

**BECOMING AN AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN:
A TOTAL BUY-OUT FOR
THE FILIPINA?**

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Filipinos are everywhere. It appears that in every nook and cranny port there is a Filipino. Their presence seem undeterred by harsh climatic conditions like the arid deserts of Saudi Arabia or the freezing waters of the Artic (Lao 1995:73). Filipinos abound in any industrialized country where the promise of the good life beacons. Australia is no exception.

In the past two decades, migration of Filipinos to Australia has been predominantly female (Jackson 141). Based on the 1986 census, 69.3% of Philippine born in Australia are women (Balaba & Roca 1992:59). In 1991, a total of 37,407 Filipinos lived in New South Wales of which 22,871 are women (EAC 1994:32). The number increased to 28,831 in 1996 (EAC 1998:43). This situation, Richard Jackson (1993) comments, is unusual because migration to Australia has been traditionally male-dominated (1993:137). Although the Filipina wave is shared by other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, it is by far the largest. Thus, a female-oriented migration is a defining characteristic of the Filipino community, reflective of a worldwide trend among developing countries (Tigno 1993:57).

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To sweat and toil in a foreign land as a contract worker is one thing, to seek permanent settlement and change of citizenship is another. A temporary sojourn to distant shores in order to earn sufficient income for the well-being of the family suggests an imminent return to the country of birth. But, to change formal allegiance is more permanent in nature that certainly precludes severance of some sort. With a new citizenship the individual comes to terms with the old and faces a future compromised by a host of challenges.

Of the migrant groups in Australia, the Filipinos have shown a high propensity to embrace citizenship (Jackson and Flores 1989:34). Their citizenship adoption rate is far beyond the average rate among overseas-born migrants (Balaba and Roca 1992:61).

This paper discusses the motivations for migration and reasons for becoming a citizen in Australia among immigrant Filipino married women and situate their motion of citizenship within the feminist citizenship discourse. This area of interest has never been highlighted in the literature of Filipino women in Australia.

Data for this research is based on the narratives of 30 Filipino women based in New South Wales, particularly in Sydney and Wollongong—areas of Filipino migrant concentration. Half of the respondents are married to Australian men and the other half to Filipino men. This grouping typifies the two Filipino communities in Australia. Aside from their marital status, the respondents have lived in Australia for more than five years. Using a limited life document approach gives a voice to a specific aspect in the lives of migrant Filipino women long subject of inquiries as hapless victims. The life story method is premised on the idea that ‘knowledge is grounded in the everyday, common-sense world’ which make us understand how ‘members of that world

describe their reality and actions' (Jones 1983:149). This strategy allows a discursive space in the production of knowledge on the choice of Australian citizenship. Feminist epistemology demands that, in the words of Diane Fowlkes, 'we listen to storytalk' (1987:4) of migrant Filipino women crossing cultures and their new political membership.

This paper is divided into three sections: reasons for migration to Australia; becoming an Australian citizen; and migrant Filipino women within the feminist discourse on citizenship.

Reasons for Migration

Migrants have all sorts of reasons to venture abroad. Foremost is the stimulus of local economic and political conditions of the motherland where dire hopelessness cloud the future. As Barbara Lane posits, migration, while personal, is also due to the 'failure of development policies to provide adequate living and employment structure' (1992:24). In the Philippines, the problem of perennial poverty is unabated. By the 1990's the incidence of poverty, measured by the Gini coefficient, is higher than its neighbors (Gerson 1998:46-49). Albeit national forces provide the impetus to search for better opportunities in some promised land, the act of migrating is personal. There is no apparent standard to gauge this process because the act stems from individual motivations.

Based on the narratives of Filipino women, two major reasons stand out for coming to Australia: marriage and work.

1. Marriage Dictum: I Will Follow

Marriage for the Filipina is not merely cohabitation for the purpose of procreation or forging familial bonds. Marriage is viewed, generally, as a sacred institution instilled deeply by the

Catholic ethos. God's will is cast upon two destined heterosexual beings that no one can put asunder. Its inviolability is acknowledged by fundamental law and up to now divorce is not allowed in the Philippines.

The patriarchal mold of Philippine society dictates that wives follow their husbands, a practice rooted in the Castilian values of the colonial era. Article 57 of the Spanish Civil Code of 1885 stipulates that 'the husband must protect his wife and the wife must obey her husband' (Feliciano 1996:28). The ideal wife long pounded on the minds of the Filipina is that of a loyal partner upon whose shoulders lie the moral burden to keep the union at all cost. In the context of migration, the wife is expected to make the necessary adjustment and sacrifice to keep the family together. This pattern is consistent among other migrant women in Western Europe where, according to D. Lichter, 'women willingly sacrifice their career, provided that migration improves the economic well-being of the family' (1983: 488). The lure of comfort is undeniable, but this is not the only reason why the Filipinas follow their husbands. It is more of keeping the union intact, it is obligatory on her person to save face in the community and avoid what Filipinos call '*hiya*' (shame). Women with resident husbands abroad are expected to follow them. The social pressure from anyone who knows the situation when the husband who is overseas will come for her makes the wife want to give a definite answer. Thus, migration sets it right.

