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Globalization and Third World Women
Exploitation, Coping and Resistance

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ASHGATE
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Chapter 4
Migration, Transnational Politics, and the State
Challenging the Limits of the Law: Filipina Migrant Workers’ Transnational Struggles in the World for Protection and Social Justice

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez

Extra-legal struggle is how change happens. Without organizing and doing rallies and campaigns, the government would not do anything! Getting legal representation requires that you get a lawyer which is very difficult. Extra-legal action is necessary both abroad and in the Philippines. Majority of Filipinos are dependent on migrants so that means that the struggle we [as OFWs] go through abroad, affects [our families] here too.

(Ceny, domestic worker in Hong Kong and MI International activist)

Introduction

This chapter’s title draws inspiration from Ceny, a domestic worker employed in Hong Kong and an active member of a Migrante-International (MI) member organization. MI is a transnational alliance of grassroots Philippine migrant workers’ organizations that is the focus of this chapter. I met Ceny in the Philippines while she was in between contracts. After visiting family members, Ceny spent the rest of her time at MI’s headquarters in Quezon City helping coordinate mass mobilizations around different campaigns including one demanding that the Philippine government intervene in the release of a Filipina, previously employed as a domestic worker, who was jailed in Saudi Arabia.

Mary Jane Ramos was imprisoned after killing her employer. After suffering a series of rapes over the course of three-days by her employer, Ramos killed him in self-defense. Though the Saudi Arabian government cleared Ramos of any malicious wrongdoing, it refused to release her from jail. She would not be allowed to return to the Philippines until she paid $40,000 in so-called “blood money” to her former employer’s family. In Saudi Arabia, it is customary for the perpetrator of a crime to monetarily pay their victim’s family even when a court clears them of criminal intent. Ramos and her family did not have enough money to pay off her “blood” debt. She was therefore left to languish in jail in Saudi Arabia. The Philippine government, meanwhile, did nothing to facilitate her release.
Ceny’s statement is a poignant one, especially in light of the kinds of struggles, like that of Mary Jane Ramos, that Filipina migrants face around the world. Many migrant activists describe themselves as “modern day slaves.” Filipina migrant workers are subject to highly exploitative working and abusive living conditions. Additionally, given migrant women’s tenuous legal status as either legal or undocumented foreign workers, they are left vulnerable under the laws of their host countries. The uneven application of international human rights norms in different national contexts, furthermore, limits Filipinas’ legal protections. Hence, as Ceny suggests, “extra-legal” action is necessary. For her, the law is limited in its ability to protect migrants’ rights.

Given the limits of the law in Filipina migrants’ countries of employment, how are they able to secure better working and living conditions, if at all? Moreover, how do Filipinas struggle to survive beyond everyday, individualized acts of agency? In other words, in what ways do Filipinas collectively mobilize to fight for their rights and welfare?

In this chapter, I examine the transnational organizing of Filipina migrants through the global alliance of grass-roots Philippine migrant groups, MI, as a means of answering these questions. MI offers an important case-study of the novel ways Filipina migrants can successfully organize and mobilize across national borders to assert their rights and to fight for their improved welfare.

The data I present in this chapter is based on my participant-observation of MI’s headquarters in Manila, Philippines for three months in 1997 and an additional seven months in 2001. During that time, I observed and participated in a range of MI’s campaign and research work. For instance, I observed as MI campaigned on behalf of Mary Jane Ramos (the campaign Ceny was part of). Additionally, I observed MI International’s mobilization of return migrants and their family members to vote for progressive political candidates representing the Bayan Muna Party in the 2001 national elections. I also assisted MI in its research work and its other day-to-day tasks. This work allowed me access to their materials (including for instance, press statements, newsletters, brochures, and other organizational documents) which in turn allowed me to better understand organizational processes.

Additionally, I draw from observations conducted during a regional meeting of MI’s affiliated groups in the Asia-Pacific region organized in December 2006 that was held in Cebu (Philippines) as well as observations of an international meeting convened by MI in Hong Kong in June 2008.

Before I discuss Filipina migrants’ activism in MI, I will briefly discuss the context for the globalization of women workers from the Philippines.

