

/FL/MAGARAL/THE-HEROES-WHO-
FOUGHT-MARTIAL-LAW-LILIOSA-
HILAO/)

MARTIAL LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES
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The Heroes Who Fought Martial Law: Lilia Hilao

At age 23, Lilia Hilao was a bright young girl who had her entire future in front of her. Despite her asthma and allergies, she was talented, smart, and outgoing. She had many friends. She was set to graduate cum laude with a degree in communication arts from the

Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. She was also the first reported case of a political prisoner's death under Martial Law.

As associate editor of her school paper, Hilao wrote essays about the death of democracy in the Philippines under Martial Law. She began to wear black as an outward sign of mourning. Lilia Hilao had a strong sense of justice, and she was not afraid to express it any way she could.



In April 1973, drunken soldiers from

the Constabulary Anti-Narcotics Unit barged into her home searching for her brother. When she demanded a search warrant, she was beaten up and taken away. Her brother-in-law, a man in the army, visited her and saw the marks of torture and gang rape. He was unable to do anything to help. When her older sister Alice was called to the Camp Crame Station Hospital to see her, Lilia was already dead.

For years, the Hilaos were kept under close surveillance. Several members of the family had to leave the home to avoid arrest. Authorities claimed that Lilia had killed herself by drinking muriatic acid. The case was closed, they said.

Two weeks later, her university held their graduation ceremonies and conferred her degree posthumously,

with honors. They kept her seat empty.



Photos by Blew David, Chana Garcia, Roxy Navarro

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