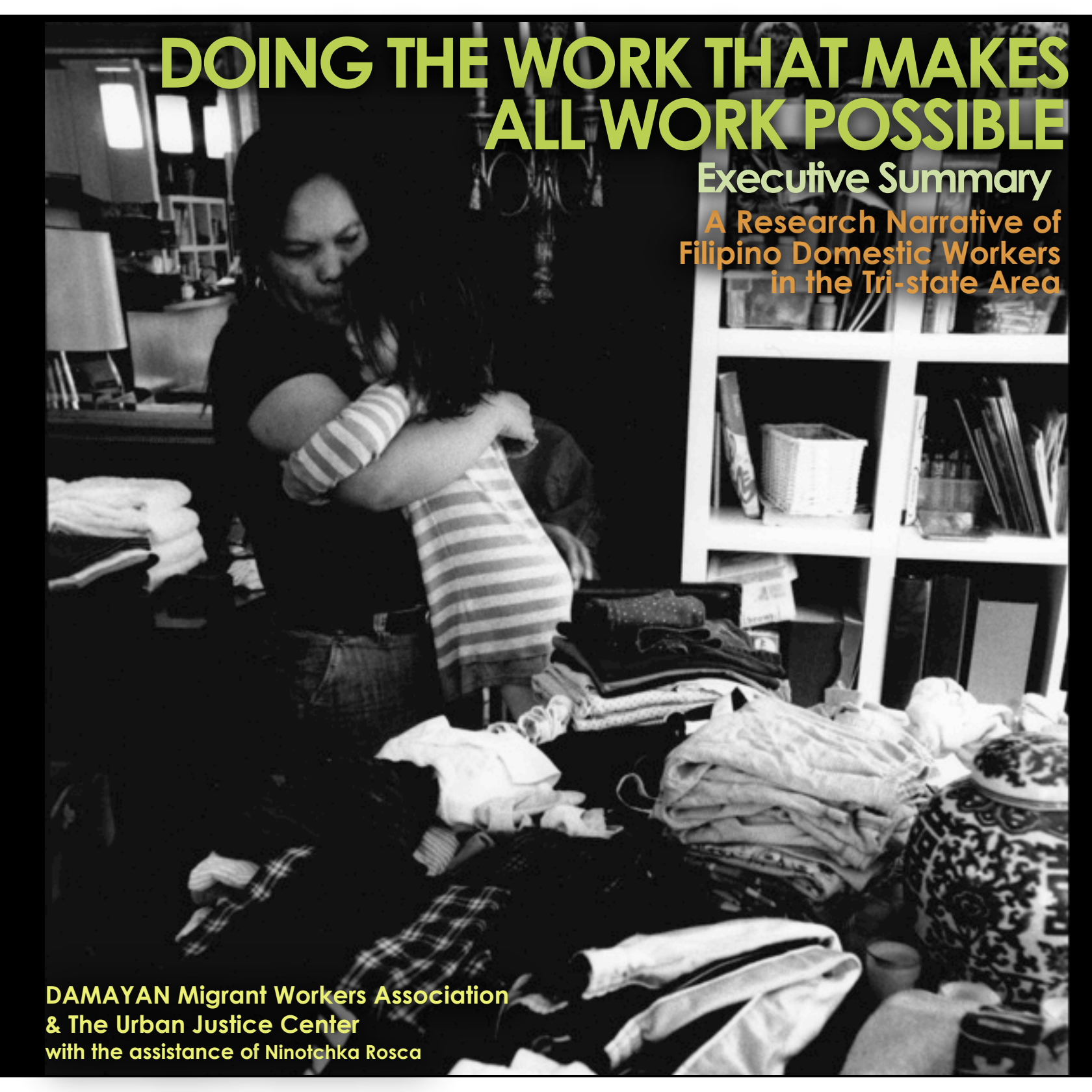


DOING THE WORK THAT MAKES ALL WORK POSSIBLE

Executive Summary

A Research Narrative of
Filipino Domestic Workers
in the Tri-state Area



DAMAYAN Migrant Workers Association
& The Urban Justice Center
with the assistance of Ninotchka Rosca

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DAMAYAN Members:

Christina Alcantara
Maribeth Bautista
Marichu Baoanan
Cita Brodsky
Virgilio Callanta
Mhing Cañete
Alberta Casayuran
Corazon Chiofalo
Lina Crisostomo
Juana Dwyer
Marilyn Evans
Leonora Enriquez
Vernice Gari
Zelem S. Guerrero
Elvie Green
Lily Lagrada
Josie Lanzon
Florence Laurel
Carmencita Lavilla-Cortez
Mona Lunot
Esther Pascua
Corazon Panlasigui
Elvie Peñeda
Aby Piñon
Hermie Ponce
Lerma Publico
Fe Raquel
Melinda Romano
Milamae Ronquillo
Tess Randrup
Joy Samalca
Beng Santos
Dory Sederiosa
Bernadette Schmeiber
Grace Achim Uy Tan
Elena Tan
Proserpina Tan
Nilda Umbay
Daisy Velasco
Cecille Venzon
Concordia Villacarlos
Lillian Zafra

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Urban Justice Center:

Alexa Kasdan
Chris Fernandez
Ejim Dike
Frances Liu
Harvey Epstein
Kelly Simmons
Laine Romero-Alston
Michelle Holland
Molly Slavin
Rose Sayre
Sanjana Ragudaran

Writing Contributors:

