

OPINION & FEATURES

Remembering and healing

WHAT difference do years make on a tragedy that has been felt not just by one nation but by the corners of the globe – regardless of the variety in ways and intensity? Does the painful memory mellow down and fade like the things touched by the passage of time?

The Holocaust, the death of Princess Diana, the apartheid, the Vietnam War, the Pearl Harbor bombing, the ongoing war in Iraq—these and many other human tragedies that we have buried in history are still remembered in homes, schools and the halls of power and will live in the memory even of future generations.

The 9/11 attacks are no different. No matter what, forgetting is a slim chance. There will always be a little, private moment for remembering.

This Sept. 11, seven years after that tragic day in America, we silently recall among ourselves the emotions that the successive attacks left us. We want liberation from the pain, we long for justice from the

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loss, so in remembrance, we only want something good to come out of it.

9/11, which resulted in carnage and massive damage—including the collapse of the World Trade Center, the damage in the Pentagon, and the deadly crash of United Airlines Flight 93—begs us to find meaning in it, just like any tragedy does and should if we want to be able to move on in peace.

A cliché that up to this day many of us fail to fully realize and understand is that time heals all wounds. How faster healing would be if we open ourselves to it?

It's always worth remembering what 9/11 has made us. We have learned, we have helped, we have reflected in the middle of our busy lives, and we have harnessed the courage to remember. In our loss, we have found meaning.

Something good has to materialize out of this sad episode in our history, for the sake of our children's children. Still, on this day, let us never cease in praying for the victims, and to remain vigilant in fighting the evils of terrorism and all its forms towards a culture of peace-loving people. ■

What's good journalism?

BY now we should all be convinced that journalism plays an increasingly pivotal role in society.

That's because whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, we grow in our reliance for data and information, and our thirst for truth has

actually gone worse.

Needless to say, the world is getting more dependent on pieces of information, not only in terms of quantity, in itself already formidable, but also in quality. We want to be sure that what we are getting from media truly serves our multiplying needs and ultimately the common good.

For example, journalism has to give due attention and space to a growing number of players who contribute in the world of public opinion. It has to foster dialogue, promoting legitimate differences while building a sense of unity amid varied tastes and mentalities and changing cultural milieu, etc.

There's that disturbing sensation, felt by many, that we are drifting on an ocean of bits and pieces of info, not without our share of thrill and a varying degree of satisfaction, but not knowing where we are actually heading.

Even with impressive strides in information technology that make for that most welcome rapid response environment, there's still that frustrating and disappointing feeling that what we want in our heart, in itself also hard to articulate, remains elusive, and even more so nowadays.

This is the challenge facing those in the field today. Let's hope and pray that we in this business are up to it, able to deal with its complicated and mushrooming demands.

One basic issue though has to be resolved. We have to understand that this business of information and truth is not just about telling and reporting what happened where and when and also on who were involved and how it happened.

Data and information, facts and truths are living things, with origins and ends, with laws and purposes that need to be respected and handled properly. They have their own reasons and motives, even a certain spirit, good or bad, that animate them.

We have to learn to develop them from their raw, seminal state to their full-grown, more acceptable human forms. This should be the abiding concern those in journalism should have toward facts and data that they handle.

It's like we are in a journey with them, a journey that should take us from one stage to another. It should not stop until we get to our final end, which is a matter of faith or at least an ideology.

To stop somewhere along the way is to get stuck. For example, we can not remain in the technical level alone, or in the economic or political aspects.

We have to try, no matter how hard, mysterious and thwarting, to continue developing the data

toward a higher plane, not without our share of thrill and a bigger picture. By its nature, journalism is always a work in progress.

We then have to understand that we need a North Star in this life-long travel. It should not be just a short-range guide, but one capable of shedding light on a lengthening range and widening scope of things, one that can effectively inspire prudence.

We cannot escape this matter. Or we can, but at the expense of enclosing ourselves in our own world instead of opening up to more and endless possibilities.

This is what we have to be very careful about. I think good journalism should reflect this dynamics. Its coverage, its judgments and selection of topics, etc., should be a result of this understanding of journalism's true nature.

While journalism may set some limits and boundaries to be able to identify and cater to its particular market, it should do this without preju-



dice to being open to higher and bigger sources of light.

