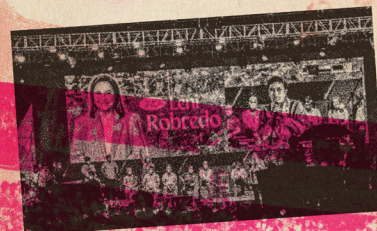




and so it begins

A FILM BY RAMONA S. DIAZ

Mahirap ba
talagang
mahalin ang
Pilipinas?



SOLAR PICTURES PRESENTS A CINEDIAZ PRODUCTION

A FILM BY RAMONA S. DIAZ "AND SO IT BEGINS" FEATURING MARIA RESSA & LENI ROBREDO

MUSIC BY CHRISTIAN ALMIRON CINEMATOGRAPHY BY BRUCE SAKAKI EDITED BY AARON SOFFIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. CORNFELD LINDA A. CORNFELD STEPHEN GONG DONALD YOUNG CARRIE LOZANO LOIS VOSSEN

WRITTEN, PRODUCED, AND DIRECTED BY RAMONA S. DIAZ



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Facilitation Guidelines

Filmmakers use immersive storytelling to produce intense thoughts and emotions in the viewer. In this guide, you will find suggestions for leading productive conversations that broaden perspectives, increase global competency, encourage empathy, and build new paradigms for education.

- When watching a film or having a powerful discussion, normalize taking breaks and exercising bodily autonomy. Acknowledge that conversations around complex topics can be vulnerable, complicated, and challenging. Encourage members to voice and do what is right for them without needing to explain or apologize.
- People do their best when they know what to expect. Start and end your meetings on time.
- Share or co-create your intentions for the meeting.
- Create your space. If possible, share snacks or find other ways to create an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.
- Create a trustworthy space. Maintain confidentiality and only speak to your own experience.
- Minimize distractions while you are together. Silence cell phones and devices so you can give your full attention to the conversation.
- Practice whole-body listening. Listen to words, tone, body language, and the feeling in the atmosphere.
- Acknowledge voices that may be absent. Is there a lived experience that isn't represented in your group? Who are the bridge people who might be able to connect you with other people in your community who might bring new perspectives to the table?
- Adopt an attitude of positive intent. If someone says something that bothers you, assume positive intent and ask for more information.
- Ignite your curiosity around other people's views and opinions. Listen to understand, not to respond. You don't need to agree with others in your group or make it known that you are "right" to have a worthwhile conversation.
- Words matter. Be open to learning and practicing new ways to communicate with others.
- Be clear, direct, and kind in your communication. Nobody benefits when you bottle your opinions.
- Everyone has blind spots and biases; cultivate a space of grace as you enter into new territory together.
- If a conversation gets heated, practice acknowledging the tension, pausing as a group, and taking a collective breath together before diving back in or taking a longer break to reset.
- Privilege your relationships with others over the content or agenda of the meeting. Show each other kindness.
- Create a closing ritual that celebrates the time you've spent together and either gives closure or gives members something to think about before your next meeting.

About the Film

In a decades-spanning nonfiction exploration of the Philippines, director Ramona Diaz presents the latest chapter in her homeland as the strongman authoritarian presidency of Rodrigo Duterte is coming to an end. [And So It Begins](#) offers intimate access to all the key players in the months leading up to the country's 2022 presidential election. With her keen eye and deep knowledge of the sociopolitical history and landscape of the Philippines, Diaz continues to find her own forms of storytelling as political disruption.

Maria Ressa, co-founder and CEO of Rappler, an independent online news service in the Philippines, is central to the story. Ressa is the brave and passionate protagonist of both *AND SO IT BEGINS* and Diaz's 2020 multiple-award-winning documentary thriller [A Thousand Cuts](#). Just as Ressa wants to "break the formality" of political rhetoric, so Diaz sets her latest film amid a "multiverse of disinformation" 35 years after the People Power Revolution of 1986 ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos and forced the Marcos family into exile.

Set during the thick of the COVID pandemic, [And So It Begins](#) is a shape-shifting story of the raucous collective act of joy expressed by a resistance movement that pits itself against the a political reality of increasing autocracy. Weaving together multiple narratives against the backdrop of a gloves-off campaign for the most powerful office in the land, what emerges is a dazzling portrait of a beleaguered nation fighting for its very soul.

[A Thousand Cuts](#)

In 2016, outsider candidate Rodrigo Duterte upset the political establishment in the Philippines by winning the presidency and promising vengeance and violence. Within hours of taking office, bodies piled up in the streets. Rappler, the country's top online news site, investigated the murders and revealed a government-sanctioned drug war targeting poor addicts instead of lucrative dealers. In an attempt to suppress independent reporting, Duterte unleashed a powerful disinformation campaign that spread like wildfire throughout social media.

Filmmaker Ramona S. Diaz follows key players from two sides of an increasingly dangerous war between press and government. Representing the journalists is fearless Rappler CEO Maria Ressa, who, despite arrests and harassment, continues to publish articles holding a lawless regime accountable. On the other side, influencers such as pop-star-turned-government-secretary Mocha Uson start incendiary social media movements and General Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa spearheads a public execution campaign against addicts. As each side digs in, we become witness to an epic and ongoing fight for the integrity of human life and truth itself—a conflict that extends beyond the Philippines into our own divisive backyard. (Credit: [IDA Film Synopsis](#))

Discussion Questions

1. The film opens with an open display of President Duterte harassing Vice President Robredo. This harassment is indicative of something many women political candidates experience around the world. How does this opening set the tone for what is to come in the film?
2. On March 11, 2025, Duterte was arrested by the International Criminal Court for the charge of murder as a crime against humanity in the context of the nation's war on drugs during his presidency. Does his arrest affect the way that you experience this film? If these charges had been brought earlier, do you think it could have affected the outcome of the 2022 national elections in the Philippines? (More about the charges can be found on the [ICC website](#).)
3. What miseducation and indoctrination practices were used by the Marcos family and Marcos supporters to rewrite history?
4. What does this film teach us about the fragility of democracy and democratic institutions? What does it teach us about the relationships between the freedom of the press and an open, democratically elected government?
5. What can this film teach us about strategic initiatives to weaken democratic institutions, specifically through the reduction of checks and balances?
6. What does the film underscore about the importance of a free press for a healthy democracy? How can individuals support a free press?

The Philippines: Grounding Context, A Brief History



The Republic of the Philippines (commonly known as the Philippines) is an archipelago consisting of over 7,000 islands, covering an area of about 300,000 km², located in the Pacific Ocean about 500 miles/800 km off the coast of Vietnam. The capital of the Philippines is Manila. Nearby Quezon City is the nation's most populous city. With over 120 languages spoken across the islands, the Philippines is linguistically diverse, and the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and English. Filipino is a standardized form of the Tagalog language. Cebuano is another commonly spoken language in the Philippines.