Ana Liza L. Caballes
Alexa Kasdan
Terri Nilliasca
Linda Oalican
Leah Obias
Ninotchka Rosca

Photo Credits:

Riya Ortiz
Anang Palomar

Layout & Design:

Ana Liza L. Caballes

Youth and Ally Volunteers:

Jasmine Agustin
Kim Baglieri
Chevy Evangelista
Jennifer Gallagher
Katrina Rittershofer
Remy Kharbanda
John Miller
Marie Obaña
Ofelia Virtucio
RZ Flandez
Amanda Vender

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DAMAYAN Staff Members:

Ana Liza Caballes, *Overall Coordinator*
Cita Brodsky, *Gender Rights Program Coordinator*
Linda Oalican, *Health & Legal Program Coordinator*
Leah Obias, *Case Manager*

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This report is dedicated to domestic workers, especially women migrants, who have toiled in the shadows of slavery.



DAMAYAN Migrant Workers Association (DAMAYAN) is a grassroots organization of Filipino migrant workers, primarily women domestic workers. Founded in 2002, DAMAYAN organizes domestic workers to enable them to fight for their labor, health, gender and immigration rights and challenge the root causes of forced migration. Through leadership development, base-building, direct services, campaigns, advocacy and coalition work. DAMAYAN is helping to build the domestic workers movement for justice and liberation of all workers and genuine social change. Damayan means “helping each other” in Filipino.

The Community Development Project (CDP) of the Urban Justice Center (UJC) provides legal, technical, research and policy assistance to grassroots community-groups working for positive social change in low-income communities. CDP strives to support such groups in improvement efforts in the following areas: grassroots community organizing; affordable-housing and tenant organizing; sustainable economic development; technical assistance to not-for-profits; worker rights; environmental justice; and immigrant rights and organizing.



INTRODUCTION

The migration of Filipinos for domestic work in the United States is a compelled choice. The national implementation of globalization in the Philippines severely constricts their agency in this matter. For the women of the Philippines, migrating to the US for domestic work is a last resort. They have done all the usual mandates for women's emancipation and to escape poverty: achieved a high level of education, acquired high marketable skills, engaged in entrepreneurship, worked at a profession or a job, etc. But globalization works against their success, taking over the economic niches where they could have made their stand for their families' survival. Philippine kinship and family traditions, on the other hand, demand that they respond to the families' economic crisis.

It is the archipelago's supreme irony that at a time when selfishness is supremely rewarded, selflessness has been elevated as the ultimate virtue for the women of the Philippines.

The old portrait of migrant domestic workers¹ as poor, uneducated, unskilled, is a lie. The old portrait of migrant

domestic workers as single and young is also a lie. The majority of Filipina domestic workers in the US are of mature age, married, with children. Their main reason for migrating is to enable their families to survive and most especially, for the children to acquire an education. The current generation involved in domestic work see themselves as a "sacrificial" generation, all hopes and aspirations reserved for the next one.

This is the second irony for the women of the Philippines: that to enable their family to survive, they have to leave their families.

The supreme dedication to one's loved ones becomes the capacity to endure years' long separation from those same loved ones and from everything familiar. In a further ironic continuum, domestic work requires that the workers place their needs and wants below those of the employer-family. In the ranking of priorities, their requirements are secondary even to those of family pets. This is the ultimate irony: that their lives are mortgaged to two families, that the work that they do enables two families to survive, that



the work they do makes possible all other kinds of work, even as their own lives are in suspension.

The quality of the migrant domestic workers' life can be summed up in these words: uncertainty, isolation and hard work. Because majority of those who do domestic work are undocumented, anxiety is a daily companion. Because domestic work is not considered formal work, regulated by laws to ensure the workers' well being, the domestic workers are susceptible to economic exploitation, bad working conditions and abuse from the employers. Because domestic work is usually by verbal agreement only between the worker and the employer, domestic workers are susceptible to abrupt job termination, additional work and extra services required. They have no medical or social security benefits, or any other employment-related benefits.

Because domestic workers work in a private household, they are in the paradoxical situation of being embedded in a group (the family) and yet isolated from both their colleagues and the larger society. Their social interaction is

restricted to entities connected with the household needs: grocers, doormen, supers, etc. Their socialization is thereby warped and diminished, their sense of self-worth neither confirmed nor strengthened by a social appreciation of the value and significance of their work. This centripetal diminution of the Self works against collective action for worker rights.

Although this study focuses on the onerous conditions of work and life for the Filipino women domestic workers in the tri-state area, it must not be assumed that they are passive recipients of such afflictions. At the individual level, the domestic worker is intuitively creative in resolving often contradictory demands upon his/her person, stemming from the nature of his/her work in the U.S. and the nature of his/her responsibilities in the Philippines. Domestic workers continue to organize and continue to act for the sector's collective interest, calling for state, national international policies that will enable them to achieve fair labor standards, recognition and full social stature. Domestic workers are fully engaged in the quest for economic justice, as well as for social and political justice.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

DAMAYAN Migrant Workers Association, in partnership with the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center, engaged in this multi-year study to understand the plight of Filipino domestic workers living in the tri-state area.² The study utilized a community-based participatory action research approach (CBPAR).³ From inception to release, domestic workers, their children, staff members and volunteers have been involved in multiple levels of this research. Domestic workers were purposefully involved in the analyzing, writing and designing of the report. While there are volumes of literature written about the conditions of Filipino domestic workers worldwide, few studies focus on the migration and labor of Filipino domestic workers in the US; and none have made Filipino domestic workers comprehensively integral to the CBPAR process such as this one.

