

## Paghubog, Pagwasak at Muling Pagbubuo ng Pagkataong Babae\*

MAUREEN C. PAGADUAN, ANNA MARIE O. DIZON  
and SALOME B. QUIJANO

(Condensed and Translated by Jo Florendo Lontoc)

A comprehensive institutional work, the study tracked various aspects of the lives of eight women torture sufferers persecuted by the military for their participation in the Movement. Researchers extracted the respondents' view of themselves as women and human beings and traced it to the experience of their lives. The study showed how this view was vital in the way the respondents dealt with their experience of arrest, torture, imprisonment, and release. The study, therefore, did not limit itself to their experience of torture, or the political involvement that led them to it, but explored and described deeper personal histories and wider societal influences that shaped their self-concepts as women. Furthermore, it highlights a rehabilitative care-giving concern for the respondents. In the end, the study provided a forum for the respondents and the researchers, all of whom were women, which evolved into a support group during the study. Hence, the methodology of the study is feminist and participatory. The forum led to an opening up of respondents—which is crucial in that the center of the forum is trauma and repression. Ultimately, the study makes an important contribution, not only in helping its respondents, but also in the campaign to help people of similar traumatic experiences and in the campaign to understand the phenomenon of women as subjects of torture in all its forms.

Freedom from torture is an absolute right. Like the basic right to life, there is no justification whatsoever for torture.<sup>1</sup> Despite the universality of this principle, torture and other violation of human rights of prisoners, political or otherwise, continue to be a documented fact of life in the Philippines.<sup>2</sup> Women victims' perspective on torture, however, remains unexplored. Although research abounds on torture, most studies are limited to the incident of torture. There is a general lack in the documentation of lives of sufferers, much less women. The Philippines, particularly, lacks studies on torture as a violation of women's rights.

This study hopes to make a contribution to address this gap. It takes into consideration the victims' lives from their childhood to their present, therefore, including comprehensive cultural and value-formation histories. The researchers felt this consideration as vital in studying experiences of torture and the aftermath of these in the victims' lives. Integral in this study is the issue of womanhood of the respondents.

\*Moulding, Destruction and Reconstruction of Womanhood. This research paper was funded by the U.P. Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

### **Objective of Study**

This study was made particularly to depict how the personhood of women torture victims had been formed in society and the women's own views on their personhood. Therefore, the study did not limit itself to detailing the specific experience of torture but also its implications on the sufferer's life, family and community relations, and coping mechanism. The study aimed to draw findings sensitive to feminist and gender issues.

The study also intended to provide a forum for women torture victims to share experiences and give advice and support to one another. The study aimed at helping in the campaign against torture.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although torture is a political rights issue, the political activities and beliefs of the respondents were not focused upon. Politics was only tackled in relation to the impact of torture on them as women. Politically prepared, the respondents had resolved in their mind, for example, the reality and possibility of torture and that it would be sexual, they being women.

Because the study was first of its kind, it did not concern itself immediately with a specific framework. After several deliberations with consultants, the study followed an exploratory and descriptive path, from which conceptual connections may be made based on feminist and psychological theories. The study hopes to contribute in articulating a definite framework in the future.

### **A Review of Related Literature**

The scope of the study is comprehensive and can be divided into three major parts: 1) formation of the self during youth, 2) the incidence of torture and its effect on the respondents' feeling of being whole and complete (*pagkabuo ng pagkatao*), and 3) self-rebuilding. Studies abound specific to each part. For the issue of torture, research and firsthand monitoring are continuously provided by Amnesty International, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, GABRIELA, among others. However, since this study aimed to include the issue of personhood and womanhood, it would have to delve into deep emotional and mental issues.

For self-formation, the following articles are the main related literature: "Religion in the Home" by Lourdes Luz-Samaniego, "Character Education in the Home" by Luz A. Zafra and "Children and Parents" by Lilia A. Villa, all found in *Talking Things Over with the Growing Filipina*, a compilation edited by Pura Santillan Castrance.<sup>3</sup> According to Villa, the power structure within the family while the children are still small is usually simple. Centered on the parents, power is unchallenged by the children. As children grow up, they acquire physical and mental empowerment. They begin to question, analyze and make judgments. Their parents are not exempt from their questioning eye. In this stage, conflict between parents and children arise. Zafra says the home serves as the factory where the personhood of children is shaped more or less permanently. The home therefore is responsible for the characters of its members.

On the one hand, these articles point to the home as the main factor in the production of personhood. On the other hand, Salome B. Quijano, in her college thesis entitled "Mga Impluwensiya sa mga Batang Lansangan ng mga Istrukturang Namamayani sa Lunsod ng Olongapo" — (Influences of the Prevailing Structures in Olongapo City on Street Children), points to wider structures as the major factor.<sup>4</sup>

These two opposing views are synthesized by Loreta Makasiar-Sicat in her dissertation entitled "The Political Attitudes of Young Filipinos: A Study in Political Socialization".<sup>5</sup> Here, Makasiar-Sikat identified two channels of socialization: family and media. She does not set aside the role of religion and pointed to it as one of the providers of high values to its members.

Renato Constantino's *Parents and Activists* is cited to provide a view on the nature of conflict between parents and activist children.<sup>6</sup> Parents, he says, cannot accept their children choosing a life that is difficult, with little security and money, full of risks and life threatening.

Home, community structures, religion, activism: These factors on personhood and value system were looked at by this study in trying to see how the respondents viewed the destruction that occurred in themselves owing to the difficulties they encountered.<sup>7</sup>

In documenting this "destruction," the study looked at a 1991 report of Amnesty International entitled "Women in the Frontline."<sup>8</sup> It says that women with strong values, who are political activists, community organizers and insistent about their rights are prone to abuse. At the same time, weak-willed, young women also leave themselves open to sexual abuse and shame. In the end it is not the qualities of weakness or strength that makes a woman open for sexual abuse but her being a woman.