The Globalization of Filipinas

Global Restructuring and Neoliberalism

Processes of globalization and alongside it, the dominance of neoliberal orthodoxy, have given rise to new forms of racialized and gendered labor demand around the world. Deindustrialization in advanced, “core” economies like the United States, and other Western nations, has meant the global restructuring of key industries which have off-shored manufacturing to peripheral, Third World sites where capital takes advantage of cheaper labor. In the U.S., we need look no further than the clothes on our backs for evidence of this process of global restructuring. Though garments manufacturing supplied many jobs to women in the United States for many decades, many have been closed and relocated to the global South. While U.S. consumers pay one price for an item of clothing, workers in the Third World are paid only a small fraction of the cost of that same item. Manufacturers and retailers, meanwhile, enjoy huge profits.

If deindustrialization is resulting in the contraction of some industries, it is also resulting in the expansion of others in the “core,” including the service industry. From business services (cleaning companies) to personal services (which includes domestic workers), major firms as well as ordinary people, are requiring particular forms of service labor. This labor, however, is often defined in different national contexts amongst the “core” of the world system as being performable only by gendered foreign migrants. At the same time, neoliberalism and the state’s scaling back of public services globally is producing its own sets of gendered and racialized labor demand including demands for care workers (nannies), who are often required to perform domestic service.

Deindustrialization in the core has produced a relative economic boon to some erstwhile peripheral economies who are now graduating to the status of “Newly Industrialized Country” or NIC. NICs in particular, have thrived as they have played host to erstwhile “core” factories. Significantly, these factories’ hiring practices are often informed by the same kinds of gendered logics that shaped hiring when the factories were in the “core.” To continue with the example of the garments industry, if women were hired to make clothing in the U.S., they are hired to make clothing in countries throughout NICs of Asia. As more and more women in the NICs are entering the labor force and as families enjoy higher incomes, citizens in the NICs have come to require personal services like caregivers and domestic workers. The workers sought to perform these jobs are increasingly secured from poorer neighboring countries.

The Role of the Philippine State

For states like the Philippines, globalization and neoliberalism and the new labor demands it requires, have become both an economic and political opportunity. Perennially crisis-ridden, the Philippines has emerged as what I call in my work, a
living and working conditions

parrenas illustrates how the rome and u.s.-based migrants she interviewed
hours. "(parrenas 2001) indeed, if migrant women are undocumented, they are
gotis, the lcp requires that women live-in with a family for 24 months. during

living and working conditions

parrenas illustrates how the rome and u.s.-based migrants she interviewed experience "contradictory class mobility." that is, they are unable to find work in the philippines despite their professional training and are better able to secure employment abroad. however, employment abroad often comes at the cost of having to accept lower-status work as domestics.

not only do these women experience contradictory class mobility, they also contend with insufficient regulation at their sites of employment. since they often work and live within the confines of their employer's private homes and are employed on an informal basis, the boundaries between work and leisure are frequently violated. parrenas points out: "live-in domestic workers, for example, often complain about the absence of set parameters between their work and rest hours." (parrenas 2001) indeed, if migrant women are undocumented, they are even more vulnerable to exploitation as they may be threatened with deportation by their employers if they protest their working conditions.

even in the case when domestic workers are documented and their employment is ostensibly regulated through employment contracts that define set wages and working hours, constable finds in her study of filipinas in hong kong that they ultimately have little recourse to legal protections. migrants' employment contracts are supposed to regulate their work and rest hours as well as define the wages the earn, however when migrants attempt to raise concerns about contractual violations to the hong kong government, "the onus of proof is on the worker," (constable 1997) and the proof becomes difficult for domestic workers to muster.

canada's live-in care program (lcp) would seem on its surface to offer a better resolution to filipinas' dilemma as either unregulated and undocumented workers or regulated workers with limited rights as temporary residents. through the lcp the canadian government imports foreign care-givers, 82 percent of whom are from the philippines (pwu, march 5, 2002). given entry on a temporary basis, the lcp requires that women live-in with a family for 24 months. during
employers and other host people renders them marginalized both legally, as I suggest above, and socially. Migrants' social marginalization can ultimately prevent them from being able to seek advocates from amongst host people including legal representation if there are in fact legal avenues for them to seek redress for exploitation. Additionally, migrants often actually live with their employers (as in the case of domestic workers or caregivers) or under the watchful eyes of the employers on residential compounds. This is often the case for Filipinas who are housed in communal housing arranged by their employers, for instance. Filipina migrants therefore lack meaningful interaction with host people, including potential advocates. Indeed, language and other cultural barriers might also prevent linkages with those who would be allies.

