



KASAMA

the newsletter of SPAN
Solidarity Philippines Australia Network
Nine years of regular publication

Vol 9. No. 4.

June-July-August 1995

\$2.00

Philippine Solidarity Groups Network

OUR readers will notice that the **KASAMA** banner now sports the byline: *the Newsletter of SPAN Solidarity Philippines Australia Network*. This reflects the changes that were decided upon at the PASG QLD AGM held in Brisbane on May 6, 1995 after a consultation process with the rest of the solidarity network. Our PASG group in Queensland has now passed gracefully into the history books and has been replaced by **SPAN (Brisbane)**. **KASAMA** is now the newsletter of the **SPAN** national network and we are in the process of expanding the editorial board of **KASAMA** to include interested members outside Queensland. It is our intention that **KASAMA** projects the solidarity activities going on in different parts of Australia and the composition of the editorial board should reflect the actual diversity of the network.

The SPAN national network was inaugurated at the Sydney Solidarity Conference organised by the Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia in 1992. The impetus for networking that emanated from the regions ensured that the proposal to build the SPAN network was reaffirmed at the SPAN national meeting in Melbourne last year. SPAN (Brisbane) is undertaking an initiative to bring the national network formally into being by organising a SPAN Conference in Brisbane in the near future. The *Provisional Aims and Constitution of SPAN* adopted at the Brisbane AGM are as titled, *provisional* guiding documents for this national conference at which these and any other proposals will be subject to amendment and endorsement.

Continued on Page 2 >

Sex Tourism & Trafficking Study Tour Ejected from Angeles Hotel

FROM June 19 to July 4 fifteen women from Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, and New Zealand were in the Philippines on an exposure/study tour investigating the involvement of Australians in the Philippine sex industry. On the fourth day of the tour the group met with local government officials in the mayoral office of Angeles City. But in the evening they were unwelcome guests for the city's bars, clubs and hotels. **EMERE DISTOR** describes the events of that night and traces the sex tour route from Angeles to Apuao.

GARY Griffin, the manager of Bonanza Hotel in Angeles City is a different breed of businessman. Instead of inviting guests into the hotel, he is kicking them out — as was the case of the 15 participants of a study tour who were ejected by Mr Griffin upon discovery that the group was in the city to investigate Australian involvement in the Philippine sex industry.



Mr Griffin, a New Zealand national who had lived in Australia, was so possessed with arrogance that he even threatened the group that their "status" as visitors would be checked by the Australian Federal Police in Manila. Later in the tour, the group met with officials of

the Australian Embassy in Makati which included a few from the Federal Police who although acquainted with Mr Griffin had still not heard a word from him nor from Rose, his Filipina wife.

Not to be mistaken as a classic case of sour graping, Bonanza is not necessarily a desirable accommodation. In fact if one were to be snotty, the hotel should not even expect to receive an imaginary star let alone the three-star rating given by the Department of Tourism. To begin with, one is destined to walk through a corridor with both walls decorated in glossy full colour posters of almost naked Asian women.

Upon entering the room, noisy air-conditioning welcomes the occupants, one of whom will be unfortunate enough to sleep underneath the irritating cold-box. With a quick look around the room you could experience an instant craving for potato crisps as you catch sight of the chipping beige wallpaper. And if your crisps-craving should make you thirsty, the drinking glass beside the bed is horrifying to be even near one's head, more so to drink from.

Continued on Page 2 >

Philippine Solidarity Groups Network

◀ *Continued from Page 1*

SPAN Aims and Objectives:

To build a solidarity network of individuals and organisations among Filipinos and other communities which:

1. seeks to give material and moral support to the peoples' organisations in the Philippines struggling for human rights, national liberation, self-determination and social justice;
2. informs people in Australia by means of publications, forums, meetings and other educational and cultural activities of the work of the peoples' organisations and facilitates direct people to people contact with the members of these organisations at the grassroots level;
3. promotes the rights and welfare of the Filipino migrant community in Australia towards a better economic, cultural and political life;
4. pursues justice for migrant Filipinas and other women of non-English speaking background and their families who are victims of domestic violence and marital murders;
5. co-operates with other groups towards developing a solidarity network that responds to the expressed needs of the peoples' movement in the Philippines;
6. supports the struggles of the Indigenous Peoples in Australia and other oppressed peoples throughout the world for human rights, spiritual and cultural re-empowerment, national liberation, self-determination and social justice;
7. forms alliances and engages in solidarity action with other organisations towards building the movement for Justice and Peace in the Asia Pacific region and throughout the world.

While the Aims of SPAN reflect the old PASG (QLD) Aims, the SPAN Constitution is radically different in that it allows for a *national* network based on branches in various localities rather than single state groups based in the capital cities.

There has not been a functioning national solidarity structure since the collapse of national PASG in 1987. While the PASG (QLD) membership was largely Brisbane based, it was not solely Queensland based. In addition to Queensland members outside Brisbane, SPAN has members in Darwin, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Our name and constitution reflect this national network reality.

SPAN Communications Centre

Sex Tourism & Trafficking

Study Tour Ejected from Angeles Hotel

◀ *Continued from Page 1*

However, the circumstances surrounding the ejection of the group did not begin with complaints about the ambience and sanitation of the hotel but was started off when a news item about the study tour appeared in an Australian newspaper the day most participants left Australia. The article, written by Nick Cater entitled "Women Target Sex Traders", had obviously reached the powerful Australian business network in Angeles City who raised the alarm that this group of women are off to create "trouble" for the entrepreneurs. "...To embarrass men taking part in the sex industry," was how Cater ended his article — a statement offensive enough to cause "discomfort" for Australian business in the city.

Judging from the series of events that occurred prior to the Bonanza incident, it was obvious that the Australian network had prepared a calculated effort to sabotage the study tour's purposes. Reliable sources said that the businessmen had a meeting a few days before the arrival of the delegates in Angeles. The local group which organised the billeting for the participants was refused by two Australian-owned hotels located at the centre of the city's red light district and was finally accepted but eventually ejected by Bonanza. Another response to the presence of the study tour was that all Australian-managed bars along Fields Avenue and Diamond Subdivision posted in their entrances the following new guidelines: "NO CAMERAS, NO VIDEO AND NO UNACCOMPANIED LADIES ALLOWED" — all these efforts to make bar-hopping for the exposurists nearly impossible.

The next day, the study tour participants, many of whom are Philippine-born migrants living in Australia, filed a formal complaint of harassment and grave coercion against the owner of Bonanza with the police in Balibago. In the afternoon of the same day, a policeman visited Bonanza Hotel to conduct initial investigations. Mr Griffin was nowhere in sight but his wife, Rose, told an outrageous and, needless to say, untruthful version of the incident. According to Rose, some of the members of the study tour group refused to show their passports when filling in their check-in forms and, supposedly, this refusal caused the receptionist to become suspicious and so she requested the bags of the newly arrived guests be checked for security reasons. In her bizarre account of the events that followed, Rose claimed that the hotel management rang the police fearing that the guests were hiding something, but the guests "left" before the police arrived.



The owners of the Bonanza Hotel attempted to mislead the police into believing that the group were not even allowed to check-in their luggage. One can only imagine Rose's reaction when the policeman asked for the bed sheet left inside one of the rooms by a member of the group. Forgetfulness in this instance can be applauded as a "blessing in disguise." Had not the sheet been left inside the room, the hotel owners would be given an opportunity to parade their distorted version of the incident.

ANGELES City is just one of the many areas in the Philippines investigated by members of the study group called *Campaign Against Sex Tourism and Trafficking in Filipino Women* (CAST). For sixteen days, participants of the tour witnessed the extent to which Australians are involved in sex tourism and trafficking in the Philippines. An Australian-based group called Network Against Sex Tours says an estimated 50,000 Australian men leave the country as sex tourists every year (*The Age*, 23 June 1991). But the role of Australians in the exploitation of Filipino women is not confined to being only a "user"; they are also "suppliers". Mr Ed Pamintuan, the incumbent mayor of Angeles City, had admitted that at least 80 per cent of the 152 nightclubs and other entertainment spots in Angeles are owned and operated by Australians (*The Courier Mail*, 25 July 1995).



