



CTRL + Z: REVISITING EDSA 1986, FOUR DECADES ON

Shannon Vergara, 10-4

Silence is easy. Courage is not. Courage demands that we face discomfort with a strength beyond ourselves. With God, that strength is given. And so, with conviction, I believe that to have courage is to actively stand for truth.

For generations, the Philippines has been swept up in a tide of dishonesty and life-threatening, even life-ending, corruption. EDSA 1986 ousted a government plagued by greed and graft. Those who came before us stood their ground for justice and truth, the avenue untarnished by blood, only filled with Filipinos united by Rosaries and a shared desire for honesty. They fought for us; yet much remains unchanged. The turning of calendars continues alongside the tearing of truth in the forms of misinformation, disinformation, corruption, historical revisionism, and modern deceptions such as deepfakes, false advertisements, abuse of Artificial Intelligence, and academic and corporate dishonesty. Society now asks of us: in the creeping grip of ever-multiplying forms of deceit, in the entropy of honesty—where lies are countless but truth is one—how can the youth restore the nation? How can this generation immortalize the legacy of the Rosary Revolution? In a reality tainted by unnerving forms of deceit, the youth are called to unified, simple, and democratic acts of courage, standing as trailblazers of truth and agents of hope in a nation whose restoration is possible only through the Spirit of Christ.

First, the story of EDSA 1986 exemplifies courage, showing that even ordinary people, united in truth and awakening, can bring meaningful change despite widespread injustice, corruption, and deceit. In that historic uprising, millions of Filipinos, from students to ordinary workers, came together chanting, “Sobra na. Tama na. Palitan na,” expressing their desire to uphold a truthful administration—one that is unmarred by greed, the same moral corruption that similarly stains today’s government. Following the rise of debunked ghost projects, kickbacks, and failed governance in the present, the call for integrity and courage becomes even more urgent. Just as those at EDSA stood up despite fear and risk, young Filipinos today are challenged to act with courage and advocate truth through recent rallies, online campaigns, petitions, and community initiatives that promote transparency and accountability. These modern forms of participation prove that the spirit of People Power did not end in 1986, but continues to live on through action in today’s generation. In the words of Makabayan partylist bet Amirah “Mek” Lidasan, “Kaya natin ginagawa ang paggunita na ito ng EDSA [ika-39 anibersaryo sa taong 2025], hindi dahil sa naggugunita lang tayo kung hindi, testamento ito, panata natin ito sa patuloy nating pakikibaka at sa pagsabing makatarungan ang paghihimagsik at maghihimagsik tayo para sa ating kinabukasan.” EDSA 1986 reminds the youth that unity rooted in accountability, transparency, and truth can shape the nation and sustain the legacy of People Power.

Furthermore, as we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of EDSA 1986, we are called to immortalize its spirit through everyday actions grounded in hope. Yet this year, the day that should honor those who fought for democracy has been declared a special working day, unlike usual commemorations prior to Pres. Marcos Jr. regime. Together, let us prove that the heart of EDSA cannot be confined to a single day, that the Filipino people honor its lessons through every choice we make. In a world riddled with corruption and cruelty and in a time when injustice seems to merit no consequence, the story of EDSA teaches us that hope is a choice and that freedom is something we proactively fight for. As truth-seekers, we amplify hope in simple and little ways: by fact-checking before we share, speaking up with respect, acting with integrity in our studies and work, and choosing honesty over convenience, especially in an age where Artificial Intelligence, deepfakes, scams, and false information are ever-present. These acts may seem simple, but as embodied, relational beings, our choices ripple outward, inspiring others to believe in the goodness of God and reminding us all that even in a flawed world, hope is possible. Through these daily acts of courage, we keep the spirit of EDSA 1986 alive, bearing witness that true love for our country requires neither bloodshed, violence, nor death—only simple and little ways to be the hope for others.

Definitely, democracy lies at the heart of EDSA 1986, presenting the challenge to sustain its pulse to this day. The face of anti-dictatorship in 1986 has, in many ways, evolved into the practice of democracy in 2026. If rallying defined participation then, today the youth engage through voting, particularly in the Sangguniang Kabataan, and even by running for office themselves. The youth can advocate for voters’ education, promote leaders with a clean track record, and make the Philippines identify the kind of leader we need now. Moving from the national landscape to the school level, students show democracy daily. In group works, class initiatives, and projects, they are constantly faced with choices that reflect accountability and shared decision-making. These choices, small as they may seem, are acts of democracy. Yet having democracy that respects everyone is one thing; sustaining it is another. It is sustained only when practiced with honesty, guided by social responsibility, and rooted in justice. In this way, democracy becomes more than a system of governance. It becomes an intentional act of hope. Indeed, it is through democracy that we keep the heart of EDSA beating.

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Lastly, these efforts are ultimately meaningless without the guidance and grace of God. It is imperative, certainly, to couple action with faith as no human courage, no strategy, no rallying cry can endure without His hand to lead and sustain us. In the present, we face a struggle similar to that of those who came before us—one that challenges us to confront fellow Filipinos in positions of power. Many may seem hardened of heart, stiff-necked, deaf to conscience, and resistant to truth. Yet we have seen God's hand at work. Just as Gideon the Judge overcame the vast Midianite army with only 300 men through faith in God, so too did the unity and Christian faith of Filipinos overthrow an administration that had held power for nearly two decades; and the same Divine intervention that moved a nation in 1986 can move it again today, if we allow our faith to make room for God's work. Let us pray to God to raise up leaders after His own heart and spirit—servant leaders who will shepherd the nation with integrity, justice, and compassion, and make the country a living Heaven. As Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the people are not passive observers but active participants in the building of a just society; democracy thrives when citizens take responsibility for the common good. As God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a guide unto our path, we are reminded time and again: we cannot sustain ourselves alone.

Ultimately, if EDSA 1986 taught us anything, it is that even ordinary people, united in faith, integrity, and hope, can move mountains without violence, without bloodshed, and without surrendering their conscience. Today, the challenge falls on us, the youth, to continue this legacy not only by remembering history but by living it in our daily choices, in our honest words, in our being the hope, and in our commitment to democracy. While corruption still lingers in our country, the spirit of the People Power Revolution can live on in smaller, quieter, yet equally powerful ways through the daily practice of integrity and honesty. It begins with ourselves: academic honesty in school, being truthful yet kind to friends, and holding ourselves accountable even when no one is watching. In an age where technology, AI, and social media constantly tempt us to take shortcuts or spread misinformation, the Holy Spirit guides us to choose what is right over what is easy. The legacy of EDSA is not only in grand rallies or dramatic protests, but in the consistent, everyday decisions that reflect truth, courage, and hope. Because as a people, we shall foster the saying, "never again, never forget." May the courage that once faced tanks with nothing but Rosaries and prayer become the courage that now faces deception, corruption, and moral apathy with clarity, discernment, and faith.

United, let us hope for a time when silence feels wrong, when inaction is unthinkable, when standing up for truth is no longer a challenge but a given. Let us be the generation that proves that the heart of EDSA beats not in protests, but in everyday honesty, in courage, and in love for God and country. With God as our guide, truth as our compass, and hope as our inheritance, we will not merely remember EDSA—we will live it, embody it, and pass it on.