Surveys

A 52-question survey tool was developed with the members in the fall of 2003 through spring 2004. Training of DAMAYAN staff and members were conducted prior to survey implementation. While there is no accurate official data that records this population, samples were targeted to reflect as much as possible the world of Filipino domestic workers in the area based on race, gender, where they work and live. A total of 208 surveys were collected between the spring of 2004 through the summer of 2007. Surveys were completed in all five boroughs of New York, Jersey City, in the suburbs of New Jersey, parts of Connecticut -- close to where domestic workers work and live, on the buses, in the parks, subways, house meetings and in Filipino restaurants.



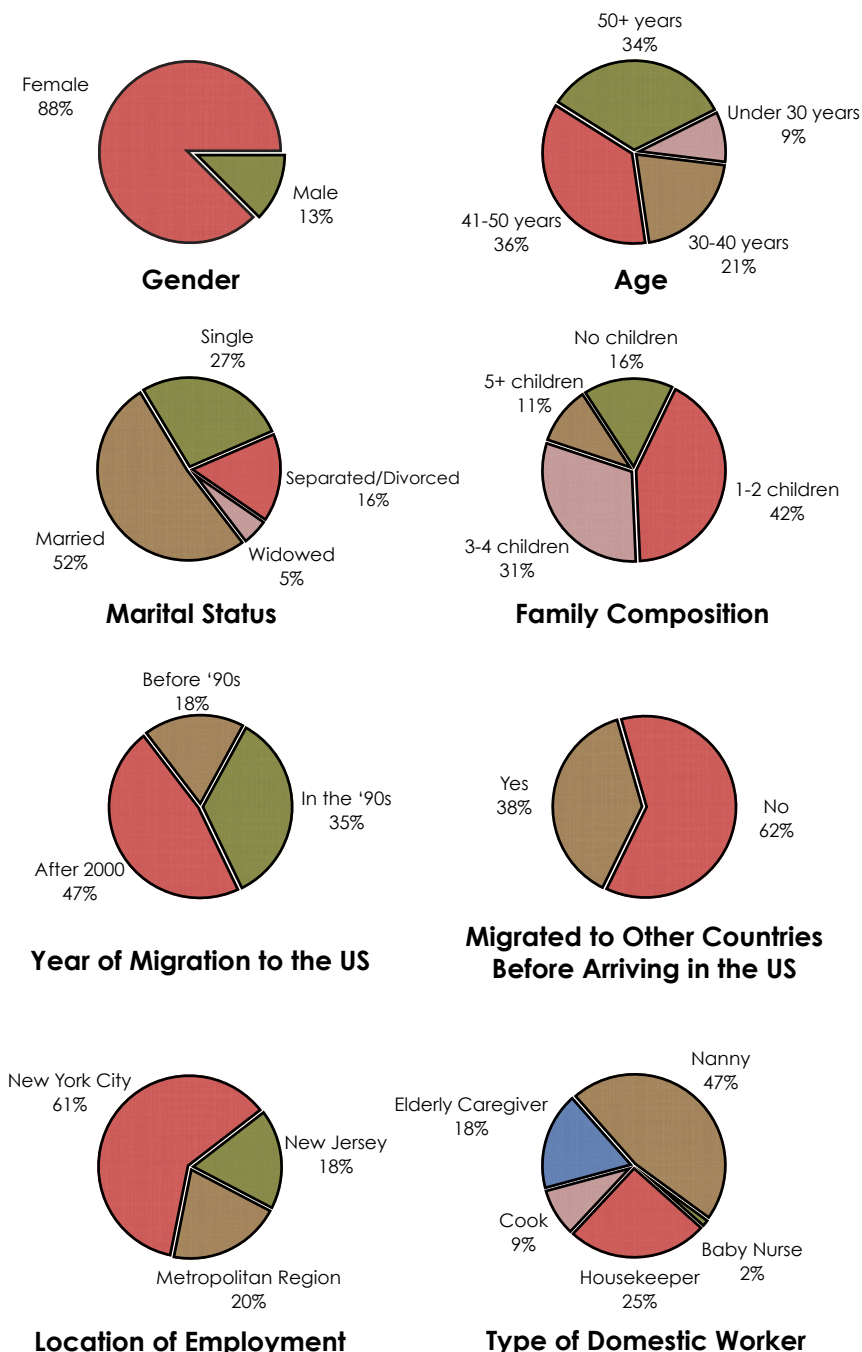
Focus Group Discussions

Five focus group discussions with 37 participants were conducted between 2004-2008. A base interview guide was developed with members and staff to delve deeper into the issues addressed in the surveys. After preliminary review of the survey results, focus groups were tailored to focus on data that was not captured through the surveys -- such as experience of the process of migration, live-in workers, discrimination, the social cost of migration, and the emotional impacts of migration. Trained domestic worker co-facilitated focus group discussions. Initial focus group discussions were co-facilitated by the Urban Justice Center and trained DAMAYAN staff members. Focus group discussions conducted in 2007 and 2008 were mostly facilitated by DAMAYAN staff and members, particularly to ensure the comfort of participants as well as to allow for discussion in Tagalog. Focus groups were captured verbatim.



DOMESTIC WORKERS AS EXPERTS

Figure 1. Survey participant demographics.



