

FOREWORD

Ano po ang inyong mga pangarap sa buhay? (What are your life's dreams?) is a question I like to ask women from rural and urban poor communities. Their immediate responses are invariable. Wistfully, they speak about seeing their children finish school, their husbands finding better employment, having secure housing and the means to sustain the family's basic needs. I clarify the question with a qualifier. *Ano po ang mga pangarap ninyo sa buhay, 'yung para sa sarili niyo lamang?* (What are the dreams you have only for yourself?) Each and every time, the women grapple with a question we would answer with relative ease. There are no personal dreams, all have been conflated with familial aspirations.

There is one painfully raw reply, expressed dolefully, that is most etched in my heart.

Sana hindi na ako mahirapan. (My wish is a life free from hardships.)

The lives of low-income Filipino women are unremittingly characterized by sufferings brought about by interlocking structures of oppression and domination. At its most basic, they contend with their subordination as women in a patriarchal society and as members of a socio-economic class that bears the brunt of the inequalities that ensue from the practices of a neoliberal order.

This is why we do feminist research. These are the lives we care passionately about. It is the experiences and perspectives of these women, their needs, interests, and priorities, that we must exigently give voice to. Their struggles must not remain invisible. It is because of them, and for them, that we are committed to a scholarship that is inextricably linked to the advocacy of gender and social justice, to our loftiest aspirations of a more humane world where no one is left behind.

We locate the work that we do as feminist scholars in what are currently very challenging times. We are collectively indignant, frustrated,

and weary from the unrelenting onslaught of threats to and assaults on human rights, freedoms, national interest, and the rule of law. We express our outrage, a chorus of voices fiercely protective of the gains from decades of struggle of the women's movement in the Philippines. It is a movement begun by our feminist foremothers, whose advocacies of gender equality, gender justice, and women's empowerment we have, together, made our own. We are resolved to never allow the erosion of hard-won victories.

We resist all threats to freedoms and rights, and we will continue to fight for them. We do this for the least of us most of all, those who bear the greatest burdens of discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, oppression, and subordination not only because of their gender, but also their class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, and other intersectional identities. We resist and fight not only through the actions we accomplish with the women's movement, but also with our capacities for knowledge generation. We will exert every effort to surface and echo the subjugated knowledge of the unheard, and to magnify their narratives.

Our feminism demands so much from us today. Not just protest and resistance, but more than ever, vigilance, equanimity, tenacity, and solidarity across our differences. We envision the *Review of Women's Studies* as contributing to deeper reflection, to strategizing, organizing, mobilization, and collective action against asymmetrical structures that are alarmingly fortifying.

For as long as our grassroots women are unable to visualize, articulate, and actualize their dreams for themselves, our work remains unfinished.

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