

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Anthropology Faculty Publications

Anthropology

2005

Christians Against Globalization in the Philippines

Kathy Nadeau

California State University, San Bernardino., knadeau@csusb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/anthro-publications>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Regional Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nadeau, Kathy, "Christians Against Globalization in the Philippines" (2005). *Anthropology Faculty Publications*. 8.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/anthro-publications/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

Use full citation when citing this paper.

Source: Nadeau, Kathleen 2005. "Christians Against Globalization in the Philippines." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*. Edited by Lynn Kwiatkowski and Jack Rollwagen; Vol. 34, No. 4: 317-340.

7/15/05

Christians Against Globalization in the Philippines

By Kathy Nadeau

Abstract: This paper looks at the bottom-up Basic Christian Community movement for sustainable (social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental) development in the Philippines. This movement is part of an international coalition against globalization: the new form of imperialism. The paper argues that social and environmental justice movements, like the Basic Christian Communities, provide a new alternative method to restructure local Philippine society and, to think about international alliances. The paper discusses, first, the Basic Christian Communities, second, the United Nation's International Declaration of Human Rights, and third, the movement's response to unwanted forms of development that are being imposed on the Philippines by global elites.

This paper is limited to a discussion of the Basic Christian Communities that work to counter rights violations resulting from macro-economic development processes in the Philippines. While not every activist-led and mass-based people's movement includes critical environmental issues on their agendas for social change, this paper focuses on the *Basic Christian Community* movement that incorporates the environmental discourse into everyday practice. This movement is part of an international bottom-up effort to counter some of the negative effects (e.g., profit at the expense of human life, and the environment) of global capitalism. While on the one hand, the fall of the Soviet Union and communism has succumbed to the New World Order, on the other hand, a diverse Left has given rise to competing and popular environmental justice movements for social change that have transnational linkages. Contreras (1999: 16) argues that the [Philippine] State has been re-articulated in this new world order as merely a handmaid hastening the processes of globalization. "The world of economic

Kathy Nadeau is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at California State University San Bernardino. She can be reached at knadeau@csusb.edu

and political markets is now led by a corporate community that ironically debunks the traditional corporate theory of the state acting as the lead capitalist accumulator.” This new positioning of the State’s role as bringing about global processes, has been given added impetus since the September 11, 2001, bombing of the World Trade Center that resulted in a reactive war on terrorism. It is no longer feasible to seek to merely overhaul the state to effect total social transformation at the social and cultural level. But, as the state has succumbed to international capital, counter-hegemonic movements for social, cultural, and environmental rightsⁱ are reacting against the globalization of every life way by reasserting their own unique cultural identities.

The paper begins with a discussion of the Basic Christian Communities, and, then, the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It, then, defines development aggression as a form of development that is imposed from above without consent or debate, and distinguishes it from sustainable development and bottom-up approaches. Finally, it contends that social justice and environmental rights movements like the Basic Christian Communities are renovating traditional cultural practices (e.g., mutual self-help organizations, organic farming and livestock raising techniques, and the planting of traditional crops) to counteract some of the adverse consequences (e.g., increasing poverty and environmental degradation) of globalization. These low budget rights movements need to be supported and encouraged by local and international elites who have the economic and political clout needed to solve the Philippine poverty problem. Instead, many elites label the liberationalⁱⁱ Basic Christian Community movement in the Philippines as a communist or terrorist organization because it collectively opposes top-down development schemes that pose a threat to poor people’s lives.

History of Philippine *Basic Christian Communities*

The Basic Christian Community movement traces its roots back to the early church of Jesus Christ, and the Filipino struggle against colonial and neocolonial dominance by Spain (1565 –1898), the United States (1898 –1946), and the Filipino elite. The contemporary movement arose in reaction against Marco’s martial law dictatorship (1972-1986). Church leaders referred to Vatican II (1962-1965) social teachings to fight for the rights of the oppressed inside the nation. They worked to organize and increase the class-consciousness of the poor and to improve their circumstances. Latin American liberation theologies influenced these social action workers. The Maryknollsⁱⁱⁱ institutionalized this movement in Davao province on the southern island of Mindanao in 1967. From there the movement spread out to the rest of the nation.