This report is also useful for its perspective on rape, which defines rape as attack on women's dignity as person. It is traumatic physically and emotionally. In a report made by the GABRIELA Commission on Women's Political Rights entitled "Because We Dare to Struggle,"<sup>9</sup> rape in the torture of political prisoners is a means to make the woman implicate herself and others, and break her spirit in order to keep her as captive to the military power.

More insight into rape as an act of violence against women is provided by the paper of Isabel Duque, Teresa Rodriguez and Soledad Weinstein entitled "Violence Against Women: Definition and Strategies."<sup>10</sup> Here violence is related to social exploitation and oppression, where the domination-subordination structure supports forms of violence. Oppression is both a result and elemental in supporting the dominant force. Authoritarian relations within the family results in and adds to the authoritarianism in society. Playing into this structure, the family breeds violence and conditions a person to accept violence.

Margaret Schuler elaborates on violence in her article "Violence Against Women: An International Perspective."<sup>11</sup> She says that violence is imbedded in gender as a result of cultural, socioeconomic and political power relations. The rape and torture of detained women by their captors are most apparent manifestations of the state's support of gender-based violence.

Psychological preparedness, especially in the case of activists, will not prevent them from feeling fear the moment they get arrested. This is what Satur Ocampo says in his article "For the Masses, With the Masses."<sup>12</sup> The experiences of torture are further studied by Dr. June P. Lopez in her paper "The Filipino Survivors of Violence: Recovery and Reintegration."<sup>13</sup> Lopez claims that torture victims tend to blame

themselves and doubt their sanity. Torture, for Lopez, aims not merely to obtain information but to destroy a person's moral. As a psychiatrist, Dr. Lopez says it is vital that the victim gain back his or her self-esteem, and this can be achieved through the victim's coming back to pre-trauma situation, far from any inducement of traumatic symptoms, and being productive.

Other studies were used in the study, particularly in dealing with the respondents. They include Lone Jacobson and Peter Vesti's *Torture Survivor—A New Group of Patients*<sup>24</sup> which talks about care-giving and Anna Marie Hilsdon's *Madonnas and Martyrs: Militarism and Violence in the Philippines*<sup>25</sup> which talks about civilian-military relations and military discourse on sex and violence. The latter shows the imbedding of sexual and gender discourse within social institutions.

### Analytical Framework

Three texts formed the basis on which the study made its analysis. The first one is "The Valuing Process Among Caregivers" by Edicio de la Torre,<sup>16</sup> otherwise known as Ed's Framework. The concept of "kapwa" (fellowman) provided by Virgilio G. Enriquez's *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience*<sup>17</sup> is integrated into Ed's Framework to analyze the respondents' social nature. An analytical framework for the experience of trauma and recovery is provided by Judith Lewis Herman's *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*.<sup>18</sup>

Ed's Framework presupposes that the goal of the self is peace. Peace is then related to security and well-being. One feels peace when secure and well. Herman puts the issue of security forward as necessary in recovering from trauma. Herman says that torture victims experience loss of sense of security, in that their mind and feelings become hard to control. They do not immediately feel secure even after re-establishing relationship with people.

De la Torre and Herman agree that natural sources of support are major factors in recovery. De la Torre identifies these sources as fellowmen while Herman specifies them as family, loved one and friends.

De la Torre also says that another factor in attaining peace is empowerment, that is, realization of ability or things in the self from which a person can start anew, gain strength, self-knowledge and self-organization. Herman includes this process in a second stage of recovery she terms as remembering and mourning. Remembering and mourning can be construed as a process toward identifying what De la Torre terms as the subject's strengths and abilities.

De la Torre says that recovery from trauma is a process of establishing peace while Herman says it is reconnection.

This analytical framework resulted from the difficulty of tackling torture and feminist issues that are usually given different approaches. Torture usually requires clinical study while women's issues are employed with non-traditional methods such as participatory research, autobiography, and group discussion. What should the study employ? Does the issue of women and torture deserve a wholly separate valuing and importance? The study employed a combined participatory approach of autobiography, group discussion, and clinical review of the cases of each respondent. Coordination between the researchers and respondents took the form of counseling sessions, where the researchers could not help but be one with the respondents.

Sensitivity of the respondents to questions was considered; thereby influencing the method of study. Their responses were therefore allowed to become more confessional and products of their own words and logic. The study gave more importance to what the respondents perceived as the causes and meaning of things. This also meant the researchers lose the usual scholarly distance. But this was necessary to elicit the most participation from the respondents, as the respondents remained apprehensive about the stigma in society that "coming out" entailed.

As a result of the study, the respondents themselves were able to form some kind of a temporary support group where they got to compare notes on their experiences and goals.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

### *I. Social Standing of the Respondents*

Eight women freely responded to interviews. The youngest was 37 and the eldest was 53. All stepped into college but only four finished it. They took different courses: engineering, chemistry, biology, agriculture, journalism, secretarial and social work. After detention some went back but failed to finish school. Six came from financially stable families. All had both working parents except for three whose mothers worked in the house. Two came from poor families and helped earn income during childhood. Three grew up in Manila and the rest came to Manila only during college. Six came from families of five to eight siblings, while two had two and three siblings.

At the time of the study, only one was single and the rest had husbands and children. Those with families had two to four children. The respondents were employed and one was the sole breadwinner of her family. They worked in NGOs except for two who were government employees. All of them either continued participating in political movements or extending direct service to people. All had houses of their own although they were still connected with their families of origin.

### *II. Formation of Self during Youth*

#### *A. Relationship with Parents and Siblings*

*Gender Formation.* All respondents, except one who did not mention it, said they grew with their parents. All said they lived close to their relatives. The five who had relatives in the house all had a grandmother living with them. Four described their childhood with their families as happy.

All tended to provide greater detail about their relationship with their fathers than their mothers. All said that during their childhood, their mothers did not appear to them as having strong personalities, although one said her mother was strong but only after her father's death. Most associated their mothers with tears, domestic chores, and lack of time to spend with children due to work. One said she was closest to her grandmother, two said to their fathers, and one said her relationship with

her mother was as sisters. Three said their fathers were strict disciplinarians and one said it was her mother and grandmother who were such. One expressed admiration of her mother for her strength in facing problems. Three said they were favorites during childhood. One was a favorite grandchild, one was the favorite of her mother reportedly because of her beauty and intelligence, and one said she was favorite not only of her family and relatives but also her neighbors and friends.

