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## GENDERING THE QUEST FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## GENDERING THE QUEST FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE: THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN LABOR MIGRATION TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

*Gemma Tulud Cruz*

*Migration is a one-way ticket. There is no "home" to go back to*

-Stuart Hall-

### Introduction

"History is always the story of somebody's diaspora"; so goes an oft-repeated quote by Romesh Gunesequera. From Abraham's family in the Bible to the Jews in the modern world, from the voyages of the colonizers to the journeys of America's European settlers, migration is, indeed, a phenomenon that is as old as humankind. In itself, the reality of deterritorialization it spawns already poses serious questions to the theological imagination. Today, however, migration's imbrication with the process of globalization<sup>1</sup>, particularly through labor migration, is offering us new and nuanced insights into the human condition and consequently, challenges for theological reflections.

Indeed, globalization, which spawned an economic polarization that created not only a more mobile transnational elite<sup>2</sup> but also a more dependent underclass, has a lot to do with contemporary migration. Because of the exacerbation of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment thousands of people all over the world leave their homes and countries everyday in search of work or better job opportunities. Excluding the permanent immigrants and refugees who also look for remunerative activities, global estimates of migrant workers by the International Labour Organization run as high as 120 million as of 1995.<sup>3</sup> And this does not include yet those who resort to or fall prey to irregular or undocumented migration, who are often women, as they are usually the easy victims of trafficking, where migrants are kept in bondage or forced into prostitution. According to UNIFEM [United Nations Development Fund for Women], the number of women and children trafficked in Southeast Asia alone could be around 225,000 out of a global figure of over 700,000 annually. There is also a surge in human trafficking in Central Asia especially from Uzbekistan. Upto 10,000 people, composed mostly of young women, are forced into the sex trade by international crime syndicates. This multi-billion dollar industry also accounts for the trafficking of Filipinas and Russian women in US military bases in Korea; the illegal movement of 400 Bangladeshi women monthly to Pakistan; and the undocumented entry of 300 Thai women annually to Australia.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, labour migration, in its unjust dimensions, is increasingly taking on a concrete face, i.e., a woman's face.

Because there is a vast labor reserve from the ever-increasing millions of poor people from Third World countries, migrant workers, especially women, are today's "hot commodities" that can be "acquired" at "cheap prices" as part of the "circulating resources" or capital in the world. Take the case of women migrant domestic workers. There is a structural and global trade in maid. This maid trade turns millions of women into victims by their employers, host governments and its citizens, as well as by their recruiters, their own

governments, and their own next of kin, not to mention by their fellow women. Noeleen Heyzer and Vivienne Wee, in their study of the institutional and global scale of the trade in domestic workers<sup>5</sup>, identify the other groups in the network of people who benefit and perpetuate the worldwide trade in maids. Aside from the recruiters, the employers, and the maids' families, these include the banks, the remittance intermediaries, the lending agencies, and of course the sending and receiving country's economy. To put a more concrete face to this, allow me to share with you the case of the Filipina migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong:

### **The Filipino Women Domestic Workers in Hong Kong**

Filipina migration to Hong Kong started in the 1970s, when Hong Kong was experiencing an economic boom and the Philippine economy was beginning to hit rock bottom. Because Hong Kong housewives had more opportunities to work — or were forced to work to meet increasing economic demands — and local domestic workers were expensive, the demand for cheap or migrant domestic workers arose. Filipinas filled this demand. Hong Kong's further industrialization attracted local workers, including local women workers, to jobs that paid higher than the expanding service sector. This intensified the demand for the English-speaking Filipinas who then came in droves, making Hong Kong today the host city of more or less 150,000 Filipina "DHs" (domestic helpers), as they are popularly called. While they compose the majority of Hong Kong's foreign house help and its largest ethnic migrant group, life for the Filipina DHs is a saga born in the constricting mold of gendered migration, intensified by gendered transitions, and sealed in their experience of gendered violence and unjust working conditions.