The usual process of following husbands is through family reunion. Family migration is one of the eligibility components of the Australian immigration program whereby a person living in Australia sponsors a relative from the Philippines. Gerard Sullivan and S. Gunasekaran point out that the Philippines, alongside Indonesia, have more migrants under this scheme (1992:170). Kamuning, a Filipina married to a Filipino said:

'*guin petition ako. . . .kanan spouse*' (I was petitioned. . . that of spouse). They were married before her husband set foot in Australia. Liwanag also tells her story: '*after han am wedding ha Philippines, in-apply ak niya ha spouse, siyempre*' (after our wedding in the Philippines, he applied a visa for me as a spouse, of course). Like the Goan Catholics and western women, the Filipinas migrated to join their husbands (Mascarenhas-Keyes 1993:25; Bogue 1977), an act consistent with fulfilling their marital roles.

A similar situation applies in intermarriages; that is, between a Filipina and an Australian. By Australian I mean a white male who resides and is a citizen of Australia regardless of his nationality. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 743 marriages between Australians and Filipino women in 1991 (1994:39) alone. The incidence of intermarriages is far higher than in other countries: 'Australia is four times as high as in Canada and three times as high as in USA' (Boer 1988:12). The large intake of Filipinas as fiancées or spouses of Australian men early on created controversy caused by the 'mail-order bride' phenomenon in the 1980s (Jupp 1992:2). The catch of this system is still the alleged nature of the Filipina as a wife. For example, an advertisement by *The Philippine Connection in Sydney* claims that: 'a Filipina wife promises to love, honor and cherish her husband' (Demain 1993:59). Based on the increasing statistics, apparently, many Australian men took it to heart. This stereotypical image of the Filipina as the 'mail-order bride' congest contemporary Australian literature. Because of the sensitive nature of the 'mail-order bride' issue, I do not wish to venture into this subject any further. Out of respect for my respondents, about half of whom are engaged in bicultural relations, I did not ask about this matter simply because it was irrelevant to the topic under discussion. It would be quite difficult to establish

the relationship of citizenship to the pejorative image without arousing suspicion as to why the research was conducted in the first place. Suffice it to say that marriage is the principal reason.

Based on my interviews with Filipino women in Wollongong and Sydney, Filipinas who arrived as spouses in Australia were, interestingly, married in the Philippines. The Australian groom undergoes the solemn Catholic wedding and witnesses the traditional rituals, particularly the day-long festive celebration of marriage in the presence of relatives and friends. To some extent the whole *barangay* partakes in the ceremony. No Australian groom, probably, would last the day without understanding the seriousness of the union. Furthermore, having married in the Philippines, where divorce is not allowed, somehow grants a sense of security in the minds of the Filipina. Even those Filipinas whose Australian husbands were already divorcees at the time of the marriage in the Philippines still face the civil ceremony in front of the local judge or mayor. The same gaiety follows in the reception with family and friends. Being married first in the country gives the Filipina and her family a tinge of pride.

Overall, the marriage ceremony symbolizes the acceptance of the Australian man into the family of the Filipina, granting him the right to bring her to Australia. Such act dispels any unchaste rumors on the wedded Filipina and even elevates the status of her family in the community. As Bradford Barham and Stephen Boucher note, the international migration of a family member increases the household income through remittances (1998:308). Philippine towns witness the rise of newly built concrete houses and other signs of material comfort among families where one or two members are overseas.

After their wedding, Dayday disclosed that her Australian husband promised her ageing mother that he would look after

and care for her daughter amidst the difficulty of living far away. Now, after 23 years, they are still together with two grandchildren. Dayday regularly returns home for a visit; she has been able to help construct a two-storey house for her mother and to give other amenities to her brothers and sisters.

The on-set of migration is arranged for by the husband in Australia. This may entail months of waiting. Upon compliance of all requirements the Filipina arrives in Australia. Anxiety surrounds her departure from the Philippines, away from the usual support of her family and friends. Elsa confides that she feared coming to Australia. After a short stay in Sydney with her husband she returned to the Philippines for a while and only came back during her pregnancy. Meanwhile, her spouse regularly visited her in Manila. Used to living in a friendly neighborhood around a congested area, Elsa initially dreaded the deafening silence and the wide open space of her middle-class home in the late 70s. Their house stands alone about a mile from the next house. In her study of Latin American women, Olivia Espin explains the 'unique stresses created by the process of immigration' to them compared to men (1987:489). The likely shift in gender roles or its increased burden contributes to their difference. For instance, the men become more mobile while women may be confined to domesticity.