The Limits of the Law

The increasing significance of temporary, foreign labor to various countries around the world raises critical questions about the nature of rights for migrant workers. As rights continue to be moored to formal membership or citizenship in a nation-state, migrants face the problem of being legally marginalized in their countries of employment because they are non-citizens. Even as some host states may extend rights to migrants, they are often only partial. Moreover, those rights are contingent on migrants' legal status. Undocumented migrants' abilities to make claims on a host state are severely limited.

Meanwhile, international human rights regimes do not appear to offer an alternative regulatory framework from which migrants can frame their rights claims. Rochelle Ball and Nicola Piper point out, "The view of a global spread of conventions surrounding human rights, which leads to the claim that the advances of values attached to human rights would render the concept of citizenship almost irrelevant, seems to be rooted in European philosophy and regional systems such as the European Union (and EU citizens only), but cannot necessarily be extended to other regions, such as Asia, or to all types of migrants" (Ball and Piper 2002). Without reifying the notion that "human rights" is a modern, Western concept recognized and practiced solely by nation-states in the West, and thereby implicitly rendering non-Western nation-states as backward places where people do not enjoy rights, the point to be underscored is that rights, whether they are nation-based or rooted in international human rights conventions, cannot be enjoyed by migrants in many places around the world.

For Ball and Piper, given the limits of citizenship rights within host countries and international human rights regimes, that is, given the "limits of the law," new sorts of struggles become important. They suggest, "[t]here is evidence of increasingly transnational networking between migrant worker NGOs in both sending and receiving countries. These steps towards forging of service and advocacy alliances have great potential in making the needs and rights of globalised workers more broadly recognized and ultimately attended to" (Ball and Piper 2002). MI is a good-case study of the sort of "transnational networking...in both sending and receiving countries" that Ball and Piper describe.

MI makes the Philippine state its primary target for demands-making. Significantly, amongst MI's members are groups organized by migrants' children and family members. MI coordinates the mass mobilizations of Philippine migrants as well as their family members left behind against the Philippine government in the homeland as well as consular and embassy offices around the world. From MI's perspective, if the trouble is that Filipina migrants lack rights in their host countries or have little chance at asserting international rights regimes, they do retain membership, and therefore "rights" as citizens of the Philippines. As Philippine citizens, they have a better sense of the Philippines' political terrain and an understanding of the state's pressure points both in the Philippines and outside in the form of Philippine embassies and consular offices. They use their understanding of Philippine politics to compel the Philippine state to either reform migration policies or to even intervene extraterritorially on migrants' behalf.

In the section that follows, I offer first a sketch of how MI is organized, then I will examine specific campaigns it has organized around.

MI International

Background

Headquartered in the Philippines, MI has ninety affiliated organizations from almost every major region of the world. Though MI is not comprised exclusively of migrant women but they have been in key leadership positions. Through their engagement in the MI network, Filipina migrants bring domestic work (and other home-based care-related work) into the public sphere. They thereby denaturalize domestic work as an extension of women's innate other-orientation which foreign employers use to exploit and abuse them. MI insists domestic work is a legitimate form of employment which ought to be subject to state regulation rather than an intimate space to be protected from external intervention. Moreover, in contrast to nationalist, paternalistic and maternalistic middle-class and church-based activists who campaign for employment bans on domestic work or entertainment because it is "shameful" employment or because they believe women who choose to work in these jobs exercise poor judgment, MI activists struggle to maintain women's dignity.

Though MI does call for an end of the state's active promotion of labor migration, it is a call for the end of structural inequalities within and between states that effectively force people migrate. As Maher suggests, "women in sending countries need the material conditions to facilitate their full citizenship, including access to education, capital, and social services. They need legal institutions that value them and function to protect their rights, such that migration as a means of
escape is no longer necessary.” (Maher 2004). Indeed, it is full citizenship that MI women (and men) activists fight for.

MI creates and sustains its global network of affiliates by being flexible about the sorts of groups it seeks to both incorporate and create. On one hand, MI attempts to bring pre-existing organizations into its fold. MI activists will approach so-called “traditional organizations” that is, linguistic or home town associations (a typical organizational form amongst Philippine migrant workers) to participate in MI as a member. MI members are expected to share a commitment to collectively identified campaigns that are local to migrants’ countries of employment (i.e. demands for minimum wages, struggles for human rights) or that involve fights for migration and other related reforms in the homeland. In South Korea, for instance, KASAMMAKO, a MI member alliance, is comprised of groups including the Capampangan Brotherhood Association (whose members hail from the Pampanga province in the Philippines) and the Bicol Association (also a regionally-based group).

