have cried for her, even if I haven't met her, because of who she is in the lives of the people who remember her. These tangents perhaps have no greater significance other than the fact that they show us just how simple, how accessible, and how close to us the revolution truly is, and, with it, the sheer simplicity of its many faces and the uncompromising fire of its principled rage.

I never met Recca, but at the same time that the various contributions to the anthology textualize her, produce her as an image of strength, humility, industry, courage, and revolutionary inspiration—the “Lorena Barros of our time”—they also make her familiar, alive, almost tangible even to those who don't know her. In including raw letters, un-posed photographs, archived articles, graduation pictures, handwritten notes, and autopsy reports, the anthology becomes deeply personal as well as violently political. The revolution is made up of letters between sons and mothers, of cultural performances among the masses, of crude blackboards and alphabet lessons, of hydraulic technologies set up to harness electricity for remote communities—and, in between, of talks about haircuts, jokes, and how the family must be doing.

RECCA: From Diliman to the Cordilleras is not just the story of Recca's life. It is evidence of a life that had been lived in the best way possible: in the service of others, rooted in and strengthened by the love of the people. Most of all, the anthology is not mere commemoration but a testimony to a life that continues in the lives of others. Certainly, the wealth of contributions are testament to the extent of Recca's love.

I never met Recca—and yet, in a way, I have. For in the same way that Recca lived her life not for herself but for others, after death, she is not the personal memory of some but part of the collective imagination of our continuing revolution. We forge on.

Salamat, Recca.

Magpapatuloy kami.

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