

and must be recognized both for the richness of their “thick descriptions” and their contributions to theory-building.

In their concluding remarks, the coeditors emphasized the importance of policymakers having the ability to categorize and conceptualize “to bring events, personalities, and figures into some abstract container.” Qualitative methods, in this light, is said to offer a set of immensely useful tools for supporting policy recommendations through the identification of critical causal mechanisms (329). But ultimately, in order to deepen the comparative significance of qualitative approaches, both the manufacturing process and material composition of the said “containers” must undergo intense scrutiny to validate their “travel-worthiness” at the midrange and global levels.—**ROLANDO S. FERNANDO**, SENIOR LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES, AND RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, MANILA, PHILIPPINES.

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**San Juan, Epifanio Jr. *Toward Filipino Self-Determination: Beyond Transnational Globalization*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2009. 184 pp.**

In his latest book *Toward Filipino Self-Determination: Beyond Transnational Globalization*, Epifanio San Juan, Jr. uncovers the concealed operations of power and the historic inequalities of political economic systems that have impacted Filipinos in an age of globalized crisis and contradiction. While the definition of globalization is often debated, for the majority of people in the Philippines, the process of globalization can be more accurately described as “gobble-ization” (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2001). Similar to the mass destruction in the Philippines caused by Typhoon Ondoy, the mechanisms of corporate globalization have enabled an international ruling class to pillage the resources of the islands, leaving behind an entire population submerged in the overflows of structural adjustment, debt, and privatization. The rule of the high water is the doctrine of neoliberalism where every layer of the nation’s social fabric is a site of looting, as the market has become the organizing logic of an entire social sphere. San Juan’s book is an important contribution to the fields of globalization, race, and postcolonial studies as he foregrounds the domains of transformative possibility

within culture and social life for Filipinos in a global diaspora, a population that has historically been greatly impacted by the tides of capitalist production.

This book, a compilation of essays written after 9/11, serves as a sequel to his influential writings, in particular, *From Exile to Diaspora* (1998) and *After Postcolonialism* (2000). In this book, San Juan uses a method of dissent that captures the complex social relations and constant motion of the Philippine diaspora, the same method he used in his earlier works. With such method, tension is present throughout his analysis engaging more commonly accepted theoretical frames promoted by postcolonial, postmodern, and post-Marxist scholars. He explains,

We are not transmigrants or transnationals, to be sure, despite the theories of academic pundits and exoticizing media. We are Filipinos uprooted and dispersed from hearth and communal habitat. We will find our true home if there is a radical systemic change in the metropole and, more crucially, a popular-democratic transformation in the Philippines (xvi).

San Juan argues that the struggle to end oppression for Filipinos, women, and people of color both within the United States as well as throughout the diaspora is not simply a discursive or semiotic liberation but a global social relation. For those familiar with San Juan's earlier works, there is recognizable overlap in the astute critiques that he makes; however, for a reader not exposed to the conditions and history of the Philippines or to social theory, San Juan's reiterations are valuable as he rigorously intervenes in complex arguments.

The chapters "Imperial Terror in the Homeland" and "In the Belly of the Beast" are important historical supplements for youth involved in organizing the popular Philippine Culture Nights (PCN), scholars of Ethnic and Asian American Studies as well as community organizers interested in furthering political projects that counter the heightened injustices of racism and patriarchy. Throughout these chapters, San Juan shows how seemingly disconnected events are linked through systemic exploitation and an international division of labor necessitated by the current global economic order. Such writings serve as a constant reminder that ecological disasters, racist anti-immigrant sentiments, and the escalating violence against women are dialectically related to the motions of capitalist development.

San Juan's chapter "Subaltern Silence" is especially illuminating for university students as they witness the privatization of their public

education, the exorbitant increases in tuition fees, and the reduction of courses offered in the humanities and languages. Even though Filipinos have become one of the largest Asian American groups in the United States, Filipino language instruction in the academy is sparse. San Juan argues that the struggle over language in our schools is a struggle over Filipino identity—an identity that must be rooted in the ideas of liberation, democracy, and justice for Filipinos throughout the world. He states, “literacy must be based on the reality of the subaltern life if it is to be effective in any strategy of real empowerment, in the decolonization of schooling for a start” (50). However, the struggle for Filipino languages cannot be confined solely within institutions of higher learning. San Juan argues that the struggle for Filipino languages “cannot be achieved except as part of the collective democratic struggles of other people of color and the vast majority of working citizens oppressed by a class-divided, racialized, and gendered order” (51).

It is this social order that Carlos Bulosan confronted in literature and labor organizing at the beginning of the twentieth century. The influential writings of Bulosan are widely available due in large part to the research of San Juan. In keeping with this work, San Juan builds upon Bulosan’s analysis in an assessment of the irrational conditions that continue to plague Filipinos in America. In the chapter titled “Revisiting Carlos Bulosan,” San Juan requests that the reader not examine Bulosan’s writing as a sacred or finished text. Rather, he invites us to resume the unfinished project of Bulosan and the countless “others” who have worked to understand the challenges that confront racialized and subjugated peoples of America in order to prepare for a more humane and just tomorrow. San Juan’s examination of Bulosan’s life and legacy is a dialectical endeavor. The author highlights Bulosan’s life experiences that undoubtedly have influenced many. And yet the author reminds us that individuals do not impose such an influence alone but by generations building on the labor of those who have come before.

In the last chapter “Tracking the Exile’s Flight: Mapping a Rendezvous,” San Juan reproduces the speech he delivered to the alumni of the Philippine Studies Program, a program that enabled university students from around the United States to gain college credit for their summer studies in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> San Juan maintains that through critical travel experiences or “exposure trips” one can gain a critical standpoint of neoliberal globalization not provided by

corporate media or by mainstream academic textbooks. The author argues that these personal experiences can provide critical points of analysis, especially when applied to the conditions that entire groups of people (Filipinos) are situated. Throughout this chapter, San Juan's use of historical materialism provides the reader with an important lens to examine the social contradictions of the Philippine diaspora.

A common theme throughout the book is that previous generation of Filipinos have passed on a rich legacy dedicated to the projects of democracy, liberation, and self-determination. A new generation of culture workers, scholars, activists, and radical feminists is emerging with their own adapted strategies to bring forth a new society from the vestiges of the old.<sup>2</sup> Throughout his book, E. San Juan reminds us that we are all located within arenas of battle "between humanity and barbarism, between oppressed third world peoples fighting for survival and the rule of a dehumanized global capital" (166). He is astute in his analysis that in this historic struggle, new ideas, imaginations, and strategies are needed to enable us to transform the world we live in. This transformation requires understanding and such understanding can be furnished with theory. —**MICHAEL VIOLA**, *PHD STUDENT, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND INFORMATION STUDIES (URBAN SCHOOLING), UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES*.

## NOTES

1. University exchange programs to the Philippines, such as the very popular Philippine Studies Program (PSP) have been widely reduced or cut altogether due to the U.S. State Department travel warnings.
2. Such examples within the United States include: the academic work of Jeff Cabusao, Peter Chua, Valerie Francisco, and Anne Lacsamana; the cultural production of Habi Arts in Los Angeles as well as the important music of hip hop artists Blue Scholars, Kiwi, and Bambu; and the radical feminism of such collectives as SIGAW in Los Angeles and Pinay sa Seattle, to name only a few.

## REFERENCE

- McLaren, Peter, and Ramin Farahmandpur. 2001. Educational policy and the Socialist imagination: Revolutionary citizenship as a pedagogy of resistance. *Educational Policy* 15: 343.