Semi-structured Interviews

After reviewing data from completed surveys and focus group discussions, members and staff created an interview guide to elicit additional and more substantive experiences. Trained members, staff, children of domestic workers and youth volunteers were paired to conduct the interviews. Interviews ranged from 1.5-4 hours long. Interviews were taped, transcribed verbatim and often interpreted from Tagalog to English. Between 2005-2008, there were 28 in-depth interviews completed.

Literature Review

Throughout this research, DAMAYAN's library expanded with books, journals, articles, reports and statements about the Philippines, domestic workers and migration. Staff and members compiled and reviewed literature to further understand the history, root causes, conditions and policies that impact the Filipino domestic workers in New York and New Jersey. Books, journals and articles directly from the Philippines were also collected and incorporated in the report.

Data Processing

Surveys were entered into a Microsoft Access database and analyzed in SPSS.⁴ All qualitative data (focus groups and interviews) were coded manually and entered into and analyzed using qualitative analysis software. Memos were written on all major nodes of analysis, integrating results from three sources of quantitative and qualitative data.

Analysis Workshops

From 2004 to 2009, a series of workshops and discussion sessions were conducted with members of DAMAYAN, sometimes including their children and youth volunteers. Sessions were semi-structured to: 1) share the data that was gathered at a given time; 2) get insight about the integrity of the results and/or information that had not yet been captured; 3) interpret the results to inform the writing of the report; and 4) guide and make collective decisions about the direction of the research.

BACKGROUND

Modern-day domestic work remains an invisible, marginalized and devalued form of labor. Despite being a large and growing industry, domestic work is not respected or recognized as an integral part of the American and global economy. While the common perception of domestic work is that of an individual and undisciplined form of work, it is quite the opposite. Domestic workers provide a wide range of services that are essential for many Americans. From cleaning to cooking, housekeeping to babysitting, elderly care and other household duties, domestic workers have become fully entrenched in the American way of life.

Domestic work is the predominant form of work among Filipino women outside the Philippines. Due to economic policies and practices that exist in the Philippines, many Filipinos see migration as essential to not only maintaining their livelihoods, but also as the only way of achieving a better life for their families. Domestic workers, therefore, do more than sustain American households; as women, they

also sustain their own households in America and the Philippines.

The Filipino Migrant Workers

In 2008, the Philippines deployed a million workers to nearly 200 countries, with women comprising 75 percent of the new hires; in 2008, the Philippine government announced its intent to double that number.⁵ The pivotal contribution of migrant domestic workers to the Philippine economy was established in 1997, when the country weathered the Asian economic crisis by nearly doubling the number of women workers exported, by then already in the hundreds of thousands. Most went into domestic or household work, serving as housekeepers, nannies, cooks and all-around help for families in countries as diverse as England and Nigeria. This view of domestic work as a fall-back employment for those in economic distress is due to some peculiar characteristics of Philippine society and Philippine history.



But it is a distorted gender view, on the other hand, that enabled the Philippine government to engage in the large-scale export of women with little protest from its citizenry.

History of Domestic Work in the Philippines

Service to the household can be traced to Philippine pre-Hispanic history, when poor segments of the population were attached permanently to more affluent households as *aliping sagigilid* – usually translated loosely as slaves who do household work and reside in their master's house. The feudal system by Spanish colonization introduced superficial changes to this native form of slavery while institutionalizing it for half a century.

The widespread practice of domestic servitude – as debt payment, to support education, to migrate to cities and

“Human resource is now a global resource, the way capital is regarded as a global resource. If the capital of the more developed economies move, why shouldn't the human resource of developing countries? The Philippines should not stop at the numbers but should aim for higher international comparability and standards, if we are to truly participate as a global leader in the supply of health services and maximize opportunities in the global market.”⁶

- Patricia Sto. Tomas, former Philippine Secretary of Department of Labor & Employment, 2004

towns with greater opportunities than the rural areas – undoubtedly contributed to the current acceptance of a most peculiar fate for millions of Filipino women under globalization. This indentured servitude meant that the terms of work hours, work conditions, benefits, and employer relationship were never addressed or even considered. It was generally assumed that corporal punishment was part of the work conditions, as well as long hours and for many, subhuman status. Domestic work was traditionally and historically simply not considered work in its modern definition.

The history of indentured servitude in the Philippines stifles the improvement of domestic work and the workers. For Filipino women, household servitude is still accepted as an option to escape crushing poverty afflicting not only the peasant and worker families but also the middle class. Coming to the US, Filipina domestic workers are further rendered vulnerable by the history of slavery in the US. The connection of domestic work to slavery directly contributed to the low regard for domestic work.



Consequently, despite a consistent market in American society, domestic work is among the lowest paid forms of work. The low pay of domestic work is partly derived from its status as “unskilled” or “low-skilled” work, a common devaluation of work done by women.

Philippine Migration to the US

Apart from a handful of war brides in the early 1900s, migration from the Philippines has been historically demand-driven. Starting in the mid-1920s, large-scale recruitment of workers started to fill in the labor needs of plantations in Hawaii and the West Coast. Filipino men comprised 99% of this new labor force.

A second wave of migration occurred in the 1960s, when reunification of families under new immigration laws enabled the remnants of Filipino plantation workers to bring in their relatives. In the 1970s, the large-scale recruitment of medical personnel from the Philippines changed the

demographics of migration. Nearly all of the recruited were female.