2. Work: The Dollar Lure

To work and earn more money in terms of value over time is another reason for migration among Filipinas. In 1994, more than 300,000 Filipinas joined the overseas workforce (Rosca 1995:522). The increasing feminization of overseas employment directly relates to the low level of women's participation in the wage labor market (Lanzona 1998:37). From 47% in 1987 the

migrant Filipina workers ballooned to 55% in 1993 (Paredes-Maceda 1995:10). Filipino women led the 5.5 million migrant labor force in 2000 (*The Philippine Star* 30/3/2000). Jose Brillantes contends that the overseas deployment is an 'inherent feature of the international economy' reflecting a global phenomenon (1995:20). Like other developing countries, feminization of labor migration typifies the archipelago. In her article *Women and Work*, Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo claims that,

foreign and local corporate interests. . . have taken advantage of cheap docile and manipulable womanpower wherever this is found. . . based mainly on wage differences between the First world and Third world workers, and between male and female workers.
(1990: 43).

A great number of migrant Filipinas work as domestic helpers, entertainers and nurses sadly bearing 'the cross of globalization' (*WIN News* Autumn 1998:62).

Australia, like the United States and Canada, is a traditional destination for migrants (Buendia and Tigno 1999:143). Despite not being a labor-contracting country, Australia is becoming a popular destination for Filipino migrants since the late 1970s. The dismantling of the discriminatory 'White Australia Policy' in 1973 which opened the doors to non-English speaking people led to the increase in Asian migration (Brawley 1995:320). Together with Malaysia and Lebanon, the Philippines became one of the top ten sources of migrants in 1976-1977. The period 1970 to 1996 witnessed the rapid increase of Filipino migration to Australia; doubling every five years (BIPR 1999:16). Some came through assisted passage. Dama recalls: '*as a tradesman, my husband is a fitter and turner. So, they. . . ini-sponsored us to come here with the whole family, assisted passage, free. . . everything is free.*'

Aside from tradesmen, nurses, accountants and teachers are also in demand. Filipino nurses have filled in the vacancies in hospitals in Australia as well as other parts of the globe, particularly the Middle East, the United States, Canada and Europe. Maria and Jamila in Wollongong are two of them. Similarly, accountancy is an attractive profession in the Philippines; many graduates come to Australia. With their credentials in tow, Hiraya and her husband arrived in Sydney in 1987. So did Anita 22 years ago. The female-oriented teaching profession is also another cache for Filipino women. Though overseas qualifications must be assessed and recognized, teachers from the Philippines have come one after another. Felisa in Sydney came six years ago, but taught only on her sixth year.

Becoming a Citizen

'Becoming' or the 'fact of coming into existence' presuppose a preceding condition. It involves a transition from one state of existence into another, of leaving behind and embracing anew. From a migrant's perspective, this means leaving behind the country of birth, holding domicile in a foreign land, and becoming a citizen of the adopted place where an optimal life awaits her.

Becoming a citizen is an individual act, a choice. This choice is a basic guarantee of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 15 stipulates that 'no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the rights to change his nationality' (ISSJ 1998:472). Although the proviso does not specifically mention citizenship, it is essentially referring to citizenship, because citizenship in strict political science parlance, unlike nationality, can be changed. The individual makes the choice as to which country she or he adopts; that is deemed to be instrumental in the pursuit of happiness.

By becoming a citizen one gains 'formal access to citizenship' (Castles and Davidson 2000:84). In Australia, immigrants attain such access through naturalization or grant upon satisfactorily meeting certain prescribed requirements, notably a period of residency of two years, good character, and knowledge of English (Goldlust 1996:21). To be formally accepted as members of the political community appears to be inherent in the migration package. This process is crucial as it touches on the core of their relationship with the adopted country.

Citizenship *per se* is always premised on the individual, the repository of rights and obligations (Close 1995:1). In the natural course of events, the immigrant carefully chooses the country to which this relationship can be optimized. Shifting political allegiance entails careful thought and sacrifice. One does not often change citizenship like soiled clothes. It becomes a binding commitment, theoretically, for the state and the individual. As a female subject, the Filipina shares with her male counterpart the benefits of formal membership into the Australian community. She, too, made the choice of becoming a citizen.

By virtue of marriage or work and subsequent migration to Australia, the Filipina endeavors to change her citizenship, a pattern generally shared with Filipino men and other Asians as well whose citizenship adoption is high (Balaba and Roca 1992:61). Becoming an Australian citizen is not a matter of whim or caprice. Formally severing ties with the country of birth involves serious thought. One undergoes a critical process of self-examination involving many 'what ifs.' Thomas Hammar comments that 'the complexity of the many factors which are involved in individual decisions to apply for naturalization is seldom analysed' (1990:85). In a review of available literature in Australia, the reasons for such act and choice have never been clearly provided in the lives of the migrant Filipino women. Their

stories below provide their perspectives on the choice of Australian citizenship. Based on the interviews of migrant Filipino women conducted between September 2000 to January 2001, I have classified eleven reasons for their becoming Australian citizens.

