The Cupola
Scholarship at Gettysburg College

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Faculty Publications

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

12-2018

Negotiating Legacies: The 'Traffic in Women' and the Politics of Filipina/o American Feminist Solidarity

Gina Velasco
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/wgsfac

 Part of the Asian American Studies Commons, and the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Velasco, Gina. "Negotiating Legacies: The 'Traffic in Women' and the Politics of Filipina/o American Feminist Solidarity." In *Asian American Feminisms and Women of Color Politics*, edited by Lynn Fujiwara and Shireen Roshanravan, 198-217. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018.

This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/wgsfac/14

This open access book chapter is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Negotiating Legacies: The 'Traffic in Women' and the Politics of Filipina/o American Feminist Solidarity

Abstract
I wait in the audience as National Heroes, a dramatic vignette presented at the 2006 Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN) performance, [Re]creation, at the University of California at Berkeley, begins with a completely silent, dark stage. I am surrounded by hundreds of expectant Filipina/o American students and their families, eager to witness this annual performance of Filipina/o American culture, which is repeated on college and high school campuses across the West Coast.1 As I wait in the dark, the figures on stage are lit sequentially. One by one, the characters' tear-streaked faces become visible. The main character, a Filipina migrant domestic worker named Baby, cries out, "This is not my country. This is not my home. This is not my family. This is not my daughter. My daughter is far away, sick, dreaming of me holding her in my arms. Yet I hold someone else's child. It does not matter how much my bones ache, or that I am so tired. I will work as hard as I can to pay for her school, and her medicine, and her clothes" (Pilipino American Alliance 2006). [*excerpt*].

Keywords
Asian American feminism, women of color feminism, Filipina/o American feminism

Disciplines
Asian American Studies | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies

This book chapter is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/wgsfac/14

ASIAN AMERICAN FEMINISMS AND WOMEN OF COLOR POLITICS

EDITED BY

LYNN FUJIWARA AND

SHIREEN ROSHANRAVAN

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
Seattle

Copyright © 2018 by the University of Washington Press
Printed and bound in the United States of America
Design by Katrina Noble
Composed in Minion Pro, typeface designed by Robert Slimbach
22 21 20 19 18 5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
www.washington.edu/uwpress

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Names: Fujiwara, Lynn, 1964– editor. | Roshanravan, Shireen, editor.
Title: Asian American feminisms and women of color politics / edited by Lynn Fujiwara and Shireen Roshanravan.
Description: Seattle : University of Washington Press, [2018] | Series: Decolonizing feminisms | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2018011126 (print) | LCCN 2018012662 (ebook) | ISBN 9780295744377 (ebook) | ISBN 9780295744360 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780295744353 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Feminism—United States. | Asian American women—Political activity. | Minority women—Political activity—United States.
Classification: LCC HQ1421 (ebook) | LCC HQ1421 .A85 2018 (print) | DDC 305.420973—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/201801116

Cover illustration © Vesna Asanovic
Cover design by Katrina Noble

CHAPTER 9

NEGOTIATING LEGACIES

The "Traffic in Women" and the Politics of Filipina/o American Feminist Solidarity

GINA VELASCO

I WAIT IN THE AUDIENCE AS *NATIONAL HEROES*, A DRAMATIC vignette presented at the 2006 Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN) performance, *[Re]creation*, at the University of California at Berkeley, begins with a completely silent, dark stage. I am surrounded by hundreds of expectant Filipina/o American students and their families, eager to witness this annual performance of Filipina/o American culture, which is repeated on college and high school campuses across the West Coast.[1] As I wait in the dark, the figures on stage are lit sequentially. One by one, the characters' tear-streaked faces become visible. The main character, a Filipina migrant domestic worker named Baby, cries out, "This is not my country. This is not my home. This is not my family. This is not my daughter. My daughter is far away, sick, dreaming of me holding her in my arms. Yet I hold someone else's child. It does not matter how much my bones ache, or that I am so tired. I will work as hard as I can to pay for her school, and her medicine, and her clothes" (Pilipino American Alliance 2006).

This emotional monologue implicitly references the broader discourse of the "traffic in women," through which Filipina/o gendered labor migration is figured in Filipina/o diasporic culture. As the characters on stage, Baby and Flor, tearfully describe the pain of family separation, the young Filipina/o Americans in the audience are introduced to the contemporary

crisis of the Philippine nation: outward labor migration, in the form of maids, nannies, nurses, and sex workers who provide devalued labor for a global economy. Vignettes such as *National Heroes* teach young Filipina/o Americans about the Philippine nation's reliance on overseas labor migration. *National Heroes* describes the lives of two Filipina domestic helpers working abroad, Flor and Baby. The themes of familial separation and sacrifice structure the narrative of *National Heroes*. Flor must work to support her sick mother and son in the Philippines, and Baby must pay for medicine and healthcare for her sick daughter. While Baby takes care of her employer's child, her interaction with her own daughter is limited to transnational phone calls. The figure of the exploited migrant worker, often represented through the discourse of the "traffic in women," is central to the diasporic imagination offered in *National Heroes*. Through *National Heroes*, the primarily Filipina/o American audience members are introduced to the material reality of the Philippine nation under capitalist globalization, in which migrant workers provide flexible, gendered labor for the Global North.[2]