Of note, two seemed to know themselves at an early age — one admitting irritability and having a temper while the other to being quiet and introverted.

*Affirming Self-Esteem.* Six of the respondents remembered being their parents' pride, mostly because of their achievements in school. One said her parents were proud of her even before she accomplished anything. However, most felt that the pride was accompanied by expectations, such as finishing school, finding a good job and being a good help to the family. One said her parents did not expect anything from her.

They felt they had to give something to their parents in exchange for their care. Some tried to do well in school and those who did not finish school felt sad for their parents.

*Conservative and Gender-Related Rearing within the Liberal Family.* Three persons were cited repeatedly as the source of their values: their father, mother and grandmother. A few cited school and teachers. The rest mentioned siblings, friends and relatives. From their family, they learned about freedom of thought, respect for elders, friendship, generosity, openness, being good children, faith in God and diligence in life.

Most of the values they got from their mothers were being helpful, love of neighbor, neighborliness, thriftiness and good housekeeping. One said she learned the value of liberalness from her mother. From their fathers, they learned the value of freedom, aggressiveness, endurance, determination and liberalness. They claimed they saw both sets of values in the way their grandmothers reared them. From school, the respondents learned the values of respect for elderly, honesty, good grooming, critical thinking and giving importance to accomplishments.

The respondents, except two, said they were taught God and religion at an early age. All claimed to come from religious families and to have grown up with faith in God under conservative and church-going parents.

#### B. Discovery of Self and Sexuality

*The Issue of Sex in the Family.* In the cases of the respondents, it appeared that gender construction intensified during their adolescence. All respondents said there were no sex-related prohibitions imposed on them during childhood. Two said, however, there was favoritism in their family due to sex. All in all, they perceived no difference between how male and female children were reared in their families.

The respondents noticed a differentiation in their parents' treatment of their male and female children as the children reached puberty. All noted an imposition of double standards at that stage, except for one who did not have brothers and one whose brother was much younger than she. One could not remember being restricted at all while the other one was free when she decided to work, go to Manila alone and study. Double standards consisted of preventing the young woman from going out with males during the night, restriction in attending parties, prohibiting bicycle rides, conversing with males and sleeping out. They were told to maintain hygiene and be responsible for younger siblings.

*Sexual Violence and Trauma: Crises in Women's Lives.* Asked about problems they encountered while growing up, the respondents mentioned their fathers. All, except one who pointed to a cousin, said their fathers caused problems during their youth. One accused her father of abusing her sexually. One accused a cousin of sexually abusing her. One was hurt by her father's womanizing and alcoholism. One's family suffered when the father lost his job. One father hurt his wife repeatedly, one got sick leaving the respondent to take care of him, and one died leaving his family to suffer and get separated from one another. One respondent justified the violent ways of her father by such reasons as the father's own traumatic childhood, disappointment over his own failure in school and discouragement and weakened rationality. Another blamed her mother for being strong-willed and not following the father making him look for other women.

To cope with these afflictions, the respondents had various ways: hiding the anger, blind obedience, avoiding the parents, and considering strictness as part of the process of discipline. A respondent openly resisted her father's spanking, and one matched her mother's anger with hers. One of two who were burdened with heavy responsibilities accepted the parents' strictness but later got sick of them. The other endured on such responsibilities.

One who suffered sexual abuse from her father was paralyzed with shock while the act was happening. She kept everything to herself afterwards and eventually distanced herself from the entire family. She suffered crying spells and sleepless nights and later post-traumatic symptoms as dysmenorrhea and stomach acidity. The respondent who was abused sexually by her cousin also did not report the crime believing that what took place was a sin that implicated her. She feared the reaction of her parents. When she grew up she had a phobia of men and sexual arousals that left her confused.

One of these two sexually abused women turned to her studies, did away with her grief and concentrated on making a weapon out of her strength. The other one turned to religion by going to church and relieving herself of her fears in the Confessional.

*Sex Education from Outside the Family.* All respondents said sex was never discussed and was even prohibited to be mentioned in the family. One said the matter was discussed with the children in the form of warning, that is, a woman gets pregnant when she allows herself to be kissed. When they reached puberty and started to menstruate, one relied on a household help for advice, one got worried when her breasts failed to gain largely, and one was so shocked with the blood of her first menstruation that she soaked herself in water and refused to get out for shame.

All said they learned about sex in school, although some said they had previously read or seen it through media. Most treated the issue jocularly and some only became fully aware of it in marriage. One did say she saw sex and bodily changes as natural, but that it was not a thing discussed in her family.

*Gender Identity: Woman as Separate from Her Body.* Two common elements can be seen in the stories told by the respondents about their

*growing up. First is the oneness of their personhood and womanhood, and second is their insistence that they grew up free from what they saw as a gender-based kind of rearing. This resulted in their acceptance of themselves: what they were, which things were important to them, and what they wanted to be when they grew up.*

They did not rebel against or resisted the way they were raised. However, in terms of sexuality, the respondents believed in the separation of their personhood from their sex. They did not seem to see their person as sexual. This might be the result of society's and their own treatment of sex, which is marked by suppression of facts, promotion of fallacies, restrictions, lies and others. The body becomes separate from the person. The body becomes a mere instrument or tool for what is perceived as larger purposes. Sexuality is not acknowledged and sexual needs are not attended to.

Escapism and self-incrimination marked the reaction of the two respondents to their sexual abuse. The one abused by her father turned to having an early romantic relationship and immersing herself in work. One turned to artistic endeavors. While this reaction showed the inseparability of sex and their personhood, this was not acknowledged. At the time of the study, the lives of the two were marked by feminism. They believed in healing themselves by dealing with this "separation" in themselves.

