

## **ABSTRACTS**

**Feminism and nationalism: The discourse on the woman question and politics of the women's movement in the Philippines.** Angeles, L.C. (College of Social Science and Philosophy, University of the Philippines, Diliman). M.A. Thesis.

The progressive women's movement in the Philippines was born within the left political tradition. Its leftist origins therefore determine to a great extent the contours of the discourse on the woman question as well as its political practice. In other words, the women's movement's theory and practice is being developed within the matrix of class politics and the nationalist movement to which it is inextricably linked. It is this superimposition of its historical origins and the overall left debate which has nurtured the development of the women's movement.

Since the later years of the Spanish colonial period, women have participated in the resistance movements against the Spaniards, Americans and Japanese. Many women were also integrated in the Huk movement and the contemporary underground left movement. It was the anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments of these women which made them transcend their traditional sex roles.

The tensions between women's liberation and class and national liberation were first expressed at the level of both theory and practice with the formation of the Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan in the early 1970s. The creative discourse on the woman question within the left movement initiated during that period was carried over to the contemporary period.

The woman question in the Philippines is popularly explained by the progressive women's movement in terms of the triad of class oppression, national, and sex or gender oppression. This articulation of sex, class and national contradictions is intended to demonstrate how it is to be female and poor in a Third World country dominated by foreign powers and interests.

The women's movement since its re-emergence in the post- Aquino assassination period has been engaged in an arduous process of action and reflection based on the following influences to its praxis: (1) its acquaintance with Western theories on feminism, enriched by its interaction with feminists in international solidarity networks from abroad; (2) its knowledge of closer identification with other Third World countries where there are active national liberation and women's liberation movements; (3) the actual conditions of grassroots women and the lessons it has learned from them; and (4) the

lessons learned from interaction and networking among various women's organizations that form the backbone of the movement.

There are three fluid, overlapping phases in the development of the women's movement orientation. The first phase was the attention given to the need to get women out of their limited concerns and get them involved in political activities to put an end to the national crisis during the period 1983 to 1985. The little theoretical work done at this stage came in the form of understanding the impact of the national crisis situation on women's lives.

Even before the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship, this first stage was already being superceded by the second phase which focused the movement's attention on trying to understand the bases of women's subordination in the various sectors — workers, peasants, urban poor, middle-class professionals, ethnic minorities. The classification of women's issues according to sectoral concerns had as its underlying principle the emphasis on the class position of women as the major factor exacerbating their oppression as women.

The period from March 1986 up to the present is the phase of developing more rigorously a feminist orientation. Emphasis at this stage is being placed on the understanding of cross-class bases of women's subordination which may be directly or indirectly linked to class and national oppression. This understanding has enabled women to come up with campaigns against domestic violence, pornography, sexist and violent toys, and programs that aim to raise women's consciousness on health, sexuality, reproductive freedom or to increase their economic independence through socio-economic projects.

The unevenness of this development is due to a host of factors internal and external to the women's movement. The internal factors are (1) the varying degrees of political and feminist consciousness among the women active in the movement, and (2) the differing ideological tendencies that tend to divide organized women into various political formations. The external factors are (1) the differences in ideological orientation and political tradition within the Philippine left movement itself, and (2) the specific political conjuncture shaping the directions of the nationalist movement and the women's movement.

The aftermath of the coming to power of the Aquino government and the conjuncture of events following the Mendiola massacre in January 1987 point to the reality that the politics of the women's movement is still largely determined by the larger political centers with which certain women's organizations are identified. Unity among the women's groups belonging to diverse ideological backgrounds is often possible if and when the various left political centers are themselves united on certain political issues and campaigns.

It appears, therefore, that the common task facing the various organizations within the women's movement is the challenge of pushing the women's agenda within their particular political centers and the popularization of feminism among unorganized women. It is also in the cultivation of specific areas of women's concerns that the women's movement is more likely to gain unity and strength as it tries to develop its feminist orientation transcending differences in political ideology and organizational formations.

**Tapestry of Knowledge on Women in the Philippines. Monares, D.** (College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Phils.) M. A. Thesis, August, 1991.

This study focuses on knowledge-generation on women in Philippines. It seeks to systematize particular information that highlight women and women's issues in the Philippines based in the specified period (1975-1990). Through selected materials, it hopes to provide a guideline on contextualizing women's studies in the Philippines. Particular emphasis was given to understanding the manifestations of the woman question in the Philippines by highlighting the different sectors, as well as the women's movement in the context of the struggle for social transformation.

Content analysis was used in data systematization of selected 100 materials (studies and writings) to come up with meaningful patterns and trends. Many times, the researcher got caught in a dilemma on how to handle the plethora of information but the feminist method of knowing had helped her in grappling with the situation. The bias of the researcher lies in the recognition that in the process of research, there is an interaction between the subjective (one's perceptions, assumptions, feelings) and empirical reality. Experiential analysis, feelings) and empirical reality. Experiential analysis (conscious partiality) is part of the method in the total process of the study.

It is heartwarming to note that there were numerous information generated on women in the Philippines during the period. The problem is that very few had attempted to systematize this information in the light of a coherent framework that can weed-out the major from the peripheral, the actual from the mythical, the critical from the naive.

Perhaps, the most important contribution of this work is generating a framework in reading women's realities and issues. It tried to classify the materials according to content, approach and framework of analysis. The major patterns and trends woven in the findings are the following: 1) in terms of content, descriptive materials were the springboard from which analytical and visionary ones were based; 2) in terms of approach, the recognition of women's role (contribution) is dominant, followed by the works in the second half of the 1980's which were basically transitional (it seeks to explain

women's situation in terms of the structures in society coupled with the relation between men and women); 3) as to framework of analysis, it is worth knowing that most of the materials in the study belong to the critical category, which means that the level of consciousness reflected in the materials is more or less sharp in reading issues; 4) critical-liberating works are generated by those women who have grassroots experience and political involvement.

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The challenge for women's studies in the Philippines lies in generating appropriate information on the actual conditions of women in the different sectors, particularly the marginalized and those less studied — tribal women, housekeepers, professionals — through life histories or case studies that can capture women's social and personal conditions (feelings, consciousness).

There is more to be done in the field of women's studies in the Philippines. This work salutes the previous efforts done, no matter to what level or category they belong. They are the springboard from which this study materialized.