On the other hand, MI launches new organizing efforts in different countries by adopting any of a number of organizational forms. Though migrants’ political engagements are often limited by their host countries, migrants have creatively evaded their host states in order to build MI. MI activists’ organizing efforts have been malleable, negotiating with the legal restrictions host states place on migrants’ ability to form communities. For example, in many countries the only legal (or at least tolerated) form of social organization allowed are those associated with churches. Hence, MI activists have worked closely with progressive clergy to form prospective MI organizations. It is not surprising then that UNIFIL, an alliance of migrant groups in HK that is a member of MI, has long been headquartered in the Anglican St. John’s Cathedral.

MI does not limit its organizing to the labor diaspora. In a speech at a summit for migrants’ children, a young MI activist noted that, “It’s important for children of migrants...to articulate their issues for their rights and welfare.” The issue of family separation as a consequence of migration is a point of mobilization for MI in the Philippines which organizes the relatives of migrants and migrants’ children into their own groups like the Kilusan ng MI ng Familia sa Pilipinas (Movement of Migrant Families in the Philippines, or KMPP) and Migrante-International Youth.

What links these seemingly disparate organizations across the globe is their shared analysis of both the causes and consequences of Philippine migration, namely, that the Philippine state has promoted the export of labor over other kinds of developmental initiative and has therefore cause the separation of Filipino migrants from their families. As written in an MI brochure, “We dream of a society that will never be torn apart just for the need to survive.” Hence, amongst the objectives MI identifies for itself is the following: “Oppose the export of labor as a development paradigm. Build self reliant economic development to generate jobs internally, and promote social equity and justice.” The lived experience of separation fuels migrants’ and their family members’ involvement in MI to struggle for the reunification of their families and ultimately to fight for redistributive social change in the Philippines that would give them the opportunity to enjoy dignified and sustainable livelihoods in the homeland.

Significantly, MI affiliated organizations are comprised of self-organized, grassroots migrant groups rather than the NGOs Ball and Piper discuss in their work. MI activists are in fact quite wary of what they call “NGOism” and its potentially depoliticizing effects. While there are NGOs that support MI’s work, they cannot become MI member organizations. Their exclusion from MI membership is meant to ensure that migrants themselves are taking leadership in articulating their own needs and leading their own campaigns. Hence, when Ceny describes MI’s work as being “extra-legal” she also means that MI is engaged in forms of political mobilization beyond the typical forms engaged in by NGOs involved in migrants’ issues.

For instance, MI engages the Philippine state not by making formal petitions to government officials, but by rallying in front of Philippine embassies and consular offices in their countries of employment and demanding that the state advocate on their behalf on terms defined by migrants themselves. Indeed, migrants dealing any number of issues in one country can rely on MI’s affiliated organizations based in the Philippines and around the world to hold solidarity actions in front of Philippine government offices to press the state to address their issues.

There is a plethora of NGOs outside of MI’s ambit oriented toward providing direct service to migrant workers or advocating on migrant workers’ behalf in the Philippines and throughout the world. These NGOs, however, are generally reluctant to take the kinds of direct action including protests, rallies and other kinds of public mobilizations against the Philippine government that MI member organizations do.

Though MI’s approach to organizing and collective mobilization might be considered unconventional from the perspective of NGOs, MI has been successful in winning important gains for Filipina workers. Indeed, not only has MI been able to force the Philippine government to respond favorably to its demands, it has also been able to win important concessions from their host governments. The organizational capacity that migrant activists develop through their work in MI provides them with the skills and know-how to engage directly with their host governments. In the next section, I will examine key sets of campaigns around economic and human rights that it has engaged in to illustrate how it mobilizes around migrants’ rights campaigns around human rights:

Economic rights, it would seem, are rights migrants would struggle over in the host countries since it is in host countries where migrants’ employers are located and it is host countries’ employment and labor laws that govern migrants’ wages and work conditions. MI, however, not only mobilizes migrants in struggles in their
host countries, but indeed, it targets Philippine state representatives to pressure host governments to protect migrants’ rights.