The Basic Christian Community movement was formalized at the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, in Davao City, Mindanao, in 1971 after the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin, Columbia in 1968. The Catholic Bishops Conference, the National Secretariat for Social Action, and the United Church of Christ (a coalition of Protestant Churches) endorsed the movement in 1977. The annual Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral meeting provided a forum for bishops to discuss their ideas with other clergy and lay participants organizing the Basic Christian Communities. These communities encouraged people to solve their own problems by using local resources, whenever possible, to meet their own needs for themselves. The Bishops debated about issues such as the question of the degree of lay participation in the Basic Christian communities and the organizational structure of the church. Initially, the Basic community model was introduced as a way to encourage the laity to become more actively involved in the liturgy. Later, some bishops stressed the importance of lay

leadership and organization training programs directed at issues of social justice and liberation of the poor. This led to a controversy that portended to divide the movement. On the one side, some Bishops perceived the Basic Christian Communities to be an encroachment on the institutional power of the church. On the other side were those who stressed the ecclesiality of these communities. The term ecclesial refers to the people of God as the body of the church. This disagreement between the conservatives (those advocating the hierarchical church) and the progressives (those promoting the popular church) resulted in a deadlock that closed the meetings in 1983 when the Bishops met apart from the lay board (Kinne 1990).

Many progressive clergy involved in the earlier Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral meetings were transferred to conservative parishes in the Visayas and Luzon, while conservative bishops were transferred to replace them, and in theory, their programs, a reshuffling which continues into the new millennium. In this context many of the Christians critical of the Martial Law regime and involved in the Basic Christian Community movement and its task forces for social justice were forced underground during that period, as they were under military surveillance and had reason to fear for their lives.

Concurrently, the Roman Catholic administration, in Rome, silenced some of the more vocal religious proponents (e.g., C. Boff) of liberation theology. However, the liberation theology movement everywhere represented the people's church, not necessarily the hierarchical church. It is integrated into the progressive wing of all the churches. Even though it was forced underground in the Philippines, as it was in Germany during World War II (see: Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1983), it continued unabated. Liberation theology is not stagnant but a process that changes and adapts with the changing times. After Ferdinand Marcos was ousted from power by the well-known People's Power Revolution in 1986, the Basic Christian Community movement

flourished. In 1991, at the Second Plenary Council held in Cebu in the Central Philippines, this community model was officially decreed by the church hierarchy as “the new way of being a church.” The new model was added to diocesan management networks throughout the nation but some conservative archdiocesan centers began to stress the liturgical over the liberational aspect. Today there are both kinds of small Christian communities in the Philippines. However, only the liberational model offers an alternative approach to the society and ecology (Nadeau 2002; see, also, Boff 1986).

The liberational Basic Christian Community movement finds added impetus in postmodern theories of the environment and ecology, as well as theologies of liberation, which are dialectically-dynamically derived from biblical hermeneutics, world system, dependency, and postmodern mode of production theories. It involves a paradigmatic shift from one where economic development and the environment are viewed as separate entities to a paradigm based on sustainable development modes that integrate and bring together dimensions of class, development, empowerment, culture, gender, and ecological sustainability (see, Escobar 1995). The movement struggles against the entry of destructive mining operations, logging operations, and land conversion programs, calling, instead, for a new postmodern society that is based on ecologically sustainable modes of production in connection with new forms of political and social relationships. Therefore, organizers can be found at work in situations where Marxism fails to mobilize people and liberal capitalism fails to effect societal well-being. They are involved in the collaborative and time-consuming work of organizing people on their own behalf. Members pray together and use lessons from the Bible as a springboard to reflect on how they can solve their problems in order of priority. Gaspar (2001, 320) refers to this process as a struggle for justice and peace, to promote human rights and total and integral human

development. Also, there is a need to incorporate the deconstruction of security and peace into this new alternative framework.

More specifically, the movement uses an approach for the social and economic development of the Philippines based on sustainable development theory. The sustainable development concept has been broadly defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as “development that ensures that the utilization of resources and the environment today does not damage the prospects for their use by future generations.” Barrameda (1993), who reviewed the theoretical applications of sustainable development in the Philippines, refers to development as a process that cannot be understood outside of an already existing (mind-body-society-nature) “totality” because everything is interconnected. According to her, development refers to a social and structural process for achieving ecological sustainability and human well-being within a community as a whole. It refers to the qualitative improvement of all groups and individuals in a society. The liberational Basic Christian Community plan is to develop self-reliant communities that meet the needs of residents by using local resources. They aspire to be local sustainable development experiments. They network with each other to develop self help communities and to develop diversified organic farming and social services that are supported by the local industry. Members are encouraged to reinterpret Christian symbols and scriptures to reflect their own themes for liberation. A key method in this approach involves establishing critical awareness among the poor regarding their own circumstances (Freire 1973).