### ***III. Strengthening of Self, Political Beliefs and Personal Relationships: Self-Determination and Effect on Family Relationships***

#### ***A. Serving Others and Other Motives for Political Involvement***

*Political Influence Outside the Family.* School seemed to be the strongest factor in opening the eyes of the respondents to political issues. Some got political awareness from teachers, reading materials, classmates, friends and a sibling who went in the same school. The liberalness of the family also played a big factor. Others mentioned television programs.

Some got deeply involved politically when they were students and some were compelled through their jobs. One mentioned the imposition of martial law as that which prodded her to deeper involvement. One

although her mother offered her a new house, a trip and studies abroad in exchange for her involvement. All respondents proceeded in the movement just the same.

The respondents also sacrificed their studies to go full time in the movement. They questioned the relevance of their education and found it wanting. One said she felt a pang of regret not fulfilling the hopes of her parents.

*Sexuality within the Movement.* The political movement was not free from gender-based discrimination. Although the women did not point this out, their status in the movement was connected obviously to their being women. The movement in that time also had a framework in which to discuss sexual matters. Because of this, some guidelines and rules could have suppressed and denied sexuality and therefore may have resulted in its control.

One respondent reported the movement's ban on provocative outfits. Attending parties and celebrations were prohibited for these were considered bourgeois. One was advised to leave a longtime boyfriend because he was military. The women in the movement also bore the responsibility of household chores. The respondents obeyed all these rules. Only one said she resisted in doing household chores. For her this was a big issue.

*Romantic Relations within the Movement.* The respondents chose to build romantic relationships with people within the movement. It was from these relationships that they learned to cast away their old conservative values about sex. Sex was also an issue they had to fight about within the movement. Sex was an issue that tested their determination.

Five of the respondents had non-sexual relationships previous to their joining the movement. Seven had husbands who were comrades. One remained single although she had relationships in and outside the movement. All abandoned their boyfriends outside the movement. Two let go of the relationship because their boyfriends were military and one said she did so because she found the relationship too restrictive. One of the two who experienced sexual abuse left her boyfriend out of some kind of fear, while the other felt too low a self-esteem and could not talk

with her boyfriend about it. One said she did not need someone to take care of her and besides, she had lots of friends.

Four of the respondents said they had pre-marital sexual relations with their comrade boyfriends. Two did not receive punishment for this because they were discreet. One was found out after getting pregnant. She and her boyfriend got demoted and were suspended for some months. The respondent felt the punishment meted her was harsher than her male partner's. The last one said, although she felt pain and did not experience pleasure in the act, she chose to marry her comrade boyfriend after getting pregnant. She cited marriage was what her religion expected.

All respondents said they chose men from the movement because they would understand their work, be one in goals and beliefs. Although some of the men proved to be good partners early in the marriage, the women also experienced being beaten, looked down upon, and having husbands who were unfaithful.

#### ***IV. Responses/Behavior of Women in the Arrest, Torture and Detention***

##### **A. The Incidence of Arrest and Preparedness for Torture**

The respondents' recollection of their arrest was clear. Two of them were arrested not just once. Most of them were arrested during the night in their house, apartment and "underground houses" or while on their way to a meeting. One said she was on her way to her aunt's house and another said she was in a birthday party of a friend. They were arrested either alone or with their boyfriends or husbands or in the company of comrades. Their families did not immediately get news of their arrest. Most of them were in the province and made aware of the disappearance only by missed appointments or through television. One was arrested while with her father. She was ambivalent about this: On one hand, she was thankful because she had an assurance she would not be killed owing to the presence of a witness and on the other hand, she was disappointed in her father not being able to help despite his position in the military.

*Fear.* Fear was the first emotion felt by the respondents upon their arrest. One said she could not believe what was happening. The others felt embarrassed, insulted and pitiful. One was not able to move because of a fresh surgical operation and another felt terribly stupid being caught in a house on which she already had premonitions of being caught.

Respondents noted a two-pronged approach of the military: arresting officers played good and bad roles. Two of the respondents experienced the "good" approach in their two arrests. One was invited to a hotel lobby, served brandy and talked to jocularly. The other one was politely invited to the detention center. All the respondents experienced the "bad" approach, which involved physical and sexual violence. One respondent reported seeing two of his comrades shot in front of her.

*Sexual Violence.* The respondents experienced the gamut of torture: physical and psychological, sexual and non-sexual. Under sexual-psychological torture, some experienced being brought to a group of men clad only in briefs and who used foul language. Some respondents were intruded upon when they were sleeping and threatened to be stripped down or passed on to several other men. One was blindfolded for long periods. They were made to believe they were being stared at and sexually abused.

Some psychological forms of torture were not sexual but still gender-related. Some respondents were made to see their husbands being tortured. They were threatened with abortion, murder of the husband, and harming of their family and children. Others were threatened to be beaten, electrocuted, and shot.

Sexual-physical torture took the forms of being stripped down, fondled, and kissed in front of people. One respondent said she was nearly raped were it not for her menstruation, while one reported being fingered and kissed in her sex organ. One was taunted for a C-section scar and another experienced being beaten in the legs to induce abortion.

Physical-non-sexual torture included being tied down to the seat or bed, hog-tied, flushed with cold water and pushed wet in front of a blasting air-conditioner, smothered, beaten, kicked, and dragged. Other forms of torture were squeezing the fingers together with bullets placed in between them, burning the skin with cigarettes, and electrocution.

The "good" approach included wooing, jesting and bantering with the captive, lavishing her with favors. One official reportedly made his wife deal with the prisoner.

*Assault on Dignity in Times of Torture.* All the respondents said they were aware that torture aimed to destroy their sense of dignity, disturb their mental state and demolish their self-trust. One respondent said the military partly succeeded because she felt degraded; one felt extreme shame when she was stripped. Most experienced utmost degradation in torture directed at their gender.

The "good" approach was remembered lightly, and even as nice, by those who experienced it.<sup>19</sup>

#### B. Effects of Torture and Self-Rebuilding

*Assault on Dignity.* Immediately after the torture, some respondents experienced diarrhea, bleeding, sleeplessness, and loss of strength. After the release and into the time of the study, trauma took the form, for one respondent, of panic whenever she heard motorcycles; for others, indecision, bad temper, irritability and forgetfulness.