The nation's name comes from King Philip II of Spain, which colonized the archipelago in the 16th century. Prior to this, the archipelago did not have a singular name because it was not a unified or centralized political entity during its precolonial history. The islands' earliest inhabitants were aboriginal peoples who are referred to as Negritos, followed by waves of Austronesian peoples, Chinese traders, and Muslim Malay merchants and missionaries. Over time, as these groups settled the different geographic regions on the islands, they intermixed cultures.

The first contact with Europeans came through Ferdinand Magellan's expedition in 1521, which ended in Magellan's death at the hands of Lapulapu during the Battle of Mactan, the first of several instances of native Filipino resistance to European colonization. After a series of failed expeditions over the next decades, Miguel López de Legazpi established the first permanent Spanish settlement in Cebu in 1565, beginning the archipelago's period as a Spanish colony, which lasted until 1898.

By the late 19th century, Spanish rule was threatened by the Katipunan movement and revolts in several provinces around Manila. At the same time, Spain was also at war with the United States. U.S. officials had initially assured General Emilio Aguinaldo (a Filipino leader in exile because of his resistance to Spanish rule in the Philippines) that the United States had no interest in ruling the Philippines, leading Aguinaldo to view the United States as a partner in the nation's efforts to secure independence from Spain. On June 12, 1898, Aguinaldo issued a proclamation of independence. After Aguinaldo and his Filipino troops helped the United States expel Spain from the Philippines, however, the United States reversed course. When world leaders gathered to negotiate the Treaty of Paris to end

the Spanish-American War, legal representatives for the Filipino people were not allowed to participate in the negotiation. Instead, the U.S. commissioners demanded that Spain cede the Philippines to the United States, which it did on December 10, 1898. The Philippines was the first colony of the United States.

Later that month, President McKinley issued the Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation, which outlined his colonizing policies in the Philippines. In response, the Philippine Republic was formally declared on January 1, 1899, with Aguinaldo as its president. The United States refused to recognize it as the legitimate government. In reaction to this non-recognition, the Filipino government released its own constitution on January 27, 1899. By February 4, the Philippine Republic had declared war on the United States after three Filipino soldiers were killed by U.S. troops. The fighting eventually came to be known by various names: the Philippine Insurrection, the Philippine-American War, the Filipino-American War, the Philippine War, and the Philippine Revolution, to name a few. The war ended with Aguinaldo's capture in 1901, and the United States retained control of the Philippines.

In 1916, the U.S. Congress passed the Philippine Autonomy Act of 1916, also known as the Jones Law, which promised independence if Filipinos could prove to the United States that they could govern themselves (even though they had already previously established a constitution). Later, the economic constraints of the Great Depression influenced U.S. thinking about the Philippines, and in 1933 the U.S. Congress passed the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act to establish a process and timeline for Philippine independence from the United States, even involving Congressional voting that overrode Herbert Hoover's veto. This act laid out a ten-year transition period involving semi-autonomous rule and the election of an acting Filipino president. The Philippine legislature rejected the act, and Manuel L. Quezon, president of the Philippine Senate, went to Washington D.C. to negotiate a more

advantageous agreement for the Philippines. In 1934, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Tydings-McDuffie Act was passed, with minor changes from the previous act, and accepted by the Philippine legislature, laying the stage for Filipino independence.

The Philippines officially became a commonwealth in November of 1935, at the time an unprecedented act with a major world power preparing to let go of a colony. During that transition period, World War II broke out in the Philippines. Given its strategic location in relation to the Pacific arena, Filipino and U.S. troops served together under General Douglas MacArthur. Before a strong defense could be established, Japan attacked U.S. military facilities in the Philippines, and when the United States focused its Pacific War efforts on staging locations in Australia instead of the Philippines, the Japanese were able to take military control of the Philippines. In an effort to sway Filipinos to their cause, the Japanese declared the Philippines independent in 1943, but Filipinos understood that they were living under occupation and engaged in guerrilla resistance against the Japanese. In October 1944, MacArthur returned to the area and fought to remove the Japanese military from the archipelago. When the war ended, the toll on the Philippines was significant. Out of a population of 18 million, over a million Filipinos lost their lives due to the military conflict.

Finally, on July 4, 1946, the Philippines gained its independence. Even after independence, however, the imbalance of power in the "special relationship" between the Philippines and the United States affected its politics and economy in varying ways over the decades.

In 1965, Ferdinand Marcos was elected president on promises of key reforms and development initiatives for the nation. Marcos declared martial law in 1972, well into what should have been his second and final term in office according to the then-current constitution. He would ultimately control the Philippines for nearly

21 years, becoming one of the most infamous kleptocrats of the 20th century—a dictator who misused his political power to steal funds from the nation. Estimates put Marcos’s theft of the nation’s wealth at \$10 billion. In 1977, Marcos sentenced Filipino opposition leader Benigno Aquino to death, but allowed him to travel to the United States for medical treatments. In 1981, Marcos formally ended martial law while still retaining many of his powers from it. He was elected for another six-year term through an election process in which people still lived in fear and terror of his abuses of power. In 1983, Aquino returned to the Philippines and was assassinated upon his arrival at Manila International Airport.

In 1986, Marcos declared himself the winner of a national election that was widely regarded as fraudulent against Aquino’s widow Corazon Aquino. Days later, official election results showed Corazon Aquino to be the winner. This resulted in civil resistance through a series of large-scale demonstrations that became known as the People Power Revolution (also known as the EDSA Revolution), and Marcos was ousted. This revolt sparked pro-democracy uprisings around the world, including in South Korea (1987), Myanmar (1988), China (1989), and Eastern Europe (1989).

Marcos fled the Philippines and lived in Hawaii until his death in 1989. Still, the nation’s path toward democracy has remained rocky, with military coup attempts, widespread corruption, severe wealth inequality, national debt, and factional violence continuing to plague the nation for four decades. In 2016, Rodrigo Duterte was elected president on promises of a hard anti-drug and anti-crime platform, including his vocal support for extra-judicial (or illegal) killings. During his presidency, Duterte declared martial law in the Mindanao region. As part of his notorious war on drugs, thousands of people, mostly those living in poverty, disappeared or were murdered under his policies.

AND SO IT BEGINS follows the 2022 presidential election leading up to Duterte’s departure from the presidency due to term limits (according to the 1987 constitution, Filipino presidents can now only serve a single six-year term). In this campaign, Ferdinand Marcos’s oldest son Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.—also known as Bongbong Marcos—ran against independent candidate Leni Robredo, then the vice president under Duterte. In the Philippines, the president and vice president are elected separately and can often come from different political parties.

In March 2025, Duterte was arrested under a warrant by the International Criminal Court for the charge of murder as a crime against humanity for the extrajudicial killings during his presidency. He is being detained at the Hague in the Netherlands while he awaits trial.