The bottom-up plan of the Basic Christian Community movement provides an alternative to ruling elite models for the development of poor communities and works to reconstruct social, cultural, and ecological relationships, by involving poor people in their own development

process. The liberational model contradicts the predominantly top-down and export-oriented approach of the Philippine government. The top-down government plan considers progress to be determined largely by global economic forces. It implies that economic growth will someday trickle-down to benefit the majority of local people by generating the surplus needed to solve their problems. However, as shown by the following example, top-down modernization theory fails to address the Philippine problems of poverty and environmental degradation.

Ethnography of a Basic Christian Community

The argument of this paper is that liberational Basic Christian Communities are based on postmodern theories and liberation theologies that counter unwanted forms of globalization. I chose the name “Kabukiran” (pseudonym) to refer to the community in which I conducted research for reasons of personal safety. While many rural communities in the Philippines are under military surveillance and subject to human-rights violations carried out by paramilitary and military personnel under government officials, Kabukiran is not highly militarized. Its mayor, vice mayor, monsignor, barrio captain (village leader), Church leaders, and citizens appreciated my interest in their community. I did my fieldwork there in the early nineteen nineties for a period of one year. My primary methods used were formal and informal interviews and participant observation. From the moment I met the Basic Christian Community farmers, I decided to focus on this community because of its comprehensive program, which included activities ranging from social analysis and creative theater to health care and sustainable agricultural development. I first contextualize this community by looking at some geographic, socioeconomic, and historic data, collected, largely, by the farmers in collaboration with the non-

government organizers as part of their labor apostolate. Their data combined with my own presents their situation from their own point of view. I analyze these findings as an actively-engaged and outside participant observer.

Since the community under discussion has been targeted by the central government for future development, organizers prepare the farmers to unite and stand ready to resist developers who may attempt to evict them from their land in order to develop tourist attractions. They coordinate with other non-government organizers who document human rights abuses and provide training in organic farming. Organizers encourage farmers to take pride in their traditional heritage and to use natural agricultural methods that worked successfully in the past. They refuse to buy packages, even when made affordable by certified dealers, that reduce biodiversity or that intensify production through the use of artificial pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and industrial technologies. Participating farmers meet together at each other's homes to study and reflect upon how sacred scriptures relate to their everyday experiences. They hold meetings during Birthday celebrations or anniversaries, rather than at a fixed time, for reasons of practicality. During the holy seasons of Easter, Lent, and Advent, the monsignor and organizers develop liturgical 'talks' on issues of poverty, political suppression, dislocation, and ecology.

Kabukiran is located on a mountaintop some 100 kilometers from the island capital. With only one unpaved road leading to this barrio, travel is difficult. The road is narrow and steep; during the rainy season parts of it are washed out completely. One passenger jeep makes two trips daily to the mountaintop barrio; several motorcycles are available for hire. Most farmers walk to and from the town center, to the public market and parish center because they cannot afford to pay for transportation.

The farmers are mostly tenants who cultivate corn and raise chickens, goats, and pigs. A

few own cows and carabaos (water buffaloes). Their homes are spread over hills, with wide spaces between them, and are constructed of light materials: cogon grass and coconut leaves for roofs and bamboo, and in some cases hardwood, for floors and walls. Only the barrio captain and three families have homes partially of concrete. There are 143 extended nuclear households, or 700 residents, divided into three neighborhoods, each with its small chapel. Only 200 people, representing thirty-nine households, participated in the Basic Christian Community activities, apparently due to two factors: first, the main factor, those who did not participate have small children at home and are too busy caring for their farms; they simply lack the time and freedom of movement for church work. Second, in 1987, the military and leading anti-communist propagandist, Jun Alcover of BYLA Radio [a known black propaganda station run by the military counter intelligence unit] visited this barrio and others to warn farmers not to attend the Basic Christian Community, which they labeled as a “Communist front.” At present, counter-intelligence announcers propagandize against “terrorists”, rather than “communists,” since the fall of the Soviet Union ended the so-called communist threat. Also, a paramilitary informer reports members’ activities to police and military officials and the mayor.