*Coping and Self-Reinforcement.* Although their immediate reaction to the arrest was fear, this was eventually replaced by the urge to think straight and prepare for what they would say. Some used counter-shock and tactics to distract their captors such as asking them several questions. One acted rich to mislead her captors.

The respondents manifested psychological strength during the times of torture. One learned to act. To the more benevolent of her captors, she used tears; to the more hardened, screams. Sometimes she sang to distract herself. While experiencing sexual abuse, one kept shouting names of officials from government to threaten her abusers. One said she talked harshly to everyone. One said she coped by finding inspiration in her ideals and beliefs.

The respondents kept up their psychological strength to resist implicating their comrades and the movement. All said not once did they squeal, and this was something they could be proud about. One said she

felt vindicated of her delinquencies to the movement by the strength of her resistance to the captors.

Some managed to detach themselves from the sufferings and instead focus on what should come out of their mouths. Others thought of suicide fearing they might not bear the torture and begin squealing on the movement.

*Family as One Source of Strength.* The women felt they had to protect their children, parents and other relatives, aside from their comrades who included their husbands. One tried to endure the torture for the sake of the baby inside her womb. One thought of suicide realizing she had given away her family's address.

*Betrayals and Doubts on Loyalty.* All respondents believed some comrades helped and were responsible for their arrest. All said it would be difficult for them to forgive these people because they themselves underwent torture but managed not to betray anyone. One said she would kill the traitor if she saw him/her, and another said she would not deal with that person again.

One said she felt the same hurt and anger being pointed to as the traitor. She deemed her arrest an opportunity to vindicate herself. One felt the same pain toward her husband and other comrades when, after her release, they did not believe she was arrested.

### C. The Trial and Assistance During Incarceration

*Inner Strength Inside Prison.* Of the eight respondents, one was imprisoned twice and another, thrice. One was immediately released after being brought to the "safehouse." Two did not mention how long she stayed inside prison. One said it was "a long time." The rest said their incarcerations lasted for the shortest 17 days and longest three years. The torture usually took place before or in the beginning of imprisonment.

Two respondents experienced solitary detention. Both feared being killed without anybody knowing. They felt most defenseless. Eventually, fear was replaced with extreme boredom. One continued to experience despair and depression. The other fought her boredom by thinking about her entire life and decisions, identifying when she was strongest and

weakest. In the end, she said she got to know herself better in solitary confinement.

*Remedies Against Boredom and Tension.* Temporary relief from boredom and tension while in prison was provided by exercise, games, meditation, household chores and livelihood work, continued work for the movement and socialization. Games most played were volleyball, badminton and scrabble. Household chores included doing the laundry, cleaning, taking care of children and cooking. Livelihood work included planting, card-making, broom-making, dressmaking and others. Reading books, newspapers and poems, watching television, drawing, listening to music, writing and diary keeping were popular pastimes.

The respondents noted no natural grouping in prison based on gender. All worked on the same activities, although they had separate sleeping quarters. Two said the grouping they noticed was based on the detainees' positions in the movement before the arrests. One noticed a grouping of persons of similar interests, such as those given to discussions as opposed to more action-oriented work.

*Continued Struggle.* The respondents said imprisonment did not deter them from their political struggle. This resulted in what they felt as empowerment despite the detention. This struggle took the forms of fighting their military guards and the system, and reinforcing their political work and building up their knowledge.

Using various strategies against their guards, the prisoners were able to do what they wanted but were prohibited to do. Fighting the system entailed writing correspondences and coordinating with agencies outside the country that could help them. One wrote to newspapers and allowed herself to be interviewed for television. Almost all respondents experienced going on hunger strike to make themselves heard. The prisoners also engaged themselves in political discussions and planning, for example, on ways to fight torture and its effects.

*Socialization Inside Prison.* It could be seen from the interviews that the political detainees considered their criminal prisonmates as "other people" (*ibang tao*). "*Ibang tao*" also included the military and even fellow political prisoners. Two respondents experienced being jailed with criminal convicts. One did not like being imprisoned with them despite their high

regard of her. The other one was happy in their company as they protected, respected and trusted her. She was even elected as prison leader, in which position she undertook several projects. However, she still considered them "*ibang tao*." "Not other people" (*hindi ibang tao*) for the respondents would be their comrades, friends, husbands and family.

Despite their initial treatment of the military as "other," the prisoners socialized with the guards in order to manipulate them into making life easier for everybody. Some talked and played games with their guards. One said she felt nice being wooed by the military. Another said she became friends with her guard. They also considered as "*ibang tao*" fellow political detainees whom they suspected.

*Problems in Prison: Fear and Doubts.* The detainees had problems in prison as regards their fellow detainees, comrades outside prison, family, friends, husbands and children. The failure of their families and friends to visit hurt them. Suspicion was the main problem they had with their co-detainees, and the feeling of failure in their responsibilities toward their husbands and children.

One reported being upset with her mother who cried during a visit. She said this caused her more worries. One said her father's failure to visit was a punishment for her joining the movement. One said it might be because of the father's inability to deal with the situation.

Distrust and division among inmates occurred. One said she began to distrust a comrade detainee when the military gave in to the co-detainee's requests. One said she lost trust in her co-detainees for covering up her husband's infidelity. She also resented the way her male co-detainees would be drinking with guards and courting their married female co-detainees.

*Espousal Relationships during Imprisonment.* Of the eight respondents, five said they all had problems with their husbands during imprisonment. One had her husband with her in prison but they often quarreled and exhibited bad temper against each other. Of the four who had husbands outside prison, two said their husbands had several serious relations with other women, one had a husband who actually lived in with another woman, and one who brought home different women. A husband of one of the four wrote to his wife suspecting her of betraying him and another

could not accept her husband's decision to leave the movement to concentrate on taking care of the children.

