Report

The Women's Movement in the Philippines

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On the streets, in rallies and marches, in the coffeehouses, in classrooms and factories, in businesses and the professions, the women's movement in the Philippines has displayed a unique cross-class and nationalist flavor. Situating a feminist perspective and organization within a Third World nationalist movement presents dangers and opportunities for its health and growth. The unique history of the women's movement in the Philippines—growing out of the nationalist struggle—has contributed to international feminism by bringing the women's perspective and needs to bear on shaping the national agenda and attempting to deal with the contradictions of class through a genuinely cross-class movement.

This particular description of the women's movement in the Philippines is based on personal experience and some historical research over a twelve-year period. I worked in the Philippines from 1977–79 as co-director of Mennonite Central Committee, a church related development agency. Since 1980, I have returned to the Philippines seven times for two-week to two-month periods to conduct interviews and to lead fact-finding delegations. Although I do not work directly with any particular Philippine women's organization, I have participated in and witnessed activities of various women's groups. Thus this paper relies heavily on conversations with women directly involved in organizing and the printed statements which grow out of their organized events.

The characteristics of the contemporary Philippine women's movement—militant, nationalist and cross-cultural—are more readily understandable in the context of Philippine history. The strength and militancy displayed in the current women's movement have roots in the pre-Spanish period when women in this Pacific archipelago were active in social, economic, and political decision-making. The imposed Spanish colonial culture (1578–1898), which stressed male superiority, turned the tide against women, and the American colonial presence after 1898 reinforced male control of both economic and religious life. This control heightened the imbalance between social strata and further created an

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inequality between men and women, intensifying the conflict and thus the urgency for women to respond in a corporate and organized way.

The contemporary women's movement can look back on Philippine colonial history and find it dotted with stories of strong women who led in the resistance against foreign rulers. Gabriela Silang is probably the best known. In the eighteenth century she formed an army of two thousand men after her husband Diego was killed. They fought the Spaniards with homemade muskets, blowguns, and arrows. Gabriela was finally captured and hanged in full view of her followers. Many stories emerge of elite women during the colonial periods who dedicated their lives to alleviate the suffering of the poor, to fight injustice, and promote the rights of women. In addition to reports of individual heroism and sacrifice or locally led resistance, there are also examples of cooperative work and organizing on a national scale; for example, in 1937, during what is known as the commonwealth period of American colonialism, women won the fight for suffrage. They mounted a campaign which prompted almost a million Filipinos to ratify the amendment in favor of women's suffrage.

The current obstacles in a poor country like the Philippines are exacerbated for women. Women make up half the landless peasants and almost half of the factory and agribusiness workers, all of whom suffer because of inadequate pay, lack of medical benefits, and job safety. Two-thirds of all children under six suffer from some degree of malnutrition, according to World Health Organization statistics. International tourism is often a euphemism for prostitution which targets mainly women and children, and military rape is a standard interrogation procedure for women political detainees.

In response to contemporary problems, an energetic nationalist movement, composed of both legal and underground organizations, has grown up in the Philippines in the last two decades. In the context of the student radicalism of the 1960s which sought major changes in Philippines society, the first revolutionary women's organization was born. The organization, Makibaka (Fight Back) supported the goals of the underground New People's Army but also recognized that women suffer from political, clan, religious, and male authorities which are expressions of a feudal-patriarchal ideology and system. In response, Makibaka's organizational efforts were aimed at stimulating the formation of women's associations in both rural and urban areas.

When Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, Makibaka was forced to go underground, and they moved to the hinterlands of Quezon province to continue their struggle. Several of the Makibaka leaders were killed in a 1976 encounter with government military troops; however, for the most part, Makibaka apparently quietly flourished as an underground organization. During the brief democratic space early in

the Aquino administration, Makibaka sponsored several semipublic press conferences in early 1987 to remind Filipino citizens of its subterranean presence.