The typical household in the study site consists of five members. Those over sixty-five years old live in separate houses adjacent to one of their married children, or with them. Male household heads and single men and women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five often migrate to work as domestic servants, store employees, hotel workers, factory workers, truck drivers, or construction workers. Some women I talked with aspired to marry foreigners. Farmers over forty tend to remain in the village. According to the survey conducted by the local farmers and organizers in 1993, seventy-six percent of the farmers are tenants who cultivate an average farm of 0.78 hectares. The other twenty-four percent are owner-cultivators, with an

average farm of 2.3 hectares. The most common arrangement is that one-third of the harvest goes to the landowner and two-thirds of the harvest to the tenant. A few flatland tenants surrender fully one-half of their harvest. Tenants are pressured to pay landowners cash, at the rate of twenty-five centavos per harvested ear of corn. Absentee landlords live in the town center or further away. One retired landlord lives in the barrio. His father once owned nearly ninety percent of the land there.

Ironically, the resident landlord confessed to be in financial difficulty. His extended family struggles to send children to secondary school and college. He could hardly pay for medicine for his wife, hospitalized in a public hospital. He is still wealthy by local standards; four of his tenant farmers barely survived the summer of 1993, eating root crops and *kamungay* (leaves from a kamungay tree).

In the late nineteen eighties, when the Basic Christian Community first arrived they found the farmers impoverished and struggling to survive. Many of them had forgotten traditional farming practices that were practiced by their predecessors. Instead, they had grown dependent on using expensive artificial inputs to grow their crops. The soil they cultivated was rocky and eroded. Also, they were growing a costly hybrid yellow corn that attracted a lot of insects and required chemical fertilizers and artificial pesticides. In 1991, the Basic Christian Community organizers challenged the farmers to solve their problems by using resources available in their immediate environment. They introduced a traditional white variety of corn and organic farming techniques. The farmers quickly adopted the church's organic farming program because the traditional white corn could be stored and used longer than the yellow hybrid variety. Also, it was more pest resistant and did not require costly artificial inputs. The decision of the farmers to adopt the program and maintain their livelihood in terms of "use-

value” as opposed to “exchange-value” can be seen as a form resistance based on cultural differences. As elsewhere in Asia, South and Latin America, and Africa, Filipino peasant cultures differ from the dominant cultures of European origins regarding land, food, and the economy. Readers can refer to my review of the clash between Filipino peasant culture in Northern Luzon and that of the Green Revolution (Nadeau 1992). Also, for a well-known Latin American example see Taussig (1980).

The farmers used to think that being religious meant to attend Mass regularly, and keep the sacraments. Those who were perceived to be devout Catholics practiced outward forms of religious behavior. However, the Basic Christian Community organizers introduced the farmers to a new way of practicing their religion, by actually reading and applying lessons learned from the Bible. They used local metaphors and real life examples to explain what Jesus taught. Whereas the farmers used to rely, exclusively, on priests and religious teachers to read and interpret the Bible for them, the organizers now empowered them to discern the meaning of the scriptures for themselves and in conjunction with the clergy. This new way of practicing their religious faith was derived, largely, from liberation theology and post-Vatican II social teachings.

Most farmers were tenants. They had been so for less than twenty years. They became tenants by mortgaging their land to other farmers or usurers through a mortgage system known as *prenda*. As Cynthia Hallare-Lara (1992, 20) explained, *prenda* compels farmers to surrender their title and in some cases tilling rights, to other farmers or usurers for cash over time. They usually work the land for an average of two to five years, while it is mortgaged. Many Kabukiran farmers borrowed money to buy fertilizers to cultivate new high yielding varieties of corn in vogue due to the Green Revolution. These farmers could not repay the loan balances in

times of drought or poor harvest, and mortgaged and later lost their land due to modernization.