Despite the problems, two respondents said they still missed their husbands. One felt self-reproach in not being able to take care of her husband when he was sick. One gave credit to her husband for taking care of the children despite having a lover, and one tried to justify her husband's infidelity by saying he must have gotten lonely without her.

*Strong Family Support.* Relatives, friends, family, comrades and fellow inmates were identified as source of help to the respondents. Material help was what those from outside prison extended most. Psychological help came from fellow detainees. There was also psychological help from outside but this also presented the detainees with frustrations; i.e., children who could not recognize their mothers and bad news, accompanying the good ones, the visitors told them.

The family was the most consistent of the help-givers. The respondents said there was a deepening of relationship between them and their family during imprisonment, as parents were able to open their eyes to the meaning of their children's struggle and therefore enabling themselves to look at their children with higher regard.

Also noteworthy was the new regard that the respondents had of their mothers. Six said their mothers gave them the most moral and active support, including dissemination of the respondents' appeal for help, and their support of their grandchildren. The respondents realized the importance of the motherly role that they had previously dismissed.

## ***V. Release from Prison and Starting Anew: The Process of Healing***

### **A. Start of Rehabilitation Process**

*Reintegration to the Family.* During imprisonment, the respondents, except two, already had plans for their release despite the possibility they would never get out. Many said they would not immediately go back to the movement and instead find time to rest and spend with their family. Two promised never to go back to the movement. One thought of going back to school.

Of the eight respondents, only one did not return to her family after her release. Seven lived close to their families, were supported by the family financially and allowed their family to decide for them. One said she needed to make up for the trouble her family went through. Because of this she obeyed her family's request for her not to return to the movement. Some felt fear upon their release. They felt they would not be accepted, or they would be disowned or be a cause of worry to their former comrades and friends, and be denied a job. Out of fear, one said she did not go out of the house in the first several days after her release.

*Regaining Trust of and Opening Themselves up to Others.* All respondents said they had problems trusting others and being suspected as regards their arrest and imprisonment. Two said they felt until the time of the study the pain of being suspected by their husbands. Respondents told their experiences to very few, saying they hesitated to do this even to their family and husbands. They would tell their experience to their friends but not entirely. It appeared they wanted to forget and get over this part of their life by not acknowledging it.

Only one let this part of her life be an open book. Three was the most number of people each respondent told about their experiences. One doubted if she would ever be believed.

*Women's Issues in the Process of Healing.* Lack of trust was not the only reason for the respondents' hesitation to tell their stories. Some did not speak about the entire experience for fear of giving pain to their family. Some refused to tell their family anything. One said her mother might not bear the fact of her sexual abuse. Others made it appear they did not experience anything.

Apparently, the sexual violence that they experienced was not discussed owing to the view that sex and sexual abuse are matters that are private and personal in the life of a woman. Another reason appeared to be the view that the woman's body must be held pure. The respondents felt that in telling they might be marked as sexually abused and therefore defiled (*sira ang pagkatao*). They feared public judgment or lack of understanding.

One respondent, in trying to rebuild herself, tried to separate her body, her sexuality, which experienced abuse, from the rest of who and what she was.

### B. Steps in Recovery

*Coping by Self-Repression of Traumatic Experience.* After their release, four availed of counseling and stress reduction therapy. Two said the massages helped in relaxing the body. One said these helped her discover herself. One said she felt these inadequate. Four did not seek any help. One of them said she thought she could heal on her own. One felt she did not need any healing.

Four went back to the movement immediately at the same time that three of them placed themselves under the care of their parents. One did not go back to the family and made quick steps to re-establish her involvement with the movement. Three said they would never go back to the movement, primarily because of the suspicions they encountered. One did not mention anything about going back to the movement.

What transpired in their imprisonment was not discussed in the movement. According to those who went back to the movement, the movement was not prepared or was unaware of means to discuss what happened to them. Reportedly, the movement did not know how to reintegrate torture sufferers and ex-detainees. After leaving the movement, they remained involved in activities related to their beliefs. Six of them, at the time of the study, worked for NGOs. Two were involved directly in other political groups. They said they felt happy to have a semblance of what they used to do and be of help to people. Two who chose to work for the government said the same thing. Having the same principles, they now had different means of carrying them out.

*Major Problems in Rebuilding Lives.* The major problems encountered by the respondents after their release were rebuilding their relationship with their husbands and financial problems. Two said their husbands had relationships with other women going on when they were freed. One said her husband had a relationship with another woman while they were rebuilding their family. One of these husbands went on to separate permanently from his wife. One said she continued being wife to a husband who now rarely visited her and the children. She said she was contented with this arrangement.

One of the respondents experienced being beaten. The husband reportedly threatened her using the children to stop her from leaving him. She had thoughts of suicide but suppressed them by thinking about her children and doing what her husband liked such as taking care of the children.

Those experiencing problems with their husband tried to defend their husbands' behavior. One said she failed to attend to her husband's need when she was imprisoned. She consoled herself with thoughts of the children and the memory of her husband asking for forgiveness. The one who had an arrangement with her husband said he did not experience freedom experienced by other men in their youth. The one who was being beaten felt inadequate as a wife.

One said she remained resentful of her husband's doubts on her incarceration, and one regretted having left the movement when her husband, too, left the movement. One said she was happy with a new relationship although she still felt traumatized by the experience with her former husband. One said she felt contented with her new life with her husband and children, but once in a while a sense of regret would come to her about leaving the movement.

Generally it could be said the respondents had not recovered from the trauma of their experience. They now felt a certain security but also felt this was not complete. Grief and worries were not fully resolved. They took steps toward recovery but did not complete them.

*Quest for Justice.* All the respondents sought legal redress except for one whose incarceration was not even recorded. Some won in their cases, others did not pursue them, and others lost. All, except one, filed charges against the Marcos government. They did not believe they would be compensated but felt they had to prove they did not do wrong. One said rather sarcastically that it would be enough just to pinch the Marcoses if all the aggrieved would do it.

All appeared before cases filed against the military. Most lost heart because the cases were turned over to military courts. There they feared being degraded once again. Time seemed to have softened one's quest for justice. She felt she would even pity her torturers if they were proved guilty.