### **Gendered Migration**

In a lot of ways, the migration of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong is gendered.<sup>6</sup> First of all, the global job market is a gendered market, as

women, especially poor and poorer women of color, continue to be segregated in jobs associated with the service sector or care work. Secondly, the Filipina DHs' decision to migrate, which is often a family strategy for upward social mobility, is also gendered. This is so in the way sexual division of labor, rooted in gender stereotypes, plays a major role in singling out the womenfolk to be the one to leave and work abroad. Filipino families think it is but "natural" for the daughter, sister, or wife to apply for the job because domestic work is a woman's work. For single women, families often capitalize on the imposed and popular notion of the language of care among women as nurturance in all aspects, e.g. emotional, physical etc., for them to agree to leave to work as DH. Parents especially tap into the highly ingrained sense of responsibility among women in choosing them to be the one to migrate.

The circumstances surrounding siblings Elsa and Belle's migration to Hong Kong is a perfect example of this. Their father was the one who facilitated their migration process. He first tried to send Belle to Hong Kong when he did not like her involvement with union activities. He even arranged it with one of his nieces, (Belle and Elsa's cousin), who was already working at that time as a DH in Hong Kong. When Belle could not make it, Elsa became the next target. Elsa's account of her last conversation with her father reflects the dynamics not only of the expectation for and socialization of Filipino women for care work but also the reality of patriarchy that is operative within the Filipino family:

"Elsa" he told me, "can you help your sisters in their schooling? Because they like to study and you know that I don't have any capability to send them to college." He said, "Elsa can you help me? Your sisters, they like to go to school."...and so I said, "OK. No problem. This is my opportunity to help.... Don't worry, *Tay* [father], I will try my best to help you."<sup>7</sup>

Hope Antone, a Filipina feminist theologian based in Hong Kong, affirms this patriarchy-rooted ideology of domesticity when she says:

...women have been socialized early in life to do multiple responsibilities in the home — for their siblings, their parents, the elderly, and sometimes even others in the community. This ideology of domesticity is so ingrained that many Asian women feel it is their fate or destiny to sacrifice in order that those who depend on them can have a better life. Migration then becomes an option not only for mere economic reasons but also for the ideological-cultural factor of gender socialization into the ideology of domesticity and multiple responsibilities.<sup>8</sup>

### Gendered Transitions

The Filipina DHs also undergo gendered transitions when they work and live in Hong Kong. For married DHs guilt because of their being “absentee mothers” is a source of much oppression. At the root of their guilt is what they perceive as a transgression of a “good” Christian woman’s proper place and role which is at home with her husband and children. This personal and even societal perception of their sojourn in Hong Kong as a betrayal of their primary duty and responsibility then becomes like a millstone hanging over their neck. Such is this perception that some of them do not even say goodbye to their children nor immediately tell the truth as to where they are going.

To ease their guilt, these DHs find a *tagasalo* (surrogate) whereby they pass on their direct nurturing responsibility to another woman, e.g. their mother, a sister, female cousin, their eldest daughter, or hire the services of a poorer Filipina to be their own domestic helper.<sup>9</sup> These DH mothers, however, still try to make up for their absence by resorting to transnational mothering. They are often known as “cell phone mothers” because they try to do their responsibilities as mothers via the cell phone. Some even help their children do their homework via the mobile phone.

Unmarried, single, or unattached DHs, in the meantime, find difficulties in having a relationship with the opposite sex or, in their own words, “finding a good man to be a husband.” According to a study by Marilen Abesamis titled *Romance and Resistance: The*

*Experience of the Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong Kong*, single DHs prioritize the “white, middle-class male” thinking that marrying a white, middle-class male would mean higher social class, more “freedom” and rights.<sup>10</sup> But this does not happen because of cultural differences exacerbated by the low social regard for them. For others who do get involved with foreigners, particularly Chinese, not being taken seriously remains a problem. As a result, many unmarried DHs, end up preferring Filipino men. But since there are also very few Filipino men in Hong Kong and class boundaries within the Filipino migrant community are very much in place,<sup>11</sup> the “field” for the single DHs becomes all the more limited.

This severe limitation of possibilities for a “husband material” among the single DHs who are socialized in the Philippines that marriage and having children is the be-all and end-all of a woman’s existence often becomes a problem for them as women. This is especially so because most of them are in the marrying age and some quite beyond the marrying age.<sup>12</sup> That is why some who are always asked the big question: “Why on earth are you still single?” get annoyed.<sup>13</sup> The prevalence of this mentality among the DHs and in the Filipino community at home and in Hong Kong explains why marriages are the primary occasions for celebration of the DHs. Wedding pictures even land on the cover page of magazines that have mostly DHs as contributors and readers.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, conflicts or fights about men or boyfriends, especially about boyfriend-grabbing, also occur within their peer groups.

