

Back to the Future

Compiled by the Women's Feature Service

It turns out we had equal rights before the Spaniards arrived. Take a look at history from a woman's perspective and see what a better world we live in, thanks to our woman warriors then and now.

Pre-Spanish Period

- o legendary first law-giver/??law-maker, Lubluban, was a woman

- o Princess Urduja rules Pangasinan

- o Queen Sima rules Cotabato

- o The babaylan is healer/priestess who presides over rituals, weddings, births, deaths, planting, harvesting

- o Women engage in commerce, enjoy equal rights, equal inheritance and the right to rule

1685 Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo organizes the Beaterio de la Compania de Jesus, the first religious order open to Filipino women, who were then barred from other congregations. The order is now known as the Congregation of the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM).

1763 Gabriela Silang leads the Ilocos Revolt after the assassination of her husband Diego.

1888 21 women from Malolos write to the Governor General about their desire for higher education, including learning Spanish, aside from the usual religious instruction and home arts. In response, Rizal writes his famous letter to them.

- o The Masonic Lodge for women is formed, giving them the same access as men to liberal ideas from Europe.

1893 The first women's chapter of the Katipunan is formed during the wedding of Gregoria de Jesus, 18, and Andres Bonifacio, executed by Aguinaldo in 1896.

1895 Trinidad Tecson signs up to join the Katipunan with her own blood, fights 12 battles and earns the rank of Brigadier General.

1896 Cry of Pugad Lawin--Melchora Aquino or Tandang Sora at 84, along with a thousand Katipuneros tear their cedulas in the home of her eldest son. A few days later, she is captured and exiled to Guam for six years.

1898 Marcela Agoncillo and five others sew the Philippine flag as we know it now, which was unfurled on June 12 in Kawit, Cavite.

1900 Instituto de Mujeres, the first non-sectarian school for women, is founded by Rosa Alvero, co-founder of the League of Women Voters and La Liga Damas Filipinas, now the Catholic Women's League (CWL). She becomes the first woman dean of University of Santo Tomas.

1905 Asociacion Feminista Filipina, the first of many organizations to fight for suffrage

1928 National Federation of Women's Clubs focuses on lobbying for suffrage

1933 Women win the right to vote--in theory, as the law is not implemented yet

1935 A plebiscite is held to gather at least 300,000 signatures in favor of women's right to vote; the women campaign and gather 447,725

1937 Law on women's suffrage is passed. Carmen Planas becomes the first woman in a city council (CHECK W/C CITY?).

1938 Elisa Ochoa of Agusan becomes the first woman representative in the Second National Assembly during the Commonwealth.

1939 The League of Women Voters is organized by Pura Kalaw. The formation of the Damas Nacionalistas de Filipinas marks the first formal participation of women in a political party

o The Girl Scouts of the Philippines is established by Josefa Llanes Escoda who, before she was beheaded by the Japanese in 1945, said: "Tell our people that the women of the Philippines did their part in keeping the ember sparks of truth and liberty alive till the last moment." .

1945 The year of the UN charter, the first international instrument to establish the principle of equality for men and women

1946 The Commission on the Status of Women is established to promote women's political, economic and social rights.

1949 The year of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Others

1950 Geronima Pecson is elected the first woman senator of the Philippines.

1951 The International Labour Organization (ILO) adopts the Convention Concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value.

1952 The year of the Convention on Political Rights of Women, the first global endorsement of equal political rights under the law, including the right to vote.

1957 The Convention on the Nationality of Women is adopted, granting women the right to retain or change their nationalities regardless of their husband's actions.

1960 The ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect to Employment and Occupation is adopted.

1962 The year of the Conventions on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages

1970 Makibaka, a militant women's organization, is founded by Lorena Barros

1972 The United Nations General Assembly designates 1975 as International Women's Year to focus on women's issues.

1975 The International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico adopts the first World Plan of Action and proclaims the first Decade for Women, Equality, Development and Peace.

1975 The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women was formed in response to the Mexico plan of action.

1976 The Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women (UNIFEM) and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) are established, giving women more access to resources and funding.

1979 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is ratified

1980 Second Conference on Women held in Copenhagen. Reviews progress at mid-Decade.

1981 CEDAW becomes operational

1985 Third Conference on women, held in Nairobi with Leticia Ramos-Shahani as secretary-general, adopts the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000

1987 Corazon Aquino is elected as the Philippines' first woman president; Santanina Rasul becomes first Muslim woman senator and Cecilia Munoz-Palma becomes the first woman to sit in

the Supreme Court

1988 The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law gives women the right to own land

- o RA6657 The Family Code provides for legal separation

- o RA 6725 Prohibits discrimination against women in employment, promotion or training opportunities

1990 The Day Care Center Law (RA 6972) provides for the establishment of day care centers in every barangay

- o RA6955 prohibits matching Filipino women with foreigners for marriage on a mail order basis through ads, fliers, brochures and other materials

- o The year of the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and members of their families

1991 RA 7322 Increases women's maternity leave benefits

1992 The UN Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) recognizes the key role of women in the preservation and management of the environment.

1992 RA7192, or the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, stipulates that women can enter into contracts, secure loans and have equal access to credits and land reform programs

- o RA 7600 The Rooming-in and Breastfeeding Act is passed

1993 The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women is adopted by the UN General Assembly

- o The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna integrates violence against women and other women's human rights issues into the UN's overall human rights agenda and activities

1993 Ma. Rosa Henson, 65, reveals the long-hidden war-time phenomenon of "Comfort Women"; with 46 others, she files a lawsuit (WHAT KIND/CIVIL??) in Tokyo.

- o Policewomen's desks are set up to handle complaints of violence against women

1994 At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the empowerment of women is seen for the first

time as an integral part of development

1995 The agenda of the World Summit for Social Development reflects a full range of women's issues. A draft declaration contains a commitment to ensuring full equality

o The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing tackles 12 areas of concern with its Platform for Action under review in 2000.

1995 Filipina domestic worker Flor Contemplacion is executed by hanging in Singapore. Her death triggers demands for more protection for migrants, especially women.

o RA8042, or the Migrant Workers Act, is passed

o RA7877, or the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, is passed

o RA7941, or the Party List Law, provides for women's representation in sectoral parties

o The year of the Philippine Plan for Gender and Development, up to 2025

1996 The General Appropriations Act grants that 5% of the budgets of government agencies goes to gender-responsive projects.

o RA8187, or the Paternity Leave Act, gives husbands one week off after the birth of a child

1997 The Anti-rape Law reclassifies rape from a crime against chastity to a crime against persons where someone, other than the victim can file charges

1998 Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo becomes the country's first woman vice-president

o Abanse Pinay, representing the women's sector in the party-list system, wins a seat in Congress

o RA8505, or the Rape Victim and Protection Act, establishes rape victim's rights centers in every municipality

Sources:

Beijing Watch Bulletin, Aug. 1997, Dec. 1997 and June 1998 issues; NCRFW Women and the UN: 1945-1995, Instraw and Unifem; Kababaiyan, Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan by Josefina Diaz, ICM, Socio-Pastoral Institute, 1997; Kasaysayan, A Timeline of Philippine History, Henry S. Totanes, Research Editor, Vol. 10, Asia Publishing Company Limited, 1998.