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*Feminist Diversities: Contemporary
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in the Philippines*



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FOREWORD

We know that women are not homogeneous: they are differentiated by other social identities. For the vast majority of Filipino women – indeed, the world’s women – gender justice and gender equality do not constitute the entirety of the struggle. Failing to take into account women’s distinct experiences of oppression, and how these are not merely gender-based, is also failing to recognize our own power and privilege along the other social axes of class, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ability/disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. In the Department of Women and Development Studies, the academic unit tasked with the production of this issue (with the invaluable support of the Research and Extension for Development Office, or REDO), our bias is overtly for women who bear multiple marginalized identities - women who struggle more, and need more.

We argue that gender and development (GAD) must be conceptualized and operationalized using contextual and intersectional perspectives. Popularized by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the intersectional approach is a critical analytical framework feminist scholars utilize in understanding the interacting and reinforcing impacts of asymmetrical social structures on variegated subordinated identities. Social justice demands transformative action towards the equalization of inequitable and unequal power relations across all interlocking systems of oppression and domination. Thus, the goals of gender justice and gender equality, and actions towards these, must be inextricably conjoined with other forms of and actions towards social justice and equality.

Feminism itself, as theory, action, and iterative praxis, is characterized by diversity. Through a prism is an apt metaphor for how women’s issues are refracted as subjects of advocacy and struggle in the Philippine context. As it is elsewhere, our women’s movement is animated by “feminisms,” by a multiformity of perspectives and practices, all striving to respond to the needs and interests that arise from being a Filipino woman in contemporary times. All are valued for their contributions to our protracted struggles.

The terrain of feminist scholarship is as heterogeneous as women themselves, the issues they confront, and the efforts undertaken to improve their condition and position. In this issue, we feature the experiences of lesbian women and urban poor women; a textual analysis of public remarks made by the highest public official of the land through the lens of masculinity studies; and two gender and development strategies, gender mainstreaming and feminist organizing.

Given the large number of women drawn into the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, which according to the ILO comprised 53.2 percent of the 1.3 million total number employed in 2016, an investigation into their situation is warranted. In “The L Words Lesbian and Labor: Physical and Social Health Impacts of Call Center Work on Lesbian Women in Quezon City, Philippines,” Mylene De Guzman sheds light on women at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. She elaborates on how lesbian women contend with the additional impediment of discrimination in the workplace, on top of the numerous repercussions of call center work on their health.

Sabrina Laya S. Gacad’s “Pushing the Boundaries of Motherhood and Pagkadalaga: Sexuality and Reproductive Freedom of Urban Poor Women and Volunteers of the Likhaan Center for Women’s Health” focuses on low-income women of varying ages who have chosen to avail of contraceptive commodities. Through her study, she surfaced how consciousness-raising combined with free access

to reproductive health services contributed not only to their reproductive freedom and the enhancement of their socio-economic condition, but also to their empowerment as women and mothers.

We recognize how masculinity studies can enrich and sharpen our understanding of the unremitting reproduction of asymmetrical gender relations. Shebana Alqaseer's and Joshua Carlo Tenorio Pile's "The President's Monologues: Duterte's Rhetoric and Toxic Masculinities" highlights Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's portrayals of masculinity through his public remarks, laying bare a conformity to orthodox masculinity and its perilous implications on culture and politics.

For government agencies, gender mainstreaming is a GAD strategy facilitated by the utilization of the five (5) percent GAD budget as provided for under the Magna Carta of Women and the General Appropriations Act. Allen L. Espino's "Problematizing Privatization: How Private Take-over of Local Water Districts Impacts Gender Mainstreaming" reveals how privatization resulted in a pushback in the capacity to utilize the GAD budget and to implement programs that target women's empowerment.

In "Mapping the Terrain of Feminist Organizing among Selected Organizations in Luzon and the Visayas," Teresita Villamor Barrameda inquires into the organizing efforts of women and LGBTQI individuals in relation to how they promote the development and empowerment of their members. It was found that some of the processes and practices mirror feminist principles, and that the utilization of feminist organizing could contribute to these organizations, enable the mainstreaming of gender, and facilitate the creation of alliances.

We owe the richness, the breadth, and the depth of the ground we cover in our praxis to our feminist diversities. It is in the application of the feminist value of respect for multiplicity and difference, to each other and to our work - as women, as feminists, and as scholars - that we can locate our strength.

Nathalie Africa-Verceles, DSD
Issue Editor