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The voices of images: photographs and collective provenance

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Abstract

This paper presents how the concept of provenance is expanded and reconceptualized from being an organizing principle to an interpreting community that describes, contextualizes, and breathes life into photographs. As social objects, photographs warrant a nonlinear, collective provenance because of their intrinsic ability to transcend time and space while bringing various entities to come together, form a community and relationships, and reflexively exercise memory work and meaning-making. Collective provenance includes various individuals who are not necessarily in the same locale or setting, but are united through a shared identity, a common past, and an imagined future in relation to the phenomenon portrayed and documented by the photographs. This study, which is based on my PhD project on archival photographs during the martial law years in the Philippines in the 1970s–80s, draws on Chris Hurley's *parallel provenance*, Tom Nesmith's *societal provenance,* and Jeanette Bastian's *co-creatorship of records.* I use the case of one photograph taken during the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution that ended the dictatorial rule of the Marcos, Sr. regime in the Philippines. Through oral history interviews enabled by photo-elicitation, the collective provenance interacted with the photograph, interpreted both the photograph and the event depicted, and positioned themselves in the wider and more dominant narrative of EDSA.

Keywords EDSA People Power Revolution · Photographs · Photo-elicitation · Memories · Provenance · Archival description

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Introduction

It was day 3 of the EDSA[1] People Power Revolution in February1986 and the setting sun, shedding an orange glow on the mass protests sprawled on the streets, was already taking its final bow for the day. The nun saw, in the distance, the newly deployed soldiers assigned to keep the masses in check. The circles of space between them became smaller and smaller as she approached them. Distant became yards, yards became feet, feet became an arm's length. A few meters away, someone clicked the shutter of his camera. The man behind the viewfinder was Sonny Camarillo, a Filipino freelance photographer. Years later, Sonny enthusiastically recollected the colorful story behind this black and white photograph and his involvement in the historic people's revolt that ended the two-decade rule of the late Philippine president Marcos, Sr. The production of photographs as evidence and powerful instruments to preserve memory of this time could be seen as an act of personal and group deliverance from the long years of state control and stringent media censorship under the Marcos regime. The massive gathering of millions of Filipinos in EDSA left an indelible mark in the Filipinos' collective memory. However, Kerkvliet and Mojares (1991, p 1) observe that there is 'little consensus, though, on what EDSA actually was and what it means.' Moreover, the popular memory of this event has been mostly centered in key personalities such as Cardinal Sin, Fidel Ramos, Ferdinand Marcos, and Cory Aquino who represent the religious, military, and political groups that played parts in the success (or failure) of the revolution (Montiel 2010). With about 800,000 results in a Google web image search on 'EDSA People Power Revolution' containing thousands of photographs of nameless civilians, religious and members of the military, only a few names stand out including the ones that emerged in Montiel's study—mirroring the main narrative or what has been committed to the public memory and understanding of the revolution. Sonny's photograph, on the other hand, did not depict any of the aforementioned key personalities but this particular record resonated so much to him as the creator, or in the archival tradition, the provenance of the photograph. This creator-photograph relationship therefore brings us to a number of questions: In addition to the prevailing narrative and key personalities of the EDSA People Power Revolution, what other memories and meanings does this photograph hold? In what ways can a single visual record assemble stories and narratives from different individuals? As a social object, what relationships among various entities can a photograph establish? How can a photograph be described and contextualized outside of the temporality of its original creation? These inquiries call for an examination of both the affordances of photographs as evidence and memory sites, and the concept and operationalization of provenance which has been narrowly understood as the creator, origin, source, and owner of a record.

[1] EDSA is the acronym for Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a major thoroughfare in Manila, Philippines. While EDSA is the name of the place where the demonstrations took place, all the events happened during the revolution in 1986 are also commonly referred to as EDSA.

In this paper, based on PhD thesis *When the Provenance Speaks: Memories of Martial Law in the Philippines* (Buenrostro 2019), not only is the story behind the photograph told based on its creator, but the accounts given and memories expressed by the other participants in a reconceptualized provenance of the photograph are correspondingly unfolded. In reconceptualizing provenance that goes beyond the creator or origin of records, I draw on Chris Hurley's *parallel provenance*, Tom Nesmith's *societal provenance*, and Jeanette Bastian's *co-creatorship of records*. I argue that as social objects, photographs warrant a nonlinear, collective provenance because of their intrinsic ability to transcend time and space while bringing various entities to come together, form a community and relationships, and reflexively exercise memory work and meaning-making. Collective provenance includes various individuals who are not necessarily in the same locale or setting, but are united through a shared identity, a common past and an imagined future in relation to the phenomenon portrayed and documented by the photographs. While the dominant western paradigm of provenance has been centered on the creator of records, collective provenance is based on people's recollections, experiences, and collective agenda to secure the continuous transmission and articulation of particular memories through records that may not be part of the prevailing and official narratives. Since the members of the collective provenance may or may not be directly related to one another, photographs serve as contact zones (Pratt 1991) that invite and gather various perspectives and affects. Photographs may not have the ability to speak, but through listening to the stories and interpretations of the collective provenance, we can unravel some of the layers of messages and meanings that the photographs hold or can potentially convey. Collective provenance enables multiple readings, descriptions, and interpretations of the images. In the succeeding sections, I will first provide a brief sociohistorical context of the EDSA People Power Revolution and its mediated memories. Next, I will concisely examine the literature suggesting the various relationships that photographs have and can build, such as with memories and provenance. Then, I will briefly present the study's methodology, specifically oral history interview enabled by photo-elicitation, followed by the discussion of the results, and a reflective conclusion (Fig. 1).

