

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City**

**FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session**

HOUSE BILL NO. 4700

**INTRODUCED BY ANAKPAWIS PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE
RAFAEL V. MARIANO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is said that the lives and the heroic deeds of Filipinos who served their country should never be forgotten and in fact should be remembered and taught to succeeding generations. History books are filled with descriptions of these various individuals and the role they played in defending the nation against foreign political reforms. Textbooks, particularly those used by students in elementary, high school and college, describe the lives of these Filipinos, and explain precisely why they deserve to be emulated, and their example held up for future generations to follow.

A random scan of elementary and high school textbooks revealed that there is barely, if any, mention of the role of the Philippine labor movement and its leaders.

There is no debate that the Philippine labor movement has helped shape Philippine history and politics. The history of the country's labor movement, the various labor groups, their campaigns and stands on crucial political issues through time have made significant impact on the country's current state.

The lives of labor leaders, most particularly those who have espoused a strong nationalist stance and not just a genuine, pro-poor, pro-worker outlook, deserved to be brought to the public light, and taught to current generations of Filipinos. These labor leaders like Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia and his son Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia devoted and gave their lives in unselfish service to the cause of the Filipino workers and other impoverished sectors of Philippine society.

Born to an impoverished life in Tarlac, Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia (August 5, 1904 - December 4, 1983), started to work when he was only 16 years old. He left his family in 1920 for Manila to become a worker in a shoe factory. He easily embraced unionism and became a member of the Union de Chineleros y Zapateros de Filipinas, Comité 4. It was one of the first industrial unions in the Philippines. From being a messenger, he was elected president of the union.

Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia became part of the finance committee of the Collective Labor Movement in 1929, and became the secretary-general of Katipunan ng mga Anakpawis sa Pilipinas in 1939. He worked with veteran union leaders like Crisanto Evangelista.

He was one of the founders of Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO) in 1945 and Kalipunan ng mga Kaisahang Manggagawa (KKM) in 1949. KKM was disbanded after Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia was arrested in 1951. Upon release in 1954, he founded the Confederation of Labor in the Philippines (CLP) and later the National Federation of Labor Union (NAFLU) in 1957.

Despite the government's violent repression of workers, Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia persisted in organizing work. He became vice-chairperson of the Katipunan ng Manggagawang Pilipino in 1959, the vice-president of the Lapiang Manggagawa in 1962, and chairperson of Malayang Samahang Magsasaka (MASAKA) in 1964. He was also active in the labor committee of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN).

The government during the time of former President Elpidio Quirino sought to crush the burgeoning trade union movement and discourage labor leaders. Former President Quirino had Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia arrested for subversion and later charged him with rebellion in 1956.

During the height of martial law when strikes and labor unions were outlawed, Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia founded and became the first national chairperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and Pagkakaisang Manggagawang Pilipino (PMP). Two years later, on August 13, 1982 which became known as the day of the infamous labor crackdown, former President Ferdinand E. Marcos had him arrested and detained.

While in detention, Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia became weak and acquired a heart illness. He died of pneumonia in prison. A day before his death, on December 4, 1983, he was still able to send a message to the workers gathered in Plaza Miranda and the same reads as follows:

"How can I describe Philippine society? It's a one big isolation cell. Without a doubt, under the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship, Philippines is one big and stinking prison cell. What is the condition of the people? Slaves...exploited...and beggars! Because rights are repressed, livelihood is deprived; the soul is blatantly being sold to the foreign capitalists... The puppies and dogs of Irene Marcos are luckier. They eat on time, they are well provided with medication, and they even live in a palace!"

Felixberto's son Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia, meanwhile, very much lived his own life the way his father did. He became a lawyer with a determined objective to use his knowledge of the law to help workers push for their legal rights. He was an active union leader, and became the president of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) after his father died in 1983. He became the president, both of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), and Partido ng Bayan.

Because of Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia's unflinching criticism of the continued exploitation that workers suffered even under the supposed 'revolutionary government' of President Corazon Aquino. Like his father, Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia was also targeted by military forces allied with the government. Together with activist worker Leonor Alay-ay, Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia was abducted on the night of November 13, 1986. The following day, their dead bodies were found. They bore signs of vicious torture. Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia sustained four (4) gunshot wounds in the head, and six (6) stab wounds in his torso. His mouth was stuffed with newspapers, his hands tied closely together with his own belt.

On the day of his burial, more than six hundred thousand (600,000) workers and people from all walks of life joined the funeral march and demanded justice for his brutal murder. Work stoppage took place in two hundred seventeen (217) workplaces.

It is important that the Filipino people be made aware of the two Olalias' lives and how they lived it in the service of the oppressed sectors and the furtherance of the cause of the Filipino working class. Considered as heroes of the Filipino workers, the lives of Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia and Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia are more than worthy of being included in Philippine history, social studies and history books used by students in elementary, high school and college in the country.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


RAFAEL V. MARIANO

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE INCLUSION IN SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY
BOOKS OF ELEMENTARY, HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE THE LIVES
AND HEROIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF FELIXBERTO "KA BERT" OLALIA
AND ROLANDO "KA LANDO" OLALIA TO THE MILITANT LABOR
MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE
OF THE FILIPINO WORKING PEOPLE FOR GENUINE JUSTICE AND
FREEDOM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of the Representatives of the
Philippines in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. The lives and heroic contributions of Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia and Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia to the Philippine labor movement shall be included in the social studies and history books of elementary, high school and college in the country.

SECTION 2. The Department of Education (DepEd) is hereby required to promulgate the implementing rules and regulations within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 3. Such sums as may be necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be taken from the current appropriations of the Department of Education (DepEd). Thereafter, the fund necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.