Bypassing usurers and creditor-landlords who offer high interest loans (twenty to thirty percent interest rate per month), Basic Christian Community participants with the help of the monsignor, secured a low interest loan (with an interest rate of 1.5 percent) from an Archdiocesan Church Foundation for the indigent, which they used to buy cows, goats, and chickens. After about four months, they were to divide the profit of the sale of the original cow, goat, or chicken between themselves and the parish. Accordingly, two-thirds of the profit went to the caretaker, one-sixth to the Basic Christian Community fund, and one-sixth to the parish fund, which serves as a revolving community fund for emergency (e.g., when a goat dies or fails to gain weight or produce offspring). This loan program enables farmers to avoid high interest loans and other disproportionate sharing arrangements from local creditors to start their income generating projects. Yet, many Basic Christian Community farmers cannot sell their chickens in the local market because they are branded as “Communist chickens” by some non-affiliated neighbors. Thus, in times of emergency (death or serious illness) they usually, still, sell their produce to usurer-traders who, also, lend them extra money at high interest rates.

In summary, these farmers are mutually supportive of each other and are aware that they participate in both the commercial market and their own subsistence economy. They know, fundamentally, that they are being further impoverished by those who control the market. Consequently, they try to lessen their contacts with the latter because of the high costs involved. The economy of the Basic Christian Community, largely, is based on use-value: the everyday use of local resources in their surrounding natural environment. The outside agricultural team in the community aimed to eradicate the outmoded idea by which farmers saw themselves as beneficiaries of an agricultural program: “We are trying to erase this idea because it encourages

the farmers to depend on us for dole-outs.” The non-government organization, also, wanted to make the farmer’s teams more participatory by training them to work together, collectively, in larger numbers. Another aim was to encourage farmers in their traditional pre-capitalist practices, such as not counting the hours they work. As one non-government organizer stated:

The farmers are not yet business people. We are trying to retain an attitude that they don’t have to count. Their only capital is their labor and time. So, we try to encourage them to work cooperatively because one way of getting enough or producing more resources is to multiply their labor. Also, we do not have any alternatives because they do not have any finances. (Interview 1993).

Kabukiran’s Basic Christian Community members meet to read and reflect on the Bible, regularly, for example, on birthdays and special occasions. These Bible-sharing activities motivate, validate, and bring together the community for cooperation and economic and political action. Participants view Bible-sharing as a time of interaction and learning from one another’s interpretations, rather than as a form of meditation and prayer (e.g., novenas, rosaries, and vigils). They see Christ’s faith-life experiences as an expression of their own community values and faith. One example: the message of Christ to help one another and love one another serves to encourage families to help neighbors by working (effectively and with limited resources, financially) for each other without pay. Men and women participate, equally, in reading Scripture; their sharings may be called genuine and down to earth. There is an element of spontaneity in their reflections, absent from Basic Christian Communities that I have observed in the city. For example, one member compared the resurrection of Lazarus to a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly, and how a farmer’s life can be so transformed by, for example, turning the sale of a cow into land. In this instance, resurrection is interpreted as transformation

and not just a continuation of Lazarus's life. The social contexts in which members interact with other people (landlords, government and military personnel, disinterested neighbors) and the institutional Church are situations in which new ideas and cultural forms are continuously introduced, negotiated, and transformed. While the Church may incorporate or exclude many indigenous religious customs and beliefs, Basic Christian Communities continue to assert their own religiosity and culture. They consciously resurrected traditional practices (not all of which are supernatural, as when a farmer reveres a corn field) to resist being fragmented by capitalist relations of production. Some participants continue to hold indigenous requiems and prayer services, which include rituals for feeding the dead, and maintain beliefs concerning holy amulets and sacred objects and blessing rituals that use the sprinkling of blood from livestock. Other examples include their localization of the Passion Play, and circular processions to shrines or around mountaintops. Some of these processions are reminiscent of Buddhistic, Hinduistic, and Tantric processions made to stake out sacred space. The Church is in transition between old ways (e.g., fall/redemption spiritualities) and new (creation-centered spiritualities). The Basic Christian Communities are the concrete expression.

This section has looked at an example of a provincial government's unsuccessful attempt to intimidate farmers from establishing a Basic Christian Community in the Philippines. I have argued that the bottom-up approach of the Basic Christian Community provides a more holistic development approach than outside packages that emphasize increasing agricultural production for the global market but not social and ecological well-being. The following section looks at the issue of development aggression and the counter-strategy of religious social action workers for building a more just and community-oriented society while promoting sustainable development.