All participated in this study to be of help to those who experienced similar sufferings. They hoped that, if not justice, they would be given enough attention and all the sufferers given psychological help.

### Conclusions

1. Gender construction of children is significantly influenced and determined by their parents. Children assimilate these roles even unconsciously or sometimes through parental pressures to conform. The role of the mother and the father of the respondents mainly follow gendered stereotypes. The father is the breadwinner while the mother is the housekeeper. Most of the respondents identified with the strong public image of the father and his power over decisions and determining directions. Their mothers' presence, on the other hand, was seen as a "soft light," often retreating, but always supportive.

Expectations on the father were greater, such as provider, protector and decision-maker. High expectations of the father brought disappointment among the children in cases of the father failing. The mothers were seen as very feminine, "motherly" even, when they took the responsibility of breadwinner.

Most respondents felt they had happy, well-cared childhood where they experienced relative freedom. This familial support provided to the respondents contributed greatly to their strength of character as adults and activists.

The respondents noticed little, if any, gender discrimination in the way they and their siblings were raised. During adolescence, a noticeable gender-based differentiation and stereotyping of roles and treatment of respondents was present but did not cause respondents to rebel. They said they had been unaware of how they were "gendered" during childhood.

2. The values the respondents learned while growing up were result of generally liberal conditions in the home. They were also used to having people often in the house being assisted or entertained by their parents; they learned from their parents the value of serving others. They admired the public life of their fathers and tagged along with their fathers while

growing up. These values were reinforced by the school, church, later acquaintances and readings.

Most parents of respondents had busy lives, surviving both economic and emotional difficulties. Being exposed to the struggles of both parents, the women developed a strong foundation to face various challenging activities that were not confined to domestic affairs.

3. Despite the general liberalness, their families were not open to discussing matters pertaining to women's bodies and their sexuality. Sexuality was repressed and the body was not regarded as integral to a woman's life and full personhood. The body was seen merely as an instrument of existence, not site of pleasure. This view on sex was reinforced by the church and school. Moreover, the early experiences of the respondents with men and their manner of coping with sexual abuse were possible reactions to these part-unresolved issues. There was escapism, repression and guilt. There was great trauma and inadequate understanding of the abuse they experienced from the people they loved or trusted. Again, there was an incomplete resolution of the experience of abuse, which then affected future relationships with other men.

4. The respondents had to forgo opportunities and privileges and commit personal sacrifices in deciding to be activists and members of the movement. These included parental favors, school, livelihood, romantic relationships, which should not present obstacles to the struggle. They found new family and love in the movement, which gave them strength and inspiration. But like family, church and school, the movement's way of dealing with sexuality appeared to be characterized by narrowness or inadequacy of understanding and exposure to this issue. There appeared to be no clear basis for their rules and regulations of women's sexual behavior, relationships, clothing, and responsibilities. Not all followed these rules blindly or unquestioningly. Many fought for their comrade boyfriends. One got married early pushed by the belief against premarital sex and pregnancy.

5. Upon arrest all experienced extreme fear of being sexually abused despite having prepared themselves for such possibility. Nothing prepared them for what actually took place. The immediate response to torture was to gather courage, deny charges, and insist on their rights. No one played the role of the weak woman.

6. All respondents suffered sexual torture, physical or psychological. It appeared that they took the torture merely as a violation of the body and therefore irrelevant to their personhood. It did not occur to them that their bodies or their sexuality makes an important part of who and what they are; that one's self is one's body, sexuality, mind, and emotions, whose harmony with one another brings about strength and integrity.

7. State violence through the military machinery was inflicted on the women. Patriarchy ruled the state and the military. It placed women on pedestals to be adored, but this works against women in that this pedestal subjects women to men's control. Women are made to fear sexual exploration as this would result in their fall from the pedestal. To be abused sexually is a worse fall. This defilement implicates all. The defiled woman becomes her husband's disgrace. In the end, the man blames the woman, society blames the woman, and the woman blames herself.

8. The respondents' relationship with their husbands, families and comrades during imprisonment was a major factor in how they tried to rehabilitate themselves inside prison. The respondents relied on their support for survival, while doubts about their betrayal and circumstances of their capture made up the women's insecurity. Faithfulness, loyalty, trust and care of loved ones are values learned by the respondents in childhood. To see their loved ones go against these caused the respondents much pain.

9. The respondents' relationship with their co-detainees and the military took many forms. Socialization inside prison was not static and unchanging. It was marked by shifting alliances that reflected the politics of personal convenience often prevalent in the cultural politics of Filipinos.

10. *Buryong*, a mixture of boredom, depression, idleness and anger, became a major problem for the detainees. In response, the respondents busied themselves with personal, familial, livelihood and political activities. The respondents noted no gender discrimination in these activities, except for the children being given to the care of the mother and the men being prone to drinking and courting female prisoners.

11. Some of the respondents had husbands who were unfaithful during their imprisonment. They either got separated, or forgave and tried to understand the husband, or forgave but failed to forget the hurt the husband caused. The study did not pursue the effects of sexual torture and separation due to imprisonment to the respondents and their husbands' sex life. One suspected her husband's infidelity was caused by her own frigidity, which was in turn caused not by torture but by a previous incestuous abuse. A few accepted their husband's infidelity by considering the long separation caused by the women's imprisonment. Respondents tended to accept the idea that it was natural for a man to have overpowering sexual needs, which should be gratified instantly. This issue is vital to the women's lives, but was not pursued by this study.

12. In the long time that they were imprisoned, the women detainees had the chance to get close to their family, particularly their mothers. Before, they looked at their mother as weak and part of the background. In their imprisonment, they got to realize the mother's importance, their strength, patience and talent. This admiration continued after the respondents' release.