1. *Family*

Marriage to an Australian or to a Filipino living in Australia basically prompts the Filipina to follow the citizenship of the husband. Rajah declares that: *'married na ako sa Australian citizen'* (I am already married to an Australian citizen). Ligaya also believes that: *'importante rin talaga at kailangan yun ano mo dahil Australian yung asawa ko. So kailangan maging Australian rin'* (It is important and necessary because my husband is Australian, so I have to be Australian, too). Selena echoes a similar feeling. She felt obliged to become an Australian citizen after marrying an Australian: *'...kasi nagpakasal na ako so wala na akong choice na bumalik pa sa Pilipinas dahil nag-asawa ako ng Australian. So, I have to be'* (because I got married already and I can no longer choose to return to the Philippines because I married an Australian).

Since the time of Aristotle, marital relations have been intrinsically linked to citizenship. By patriarchal standards, women in the family have been subordinate to the man (Vogel 1991:67-68). Natural law is used as justification for the wife to transfer her rights to the family, specifically the freedom of choice. Hence, the wife ought to 'follow him whenever he decides to take residence' (*ibid.* 72-73). In so doing, the adoption of citizenship is dependent upon that of the man. This goes on to show that the citizenship of the woman is considered weak, for it to be absorbed by the husband's citizenship.

The entrenched genderizing in Philippine society mirrors unfailing orientation of the Filipina towards the family (Torres 1993:93). Carolyn Sobritchea explains the domesticity of the Filipina:

Philippine society nurtures other beliefs that tend to bind women to their traditional roles as housekeepers and child carers. These include the belief in the primacy of the female reproductive role over her other roles, the perceived contradictions between family and public life and the need, especially of a woman, to put family interest above all her other concerns in life (1990:31).

On her shoulders lie the challenge of keeping the family intact. Liwayway states: '*. . . siyempre, an akon asawa taga dinhi. Para mga bata. Mas maupay kun maging citizen ako ngan dinhi liwat kami umukoy kay. . . for safety hinin mga bata*' (of course, my husband is from here. For the children. It is better if I become a citizen and we live here also. . . for the safety of the children). Linaw decided to become an Australian citizen after giving birth to her child: '*Para sa anak ko, siyempre. eh. . . anak ko Australian citizen tapos naisip ko na rin. . . wala na talaga akong. . .*' (for my child, of course. My child is an Australian citizen and I thought about it. . . I really have no. . . (choice). Culled from these narratives, the family serves as the justification for becoming an Australian citizen. The Filipina uses the ideal of the family and her pivotal role in it to acquire citizenship in Australia.

2. Family Sponsorship

Equally important to joining their family is the privilege of sponsoring a relative or fiancé to Australia. Eva discloses that: '*I decided to become a citizen. Siyempre, because yung purpose ko din is to bring my other relatives to Australia and. . . to bring my fiancé to Australia*' (I decided to become a citizen. Of course, my purpose also is to bring my other relatives. . .). The rapid growth of the

Filipino community in Australia is mainly caused by what Richard Jackson calls the 'high propensity of settled migrants to sponsor relatives from home' (1993:146). But this practice is not limited to Filipinos. Other migrants, like the Italians, do so as well (Henderson 1993:16).

Unmarried Filipino women who migrated to Australia later on sponsor their fiances back home. Anita and Eva petitioned their loved ones and were eventually married in Australia. Those in mixed marriages have sponsored their relatives, too (Soriano 1995:97). Sponsorship of family members manifest the close-knit structure of Philippine society. One who feels alone takes the chance of filing a sponsorship even if it is increasingly becoming difficult because of the points system. In her study of women migrants in the European Union, Louise Ackers discusses the varied forms of fulfilling care at a distance; from bringing family members to join them, regular home visits, and financial support (1998:296-297). Those far from home provide financial assistance or, better still, even sponsor them to Australia.

3. *Social Integration*

Embracing citizenship of the spouse is perceived to be an acceptance of the new country. Luningning vividly remembers the feeling: *'Masaya'* (happy). She became a citizen because, *'inadopt mo na. . . ng country na pinuntahan mo dito'* (you have already adopted this country where you have been to). For Sagisag, *'I wanted to become a citizen because I wanted to integrate and to be a part of the system.'* Their motivations coincide with the integrative function of citizenship in social life (Barbalet 1988:87). Citizenship allows one to be a part of a community. For the naturalized Filipina, citizenship guarantees her membership in the Australian community, of claiming space, although

this may be peculiar coming from a minority. It seems that she feels prepared and ready to embrace Australian citizenship being a product of a 'unique blend of east and west' (D'Mello and Esmaguel 1990:3). Learning the language, for instance, is easy, coming from a country whose official business language is English and where even illiterates can mumble understandable phrases sufficient to guide a lost visitor. Australian citizenship is perceived as an indicator for 'successful integration' (Jordens 1995:165) in a multicultural country.