The flowering of lawful militant women's organizations duly registered with the government came into public view in 1984 with the founding conference of General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action (GABRIELA), the umbrella organization of various women's groups around the country. Named in honor of the Filipina heroine, Gabriela Silang, who fought valiantly for liberation from Spanish rule in the eighteenth century, GABRIELA is the largest nationalist women's coalition in the country. Its related organizations are active in almost every one of the seventy-three provinces in the Philippines. For purposes of brevity, feminist organizations like PILIPINA and other women's groups independent of GABRIELA will not be my focus here; rather, this paper will draw mainly from the GABRIELA experience.

The groundwork for GABRIELA started much earlier than the 1984 founding conference. The conference brought together already existing associations of peasant women, urban poor, women workers, tribal women, religious women, professional women, and housewives from the middle and upper middle class. Because the women's movement is rooted in the nationalist struggle, it was possible to create a cross-class women's coalition where the marginalized women have a strong voice. Though the problems of rich and poor are not yet resolved, the possibility of equal face-to-face encounters brings Filipinas closer to the heart of that dilemma and thus closer to a resolution. By providing a venue for poor, middle, and upper middle class women to act together, GABRIELA is developing a remarkable ability to include more diversity and to channel women's energies.

In the midst of a life and death struggle for Filipino control of their own political and economic life, the tension of dealing with women's particular agenda demands creativity. The women's movement in the Philippines is hammering out new ways of exposing and dealing with oppression in the crucible of day-to-day experience. Some of the women involved in leadership of GABRIELA and its member organizations had been in the militant nationalist movement for many years before they began to focus their energies directly on the oppression of women. Two such leaders are Nelia Sancho and Maita Gomez. Experience and grassroots exposure convinced the two that a strong women's organization was crucial if women were to successfully change their conditions. Years of dedication and commitment working on issues of economic justice within the nationalist movement earned Sancho and Gomez the trust and respect of the movement's decision makers. This helped pave the

way for the possibility of creating a genuine women's organization in the midst of a revolutionary nationalist movement.

"The Filipino Women's Manifesto," a mimeographed sheet prepared for the Women's Protest March, October, 1985 speaks poignantly of the national crisis and the women's crisis and links the problems of foreign intervention, economic inequality, and the particularities of the women's experience. Ferdinand Marcos was the dictator at the time the manifesto was written; however, the situation in the Philippines remains the same for most women under the presidency of Corazon Aquino, so the essential ingredients of the document are still relevant.

> Our nation is in crisis.
>
> We, the women know because we live the crisis everyday. This crisis has exacerbated the specific forms of oppression that we have to contend with as women.
>
> We are the housewives who can barely make ends meet because of the dwindling value of the peso and spiralling prices. We are the consumers, victims of monopolies, price fixing, hoarding and false advertising.
>
> We are the mothers who grieve over the future of children we can neither clothe nor educate.
>
> We are the peasant women who do not have access to basic social services, who do not have a voice in the decisions which affect our lives and who bear the double burden of unpaid labor at home and in the fields.
>
> We are the urban poor who live in extreme poverty, yet must defend our shanties and meager possessions against harassment and demolition.
>
> We are the women workers who suffer in sweatshops, receive extremely low wages, are sexually harassed at work and the last to be hired and the first to be fired, while profit hungry companies—both local and transnational—feed on our labor.
>
> We are the marginalized women who are forced to eke out a few pesos selling whatever we can, scavenging in garbage heaps and begging in the streets.
>
> We are the migrant women workers who are degraded as entertainers or who accept demeaning employment as domestics abroad.
>
> We are the mail order brides for whom marriage has become an escape from the shackles of poverty. We are the prostitutes who are dehumanized into selling ourselves as tourists' fare and objects of lust of American servicemen.
>
> We are the students whose minds are warped by irrelevant, uncritical and sexist education and who, as women, do not enjoy the same educational opportunities as our brothers.
>
> We are the women professionals who in every field, are limited to subordinate positions. We are the teachers who are paid starvation wages and are repeatedly deceived by broken promises.