Artist: Elva Albacite

Just 80 km from Manila, Angeles City has nothing to offer foreign tourists who expect fresh air, scenic views or even beaches. Still recuperating from the devastation of Mount Pinatubo, Angeles is hardly the place where you can breath fresh air, sight-see or swim. Like the many hard-stricken areas affected by the Pinatubo eruption, Angeles' air, water and scenery are as bad as Manila's. Defenceless visitors to Angeles are welcomed by *lahar* dust seeping into the pores. Instead of a stretch of beach resort, tourists are visually assaulted by relocation areas for families displaced by the eruption or the view of a fractured bridge and *lahar*-filled river. And yet, the influx of foreign tourists remains as steady as the time when Clark Air Base was still in operation. The Department of Tourism in Angeles confirmed that Australians comprised the largest number out of the 120,000 tourists who visited Central Luzon last year with Angeles City as their preferred destination (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 3 July 1995). To service the popularity of Angeles City, Australian tourists can board a shuttle bus from the international airport in Manila straight to Angeles for a reasonable charge.

Packaged sex tours are very popular with Australian men and are promoted through tour and travel agencies with business networks in Manila, Bangkok, United Kingdom, northern Queensland, Brisbane, and Victoria. Since Angeles City cannot offer all the Five "S's" (Sun, Sea, Surf, Sex and San Miguel) as a package, then this is where the sex tourism network comes into the picture. One notorious agency, named after a popular Australian icon, is in fact part of a corporation that owns coaches, a bar, five hotels and two resorts in the Philippines. Holding a complete structure under its corporate wing, the company became renowned for very cheap packaged tours to the Philippines. To beat competition, the company's travel agencies specialised in 21-day visa-exempt holidays in the Philippines at a price roughly equivalent to two weeks wages of an average Australian worker.

Other foreign businessmen in Angeles City observed that their Australian counterparts are as tightly knit as the Chinese and this culture, they believed, compliments its tourism network all around the Philippines. Brochures and leaflets of resort destinations can be found in every Australian establishment in Angeles City which is often the first stop of tourists looking for local women as tour companions.

More often than not, the depiction of Filipino women in brochures and other materials is degrading. Photos of two or more Filipinas with a white male are typical in advertising tourist spots. Commodification of Filipino women is illustrated in the June 1995 issue of *Bayside Breeze*, a publication distributed free to expatriates in Angeles and La Union, which carried an advertisement inviting tourists to visit a resort which offers "Beautiful Ladies" or "Lovely Ladies". (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 3 July 1995).

Continued on Page 4 ➤

Sex Tourism & Trafficking

◀ Continued from Page 3

Australian men who join these packaged tours are between the ages of 25 to 50 years old and are mostly working class. A steady stream of male customers can be attributed not only to the explicit promotions but also to the men who spread the news about these exotic holidays. Although Australian men have been frequenting the Philippines for more than a decade, their reputation among local women working in the "entertainment" industry is far from popular. Compared to the Americans who used to lord over the red light district of Angeles City, Australians are stingy, quite unlike their predecessors who were very loose with money. Sex workers in Angeles can, in fact, distinguish Australian men from other foreign customers not because of their accent but the way they bargain over the price for the women's services. Some women are wise not to be out-manoeuvred at the bargaining table but a few women, new in the industry, usually fall prey to men who promise to bring them to Australia. Aware that most women enter the sex industry to meet foreigners who can offer "green pastures", foreign men pretend that they will marry the women to get free sex and a willing domestic.

APUAO is an 80-hectare island located in the province of Bicol. With a free domestic ticket being promoted by Philippine Airlines, the island can be reached within 45 minutes by plane followed by 3 hours in a bus and 30 minutes boat ride. Although the trip may daunt an impatient and not so adventurous tourist, the natural beauty of the island will right away cheer up visitors as experienced *bankeros* draw the ladder to its shores. Classified as a *barangay* of Mercedes, Camarines Norte, the whole island of Apuao was bought by Swagman corporation in the early 1980s; they started building the resort in 1986. It is unknown how much Swagman paid for the island, but it is believed to be one of the biggest investments of the corporation so far. The Apuao Grande Resort boasts of its golf course, tennis court, swimming pool, tropical cottages with en-suite facilities, and "an array of wildlife including guinea fowl, Australian sheep, carabaos, ducks, geese, turkeys and varieties of wild birds" (*Leaflet of Apuao Grande Island*).

Originally, the island was occupied by a local fishing community. When the Australian company took possession, it pushed the villagers to one end of the island where 300 families are now crowded into a tiny compound of *nipa* huts, shanties, elementary school, and chapel. These locals are not obliged to pay Swagman rent as the company have realised that the poor families cannot afford it in the first place. The retention of the villagers in Apuao, however, proved to serve

the interests of the newly established resort. During peak seasons, locals are employed at the resort while the fishermen provide a steady supply of fresh seafood.

The transformation of Apuao as an island particularly catering to Australian men has been so successful that the resort has gained popularity as an exotic paradise in a country once described as "the land of cunt and contradictions" by one disgusting Australian chauvinist. With fresh air, white sand and gin-clear water, many Australian men invested in Apuao by building houses on leased land. Foreigners are allowed by Philippine law to erect a building or a house on land they can lease for 50 years and renew for a further 25 years. Foreign investors like Swagman are exempted by the Department of Tourism because development of a resort falls under "pioneering investment" – a category that legitimately permits foreign investors to buy and not just lease land.

An investigation by some members of the study tour found that there are a total of 12 houses in Apuao owned by Australian men, four of whom have Filipino women as partners. Prices of a lease on a house and lot being sold on the island fetch from (US) \$45,000 to \$150,000. The proliferation of Australian residents gives local women another means of livelihood as they are hired on a daily basis to perform domestic chores like gardening, cleaning, cooking, child care and washing clothes. The women used to receive 70 pesos (Aus\$1=18 pesos) for a day's labour which is half the legal minimum wage in the Philippines. Of late, the already depressing daily rate was reduced to 50 pesos by employers who are aware that many local women are desperate to compete for housekeeping in the Australian homes at an even lower rate just to augment their family income.

Continued on Page 6 ➤



Artist: Elva Albacite



Australian-Philippine Dialogue: Confronting Sexual Exploitation

DIALOGUE STATEMENT

We, 58 Filipinos and Australians from various organizations, women's centers, government agencies, the academe and media, participants of the *Australian-Philippine Dialogue: Confronting Sexual Exploitation* conducted a study tour from June 19-July 4, 1995 to examine the involvement of Australian nationals in sex trafficking and prostitution of Filipino women and children.

We note with grave concern:

- the alarming trend of Australian men's involvement in sex tourism, trafficking of women and prostitution through package tours, introduction agencies and the operation of bars, hotels and resorts throughout the Philippines;
- the operation of syndicated networks, on an international scale which enable Australian operators to exploit Filipino women and children. These networks also act to protect their activities from expose;
- that these activities are a clear violation of human rights under international laws such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, *The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* which the Australian and Philippine governments have signed and ratified;
- the practice of foreigners to circumvent Philippine nationalization law prohibiting foreign ownership and management of businesses such as bars, hotels, and resorts. We noted Australian nationals using their Filipino wives or live-in partners or business partners as fronts for their operations. For instance in Angeles City two thirds of all bars and hotels are owned by Australian nationals;
- the promotion of Filipino women and children in leaflets, brochures, calendars, catalogues as sex commodities when advertising travel destinations in the Philippines;
- the inadequacy of information for Australians, that acts of paedophilia committed overseas are punishable by law in Australia. We saw that a large number of women are under 18 and adult women have started as prostituted children;
- the clear and blatant violation of Philippine labor laws by entertainment establishments, e.g. the non-payment of legally mandated wage and the absence of protection from various forms of hazards and other benefits;
- the involvement of New Zealand nationals engaging in the above activities and contraventions and often in

conjunction with Australians or with the use of Australian resources.

We recommend:

that the Australian and Philippine Governments enter into agreements to facilitate the investigation and extradition of Australians involved in the prostitution of women and children in the Philippines.