13. Most of the women never told the full story of what transpired during their arrest and torture. Many preferred to forget. Others made official reports; others went to doctors or underwent some form of counseling and therapy. It was pointed out earlier that acceptance of what transpired was vital to the women's healing. However, the women's reasons for this repression are understandable. These included fear of stigmatization and continued victimization. However, by repressing their traumatic experience, most of the respondents could not understand or identify with a part of themselves and their personhood. Shame rendered difficult their interaction with people. They became inhibited, constantly on guard, afraid of slips, and irritable. They avoided anything that could lead to exposure.

14. The respondents did not discuss their experience with their co-members in the movement. The movement was observed not to have had any framework to deal with such traumatized members. But, to stay on with the movement despite the trauma was regarded as a sign of commitment and deep understanding of its vision.

15. Upon their release, the respondents said their awareness of the feminist movement helped them greatly in their recovery. Their experience

of oppression under a militaristic patriarchal system became fertile ground for their feminism. Self-rebuilding is significantly helped by feminism as the torture sufferer finds a handle in building a personal framework in which to deal with patriarchy and domination responsible for her torture. In addition, their encounter with patriarchy could only be dealt with, problematized or understood through feminist perspectives.

16. All respondents continued to seek redress. Others joined the class suit against the Marcoses. All hoped this study would not be mere reportage of their experience but would serve to provide means to help them and all those who have suffered similarly.

17. This study used a creative research methodology that combined research, therapy and support group work with both researchers and respondents as participants.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. Other Issues that Can be Included in the Study of Torture and Women**

The gendered nature of society, patriarchy, and subordination of women interact as forces that result in sexual torture being adopted as military tactic during capture, interrogation and imprisonment. It would be most useful and revealing if a gender study of torture could be made.

Moreover, the captive woman is appropriated based on her uniqueness as a woman. Her uniqueness as a woman is what is assaulted and abused. A gender study can explore and problematize this particular mode of appropriation and control of women's sexuality.

Sexual torture must also be studied for its effects not only on the dignity of a person, but also on the victim's relationship with her loved ones such as her husband. It would be fruitful to see how people in relationships burdened with this problem help each other, or play into the repression, or get separated from each other owing to this problem.

The relationship between women survivors and their mothers could be studied more deeply, with the aim of finding out how the mother-and-daughter relationship helps in the healing and recovery of women.

Lastly, this study recommends further studies in other forms of gender-related violence and trauma perpetrated on women. These include wife-beating, incestuous rape and other rapes. Often, the violence is connected to the woman's status and influenced by power relations within the state-military-political machinery.

## 2. Possible Focus for Dealing with Torture and Women

Although this study aimed to help in policy-making on the issue of torture, it was weak in responding to this aim. However, the public, particularly political movements and private institutions with programs on peace and human rights, and especially women's movements, can use the findings of this study. They can integrate women's concerns in their institutional and policy programs, or support the movement upholding women's rights.

This study can also be useful to professional caregivers and others serving the traumatized and tortured. The analysis of this study on the rehabilitative experiences of the respondents can benefit therapy sessions, counseling and support group work on women.

## 3. Research Methodology that Facilitated the Study of Torture and Women

The researchers used a feminist perspective and participatory methodologies in the conduct of the study. The researcher-respondent relationship was strengthened and communication between them was deepened. The researchers also saw how the method provided the respondents with a means to unite and find mutual support. ♦

### Endnotes

1. United Nations. *Human Rights Questions and Answers* (Philippines: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1987), p. 4.
2. Amnesty International. *The Killings Goes On* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1992). The militant group documented physical and mental torture signs in 21 out of 25 persons detained by the Philippine military in July 1990.
3. Pura Santillan-Castrance (ed.), *Talking Things Over with the Growing Filipina* (Manila: Bardavor Book Company, 1951).
4. Salome B. Quijano, "Mga Impluwensiya sa mga Batang Lansangan ng mga Istrukturang Namamayani sa Lunsod ng Dlongapo," undergraduate thesis, Saint Joseph's College of Quezon City, 1990.

- 5 Loreta Makasiar-Sicat, "The Political Attitudes of Young Filipinos: A Study in Political Attitudes of Young Filipinos: A Study in Political Socialization," graduate thesis, University of the Philippines, Department of Political Science, Quezon City, 1972.
- 6 Renato Constantino, *Parents and Activists* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, Inc., 1971).
- 7 The study cannot escape the issue of gender formation based on feminist theories. It thus differentiates gender from sex, where gender becomes a social construct and sex becomes the biological/natural property. The study alludes to Michel Foucault's Poststructuralist view on the involvement of social structures in the construction of the individual's mental, even physical, makeup. This view is used by Maureen Castillo Pagaduan in her "The Prison Within: Perpetuating Power Over Women," a masteral thesis she presented at ISS, The Hague.
- 8 Amnesty International, "Women in the Frontline", *An Amnesty International Report* (London: Flashprint Enterprises Ltd., 1991).
- 9 GABRIELA, *Because We Dare to Struggle: A Documentation Report on State Violence Against Women in the Philippines* (Quezon City: GABRIELA, 1992).
- 10 Isabel Duque, Teresa Rodriguez and M. Soledad Weinstein, "Violence Against Women: Definitions and Strategies," a paper prepared for the World Congress on Human Rights in New Delhi and Chile, 1990.
- 11 Margaret Schuler, "Violence Against Women: An International Perspective," *Freedom from Violence: Women's Strategies from Around the World* (UNIFEM: 1992).
- 12 Satur Ocampo, "For the Masses, With the Masses," *Torture Survivors and Caregivers* (Quezon City: UP CIDS, 1995).
- 13 June P. Lopez, "Filipino Survivors of Violence: Recovery and Reintegration", a paper presented to the Regional Conference of the International Council of Psychologists and the 23rd Annual PAP Convention, Legend Hotel, Mandaluyong City, 10-13 August 1995.
- 14 Lone Jacobsen and Peter Vesti, *Torture Survivors—A New Group of Patients* (Denmark: International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, 1992).
- 15 Anne Marie Hilsdon, *Madonnas and Martyrs: Militarism and Violence in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995).
- 16 Edicio dela Torre, "The Valuing Process Among Caregivers," *loc. cit.*, *Torture Survivors and Caregivers*.