Mediating the memories of EDSA

On February 22–25, 1986, millions of Filipinos congregated at EDSA. Manila Archbishop Cardinal Sin appealed to the public for mass support to object to the fraudulent election results and protect the rebel soldiers defecting from the Marcos Sr. regime.[2] The Marcos family fled the Malacañang Palace, flying to Hawaii

[2] Under the Marcos regime, the worsening economic and political situation from 1983–1985 alarmed the USA and prompted the USA to pressure Marcos to reform and declare a snap election against Corazon 'Cory' Aquino, who became the opposition's presidential candidate (Curaming & Claudio 2010). Marcos was proclaimed as the winner, but people started to protest due to the rigged results. Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines then withdrew from the Marcos regime and announced their revolt against President. Marcos. They holed up at Camp Aguinaldo on February 22, 1986. For a more detailed chronology of the events from 1968–1987, see Javate-De Dios, Daroy & Kalaw-Tirol (1988).

Fig. 1 Sister Aida Velasquez and the Marines by Sonny Camarillo (Also appeared in Buenrostro's PhD dissertation*: When the provenance speaks: memories of martial law in the Philippines* (2019) with permission from the photographer.)

courtesy of US President Ronald Reagan. Corazon 'Cory' Aquino, widow of Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr.,[3] was declared the first female president of the Philippines and democracy was officially restored. Cory Aquino then formed her cabinet, lifted the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus throughout the country, announced the unconditional release of political prisoners, and created the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), the Presidential Commission on Human Rights (PCHR), and a Constitutional Commission to draft a new constitution (Javate-De Dios et al. 1988). The EDSA People Power Revolution that ended the rule of late President Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. was said to have inspired revolutions against dictatorships in Asia and in different parts of the world (Thompson 2000 cited in Manzanilla 2016, pp 19–20). There were high hopes and expectations for the Cory Aquino presidency. However, the period after the revolution was entangled in uncertainty while being trapped in the same old political, economic, and social issues. Four issues confronted the post-authoritarian/post-EDSA/Cory Aquino administration: foreign debt, agrarian reform, crony properties, and human rights (David 1996).

In the years following martial law and EDSA People Power Revolution, different sites of memory have been built and dedicated to mediate the narratives. The

[3] Marcos, Sr.'s staunchest critic Senator Ninoy Aquino returned to the Philippines on August 21, 1983 after his three-year exile and medical treatment in the USA (triple coronary bypass). While exiting the aircraft at the Manila International Airport, Ninoy was shot in the head. His assassination led to mass actions and demonstrations calling for justice for Ninoy and other victims of Marcos' rule. His funeral parade on August 31, 1983 was attended by approximately 2 million people (Javate-De Dios, Daroy, & Kalaw-Tirol 1988).

memories of EDSA People Power Revolution, also widely known as EDSA, are heavily associated with the memories and affairs of its preceding regime. These narratives revolve around the Marcos myth of romanticized, yet false nostalgia of prosperity and 'golden age' during his rule (Talamayan 2021; Punongbayan 2023), and the People Power Revolution myth that is mainly constituted by the Cory Aquino myth as the 'moral antimony of martial law' (Claudio 2013, p 8). Aside from the pro-Marcos myth and representations seen in Ilocos[4] and in posts and photographs circulated in social media, the narrative of martial law also includes the memories of torture and victimization, memorialization of key personalities, the coalition of government and civil society to oust the dictator, and the role of the Left and numerous social movements in the struggle against Marcos (Diokno 2001; Quimpo 2008; Akmaliah 2014). On the other hand, the EDSA Revolution is seen as the return of democracy, symbol of unity, and a period of people's empowerment (Anderson 1988; Diokno 2001; Curaming and Claudio 2010; Quimpo 2008; Claudio 2013; Akmaliah 2014). These narratives are obviously partial and shaped by various actors and institutions ranging from 'domain experts, market forces, and power of the state' (Antze and Lambek 1996, pp xvii–xviii). The literature pertaining to the 1986 EDSA Revolution and transition from a dictatorial to a democratic government largely focuses on leadership, political parties, and democratic/authoritarian values systems (Montiel and Chiongbian 1991). Also, much attention is directed to the drama and rhetoric of the four-day revolution (Teodoro 2016). The myth of EDSA continues to be known as a yellow[5] revolution—and a fairy tale (Escalante and De la Paz 2000). As stated earlier, there is no single account of EDSA in the people's collective minds. Different sectors have different opinions on whether the revolution was successful or not, but what is consistent are the key personalities that people remember or associate with it. The key personalities mentioned in the previous section have become central to the scholarship and reportage of the people's revolution (Kerkvliet and Mojares 1991).