We recommend further to the Australian Government:

1. that the Australian government request the Sex Discrimination Commission to conduct an inquiry into the involvement of Australian men in the sex industry specifically in the following areas:
 - a. ownership and operation of establishments suspected of trafficking and prostitution,
 - b. working conditions of women and children employed in those establishments,
 - c. the violation of human rights of Filipino women and children by Australian nationals, such as freedom from sexual abuse, violence and exploitation;
2. that likewise an investigation be conducted regarding the circumvention of Philippine nationalization laws governing land ownership and operation of businesses by Australian nationals. This practice facilitates sex tourism and the trafficking and prostitution of women;
3. that the Australian government put more resources into the investigation and conviction of Australians in the Philippines under the paedophilia legislation. In particular, that charges be laid against Australians organizing paedophilia prostitution and networks in the Philippines;
4. that the Australian and Philippine governments be asked to require to issue information and warnings against the practice of sex tourism and paedophilia on international airline flights, points of departure and travel agencies. These practices dehumanize women and children in the Philippines;
5. that the Australian government be asked to increase and rechannel aid to NGOs in the Philippines that provide support to efforts that will prevent the exploitation of women and children in the sex industry and provide assistance to those who have been sexually exploited, e.g. alternative livelihood programs;
6. that the Australian government review the Privacy legislation to allow prospective Filipino spouses to be provided with information on their sponsor regarding any previous conviction for violent behaviour, criminal conviction, mental status and identical health checks;

Continued on Page 6 ➤

Australian-Philippine Dialogue: Confronting Sexual Exploitation

◀ Continued from Page 5

7. that the Australian government collect data on previous sponsorships and in cooperation with the Philippine government make this information available to prospective fiancées or spouses in their own language. This information should be maintained on a centralized database at all immigration points in recognition that sponsors may seek partners from different countries. Current mechanisms used by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to collect such information are insufficient because they rely on the sponsors' honesty and their information is not cross-checked;

8. that the provision of information about support services in Australia continue after the Filipino spouse or fiancée has migrated to Australia. This is often the time when such information is most needed.

Likewise we recommend to the Philippine Government:

1. that the Department of Tourism and local governments, in consultation with concerned NGOs, study the social costs of its tourism strategies, in particular as they result in the sexual exploitation of women and children, and cease their aggressive promotion of tourism until preventive and protective measures can be put in place;

2. that the Department of Trade and Industry examine the ownership and operations of "entertainment" establishments that often are fronts for prostitution activities;

3. that the Department of Labor and Employment investigate the violations of labor laws and regulations concerning personnel of these establishments such as waitresses, receptionists, "public relations officers", gogo dancers, singers, and the like;

4. that the Supreme Court declare as unconstitutional the Vagrancy Law that is used to arrest women suspected of prostitution;

5. that Article 202.5 of the Revised Penal Code be repealed in the interest of the decriminalization of women in prostitution; that criminal sanctions be imposed on the clientele of prostitution;

6. that the Commission on Human Rights conduct an inquiry into the violations of human rights of women and children sexually exploited in prostitution, and establish complaints procedures and mechanisms;

7. that RA 7610 or the Special Protection for Children Against Exploitation, Abuse and Discrimination be strictly implemented.

Philippine Secretariat: c/o Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Suite 406 Victoria Condominium, 41 Annapolis St., Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila, Philippines
Phone (+632) 722 0859; 721 6046 • Fax (+632) 722 0755

Australian Secretariat: c/o Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia (CPCA), PO Box 338, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Phone (+613) 329 9042 • Fax (+613) 326 7140

Sex Tourism & Trafficking

◀ Continued from Page 4

One newly-built cottage on the island is now becoming a focus of concern. Reputedly owned by a Filipina married to an Australian, the fancy cottage was erected as a training centre for prospective "entertainers" bound for Japan. The big in-house training centre is said to be targeting women coming from as far as Cebu and Manila. Built of bamboo, brick, concrete and stone imported from the Visayas, the centre has a number of cubicles, a moderately-sized spa bath and a big barbecue area. Although the training has not yet started, the potential of recruits to be seduced to work as prostitutes catering to sex tourists is a probable scenario that can be used to advantage by the Apuao resort management.

It is seemingly necessary for Swagman at the moment to regain the stream of customers it lost after the workers' union launched a strike at its main office in Manila on March 18. Nine union officers were dismissed by the management, *"on the grounds that they held an unofficial strike last September by meeting for one day to prepare for the upcoming negotiations on the wages as scheduled in their Collective Bargaining Agreement."* (Report, KMU International Solidarity Affair, May 1995). Supporters of the nine dismissed officers maintained the picket line in Ermita but it was dismantled twice by gun-wielding policemen. The Apuao resort, which Swagman owns, was eventually affected by the tension between the workers and management in Manila. The island was closed for some months last year because a strong typhoon destroyed many cottages and other infrastructure. As a consequence, many workers were laid-off but the Swagman management refused to give severance pay to the workers. The Apuao resort re-opened early this year with a new management and newly-acquired name: T.S. Resorts, Apuao Grande Island. Incidentally, T.S. stands for Terrence Sayle who is the manager of the Swagman booking office in Brisbane.

by Emere Distor

Sign in Angeles City motel room:

ATTENTION

- DO NOT SMOKE IN BED TO AVOID FIRE
- DO NOT THROW WASTES IN THE TOILET BOWL
- DO NOT RUB MAKE-UP ON THE WALL
- USE TISSUE PAPER

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS

- PLS. TURN-OFF THE AIR-CON BEFORE LEAVING
- YOUR LADY ESCORT IS NOT ALLOWED TO STAY IN YOUR ROOM, YOU TAKE HER WITH YOU WHEN YOU LEAVE THE ROOM
- KEEP YOUR VALUABLES IN THE LOBBY OF HOTEL FOR SAFE-KEEPING

SUPPORT WORK FOR PROSTITUTED WOMEN

PROSTITUTION, in the Philippines, is a constant. The most accessible curse in the national language is *Putang ina mo*, for "Your mother's a whore." The tabloids joke about the Brunei Beauties – young actresses prostituting themselves in the island, while Manila's mayor makes international news supposedly for closing the city's red light district and 'cleaning up' the streets. Everyone knows how a whore looks, so when a camera crew zooms in on seven pretty girls in little skirts, eyelashes sculptured, in one of the bars along Metro Manila's most notorious 'strips', Quezon Avenue, everyone knows what the film being shot will be about.

In that same crowd, some of the real Quezon Avenue 'girls' watch the location shoot, inconspicuous in jeans, running shoes, long-sleeved shirts and basketball caps. On the way home, the same camera crew will pass by middle-aged women carrying frayed handbags and chubby mothers in crumpled shorts, and assume that they are vendors. They are not. They are the invisible face of prostitution, women forgotten until such time as their services are needed.

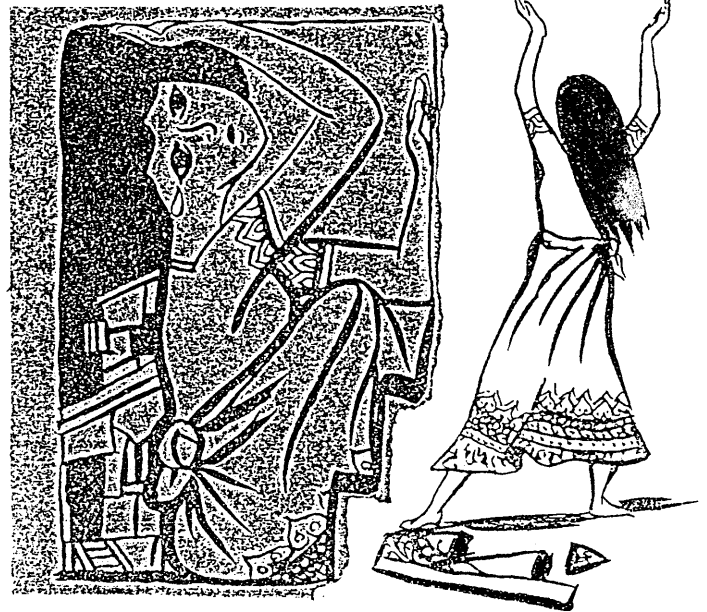
Within the women's movement, more and more advocates are beginning to tackle the issue of prostitution and the marginalization of prostituted women. This development can be attributed to groups such as Buklod Women's Center and Women's Education, Development & Productivity Organization (WEDPRO), which initiated grassroots work and advocacy with prostituted women long before doing so became a 'politically correct' undertaking.

Buklod Women's Center

When the foundations for Buklod were being laid in Olongapo City in the mid-80s, the city was the R&R center for US servicemen docking at their Subic Naval Base, and its sex industry, the tonic for sailors' fatigue. Buklod founder Brenda Stolfutz started her advocacy work with long nights in the bars, getting to know the women. She was eventually conducting education seminars, helped along by colleagues. These women next considered organizing a union of bar workers so that dancers and waitresses would receive decent wages and not be forced into prostitution. The idea metamorphosed into the drop-in center Buklod, now almost 10 years old.

