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Murals to honor Sakay, Lean Alejandro to be unveiled Sept 21

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MANILA, Philippines — Two public murals will be unveiled on September 21 by the Constantino Foundation to honor the centennial of Philippine hero Macario Sakay's execution and the 20th anniversary of the murder of youth activist Lean Alejandro.

The date also marks the 35th anniversary of the declaration of martial law.

"It's high time to recreate the conversation between young Filipinos today and their collective past. We intend to reclaim public space in a way that brings the memory of standing up to tyranny closer to our people," a statement from the foundation quoted managing director Renato Redentor "Red" Constantino as saying. "The paintings aim to start a national trend to transform public spaces as visual tools in recapturing national memory and history. The murals will highlight two largely neglected icons of resistance who fought for our nation's freedom," he added.

The project is a collaboration between the Constantino Foundation and TutoK, an artists' group organized last year in response to the continued extrajudicial killings and deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

The Constantino Foundation and TutoK are working with the city government of Makati, which has agreed to install a 4.5 by 24-foot mural at the Ospital ng Makati in Pembo, and San Juan City, which will install in its own city hall a huge painting consisting of three 10 by 12-foot panels.

Macario Sakay was an original member of the Katipunan who continued the struggle for national liberation against American colonial rule. Maligned by US authorities and mainstream history books as a bandit, Sakay was hanged on September 13, 1907, a victim of American and native elite treachery.

Lean Alejandro has been described as the quintessential student leader of the 1980s and hails from the University of the Philippines (UP). He led massive rallies against the Marcos dictatorship and took part in rebuilding the democratic order after the fall of the authoritarian regime.

On September 19, 1987, Alejandro, 27, was slain in an ambush.

"We sought to portray Sakay and Alejandro in a manner that Filipinos, most especially our youth, can relate to — as modern, human and contemporary. They are not larger-than-life-heroes, though their acts of resistance are heroic," painter Emmanuel Garibay, TutoK chairman, was quoted by the statement as saying. "The concept of the murals was enriched greatly by intense discussions between the participating artists and historians, including the family and friends of Lean Alejandro," he said.

Constantino is the grandson of writers Renato and Letizia Constantino, who established the foundation formerly known as the Foundation for Nationalist Studies. It has been promoting and publishing progressive literature for over three decades, focused primarily on propagating nationalism and Philippine history from the point of view of the Filipino people.

P.S.

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