The trend continues with the recruitment of teachers and other highly skilled professionals like IT experts.⁷ With the rise of the service industry in big cities like New York, from the 1980's up to the present, US immigration opened its doors to domestic and other service workers like hotel and restaurant workers. Unlike the H1-B⁸ workers who usually come with work contracts, majority of women domestic workers enter the US as tourists or visitors. Despite the steady growth of the domestic work industry, the workforce remains unregulated, unprotected and largely undocumented, the work viewed mainly as a family affair in the private sphere of the home, rather than service industry work with considerable public benefit. Instead of state-run programs such as universal childcare, the unregulated and unprotected industry continues to thrive off recruited and imported workers from abroad.

Philippines' Labor Export Policy (LEP)

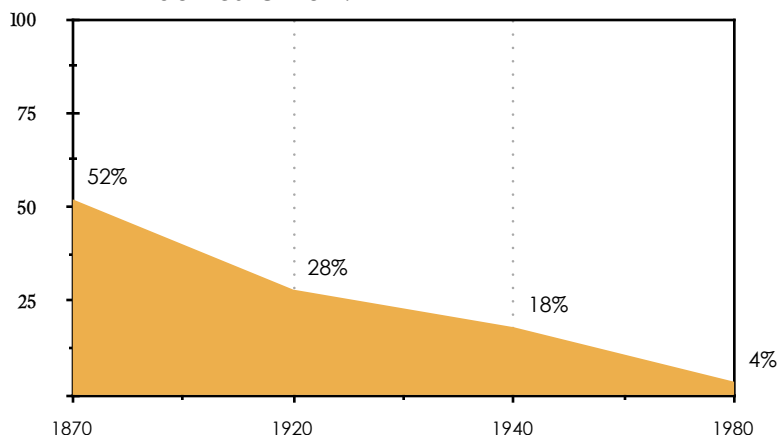
The government of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, saw an opportunity to export young men left unemployed by the stagnant economy and established a system to regulate and encourage labor outflows. The LEP was also a means to rake in the much needed dollar remittances to prop up a falling peso, pay balance of trade deficits and onerous foreign loans.⁹

By 1982, the potential presented by migrant workers had grown enough for the Filipino government to set up the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA).¹⁰ From the initial regulatory agency, the POEA would see its mandate change to the current function as an employment agency, ensuring the deployment of more than a million workers annually throughout the globe, many to domestic worker jobs.

History of Domestic Work in the US¹⁴

The 1870 census listed domestic and personal service as the occupation of 52% (1.5 million) of all employed women in the United States. Domestic work remained the main job of US women until certain commodity production (e.g., textiles, garments) done in the home were centralized in factories. By 1920, only 28% of employed women did domestic work. This declined steady to 18% in 1940 and to

Figure 2. Percentage of women involved in domestic work.¹⁶



3.5% by 1980, as job opportunities for women in factories and corporate offices increased.

The demographics of domestic work changed along with economic production and immigration trends. Though the South maintained the use of African Americans for domestic work -- first as slaves, then as "personal service" workers -- young, single Caucasian immigrants dominated the profession in other areas. The Irish immigration, for instance, from the 1840s to the 1900s, brought so many Irish young women into domestic work that Bridget or Biddy became synonymous with "domestic" in the Northeast.

This association of domestic work with women, women of color and immigrants were undoubtedly subjected to undervaluation and a low social status. By 1944, black women comprised 60% of domestic workers in the US. Considered as low-skilled and not as vital to the economy as other work done by women, domestic work was excluded from the 1935 Wagner Act,¹¹ the 1935 Social Security Act¹² and the 1937 Fair Labor Standards Act.¹³ Social security was finally extended to domestic work only in 1951 and fair labor standards only in 1974.

Currently, Latinas, Black and Caribbean women predominate in domestic work.¹⁵ Caucasian women who work as domestics consider the jobs as "bridge" employment -- something to do on the way to a career and a profession. For many women of color and immigrants, however, with xenophobic and racist limitations on their avenues for gainful employment, domestic work become and has become a life-long job ghetto.

FINDINGS

#1 Severe poverty, unemployment and cultural factors push mainly middle class Filipino women to migrate to find livelihood abroad.

Globalization renders the chronic Philippine economic crisis acute, devastating families and destroying traditional and informal sources of income for women.¹⁷ On the other hand, the winnowing process of migration ensures that the educated and middle-middle to low-middle class, rather than the poor, comprise a large segment of migrants.

- » **69%** of the domestic workers surveyed migrated for economic reasons.
- » **17%** migrated to reunite with families
- » **83%** had at least two years of college education¹⁸
- » **40%** were business professionals, majority of whom were self-employed

"There's really no hope in the Philippines. It doesn't matter how great your education is, or how many courses you've done, you cannot really improve your life." – Karen¹⁹

"Everybody come here because the life in the Philippines is very difficult. Even if you have a job, the money is not enough to support the family. My husband is only a security guard. First, I asked the Lord to help me go out of the Philippines to help me support my kids to school...6 months over here and I had to extend my visa. Then, I thought there's so much suffering but my children cannot go to school." – Diana

#2 The mass migration and remittances²⁰ of Filipino domestic workers benefit mainly the Philippine government.

The Philippine government profits from migrant domestic workers before they leave the Philippines and more so once they are overseas. Remittances from Overseas Filipino Workers,²¹ including domestic workers, are one of the largest contributors to the Filipino economy. In 2006, overseas workers remitted US\$12.7 billion.²² Of these, \$6.5 billion came from the Filipino workers in the United States

alone, even though these workers are exported to nearly 200 countries.²³ In 2009, remittances reached \$17.3 billion.²⁴

- » **Half** of Filipino domestic workers remitted 26% to 75% of their income to their families in the Philippines.
- » **Half** of workers had a weekly income of \$400 to \$600.