Through the years, people have questioned the legacy of EDSA. The popular uprising put the Philippines in a short-lived spotlight, but in recent years, it has been largely overlooked by the Filipinos as shown by the decreasing interest in commemorating this event (Dinglasan 2014; Thompson 2016). Recently, under the incumbent Philippine president Bongbong Marcos, Jr., son and namesake of former president Marcos, Sr., the commemoration of EDSA People Power Revolution was not included in the list of holidays for 2024. The Office of the President explained its reason based on holiday economics and that the commemoration of the EDSA People Power Revolution is still being respected. This omission caused suspicion and prompted Albay Representative Edcel Lagman to file House Bill 9405 to declare EDSA People Power Revolution an official holiday (Cruz 2013). A newly formed

[4] A province in the northern part of the Philippines, which is the hometown of the Marcos family.

[5] Yellow had become the symbolic color of the EDSA People Power and was the de facto color of the Aquino family, and Liberal Party. President Benigno Aquino III (Ninoy and Cory's son) would always be seen wearing yellow during his campaign in 2010 and in other events during and after his term. Members of the Liberal Party also do the same, especially during political and election campaigns.

group, The *Buhay ang Edsa* Campaign Network [Edsa is Alive Campaign Network], consisting of social movement organizations, nongovernment organizations, church leaders, different members of political parties and sectoral groups, businessmen, artists, and individuals, organized several activities to commemorate the 38th anniversary of EDSA and launched a drive to oppose the initiatives of some of the current lawmakers to amend the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Tupas 2024). The 1987 Philippine Constitution is the present-day constitution of the country, and is considered to be one of the significant landmarks of the EDSA Revolution. As the memories of EDSA are continuously being mediated, thus evolving, the use and treatment of records and various memory spaces will also evolve in shaping people's historical consciousness and understanding of this event.

Photographs and memories

Photography has been customarily used in documenting and remembering events to ensure that a particular memory will be deposited into people's consciousness even long after an event has ended. Although photographs are by nature selective and have a narrow transparency due to the unknown intention of the creators that frame and capture them, Susan Sontag (1973, p 3) claims that photographs remain a 'more innocent, and therefore more accurate relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.' The rendered accuracy and reality of photographs earn their position as social objects that are ubiquitously present in various human experiences and activities that require channels to link the past to the present, and vice versa. The relationship between photographs and memories is evident in the images created and circulated after the EDSA Revolution, where some of them were featured in various commemorative undertakings, platforms, and publications such as *Bayan Ko! Images of the Philippine Revolt* (Steiner et al. 1986), and *People Power: An Eyewitness History, the Philippine Revolution of 198*6 (Mercado 1986) that were published after the uprising in February 1986 so that the memories of EDSA would remain and be continuously communicated to the next generations.

Photographs may always be linked with memories, but they are not the memories themselves. The EDSA photographs are not the memories of EDSA. As records, photographs are 'triggers or touchstones that lead to the recollection of past events' (Millar 2006, p 114). Since both remembering and forgetting require intervention, humans have become strongly dependent on photographs to keep evidence and memories alive. Collective memory, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), is a socially mediated embodiment of the past that is continuously created and recreated based on a dominant framework of thoughts and ideals. This social framework drives individuals to agree on certain representations or signs of a reassembled past. Therefore, collective memory is not simply an accumulation of individual memories, but these are recollections organized according to memory scripts or templates (Green 2004). While photographs may prompt a series of recollections, it is not guaranteed that what will be remembered when looking at them is the exact event or phenomenon depicted in the photographs. Memories can shift back and forth from the actual visual elements represented in the photographs, dominant