In other words, journalism should not be detached from other branches of knowledge that certainly will complement and enrich whatever, by itself, it can discover or is good at. For a Christian journalist, his work involves nothing less than his personal living relationship with God and with others.

The problem we often encounter is a journalism straitjacketed by a certain bias or interest, political, economic, social, ideological. While it cannot avoid these, it should have some mechanisms to overcome and transcend them. (Philstar.com)



HINTS AND TRACES
Fr. Roy Cimagala

LAST September 8, the United Nations commemorated International Literacy Day with the theme

“Literacy is the Best Remedy”, which focuses on the importance of literacy in the promotion of global health. The growing incidence

of diseases in the world today is being traced to the most fundamental problem of poverty and lack of literacy. Poverty is a hindrance to literacy and education without which people become vulnerable to the increasing hardships from the environment, diseases such as AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases. In other words, the lack of

literacy, a big problem in itself, can lead to even greater problems of society. How can an illiterate person who cannot read or write, or who cannot understand written information, be expected to avoid infection from contagious disease? Hence, the importance of literacy is being underscored as a key factor in preventing poverty, diseases, and other ills of society. Conversely, literacy is the key to sustaining the quality of life of the human race.

In our country, utmost importance is being given on functional literacy. The latest statistics based on the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) by the National Statistical Council in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Literacy Coordinating Council (LCC) show that our functional literacy rate is high at 84.1 percent of the population, in the age bracket of 10-64 years old, with females registering the higher rates than males. Of the estimated 80 million Filipinos, 84.1 percent, or 67 million Filipinos are considered functionally literate, while 15.9 percent or 12.72 million are considered illiterate. This is alarming considering the fact that the same percentage of illiteracy in 1994 translates to only 9 million illiterate Filipinos, which means that illiteracy remains to be a persistent problem that needs to be tackled more seriously by our administration.

On a positive note, the nation has 84 percent of its population who are functionally literate, and based on the FLEMMS definition, this means these

are the Filipinos who can, not only read and write, but also possess number skills. Their being functionally literate means they have the ability to follow a written set of instructions for basic tasks. They also possess the competence needed to participate meaningfully in the workforce. Therefore, they are armed with the tools necessary to survive in the currently difficult times.

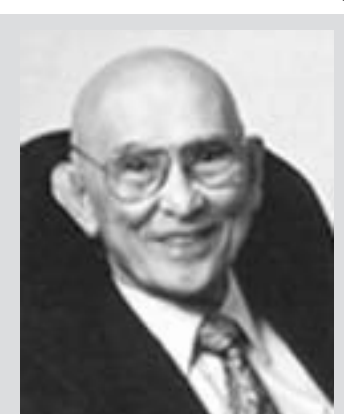
Proof of this is the growing number of small-scale enterprises in the countryside, from sari-sari stores, mini computer shops, cellphone repair shops, automotive and electrical repair shops and the like operated by many non-graduates, the unemployed adults and even the out-of-school youth. This despite the following findings – that the Filipinos are a nation of non-readers, 65 percent of the youth today are out of school and only 44 out of every 100 Filipino children graduate from high school.

We have witnessed many highly educated and professional men and women of today who cause



unrest and anarchy, who cause harm to the environment, who use their authority and power to promote their selfish agenda for material gain. They show that literacy and education are not enough to have a peaceful and just society.

Literacy is indeed the first remedy for a people to rise from poverty, disease and to survive life's hardships. To me, the more meaningful form of literacy is that imbued with values, a sense of discipline and strong faith in God. With these, and a responsible and compassionate government, we can hope and pray that even the poorest Filipino can survive. (Philstar.com)



ROSES & THORNS
Alejandro R. Roces

Literacy is the first remedy

ASIAN JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Main Office:
1150 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1904
Tel: (213) 250-9797 • Fax: (213) 481-0854
e-mail: info@asianjournalinc.com
http://www.asianjournal.com

Northern California:
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Tel: (650) 583-6818 • Fax: (650) 583-6819

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Las Vegas, Nevada 89102
Tel.: (702) 792-6678 • Fax: (702) 792-6879

Manila Office:
Suite 208, The Manila Bank Corp. Bldg.
6772 Ayala Ave., Makati City 1226
Tel.: (632) 893-1720 • Telefax: (632) 813-8746

New York and New Jersey:
5 Penn Plaza, Ste. 1932, New York, NY 10119
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Jersey City, NJ 07311
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