4. *Lifestyle*

Jamila came to Australia in 1973. Asked why she became a citizen, she says: *'I like the lifestyle and I'd like to adopt and I was adjusted in. . . way of living in Australia and I believe it would be best for me to be a citizen in Australia.'* Dama confides that initially they did not want to stay permanently in Australia. She states: *'Sabi namin noon after two years babalik na kami sa Pilipinas. Ano, mag-iipon lang kami ng pambahay, uuwi na kami. Babalik na kami doon. Pero after two years na settled na kami dito. Ayaw na namin bumalik ng Pilipinas kasi. . . nai-adjust na namin ang life dito'* (We said that after two years, we would go back to the Philippines. We would just save for needs of our house and we will go home. We will go back there. But, after two years, we were already settled here. We do not want to go back anymore because we have adjusted to the life here).

In stark contrast to the way of life in the Philippines, the Australian lifestyle presents an ideal. A relatively peaceful and clean environment lures the migrant to settle in Australia. The sight of long beaches is reminiscent of home sans the bikini. The avowed democratic system, albeit structurally different, is apparently working compared to the catastrophic practice back

home. More so, the western lifestyle permeates Philippine urban centers and are regular sights in mass media. The Filipina migrant feels culturally safe in Australia.

5. Access to Social Services

Social security is another pull for Filipino women to change citizenship. Rama notes that: *'it's very important for us who migrated here to become Australian citizens so that we can have access to all the privileges of the citizens of the country.'* Anita presents her side: *'kasi dayuhan ka, katulad mo. Dayuhan ako sa Australia. Feel ko ba na kailangan kong i-acquire yung pagiging citizen dito para kung бага may mga benefits man, eh, entitled ako rather than yung hindi ka citizen. Mamaya ang sasabihin lang nila, okey. Halimbawa, wala akong kamag-anak dito, wala akong mahingan ng tulong. Tapos kung hindi ako magpapa-citizen baka mabe-behind ako'* (because I am foreigner, like you. I am a foreigner in Australia. I feel that I need to acquire citizenship to be entitled to whatever benefits a citizen has. For example, I have no relatives here whom I can ask for help. If I do not become a citizen, I might be left behind by the social tide). Filipino women in the labor force believe they are missing out on their tax contributions if they choose not to become Australian citizens.

6. Job Security

Job security is another consideration for some to change political allegiance. Wagayway believes that: *'... it will be easier to work in Australia. Because it will be easier for me to look for a job and earn money to help my relatives back home.'* Rama firmly holds the idea that: *'when you are applying for jobs. . . it's different when you are a fully Australian citizen. So, I became one.'* Hanna also feels the same. *'When you apply for work. . . you have top*

priority over those who are not. . . you have to be an Australian citizen.' Rosa finds herself in the same situation: *'I did not really feel the need to apply for citizenship. Pero, nang. . . noon mag-umpisa ako mag-apply for jobs na mas permanent. . . ang feeling ko hindi ako natatanggap kasi, if pitted against someone who is an Australian citizen, ang kukunin nila iyon Australian citizen'* (I did not really feel the need to apply for citizenship. But, when I started applying for permanent jobs. . . my feeling is that I was not accepted because, if pitted against someone who is an Australian citizen, they will choose the Australian citizen).

In the light of having overseas qualifications, in most cases undervalued and not recognized, Filipino women, like other non-English speaking migrant women, face a form of discrimination on job opportunities (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1996:7). The feeling of not being considered equal to the Australian is compensated by having Australian citizenship; it is a leverage in the labor market.

7. *Sense of Power/Right*

Becoming an Australian citizen is power. It gives the Filipina a sense of well-being and place in the Australian community, claiming a rightful place in a dominant white society. Salome believes that *'If you are an Australian citizen you can exercise your rights as an Australian. . . whatever the Australian people got.'* Kamuning opted to be an Australian citizen primarily because it gives her power to compete with other Australians. She notes: *“. . .bagan hin na look down hira more kun nasiring ka nga Filipino citizen ka pa compared kun nabutang ka na Australian citizen ka na. . . Pero, kun pagbutang nimo na Australian citizen ka na baga hin they give you more consideration* (it's as if they look down on you more if you say you are still a Filipino citizen, as compared

to the treatment you get when you are already an Australian citizen).

