

ALAS NG BAYAN

Women, Heroism, and Memory

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27 January 2020

Before I begin I would like to express my sincerest gratitude for all the work that was done to make this exhibition of art and history happen. Many thanks to our friends at the Institute for Climate & Sustainable Cities and to the Constantino Foundation for organizing the whole project and for providing avenues for artists like Johnny Guarin a space to realize his vision and foresight on the place of art in shaping our collective consciousness.

To the families of Kumander Liwayway and Gloria Capitan who have been gracious enough to indulge us with their support and guiding presence.

Lastly to the friends and comrades in 350 who in their own individual ways taught me to become a better person and a committed activist.

On many occasions I've always been asked about the name of our organisation. My usual response is that the name is also our battle cry.

According to scientists 350ppm pertains to the safe number of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere that will enable life to thrive in its diversity. Unfortunately we have gone way past 350 and have breached 400ppm. We are working globally to demand climate action based on the realities of science and guided by the principles of justice.

Science and justice are two important elements of our work: because science provides the evidence and the correlation between cause and effect. While justice gives the moral imperative to pursue the common good and to safeguard the welfare of the oppressed and vulnerable in society who are already facing worst impacts of climate change in the present.

Therefore an understanding of the past must play a crucial role in the formation climate activists.

The current ecological crisis that we are now experiencing is a product of historical and material conditions. It is borne out of social, political, cultural and economic systems that commodified people and our planet where the powerful few who runs industry and the apparatus of the state maintain their privileges out of the subservience of others.

However history also tells us that the revolutionary force that has been far successful in challenging this hegemony of patriarchy has been the loving, passionate, courageous and at times angry women who rose up to speak truth to power. Who have played their part in thwarting the domination of 3 empires, a tyrant and faced up to the forces of dirty energy development.

350 recognizes that the climate crisis requires new ways of seeing things, new ways of doing things but more importantly new ways of being in the world.

I believe that these artworks made by my friend Johnny Guarin, gives us a glimpse of what it means to learn from the past; of what heroism means and entails; and what the new ways of being are possible as captured in the lives and martyrdom of these women who resisted tyranny.

But as in all reconstructions of history there is always that challenge to see their lives as multi-faceted products of their respective contexts and to acknowledge our subjectivity and recognize the need for nuancing ---which are also essential elements in tackling the intersectional nature of the climate crisis.

Because in the end what we all aim for is a world that is not only socially just and ecologically sustainable --but one where we can defy stereotypes; resist empires; exhibit beauty amidst strife; serve the people; and to sing our own songs.

May these paintings help us find connections and glimpses of our place in the struggle to shape history amidst the climate crisis grounded on beauty, solidarity, and shared humanity.
