



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

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POSITION PAPER  
ON THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL WOMEN'S MUSEUM

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INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Human Rights lauds the filing of this bill and commits to support its passing and eventual implementation. The Commission believes that the time for the creation of a National Women's Museum is now, not sometime in the future.

Consistent with the Commission's Constitutional mandate to recommend to Congress effective measures which aims for the protection and promotion of human rights<sup>1</sup> and monitor the Philippine Government's compliance with the international treaty obligations on human rights<sup>2</sup>, the Commission on Human Rights, hereinafter (the 'Commission') and by the strength of the Magna Carta of Women Act of 2009<sup>3</sup> which delegates to the Commission, the powers of Gender Ombud, the Philippines being" a State Party to the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>4</sup>, therefore, submits this position paper on **House Bill No. 372 "An Act To Create A National Women's Museum, and for Other Purposes"**.

Humanity, honesty and human experience is to be found in museums. They connect us to the past, to collective and individual experiences, and in doing so, ensure our future. While the Philippines have some existing museums, in need of resources and manpower to protect, safeguard and retrieve its artifacts and works of art, it is in dearth of a national women's museum.

Women's Museums are now a worldwide phenomenon which developed independently, although most are oblivious about each other's existence. The Women's Museums in America and Europe have originated mainly from the second wave feminism and from the understanding and belief of history as a gender history<sup>5</sup>. The museums of the other continents are based on the roots of modern feminism: Gender inequality, the material disadvantage of women and the ideological discrimination of the females being the all uniting subject.

In the country, as anywhere in the world, women have made contributions to civilization, for the development of the nation and its people. Such contributions should not go unvalued and unnoted leaving a gap in our country's historical record. Out there, unaccounted and untold, unrecorded and untaught to the youth are Filipino heroines' lives whose stories could complement, complete and enrich Philippine history with "*herstory*" to close the gender gap.

  
<sup>1</sup> PHIL. CONST. ART. XIII, § 18(6).

<sup>2</sup> PHIL. CONST. ART. XIII, § 18(6). ARTICLE XIII, SECTION 18(7).

<sup>3</sup> Republic Act No. 9710, Magna Carta of Women Act of 2009

<sup>4</sup> Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women,  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw)

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-wave\\_feminism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-wave_feminism)



Women deserves equality and inclusion into every facet of the society. We owe it not just to women but to the society and our youth, to give proper regard to women in our history and governance.

Our nation's history is fraught with untold stories of women's heroism in our country's struggle for independence - from the Spanish-American war to the years of Philippine's struggle from American colonization to the Japanese occupation during the second world war. Even the making of our national flag which is the ultimate symbol of our country's independence, was done by three women whose names most of us barely know and which our museums and historical records have not properly given proper recognition to, and must have been forgotten, save for Fernando Amorsolo's painting and Napoleon Abueva's sculpture of them.<sup>6</sup>

But until now, no historical institution exists which is devoted to the valor, fortitude, legacy and self-sacrifice offered to the country by Filipino women. No institution that profiles, individually or collectively, the achievements that Filipinas have achieved in society, either here or abroad. But it should not be of much wonder, since even the United States of America's women are still deep in their own struggle for an actual National Women's History Museum. Their online National Women's History Museum was founded in 1996 and until now its prime movers are yet in the thick of their own campaign for an actual, living women's museum with a physical and organizational structure and funding of its own.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the need for the creation of a National Filipino Women's Museum in recognition of women's contributions to Filipino life, history and development, arts and culture is but sound and befitting. It will also honor individual women whose specific achievements have enriched and impacted all aspects of life and commemorate modern-day heroines and martyrs who struggled against injustice, oppression and exploitation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission on Human Rights firmly advises that the following recommendations be included in the bill:

1. In Section 2. Declaration of Policy, the statement of Section 2.1, may be enhanced by adding the following, to read;

*"Recognize women's historic contributions and role as a potent force to the Filipinos' development as a nation and a people."*

Aside from the women's historic contributions, their active participation in the continuing development of the country and the people must also be recognized and appreciated. Their involvement must be inculcated into the national psyche, acknowledged and given space in a realistic and dynamic perspective.

2. In Section 2.6, the Commission strongly suggests the inclusion of the

<sup>6</sup> <https://filipiknow.net/philippine-flag/>

<sup>7</sup> Whiting, Susan, Why We Need a National Women's History Museum, <http://time.com/4774629/us-needs-national-womens-history-museum/>



following statement:

*“Preserve the Filipino heritage that regard women as key decision makers and leaders in the community and highlight them as role models that the youth can emulate.”*

Gauging from the barometers and sources put together, the actuations and pronouncements of persons in authority, the reactions of the common people, the posts on social media, even the cat callings in our streets, says a lot about how women are regarded in this country. Thus the need to give the right signals through highlighting a deep awe and respect for women.