In Australia, the Filipina becomes aware of her race in relations to the 'white' majority. The intricacies of power relations along racial lines is a fact to reckon with. Back in her country, the Filipina is accustomed to sharing her warm hospitality to foreigners, a trait undoubtedly abused by many. Reciprocity fizzles once in Australia. Acquiring citizenship status, thus, gives her a sense of equality with the rest of the populace despite being 'racialized' (Javed 1995:13).

8. *Boost to Morale*

In a country where colonial mentality permeates all facets of life, holding an Australian passport is a boost to the morale of the Filipina. Sagisag says: *'If I become a citizen and I own my Australian passport. . . if we go back to the Philippines, people there will say. . . the immigration people upon seeing your passport; oh, you're an Australian citizen. . . you're a balikbayan (one who returns to the country). And the impression to you is different. They become friendly and. . . they respect you. . .'* In the Philippines, there is an impression of preferential treatment for foreigners. If a Filipina becomes an alien citizen, the impression remains. Nora believes that holding an Australian passport allows her to go through immigration without delay. *'Yung pagpasok mo lang ng immigration, hindi na nga tinatatakan nila yun passport mo pag citizen ka na. . .'* (upon entry to immigration, they do not stamp on your passport if you are already a citizen). Liwanag confers with the kind of treatment given to Australian passport holders: *'pag Australian passport ka na pag-ada ka ha airport iba it treatment ha im kontra ha Pilipino citizenship. . .'* (if you have already an Australian passport, you are treated better at the airport compared

to Filipino citizens). Matahari also declares that without the Australian passport, *'we're like third class citizen or human being . . . that's how we are treated. So, with this. . . holding of Australian passport gives us power, too.'*

9. State Protection

Pilar notes that: *'ang kaigihan lang ng being an Australian citizen, whatever happens. . . ang sabi nila pag if you are in another country, whatever happens to you in that other country, if you are an Australian citizen kaagad kang sagot ng gobyerno na kukunin ka nila doon. Pero, if not, mahihirapan ka daw.'* (the beauty of being an Australian citizen is that whatever happens, they say, if you are in another country, whatever happens to you in that other country, if you are an Australian citizen, the government will immediately make arrangements to get you out. But, if not, they say it will be difficult). The notion that a government is instituted to protect the welfare of the people is strong in the mind of the Filipina. Mirasol is impressed about the road safety regulation in New South Wales. She said: *'They have all the signs. They really make it safe for people to travel. . . Sa atin (in our place), they don't care. . . they don't care about the people who are going to travel through that road. Kaya wala silang pakialam'* (That's why they do not care). *Kaya* (that's why), *they don't think about safety. . . So, when I came back, I decided na I'm going to apply for citizenship.'*

In her study on the nature of national identity, Ma. Luisa Canieso-Doronila shows the vulnerability of personal identification with the nation (1997:107). From a macro-perspective, the individual Filipina remains ambivalent on her relationship with the state as compared to her distinct identification with the family. Over the years the Filipina subject finds blatant disservice from the agents of state power.

10. *The Arduous Philippine Passport*

A strong thread that ties the reason for becoming an Australian citizen among the married Filipinas is related, previously cited, to the unending hassles of holding a Philippine passport. Nora declares that: '*. . . it's better mag-apply ka ng citizenship mo kasi kung may passport kang Australian, wala ka nang babayaran sa travel tax.*' (it's better to apply for citizenship because if you have an Australian passport you do not pay the travel tax). The travel tax is charged by the Philippine government for every departing Filipino national. Liwanag affirms that: "*Kun Australian passport ka na, waray na. . . diri ka na nagbabayad*" (if you hold an Australian passport, no more. . . you do not pay). Luningning also avers that with Australian citizenship, "*wala nang maraming ano pasikot-sikot pagkaano mo balikbayan*" (no more going through the complicated processes undergone by someone who returns to the country). Diwata further stresses that with an Australian citizenship, "*diri makuri pag-uli ngatha Pilipinas. Diri makuri pagbuwelta*" (it's not difficult to go home to the Philippines. It's not difficult to come back).

Issuance of travel documents and other bureaucratic requirements are centralized in Manila. Those coming from outside the metropolis have to bear the frequent trips to ensure processing of pertinent papers. The long wait and the seemingly circular and slow nature of public service may have gotten its toll among permanent Filipina residents in Australia. Hence, the change of citizenship is resorted to for convenience sake.

The Australian passport allows the Filipina to travel easily to other countries. Kamuning confides that: "*an chances pagkadto ha abroad mas greater kun mag gusto nimo mag travel than when you have the Filipino passport. It's very difficult. Whereas kun an imo passport Australian. . . it is easier* (the chances of going abroad

are greater if you want to travel than when you have the Filipino passport. Whereas if you have an Australian passport, it is easier). Matahari also affirms that: *'its easier for me to have an Australian passport because I can travel anywhere in the world with no problem with visa.'* Jamila shares her experience: *'when I go overseas or anywhere, I can easily go back, because, you know Australia is supposed to be my homeland, since I'm a citizen here.'*

Ironically, all the respondents believe that it is far convenient to go back to the Philippines under an Australian passport than their own. Political membership in the country of birth is replaced by an Australian citizenship which, allegedly, provides more ease and comfort when returning for holidays.