collective memory, and individual memories and emotions as influenced by their own experience, values, and knowledge. Since there is a divide between remembering and knowing, photographs act as 'safeguards' that help organize memories and avoid inconsistent recollections especially for instances where 'memory slips from individual to collective remembering' (Millar 2006, p 115). However, as much as they homogenize memories as in Pierre Nora's (1989) notion of *lieux de mémoire* or sites, events or symbols created to hold and signify people's collective memory, photographs also have the power to invite and diversify perspectives and feelings. Unlike text, the visuals and meanings of photographs are not presented sequentially but simultaneously depending on the relations built between the photographs, their functions, and viewers (Schwartz 1995, p 50). There are various contexts or 'ambiences' (Hurley 2005, pp 122–123) where records exist and operate. The social context where the photograph is seen, used, and interpreted mediates its impact on the viewers (Rose 2012, p 15). For instance, photographs can be imagined and treated as symbols that touch upon our inner emotions (Barthes 1981), as ethically challenged instruments in seeing and remembering other people's sufferings and violence of war (Sontag 2003), as commodities sold by survivors of previous mass atrocities to tourists to support their own subsistence (Caswell 2014, pp 136–155), and as everyday visual tools of memory, activism, and identity building for minoritized individuals and communities (Buthpitiya 2023). Photographs, therefore, engender and propagate contexts and recollections that are both within collective and individual frames—and these memories reflexively give use and meaning to photographs in a particular ambience or environment.

Photographs and reconceptualized provenance

As photographs are commonly seen and used as memory cues or triggers and at the same time a manifestation of 'social power' for their capacity to 'inscribe events, descriptions and traces' (Bate 2010, p 248), these inherent and ascribed properties of photographs will not be tapped and activated without the 'interpreting community' (Edwards 2006, p 39) that will give meaning and breathe life into the photographs. In the same vein, Gorichanaz and Latham (2016) maintain that meaning-making in documents takes place through the interaction and experience of human actors with documents, incorporating personal histories and associated memories. Hence, a single photograph can evoke and have many layers of stories and memories through its interaction with individuals, similar to the example used in this paper. These individual narratives may or may not be aligned with the objective truths, in this case, of the EDSA Revolution. But, Montiel (2010) asserts that the subjective truths and recollections of Filipinos of this iconic event should be given importance as they are influenced by their intergenerational group identities and shared patterns of thinking. The collective identity and perceived common past reflect the society within which the record was created and co-created, and simultaneously suggest why individuals or communities view and interpret a record in a particular way.

The subjectivities in how individuals respond to a photograph and remember its represented event are particularly not included in the traditional methods of

describing photographs. Neutrality and objectivity in the archives had been codified in the early works and standards in building, managing, and describing archives, but have already been critiqued mostly by postmodern archival scholars for their practical and conceptual inadequacies. The visible elements of photographs can facilitate a system of description, but in addressing the limitations of the traditional descriptive practices and standards that lack varying perspectives and shifting contextualities and meanings, further conceptualizations are needed to view provenance as 'an entity involved in bringing a record into being' (Hurley 2005, p 122), and not only as an organizing precept in recordkeeping. If records are to be viewed and treated as social objects with varying contexts and purposes, Nesmith (1999, p 146) maintains that instead of viewing provenance as a fixed and single entity or origin of a record, a more dynamic, evolving, and context-rich societal provenance should include 'the social and technical processes of the records' inscription, transmission, contextualization, and interpretation which account for its existence, characteristics, and continuing history.' Archivists are then urged to reevaluate their practices and mindsets in terms of identifying the provenance and developing more participatory and liberatory approaches to archival description (Nesmith 1999, 2006; Duff and Harris 2002; Newman 2012). Critical archival scholars are continuously challenging the dominant western traditions, such as Lapp's (2023) provenancial fabulation, which is a feminist framework for figuring records creation that acknowledges contradicting accounts, contexts, and imaginaries, and extends the customary confines of historical records. Supporting decolonization process and archival repatriation efforts, Ghaddar's (2022) conception of provenance in place advocates for the return, maintenance, and interpretation of records based on their origin and cultural, historical and geographical contexts. In addressing issues on ownership, attribution, and proper representation of histories and relationships between postcolonial states and former colonizers, Bastian (2003, 2006) argues that the scope of provenance has to be broadened to include not only the creators but also the subjects. Giving voices to the usually silent subjects of records as co-creators allows them to be essential players in the formation, description, and contextualization of records, as well as in the construction of their own identity, collective memory, and history.

But I would like to further suggest that the narratives and interpretations of records must not stop with the creators and co-creators, or photographers and subjects. As recordkeeping is about 'belonging' and 'ownership of the truth that records memorialise,' there is a need for new ways to further contextualize the records outside of a 'single description' (Hurley 2005, p 112), and a single-view provenance. When dealing with photographs, it is important to look at their functional contexts and 'return them to the action in which they participated' (Schwartz 1995, p 42). Also, we can look at how photographs can potentially function beyond the realm of their origin and creation in the past. As archives are not merely about the past, Derrida (1995, p 45) underscores that, 'the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future.' Since photographs have multiple social roles and functions in various temporalities that generate manifold memories, interpretations and meanings, I argue that the more fitting reconceptualized provenance for them should likewise be more dynamic and evolving. By looking at Hurley's parallel provenance, 'different kinds of 'creation,' 'generation,' or