"I started applying for a visa from Canada... but... [they] swindled me. I paid 150,000 [pesos, \$3,450²⁵] person...[but I was] swindled. It was taken from retirement pay....because a lot of people knew me...so you know, what I told the agency, you should let me go, because if you don't let me go, a lot of people won't come here. They closed the agency. I have no choice... I don't want to fight anymore I just got the information, what to do, what to present them. I got the information." – Mila

#3 The US government profits and many employers benefit from the broken immigration system and the labor exclusions of Filipino domestic workers.

The US government collects visa application fees endlessly, whether or not they are able to grant visas. The US Embassy in the Philippines is said to have almost a million applications at \$131 application fee each (non-returnable even when the application is rejected).²⁶ In addition, the US has seen a proliferation of law firms and lawyers specializing in immigrant cases. Every step in the process of adjusting her/his immigration status costs the migrant domestic workers money.

- » **73%** of workers surveyed arrived through a tourist visa.²⁷
- » **Majority** of those who arrived on a tourist visa had little or no recourse to adjust their immigration status and were not able to work legally. They spent a big part of their income to pay for immigration and work permit application fees.

"They paid part of it and I paid part. When we started this, they paid \$500, and I paid for the rest. Before it was only \$1800. (So, you paid \$1300?) Yeah. I did not pay at one time. I paid monthly...my lawyers." – Lea

#4 Domestic workers lack fair labor standards and regulatory protections and are subject to extremely poor working conditions.

Legal exclusions²⁸ and the unregulated domestic work industry have contributed to the vulnerability of Filipino workers. These conditions bred rampant and unchecked labor rights violations.

- » **Three out of four** workers have experienced one or more wage and hour violations.
- » **59%** of workers experienced non payment of overtime
- » **20%** of workers did not receive minimum wage.
- » **One out of ten** workers reported delay or non-payment of wages.

Non-payment of overtime and imposed long hours of work are the most widespread forms of abuse and exploitation of domestic workers, particularly of live-in workers.

- » **Three of four** workers surveyed worked from over 40 to 70 hours per week.
- » **55%** of workers did not receive meal breaks

"In 2000, I took care of a lady... for 9 months. She was really terrible. She was supposed to pay me \$110 a day, but the agency took \$20 per day, so I only ended up getting \$450 a week. My employer paid directly to the agency and then I couldn't get my money out of them. I was not paid for about six months...I was working and I really needed that money." – Lila

"I did it on my days off. I was live-in and didn't have my own place. So I stayed there and made clothes for the mother and the child. I was paid \$75-\$85 for the adult clothes and \$25-\$35 for the child's clothes...I was about to get my papers at that time. I paid \$2000 for the sponsorship and she paid the other half... then the deadline for the submission came and I called her and she said you're not working with us anymore. I said I only need the tax statement from your husband. And there's only five days left. So I lost the sponsorship and the money." – Dia

#5 The unregulated nature of the industry and the race, gender, class and immigration related discrimination exacerbate workplace power dynamics that deepens domestic workers' vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation.

"Only the woman dealt with us. The husband never did. And she was crazy. Sick. I have to make myself invisible. When she comes into a room, I have to go out. If I meet her in the hallway, I have to sidle away to the side. I'm not supposed to look at her, I'm supposed to look down. And she was always complaining. Give me a dirty house and I'll clean it. But you can't clean a house that's already clean. No matter how well I cleaned, she'd say it was dirty, I hadn't cleaned it." – Helena

"It was no big deal. The thing at the top of the spinner just got dislodged. I was trying to explain it to her but she started screaming: 'I had it! I can't take it with you anymore! GET OUT!' It doesn't feel good remembering that." – Leny

"I was told by my employer she would not provide food, and she told me that I couldn't even eat in her house, that I could not bring food. My employer told me that I should eat in my house before going to work, that I cannot eat in her house. What can I do? I still brought food and when the employer is not around, I eat. I cannot work for eight hours without eating." – Melissa

#6 Filipino domestic workers endure poor living and housing conditions, inadequate health care, family separation and social isolation.

After sending remittances to the Philippines, workers' wages fall below the NYC poverty level. With most domestic workers living under the NYC poverty line and with roughly 3.8% vacancy for the city rental apartments, getting a place of one's own is extremely difficult.²⁹

- » **Over half** of the workers could only afford to rent a room or share the room with one or more workers.
- » **One out of three** workers shared a room with at least one other worker.



- » **One out of five** rented a private room in someone else's apartment or house.
- » **One out of six** lived with their employer.

Poor health and access to services is a key issue for workers.

- » **Two out of three** did not receive paid sick days
- » **88%** did not have health insurance
- » Workers often work through illnesses, for fear of losing their jobs.
- » Workers, most of whom are middle-aged women, suffer from high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar. Many have joints problems – like arthritis and gout.
- » Many domestic workers suffer from a chronic lack of social life and companionship, which can affect their mental and physical wellbeing.

"I hurt my spine... When my employer asked, 'what happened to you?' I said, 'I guess I hurt my lower back.' And she goes, 'Let's go to an orthopedic doctor.' [I asked,] 'If I go, are you going to pay for the doctor?' And she said, 'Do I have to pay upfront?' So I just told her 'I'll wait to return to my own group and she was happy enough to agree. It was one of the saddest days of my life.'" – Linda

#7 The large-scale migration of Filipinos negatively impacts women domestic workers, their children and families, and is detrimental to Philippine society.