Single DHs, in the meantime, find difficulties in having a relationship with the opposite sex or, in their own words, “finding a good man to be a husband”, according to a study by Marilen Abesamis<sup>15</sup> titled *Romance*.

### Gendered Violence

Gendered violence economically, physically, and sexually also plagues the Filipina DHs. Economically, they and the other foreign

DHs have been victimized a number of times already to solve or alleviate Hong Kong's economic woes. The wage cuts which targeted only the domestic workers — an occupation the Hong Kong government knows is women – dominated — was meant to ease Hong Kong's economic slowdown. The DHs are already systematically made poor in the Philippines. With domestic workers also already the lowest paid worker in Hong Kong, singling them out for further reduction of wages is tantamount to “making the poor even poorer.”<sup>16</sup>

The Hong Kong government further reinforced this institutionalized gendered violence with the proposal to remove maternity protection for foreign domestic helpers. Concocted as a means to offer “flexibility” to employers to terminate their FDH on the basis of “mutual agreement,” the proposal, according to a letter by the Asian Migrant Coordinating Body, is not only “discriminatory, as it is applicable only to those in the category of foreign domestic helpers...[and] racist as it seeks to exclude workers of certain nationalities from enjoying a right available to local workers and those of other nationalities.” It is also “sexist as it targets women for oppression” by considering “pregnancy and maternity as a ‘hindrance’ to more effective and productive labour.” The proposal, the letter goes on to say, “brings us back the age of slavery where the right to bear children was considered a threat to productivity<sup>17</sup> — a violation of the DH's reproductive rights which is a hard-won right of women workers around the world.

The scourge of the Filipina DHs as women comes not only from the Hong Kong government but also from their employers and recruiters. For instance, because of the popular perception and fear in Hong Kong that foreign domestic workers will go to great lengths to snag rich or economically-stable men like their male employers, the DH's physical appearance is usually controlled mostly by women employers. Dress codes are imposed through the maid's uniform. For those who do not make the DH wear a uniform, they require her to wear jeans and T-shirts or other “harmless” and gender-neutral clothes. Moreover, body control and discipline, as women<sup>18</sup> are important adjustments

the DH has to make right at the start. Recruiters, upon the desires of prospective employers, “transform” the DH's body and appearance by dictating her body weight, length of hair, facial appearance (no make-up), kind of shoes to wear, etc. When the external fits the prescribed ideal DH's body appearance, the internal is the next one the recruiters tinker with. Aside from being subjected to the X-ray machine and the weighing scale, the DH's body is exposed to numerous tests as part of the application process. These include tests for hepatitis, syphilis, herpes, and even a pregnancy test. When the DH passes the “body quality control” she is photographed with her “signature” clothes: the standard pastel pink or blue-striped maid's uniform. This “perfect maid” look is then photographed twice: a close-up of the face and a “full body” shot. All in all, the ideal DH must be neat and tidy but not so attractive.

Employers, especially women employers, do not go for pretty domestic workers. If the prospective DH has what mainstream society considers as physical imperfections like acne, scars, birthmarks, and a bit [but not too] dark complexion, the more she will likely be employed. Skin color is a factor that Chinese employers value. Many of them shun women with darker skin because a woman with dark color allegedly scares the children. They also go for those who are more Chinese looking. As a result, there are quite a number of what DHs call “from airport to airport.” These are those who were terminated the moment their employer laid her eyes on them at the airport and saw “how beautiful” or “how dark” they were.

Various forms of physical abuse, in the meantime, plague those who get to actually work. These include slapping on the face or hands or any part of the body, spitting, kicking, being hit with or thrown objects at, beating, etc. Others, like Lilia Dangco get treated more atrociously:

...Six days later (after arriving in Hong Kong), her employer burned her left forearm with a flat iron after she failed to follow her

employer's instruction to put a handkerchief on top of a black long skirt that she was ironing. She was confined at the Queen Mary Hospital. She said her employer warned her not to tell the incident to anybody or her face would be the next target...<sup>19</sup>

In terms of sexual violence, kissing, touching, and sexual advances are the most common forms of abuse for Filipina DHs. This is closely followed by the employer displaying himself naked or asking the DH to touch him. Other complaints include being peeped at by employers when taking a bath or getting changed, videotaping the DH in the bathroom or bedroom, and touching the DH while she is sleeping.<sup>20</sup> Male employers also tend to regard their DH as in-house masseuse who is available for 24 hours. Some make "substitute wives" out of their DH especially if the wife seems not able to provide adequate "sexual services." Some DHs are even turned into virtual sex slaves.