> We are the women, who, in addition to all these, have been relegated to supportive and subordinate roles in society; who are discriminated against even in our laws; whose contribution to the productive and reproductive processes are not fully appreciated; who are treated as objects especially in media; who are caricatured as weak and dependent by our male oriented values and institutions.
>
> We are the street demonstrators whose legitimate protests are met with water cannons and truncheons, tear gas and bullets. . . . We are the women in the countryside whose peace has been shattered by intensifying militarization. . . . We are the martyrs who have been arrested, tortured, raped and murdered.
>
> And we say, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.
>
> We who make up the bulk of the silent majority, will no longer be silent. We who have been called the weaker sex, will no longer be cowed. We who have been relegated to the home will no longer be confined.
>
> In unity we will raise our collective voices, we will build our collective strength.

The particular tone and stance of GABRIELA, as expressed in the manifesto, is intimately connected with the way in which it began and the history of its leadership; however, the analysis and issue-focus obviously resonated with Filipinas because women's organizations sprang up quickly across the country in the 1980s.

I witnessed this resonance between the existing national women's organization and the local needs of women when I stayed with a farming community on the island of Mindanao several years ago. While visiting a community just outside of the city of Butuan in order to better grasp the rural women's situation, the men of the barrio, eager to entertain, showed me the ricefields and explained in detail the cost of inputs like fertilizer and pesticides, the cost of renting a hand tiller and of irrigation so the "miracle rice" will grow miraculously. "We are not officially organized, but we men meet regularly to discuss farming and economic problems," they told me.

In the evening, it was traditional for everyone to gather together for an informal discussion. During the dialogue, I asked if there was a women's group in the barrio. The women, seated at the edges of the room shook their heads. One of the more talkative men offered the comment that "The women are too jealous; they can't get along with each other." The women were silent, but as soon as the meeting was over they quickly surrounded me. "We want you to know why we don't have a women's group," began Mely, the oldest in the group. Plump, slightly stooped, work and worry lines in her face, she looked at me with blazing eyes, "We do the housework, look after our children, do the marketing and help in the fields. By the end of the day we are exhausted. We are not jealous; we are tired." A younger woman ex-

plained, "Then our husbands want to meet in the evening or they want to go see a movie in town. I have only young children, so I have to stay home and look after them." My hostess for the week, a quiet emaciated-looking woman added, "When we are frustrated we go to Mely's to talk. She gives us good advice." Mely concluded the discussion with a statement of hope, "We want to be organized as women. . . . Maybe the next time you come and visit us, we will be."

What are the possibilities for a young woman in the barrio? If her community is allowed to stay on their land, she could marry a farmer and do double duty in the home and in the fields like Mely and her friends. If her family loses the land or finds it impossible to make a living on its small acreage, she could go to the nearest town or city to look for work in a factory, department store or restaurant, usually at less than the minimum wage.

Women participate in large numbers in the Philippine workforce and are preferred by foreign companies because of their ability to do precise hand-and-eye work and of course, because employers hope they will prove to be obedient and uncomplaining. Over 80 percent of the twenty-six thousand workers at the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ) on the island of Luzon are women, almost all under twenty-five years of age. BEPZ is home for sixty transnational corporations, which import materials, use Philippine labor, and export all goods produced. Many women at BEPZ are active unionists, and they form the backbone for the national women's division within the Philippine's militant labor movement, the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) or May First Movement.

Young women are also recruited from the poverty-ridden barrios in the Philippines to work in the bars of Olongapo, the rest-and-recreation town adjacent to the American Naval Base at Subic Bay on Luzon island. Buklod, a women's drop-in center run for hostesses in Olongapo estimates that the majority of the fifteen thousand women are between ages 18 and 30. The women cite poverty as the major reason for coming to Olongapo, but other reasons given are broken homes, troubled marriages, a sense of adventure, and hope of marriage. Prostitution is technically illegal in the Philippines. Officially there are no prostitutes—only hostesses, waitresses, cashiers, entertainers or go-go dancers.