Throughout decades of political education that was integral to the nationalist movement's struggle for the withdrawal of US military facilities from the Philippines, the question of economic alternatives surfaced again and again. With the insights that such education inspired, the women more and more keenly felt and detested the oppression of their lives in prostitution. Individually, however, they had no more options than when they started. Buklod in response developed a

by Kathleen Maltzhan



Graphic: by Rica Palomo from the cover of *Let Our Silenced Voices Be Heard: The Traffic in Asian Women*, Isis International, Manila

course on high-speed sewing. It is now thinking of establishing a small-scale garments factory.

WEDPRO

WEDPRO was formed in December 1989 when the anti-bases sentiment had fully developed. Contracted by the Aquino government to develop a conversion plan for the benefit of the women to be affected by the eventual pull-out of the US bases, WEDPRO later found its meticulously prepared proposals shelved. The group decided to implement some of the conversion proposals that the government ignored. The devastating eruption of Mt Pinatubo hastened the Americans' departure from Clark Air Base in Angeles City, and when WEDPRO entered the area, its 'entertainment' industry was dead. Building on the Buklod experience, and in the face of the double catastrophe of the volcano's destruction and the bar workers' loss of livelihood, WEDPRO immediately combined its organizing efforts with a socio-economic program. The women were offered small food-vending stalls, with two to three women staffing each. In the next three years, the program had expanded to soft-drinks vending as well as rice trading. Meanwhile the difficulties the group encountered to initiate and operate these ventures highlighted the need to intensify education strategies. Hence simultaneous with WEDPRO's efforts to continue developing economic alternatives for the women are its education seminars on such issues as violence against women, sexuality and women's health.

Continued on Page 8 >

SUPPORT WORK FOR PROSTITUTED WOMEN

➤ *Continued from Page 7*

Sinag Kababaihan

By late 1993 to early 1994 when the United Church of Christ in the Philippines conceived of its special project on prostitution, the SINAG Kababaihan, prostitution and prostituted women had clearly become an issue in itself, and not just a problem tied to the US bases or tourism. In Quezon City alone, hundreds of bars-cum-brothels had flourished, and 'street walkers' were regularly rounded up by the police when they became too visible. SINAG opted to work with these street walkers. In September 1994, it initiated contact-building in the streets and jails where the women were detained. The unpredictable, highly mobile work environment prostituted women move in necessitated a similarly mobile center. The center serves as a venue for women to attend education sessions or health trainings, to secure condoms, to catch up on sleep or simply to trade gossip. SINAG hopes to provide a space where women can define themselves, tell their own stories, generate and give support to process the violence they have encountered and form their own organization.

Pitfalls of Advocacy Work

Each of the three projects — Buklod, WEDPRO and SINAG — receives a steady stream of inquiries on its work. Still, the volume of sustained feminist responses to the issue of prostitution remains limited. Apart from the problem of scarce resources, which is common to the NGO movement as a whole, the response to advocacy work regarding prostituted women may be slack also because of the working conditions and slowness of "progress" that women's groups are experiencing.

Although by no means as difficult as the problems women in prostitution must wrestle with, NGO work is also taxing. The strain of late nights squatting on the sidewalks or watching strip shows is inescapable, the risk — and reality — of harassment and violence loom every time a police van passes by, and the plain depression of seeing women bought, sold, thumped and dumped is fatal to job satisfaction. Andrea Dworkins recounts that after writing her book on pornography, her world was destroyed — she learned to look at life with the eyes of the

pornography maker and reader. The result: everything, whether mundane or essential, became instruments of women's torture. Gaining entry to this new world poisoned the one she had come from because she learned how this new world shaped hers.

Working on prostitution is similar. When night after night, an NGO worker encounters men who try to arrest, abuse or buy other women, she is yanked to a realization that for them, all women are whores, and all whores, dirt. Exposed to the full range of men who treat women as commodities — from men in cars with government-issued plates to those in slippers so worn only their callouses keep their soles off the ground, she realizes that most men participate in this ritual of destruction. Her work strips away layer upon layer of her world and leaves her naked, betrayed by society's promise that men and women can live with each other honorably. It touches both the 'external' structures and the contours of the mind, her vision of society, her faith in ideologies and the space around her body.

Aida Santos of WEDPRO has had to continually grapple with the politics and psychology of prostitution. "Prostitution work is difficult because of the issues and because it entails achieving a level of honesty within yourself," she says. "It is an area that tends to push you back to ask questions about sexual-

ity. It has the tendency, if you're married, to push you to think, what if my husband is... or my brother, or father, or son? It has a very direct impact, it gives you some sleepless nights."

At the same time, Santos continues, work on prostitution launches one into direct confrontation with the dominant structures of society. "I always say [prostitution work] is a classical example of where you see the conglomeration of the issues of racism, classism, gender, imperialism — especially within the context of... prostitution abroad, where southern women are predominantly bartered in the trade".

These are the realities that at times make advocacy and organizing in prostitution shattering and exhausting. Yet these realities present the very reason why such work is crucial. In prostitution, the dominant structures of destruction are magnified and melded and we — all women — are burned, right through to the core. Prostitution sustains and strengthens immeasurably all that the women's movement is struggling to replace.



Graphic: Batis, July-Sept 1990

Bureau Of Immigration, Manila

by Aida F. Santos, 1991

Sitting here on the cheap
vinyl-covered hard chairs
is like being in hell.
"The officer is out, but will be back soon..."
says the assistant,
a standard line
mockery of time.
Men are napping
on squeaking swivel chairs
foam desperately poking through
the beaten arm-rest.

Sleazy characters
move in and out:
A bureaucrat sits his shoes on a table
suffocating with business cards
imprisoned under a heavy glass;
a lawyer in a beige linen suit
armpits profusely perspiring
chubby hands adorned
by two obscenely-big diamonds
voice booms of tales
of drunken nights in sleazy bars
where he said he had his women;
a travel agent in a greyish barong
is smiling to himself
as he devours the haggard-looking secretary;
another man in a blue shirt
speaks in hushed tones about AIDS
and Filipino nurses in Saudi
prostituted
as they pore greedily through
the semi-pornographic tabloid;
an errand boy
with a big scar across his cheek
tries to undress me with his looks
and I stare back, going through
his coagulated brain and bulging front
quickly, he drops his eyes as quickly as he flicks
cigarette ash on the shabby carpeted floor.

The secretary pounds feverishly
on an old, tired manual typewriter
moved by the songs on Jesus
from the karaoke in the lobby, christmas spirit
and everybody's feeling christian.
Paper bills are thrust into
her hands, smiles are exchanged

between a slit-eyed man
and the secretary who bows
a little bit, mildly embarrassed
but pushes the bills into her drawers.

Part time, and we sit still.
Bosses come out of their cubicles.
Bureaucracy croaking at its seams
and the posters on the wall scream:
"No bribes allowed."
Robots of poverty, lords of power
greed oozes like pus
women smile through the sexist jokes
powerlessness painfully plastered on painted faces.
The ceiling has one gaping hole
like a hole in the brain
of this monstrous institution.
Christmas is here, said another
but I can't feel the spirit,
making a peso sign.

This is corruption supreme
grafted into each little corner.
Bribes breathe, bastards bribe
my stomach feels sick.
We ask for coffee, sure, sure
and a greasy cup with lukewarm instant appears
and we wait, for that signature
that perhaps will not come today.

Reprinted from *Women in Action*, 2-3/94

Aida F. Santos is an award winning Filipino
feminist poet and women's rights activist,
theorist and trainer.



Artist: Elva Albacite

JAPANESE COMFORT WOMEN

One Woman's Story

by Anthony Brown

FROM 1928 until the end of World War II, about 200,000 Asian women were forcibly drafted into sexual servitude by the Japanese Imperial Army.

These women, many in their teens, were often either tricked by offers of legitimate employment or abducted by Japanese soldiers and forced into so-called comfort houses. There they were forced to sexually please their captors, sometimes several at a time up to several times a day. To resist, invited beatings, torture and even death.

According to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a Swiss-based international women's rights organisation, they generally received little or no medical treatment even if they were injured in the process of rape and torture or became pregnant or infected with venereal disease.

Towards the end of the War, thousands were executed to conceal the existence of the comfort houses. In the Philippines, a human rights group has documented the cases of three survivors who bear the marks of where the Japanese tried to behead them.

About 60,000 comfort women survived the War and approximately one thousand are alive today, the youngest of whom is in her sixties. After decades of hiding what happened, they are now finding the courage to come out and tell their stories.

In the Philippines in 1993, about 150 women came forward when the *Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women* asked in a series of popular radio programs for comfort women to contact it.

One of these was Felicidad de Los Reyes. This is her story:

Felicidad was born on November 22, 1928 in Masbate, Philippines.