The shift in social status from being middle or upper class in the Philippines to the marginalized domestic worker in the United States can be traumatic.

"You should imagine that the people in my country call me doctor. And then I come here... and I am cleaning. I'm babysitting. I'm cooking...wow, I am a domestic worker. There, I was the one who had a domestic worker." – Mae

"It's torture for me because domestic work is not my profession; at times, I cry from frustration. It came to a point where I asked myself, 'Shall I continue staying in America or go home?' The only thing that's keeping me here is the economic situation. In the Philippines, I could go back to the profession I love, but with a meager salary. While here in America, I'm not working as a professional. Rather, doing menial jobs but with better pay. I ask myself, 'Is it really money that matters in life?' However, whenever I ask this question, my family's welfare tips the balance. I can't have my favorite profession with a meager income and sacrifice my children's future." – Thelma

- » **Nine out of ten** workers support children & other dependents in the Philippines.³⁰

"My youngest was only six years old when I left and was very distant, like she didn't know me. Now when I go home, I try to stay for a while, so I can build my relationship with my children." – Jean

- » Relationships with spouses are also negatively impacted by migration.

"At first I didn't believe the rumors of the irresponsibility of the husband neglecting the children. But later on, through friends and neighbors, I found out what was happening. I decided not to bother with my husband. The worst thing that happened, I learned through my sister, was that there were times when my children had nothing to eat. Everything had gone to my husband's drinking habit." – Myla

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

In consultation with DAMAYAN members, organizers, the Urban Justice Center and exchanges with the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)³⁰ and other worker organizations, DAMAYAN proposes the following selected recommendations:

IMMEDIATE

In the US, particularly New York State:

- » Educate, organize and mobilize domestic workers into grassroots organizations that advance the rights, welfare and collective leadership of im/migrant women workers.
- » Heighten government enforcement of pertinent federal and state labor laws, particularly the NY Domestic Workers Bill of Rights,³¹ with a redefined and industry-appropriate approach to collective bargaining.
- » Demand that the New York City Council to pass the Paid Sick Time Act³² in collaboration with all workers in the city. The legislation would give all private sector employees the right to earn paid sick time of 5 days per year at workplaces with fewer than 20 employees, and 9 days at workplaces with 20 or more employees.
- » Continue advocating for the following provisions in the NY Domestic Workers Bill of Rights that have not yet been passed into law: living wage, paid vacation, holidays and personal days, notice of termination, severance pay and health insurance.
- » Expand existing campaigns against trafficking and modern-day slavery, focusing on diplomatic immunity, with the US State Department, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Consulate. Waive the diplomatic immunity of employer diplomats in worker(s)' exploitation and trafficking cases.

In the US, advance campaigns in alliance with the NDWA and the Excluded Workers Congress³³ for the passage of the following:

- » Occupational Safety and Health Act to cover domestic workers and all workers excluded from these protections.
- » POWER Act (Protect Our Workers Against Exploitation and Retaliation) and expand U-visas for domestic workers and all workers who stand up to workplace abuses.
- » Inclusion in the National Labor Relations Act and affirm domestic workers right to organize.
- » Care Act to create jobs, a career path, legalization and family reunification for care and domestic workers and to give care and dignity for the American elderly.

- » At the state, regional and national level, alliance and coalition building for a stronger workers movement, expanding the NDWA, New York Domestic Workers Justice Coalition and the Excluded Workers Congress.

In the Philippines:

- » Scrap the Executive Order, "An Act Liberalizing and Accelerating the Processing and Development of Overseas Filipino Workers," which further commodifies and reduces to the lowest level the wages and protections for migrant domestic workers.
- » Dignify a worker's passing away by allocation government funds towards the full cost of repatriation of worker's remains and burial in the Philippines.

Internationally:

- » Pass a strong Domestic Workers International Labor Organization Convention in 2011 – creating fair labor standards and protection for domestic workers globally.

INTERMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM

In the US, collaborate with other workers centers and immigrant rights organizations to:

- » Win comprehensive and humane immigration reform and an end to deportations, detentions and criminalization of immigrants.
- » Campaign for a work visa specifically for foreign domestic workers, with a path to legalization for the worker and her immediate family.
- » Re-envision the right to organize based on human rights and strategize to fight for collective bargaining of the growing im/migrant workforce.

In the Philippines, advance campaigns to:

- » End neo-liberal policies of globalization and US policies that worsen poverty and forced migration.
- » Abolish the Labor Export Policy. Reallocate government funds towards infrastructure development.
- » Implement basic national industrialization, genuine land reform and modern agriculture to solve widespread poverty and unemployment.

CONCLUSION

The face of domestic workers in the US has changed from the African American women of chattel slavery to that of the foreign-born women of color today. Using the Filipino women domestic workers experience, the report analyzes the critical intersections of global migration, neo-liberalization and the domestic work industry in the US.

The first-hand accounts provided by the workers in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions enrich the analysis on the push and pull factors for the large scale migration of middle class Filipino women and their consequent modern day slavery in receiving countries like the US. They serve as real-life testimonials describing how US neo-liberal economic policies are directly accountable to the immense poverty and unemployment in the Philippines that push Filipino women to find livelihood abroad. Their personal stories and voices demonstrate how they, as workers, are reduced to a commodity by the Philippine government through its labor export program, ensuring continual benefit from their remittances.

