

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5457



Introduced by **BAYAN MUNA** Representative **CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**

AN ACT
DECLARING MAY 22 OF EVERY YEAR AS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DAY IN
COMMEMORATION OF NATIONAL ARTIST FOR FILM LINO BROCKA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The world celebrates May 3 as World Press Freedom Day as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1993 following UNESCO's General Conference. But there is no separate date for remembering and celebrating freedom of expression.

May 22 was dubbed as an unofficial Freedom of Expression Day almost a decade ago, on the occasion of film legend Lino Brocka's 10th Death Anniversary, in commemoration of Brocka's unwavering crusade for freedom of artistic and intellectual expression.

Brocka, once a member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1987 Philippines Constitution, has been credited for putting the phrase "freedom of expression" in the Bill of Rights.

After his father's untimely death, Brocka (born on April 3, 1939) became a houseboy, a working student and an odd job worker before getting a shot at filmmaking. He got into the University of the Philippines through a scholarship and had wanted to become an actor for a drama club, but because of his "probinsyano" background, he was relegated as a stage hand.

Determined to get into theater, he later joined the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) where he worked as an errand boy and then as a scriptwriter. He got his biggest break when he was asked to direct Mars Ravelo's comic strip *Wanted: Perfect Mother* into a film. It became a big hit, paving the way for him to be considered as a world-renowned Filipino director.

Brocka is known for masterpieces showing graphic depictions of social injustice. His movies centered on characters living in poverty and a prejudiced society. These include award-winning films *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*, *Maynila: Sa Kuko ng Liwanag*, *Insiang* and *Jaguar*.

Directing at the time of Martial Law, Brocka's *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* was deemed subversive by the Marcos administration and was heavily censored with all rally scenes deleted. It underwent a legal battle but was later smuggled into France and was shown at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival. It also won several awards at the Gawad Urian. To silence him, the Marcos regime ordered Brocka's arrest but, he was later released, still unbowed!

It was during that time that he founded the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) to encourage and rally more artists to address societal issues and oppose government repression.

In 1986, he was selected as member of the Constitutional Commission. He fought to insert the freedom of expression clause and is credited for the Constitution's Article III, Section 4 which reads, "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."

A couple of years later, he collaborated with multi-awarded poet and writer Pete Lacaba and directed *Orapronobis*, which criticized the violation of human rights and the support for vigilantes by the new administration. Like *Bayan Ko*, it was banned for commercial exhibition but received 22 citations from international and local award-giving bodies.

All throughout his career, Brocka was known as a non-compromising visionary who used controversial political and sexually loaded scenes in films that criticized the prevailing norms and pushed for the rights of workers, the LGBT community and Filipinos in general.

Brocka was a legendary director not just because of his technical brilliance but because of his unwavering principles and political consciousness which in turn pushed him to create films that made viewers aware and critical of the conditions around them. He deviated from the commercial format and chose stories not because they were bankable but because they were worth telling.

Brocka died on May 22, 1991 after a fatal car accident. He was given a posthumous distinction as National Artist for Film.

As a tribute to Brocka and the efforts of his close friends and admirers in not only commemorating the life of a truly gifted artist, but also the fight for freedom of expression, this bill aims to formalize the declaration of May 22 as Freedom of Expression Day.

In establishing a freedom of expression day, this bill hopes to impart the importance of freedom of expression in pursuing democracy.

This bill further seeks to encourage more people to oppose censorship and repression, as well as the practice of compromising artistic and intellectual expression for commercial purposes.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval thereof is highly recommended.

Approved,


Rep. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Party-List

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Introduced by **BAYAN MUNA** Representative **CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**

AN ACT DECLARING MAY 22 OF EVERY YEAR AS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DAY IN COMMEMORATION OF NATIONAL ARTIST FOR FILM LINO BROCKA

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as the “Freedom of Expression Day Act” to commemorate National Artist Lino Brocka’s contribution to the Film industry and the Filipino People as a non-compromising visionary and champion of artistic and intellectual expression.

SECTION 2. In order to commemorate Lino Brocka as a leading advocate of freedom of expression, to uphold art that sheds light on social realities and human conditions and to encourage artists and the general public to continuously struggle against repression and censorship, May 22 of every year is hereby declared as a special working holiday to be known as the “Freedom of Expression Day.”

SECTION 3. Schools, government agencies and offices and establishments in both the public and private sectors shall celebrate this observance with ceremonies and activities that demonstrate national commitment to freedom of expression, democracy, human rights and justice and that pay homage to Brocka and like-minded artists and individuals who fought against the tyranny of censorship and repression.

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Department of Education, Philippine Information Agency, premier state schools and universities and other art and film institutions and groups shall take the lead in establishing prominent activities and productions across the country in this regard.

SECTION 4. To ensure the meaningful observance of the holiday as herein declared, all heads of government and private facilities, offices and instrumentalities shall encourage and afford sufficient time and opportunities for their employees, personnel or students to engage and participate in any activity to mark the “Freedom of Expression Day.”

SECTION 5. The funds necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and Department of Education under the General Appropriations Act of the year following the enactment of this Act.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,