(Sources: [Britannica](#), [the BBC](#), [The World War II Museum](#), [How To Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Freedom](#) by Maria Ressa, [The American Presidency Project](#), [CRC Works](#))

Discussion Questions

1. *AND SO IT BEGINS* chronicles key events in recent Filipino history. What did you learn from the film about President Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., and President Duterte? How would you characterize their governing styles (and personalities)?
2. The film highlights efforts to change the historical record to inaccurately reflect Ferdinand Marcos's rule of the country. What stood out to you as particularly egregious or compelling? What role did these efforts have on the 2022 election in the Philippines?
3. Martial law dominated major periods of the Philippines' recent history. What is the lasting effect of those years of martial law on the democratic aspirations of Filipinos?
4. What might the future hold for the Philippines? How can the movement Leni Robredo started continue to move forward, build, and defend democracy in the Philippines?

Extension Activities

1. For geography/social studies classes: Project a map and study the area. Note where the Philippines is in relation to other countries. Why was the Philippines considered of strategic importance to Spain and the United States? What other countries do you think might have felt the Philippines was important in a political context? Geographically, what countries do you think the Philippines had active relationships with and cultural exchanges with?
2. For social studies, English language arts classes, or community groups: Have individuals research Filipino food, music, traditions, and culture. Provide opportunities for individuals to share what they learn from their research, as well as to celebrate their own personal connections or heritage, if applicable and if individuals are interested in and comfortable doing so. Consider inviting guest speakers if available.
3. For geography/social studies classes: Have learners complete the Country Profile handout on the next page. Research can be done from any of the sites listed [here](#), or learners can work in groups, with each group using a different site so that the class can compare their findings. Have students discuss the merits and limitations of viewing countries based on a list of facts like this.
4. For social studies classes: Divide students into small groups. Assign each group a revolution/popular uprising to research and present to the class. Suggested creative delivery methods, including digital presentations with embedded video, poster presentations, and written "field guides" to the events. Suggested events:
 - People Power Revolution in the Philippines
 - June Uprising in South Korea in 1987
 - 8/8/88 Uprising in Malaysia in 1988
 - Tiananmen Square Incident in China in 1989
 - Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989
 - Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989
5. For literature classes: Rule of the Philippines by the United States was supported by many around the world at the end of the 19th century. In 1899, Rudyard Kipling published "The White Man's Burden," a famous imperialist poem, to encourage U.S. governance of the Philippines. Have students analyze this poem and the imperialistic rhetoric used in both the poem and in McKinley's Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation.

COUNTRY PROFILE

To be used with Extension Activity 3.

Human Development Indicators	Philippines
Health	
Education	
Income/Composition	
Gender	
Poverty	
Work, Employment, and Vulnerability	
Human Security	
Trade and Financial Flows	
Mobility and Communication	
Environmental Sustainability	
Health	
Demography	
Socio-Economic Sustainability	
Human Development Index (HDI)	
Country Rank	

Additional Resources

AAPI Data - [Filipino Americans: By the Numbers](#)

The American Presidency Project - [William McKinley Executive Order \(Regarding the Philippines\)](#)

Anderson, Warwick. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

BBC - [Philippines: Timeline \(up to 2017\)](#)

Britannica - [The Philippines](#)

Codeswitch, NPR - [Why Are We Here?](#)

CRC Works - [How the Philippines Became the First Colony of the United States](#)

Francia, Luis. H. *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos*. New York: Overlook Press, 2014.

International Criminal Court, "[Situation in the Philippines: Rodrigo Rua Duterte in ICC Custody](#)"

National WWII Museum - [The Philippines](#)

Northern Illinois University - [Philippine-American War Lesson Plan](#)

Pew Research Center - [Filipino Americans: A Survey Data Snapshot](#)

World Atlas - [Philippines Map & Facts](#)

The Zinn Education Project - History Textbook: "[Theirs](#)" and "[Ours:](#)" A Rebellion or a War of Independence?

To see recent events happening in the Philippines, use the [Live Universal Awareness Map](#).

Filmmaker Profile: Ramona Diaz



Diaz's films have demonstrated her ability to gain intimate access to the people she films – be they rock stars, first ladies, dissidents, mothers, teachers, or journalists – resulting in keenly observed moments and unforgettable nuanced narratives.

Ramona S. Diaz is a Peabody, Gotham, International Documentary Association, Emmy Award–winning, PGA, and Independent Spirit Award–nominated Filipino American filmmaker best known for her compelling character-driven documentaries that combine a profound appreciation for cinematic aesthetics and potent storytelling. Diaz's films have demonstrated her ability to gain intimate access to the people she films—be they rock stars, first ladies, dissidents, mothers, teachers, or journalists—resulting in keenly observed moments and unforgettable nuanced narratives. Her films have been screened and won awards at Sundance, Berlin, Busan, Tribeca, SXSW, IDFA, HotDocs, and many other top-tier film festivals.

Diaz's feature-length, independently produced films have been nationally broadcast on PBS, Arte, and the BBC, among others. Diaz is both a Guggenheim Fellow and a USA Fellow, prestigious awards given to artists with singular visions who have significantly contributed to the arts in the United States. She was named the inaugural McGurn Family Trust Resident in Film by the American Academy in Rome. Diaz is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences and the Producers and Writers Guilds of America. In 2017, she received a Women at Sundance Fellowship, a Creative Capital Award, and a Chicken & Egg Pictures Filmmaker Award.

For ten years, Diaz served as a film envoy for the U.S. State Department's American Film Showcase in partnership with USC and, more recently, for Film Independent's Global Media Makers program. Diaz is a graduate of Emerson College and holds an MA from Stanford University.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Diaz decided to make a follow-up to *A Thousand Cuts* with the film *AND SO IT BEGINS*? What do you think her motivations for this new film might have been?
2. As a filmmaker, Diaz has to balance two main characters in this film. How did the dual-protagonist storytelling complicate or illuminate your understanding of either protagonist? Did one or the other of the women seem more prominent to you, or more relatable to you?
3. Both Robredo's and Ressa's stories are stories of perseverance, resilience, and survival. What techniques did Diaz use to interweave their stories? What did you think of the way Diaz balanced these two strong women as she highlighted the parallels in their experiences?
4. In what ways is disinformation also a "character" in the film? How did Diaz convey the realities of disinformation to the audience and the strategies used to spread disinformation?
5. An ideal storytelling arc for a film like this would be for Robredo to win the election, but of course, as a filmmaker, Diaz cannot control the election's outcome. How do you feel she handled Robredo's loss? Was she still able to make a film that felt satisfactory and complete? Did the film leave you with a sense of hope?
6. In an [interview with Hammer to Nail](#), Diaz states that losing may be the "better story, because you learn in failure." What do you think organizers and politicians learned from Robredo's campaign and the outcome? What can other countries learn from this story?