### Unjust Working Conditions

Unjust working conditions, however, account for some of the most common yet most oppressive experiences of the Filipina DHs. For example, a lot of employers provide poor accommodations. DHs are made to sleep on the kitchen or living room floor, near the bathroom, and under the table where they have no privacy.<sup>21</sup> As a result, some sleep for 3-4 hours only because they cannot sleep until everyone leaves the living room or stops going to the kitchen and goes to sleep. It becomes all the more difficult when their employers entertain guests or when they have to serve refreshments at *mahjong* parties which could take place several nights a week.

DHs also encounter problems with their employers when it comes to food. The employers determine not only what the DH eats but also where, when, and how much she eats. Meals can be irregular, late, or inadequate. One respondent in a study by Rita Ybanez complained of being fed with just a piece of bread and coffee in the morning and the next meal is at 3 or 4 in the afternoon. Other respondents revealed how they were given just porridge, noodles, or a hamburger as their food for the whole day.<sup>22</sup>

DHs' bodies also suffer as they are turned into a workhorse. A study done by the Asian Migrant Center in 2001 pointed out that possibly more than 5,000 of the then existing number of Filipino DHs suffer from virtual slavery (0-1 days off per month).<sup>23</sup> Aside from their "official" job as DH, some are actually made to work outside their employer's homes either as unpaid DHs to their parents', relatives, or friends' homes, or as secretaries, nurses, waitresses, dishwashers, medical technicians, cooks, salespersons, messengers, hawkers, factory workers, and researchers.

Recruiters also contribute to this objectification of the DH with the practice of giving a three-month warranty for their "products." They "package" their "products" by advertising even in cyberspace that their "products" are far superior, better trained and more "obedient." Some recruitment agencies offer as much as three free replacements if the employer is not satisfied with the "product." An agency, at one time, even put them on "sale" with a "15% discount" price tag because it is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary.<sup>24</sup> The DH then become like goods in the store where one has the ultimate freedom to choose which to buy and if the "goods" is "damaged" you can return her, free of charge.

Geraldine Pratt, in her article *Inscribing Domestic Work on Filipina Bodies*, narrates another kind of objectification where "a domestic worker's body and function as servant is further objectified by building an equivalence between her and the household décor." The employer made Cora, the Filipina maid, wear a uniform "coordinated with her employer's dishes." Cora was even "asked to wear her black uniform when the black dishes were in use."<sup>25</sup> Nothing beats, however, the names "my Filipino[a]" which means "my maid" and *banmui*<sup>26</sup> which are used to refer to Filipina DHs in Hong Kong. These do not just inscribe domestic work in women's bodies. These racialize it in Filipina women's bodies.

These experiences of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong that are borne out of their migration as women in the context of globalization raise some critical questions:<sup>27</sup> How does one confront gender injustice beyond boundaries? Or, how does one deal with forced, racialized, and gendered migration fraught with unjust situations? What do these mean to you and me and to humanity as a whole? How does one talk about an age supposedly of global wealth and plenty when global poverty, particularly global feminization of poverty, is the *real* reality? Most importantly, how does one even talk about human dignity and social responsibility when these are sacrificed in the altar of global capital daily? These, I believe, are some of the questions that must be subjected to theological reflections.

### Theological Challenges and Perspectives

As shown by the experience of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong, labor migration is intensified and abused by global capitalism — the emblem of globalization. The prevailing market economics is hegemonic as it cuts or disregards any ties with other institutions such as religion, family, and politics and even usurps the power of the nation-states. It is exploitative as it tends to look at everything in terms of cost, benefit, and exchange value at the expense of human dignity, especially of the vulnerable in society. Lastly, it is gendered as it reinforces the inequality between men and women, with the latter as the victim.