production' can take place simultaneously' and the actors involved are connected and 'collectively engaged' through the records (Hurley 2005, p 125). Going back to my earlier point of photographs as contact zones, the members of the collective provenance coming from different backgrounds and roles are connected and engaged in memory work by looking at the photographs while being in a particular ambience shaped by their collective identity, shared beliefs, and patterns of thinking about themselves, the past, the present, and the future. Within the ambience of building and mediating the collective memory of the EDSA People Power Revolution, aside from the creator (photographer) and co-creator (subject), the collective provenance therefore includes the archivist, the historian, and the symbolic entrepreneur–the group that is responsible for the reconstruction, interpretation, and shaping of history and the collective memory of the people. While the collection, processing, and preservation of historical records have been conventionally entrusted to archivists, and the interpretation of the past in the present is attributed to historians, the symbolic entrepreneurs are responsible for the framing and commemoration of people and particular events in our history through public engagement and installation of resources, in mobilizing activities that will encourage more people to join the movement (Armstrong and Crage 2006). All of these members of the collective provenance have particular relationships with photographs and the event they depict. They are likewise responsible for the different kinds of 'creation' and 'imagined treatment' (Hurley 2005, p 69–70) of photographs. Even after the event, the collective provenance continues to be engaged in collecting and interpreting records and evidence that can be used to better represent and understand the past. Indicative of the subjective and political nature of collective memory, the daily functions and activities done by these actors within the frames of their institutional and professional mandates, as well as their own subjectivities are responsible for what collections and scripts of memories to be preserved and disseminated (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998).

Methodology: photographs, collective provenance, and oral history

In this study, I drew upon oral history enabled by photo-elicitation. Photographs were used as stimuli, touchstones, or 'interrogatory tools' that prompted responses from the participants (Edwards 2001, p 8). Rose (2012) categorized the types of photographs that can be used in photo-elicitation interviews: (1) photographs taken by the researcher; (2) images found elsewhere; or (3) images taken by the research participants. The photograph included in this study falls under the third category—the image taken by Sonny Camarillo. As photo-elicitation 'mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews' (Harper 2002, pp 22–23), the stories, experiences, and memories of the collective provenance are uncovered with and through the photographs. There is already a pervasive use of photographs in oral history interviews as memory devices. According to Freund and Thomson (2011, p 2), 'oral history and photography intersect at important epistemic points: evidence, memory, and storytelling.' In this study, the collective provenance also crosses and forms relationships with photographs in these points.

Through oral history, the collective provenance fulfills its purpose as an interpreting community connected through photographs as their contact zones, and their collective storyline and identity as the glue that bonds them together as a group.

The members of the collective provenance are the creator or photographer, subject, historian, archivist, and symbolic entrepreneur. I sought the necessary permission and consent from the participants, following the ethics protocols of my university. I first did an initial research on photojournalists during the Marcos regime, one of whom was Sonny Camarillo. I then searched for the subject of the photograph, and while it would have been better to include the member of the marines who was in the same frame as the nun, due to my limitations as a researcher, it was difficult for me to identify and look for the other subject. Furthermore, being able to find Sister Aida Velasquez, was rather a serendipitous encounter given that decades had already passed since the photograph was taken. I then looked for the other potential members of the collective provenance—historian, archivist, and symbolic entrepreneur whose ambiences overlap through their historical and memory work on Philippine history, including the EDSA People Power Revolution. They were chosen according to their common experiences, goals, and responsibilities in relation to the records and memories of EDSA. The historian whom I interviewed, Professor Ricardo Jose, is a Philippine history expert and a first-hand EDSA witness and participant. Archivist-librarian Mercy Servida, whose workplace is one of the leading repositories of Philippine history materials in the country, also experienced joining the mass protest in EDSA. Lastly, although symbolic entrepreneur Celso 'JR' Santiago, the former chief of staff of the EDSA People Power Commission, was too young to have seen or remembered the actual event, he contributed to the memory work of creating the EDSA Experiential Museum in 2016 to mark the 30th anniversary of the uprising. The flow of the conversations with the collective provenance evolved around the general questions on memories of past experiences and current experiences as evoked by the photographs. Interviews were audio recorded with consent, and these were then coded to come up with themes to be used for analysis.

The collective provenance's narratives as the voices of images

Sonny Camarillo shot hundreds of photographs during the four-day mass demonstrations from February 22 to 25, 1986. As a freelance photographer, he had the liberty to keep all of his original photographs at home. By letting him choose the photographs that he could talk about, Sonny was able to make an active decision on what instances and memories behind the viewfinder that he would like to share. Through his photographs, he put forward a representation of himself as a photographer doing his professional and civic duties, and a participant of a historic event. He discussed the technical aspects and devices that he used, and also recalled the difficulty that the photographers faced during those four days. They made sure that they would be safe and far from bombings or any riots in case that the marines would receive an order to disperse the crowd. He described the atmosphere and the overall mood. People were everywhere; some came alone, some came in groups. Many were just curious and asking, 'What's happening?' He remembered that people became more

determined to barricade along EDSA especially toward the evening of the 24th. There were negotiators from different camps-the marines under Marcos government and Enrile-Ramos.' They were making an agreement to simply maintain the status quo so that no one would launch attacks against each other. People were also trying to negotiate with the marines to join them and leave their post. Sonny narrated:

> At dawn, Marcos sent the marines to Ortigas. There was a stand-off. No one was advancing. The rebel forces communicated that 'If you guys move there in Ortigas, we will also attack Malacañang. It was like that, calling each other's bluff…But the ones on the ground had no idea. By nightfall it started, you know the video that always plays on TV. That's when they [protesters] started giving flowers. That's when they started blocking the tanks.