Extension Activities

1. Ramona Diaz has been recognized by many as one of the most influential Asian American women working in film and television. A Vancouver news site compiled a list of [25 Asian American women in the film industry](#), including Diaz. Individually or in small groups, have learners select a woman from this list to research and present their findings to the class.
2. [Share this article about Ramona Diaz with your class](#). It explores her early life in the Philippines where she lived at a time of mass censorship in the country, but it is also where she discovered filmmaking. It also covers her journey to study in the United States and her filmmaking success. Have students imagine that they are being profiled and that their future accomplishments are being recognized (as a scholar, an athlete, an artist, a chef, whatever they hope to be). After they brainstorm what that future might be, have them write a similar article about their future self.
3. Share one of the [Journeys in Film "Windows and Mirrors" handouts](#) with students. Either in class or over a weeklong period, have students complete the handout. Once the handout is complete, have students note whose stories they are most often engaging with and whose stories might be missing.
4. Have students [watch the trailer for *A Thousand Cuts*](#), the precursor to *AND SO IT BEGINS* and a film lauded as one of the most important films of the 2010s. The film and trailer highlight the way that online social media harassment works and the power of misinformation and weaponized hate speech. It also underscores that the Philippines was used as a practice field for tactics that were later used in the United States. Have students look for examples of misinformation online. This could involve keeping a class tally for one week of the misinformation or disinformation that students notice in social media and in other online spaces. Engage in a class discussion regarding ways to counter misinformation and/or personal attack campaigns that seek to discredit journalists.



Additional Resources

Hammer to Nail - [A Conversation With Ramona Diaz \(AND SO IT BEGINS\)](#)

[Give Me the Backstory” - Sundance interview Ramona Diaz and AND SO IT BEGINS](#)

Ramona Diaz’s Key Film Credits

- [Spirits Rising](#) is about the role of women in the 1986 People Power revolution in the Philippines. It received a Student Academy Award, the Ida Lupino Director’s Guild of America Award, a Golden Gate Award from the San Francisco International Film Festival, and a Certificate of Merit from the International Documentary Association. (Film available on Amazon and iTunes)
- [Imelda](#) is a feature-length documentary about the former First Lady of the Philippines. The film garnered the Excellence in Cinematography Award for documentary at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and other awards. (Available on YouTube)
- [The Learning](#) is a feature-length documentary following several Filipino teachers in Baltimore. The film was supported by ITVS, Sundance Documentary Fund, and the Center for Asian American Media. (Film available on Kanopy)
- [Motherland](#) is an absorbingly intimate, vérité look at the busiest maternity hospital on the planet, in one of the world’s most populous countries: the Philippines. Women share their stories with other mothers, their families, doctors and social workers. In a hospital that is literally bursting with life, we witness the miracle and wonder of the human condition. Winner, 2017 Sundance World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Award for Commanding Vision. (Film available on PBS app)
- [Don’t Stop Believin’: Everyman’s Journey](#), a feature-length documentary film, about Journey, an iconic 80s band, specifically the new lead singer, Arnel Pineda, discovered via YouTube. The film premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2012. It won the audience awards at the Traverse, New Hampshire, and Palm Springs International Film Festivals and had its international premiere at the Dubai International Film Festival. (Available on most VOD platforms)
- [A Thousand Cuts](#), a Frontline feature-length documentary diving deeply into threats to the freedom of the press in the Philippines, specifically through the life and work of Maria Ressa, who became a top target of President Rodrigo Duterte. (Available on YouTube [via Frontline](#))

Journalist Profile: Maria Ressa



“You always have the choice to be who you are.”

*- Maria Ressa, AND SO IT BEGINS
(in response to political and personal attacks)*

Maria Ressa has been a journalist in Asia for more than 37 years and cofounded Rappler, the top digital-only news site that is leading the fight for press freedom in the Philippines. As Rappler’s CEO and president, Maria has endured constant political harassment and arrests by the Duterte government, being forced to post bail ten times to stay free. Rappler’s battle for truth and democracy is the subject of the 2020 Sundance Film Festival documentary, *A Thousand Cuts*. In October 2021, Ressa was one of two journalists awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her “efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace.”

For her courage and work on disinformation and “fake news,” Ressa was named one of TIME’s 2018 Person of the Year, was among its 100 Most Influential People of 2019, and has also been named one of TIME’s Most Influential Women of the Century. She was also included in the BBC’s list of 100 inspiring and influential women in 2019 and Prospect Magazine’s world’s top 50 thinkers. In 2020, she received the Journalist of the Year award, the John Aubuchon Press Freedom Award, the Most Resilient Journalist Award, the Tucholsky Prize, the Truth to Power Award, and the Four Freedoms Award. In 2021, UNESCO awarded her the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

Among many awards for her principled stance, she received the prestigious Golden Pen of Freedom Award from the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, the Knight International Journalism Award from the International Center for Journalists, the Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Shorenstein Journalism Award from Stanford University, the Columbia Journalism Award, the Free Media Pioneer Award from the International Press Institute, and the Sergei Magnitsky Award for Investigative Journalism.

Ressa was born in the Philippines, but grew up in the United States after her family immigrated to Toms River, NJ, in 1973. She took up premed at Princeton University, where she graduated in 1986 cum laude with a B.A. degree in English and certificates in theater and dance. She returned to Manila on a Fulbright fellowship in 1986. She worked for the newly liberated government station, People's Television 4, as director of newscasts, then as head of its special projects team. In 1987, she began reporting for CNN and joined ABS-CBN as the director and producer of Probe, the first and longest-running investigative news magazine in the Philippines, before helping set it up as a separate company, Probe Productions, Inc., in 1988.

Before cofounding Rappler, Ressa focused on investigating terrorism in Southeast Asia. She opened and ran CNN's Manila Bureau for nearly a decade before moving to Indonesia and opening the network's Jakarta bureau, which she ran from 1995 to 2005. That was when she returned to Manila as the senior vice president in charge of ABS-CBN's multimedia news operations, managing the largest news organization in the country.

Ressa's books include: *How to Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future*, published by HarperCollins, 2022; *Seeds of Terror: An Eye Witness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, published by Simon & Schuster, 2003; and *From Bin Laden to Facebook: 10 Days of Abduction, 10 Years of Terrorism*, published by Imperial College Press, 2013.

Discussion Questions

1. Despite social media intimidation and threats from her own government, Maria Ressa continues to stand up for the rights of journalists and for the rights of individuals to have open access to factual information. Though others are fearful for her, Ressa consistently maintains her commitment to this work and seems to work without fear. Where do you think Ressa's strength of conviction comes from? What do you think drives her to do the type of journalistic work she does, despite such challenges and risks?
2. Why did Ressa decide to return to the Philippines and remain in the Philippines when she could live in many other countries instead? What does her example teach us?
3. A famous quote by Ressa about the situation in the Philippines is "what we are seeing is death by a thousand cuts of democracy." In this quote, what do you think the "cuts" represent? What does she believe are the key contributing factors to this death? And what does she see as antidotes to this?
4. What other world leaders (past or present) does Ressa remind you of? If you were to make a film about one of them, who would you choose and why?

