

# A nationalist leader essay sample

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



In the histories of many nations, the national revolution represents a peak of achievement to which the minds of man return time and again in reverence and for a renewal of faith in freedom. [1] Rizal and The Revolution Rizal's refusal to align himself with the revolutionary forces and his vehement condemnation of the mass movement and of its leaders have placed Filipinos in a dilemma.

Either the Revolution was wrong, yet we cannot disown it, or Rizal was wrong, yet we cannot disown him either. Because Rizal took no part in that Revolution and in fact repudiated it, the general regard for our Revolution is not as high as it otherwise would be. Rizal repudiated the one act which really synthesized our nationalist aspiration, and yet we consider him a nationalist leader.

An American-Sponsored Hero We have magnified Rizal's role to such an extent that we have lost our sense of proportion and relegated to a subordinate position our other great men and the historic events in which they took part.

[p. 127] Although Rizal was already a revered figure and became more so after his martyrdom, it cannot be denied that his pre-eminence among our heroes was partly the result of American sponsorship. And so was history made.' Theodore Friend in his book, *Between Two Empires*, says that Taft "with other American colonial officials and some conservative Filipinos, chose him (Rizal) as a model hero over other contestants – Aguinaldo too militant, Bonifacio too radical, Mabini unregenerate." [2] This decision to sponsor

Rizal was implemented with the passage of the following Acts of the Philippine Commission: (1) Act No.

137 which organized the politico-military district of Morong and named it the province of Rizal “ in honor of the most illustrious Filipino and the most illustrious Tagalog the islands had ever known, “ (2) Act No. 243 which authorized a public subscription for the erection of a monument in honor of Rizal at the Luneta, and (3) Act No.

Cameron Forbes who wrote in his book, *The Philippine Islands*: It is eminently proper that Rizal should have become the acknowledged national hero of the Philippine people. (Underscoring supplied) [3] The reason for the enthusiastic American attitude becomes clear in the following appraisal of Rizal by Forbes: Rizal never advocated independence, nor did he advocate armed resistance to the government. (Underscoring supplied) [4] Taft’s appreciation for Rizal has much the same basis, as evidenced by his calling Rizal “ the greatest Filipino, a physician, a novelist and a poet (who) because of his struggle for a betterment of conditions under Spanish rule was unjustly convicted and shot....

“ The public image that the American desired for a Filipino national hero was quite clear. We must take these acts of the Americans in furtherance of a Rizal cult in the light of their initial policies which required the passage of the Sedition Law prohibiting the display of the Filipino flag.

At the same time, the attention lavished on Rizal relegated other heroes to the background-heroes whose revolutionary example and anti-American

pronouncements might have stiffened Filipino resistance to the new conquerors. That is why a critical evaluation of Rizal cannot but lead to a revision of our understanding of history and of the role of the individual in history. It must be admitted however, that the study of his life and works has developed into a cult distorting the role and the place of Rizal in our history.

The Role of Heroes With or without these specific individuals the social relations engendered by Spanish colonialism and the subsequent economic development of the country would have produced the nationalist movement.

Without Rizal there would have developed other talents.

Without Rizal there may have been a delay in the maturation of our libertarian struggle, but the economic development of the period would have insured the same result. Rizal maybe accelerated it.

Because Rizal had certain qualities, he was able to serve the pressing social needs of the period, needs that arose out of general and particular historical forces. He is a hero in the sense that he was able to see the problems generated by historical forces, discern the new social needs created by the historical development of new social relationships, and take an active part in meeting these needs. He was the first Filipino but he was only a limited Filipino, the ilustrado Filipino who fought for national unity but feared the Revolution and loved his mother country, yes, but in his own ilustrado way.

Though we assert that the general course of history is not directed by the desires or ideas of particular men, we must not fall into the error of thinking that because history can proceed independently of individuals it can proceed

independently of men. Hence, for a deeper understanding and a more precise evaluation of Rizal as Filipino and as hero, we must examine at some length the period during which Rizal lived.

Innovation and Change Rizal lived in a period of great economic changes.

They attained a new consciousness and hence, a new goal – that of equality with the peninsulares – not in the abstract, but in practical economic and political terms.

Rizal contributed much to the growth of this national consciousness.

However, it was only a partial gain, for Rizal repudiated real de-colonization.

Perhaps it would be useful at this point to discuss in some detail the metamorphosis of the term Filipino not just as a matter of historical information but so that we may realize the importance of Rizal's contribution in this regard. It was at this time that Rizal and other indios in Paris began to use the term indios bravos, thus “ transforming an epithet into a badge of honor.” The cleavage in the Filipino colony abroad ushered in a new period of the Propaganda which may be said to have had its formal beginning with the birth of La Solidaridad. [11] The indios led by Rizal gained acceptability as Filipinos because they proved their equality with the Spaniards in terms of both culture and property.

Though Rizal was able to win for his countrymen the name Filipino, it was still as ilustrado that he conceived of this term.

Rizal, therefore, was an ilustrado hero whose life's mission corresponded in a general way to the wishes and aspirations of the people.

In line with their avowed policy of preparing us for eventual self-government, the Americans projected Rizal as the model of an educated citizen. [14] The authors of this book then make the following comment: Rizal intentionally avoided the use of the term independence, perhaps because he honestly believed that independence in its true, real, and strict sense should not be granted us until we were educated enough to appreciate its importance, and its blessings, and until we were economically self-reliant. It may be shocking to say that Rizal was one of the practitioners of a mendicant policy, but the fact is that the propagandists, in working for certain reforms, chose Spain as the arena of their struggle instead of working among their own people, educating them and learning from them, helping them to realize their own condition and articulating their aspirations.

They wanted to be called Filipinos in the creole sense: Filipino-Spaniards as Rizal called Ibarra.

Though their fight was reformist and may be regarded as tame today, the historic role of the ilustrados cannot be denied for they were purveyors of ideas which when seized upon by the masses became real weapons.

The role and the contribution of Rizal, like that of the ilustrado class, [p. 142] must be evaluated in the context of his particular reality within the general reality of his time. But he was only a moment, and while his validity for his time amounted to a heroism that is valid for all time, we cannot say

that Rizal himself will be valid for all time and that Rizal's ideas should be the yardstick for all our aspirations. Just as a given social system inevitably yields to new and higher forms of social organization, so the individual hero in history gives way to new and higher forms of heroism.

It is a reflection of our lack of creative thinking that we continue to invoke Rizal when we discuss specific problems and present-day society.

Limitations of Rizal We are living in an age of anti-colonial revolutions different in content from those of Rizal's period.

Rizal could not have anticipated the problems of today. The revolutions of today would be beyond the understanding of Rizal whose Castilian orientation necessarily limited his horizon even for that period.

Part and parcel of the attempt to use Rizal as an authority to defend the status quo is the desire of some quarters to expunge from the Rizalist legacy the so-called controversial aspects of his writings, particularly his views on the friars and on religion.

In his time, the reformist Rizal was undoubtedly a progressive force.

The Negation of Rizal Today, we need new heroes who can help us solve our pressing problems. When the goals of the people are finally achieved, Rizal the first Filipino, will be negated by the true Filipino by whom he will be remembered as a great catalyzer in the metamorphosis of the de-colonized indio.