Sonny explained the events that transpired during the first two days as if setting the backdrop for his photographs, including the one that won first prize in the Philippine Daily Inquirer photo-contest on Snap Elections in 1986. He recalled, 'That night the tanks started to inch forward. The sun was going down so I was having a hard time already with my Leica, 21 mm super…' Then Sonny saw a nun walking really fast, approaching one leader of the marines. He overheard the nun saying, 'Don't attack, marines. Remember we are all Filipinos. God bless you, marines. 'Sonny calculated for exposure and adjusted his shutter speed to' 1/30th of a second. He also adjusted the aperture and did dark room techniques such as burning and dodging during the printing of the photograph. He dodged a part by covering the enlarger to keep the part of the photograph from getting dark.

This photograph is just one among the copious records produced during this time. Compared to other more popular photographs, this may not be the most prominent or emblematic representation of the people's uprising. But this particular photograph appeared to have struck a chord with Sonny. 'That is just one shot…,' said Sonny who felt lucky that he was able to capture this moment despite the seemingly unfavorable conditions. This 'lucky photo' echoes Barthes' (1981, p 6) claim that 'a photograph is always invisible: it is not that we see.' Viewers do not usually see the story behind the photograph, and it is Sonny's memories of luck and attempt to freeze this moment that hold more personal meaning to this photograph. Sonny wanted to show the contrast or the conflicting sides, and explained that, 'The contrast is very obvious: the light and shadow, the nun against a fully armed military marine.'

As Sister Aida looked at her photograph, she said that although she was not aware that her photograph was being taken by Sonny at that very moment, she had later seen this photograph and was given a copy of the newspaper where it first appeared. The Benedictine sister and founder of *Lingkod Tao Kalikasan*,[6] also recalled that she had another photograph, also taken at EDSA, wherein she and the other nuns and civilians were sitting on the grass and waiting for other troops to arrive. This

[6] Lingkod Tao Kalikasan [Servants of Humanity and the Environment] is a Philippine-based organization that spearheads projects that raise people's awareness of environmental issues.

shows the widespread use of photography to produce evidence of this event. She then began narrating the story behind this photograph:

> Maybe this was already the third day [of the revolution]. It was in the afternoon, past twelve…I went back to EDSA from St. Scholastica in Manila. I was the only one who went home while the other sisters remained in EDSA. I don't remember why I went home. Then, I went back to EDSA and came looking for the others. That's why I was the only one there [in the photo]; the other sisters where in different places. I didn't know where they were. I kept walking around. I was thinking, '*Naku,* where are they? It's already getting dark.'
> Then I saw the soldiers, and approached them. I asked the soldiers, 'Where did you come from?' I was the one who was interviewing them. I was greeting them and asking how they were since I knew they came from faraway places and they looked really tired. They were immediately deployed to EDSA and they probably had not eaten yet. They were responding and not hostile. I thought we should all be on the same boat. We should all see the same things. That's what I felt. I didn't see them as the enemy. It was just that they were soldiers and they had to side with the state. I was not mad. I was not scared. I didn't remember any fear. I was alone when I went there. And I was confident since there were many people there. The feeling was as if it was right to be there; that you are fighting for what is right. The soldiers were speaking and I remember I said something like, 'This is for the future of the youth. We have a common task and we should work together.'

For Sister Aida, it was the photograph's message that made it important. Even though she did not know who Sonny was and was not aware that she co-created this photograph, her interpretation of her own image together with the presumed intention of the photographer reinforces her position as an active co-creator of the record and not just a passive subject and receiver of the viewers' gaze. Sister Aida further explained that:

> I represent the church and the soldiers represent the government. People were already tired and could not understand what was happening and what would happen. He [Sonny Camarillo] wanted to show that people had a common interest. Where we should be heading to without violence. Everyone should be together without saying too many words—everyone only wanted to make peace.

Filipino historian and University of the Philippines Professor Ricardo Jose likewise interpreted the photograph of Sister Aida and the marine officers as an indication of peace versus war. Both the nun and soldier captured his attention. Ricardo, who also participated in the four-day protest, tried to recall the situation, and the exact moment depicted in the photograph:

> I think this was the stand-off in Ortigas. The tanks came in from Fort Bonifacio, and they couldn't get through because people were blocking them. So, they stayed there for some time. I didn't see the actual confrontation, but we heard about it.