11. *Dual Citizenship*

Another reason cited by Filipino women in adopting Australian citizenship is the idea of dual citizenship. That is, one does not lose Philippine citizenship by embracing another. Tamana, fearing the loss of her Philippine citizenship upon marriage to an Australian, consulted a solicitor who said: *'You've got two citizenships. You will not lose your Philippine citizenship.'* Citizenship in the Philippines is retained by the Filipina even after marriage to a foreigner so long as she does not renounce it. By embracing Australian citizenship, the Filipina has not renounced her Filipino citizenship. The formal citizenship ceremony does not require renunciation of previous affiliation. Felisa declares that "Australian citizenship is only a piece of paper. *Pilipino pa ako*" (I am still a Filipino). Married to a Filipino, her adoption of Australian citizenship is considered a temporary state aimed at gaining the practical benefits of it for her three children while reserving Filipino citizenship for later years. Many of the Filipinas, like Felisa, believe that their Filipino citizenship is not to be questioned at all. It's always there.

Dual citizenship is a 'fair expression of their dual national identity.' (Hamma 1990:108). Belonging to the Australian community as embodied by citizenship falls within an 'imagined' state. But to view their 'imagined community' as an expression of nationalism among Filipinos is another matter.

Article IV, section 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, however, stipulates that 'dual allegiance of citizens is inimical to the national interest' (Magallona 1990:1). The provision, however, lacks teeth because there is no system or record of tracking Filipinos with dual citizenship. Realistically, the government cannot identify all those with dual citizenship unless a third state is involved or one plans to run in the election.

The Migrant Filipina and the Feminist Citizenship Agenda

Conventional citizenship discourse, mainly liberalism and civic republicanism, focus on individual rights and political obligations of the citizens. Rights encompass the civic, political and social entitlements propounded by T. H. Marshall (1950). However, feminist citizenship theorists argued that the universalist assumptions of the liberal and civic republican models favor the male citizen in their domination of the public sphere. For example, Carole Pateman in *The Sexual Contract* (1988) first argued that the hierarchical and structural nature of the public and private divide in patriarchal societies exclude women from politics. The masculine characteristics of 'aggressiveness, competitiveness, pragmatism' becomes the ideal political behavior (Bourque and Grossholtz 1974:225-226). Citizenship then, is expressed in male values and power. Challenging this sexist paradigm becomes primordial. As Kathleen Jones put it:

The dominant conceptualization of citizenship displaces women, their work and the values associated with that work from the culturally

normative definitions of objectivity, morality, citizenship and even of human nature. That we need to challenge this discourse is evident (1990:801).

Since the 1990s the feminist challenge to citizenship discourse became intensely prominent. The major debates centered on the gendered nature of citizenship and whether equal citizenship is possible in plurality (Voet 1998:1). I will endeavor to analyze the perspectives of migrant Filipino women on becoming Australian citizens in the context of the feminist alternative models on citizenship.

From the narratives, it appears that migrant Filipino women arrived in Australia as dependants to men—as fiancées or wives. In so doing, the male partner has proven his financial ability to sustain a family unit. Ursula Vogel in *Is Citizenship Gender-Specific?* argues that the universal male-breadwinner who ‘claims rights and discharges responsibilities not only for himself but also on behalf of other citizen’ has been popularized by social liberals like Marshall (1991:66-67). Where women are considered dependents of men they cannot be of equal standing with the men. Because the Australian welfare state, like other welfare regimes, is premised on the male-headed household, women and children are subsumed in his identity. Women became citizens only through him in such areas as taxation and social welfare (Close 1995:4). Migrant Filipino women receive means-tested social entitlements as well as child endowment allowance for their caring roles. Since the family is of primal concern to Filipino women it follows that they are more oriented towards the private domestic obligations. In *Women and Citizenship* (1991), Yvonne Summers observes that because women are saddled with the responsibility of caring for their children they cannot be equal citizens with men. A dependent wife is, therefore, not a full member of society.