In the case of Filipina caregivers in Taiwan, for instance, an MI affiliated organization called for the dismissal of Philippine state representatives who failed to intervene on migrants’ behalf in a wage dispute:

We therefore call for the dismissal of Mrs. Lydia Espinosa and Paul from MECO (Manila Economic Cooperation Office) for selling out Jovita and Marilyn. They acted as representatives of the employer, broker and even the Hsinchu [Taiwanese] Labor Bureau (MI Sectoral Party-Taiwan Chapter).

In addition to launching a campaign for these officials’ dismissal, MI activists also launched a campaign demanding a standard employment contract for all migrants working in Taiwan as illustrated in the following quote:

The tasks presented to the organization for the next two years include campaigning for a standard employment contract for all foreign workers. This is to ensure that all side agreements imposed in the Philipines and/or Taiwan should be made void or non-binding (MI, Taiwan).

The “side agreements” MI-Taiwan alludes to include bilateral agreements between the Philippine and Taiwanese governments on minimum wages for Filipino migrants.

To contest these kinds of “side agreements,” migrants have struggled against Philippine migration officials in the Philippines to ensure that they earn fair wages while they are overseas. For instance, MI launched a campaign in the Philippines against the Department of Labor and Employment calling for its head to step down. According to MI,

With the Philippine’s own Labor Chief agreeing to slash wages of Filipino migrant workers, it’s not surprising if other foreign employers and governments take her cue. In effect, this government sends the message that Filipino workers are negotiable for lower wages (MI International 2002).

In a similar campaign, MI raised a public outcry against the Philippines’ main migration bureau, the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) when it announced that the Japanese government had agreed to open up two hundred positions for nurse and caregiver “trainees.” MI was outraged by this and issued the following statement:

If the Arroyo administration pushes through with this plan, it means that Filipino nurses and caregivers sent to Japan will receive lower wages than their Japanese counterparts. After their three year ‘training’ stint, it’s likely that many will simply be deported out of Japan given the extremely difficult Japanese language test the nurses and caregivers must take before ‘qualifying’ to work as regular nurses and caregivers (International 2005).

What this statement suggests is that MI recognizes that migrants’ wage rates are not merely dependent on the minimum wage rates set by foreign government or wages offered by employers, but that the Philippine state is accountable in ensuring that migrants get fair wages. The Philippine state must be accountable to migrants whether it means intervening in sites of employment on their behalf or through Philippine migration officials’ commitment to only deploy migrants to those countries where migrants will be guaranteed decent wages.

In 2007, Filipino nurses sat in a New York State courtroom, indicted on criminal charges for patient endangerment because they had walked off their jobs. They left their place of employment to protest low wages and bad working conditions. According to James Millena, a nurse-turned-doctor, “We were brought to the staff house where we stayed for two months for free and saved money we needed when we move to an apartment...I shared the room with other Filipino nurses. We took turns sleeping on the bed and on the floor. It wasn’t comfortable, but I didn’t complain.” He also revealed that he was assigned to handle 100 patients by himself throughout his shift (National Alliance for Filipino Concerns 2007). The nurses however were being countersued by the facility where they worked after the nurses themselves filed suit against the labor recruitment agency that had facilitated their migration to and employment in the U.S.

After their legal strategy stalled, the nurses decided to take the issue nationally through NAFCON (which has links to MI)—to “avoid corrupt politics” and to:

1. help the nurses meet their basic demands— including dropping of all criminal and civil charges against them in the State of New York, seeking compensation for all backwages including unpaid overtime wages, re-suspension of the Sentosa recruitment license by the POEA, and investigation by the State of New York on Sentosa Care LLC operations against existing anti-human trafficking law and the thirteenth amendment outlawing slavery (NAFCON, May 2007).

Mobilizing both in the Philippines and the United States, MI affiliated organizations demanded that the Philippine government intervene on their behalf.

MI’s protest activities in the U.S. included major press campaigns, public forums, an on-line petition generating nearly three thousand signatures (many of whom claimed to be nurses) and even participation in the Philippine Independence Day Parade in New York City. Indeed, MI efforts appear to have been instrumental in getting the nurses’ issue addressed by the New York Times. In the Philippines, MI along with the Alliance of Health Workers, BAYAN Philippines, and the Health
The numerous cases of rights violations resulting to the increase of run-away and stranded OFWs in the Middle East are concrete manifestations to look upon by the Arroyo administration, which has been remiss to its state responsibility protecting OFWs rights and welfare, to come up a policy or link bilateral agreements with host governments advancing and protecting migrant rights and welfare (Monterona 2008).