Ricardo may not have seen the confrontation between the civilians and marines, but this occurrence made a mark in the official history and memory of EDSA.[7] As a historian, he attempted to associate the photograph with the historical facts of the event. He was in EDSA every day and also took photographs using his personal camera. Despite not having any plans of publishing these photographs, as a historian, he felt that he had the responsibility to document that event. Years later, he would be posting some of these photographs on his Facebook account, making his social media platform his own personal memory site of EDSA. This shows how photographs can operate in various sites and temporalities, and for shifting purposes even at a personal level. As a witness, he also recalled how people began to mobilize and hold a fiesta-like gathering in EDSA–which was also the recollection of Sonny and Sister Aida. The chain of events, including the bringing of food and flowers, forming human barricades on the streets of EDSA, and inviting more people and the military to join the people's side, was all 'played by ear,' without any elaborate plan, and only done based on *pakiramdam* (feeling) or *pakiramdaman* (feeling one's way through) (Lagmay 1986, p 35). The political behavior of Filipinos is mostly influenced by personalism, need for group affiliation, and the tendency to be 'affective rather than cognitive' (Montiel and Chiongbian 1991 p 773).

While looking at the photograph, Mercy Servida, librarian-archivist of the Lopez Museum and Library,[8] immediately noticed the smiling nun, followed by an imagined conversation between the nun and soldier. Mercy said, 'It's like the nun was pleading, 'We are brothers and sisters…we are all Filipinos. Please don't make this a bloody revolution.' She then recalled that she and her co-employees also joined the protest. 'I was pregnant with my second son then. I experienced walking from Guadalupe up to Camp Aguinaldo,' said Mercy. What strongly resonated with Mercy was her own experience of joining the protest. Similar to Sister Aida's recollections, Mercy remembered that there was no riot unlike those pre-EDSA mobilizations. Mercy also felt no fear when she joined, and she mainly thought of her kids' future. Despite not being able to remember the exact details of the revolution, the librarian for 35 years shared the importance of having and keeping photographs, and underscored that through visual evidence, 'You can imagine it. You'll be able to compare the past to the present. You'll know what happened back then.' This perception could have been driven by her experience with her institution. Mercy emphasized the need to collect and preserve archival photographs to fill in the gaps in the collections of other archives and libraries. Mercy and her colleagues are likewise

[7] In the chronology of events by De Dios, Daroy & Kalaw-Tirol (1988, p 869), this moment was described as 'Close to two million people gathered at Epifanio delos Santos Avenue (EDSA) to prevent Marcos troops from attacking Camp Crame where Enrile and Ramos held fort. In an unprecedented show of unity, men, women, and children organized themselves and stopped tanks and attacking soldiers with their bodies and religious objects like rosaries and statues of the Virgin Mary.'

[8] Oldest privately owned *Filipiniana* collection based in Manila. It houses rare books and manuscripts relating to Philippine history. The library also houses an extensive collection of photographs from different donors and newspaper agencies such as *Manila Times*. In 2005, the Lopez Museum started to digitize their photograph collection, which is still going on up to now. To learn more about the library and museum, visit https://lopez-museum.com

attempting to address this gap in their collections. According to Mercy, the library had photographs dating back to the 1960s, which included those published in newspapers before the declaration of martial law in 1972. Media outfits, including newspapers, were immediately put under the government's control and the majority were shut down after this date, leaving a gap in their collection, as well as in other public and private archives and libraries in the Philippines. For this reason, seeing photographs delighted Mercy and expressed her hope that more freelance photojournalists would make their work available by donating them to archives and libraries for preservation and dissemination.

With the need to employ more effective channels to disseminate information and understanding of EDSA to the public, symbolic entrepreneur Celso 'JR' Santiago, former EDSA People Power Commission's chief of staff, strongly believed in the power of storytelling to avoid forgetting and apathy. He believed that the use of photographs is very effective in telling a story and evoking emotions. As he looked at the photograph, he said that, 'Oh this is very… wow. The smile of the nun is beautiful…This shows, well, courage in the part of the nun. But then this also captures what the revolution is all about…' With the symbolic entrepreneur's capacity to create commemorative vehicles and frame events that can urge the public to memorialize, join a cause, and participate in social movements (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000; Vinitzky-Seroussi 2002; Armstrong and Crage 2006), JR suggested that multimedia evidence and correct usage of photographs can really help in communicating the message, especially for the younger generation with short attention spans. He also pointed out that:

> They're very visual. They need short bursts… all these media can really teach young people and evoke emotions and inspire them, hopefully…People power doesn't have to be big. Fighting against tyranny doesn't have to be always life threatening, right? Standing up for something doesn't always mean you're gonna die. It can be in other forms and that's what these things hope to inspire and young people can do things; if they are united.