One day in 1943 three truckloads of Japanese soldiers from the garrison compound at the back of her school visited Felicidad's class. Her Japanese teacher had organised the students to perform songs and dances for the visiting soldiers. The Japanese army often introduced Japanese civilian teachers into schools in its conquered territories.

Felicidad, then only 14, was made to sing. The following day her teacher told the class that the soldiers were so impressed with the students' performance that they wanted to reward them. Felicidad was identified as one who was to be given an award and later that day two soldiers arrived to fetch her. They told her that she

International Women's Day, Manila, 1993 (Photo: CPCA)



would be given the gift at the garrison. Thinking that there might be other students there, Felicidad went along. But when she got there, she did not see any of her school friends. Instead the only other women she saw were doing the soldiers' cooking and laundry.

She became worried. She asked to leave. The two guards refused. Instead they took her to a small room in the compound and pushed her in. They told her that her gift was coming.

A few hours later five Japanese soldiers arrived. Three of them were in uniform and two in civilian clothes. One of them jumped onto her catching her by the arms and forcing her down onto the ground. When she struggled, another punched her in the face while another grabbed her legs and held them apart. Then they took it in turns to rape her.

Felicidad had no knowledge about sex. She did not even have her menstruation. So she did not understand what they were doing to her. She begged them to stop. But they just laughed and whenever she struggled or screamed, they would punch and kick her.



March 8, 1993, Manila (Photo: CPCA)

Surviving comfort women throughout Asia are now demanding justice from the Japanese Government for what happened to them.

They allege the Japanese Government during the War not only knew what its soldiers were up to, but that the system of sexual slavery was official government policy.

They argue that the authorities systematically planned, ordered, conscripted, established the army brothels and encouraged the abductions of women in countries occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army.

Besides seeking compensation and prosecutions of those responsible, they want the Japanese Government to admit its guilt. To date the Japanese Government has refused all their demands.

Confused and frightened and tired and in pain, she drifted in and out of consciousness. That night three more soldiers came and repeatedly raped her. For the next three days a succession of soldiers abused her.

The continual raping and beatings finally took their toll and on the third day she fell ill. Her body and mind could take it no more. But even though she was obviously sick, the abuse continued. Not even her fever drew pity from her rapists.

Finally on the morning of the fourth day, a Filipino interpreter working for the Japanese visited her. She told him she was very sick and wanted to go home to recover. Feeling sympathy for her, he let her out of the compound.

When she arrived home, her parents who had no idea where she was, cried after learning what had happened. Just the year before an older sister had been taken by the Japanese. She died in a comfort house.



Fearing the soldiers would come looking for her, her father hid her in a nearby village. She stayed there for about a year until the American army arrived.

After the War, Felicidad returned to her home town. But her experiences at the hands of the Japanese soldiers had left deep psychological scars. She found it hard to socialise and could not face going back to school. She felt dirty. She dared not tell anyone outside her parents. She was afraid of how others would view her if they knew the truth. So she buried it inside.

When she was 25 she moved to Manila where she met her husband. Before marrying, Felicidad decided she could not conceal her experiences from the man she was going to marry, so she told him.

They were married in 1956 and had six children and 15 grandchildren. But outside her husband, she told no one else for almost 37 years.

Anthony Brown is an Irish-born journalist based in Brisbane. He hosts a regular Saturday morning program on Radio 4ZZZ. Anthony has written several articles on Filipino women's issues for KASAMA. He also writes for *Green Left Weekly*.



Comfort women lead the IWD march, Manila 1993 (Photo: CPCA)

IN late June, Felicidad de los Reyes and Nelia Sancho visited Brisbane as part of a national speaking tour entitled *Women's Human Rights: Eliminating Violence Against Women in the Home and on the Battlefield*. Organised by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the tour was funded by a grant from the Office of the Status of Women.

The tour aimed to galvanise public interest and raise public awareness about gender-specific violence in the Asia and Pacific regions, in the belief that breaking the silence is a preliminary for ending the violence against women in the family and in war.

Continued on Page 16 >

PROSTITUTION AS CHOICE?

NINA is a young woman who can be found most evenings along Quezon Avenue with other 'pick-up girls'. She has already been caught twice in police street raids and arrested for vagrancy. She has served a short jail sentence (three days); her second will certainly be longer.

Nina was sent by her grandmother from the province to the capital to finish her schooling. During an evening out with school friends Nina used to hang out with, she was raped by two boys. Nina drifted to the streets after that and has been there for two years.

Malou works in a club in Angeles City as a dancer who can be taken out by clients upon payment of a 'bar fine'. She was once married, worked in a factory, and also as a domestic helper in Hong Kong.

The fact that many women return to the street, the bars and the clubs on release from jail, or after factory, household or other employment, is generally considered proof that the problem of prostitution lies with incorrigible women who continue to choose prostitution.

True, several other women are tricked, kidnapped, raped or otherwise coerced into prostitution. Particularly in countries in the South, countless others in dire economic straits find in prostitution their survival strategy. Untold numbers more have been so abused in childhood or in later life that the experience of prostitution becomes merely part of the cruel logic of their lives. But again, what of the women who appear to choose to be in prostitution?

When Malou worked in the canning factory, rising at dawn to be on time, doing a ten-hour shift, receiving just a bit less than the minimum wage set by law and no social benefits, having to parry off the sexual advances of her supervisor, wasn't she, at least, a laborer toiling with honor? And anyway didn't her male colleagues have to put up with the same working conditions?

In fact, aren't men equally poor, equally oppressed by an unjust economic order and the same bad labor conditions, as hard-hit by natural disasters or the effects of militarization on rural populations, as women are? Why then didn't Malou's male colleagues go into prostitution as well? Why didn't they apply at the countless bars, clubs or beer gardens that have signs announcing openings and where no references, no school degrees, no particular skills or qualifications are required?

The question is disingenuous, the answer obvious: Prostitution is about women selling their bodies.

Male Social System

But prostitution is not about women at all. It is about a male social system in place to ensure the satisfaction of male demand for sexual servicing and for objectified sex. The requirement, therefore, is abundant supply of women's bodies, although increasingly, such debased and dehumanized sexuality is also finding use for children's and men's bodies.

Male clients can specify the shapes and colors of bodies they want to use. On a strip of Quezon Avenue in Metro Manila, 'health' and 'entertainment' clubs have display windows of women wearing numbers for men to choose from. In Japan, agencies openly advertise the full range of bodies offered, from virgins to pregnant women. In Germany, Denmark and elsewhere, one can subscribe to catalogs of women and children, specially those from the South, offered for sale for sexual use. In increasingly technologized and sophisticated forms and representing huge money interests, pornography is a global growth industry that describes, informs, suggests and teaches the uses of those bodies.

In prostitution, it is not with human beings that men interact, but with objectified, dehumanized bodies. A sign in a bar in Angeles City, once home of the United States' offshore military facility, reads: "What is a woman? A support system for a pussy." The woman as human being does not exist in the enactment of male sexuality that is prostitution. A Swedish study describes prostitution as "male masturbation in a female body."¹

Question of Consent

In such a system, Nina's or Malou's individual consent or choice is completely irrelevant. Should they not consent, women are obtained through other ways – through trickery, threat, abduction and sophisticated forms of trafficking – for the supply must be ensured.

But patriarchy, through its social construction of sexuality, also creates the conditions and the conditioning to ensure women's consent. In countries such as the Philippines, femininity continues to be firmly constructed around notions of pleasing and serving men, sacrificing for them, depending on them. Marriage and prostitution rest on the same premises. Social mores reinforce on the women themselves the notion that their existence and fulfillment are hinged on a man. Rewards await those who conform to the traditional role of women in the family and adhere to the ideals of female sexual attractiveness, such as ubiquitous beauty titles, entertainment careers and the

¹ Hannah Olsson, *Prostitution*, Stockholm: Liber, 1981.

Amongst feminists the dialogue continues that by their consent, some women do choose to be in prostitution. Cecilia Hoffman tears this argument apart. (Reprinted From *Women in Action*, 1/95.)

plum prize — marriage to a wealthy man. The non-conformists, on the other hand, are slapped with social sanctions. In such a situation, how significant is the whole issue of consent? As Kathleen Barry points out, "Consent to be objectified is a condition of oppression." (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1995.)

And what do women consent to sexually? Filipino women, when referring to sexual intercourse with their husbands, partners or prostitution clients say: "He used me." Under patriarchy, whether in marriage or outside it, sex is a male prerogative, a male need, a male pleasure, a male right that must be socially recognized, including by women. Rape, marital rape, sexual harassment and prostitution are clear expressions of sexual power.