3. We also push for the following statement to be added as Section 2.7:

*“Create a space that “consolidates” works for, with, and by women, that has relevance to history, arts and culture;*

4. The Commission deems it fit that the following provision be added as a propose Section 2.8 (Policy Declaration):

*“Create a hub that encompass an endeavor on research that will unfold the unwritten contribution of women, individual or collective, that are worth recognizing in history.”*

5. A living women’s museum is far better than just a repository of history, gone are the days when the museums are just that. Now, museums are both resources of knowledge and livelihood, social spaces for interaction and learning, for exchange of ideas, a showcase of talent, innovation and inventiveness. Thus the Commission trusts that those who will administer the women’s museum will think, direct, use, and be innovative in their facilities, exhibitions, programs, and philosophies, for it to serve its purpose and endeavor to:

*“Create a Women’s Museum that is more than just a repository of artifacts or objects, a keeper of records and history of Filipino women’s milestones and achievements; a living museum which will be a meeting place for people and perspectives, providing sociable spaces and venue for exchange of ideas, for education, culture, arts and livelihood for women which will undo social hierarchy and inequality;”*

In the above statement, the Commission enunciates and firmly advocates this for inclusion in the Declaration of Policy as Section 2.9.

6. To express our common aspiration for a more humane and women inclusive society, the Commission strongly proposes to add the following as Section 2.10:

*“Encourage female solidarity, promote a gender-democratic and inclusive Filipino society and strengthen the*



*acceptance of women as co-equals in all aspects of Filipino life, history and culture.”*

7. To ensure the inclusion, recognition and participation of the women from the Bangsamoro and the Indigenous Communities, the Commission earnestly encourages the Committee to add the following as Section 2.11;

*“Ensure the recognition, inclusion and participation of the women from the Bangsamoro and the indigenous communities by including a seat for a representative from each in the Advisory Consultative Committee.”*

8. The Commission on Human Rights earnestly advises that the National Filipino Women's Museum be managed, monitored and evaluated by a Board and an Advisory and Consultative Committee which shall operate under the coordinative management with representation from several commissions, namely, the National Commission of Culture and the Arts, the National Historical Commission, the Philippine Commission on Women, the Commission on Human Rights and all other national agencies which may have involvement in such activities.
9. Fully cognizant that funding is a vital component for any entity to function, the Commission strongly insists that the Philippine Commission on Women be given the power to acquire, procure and negotiate for the acquisition or procurement of “artifacts”, “materials” or “resources” for the museum.

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts, to handle the aspect of culture and the arts. The Philippine Commission on Women, which has particular focus on women, must be allocated the necessary funding to manage and administer it to ensure that women's concerns and perspectives are properly put forward and that the museum is sustainably maintained and operated. The Commission on Human Rights, being the Gender Ombud will help in oversight and fulfill its mandate as mentioned above.

We staunchly advocate that the Women's Museum Board and Advisory and Consultative Committee create cooperative liaisons with existing women's groups and organizations and work with audiences, staff, and programs for a thorough and proper monitoring and evaluation of content from a gender perspective, and whose membership must exemplify and exhibit gender parity and representation at all times.

We further recommend that the museum's board and advisory and consultative committee monitor the stories, exhibits, content and programs from a gender perspective to guarantee equal gender representation across the cultural sector.

We urge the clear expression of the Board and Advisory Committee of the museum to proactively address the intersections between gender, race, age, ethnicity, region, religion, sexuality, occupation and class for policies that could identify possible gender gaps and inequalities, and eliminate these factors by:

- 1.1 Institutionalizing a consultation process that ensures a diversity of women, both groups and individuals, that are

consulted on policies and programs relating to its content, exhibits and programs; and

1.2 Establishing a dialogue with women's organizations and encouraging their ongoing participation.

## CONCLUSION

The creation of a National Women's Museum, will not rewrite history but rather complement it, enhance and highlight the important role of women in society, business, science, politics, and every aspect of our culture, and national life. It will never discount or devalue the historical significance of the museums now in existence but it cannot be emphasized enough that there is a gap for a women's museum that fulfills a need all its own.

The Commission on Human Rights earnestly encourages the filing of this bill and looks forward to its implementation soonest. The Commission believes, now more than ever, that a National Women's Museum is an exigency of culture, history and nationhood- an urgent call to which we must positively respond.

**ISSUED** this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May 2019, Quezon City, Philippines.

  
**JOSE LUIS MARTIN C. GASCON**  
Chairperson

  
**KAREN S. GOMEZ DUMPIT**  
Commissioner

  
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