Clearly many of the issues which occupy the attention of the nationalist movement overlap with the concerns of Filipina women—control over their own economy which means control over wages and prices. GABRIELA and its member organizations have been active in the nationalist campaigns which emphasize these concerns and have brought a certain panache to these efforts.

A good example is the drafting of the new constitution in 1986–87. President Aquino appointed forty-eight members to a Constitutional Commission, but GABRIELA maintained that "the task of drafting this

new constitution is not theirs alone. Each and every Filipino woman, man and youth should be involved."[1] To that end GABRIELA organized nationally for women to produce tapestries from pieces of cloth that bore the demands, issues, and rights of women. Women from the coalition and member organizations visited communities, schools, factories, and other areas where there was a concentration of women in order to discuss women's needs in relation to the constitution. Each group discussion concluded with the women interpreting their oppression and demands on a piece of cloth. These pieces were collected and sewn together in one big tapestry during a camp-out in front of the building where the constitutional commissioners were meeting. It was then unfurled for the commissioners, the public, and the media.

GABRIELA articulated three major concerns: recognition and promotion of the rights and welfare of women; promotion of the welfare of the family and the rights of children; and the guarantee of the general economic, political, and social conditions necessary for the meaningful exercise of women's rights and for the full promotion of the welfare of women, the family, and children. GABRIELA specifically demanded that men and women receive the same wages for the same work and that they be equal before the law; in marriage that property management and disposal be by the mutual determination of both spouses; and that women have the right to maternity benefits and the right not to lose jobs because of pregnancy.

GABRIELA also focused on international economic and foreign policy questions. In order to promote genuine economic development, the women requested that the constitution guarantee "limits to the entry of foreign capital and multinationals, . . . trade relations based on equality and mutual benefit, control over our natural resources and the responsible utilization of resources for our needs and benefit." In order to protect freedom and national sovereignty, the constitution must, "institute a non-aligned foreign policy, institute a no foreign bases policy and keep the Philippines nuclear-free."[2] GABRIELA's national demands reflect their understanding that without national political and economic changes, women's specific situation will not change. The group also recognizes that its attitudes and participation now give it some credibility to influence decisions in the future. "The women of the Philippines have a lot to offer in the development of our country," says Nelia Sancho, "but we women can only have a voice in influencing the future of the country if we participate fully in the struggles for democracy and justice now."

[1]GABRIELA, "A Call for a Meaningful Constitution" (Quezon City, Philippines: GABRIELA, 1986), 2.

[2]GABRIELA, "Meaningful Constitution," 8.

The struggle, however, for specific women's needs in the midst of a political and economic revolutionary struggle also reflects the perception that unless women's demands are included in the nationalist agenda from the beginning, these demands may never be dealt with. Women's leader, Maita Gomez reflects on the frailty inherent in the roots of the Filipino women's movement as a result of a predominantly male-directed nationalist struggle: "We should recognize a weakness or rather a lopsidedness in our development as activists. While our involvement in the nationalist struggle has given us the decided advantage to swiftly build a women's movement, this same experience has only lately been infused with an orientation that recognizes the distinctiveness of women's oppression."[3] But Gomez also notes an advantage of rooting the women's movement in the nationalist struggle, "Having developed from nationalist and democratic movements, our women's movement today has some decided advantages. Years of painstaking organizing among different classes in society has given us the venue to build a multiclass or multisectoral women's mass movement. This movement organized along sectoral lines is in more of a position to give full play to the initiatives and contributions of women in different classes . . ."[4] Organizing the marginalized meant that peasants, workers, and urban poor women were able to form the backbone of the women's movement.