In short, the prevailing market economics is unjust, especially for women.<sup>28</sup> While women's labor participation, indeed, increased under the aegis of globalization, the global market simply overlays 'female' roles defined in terms of sexuality, reproduction, and domesticity with a market ethos of commodification and the dominance of those who already possess resources. So you have First World over Third World countries, rich Chinese women over poor Filipino women, and the financially-better-off Filipina DHs over poorer Filipinas in the Philippines. Because it also views women as not productive or competitive, they are, therefore, not considered to be entitled to a full share in or control

over available social resources. This starts in the economy of the household or the family where the 'female' roles are ingrained. These "roles" are picked up in the job-market by assigning or leaving women with jobs that are gender-specific and reinforced in the workplace with incidents of sexual harassment and sex-discrimination in terms of wages and promotion. Then this is intensified in the "service industries" where women are turned into commodities. In the global ontological capital women are both consumer and consumed, properties and commodities.

The worse of the lot falls on women migrant workers since migrant labor is not integrated into the global economy. That is why its reputation is that of cheap and exploitative labor. This structural denigration of migrant labor has serious repercussions, especially on women, who are doubly exploited. Because their job is segregated by the international division of labor and devalued by the global economy, the accordance of dignity is minimal, if not downright lacking. Consequently, human rights are also minimal and even nil. Domestic work, for instance, is "invisible" because it is done within the confines of "privacy" of a particular family or household. It is also not usually reflected in labor statistics and is excluded from labor laws. If it does get accorded some kind of legislation, e.g. minimum wage, as is the case of the Filipina DHs in Hong Kong, it is not only the lowest-paid. It is also the first victim in times of economic slowdown or restructuring.

Where does Christian theology figure in all of these? How can it make sense of the prevailing market economics from a faith perspective? Most importantly, how can it come up with a discourse that takes into account *different* women's well-being?

Feminist theologians believe that there is an interaction of the three-fold exploitation or oppression of women, namely gender, race and class, in this issue. Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, for one, asserts that there is "structural interconnections between the gendered economic system of capitalist patriarchy, its racist underpinnings, and women's

global poverty” and that this “must be seen as due to the global colonisation and systemic exploitation of women’s labor in production and reproduction.”<sup>29</sup> Shawn Copeland in *Interaction of Racism, Sexism, and Classism in Women’s Exploitation* adds that this is very much apparent or strong for coloured women, especially for the domestic workers, who have to sell their very persons as the condition of their labor.<sup>30</sup>

Since the global economy is forged on unjust relations that have roots in socio-political and religio-cultural relations, justice must be the primary theological category for Christian theology to respond to this reality. Usually, theological discourse in view of economic justice is drawn from classical Latin American liberation theology. Although it offers considerable theological basis to address the plight of women as victims of economic injustice, this theological discourse has limitations. First of all, the generic term “poor” is problematic as it totalizes the “subject.” Lumping women with the category “poor” does not necessarily integrate the fact that there is a “woman face” to poverty<sup>31</sup> or to global economic injustice. This failure to integrate the gendering of economics in classic liberation theology’s discourse on the politics of economics then marginalizes women’s experience and perspective.

As it is, the Filipina DHs suffered not just because they are poor but also because they are women. Option for the poor as an option for poor women<sup>32</sup> then makes necessary the broad unmasking of the dichotomy between the private and the public, especially in terms of how it constructs, controls, disciplines, confines, excludes, and suppresses gender and sexual difference and, in effect, upholds patriarchal power structures. Gendered justice in the global economy means shattering this persistent dichotomy because it is the major reason why women get crumbs or nothing at all in terms of economic rights and opportunities. Schüssler-Fiorenza, for instance, laments how women are viewed as economic dependents. They supposedly work

for pin-money until they get married and for extra money to complement the salaries of their husbands. As such, women’s active economic participation is not encouraged. If they do work, discriminatory pay-scale awaits them.<sup>33</sup>

While it can unmask the dualism, equality cannot do as much in terms of shattering it. Justice must be construed beyond equality into that of love if justice is to really be about right relations. Since economic injustice to women is rooted in relationships that are often in the realm of the private, equating justice with love will strike at the “emotional capital” of such injustice — the patriarchal and romanticized notion of love that keeps women enslaved in their own and in other women’s homes. Isabel Carter Heyward asserts:

Love is justice. It is not necessarily a happy feeling or a romantic attachment. Love is a way of being in the world, not necessarily an emotional affect....Justice is the moral act of love. Love is actually justice....Where there is no moral act of love, no justice, there is an evil situation. Evil is the act of un-love or in-justice. It is the doing of moral wrong, specifically of breaking the relational bond between ourselves in such a way that one, both, or many parties are dis-empowered to grow, love, and/or live.<sup>34</sup>

Gendering the quest for global economic justice then means that love must be construed in the context of justice. Here, it is important for Christian theology to expose how the private realm, particularly the family, produces and re-produces gendered ideologies and practices for these are very much a part of the politics of the DHs’ gendered migration and gendered transitions.