In the Middle East, run-away migrants, as I discuss earlier in this chapter, are subject to imprisonment if they are found. While in jail, they suffer horrendous treatment. MI contends that the Philippines should step-in to intervene through diplomatic relations with the country of employment. Though we might anticipate that migrants would draw on human rights conventions to assert their rights to humane conditions of detention, they in fact assert their rights as Philippine citizens to protection from foreign states.

While Filipinas are subject to rights violations by their employers or even host governments they can be made vulnerable even when in the custody of Philippine state officials. In 1999, Filipino domestic worker, Glenda Lorio, was murdered at the Philippine Consulate’s Filipino Workers’ Development Center in Hong Kong. The center is supposed to offer Filipina migrants with temporary shelter if they decide, for whatever reason, to terminate their employment contracts before their official end. Workers stay at the Center temporarily as they await repatriation back to the Philippines. In Lorio’s case, she had escaped from an abusive employer and sought refuge at the Center. Yet, due to a lack of security, her employer (the prime suspect in her murder) managed to gain access into the Center where he murdered her.

Lorio’s murderer was brought to justice, but MI activists as well as Lorio’s family, believed that the Philippine government was irresponsible for not having properly secured the Center. According to a Hong Kong-based MI activist,

Simply putting the murderer behind bars will not mean justice for Glenda. Justice can only be served if the Philippine government officials who abandoned her are meted corresponding punishment; if the Philippine government will indemnify the family of Glenda, and if the Philippine government will truly provide free, accessible and adequate protection for the rights and welfare of migrant Filipinos (Mission 1999).

MI activists took actions in both Hong Kong and the Philippines calling for Philippine migration officials to launch an official investigation of the consular officers’ negligence. Ultimately, the government was forced to provide compensation to Lorio’s family including paying the cost of the repatriation of Lorio’s remains and personal effects. Other burial costs were provided for by the government. Additionally, the family was promised financial assistance including scholarship for Lorio’s children. The transnational organizing efforts of groups like MI offer Filipinas and their family members some measure of justice.

Scholars recognize that the labor-sending state’s intervention on behalf of its overseas citizens transnationally can be an important strategy for ensuring that migrants’ rights are protected. Labor-sending states, however, rarely do so because they either do not have the power or the interest to intervene (Maher 2004). Successful mobilizations by MI International suggest that when a labor-sending state is pressured transnationally by its citizens, they do intervene and migrants’ issues can be successfully addressed.

Conclusion

Through MI, Filipina migrants have challenged the limits of national employment laws and international human rights regimes to fight for their rights. MI International is a transnational migrant movement with an influence that spans the globe, but perhaps more importantly, in the “homeland.” MI’s organizations include groups in the countries where Filipinas work, as well as groups in the Philippine whose members are not in fact migrants themselves, but migrants’ relatives and children. What links these organizations globally, and what accounts for MI’s centering in the Philippines, is a shared analysis of the causes and consequences of migration that ultimately displaces Filipinas from their families and therefore, a shared commitment to struggling against the Philippine state. Because the state plays a role in deploying migrants globally, it becomes an immediate target for workers, sometimes even more immediate than their employers or their “host” countries. However, the state is a target for migrants’ demand-making also because it has an especially enduring significance for displaced people. The “homeland” continues
to be the repository of rights and entitlements for migrants who have no rights in the countries where they work. If migrants’ sense of connection to the “homeland” and eventual return becomes the means by which the state is able to sustain the profitability of migration as workers can be trusted to remit their earnings and to come home at the end of a contract, it is also their mooring to the “homeland” that becomes a means by which migrants make demands for particularized rights from the Philippine government.

MI’s organizing, as manifested in their struggles for workers’ wages and human rights highlights an emergent notion of global Philippine citizenship. This global Philippine citizenship proves to be distinct from “post-national” models of citizenship not merely because it is a model of citizenship that relies on migrants’ home states for granting citizens’ claims transnationally, but also, because it is a model of citizenship that emerges out of transnational migrant movements “from below.”

Finally, despite the fact that migrants are forced to leave their homes and families to join the ranks of the most marginalized sectors of the working class throughout the world, the transnational linkages they form in building a migrant workers’ movement in the face of dispersal and displacement is a remarkable example of workers’ resistance to the pernicious aspects of neo-liberal globalization. Through organizations like MI, Filipina migrants forge an alternative space of belonging and collective identification, a transnational community that is simultaneously anchored to the nation-state, even as it is constituted outside of and against it.

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