The middle class member organizations of GABRIELA did not come into being until after the murder by Marcos's soldiers of former Senator Benigno Aquino in August 1983. Aquino's murder and the rise of the urban middle class women's movement were separate but not unconnected occurrences. Plans had been laid for several years to start women's organizations within the middle and upper middle class. The murder of Aquino galvanized the urban middle class into action. They realized that if someone as well-known as Aquino could be killed in public, no one was safe. Aquino's death also introduced further economic instability in an already precarious investment climate. The national business class became convinced that Marcos had to go. The women from this strata of society were looking for a vehicle to express their sentiments. While many attached themselves to mixed organizations put together by predominantly male members of the upper class, others joined specifically women's groups.

One organization which bloomed during this time in response to the political situation was Women for Ouster of Marcos and Boycott (WOMB). The organization continued after Marcos fled, keeping the acronym and

[3]Maita Gomez, "Women's Organizations as Offshoots of National Political Movements," in *Essays on Women*, ed. Mary John Mananzan, OSB (Manila: St. Scholastica's College, 1987), 58.

[4]Gomez, "Women's Organizations," 59.

adding Giving Birth to a New Society under the word WOMB. The women held their public breakfast discussions or *Kapihan* in expensive coffeehouses, their presence adding a certain glamour to the street demonstrations. "Our theme is really, 'Women's Place is in the Struggle,' " says Myrna Arceo, a WOMB member and theology professor at St. Scholastica, an elite women's college. She brings her students—daughters of the rich—to urban poor communities and rural barrios to interact with the people and to reflect on what is happening in the country and to themselves. After years of experimenting with the teaching method of Paulo Freire, Myrna is experienced enough to confidently send the young women around the city to set up their own learning encounters. "There is a real change happening in these young women," Myrna said in 1987. "There's an openness among them that I don't remember in students a few years ago." The patient work of teachers like Myrna Arceo who have emphasized experienced-based learning is bearing fruit for the future by creating an aware middle class within the women's movement.

WOMB joined the many other women's organizations of GABRIELA despite the warning from organizers against the mixing of people from different social strata. These warnings were extended to Christian communities, that are part of a church that sees itself as multisectoral and open to all. The fear is that the peasants will not be comfortable in the presence of the landlords and the traditional feudal relationship will continue. Nelia Sancho explained, "The women's movement needs the skills, experience, contacts, and money of middle and upper middle class women. This is a struggle for equality for all, but we in the middle class should understand the realities of our country from the perspective of our poorer sisters in order to make our contribution."

Middle-class and college-educated women have provided resources and staffing for health seminars as well as pilot socio-economic programs for peasant and urban-poor women. They have also helped with putting together radio programs since radio is the primary source of information and entertainment in both rural and urban areas. The programs include mini-dramas, songs, interviews with women, and news. Middle-class women have also helped in conducting seminars on low-cost visual media which can contribute to making women's education more effective and livelier. Women participants are encouraged to visualize their own ideas and then produce them in cartoons, caricatures, silkscreen, posters, charcoal drawings, and lettering. The women's movement also emphasizes developing writing skills. Most people in the Philippines can read and write at some level; but too frequently at school, writing skills are learned in English, which is ineffective for the vast majority of Filipinos who still express themselves in Tagalog or Cebuano or one of the many dialects in the Philippines. A spokeswoman for the Women's Studies and Re-

source Center (WSRC) in Davao explained the need for women writers' workshops, "Now women will write about themselves and use this means to advance their emancipation process." The WSRC also published participants' evaluations after one writing seminar. A forty-seven-year-old farmer wrote, "It was gay in the seminar as we worked together with enthusiastic and alert lecturers. At the start I felt insecure seeing that I was the least educated in the group. I soon found out this was not true because I could write after all."[5]