How do women live with the prostitution exchange of their bodies? Knowing full well how their own selves are not seen, let alone wanted, by their clients, women create a prostitution identity — other names and life histories, and all manner of pretences that conform to customers' specifications. These created identities and personalities also serve to hide away and protect the real self that continues to exist outside of prostitution. And recognizing the dehumanization done to their bodies, the women of Angeles City tell of bolstering their prostituted selves with drugs and alcohol to "drive away the shame," to "force themselves" to carry out what is required. With the years, says Malou, "What I couldn't take earlier, I now manage to accept."

There is yet another aspect to the prostitution of destitute or socially disadvantaged women, particularly women of a long-colonized people. The foreign or white client could be a potential saviour from poverty and backwardness if he can be brought to see and value the human being before him. A term that servicemen from the US military bases that occupied Philippine territory for almost a century coined to refer to the women they used, gives this naive and touching hope of a "white saviour" cruel irony. The term is LBFMs, for "little brown fucking machines fuelled by rice".

The men wanted mere machines they could use for sex; the women hoped for relationships and to become wives. The women of Angeles and Olongapo, where the largest US docking station in the Pacific once was, hoped to "become lucky" and marry US

servicemen. The few women who actually did were a demonstration of that possibility.

Malou and her friends talked of sometimes "falling in love" with clients. In this sense, prostitution was no mere money exchange for the women; it also meant the possibility of a true human relationship.

Crippled Sexuality

Does prostitution, this expression of male class power, then leave men unscathed? Are they always the profiteers of their own social arrangement of sexuality? Can men act out depersonalized, dehumanized, brutalized sex in prostitution, and a truly human experience of sex in an equal relationship with a non-prostitute woman?

Prostitution continually produces and reproduces a male sexuality crippled of emotion and of true human interaction, and that reduces the human experience of sexuality that can and should be fulfilling, joyful and life-enhancing to the empty, the cruel and subhuman.

"The prostitution exchange is the most systematic institutionalized reduction of women to sex. It is the foundation of all sexual exploitation of women. It is the prototype, the model from which all other sexual exploitation can be understood," Barry said.

It is the men who choose prostitution that are the debasement of women and of human sexuality itself. With their choice, they diminish the humanity of all women and men.

Cecilia Hoffman

New reference available from CPCA Brisbane's library:



Proceedings of the Human Rights Conference on the Trafficking of Asian Women • April 2-4, 1993 • Quezon City, Philippines • Organized by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia

Bontoc Villagers Protest Australian Mine Intrusion

BAGUIO CITY (NORDIS) June 3, 1995 -- Residents of barangay Mainit in Bontoc, Mt. Province, Philippines are threatening to "wage war" should an Australian mining company and two local mining firms which applied for mining rights over 3,900 hectares in this gold-rich barangay start operations.

The Australian Newcrest Mining Company (NMC) has applied with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for mining rights covering 81,000 hectares in Mt. Province (including Mainit), Abra and Kalinga-Apayao, said Engr. Catalino Corpuz, executive director of the non-government Baguio-based Mining Communities Development Center.

On the other hand, the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corporation and the Motañosa Mining Exploration Mining Company have entered into a memorandum of agreement to explore and tap the mineral resources of Mainit, Corpuz said.

Around 20 Mainit elders and barangay officials lobbied the DENR regional office here on May 31 for the revocation of the FTAA's (Financial and Technical Assistance Agreements) signed by Newcrest Mining Company with the Philippine government to mine in areas covering their barangay. Mainit folks also urged the revocation of the memorandum of agreement made with Lepanto and Motañosa Mining to operate in their barangay.

"If these mining firms will start mining operations in our areas, we will not be the only ones to wage war against them but also other tribes like the Bontoks downriver who will be affected by the mining firms' operations," said Mainit barangay captain Lucian Bongabong.

A petition signed by around 1,000 Mainit residents called for a stop to the entry of the mining firms. "These (mining operations) will destroy our sources of livelihood like farming and small scale mining due to forest destruction and denudation. Mining operations will also destroy our ricefields and rivers. Burial grounds will be desecrated aside from the fact that our customs and traditions will be subverted," read the petition.

The petition also said that tribal conflicts could erupt with neighboring tribesmen, particularly those affected by mining operations, since the people of Mainit will be held responsible for having allowed the mining companies to intrude into their area.

A Mainit elder said that in the early 80s, the Benguet Consolidated Inc., now Benguet Corporation, sent some men to Mainit to survey the area but they nearly got killed by irate residents. "The surveyors were blocked at the road junction (to Mainit) by the

women who took off their clothes to make the surveyors leave. When they persisted in entering Mainit, the menfolk chased them with their bolos," he recalled. The surveyors ran towards Bontoc but they were met on their way by Bontoc tribesmen who warned them not to return again to Mainit. "They never returned," the elder recounted.

Rolando Diomampo, chief of the geo-sciences and mining division of the DENR in the region said they will not just allow any mining company to operate in Mainit or anywhere in the Cordillera without public consultations. "The law says that public consultations must be held first before any Environmental Compliance Certificate will be issue to any mining company or individual over their mining claims," Diomampo added.

MCDC's Corpuz meanwhile said that the influx of foreign mining applications in the country is one of the effects of the 1995 Mining Act which gives 100 percent ownership of assets to foreign mining corporations.

Corpuz said that to date a total of 25 mining firms have applied for 48 FTAA's with the Philippine government to conduct mining operations in the country.

Alfred Dizon/Northern Dispatch

PEDOfile

Australian Accused of Rape and Sexual Molestation

OLONGAPO -- Victor Keith Fitzgerald, 62 of Darwin, Australia was accused of raping two girls between September and December 1994 aboard his yacht, the *Mariposa*, while it was moored at the Nagbaculao beach resort in Olongapo City. The child victims are aged 12 and 13 years old.

Preda Foundation said Fitzgerald "had multiple sexual encounters with Olongapo streetchildren from November 1993 to January 1994." Volunteers from Preda documented and videotaped the children's condition in the boat during the arrest of the Australian by the National Bureau of Investigation.

Preda said that other children who were forced into sex with Fitzgerald submitted testimonies against the Australian to prosecutors Manuel Medina and Emily de los Santos of the Department of Justice.

Based on some of the children's testimonies, they were sexually molested in various ways. They also accused Fitzgerald of giving them drugs to weaken their resistance to his sexual advances.

Fitzgerald is being arraigned in two separate cases filed against him by the victims in Olongapo City.

Source: ECPAT Philippines

PROFILE: Nagkakaisang Kababaihan ng Angeles City

THE Nagkakaisang Kababaihan ng Angeles City (NKAC, or United Women of Angeles City), an organization composed of women working in the 'entertainment industry' as well as urban poor women, was established in December 1994 supported by and in cooperation with the Integrated Socio Economic Program of the Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization (WEDPRO).

Some of the members of NKAC are former members of Lakas Kababaihan ng Angeles City (LAKAS), a multi-purpose cooperative registered in 1994 with the Cooperative Development Authority. The formation of LAKAS was the concrete result of organizing in Angeles City among women in the 'entertainment industry' which began in 1992-93, after WEDPRO finished the Bases Conversion Program for women in this sector.

NKAC decided to organize towards the attainment of women's empowerment. Recognizing the importance of cooperating with the women's desk of the local government of Angeles City, NKAC also liaises with the newly-established Women's Resource and Development Center of the Angeles City Center for Women's Affairs and Concerns (ACCWAC). Ms Susan Pineda, a local councilor and head of ACCWAC, has even articulated her interest and support in consulting with NKAC in their future activities.

In February 1995, WEDPRO and NKAC coordinated the regional consultation meeting of the 1st National Family Violence Conference. Eleven women from NKAC attended. In an attempt to directly address the issue of family violence, NKAC together with ACCWAC and other women's groups in Angeles City established a Task Force on Family Violence.

The establishment of a cooperative-style organization among women in the 'entertainment industry', which is probably the only one in the country, has not been without its problems. The so-called 'bar culture' which has inculcated divisiveness, competitiveness and distrust, made it difficult for the women to develop a less combative stance in dealing with each other. The educational attainment of the women, (the average in 1990 being 2nd year high school), has also been a stumbling block in terms of leveling off their understanding of issues. In skills-training, most expressed differing interests which they wanted to be attended to immediately. However, given the level of knowledge, the resources available, distrust with other people and personal constraints, attitudinal problems cropped up which either sidetracked or made the process slower and much more difficult.