Equally important is the need for Christian theology to account for its own contribution in this phenomenon. The socialization of women into domesticity, for instance, is reinforced through a “theology of woman” or a “feminine theology” which advocates that woman’s nature and vocation is to be loving housewife and self-sacrificing mother. This theology becomes even more questionable given the fact that the DHs did not even have the luxury to stay home to take care

of their own children. Hence, this kind of theology doubly victimizes poor women and triply victimizes poorer women of color, since it only reflects the realities of middle-class women who can afford to stay in their own homes and/or not work. Even when these middle-class women go out to work they hire a maid thereby reinforcing the very same (“feminine”) theology, that they ran away from or were running away from, and become the oppressors of their fellow women themselves. The same is true with the DHs who hire other poor Filipinas to take care of their (DHs’) own family in the Philippines and pay the “second-level *Pinay* DH” a paltry sum.

While earlier ecclesiastical teachings cannot imagine women working outside the home and considered it “wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family” so much so that it is “an intolerable abuse to be abolished at all cost”<sup>35</sup>, more recent ones maintain that women are equal to men in dignity and responsibility, which, however, must realize itself primarily in her giving self-dedication to her husband and in her loving service to her children.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, these can be viewed as token developments, for mothering, in this sense, somehow still becomes (m)*othering* or motherhood becomes (m)*otherhood*.

What is important is that just/loving relationships must not be confused with complementary relations. This is cheap justice. It is quasi-justice, a token equality. It is exploitation in the guise of affection mirrored in the way the DHs are “conscientized” to migrate for the sake of their families by capitalizing on their responsibilities and sense of sacrifice as “good” “Christian” wives/daughters/sisters. The case of Elsa and Belle, who were “manipulated” by their father by capitalizing on their responsibilities and sense of sacrifice as daughters and sisters, perfectly illustrates this. Indeed, the notion of complementarity can make use of gender difference as a tool for oppression. Authentic just/loving relationships are characterized by mutuality understood as equality without significant difference. Mutual

relations enable or empower others to discover and develop their capabilities to make their contributions, while simultaneously making one’s own. It is about sensitivity and solidarity, affinity and facilitation.

Gendering the quest for global economic justice also entails expanding the usual feminist analytical categories of women namely gender, class, and race, to take into account the case of women migrants who suffer distinct forms of oppression by virtue of being migrants. This requires, first and foremost, gendering the migrant worker, particularly the domestic worker. We have to put a “woman face” to the migrant. We have to find an analytical category that could help in viewing the economic situation of women in migration from a faith perspective.

### Conclusion

Gendering the quest for global economic justice then necessitates covering *different* women’s experience and perspective in two areas: the productive and reproductive work.<sup>37</sup> For women, work outside the home means economic independence and, to a certain extent, personal or political independence. Yet, the notion and practice of work today is still very much hinged on the oppressive reproduction ethics that have existed for centuries in the realm of the private. In fact, as the DHs’ gendered migration, gendered transition, and gendered violence exhibit, the power of these constricting ideologies and practices transcend borders and territories. At the end of the day, gendering the quest for global economic justice is not just a question of whether women are *free* to work but also a question of whether women have *freeing* work. More concretely, it is about how the global economy can serve as a means not just for our stomachs’ satisfaction but also for the creation of living conditions that lead to authentic liberation. Just as Jesus’ story ended not with his death but with his resurrection, Christian theology must insist that in God’s great economy of salvation, love and life, not suffering and death, are the Christian’s final experience.

But let justice run its course like water, and righteousness be like an ever-flowing river (*Amos 6:24*).