Globalization and Human Rights

Since **its** inception, the United Nations has worked to develop a comprehensive set of international rights through a varied set of conventions: for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the United Nations International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the United Nations Declaration of the Right of Peoples to Peace (1984), United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986), and the African (Banju) Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1986).^{iv} During this time period, three generations of human rights have come into being (Van Ness 1999). The first generation, are civil and political rights intended to protect the individual from the State. These rights are rooted in the individualistic traditions of Western Europe and North America. The second generation of rights are economic, social, and cultural rights that reflect the priorities of socialist countries and Marxist philosophical traditions, e.g., which seek to address the problems of the poor (starvation, illiteracy, and disease) and that have the objective to improve their material standard of living. The third generation of rights refers to peoples' rights or collectivist rights and responds to the particular priorities and realities of formerly colonized countries and indigenous groups, and their emphasis on the right to self-determination (e.g., Cuba) and development (e.g., the Philippines).

Of particular importance to macro-economic development are **the** (1) International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966), and (2) International Covenant of Economic,

Social, and Cultural Rights (1976). By 1995, 127 states ratified the covenant of civil and political rights, and 129 nations ratified the covenant for economic, social, and cultural rights. The Philippine government ratified both covenants: the covenant on civil and political rights, which was signed December 19, 1966, ratified, February 28, 1986, and implemented on January 23, 1987; and, the covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights, which was signed December 19, 1966, ratified: May 17, 1974, and took effect on January 3, 1976. Although the Philippines has signed and ratified these covenants, it has failed to incorporate them into national policy and practice.

This section is concerned with the issue of development aggression and the corresponding response of liberational Basic Christian Communities in their call for a just and sustainable development paradigm. As Gaspar (2001, 327) notes, this new development paradigm marks a transition in terms of what is happening to the power structure: “As people are liberated from disempowerment, the last become first. As they are empowered, the first become last. For well-being to become sustainable and equitable, there is a need to dismantle the prison of power that makes the powerful possess the powerless.” Development aggression can be defined as the process of displacing people from their land and homes to make way for development schemes that are being imposed from above without consent or public debate. It is contrary to the United Nations Declaration of the Right to Development (1986 in Ishay 1997, 469), which “recognizes that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.”

Malignant development aggression can be characterized as a political process wherein

police and military forces work in cooperation with local governments to dislodge poor farmers from their land, while depriving the urban poor of homes and jobs, all in the name of development. Benign, and arguably less destructive, development aggression co-opts and subverts local symbols by giving them new duplicitous meanings, while implanting inappropriate macro-economic technology (e.g., genetic seeds that disappear). For example, sustainable development agriculture once referred only to organic farming but now refers to agro-capitalist industrial complexes too. Even the concept of traditional Asian values has been misused to prop up authoritarian dictatorships; Marcos used Filipino values (e.g., respect for elders and authority figures) as a pretext for declaring Martial Law. There are many more examples. Either way, malignant or benign, aggressive development is in violation of international human rights conventions such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which states that “all peoples have a right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development” (1966 in Ishay 1997, 433).

An example of development aggression on a macro-scale is the United States’ secret wars and interventions into the internal operations of other nation states. For example, the United States government supported the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship for many years. Also, the United States, notably under President Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Sr., sanctioned the use of paramilitary forces against the Basic Christian Communities, among other protest groups (Nadeau and Suminguit 1996, 246). Paramilitary and vigilante forces in the Philippines are an extension of the U.S. psychological warfare doctrine known as the Low Intensity Conflict. This doctrine was tested and developed first in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War (1899-1903) and the anti-Huk campaign (1945-1953). American military commanders employed Low Intensity Conflict during the Vietnam War to destroy the clandestine presence of

the “enemy” in villages (Andrade 1990, 3). Implemented through the Phoenix Program, Low Intensity Conflict resulted in assassinations of more than 30,000 civilians accused of being sympathetic to the enemy (Nelson-Pallmeyer 1989, 32). After Vietnam, the Low Intensity Conflict was applied to the Philippines during the Marcos regime in its struggle to contain the New People’s Army, the armed wing of the communist movement (Bello 1987). In the early 1980s, it was applied to Central America. Many of the “lessons” learned there were transferred back to the Philippines, starting in 1987, when some elites unable to resolve their differences with the Aquino administration began to back the Philippine Armed Forces and the American CIA counter-insurgency effort. These interventions are in violation of the Helsinki Agreement (1975) which states that participating states will refrain from intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating state, regardless of their mutual relations” (in Ishay 1997, 452).