Filipino women who came to Australia as fiancées or wives typify Carole Pateman's patriarchal hypothesis. She claims that women are subjected as citizens by the sexual contract. Marriage binds women to the natural world of the family and is outside the realm of civil society. As mothers or wives, women are not considered political subjects. Pateman in *Equality, Difference, and Subordination* then argues that a reconceptualization of citizenship is imperative of women are to be integrated as full citizens. She cites the contribution of women in the 'private, unpaid welfare in their homes' in the light of women's 'ultimate political duty'—motherhood (1992:22-24). Giving life and nurturing the next generation of citizens is viewed as women's citizenship and must be so recognized in their quest for equality. This 'sexually differentiated' conception of citizenship accepts the difference between men and women and at the same time consider both as equal individuals. The contributions of migrant Filipino women in ensuring the future generation of Australian citizens, amidst dwindling population growth, suggest an exercise of citizenship in itself.

Another strand of the feminist citizenship debate is the maternalist-communitarian model drawn from the works of American political theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain. In *Public Man, Private Woman* she affirms the distinction of the private and public sphere and argues for a reconceptualization of the former as a site of political morality; the private as a 'locus of human activity, moral reflection, social and historical relations, the creation of meaning, and the construction of identity having its own integrity' (1981:332). The practice of motherhood essentially counts as a model for citizenship. This 'reconstructive ideal of the private,' where the capacities of citizenship are realized, allows women to participate in political life as mothers and as family members (*ibid.*: 351)—a citizenry able to empathize

with others (Elshtain 1982:446; 1990:54-55). This notion of citizenship augurs well with the migrant Filipino where primary concern appears to be with the family both in Australia and their homeland. Such familial identification makes the migrant Filipina a part of the labor force, contributing to taxation for welfare subsidies.

Perhaps the significant positioning of migrant Filipino women in the feminist citizenship agenda is the notion of a 'differentiated citizenship' or whether or not equal citizenship is possible in a plurality. The bases of difference between and among women include culture, ethnicity, age or class. Because Filipino women in Australia are migrants they possess identifiable differences from the mainstream 'white' society. Filipino women consider their adoption of Australian citizenship as a means to empower themselves and compete equally with the rest of the Australian populace—an attitude bolstered by the multicultural framework of society. However, possession of formal rights to citizenship is not the same as full enjoyment of substantive rights. It seems that what migrant Filipino women lack *vis a vis* white Australians is somehow compensated by their status as Australian citizens.

Within the pluralist-participatory model of the feminist citizenship discourse, the ideas of Iris Marion Young and Chantal Mouffe is significant to migrant Filipino women. In *Polity and Group Difference* (1990), I. M. Young recognizes that differences exist among groups in society; that some groups are privileged while others are disadvantaged. As an ethnic community in Australia, Filipinos may be considered disadvantaged—race being their single qualifier of difference. According to Young, the notion of citizenship as generality hides the particular identities of these groups. However, her strategy of group-representation to empower subordinated groups, like migrant Filipino women,

may be too much for the asking in an Anglo-Celtic oriented political system. Ethnic councils do exist as consultative bodies but with no representative power. Despite fluency of the English language, Filipinos are still classified as from a non-English speaking background in Australia. Like other migrant communities, Filipinos are accorded some sort of 'special rights' based on their particular needs—like interpreting service and settlement assistance.

The debate on the 'politics of difference' within the purview of citizenship is taken further by Chantal Mouffe. In *The Return of the Political* (1993) she aims for a 'radical democratic citizenship' which requires a 'transformation of existing subject positions' to construct a common political identity. A single individual has plurality of identities; others are dominant in one relation while subordinated in another (1993:77). But, unlike Young's insistence on particular difference, Mouffe seeks to transform it in the context of the citizens' common identification' of a 'set of ethico-political values' (*ibid.*:83-84). Migrant Filipino women in Australia may qualify to have plural identities: as migrants, as women, as workers and all others. But, their varied identities are presumably subsumed as Australian citizens. Their desire to be socially integrated, adopt a comfortable lifestyle and gain access to welfare services as well as their need for state protection wherever they go are manifestations of their acceptance of Australian ethos. Albeit their identity remains Filipino, Australian citizenship provides the common factor for all migrants to belong.

Concluding Remarks

This paper draws out the reasons for becoming an Australian citizen among the married immigrant Filipinas in New South

Wales. Their motivations mainly spring from the practical benefits of Australian citizenship *vis a vis* Philippine citizenship while living in the country. It cannot be denied that many wish to retain their old citizenship; however, it comes to naught with the insecurities associated with holding a Philippine passport. The perception that Filipino citizenship will always be there in case they find need of it in the future makes Australian citizenship a better alternative at the moment.

The related discussion on migrant Filipino women within the feminist citizenship discourse implies that so far, there is no one right formula to explain their motivations for becoming Australian citizens. Because the on-going feminist debate on citizenship still hinges on the 'white' model, colored people like Filipino women have to find their subject positions within this western-inspired citizenship paradigm. As Chandra Mohanty claims, the hegemony of the white women's movement also universalized the experiences of women of color (1988:61). This situation of Filipino women may be partly explained by one citizenship model, complemented by others, to relate to their particular experiences.

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