The labor and immigration discrimination against domestic workers in the US is embedded in the regulatory systems. The exclusions of domestic workers from most federal and state labor laws— including the human right to organize— result in an unregulated, unprotected and vulnerable labor market that ultimately benefits not only American employers but more so the US government.

END NOTES

1 A domestic worker is defined as anyone employed to work in a private home by the head (s) of household – including but not limited to nannies, housekeepers, elderly companions, cleaners, babysitters, baby nurses and cooks.

2 Tri-state area indicates New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

3 For more information on the CBPAR approach: Isreal, Barbara A., "Community-Based Participatory Research: Principles, Rationale and Policy Recommendations." *Successful Models of Community-Based Participatory Research*, pp. 16-22, March 2000, Washington, DC.

4 SPSS is a software used for statistical analysis and social science. For more info: www.spss.com.

5 Philippine Overseas Employment Agency Annual Report, 2008.

6 Fernandez, Irene, "Imperialist Globalization, Collapse of the Rural Economy and Forced Migration," *Rights, Empowerment and Liberation: Asian Rural Women's Conference*, March 2008.

7 IT experts work in computer-based systems.

8 H1-B is a non-immigrant visa that allows employers to temporarily employ workers from outside of the US.

9 O'Neil, Kevin, "Labor Export as Government Policy: The Case of the Philippines," Migration Policy Institute, January 2004.

10 The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency is one of six government institutions that involved in deployment of overseas Filipino workers.

11 Also known as the National Labor Relations Act. A federal law that limits the control private employers have over workers, effectively gave workers the right to organize labor unions, engage in collective bargaining, and organize/participate in strikes.

12 Federal law enacted during the Great Depression to guarantee programs and aid to numerous and varied groups of Americans.

13 Established a federal minimum wage, guaranteed time and a half for overtime in certain jobs (not including domestic work) and prohibited child labor.

14 Domestic Workers United & DataCenter, *Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*, July 14, 2006, p.10.

15 Wilson, Colwick and Wilson, Leon, *Domestic Work in the United States of America: Past Perspectives and Future Directions*. Perspectives, Winter, 2000.

16 Katzman, David M. *Seven Days A Week*. Illinois: Illini Books, 1981.

17 Africa, Sonny, "The First 100 Days: Beyond Anti-Corruption, Real Steps to Reform," *Ibon Foundation Features*, May 28 2010.

It is not only inclusion in existing labor laws that is needed, but a revisioning of what humane working conditions, healthy families and communities looks like in today's world. The abuse and exploitation of domestic workers has inextricable roots in larger systems of class, race and gender oppression, where women domestic workers lie squarely in the intersections. The dramatic power imbalance inside the homes of employers is one manifestation. The feminization of Filipino migration and its social cost is another.

It is a long march to DAMAYAN's vision, "a society where families are not forcibly separated just to meet our basic needs and where everyone has an equal opportunity to live in peace, dignity and prosperity." The recent passage of the New York State Domestic Workers Bill of Rights is one small step towards a just, humane, alternative vision. In view of the continuing global economic crisis, our call is urgent: to all domestic workers, community organizers and allies, we must bring our work to new heights towards a national domestic workers movement that could organize domestic workers to even larger scale, with a wide base and deep unity with other sectors of excluded and immigrant workers in the US, the women's liberation movement and the international migrants rights movements.

We want fair labor standards and protection for all domestic workers. We also want to transform society.

18 Survey results indicated that 26% finished at least two years of college, 46% had a college degree and 11% had more than a college degree – such as a master's and doctorate degree.

19 All names of interviewees and focus group members have been changed as per the request of participants.

20 Remittance is the act of sending money through checks, wire transfers or other electronic means from one place to another; money sent by immigrants to their homeland.

21 An Overseas Filipino Worker is any person born in the Philippines who travels abroad for work.

22 Philippine Overseas Employment Agency Annual Report, 2006.

23 Nkechi Carroll, "Record High Remittances to the Philippines Lead to Increased Competition among Philippine Banks," *Asia Focus, Country Analysis Unit, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*, January 2008, p.2.

24 Philippine Overseas Employment Agency Annual Report, 2009.

25 Philippine unit of money; worth 43.51 peso for every US \$1 (as of 10/13/10).

26 Embassy of United States in Manila; <http://manila.usembassy.gov/www3220.html>

27 A tourist visa is issued by the US government for purposes of tourism or legally traveling from another country and into the US. Obtaining a tourist visa requires an application to the US embassy of the country of origin. A tourist visa does not authorize a person to work in the US.

28 Domestic Workers United & DataCenter, *Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry*, July 14, 2006, p.3 and pp.7-8.

29 State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods 2007; Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy.

30 DAMAYAN is a member and elected Coordinating Committee member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. For more info: www.domesticworkers.org.

31 The New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights was signed into law by Governor Patterson on August 31, 2010. For more information: www.domesticworkersunited.org/campaigns.php

32 http://abetterbalance.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=64

33 The Excluded Workers Congress (EWC) was initiated during the US Social Forum in June 2010. EWC is composed of various workers sectors who are literally or practically excluded from labor laws – including but not limited to domestic workers, farm workers, restaurant workers, taxi drivers and formerly incarcerated persons.

For more information:

DAMAYAN Migrant Workers Assoc.
406 West 40th Street, 3rd Floor
New York City, NY 10018
Telephone: 212.564.6057
Fax: 718.502.9965

contact@damayanmigrants.org
www.damayanmigrants.org

**Community Development Project
of the Urban Justice Center**
123 William Street, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10038
www.urbanjustice.org/cdp