Countering development aggression are grassroots peoples’ organizations, like the Basic Christian Communities, supported by non-government organizations and organic intellectuals who are researching and reporting on rights violations that occur as a result of inappropriate development schemes. In the early nineties, I accompanied several non-government organizations (the Redemptorist Justice and Peace Desk, the Farmers Development Center (FARDEC), Task Force Detainees, and the Health Alliance for Democracy) who, then, were working together as a tightly knit network to document human rights abuses (forced dislocations, tortures, arrests without warrants) that were happening on northern Cebu, as a result of real estate development projects that were being built on inhabited land. Inappropriate development can be defined as a globalizing economic and political process coming from outside, that severely damages a community’s culture, social organization, and environment. Another example would

be a community (e.g., Pardo, Antique, and Tuburan, also, in Cebu) placed under military surveillance to allow the government free reign in pursuit of so-called development (Nadeau 2002). By contrast, appropriate development can be defined in accordance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Ishay 1997) as a process for achieving ecological sustainability and human well being within a community as a whole. It refers to a holistic (social, cultural, political, and economic) process that leads to the qualitative improvement of all individuals and groups in a society.

Social justice and environmental movements that concern issues of class, gender, culture, indigenous knowledge systems, and literacy, provide a model for appropriate development. They share a common perspective that is critical of top-down development and counterpoise bottom-up alternatives that boldly identify the interdependent relationship between culture and nature. These communities work to effect changes in peoples lives (better health, satisfying work, and a safe environment), although they are still young and it is inappropriate to quantify and measure their accomplishments in terms like improved incomes and diets. They are grounded on the idea of the growing economic disparity between the rich and poor and the absence of real economic and political power. These kinds of bottom-up movements are indicative of an international trend toward the development of new social and cultural alternatives to the hegemonic discourses, symbols, and economic structures of modern capitalism (and in its heyday, authoritarian bureaucratic socialism too). As Gaspar (2001, 324) cautions, however, there are no ready-made alternatives: “And yet the times demand on-going reflection owing to more complex and rapid changes taking place. There is no longer a question that tools of social analysis have to become more all-embracing and not get tied up too much to the economic determinism of Marxist-influenced ones” (338).

For example, in the Philippines, some social justice and environmental rights movements (e.g., some Basic Christian Communities, organized farmers' and urban poor peoples' movements) reflect a deep resistance against the spread of global imperialism coming from the New World Order. Above all, they are resisting the ideological distortions, false consciousness, and fetishisms of world capitalism (see, Escobar 1995). It is for this reason that Philippine environmental justice movements, at least ideally, concentrate their training programs not only on increasing peoples' awareness about their basic rights and on providing support for those whose fundamental rights have been violated, but also on raising peoples' consciousness about their rich cultural heritages in the past and the inequitable roots of their own poverty in the present as a way to move them to action. Their training programs, at best, aim to transform the Philippines, by developing a new social consciousness that is concerned with promoting organic farming and the natural world (Versola 1993, 12).

In other words, sustainable development movements such as the Philippine liberational Christian communities intersect with indigenous struggles for the right of tribal societies to live in their natural habitats (Dove 1998; Vitug 1998). Tribal communities, for example the Hindagaon tribe of Mindanao, largely seek to protect their environments from being irreparably damaged by the influx of unwanted forms of development such as mining operations and logging concessions that pollute and denude forested areas. Tribal people are cultural bearers of indigenous knowledge systems that offer important models for sustainable forestry and agro-forestry practices. The United Nations Vienna Declaration (1993 in Ishay 1997, 485) recognizes the "inherent dignity and the unique contribution of indigenous peoples to the development and plurality of society and strongly reaffirms the commitment of the international community to their economic, social, and cultural well-being and their enjoyment of the fruits of sustainable development. States should ensure the full and free participation of indigenous people in all

aspects of society, in particular in matters of concern to them.”

CONCLUSION

Finally, not all Philippine justice and peace workers and sustainable development practitioners have turned away from an orientation based on merely transferring technology and services to the poor, toward an orientation based on changing social structures democratically from within. Some have been solely struggling for entitlements, while others are concerned only about Income Generating Projects. But those grassroots movements that incorporate a concern for the environment and human rights into their discourses are steeped in the political-economic and cultural struggles of the poor. Their goals are first, to involve the people in their own decision-making processes; second, to restructure society; and third, to influence elite allies, who are well-placed, because they have access and control over the political and economic resources that can make real change possible (see, also, Cosmao 1985, 11).