Middle- and upper-class members of the women's movement ran for Congress in 1987 and served on the Constitutional Commission, but much of their agenda came from the needs and analysis of the urban poor, women workers' and women peasants' organizations. The Philippine women's movement has demonstrated a remarkable ability to absorb and use the strengths of cross-class plurality by mounting campaigns around issues which affect everyone's life. A glimpse of this plurality was evident in 1984 during a three-day women's walk to the Bataan Nuclear Plant, over one hundred kilometers from Manila. The plant has since been mothballed by the Aquino administration, but in 1984 residents in the area were terrified that it would go on line. The reactor itself had safety problems, and the site was situated on an earthquake fault on the slope of a volcano in an area subject to tidal waves. Even the Marcos-appointed mayors of the neighboring towns were opposed to the plant. The concern about the nuclear plant reached women from all strata of society. The march began at Ayala Avenue, center of the international business district of Makati in Manila, with a rally attended by many well-dressed professional women. In addition to the jeepneys (jeep engines with elongated bodies which seat twelve, used as public transportation in most towns and cities of the Philippines) rented for the occasion, several sleek-looking private cars joined the slow motorcade procession out of Manila.

I was assigned to an air-conditioned car with an obviously wealthy Chinese-Filipino family. The women were well-dressed and laden with jewelry. The only person who looked out of place in the car was a young woman in a simple t-shirt, jeans, and thongs. It soon became clear that she was a coordinator of the march. Inbetween giving directives to runners who occasionally walked by the car, she explained, "The police might target the organizers at the beginning of the march, so extra precautions had to be taken." The plump Chinese women turned around from the front seat and smiled at me. They (upper class Filipinas) and I (a foreigner) *were* the extra precaution. When the motorcade reached the outskirts of the city, the organizer hopped out, pulled me

[5]*Womenews* 14 (April–June 1987) (Women's Studies and Resource Center, Rm. 207, Santos Building, Malvar Extension, Davao City, Philippines), 9. (Translated from Cebuano.)

with her, and the air-conditioned car sped away in the direction of Manila. The remainder of the protest march was on foot, predominantly by urban poor, farmers, and workers.

During the antinuclear march, I glimpsed yet another aspect of the commitment to work within the nationalist movement—the importance of the changes which men must make in order to build a society of equality and mutual respect. I realized, for example, during the three-day march that the men and women of the Manila press on this trip were no ordinary writers and photographers. They worked cooperatively, with virtually no competition between them. Though they rode in the media jeepney while most of the participants walked, they shared in the meager food and lodging of the rallyists (the floor of a school gymnasium one night and benches of a church the next night). A few of them had themselves been political detainees at one time.

The women led the march through central Luzon and at each town local demonstrators greeted the marchers and escorted them to the town plaza. After two days of walking under the hot sun and attending late evening meetings, the exhausted women orchestrated their grand finale. Homemade torches flaming, they began to march into the night, led by the two former beauty queens, Maita Gomez and Nelia Sancho. Ominous storm clouds in the afternoon developed into an evening thunderstorm which quickly extinguished the torches. The rain lashed against the resolute faces of Maita and the other women walking behind the jeepney. They were gasping for breath against the downpour, as water literally streamed down their faces. Then suddenly someone yelled and the procession stopped. A young man shaking with the cold was stuffed into our already overcrowded media vehicle. One of the Filipino photographers quickly put away his camera equipment and grabbed a towel and t-shirt from his bag. He removed the wet shirt from the shaking figure, tenderly swabbed him with his towel and offered him a dry t-shirt. His instinctive act of human kindness shamed me, because all I could think about at the time was my own discomfort—no space for my legs in the cramped vehicle, clothing damp and cold, rain spilling through the pathetic plastic covers hung over the open windows.

I watched this display of compassion from a member of the working press and remembered the words of Carolina Malay, National Democratic Front spokesperson, as she described what happened to men and women in the nationalist movement. "One difference is that the men cry more easily and the women cry less than their counterparts in the broader Philippine society." The development of courageous women and compassionate men is an historic process, even more impressive when it arises in the context of poverty and militarization, where the necessary leisure to mentally process internal change is not available. This change

is not so much an intentional goal as a by-product of working together on the pressing needs of economic and physical survival.