Extension Activities

1. Following a brief class discussion about the Nobel Peace Prize, so that students are familiar with it, have students research other recipients of the prize besides Maria Ressa, such as Kailash Satyarthi (2014), Nelson Mandela (1993), Elie Wiesel (1986), Mother Teresa (1979), or Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964). Once their research is complete, have students share their findings with the class or prepare a presentation about that person. In a current events class, this activity could be followed with a discussion of current leaders who might be good nominees for the Nobel Peace Prize.
2. For Ressa, the rise of disinformation and misinformation because of social media is a core issue that she is working to address. Have students identify a disinformation campaign or article and devise an action plan to address it and counter its power.
3. Have students research Rappler, cofounded by Maria Ressa, with specific focus on its journalistic practices, values, and goals. Students could also compare this news outlet with another news outlet of their choosing.

Additional Resources

[Clooney Foundation for Justice](#): This organization works to defend the right to free speech and to defend women's rights. It does so by offering free legal aid for journalists, women, and others needing protection. Alma Clooney was involved with Maria Ressa's legal defense in the Philippines.

Frontline - [Duterte Arrested: Inside His Rise, Rule and Deadly Drug War](#)

[How to Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future](#) by Maria Ressa. [NPR Book Review](#). [The Guardian Book Review](#). [The Lead Book Review](#)

[Maria Ressa: Fighting an Onslaught of Online Violence, ICFJ Study and Report](#)

[Rappler](#), news site/organization cofounded by Maria Ressa

TEDxXavierSchool - [#HoldTheLine: The Battle for Truth, Maria Ressa](#)

Literary Connection – Maria Ressa Commencement Speech, Loyola Schools General Commencement Exercises, June 30, 2023



*So whatever you're most afraid of, touch it. Hold it. Embrace it.
Because once you do that, nothing can stop you.*

- Maria Ressa, Commencement Speech

(Note to Teacher: Students can [watch a video of this speech](#) and follow along with the transcript provided below, or simply read the speech. If students are watching and not following along with the transcript, encourage them to take notes while they watch the speech. Speech transcript is provided, but can also be found online [here](#).)

SPEECH TRANSCRIPT: This honorary degree means so much to me because I feel like I've spent my entire life studying sociology, from journalism to governance to how we behave in groups to emergent human behavior.

Let me bring it to you: your lifelong search for meaning — and the global battle you are about to join.

What gets your attention is what gives your life meaning. WHERE you spend your time determines what you accomplish, what you become good at. That's important to keep in mind as the battle for your mind is waged and won by manipulating your emotions - not your heart, not the incredible feeling you feel today ... but your fear, anger, hate.

What I called TOXIC SLUDGE is what pumps through our information ecosystem, keeping you scrolling on your cellphones, making it harder for you to deal with the challenge that faced generations before you: how to build meaning into your life.

Meaning is not something you stumble across nor what someone gives you. You build it through every choice you make, through the commitments you nurture, the people you love, and the values you live by.

BUT. You're graduating at an existential moment in history.

Now more than ever, we know that information is power. Without the right information, it's impossible to fight back — whether it's to find a cure for a disease, for the climate, or to hold power to account.

We need to fight the insidious manipulation social media platforms have allowed for tremendous profit: where lies laced with anger and hate spread six times faster than facts. That's an MIT study from 2018.

These lies are like a virus that has infected our information ecosystem, playing to the worst of human nature, turning us against each other. They replicate and cripple our body politique — encouraging us to become our worst selves.

A lie told a million times becomes a fact. These next three sentences took me years to come to, backed by data, evidence we at Rappler found by living through some dark experiences. I have repeated them over and over, making me feel like Sisyphus and Cassandra combined. I said them at the Nobel lecture, and I'll say them again now.

Without facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. Without these, we have no shared reality, no rule of law, no democracy. And if we have no shared reality, how can we solve the world's existential problems — like climate change?

AI — artificial intelligence — has beaten humanity every single time. I just described the first time with machine learning in social media, creating cascading failures that has turned our politics into a gladiator's battle to the death, along with a slew of social harms we have yet to fix. Including how globally, we are electing illiberal leaders democratically. If we don't have integrity of facts, we cannot have integrity of elections.

But we didn't learn. Last November, generative AI, far more complex and sophisticated, was released into the wild, the public sphere — a real time experiment that will further test our humanity. If the first generation of AI was curation — think of this new one as creation, man acting like God. And still no guardrails. With the responsibility of protecting us left in the hands of the people rushing ahead for profit. How many of you have used ChatGPT? In two months, it hit over 100 million users. It's great, right?

What you may not know was that a few months before that happened, a survey in Silicon Valley of the folks who work with this AI said 50% believed that if what they were working on was released publicly, that there was a 10% or greater chance that it would lead to an extinction event. Of us.

Well, that's bleak, but of course, we can't give up.

You have to be prepared. This is the battle you are walking into today. We need your energy, your optimism, your commitment to justice.

It reminds me of the time when my friends told me, "Maria, you're crazy to fight Duterte." Except I wasn't fighting Duterte. I was just doing my job as a journalist — and it was crazy what I had to sacrifice to do that. Like the first time I got arrested.

"Ma'am, trabaho lang po!" That's what the arresting officer said. Then he lowered his voice to almost a whisper as he read me my Miranda rights.

He was clearly uncomfortable, and I almost felt sorry for him. Except he was arresting me — the last act in a chain of events meant to intimidate and harass me because I am a journalist.

This officer was a tool of power — and an example of how a good man can turn evil ... and how great atrocities happen. Hannah Arendt wrote about THE BANALITY OF EVIL when describing men who carried out the orders of Hitler in Nazi Germany, how career-oriented bureaucrats can act without conscience because they say they're only following orders.

This is how a nation loses its soul.

In 2019, I was arrested twice in about a month, I posted bail eight times in about three months — two more came soon after for a total of ten arrest warrants — and I committed no crime except to be a journalist and to hold power to account.

Many ask me how do you find courage? Just like small acts can turn you evil, courage grows from small acts. So let me share three lessons with you as you battle for your identity and meaning:

1. Draw the line now for your values.
2. Embrace your fear.
3. Build your community, but beware the mob.

Draw the line

Every choice you make defines who you are, and they could be really simple like choosing to turn right instead of left — they lead to different paths. Or accepting a bribe because in your mind you've rationalized it's a gift.

Character is created in the sum of all these little choices we make.

Now while you're sitting there, be clear — choose the values that define you. Do it now. Because when you're tested — and it will come if it hasn't already — you have to know the lines you've set.

Draw the line: on this side you're good; on this side you're evil.

This is what prevents situational ethics. This makes sure you can't rationalize greed or bad behavior. Think back to this moment in time.

You don't really know who you are until you're forced to defend it. Then every battle you win — or lose ... every compromise you choose to make ... or to walk away from ... all these struggles define the values you live by — and ultimately, who you are.

Then when you're in battle, avoid the hate: the US against them, tribalism — what sociologists call in group, and out-group. These labels divide us and have led to Nazi Germany, our brutal drug war, Leila de Lima in prison.

Populism is easy. Real leadership is not.

Find what we all have in common. That's our humanity.

Alone we accomplish very little — no matter how bright or talented you are. It's about what we can do together, to find what binds us together.

We build a stronger democracy by strengthening our common humanity.