### Notes

1. The volume of migration in the last decades is such that it is believed to be responsible for two-thirds of the population growth in industrial countries. The UN's 2002 International Migration Report, for instance, says that there are roughly 175 million migrants, 105 million or 60% of whom are in developed countries. Of these migrants, 56 million are in Europe, 50 million in Asia, and 41 million in North America. "Global Trends" *Migration News* Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 2003). See also Mike Pamwell, *Population Movements and the Third World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 29-30.
2. It has created, for example, a different breed of migrants like the "skilled transients" — corporate managers, consultants and technicians who hop or get transferred from one international branch of the transnational company to another, and the "transnational migrants" — the elite group of rich entrepreneurs who can "buy" citizenship and shuttle or "split their time between Melbourne as a place of study for the children, Hong Kong as the family home, and Vancouver as the business location. Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 40, 44.
3. Patrick Taran and Eduardo Geronimi. *Globalization, Labor and Migration: Protection is Paramount* (Geneva: International Labor Organization), 6.
4. Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Coming to grips with prostitution," <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/globalpers/gp041504.htm> accessed December 31, 2004.
5. Noeleen Heyzer and Vivienne Wee, "Domestic Workers in Transient Overseas Employment: Who Benefits, Who Profits," in *The Trade in Domestic Workers: Causes, Mechanisms and Consequences of International Migration*. eds. Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt and Nedra Weerakom (Kuala Lumpur: APDC, 1994): 44-70.
6. Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001) gives a substantial discussion and examples on this based on her study of Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles.
7. Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18.
8. Hope S. Antone, "Asian Women and the Globalization of Labor," *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* Volume 2 (2003), 102. See also Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis, "Uneven Development, Capitalism, and Patriarchy," in *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* ed. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza (New York: Orbis Books, 1996): 92-3.
9. See, for example, E. Mulong, "Mothers Once Again" *TNT Hong Kong* Vol. 6, No. 4 (June-July 2000): 4-5 and "When Children Become Parent Carers," *TNT Hong Kong* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Feb.-March 2001): 9.

10. Quoted in Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, "Tomboy Love," in Inter-Press Service, *Risks and Rewards: Stories from the Philippine Migration Trail*, (Bangkok: IPS Asia-Pacific): 39-43.
11. See, for example, "Class Conscious" *TNT Hong Kong* Vol. 2, No. 11 (Jan.-Feb. 1997): 10-1.
12. In mainstream Philippine standard the ideal marrying age is around 25. In rural areas the usual marrying age even tend to be earlier.
13. Ping Gonzalez, "Thirty-five and still single", *TNT Hong Kong* Vol. 5, No. 8 (August 1999): 13-4.
14. See, for instance, the cover page of *TNT* Vol. 2, No.2 (February 1996).
15. Quoted in Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, "Tomboy Love," in Inter-Press Service, *Risks and Rewards: Stories from the Philippine Migration Trail*, (Bangkok: IPS Asia-Pacific): 39-43.
16. After failing to impose its proposed 20% wage cut (the employers wanted 35%) in 1998, the H.K. government reduced their minimum wage by five percent during the economic crisis in 1999. Because of growing budget deficit, the Hong Kong government implemented another (and higher) wage cut for contracts signed after April 1, 2003 bringing the HK\$ 3,670 a month minimum wage of the already lowest-paid Hong Kong workers to HK\$ 3,270. See "RP maids' dilemma in HK: Take pay cut or be jobless," <[http://archive.inq7.net/archive/2001-p/nat/2001/dec/24/nat\\_7-1-p.htm](http://archive.inq7.net/archive/2001-p/nat/2001/dec/24/nat_7-1-p.htm)> accessed October 31, 2003; James Tien, "Hong Kong is suffering: Even the foreign maids must be willing to sacrifice" *SCMP* (November 22, 2002); and Daffyd Roderick, "Making the Poor Even Poorer," *TIME Asia* (August 25, 2003).
17. See related report "Maternity benefits for maids opposed" *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (July 4, 1997): 3.  
Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 72 cites a similar violation of the DHs' reproductive right whereby the DH was given an abortion without her knowledge when her employer brought her for physical exam and pregnancy test.
18. Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 60-82 gives a more comprehensive discussion on this.
19. "MRV Case Profiles: Lilia Bernardino Dangco" <<http://www.asianmigrants.org/mrvcases/999433070427.php>> accessed February 2, 2003. Cases of abuses are considerable enough to warrant the establishment of Bethune House, a Filipino-run shelter for DHs in distress.
20. Roseanne Calamaan, for instance, was forced by her employers to watch them have sex and was also asked to watch the couple's "private videos." See "Maid 'forced to watch sex,'" *Asia Migrant Bulletin* Vol. 11 Nos. 3 & 4 (July-December 1994), 4.
21. There are also complaints from DHs who are made to sleep in cupboards, cardboard carton cubicles, in the toilets, and on top of washing machines because of the small house of their employers. See "No More Sleeping in the Bathroom," *TNT Hong Kong*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 1996), 28 and Julian Lee, "Filipino maids' act of resistance," <[http://info.anu.edu.au/mac/Newsletters\\_an\\_Journals/ANU\\_Reporter/\\_pdf/vol\\_29\\_no\\_07](http://info.anu.edu.au/mac/Newsletters_an_Journals/ANU_Reporter/_pdf/vol_29_no_07)> accessed November 3, 2003.
22. Riza Faith Ybanez, *Conditions in Labor Migration that Contribute to the HIV*