Yet, despite all these problems and occasional frustration, the women have remained aware and willing to sort out their concerns and move forward. It is probably Filipino resilience and flexibility which has continuously helped the women propel themselves towards their goals despite all the odds. And NKAC is moving on, slowly, but with a wisdom of their, and LAKAS', experiences.



Lights off
Lights on...
earning
while young
and tender
starving
when old
and though
that
is
the life
Beerhouse
dancer
Lights off
Lights on...

Poem & image: ega carreon
Translation: gerry anigan

A postcard project of:
People's Global Exchange (PGX)
3B Potsdam St., Cubao,
Quezon City, Philippines



If the rough
edges of my heart
chafe you
hand it back to me

and I will weigh it in my palm
like a firm green apple
ripe for the eating
and then, taking this
old fruit peeler
plastic red
I will peel away, slice away
its calloused skin in one long loop
and give it back to you
virgin
soft, stripped of hardness, new

then will I please you?

by Kathleen Maltzahn, 1994



kung ang magaspang
na paligid ng aking puso
ay nakakasugat
ibalik mo ito sa akin

at akin itong titimbangin sa aking palad
tulad ng berdeng mansanas
handang kainin
at saka, gagamitin ko
ang lumang pantalop na pula

babalatan ko at aalisin
ang makalyong balat sa isang iglap
at ibabalik ulit sa iyo
birhen
malambot, walang kalyo, bago

ngayon, natutuwa ka na ba?

(Translation: Emere Distor)

Kathleen Maltzahn is an Australian who has lived in Manila for some years. She is a co-worker of the Uniting Church of Christ in the Philippines. (Her poem is reprinted from *Women in Action*, 2-3/94.) Emere Distor is a regular writer for *KASAMA* and a member of its editorial board. She is also the Brisbane coordinator of the Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia.

Is Prostitution Work?

♦ Maria's report from a Study Tour workshop on prostitution during the first day of the Australian-Philippine Dialogue: *Confronting Sexual Exploitation*.

"We decided as a group to reflect on the Pilipino word for 'work'. We say, *Hanapbuhay*. *Naghahanap ako ng buhay*. I am searching for life. So, when we work, this word, *hanapbuhay*, Filipinos speak of their poetic indigenous roots. And when we say we work, we mean we search for life, we sustain life, we affirm life, we create life. So within this consciousness, how can we say that prostitution is work? In our visual expression here*, we speak of our word, *hanapbuhay*, as the search of the inner being and the outer being. Therefore work in itself is a journey toward wholeness, towards integration of the inner and the outer search. When we work, we speak of our interconnectedness as human beings. We relate with other human beings, we relate with the family, with the society, we relate with the whole earth and human community. So how can we speak of prostitution as work when it violates life, when it is a life-threatening work, when it is a violation of human rights? Definitely there's no choice, there's no freedom in prostitution."

* graphic drawn by workshop participants to illustrate their point.

JAPANESE COMFORT WOMEN One Woman's Story

➤ Continued from Page 11

The final event of the Brisbane visit, a public meeting at the Miscellaneous Worker's Union Building in Spring Hill, enabled Felicidad and Nelia to tell their stories to the local communities, show slides, and raise public awareness about the cause of Filipino 'comfort women', the activities of *Lila Pilipina*, and the issues which still need to be addressed. After an opening by Mary Crawford, MP, Nelia and Felicidad - as always during the tour - spoke powerfully and sensitively about the issues to a hushed audience.

Chris Henderson, WILPF Brisbane

For information about the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia contact: WILPF QLD, PO Box 1523, Toowong 4066/Fax: 074 457 382 or WILPF SA, Box 2094, Adelaide 5001.



*I am a street girl. This is my life
Somebody has to pay the rent
I pay the price; I pay the price.*

Lyric from *Who's To Blame* written and performed by Ruby Hunter.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS HERSTORY...

IN February 1994, two women decided to come out in the Philippine *Sunday Inquirer* to talk about their choices. Feminist activist and writer Aida Santos and lesbian advocate Giney Villar broke the silence and invisibility of lesbian existence by discussing the politics and dynamics of their woman-identified relationship — a subject considered taboo in Catholic Philippine society.

The article generated interest enough for people to write about their experiences, support and disgust over the issue through the magazine. Despite some negative comments, lesbians and lesbian-positive women came from out of the shadows to reach out to these two women. Letters and telephone calls seeking counselling and information, requests for support groups, outpourings of feeling and insight from total strangers became a regular activity. Recognising the need to respond to these developments in a more systematic, sensitive and effective manner, Aida and Giney together with a dedicated group of women who were also working in lesbian advocacy, formed the Women Supporting Women Committee—WSWC. WSWC, currently a project of the Women's Education Development Productivity & Research Organisation (WEDPRO), is working towards the development of lesbian pride and a lesbian-positive society.

SWITCHBOARD is WSWC's monthly newsletter. It features news and articles of interest to lesbians and serves as WSWC's advocacy vehicle for lesbian issues. It circulates an average of 300 copies a month all over the country and abroad.

WSWC has hosted and participated in several lesbian-feminist fora and socials. It sponsored the *Women-Loving-Women Celebration: An Evening of Dance, Music, Poetry and Storytelling* and *Women Shindig* last February and March at the Dreams Cafe in Manila. Over a hundred women attended.

A current WSWC project aims to develop resource materials in the context of Philippine culture based on empirical data and current studies and research. The initial modules are: Lesbian Psychology, Lesbians and the Law, Stigmatisation, Lesbophobia and Coping Strategies, Lesbian Health and HIV/AIDS, Lesbian Sexuality, Lesbian Counselling, Violence Against Women, Hotline Counselling for Lesbians and their Families, and Feminism and Lesbianism.

The group is composed of professionals who volunteer their time and expertise towards the attainment of lesbian visibility and empowerment in Philippine society. It also cooperates with lesbian and lesbian-positive individuals and formations in the Philippines and abroad as part of its lesbian advocacy and solidarity undertakings.

WSWC recognised the importance of networking with all like-minded groups to align and collaborate on

common concerns and issues. It networks with: LesBond (Baguio City), The Group (Davao City), Bambang Tru-Friends Association (Nueva Vizcaya), The Lesbian Collective (Manila), Womyn (Manila), Shescapes (Manila) and ad hoc groups in Australia, Canada, and the US.

On the campaign side, WSWC spearheaded the formation of ALERT (Advocates for Lesbian Rights) as a response to the arbitrary dismissal of Beth Lim and Vangie Castronuevo from an NGO human rights group because of their gender preferences. This issue received media attention and spawned debate in the various sectors of the progressive movement.

Contributions and assistance for the continuation of its various projects, inquiries, requests and subscriptions to *SWITCHBOARD* may be sent through: WSWC, PO Box 44-43 UP Shopping Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

HIS STORY...



"Susmaryosep, this is against us. We will not allow two males or two females to get married... Imagine, if you have married two women who adopt a cat and dog and maybe that is called a family."

(Manila Archbishop JAIME CARDINAL SIN criticising the Philippine government's concurrence with a draft document for the Cairo Conference on Population and Development that extols "existing diversity of family forms", which to the Cardinal is a sinister-sounding approval of gay and lesbian marriages.)

PHILIPPINES AUSTRALIA SOLIDARITY 1995

Post Cold War Era Looks Familiar

To the long time friends of the Filipino peoples the political landscape of the Philippines in the post Cold War era looks depressingly familiar. With the departure of the US military bases, the underlying cause of the ongoing civil war in the countryside once again comes into stark relief. Eighty per cent of the population remain landless. In the rural areas where 75% of the population live the people are barely surviving below the poverty line while their livelihood condition continues to deteriorate. Under such general conditions of extreme poverty it is not surprising that the Philippines' top export commodity is its people. Blind to the suffering of the people, the Philippine government is carrying out the orders of the International Monetary Fund/World Bank to impose austerity measures and regularly hands over 40% of the national budget to service the country's foreign debt. The second largest portion of budget expenditure is allocated to the armed forces, national police and paramilitary units such as the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU).