Embrace your fear

I've been asked a lot: are you afraid? Of course, I've had those moments! But I was trained as a conflict reporter, a warzone correspondent. I plan the way in and chart the way out of any field of battle. I've learned that fear spreads and is debilitating. Fear is a luxury.

If you're in the middle of chaos, you need to stamp down your fear to have clarity of thought — that's essential to make the right decision.

So whatever you're most afraid of, touch it. Hold it. Embrace it. Because once you do that, nothing can stop you.

People will try to coerce, manipulate, intimidate or threaten you to get what they want. Often, they have a lot at stake; often it comes to power and money. And you have to be clear about what you're afraid of because those are buttons they will push.

It took me more than a month to confront my fears — of jail, of violence. I hated that the baton, the leadership of a news group, was passed to me at that moment in time, but I also knew I wasn't going to drop it.

That's where courage comes from. That simple choice and commitment.

Beware the mob

Finally, beware the mob. This is the worst of human nature, and social media mobs have become the norm. Remember that lies laced with anger and hate spread fastest on social media, forming lynch mobs. That's by design. For profit.

Switch out of thinking fast to thinking slow.

Slow down and think.

Fight for your best self.

It's worth mentioning something else that this technology we live with encourages — that it's always about you. It's not. You have to be confident, but don't cross into arrogance. Aim for the empty mirror. That when you look into the mirror, you see the world reflected — without your image blocking it out. The empty mirror — a reflection of the world, not just of your beautiful self.

Know that no matter how much of a superstar you are, you cannot accomplish anything meaningful alone. So build and strengthen your community.

Here's some hopeful data from our civic experiment #FactsFirstPH — when nearly 150 different organizations collaborated to protect the facts. Every day, we told our Mesh layer to share these boring fact checks with

emotion, and they couldn't use anger — and we found that inspiration spreads as fast as anger, as fast as hate. Believe in the good.

I'll leave you with one of the toughest moral choices I've had to make. This was decades ago, I was Jakarta bureau chief — in the final days of the Indonesian military's scorched earth policy, when they were killing pro-independence supporters. My team and I were leaving the capital, Dili, to drive to Suai, about four hours away. I was told there had been a massacre, hundreds who had taken shelter in a church. There was a Catholic Filipino priest, Father Hilario. We were about halfway there when we stopped for gas, and a man — a friend, a source — came running to our car. He asked me for a ride back to Dili because he said he was being hunted and feared for his life.

I couldn't turn the car around because we needed to go to Suai after reports of more violence. I couldn't bring him with us because it would take him directly to the military and make all of us vulnerable. Our first responsibility was to get the story for our global audience. So I told him we could pick him up that evening on our way back to Dili.

We got to the church. There was a massacre. It was a long, grueling day. When we drove back, we got to our designated meeting point an hour late. He wasn't there... and only later would I find out he had been killed.

Thirty-seven years of being a journalist. And I always ask myself — did I do the right thing?

In situations of anarchy and war, it's hard to distinguish right from wrong. There is only your mission, the purpose you are there.

So — what gives your life meaning? At a time of fragmentation, of a flattening of meaning, when the very words that once held us together — like democracy — are co-opted by the enemies of democracy, the baton is being handed to you.

It is going to get worse before it gets better. Which is why you have to prepare yourselves. This time matters.

This is in your hands. But you're not alone. Look to your left. And then your right.

Decades after my own graduation, from half a world away, the people I sat next to rallied to our cause. Rallied around the values we defined when we were sitting in your place. When the kindness of strangers became real because in the midst of fear, our community in the Philippines supported us. When Ateneo stood up for its values and its students. When the Nobel Prize reminded us that doing the right thing is the right thing.

I wouldn't be standing in front of you today if we at Rappler didn't have that support. Sure, I've lost some freedom. I have to ask for permission to travel, and yes, it took years before I could begin to clear my name. Early this year, four criminal tax evasion charges — a possible 34 years in jail — disappeared just like that after Rappler and I were acquitted by three courageous justices in our Court of Tax Appeals.

So ... don't be distracted in your search for meaning. What you do today matters.

You will define what our society will look like and how our democracy will evolve. Milan Kundera said, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

Technology is making that struggle harder. So get ready for battle: Draw the line; embrace your fear; and build your community, but beware the mob.

We're living in science fiction times, and our fate is in your hands. Congratulations, Class of 2023!

Sleep well tonight. Dream of a better future. Then go. And make it happen.

Thank you.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspect of Ressa's speech stood out to you and why?
2. Ressa shares her much-repeated quote, "Without facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. Without these, we have no shared reality, no rule of law, no democracy." Analyze her claim, and consider how you have seen examples of it in the news or in your life.
3. Ressa lists three lessons for students as they build meaning in their lives. Summarize the three lessons, and discuss the piece of advice that felt most relevant for you or your generation.
4. Ressa says, "Switch out of thinking fast to thinking slow." What do you think she means by this statement? What are some ways you can encourage yourself to "think slow"? How can you cultivate slow looking, slow reading, and critical thinking in your daily life, including as you engage with media?
5. What does situational ethics mean? Can you think of examples from your life?
6. Ressa mentions "toxic sludge." What does she mean by this term? What are some ways to limit the amount of toxic sludge that comes through your media ecosystem? If you cannot remove toxic sludge from our media ecosystem, how can you at least minimize its influence?
7. Ressa advises students to "beware the mob." What is the difference between a community and a mob? How can we make sure we are engaged in community building and not encouraging a mob mentality?
8. Discuss the metaphor of the "empty mirror." How can we step back from our inherent bias and preconceived notions to see an empty mirror?

Extension Activities

1. Have students analyze Ressa's speech by identifying her main points, her supporting arguments for those main points, and by identifying rhetorical appeals and literary devices used by Ressa. In particular, Ressa's speech has a very clear structure. Have students identify that structure and why it is effective in making her argument clear. Encourage students to consider the shape and flow of the speech and the ways Ressa weaves personal stories with key information about the current world and how she presents possibilities for engagement and action for youth to take in their own lives.
2. Have students write their own commencement speech for a graduation of their choice: high school, undergraduate, or graduate school. Remind students that such a speech should include advice, as well as segments that offer hope and encouragement to the graduates they would be speaking to.
3. Watch [Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize speech](#) with students. Have students analyze Yousafzai's speech identifying rhetorical devices, literary devices, as well as the way that she too uses her personal story to engage and inspire others to act. Consider having students compare and contrast Yousafzai's speech and Ressa's speech.
4. Watch [Maria Ressa's Nobel Peace Prize speech](#) with students. Have students compare Ressa's Nobel Peace Prize speech with her commencement speech. Encourage them to note themes that are common in both, but to also note the differences in the speeches based on the audiences Ressa is addressing. In both, Ressa has a "call to action" for the audience. What is the call to action for students? What is the call to action to the Nobel Peace Prize audience?