*Vulnerability of Migrant Domestic Workers: A Case Study of Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong*, <[http://caramasia.gn.apc.org/Ritchie\\_HK\\_cdn.htm](http://caramasia.gn.apc.org/Ritchie_HK_cdn.htm)> accessed January 22, 2003.

23. Asian Migrant Center, *Baseline Research on Racial and Gender Discrimination Towards Filipino, Indonesian and Thai Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: AMC, 2001), 29.
24. Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 61.
25. Geraldine Pratt, "Inscribing Domestic Work on Filipina Bodies," in *Places Through the Body*. ed. Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile. (London: Routledge, 1998): 289.
26. *Ban* is the final syllable of the Cantonese term for "Philippines" and *mui* is from "mujai" the lowest servant in the history of the Chinese slaveholding population. See Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong*, 15, 47, 77 for a deeper analysis on how this name reflects the denigration of the Filipina DHs.
27. See, for instance, Gemma Tulud Cruz, "No strangers in this church," <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/globalpers/gp120303.htm> accessed December 31, 2004.
28. Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Justice, Gender, and the Market," *Concilium* 2 (1997): 133-42.
29. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. "The Endless Day: Introduction," *Concilium* 194 (1987), xviii-xix.
30. Shawn Copeland. "Interaction of Racism, Sexism and Classism in Women's Exploitation," *Concilium* 194 (1987), 24.
31. Elina Vuola, *Limits of Liberation: Feminist Theology and the Ethics of Poverty and Reproduction* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) gives an eloquent critique on this.
32. *Ibid.*, 141-55 gives a comprehensive list and discussion of feminist theologians, particularly Latina feminist theologians, who tackle this issue.
33. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. "The Endless Day: Introduction," xx, for instance, cites an example of a discriminatory pay-scale in the New Testament, particularly in I Tim. 5:3-16, which stipulate that the widow/elder should receive only half of the payment or honor which is due to the male presiding elder. While male elders and officers of the community should be remunerated independently of their family status and income, widows/elders should only receive financial support from the community when they are absolutely without family support.
34. Isabel Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (New York: University Press of America, 1982), 18. Margaret Farley, "New Patterns of Relationship: Beginnings of a Moral Revolution," *Theological Studies* 36 (December 1975): 643 also discusses this.
35. *Quadragesimo Anno* no. 71 and *Laborem Exercens* no. 117 quoted in Maria Riley, *Trouble and Beauty: Women Encounter Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1991), 15-6.
36. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. "The Endless Day: Introduction," xxi.
37. Carol S. Robb, "Principles for a Woman-Friendly Economy," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 1993): 147-60 makes a good case for this.

## A LOS 25 AÑOS DE MONS. ROMERO: MEMORIA, DISCERNIMIENTO, FUTURO

*José María Vigil*

Veinticinco años después del martirio de Romero nos encontramos con un panorama realmente nuevo. Partiendo del significado peculiar de Romero, vamos a tratar de extrapolarlo, poniéndolo en relación con la crisis que experimenta hoy día la religión, sobre todo en Europa. Esa crisis europea, que con el tiempo tal vez vaya a ser mundial, no nos puede dejar indiferentes en América Latina.

### MEMORIA

**Romero: símbolo emblemático  
de la opción por los pobres latinoamericana**

Tras 25 años se puede afirmar sin miedo: Romero ha cristalizado en la memoria popular y eclesial y hasta en la opinión pública de la sociedad en general como «el mártir latinoamericano por antonomasia»,