



Statement of the UP Diliman Executive Committee (EC) on the Php 1,000 Bill Released by the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)

The UP Diliman University Council Executive Committee (UC EC) adopts in full the statement of the UP Diliman Department of History on the removal of our heroes from the new Php 1,000 bill released by the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The UP Diliman Executive Committee is composed of Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo, DSc (serving as chair), and the vice-chancellors, deans and directors of colleges and schools, university registrar, and three members-at-large elected by the University Council.



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Statement of the UPD Department of History on the Php 1,000 Bill Controversy

16 December 2021

We, faculty and members of the Department of History, University of the Philippines, Diliman, register our grave concern and dismay over the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) decision to discard the images of three Philippine heroes in the new edition of the Php 1,000 bill. There should have been public consultation on this matter. Jose Abad Santos, Josefa Llanes Escoda, and Gen. Vicente Lim represent the greatest of the Filipinos—worthy of honor and emulation, especially for the current generation. By their selfless acts they embody the best of the Filipino: courageous and compassionate; patriotic and resolute.

Jose Abad Santos, Josefa Llanes Escoda, and Gen. Vicente Lim defended our freedom and democracy in one of the darkest hours in Philippine history. They died fighting a foreign invader, steadfastly committed to their ideals and advocacies as proof of their unconditional love of country. The design of the current note pays homage to these three genuine World War II heroes who offered their lives for our country; by its continued use and display the currency design affirms the legacies of their heroism.

A nation's currency is a potent tool that can be harnessed to project a country's heritage, tradition, and history to the public and the world. For developing countries such as the Philippines where there is limited access to formal classes, books, and historical materials, our currency becomes an accessible platform, especially for the younger Filipinos, to display the best our country has to offer—an everyday reminder of the greatness of the Filipino nation and the Filipino. In the face of the marginal position of the teaching of history in the K-12 curriculum, it is crucial, more than ever, to appropriate all alternative venues to help raise historical consciousness and promote our heritage. Our national currency is a vital yet practical means to disseminate the memory and legacies of these three heroes and to ensure these are kept alive and relevant.

Jose Abad Santos, Josefa Llanes Escoda, and Gen. Vicente Lim were already exemplary citizens even before the war.

Jose Abad Santos (1886–1942) studied in the US as a government pensionado and, upon returning to the Philippines, was given a post in the American colonial government justice department. Later, he was appointed associate justice of the Philippine Supreme Court. Abad Santos gained fame as one of the cabinet secretaries who resigned in protest of then Governor-General Leonard Wood's decision to uphold a corrupt American police agent. In his capacity, Abad Santos became more aware of the problems facing the Filipinos even as he was already conscious of this reality since his brother, Pedro, had fought in the Philippine Revolution and was the leader of the Philippine Socialist Party. This awareness and compassion, particularly for the Filipino peasant, is reflected in some of his decisions as associate justice. When World War II broke out, he was appointed Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court and was tasked to accompany President Manuel Quezon to Corregidor where the Commonwealth capital was transferred. When Quezon was evacuated from the Philippines to Australia, Abad Santos became acting president and assumed all the responsibilities the position had entailed at the time. The Japanese invasion forces eventually arrested him in Cebu and attempted to get him to collaborate with the Japanese military administration. Abad Santos adamantly refused. His defiance led to his execution by firing squad in Mindanao. His son, who was with him when the execution order was released, broke into tears. Abad Santos comforted him, saying, "Do not cry. Show these people that you are brave. It is a rare opportunity for me to die for our country. Not everyone is given that chance."

Josefa Llanes Escoda (1898–1945) was a pioneer of the cause of Filipino women and social work. She championed the Filipinas' right to vote and headed the Federation of Filipino Women's Clubs and had a significant role in the Philippine branch of the Red Cross. Llanes Escoda also founded the Girl Scouts of the Philippines that helped instill love of country and civic service in schools. During World War II, she was active in the underground resistance movement and used her personal resources to alleviate hunger in the Japanese-occupied areas, bringing food and medicine to prisoners of war that Japanese captors had maltreated. She established communication channels between these prisoners of war and their friends and families. The Japanese military police eventually arrested her and her husband Antonio, who was also actively involved in the resistance. Llanes Escoda was eventually tortured and ultimately executed.

Gen. Vicente Lim (1888–1945) was the first Filipino graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point. After graduation he became a career officer of the Philippine Scouts, a unit of the US Army, since there was no Philippine Army yet at the time. Lim's distinction as the only Filipino graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff School paved the way to higher positions for him in the army; by becoming a

professional officer Lim prevailed over American discrimination and racism. When the Philippine Army was organized under the Philippine Commonwealth Government in 1935, Lim became a staff officer and eventually deputy chief of staff, the most professional officer in the army at the time. When the threat of war became real the US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) was organized. Lim volunteered to command an entire division instead of remaining in higher headquarters. The 41st Division or the Rock of Bataan under his command is distinguished for holding the line against repeated Japanese onslaught in the early campaigns in the area. Lim provided leadership and motivation for his men, rallying them to fight fearlessly and relentlessly. After Bataan fell, Lim became a prisoner of war. He was eventually released but the Japanese repeatedly approached him to collaborate with them to which he consistently refused, citing malaria and other illnesses he had supposedly contracted from the Bataan campaign. The Japanese responded by placing him under close watch. Despite this constraint Lim was able to organize resistance groups to sustain the fight against the Japanese. The Japanese military police eventually arrested and imprisoned him in Fort Santiago where he was tortured. He was executed in 1945, before the American forces had reached Manila.

Abad Santos, Llanes Escoda, and Lim had different backgrounds. Their causes represent the different aspects and sectors of Philippine society that by their singular efforts they strived to uplift: Abad Santos for government, Llanes Escoda for civil society and women, and Lim for the military and the Filipino Chinese. Neither of them was a politician, nor did they advance any political agenda. Their struggles to uplift the lives and conditions of the Filipinos were fought individually; collectively, they are our Great Filipinos whose exemplary lives serve as inspiration worthy of emulation of all Filipinos.

As we issue this statement, their remains have yet to be found; Abad Santos, Llanes Escoda, and Lim, to this day, are graveless. Perhaps, this signifies that they belong not to their graves but to the entire country.

The removal of the images of these three heroes from the new design of the Php 1,000 bill is a slap on the face of our heroes. It appears that by this act the BSP is not only disregarding the Filipino symbol of its quest for nationhood and what it means through our heroes; the BSP is also trivializing this symbol. Ironically, the one parallel moment when a Php 1,000 bill was issued without public consultation and without the faces of Philippine heroes was the Php 1,000 bill issued during the Japanese occupation: the classic Mickey Mouse money bill. Today, in the twenty-first century, under Filipino auspices, through the BSP, that act is being mindlessly repeated.

By the statement of the BSP the bill design approval process does not require consultation with the National Historical Institute, an erroneous reference to what is now the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP). The NHCP, as the country's official agency relating to historical matters should have been the first to be consulted on this matter.

We earnestly call on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to retain the images of our three heroes in the Php 1,000 bill, most especially in the new polymer bill. As our national anthem continues to grace even our most ordinary official celebrations as a constant reminder of our patriotic pledge to our country, our heroes by whose genuine sacrifices have enabled us to take our place in the community of nations and in world history should be equally honored and given their rightful place in the symbols of our nation.