Additional Resources

[How to Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future](#) by Maria Ressa. [NPR Book Review](#). [The Guardian Book Review](#). [The Lead Book Review](#)

[Moonshots Podcast: Daniel Kahneman: Thinking, Fast and Slow](#)

Psychology Today - ["Surprising Benefits of Slow Thinking or Turtle Think"](#)

TEDxXavierSchool - [#HoldTheLine: The Battle for Truth, Maria Ressa](#)

[Thinking Fast and Slow](#) by Daniel Kahneman

United States Committee on Foreign Relations - [The Assault on Freedom of Expression, Maria Ressa Testimony, March 30, 2022](#)

Journalism, Disinformation, and Social Media



“What I have witnessed and documented over the past decade is technology’s godlike power to infect each of us with a virus of lies, pitting us against one another, igniting, even creating, our fears, anger, and hatred, and accelerating the rise of authoritarians and dictators around the world.”

- Maria Ressa, How To Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future

For nearly a decade now, studies have shown that pairing lies with hatred and anger results in faster spread on social media than actual facts. These strategies are highly effective, particularly as social media has, for many *And So It Begins* demonstrates the ways that disinformation and misinformation shared through social media influenced the 2022 election in the Philippines. This is important because the Philippines is often used as a testing ground for such tactics that are then used in larger nations, like the United States.

Currently, the dominant online ecosystem is one in which facts are either secondary or irrelevant; clicks and social media engagement are driving factors for content creation. Algorithms often encourage bias against facts and fact-based journalism. This creates a dangerous reality.

“Without facts, you can’t have truth. Without truth, you can’t have trust. Without all three, we have no shared reality, and democracy as we know it – and all meaningful human endeavors – are dead.”

- Maria Ressa, How To Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for our Future

Discussion Questions

1. In the film, there is an intense scene in which it appears that government officials have come to Rappler to seize laptops and mobile phones. Ultimately, it is revealed that this was a drill enacted to prepare staff for potential government actions. What did you think of this drill? What are some other ways staff could be prepared that might be less traumatic? What does this scene reveal about the stakes facing journalists around the world?

2. *AND SO IT BEGINS* highlights the layers of disinformation and fake news that go into attack campaigns, making clear the highly strategic nature of these attacks. The film also points out that there is usually only a four-hour window to rebut fake news before a rebuttal is ineffective. Given the reality of these highly orchestrated efforts, how can individuals consume media with a more critical eye and make themselves less susceptible to these types of coordinated disinformation campaigns?

3. Do you think a “shared reality” among a society is important? Why or why not? What happens when small bubbles of “reality” are reinforced by social media with little to no ideas or facts that run counter to that “reality” being present for users?

4. How are you shaped by your social media feed? Can you locate the line between persuasion and propaganda? How might you maintain a critical eye while consuming social media?

5. What are the ethical challenges facing social media companies regarding algorithms and AI? What ethical challenges are individuals facing regarding their own use of social media?

Extension Activities

1. Can you tell a fake social media profile from one created to disseminate propaganda? Take the [Spot the Troll](#) quiz to test your skills!

Build on your quiz experience by investigating the role of social media and other digital platforms in shaping public opinion and disseminating information. It may be helpful to start with a specific controversial issue or event with global impact. For example: a recent election for a prime minister or president, national or international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, or international action against COVID-19. How did social media

algorithms and fake news impact public opinion? What role can individual users play in combating misinformation and propaganda?

2. Have students identify an issue that is important to them, and then analyze the tools of persuasion or propaganda that are used to build visibility and/or draw supporters to that cause in a particular campaign. Students should identify what makes the arguments effective, as well as what might be problematic about the approach. If students identify an argument for a cause that is important to them as problematic in its delivery, challenge them to create a persuasive argument in an ethical manner.

3. Have students watch and read a variety of local and national political speeches, sound bites, and election ads. Task them with locating the core message and identifying elements of propaganda used in the construction of the media piece. Students should select pieces from multiple points of view. Have students use the #FirstFactsPH pyramid to assess the speech, sound bite, or election ad accordingly and then have them share their findings with the class through a slideshow or other presentation format.

4. Have students create a poster, TikTok, or social media post to promote a nonpartisan cause, even something silly, like what constitutes the best breakfast. Then have students share their creation with the class (or in their learning community), and discuss the effectiveness of the message and the tools utilized. Challenge students to use the #FirstFactPH pyramid to ensure that their strategy is both effective and ethical.

5. The Canadian Digital Media Research Network recently launched a [Digital Threat Tipline](#) where anyone can report misinformation or misleading information that can threaten democracy in Canada. Have students research whether similar resources exist in other nations and share their findings. Students could also debate the value of such a resource and/or develop a strategy for the creation of such a resource for the United States or for another country.

6. Reporters Without Borders puts out a [World Press Freedom Index](#) that tracks dangers to journalists in countries around the world. The 2024 report tracked disinformation and violence against journalists leading up to elections. In small groups or individually, have students research a country using this index and present their findings to the class.

Additional Resources

Articles/Videos/Sample Student Project

Buzzfeed News - [The Philippines Was A Test Of Facebook's New Approach To Countering Disinformation. Things Got Worse](#)

The Guardian - [Patriotic Trolling: How Governments Endorse Hate Campaigns Against Critics](#)

MIT News - [Study: On Twitter, false news travels faster than true stories](#)

Rappler - [What is #FactsFirstPH](#)

Stanford Engineering - [The Ethics \(or Not\) of Massive Government Surveillance](#) (sample student project)

Stanford Report - [The best way to counter fake news is to limit person-to-person spread, Stanford study finds](#)

Organizations

[ACLU Privacy and Surveillance](#): This website includes news coverage, court cases, press releases, and podcasts concerning the intersections of privacy and surveillance.