However, a nagging question remains which Filipina feminist Jurgette Honculada describes as "the division of human labor into production of goods and services on the one hand and the reproduction of labor in terms of maintenance and in producing the next generation."[6] Jurgette Honculada, a member of a Philippine feminist coalition called Pilipina, points to the double burden of home and work duties and says its resolution is of extreme urgency for poor women in the Philippines. Mely and her friends whom I met in the barrio near Butuan faced this double burden. They had not yet joined a national women's organization in which poor and rich women could sit down together and witness the implications of gender oppression in a class society.

Despite Sancho's implacable confidence in the call for women to join together based more on what they can contribute to the shaping of the national agenda than on what immediate benefit they can receive, this cross-class and urban-rural mix can not proceed without organizational problems and tensions. I glimpsed this during a visit in early 1987 to the GABRIELA office in Quezon City. A predominantly female American lawyers' group were eager to talk with Filipina women, and GABRIELA determined that the professionals would fit best with our group, so we waited at the office for our resource person. Time passed and she did not show up, but other women—peasants, squatters, and workers stopped by the office and, noticing the visitors, sat down to chat. A few hours later, Regina, a high school vice-principal, swept in and joined us. Well-groomed, manicured nails, a hint of perfume, she carried herself with pride. "I'm very sorry," she said, "but there is a demonstration today to protest the massacre of the peasants in Manila last month. I had a lot to prepare." Lita, the peasant representative who had been chatting with us, smiled and said, "Yes we know—I am speaking at the rally."

Before Regina's entrance, Elly, a woman from the urban poor community of Navotas described the struggle in her household about the responsibility for daily chores. "I just had to make my husband understand that our political ideas and work were really the same and if he believed in equality, it had to be practiced in our house, too. But what really persuaded him to help out was how tired I always looked. He really loves me and felt sorry for me." In addition to her organizing work in her neighborhood, Elly is a vegetable vendor in the local market. We asked Regina the same question about democracy within the home. "Oh, well fortunately I don't have to ask my husband to help, because

[6]Jurgette Honculada, "Women's Double Burden: The Question Which Will Not Wait," in *Kamalayan: Feminist Writings in the Philippines*, ed. Pennie S. Azarcon (Quezon City: Pilipina Press, 1987), 27.

I have a helper who does all the cleaning and cooking. My husband is a lawyer and he is too busy for that sort of thing." I looked at Elly and Lita. They were sitting expressionless, their heads down. "Will your helper be at the demonstration this afternoon?" we asked Regina, "Oh, no, she has extra work in the house because I had so much running around to do in preparation for this action." Elly and Lita glared. The moment passed quickly and the discussion moved on perhaps in deference to the "foreign friends." Later the same afternoon, we saw Lita, Elly, and Regina arm-in-arm at the rally in support of the farmers.

Honculada writes, "Where no real child care support exists, state sponsored or otherwise, the emancipation of middle-class women hinges on the subjugation of a sub-class of women—household help—however benevolent the terms of the subjugation might be. . . . Until feminism and socialism can adequately address this core of female oppression through such short term measures as socialized child care and equal pay for work of equal value and through a long term vision that posits freer and more creative structures, roles and relationships, . . . the liberation of one half of humanity shall remain an unredeemed promise of the socialist vision, and feminism will never mobilize the revolutionary potential of women as women and as classes in transforming the old society into the new."[7]

The summary of the women's movement in the Philippines properly belongs to the women there. What follows is an excerpt from a poem written by Filipina researchers in 1983 after working on a social research project on the situation of women. They reflect on the process the women's movement in the Philippines has chosen to resolve the contradictions of class and gender oppression: "But we have found a way to survive using our pain and keeping us whole./Our past is one long thread—sewing our present weaving our future./Let us press forward and break the silence./Sew our problems into demands./Let us find ourselves in the drama of history-making."

[7]Honculada, "Women's Double Burden," 29.