The Philippine progressive Christians work in ways that are meaningful to peoples’ lives. They are part of a world-wide movement that opposes top-down globalization that is imposed without ordinary people’s consent. Since the United Nations’ attempts to protect economic, social, and cultural rights compete with matters of sovereignty, these movements provide one venue for an alternative forum for human rights to emerge (Aziz 1999; Van Ness 1999). Instead of falsely targeting them as communist, and nowadays, as terrorists, or divesting them of their land to make way for inappropriate development schemes, like golf courses, which are absurd in the Philippines, where water would be better spent to irrigate rice fields and farms, why not financially and emotionally support these bottom-up initiatives already in place?

NOTES

¹ Or, human rights, economic rights, indigenous rights, gay and lesbian rights, women's rights, civil rights, animal rights, and environmental rights.

² The liberational Basic Christian Community movement differs from liturgical Basic Christian Communities, which are Bible Study groups (Boff 1986).

³ The Maryknolls are a Roman Catholic religious and missionary order of priests and nuns.

⁴The content of these conventions can be found in *The Human Rights Reader*, edited by Micheline R. Ishay and published by Routledge Press in 1997.

REFERENCES CITED

Andrade, D. (1990). *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War*. Massachusetts: Lexington Books.

Aziz, N. (1999). The Human Rights Debate in an Era of Globalization: Hegemony of Discourse. IN *Debating Human Rights, Critical Essays from the United States and Asia*, P. Van Ness (ed.). New York: Routledge, pp. 32-55.

Barrameda, M. (1993). Sustainable Development: A Historical Theoretical Explication. *Kasarinlan, A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies* 9 (1): 97-113.

Bello, W. (1987). *U.S. Sponsored Low-Intensity Conflict in the Philippines*. San Francisco: The Institute for Food and Development Policy.

Boff, L. (1986). *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*. New York: Orbis.

Bonhoeffer, D. (1983). *The Martyred Christian*. New York: MacMillan Publishers.

Contreras, A. (1999). Globalization, the State and Civil Society, and the Politics of Identity in the Context of Environmental Governance. *Kasarinlan, A Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies* 14 (3 & 4): 9-30.

Cosmao, V. (1985). *Changing the World, An Agenda for the Churches*. Quezon City: Claretian Publications.

Dove, M. (1998). Local Dimensions of 'Global' Environmental Debates. IN *Environmental Movements in Asia*, A. Kalland and G. Persoon (eds.). Richmond, Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, pp. 44-64.

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury.
- Gaspar, K. (2001). Localization Resisting Globalization: Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Postmodern Era. *East Asian Pastoral Review* 38 (4): 316-350.
- Hallare-Lara C. 1992. *A Profile of the Philippine Corn Industry*. Manila: Philippine Peasant Institute.
- Ishay, M. R. (1997). *The Human Rights Reader, Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from the Bible to the Present*. New York: Routledge.
- Kinne, W. (1990). *A People's Church? Mindanao Sulu Church Debacle*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Nadeau, K. (1992). Capitalist Southeast Asian Peasants: Some more Thoughts on an old Debate. *Philippine Sociological Review* 40: 57-75.
- Nadeau, K. (2002). *Liberation Theology in the Philippines: Faith in a Revolution*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.
- Nadeau, K. and V. J. Suminguit (1996). A Response to Timothy Austin's "Filipino Self-Help and Peacemaking Strategies: A View from the Mindanao Hinterland." *Human Organization* 55 (2): 245-247.
- Nelson-Pallmeyer, J. (1989). *War Against the Poor, Low Intensity Conflict and Christian Faith*. New York: Maryknoll.
- Taussig, M. (1980). *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- Van Ness, P. (1999). Introduction. IN *Debating Human Rights, Critical Essays from the United States and Asia*, P. Van Ness (ed.). New York: Routledge, pp. 1-24.
- Versola, R. (1993). The Ramos Industrialization Program: A Contrary View. *Hagit*, Quarterly Newsletter of the BCC-CO Visayas 8 (3): 4-8.
- Vitug, M. D. (1998). The Politics of Logging in the Philippines. IN *The Politics of Environment in Southeast Asia, Resources and Resistance*, P. Hirsch and C. Warren (eds.). NY: Routledge, pp. 122-138.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