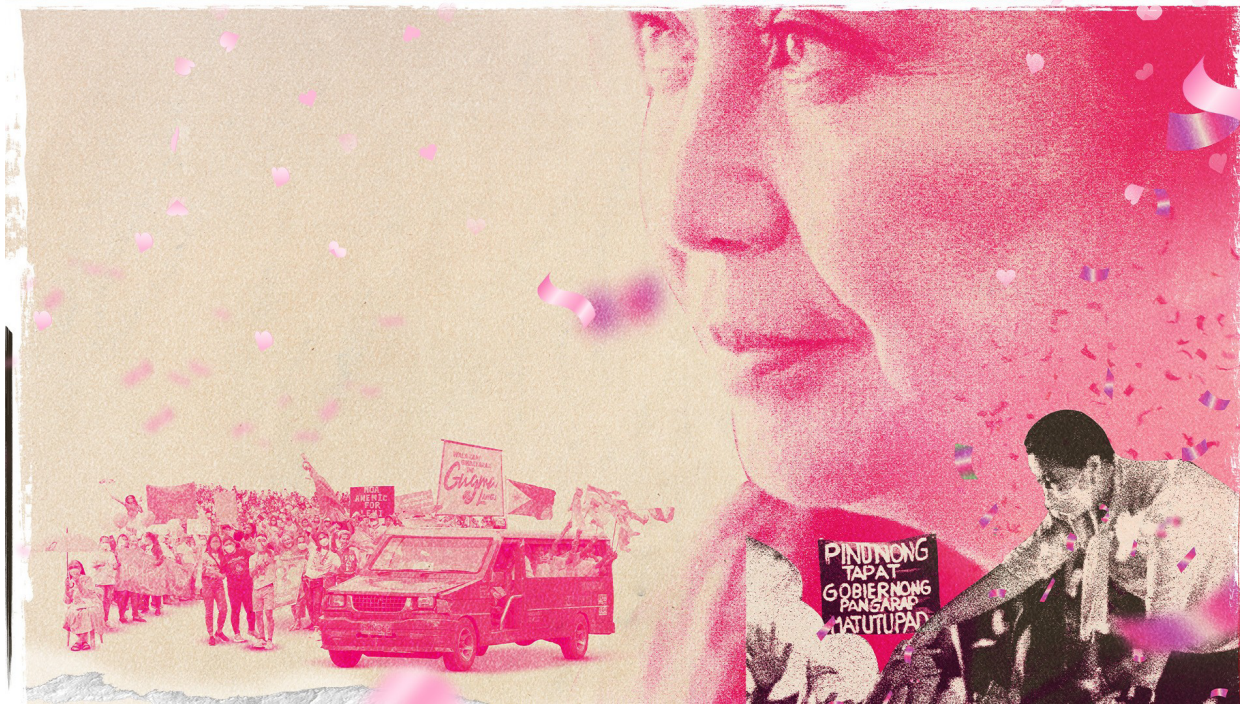
[Bellingcat](#): This independent investigative journalism organization uses open-source and digital research methods to uncover evidence and expose the truth about a wide range of issues, including state-sponsored assassinations, war crimes, and corruption. Their website includes reports, news updates, and resources for learning about their methods and investigations.

[Electronic Frontier Foundation \(EFF\)](#): This organization advocates for civil liberties in the digital world, including issues related to data tracking, state surveillance, and internet freedom. Their website includes reports, news updates, and resources for taking action and protecting your rights online.

[International Center for Journalists](#): This organization supports journalists around the world in their efforts to provide society with trustworthy news that can support free and strong societies.

[Privacy International](#): This organization advocates for privacy rights around the world, including issues related to data tracking, government surveillance, and corporate surveillance. Their website includes reports, news updates, and resources for taking action and protecting your privacy.

Political Corruption & Civic Engagement



An informed and educated population is essential for a thriving democracy in large part because such a populace makes it harder for government officials and political decision-makers to abuse their power.

Political corruption is an abuse of power in which public officials and political leaders use their positions of public trust and influence for private gain. This form of corruption involves the way government decisions are made, and it diverts and misallocates public resources. It is facilitated through secrecy and a lack of transparency in governance. The failure to hold political leaders accountable for corruption erodes trust in democratic institutions.

An informed and educated population is essential for a thriving democracy in large part because such a populace makes it harder for government officials and political decision makers to abuse their power. Similarly, transparency is a key deterrent to political corruption.

A free press is an important component of democracy that can help guard against political corruption, as a free press can bolster people's ability to be informed and educated about key issues and government activities and can push for government transparency.

In *And So It Begins*, Maria Ressa is facing many legal charges because the government of the Philippines specifically enacted several laws aimed at undermining journalistic freedoms and integrity in order to pave the way for increased political corruption. As such, the Philippines is an important case study regarding the relationship between a free press and political corruption.

Discussion Questions

1. In the film, Maria Ressa asks, “How can you have election integrity if you don’t have integrity of facts?” Respond to this question.
2. As highlighted in the film and witnessed in your own life, what actions weaken democratic institutions and pave the way for political corruption?
3. Despite the electoral victory for Bongbong Marcos, the film ends by highlighting the renewed commitment of many in the Philippines to civic engagement and popular action. What might be some next steps for the hundreds of thousands of individuals and volunteers activated by the Robredo campaign?
4. What past instances of civic engagement have impressed or moved you? If you could time travel, which social or political movement would you like to witness and participate in? Have you participated in or been affected by robust civic engagement in your life?
5. What are the responsibilities of global citizens regarding civic engagement? What are some of the most effective methods to amplify voices and increase visibility?

Extension Activities

1. Investigate and assess youth-led civic activities in the Philippines, internationally, and in your community. What are some issues that young people are most vocal about? How do young people make their voices heard? How are these civic activities covered in the news, by politicians, and by older generations? Consider protests, walkouts, social media, meetings with officials, public forums, and more. How effective do these methods appear?
2. Imagine you are a journalist seeking to hold a corrupt institution accountable for its actions. What approach might you take? How would you seek to inform the public of the corruption so that individuals might become more civically engaged in regards to the relevant act (or acts) of corruption?
3. Explore the 10-Point Plan, which was created by Ressa and Dmitry Muratov to counter government corruption, particularly in relation to tech companies and those seeking to exploit the tactics of tech companies: <https://10pointplan.org/the-plan/>. Engage the class in a discussion of the plan. Consider creating a class list of barriers to the implementation of the plan as well as ways to remove these barriers.
4. Political corruption is strengthened when democratic institutions, like the court and a free press, are weakened. Court systems are often weakened through corrupt political appointments, whereas the press is often weakened through direct attacks on journalists. Share this [report summary](#) with students regarding online harassment of Maria Ressa. Ask students to devise a counter strategy that might limit the number of attacks and the effect of these attacks. Encourage students to consider not only counter social media campaigns, but policy suggestions that would limit the ability of states and individuals to use social media in such harmful ways.

Additional Resources

Articles/Toolkits/Pedagogical Resources

[A Toolkit for Supporting Youth Civic Engagement in Underserved Communities from Generation Citizen](#)

[“Civic Engagement Can Boost Youth Mental Health,” The Jed Foundation](#)

[20 Civic Engagement Activities for High School Students from Kialo Blog](#)

[Five Ways to Increase Civic Engagement from SocialStudies.org](#)

[iCivics \(Learning Hub for Civic Education\)](#)

[Navalny Film and Journeys in Film Educational Resources](#)

[Youth Civic Hub \(Created by Youth, For Youth\)](#)

Resources about Cambridge Analytica

[Cambridge Analytica and Online Manipulation](#), Scientific American, 2018.

[Cambridge Analytica Timeline](#), NBC, 2018.

[What Did Cambridge Analytica Do During the 2016 Election?](#), NPR, 2018.

Organizations

Freedom House: This organization provides annual reports on the state of political freedom and civil liberties around the world. Its reports include detailed analysis of countries where state-sanctioned assassinations and political prisoners are common, including Russia. <https://freedomhouse.org/>

Human Rights Watch: World Report: This annual report provides a global overview of human rights abuses and political repression around the world. It includes in-depth analysis of countries where state-sanctioned assassinations and political prisoners are common, including Russia. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023>

United Nations Human Rights Council: This website provides information on the human rights situation in countries around the world, including Russia. It includes reports, news updates, and resources for advocacy and action. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/home>



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