Philippines 2000

The Ramos government is hailing Philippines 2000 and the Medium Term Development Plan of the Philippines as the economic road to prosperity. This strategy is based on developing the country into a major processing centre for export products by encouraging foreign investments and loans through attractive tax considerations, low wages, compliant labour unions, and land acquisition. The structural adjustment programs of the IMF/WB have forced unbearable austerity measures upon the people. The Philippine poor, urban and rural, are paying the cost of the country's debt. The removal of subsidy to rice and fuel plus oil and electricity price increases have raised the cost of commodities and transport. Social services have declined as a result of reducing government spending and the infrastructure decays as it awaits private development. Recent loan agreement with the IMF/WB required expansion of the value added tax. Industrial development, not agriculture, is favoured and the whole country will suffer increased pollution and environmental degradation.

Total War Policy Condemned

The counter-insurgency campaign carried out by the Philippine government since the Marcos military dictatorship, through Aquino's "Total War", and up to today's militarisation, is still fashioned upon the US-inspired Low Intensity Conflict policy. Picket line massacres, death squad murders and disappearances of church workers, trade unionists, peasant leaders and other activists in the popular movement continue unabated. In the rural areas, aerial bombardments and

forced relocations of entire villages such as in the Marag valley have created over 2 million internal refugees whose livelihood has been so disrupted as to result in widespread malnutrition and death from hunger and disease.

Call for a Negotiated and Just Peace

Recognising that the civil war in the Philippines is causing much hardship for the people, Justice and Peace advocates throughout the world have called for a negotiated peace based on genuine land reform and social justice for the poor and oppressed. Fidel Ramos, the current President of the Republic of the Philippines and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), has been the constant guiding hand in the counter-insurgency campaign since his days as Chief Martial Law Administrator under the Marcos dictatorship. The Ramos government is presently undertaking a variety of dialogues through the National Unification Commission (NUC) with the various armed factions among the AFP rebels, the Moro liberation movements and the National Democratic Front (NDF). It has not, however, opened participation in the peace process to the Filipino peoples as a whole. National security has top priority on President Ramos' agenda. The military budget has been increased to purchase new weaponry and reorganise the armed forces and national police. The death penalty has been reintroduced. The National Security Council is reactivated and strengthened. These, and other measures, point to the establishment of a sophisticated national security state. In more than 20 years of militarisation the AFP have been unable to suppress the Filipino peoples' broad general struggle for human rights, national liberation, self-determination and social justice. And, in spite of its current divisions, the revolutionary movement continues to enjoy significant support among large sections of the poor and oppressed.

Solidarity With the Filipino Peoples

In this general situation of political stalemate the peoples' movement is undergoing a widespread summing up of experience, determination of priorities, and reorganisation of its material and human resources. Friends of the Filipino peoples rejoice in the independent and diverse nature of Filipino grassroots democracy exemplified, as it is, by the creative spirit of empowering the poor and oppressed in the daily business of their own liberation. True friends of the Filipino peoples will continue to act in solidarity with all sections of the peoples' movement. The settling of such questions as the future direction, leadership structures, mass formations and activities of the peoples' movement can only be decided by Filipinos, principally in the Philippines, who may seek the

assistance from time to time of frank dialogue based on equality and mutual respect with their friends in Australia. The solidarity movement in Australia has proved itself over many years to be a broad force for unity with the authentic aspirations and causes of the Filipino peoples combining within its networks the full range of ideologies and organisational affiliations that comprise the Justice and Peace movement of the 90's. The solidarity movement in Australia is accountable to the peoples' movement in the Philippines as well as to the Filipino community here in Australia, to the Justice and Peace movement as a whole, and to the indigenous peoples of Australia.

Solidarity for Indigenous Peoples' Rights

We are accountable to the traditional custodians of this land for the precise reason that Filipinos and other non-indigenous peoples here in Australia further their Justice and Peace agenda while enjoying the benefits of the armed colonial occupation of indigenous land. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have never conceded one inch of indigenous land to the crown and are demanding their right to self-determination. As in Australia, the many indigenous peoples of the Philippines also struggle for their right to self-determination and control over their ancestral domain and resources. In both countries the indigenous peoples suffer under ethnocentrism and the spiritual chauvinism of a dominating Christian culture. In both countries there will be no peace without justice.

Australian Military Aid Immoral

The militarisation of the countryside, the organisation of vigilante death squads among CAFGU and other military elements, the mounting record of human rights abuses, and the continued detention of political prisoners by the Philippine government exposes the deep cynicism and immorality of the Australian government's grant of military aid. Justice and Peace advocates call on the Australian government to end all military aid to the Philippines government and, instead, to channel future aid through non-government organisations working in co-operation with the local communities in need.

Women's Agenda

Filipino women record the greatest number of cross-cultural marriages of all ethnic groups in Australia. Filipino women in Australia also record a rate that is 5.6 times higher than the national average for spousal homicide. Public campaigns with considerable media coverage have focussed on the issues of violence, sexual abuse, media sensationalism and stereotyping, sex tourism, serial sponsorship, and the bride trade. There are large numbers of organised women in the Philippines and in Australia struggling for the recognition of a women's agenda. The exploitation



of Filipino women and children through internationally organised sex trade continues and many people actively oppose Australian business interests in this trade. Australian media portrayal of Filipinas as sex objects, ignorant, greedy, or servile human beings is being challenged as racist denigration of the Filipino peoples and culture. In addition, the issue of increasing domestic violence, sexual abuse and homicide perpetrated against Filipino women and children in Australia over the last 15 years has mobilised Filipinos and other ethnic groups to openly oppose all forms and levels of abuse and exploitation.

Note: *Philippines Australia Solidarity 1995* is the current statement of SPAN (Brisbane) which has been submitted as a working draft document to the proposed SPAN conference.

Join Solidarity Philippines Australia Network or Subscribe to KASAMA

- ☒ JOIN S.P.A.N. - the annual \$20 membership fee for individuals (Concession \$15, Organisations \$50) includes 6 issues of KASAMA by post in Australia. We hold regular monthly meetings in Brisbane.
- ☒ SUBSCRIBE to KASAMA. \$15 for 6 issues by post in Australia. (a portion of your payment covers the cost of complimentary copies to other groups in the region.)
- ☒ Cash donations for solidarity work are always greatly appreciated. Please let us know if you wish to contribute to a specific project.
- ☒ Contact us if you would like to know about organised exposures with non-government peoples' organisations in the Philippines.
- ☒ Would you just like to know more about S.P.A.N.? Please let us send you a copy of our Aims and Constitution.

WRITE TO:

The S.P.A.N. Communications Centre,
c/- C.P.C.A., 84 Park Road, Woolloongabba Qld. 4102
or PHONE: (07) 891 5877 or FAX 24 hrs: (07) 891 6944



WOMAN, It is your RIGHT to be free from violence.
Stop violence against Women!

Poster: Women's Legal Bureau Inc., 1 Matimtiman Street,
Teachers Village, Quezon City, Philippines. Fax: 921 4389

Solidarity Philippines Australia Network

welcomes membership of individuals and organisations who support the struggle of the Filipino peoples for independence, freedom and democracy. Members are of diverse background including Filipinos and non-Filipinos. SPAN has close links with Filipino community organisations in Australia, the Philippines, and the Asia-Pacific region. We receive information from a wide range of Philippine NGOs and can provide resource material, slides and videos as well as speakers. (*Membership/subscription info: page 19*)

KASAMA... means friend, companion, comrade

Once again we offer you, our valued readers, an apology for bringing out a late issue. Covering three months, instead of the usual two, it grew by four extra pages and editorial efficiency suffered from jet lag and the immediate needs of reporting from the *Campaign Against Sex Tourism and Trafficking in Filipino Women Study Tour* to the Philippines. We will include more articles and material from the exposure and dialogue in the next issue.

It has been suggested that we reduce our stated publication frequency to five issues per year. This is a very realistic proposal since this has been our actual output since 1992, while at the same time the size of each issue increased to 16 pages. In addition, there have been enclosures with each issue to prepare. So, we have perhaps settled into the production schedule that works best for us right now. Another reality has been an increase in mailing costs. Issues exceeding 16 pages or containing a number of enclosures require almost double postage and an envelope. Please let us know if you have strong views on this.

The Study Tour participants returned with a mountain of written material and the tour coordinators would be only too happy to lend or copy it for you. The CPCA library in Brisbane is bursting at its seams. There are new references, fiction, poetry, magazines & newsletters as well as current news clippings. All the Study Tour material is available including Philippine media commentary during and since the tour. Phone Emere or Dee at CPCA Brisbane on (07) 891 5877 or Fax (07) 891 6944 for more information.

Copy deadline for the next issue of KASAMA:

October 1.

If undelivered please return to:

SPAN
c/- CPCA, Justice Place
84 Park Road
Woolloongabba 4102
Queensland, Australia