The message of peace and unity is reflected in JR's sense of EDSA as a symbolic entrepreneur. Indeed, one of the dominant narratives of this event is that it was a peaceful and bloodless revolution. Whether this is exactly true or not, the memories of the photograph's collective provenance appeared to be in harmony with it. Sister Aida also recalled that despite the threats, they were somewhat confident that nothing untoward would happen because they were with friends, and were part of a bigger group–a bigger community. Sister Aida continued, 'We were all together in this. That was the atmosphere. It did not escalate to a violent fight. Maybe it was because of our numbers. We were sure of our numbers.' At this point, people already had an awareness of the situation and the collective power that they possessed as a big group. This power in numbers enhanced people's self-confidence, self-reliance, and dignity that would push them to call for social changes (Licuanan 1987). Beaming with pride, Sister Aida said, 'We could drive away a dictator.' Even though many presume that the revolution was a failure or missed opportunity, Ricardo believed that the EDSA should be treated as a proud moment for Filipinos. From a historian's point of view, Ricardo explained that:

> Many say that if EDSA did not happen, the gains of martial law could have continued. And this is from the people who also lived through that time. They talk about the infrastructure. Maybe they have forgotten that they might look nice on the outside, but what's behind them is a lot of ugliness. And it should not be repeated. It was a tragedy then, and if it happens again, it will just be repeated. Then, we would simply forget what happened previously.

There may be contested views about the EDSA revolution, but within the ambience of the collective provenance having a common past imbued by witnessing and participation, and an imagined future for the youth and next generations, the photograph connects them as if they belong in an imagined community (Edwards 2006; Naguib 2008). The collective provenance is brought together by their shared identity, memories, and the understanding that it is the unity of the people–not only the key personalities–that made EDSA Revolution peaceful and remarkable. The individual participation of Filipinos, even without knowing what might happen next, ignited the power and will of those who were present in the protest to oust a dictator. The narratives of the collective provenance may not fully characterize the entirety of EDSA People Power Revolution, but through oral history, these stories and reflections give rise to individual thoughts, feelings, and a sense of self and others. As co-creators, Sonny and Sister Aida interpreted the photograph similarly, except for the additional personal accounts of what went on behind Sonny's viewfinder, and what happened before Sister Aida's image was frozen in time. Also, while the collective provenance remembered some of the key personalities, episodes of the four-day protest and the regime preceding it, what is more interesting are the memories of their own personal involvement and participation as evoked by the photograph. The involvement did not only necessarily happen on the event itself, but in the years that ensued, such as in the case of Mercy, JR, and Ricardo. Similar to Mercy and JR in which their interaction with the photograph reinforced the feeling of responsibility of collecting and using photographs for public information and raising historical consciousness, Ricardo also recognized the importance of the use of photographs as historical evidence, especially in teaching history and making the past alive. However, Ricardo warned that these visual records must be used carefully and with proper examination to avoid wrong or misleading labels and captions. He also expressed his belief in the nonfinality of the description and context of photographs. As a historian, Ricardo maintained that, 'there's more outside,' highlighting the need to get involved more in finding out the accounts behind photographs and other types of records. Hence, finding 'what's more outside' the photographs rationalizes the need to imagine how these records can be continuously contextualized and understood as important and powerful social objects, and how provenance and oral history can be further explored and reinvented to be more flexible and accommodating to more voices and perspectives.

Conclusion: listening to the collective provenance's narratives

The collective provenance gives voice to the otherwise silent photographs. Photographs may be seen as powerful records, social objects, and contact zones, but the power of photographs resides in the meaning built within and around them. The collective provenance facilitates the evolving formation of a photograph's meaning and function—and listening to their narratives makes the photographs not only as representations of reality or replicas of past events but as spaces where more dynamic descriptions, interpretations, and relationships are built. Oral history closes the gaps and at the same time opens the many possibilities for discoveries that will connect photographs, events, memories, collective provenance, and other more collective provenances in different ambiences united by their shared memories and experiences that may be different from others. Some may be suspicious of oral history in describing records and using them as factual evidence of the past, but Portelli (1998, p 68) argues that, 'Oral sources are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral sources.' Similarly, there is also a growing skepticism in the captions, catalogs, and finding aids resulting from the existing descriptive standards and decisions made by archivists, thus welcoming new approaches and thinking toward description and the nature of provenance will help us address—perhaps not all—but some of the many limitations and questions of truths in our existing principles and practices.

The collective provenance does not aim to replace the existing descriptive systems and notions of provenance, but rather it endeavors to explain *how* and *why* various individuals describe records based on their positionality and overarching environments that affect their memories and perceptions. Echoing Piggott's (2012, p 4) view on societal provenance that 'has a flexibility and breadth which is hard to resist,' collective provenance is one of the conceptions resulting from the compelling need to be more open and willingly rethink of our archival traditions in order to humanize archival work and listen to more voices.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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