Filipina/o diasporic cultural production, such as the *National Heroes* vignette, reflects the broader discourses through which Filipina/o diasporic solidarity is imagined. The figure of the Filipina "trafficked woman" is essential to the emergence of Filipina/o American feminism. I argue that two key characteristics of Filipina/o American feminisms are the struggle against the hyperexploitation of gendered Filipina/o labor under capitalist globalization; and an explicitly anti-imperialist framework that foregrounds the violence of US imperialism as the key historical condition of possibility for Filipinas/os in the United States. I consider Filipina/o American feminisms within a transnational frame, as one node in the broader constellation of Filipina/o diasporic feminisms.[3] Galvanized around transnational political campaigns against "sex-trafficking," as well as labor abuses of Filipina migrant workers, Filipina diasporic feminisms critique the gendered effects of globalization and the afterlives of US empire.[4]

From scholarship on gendered labor migration to the work of Filipina/o American feminist organizations, such as GABRIELA USA and Af3irm, the "traffic in women" discourse is central to Filipina/o diasporic feminisms. Feminist scholars in Philippine studies, such as Neferti Tadiar (2004), argue that the figure of the Filipina migrant worker stands in for the subordination of the Philippine nation in the global capitalist order. Feminist social scientists in Filipina/o American studies, such as Robyn Rodriguez (2010) and Ana Guevarra (2010), detail the ways the Philippine nation acts as a

labor-brokerage state, exporting the gendered labor of Filipina maids, nannies, nurses, and sex workers. In both scholarly and activist articulations of Filipina/o diasporic feminisms, the figure of the Filipina migrant worker is often collapsed with the figure of the trafficked woman. Many Filipina/o American activists use the discourse of trafficking to refer to the coercive and exploitative labor conditions that Filipina/o migrants experience more broadly, not necessarily within sex work. From the former Gabriela Network's (now Af3irm) long-standing Purple Rose Campaign against sex trafficking to Filipina/o American organizations, such as Damayan, that focus on the rights of migrant domestic workers, the discourse of trafficking is a central rhetorical and analytical framework through which transnational Filipina/o feminist solidarity is articulated.[5]

Focused on the figure of the Filipina "trafficked woman" in both scholarly and popular feminisms, this essay examines the politics of Filipina/o American diasporic feminist solidarity. I ask how Filipina/o American feminists can participate in transnational movements against the exploitation of gendered Philippine labor under capitalist globalization without reproducing problematic state discourses of the "traffic in women," such as the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which has had negative material effects on the lives of migrant workers.[6] To do so, I put into conversation transnational feminist and Women of Color feminist critiques of the representation of the Third World woman worker with a consideration of the politics of diasporic solidarity.[7] I consider the distinctions and convergences between transnational feminisms and Women of Color feminisms, exploring how each theoretical framework allows for an analysis of the politics of Filipina/o diasporic feminist solidarity, given the pervasive discourse of the "traffic in women," as well as the implications for a broader notion of Asian American feminisms. I ground my analysis in Women of Color feminisms' emphasis on a coalitional politics based on shared political goals rather than an essentializing notion of sameness (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002; Lorde 2010).

In particular, I emphasize the dual positionality of Filipina/o Americans, often perceived as inheritors of US capital, as well as interlocutors between the feminized Philippines and the masculine power of US imperialism and militarism.[8] Situated between US empire and Philippine revolutionary nationalisms, the Filipina/o American feminist is located in the belly of the beast, even as she is an important actor in transnational political movements against US imperialism and capitalist globalization. I write from the

position of a queer, Filipina American scholar-activist who is both deeply committed to and implicated in Filipina/o diasporic feminist social movements, as well as attentive to the risky politics of representation in the traffic in women discourse. I thus situate my scholarly voice within, not apart from, the following debates.

The traffic in women discourse has been a thorny subject of debate in transnational feminist theory for some time. Within the broader sex wars of feminism, along with debates on pornography, the traffic in women discourse has galvanized fierce debates about the legitimacy of sex work versus the forced labor of trafficking. Transnational feminist scholars have critiqued the representation of "trafficked women" as victims, contesting the broader representation of the Third World woman worker in Western feminism as lacking agency and in need of rescue.[9] Indeed, the figure of the "trafficked woman" has been essential to broader transnational feminist organizing, and to Filipina/o American solidarity organizing in particular. As Mina Roces has noted in the context of women's movements in the Philippines, the Filipina trafficked woman is an important figure in feminist narratives that critique the prostitution of Filipina women in the global sex trade.[10] Roces (2012, 66) notes that "the dominant narrative is that prostitution is identified as VAW [violence against women] and not sex work."

Although many Filipina/o American feminist groups have organizational and material ties to women's movements in the Philippines, Filipina/o American feminists must also contend with the effects of the traffic in women discourse deployed by the US state, given the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000. The US state discourse of sex trafficking bolsters distinctions between US citizens and nonnationals, drawing on implicitly racialized and gendered notions of citizenship. Filipina/o American feminists' use of the traffic in women discourse must be situated within the broader US discursive landscape of popular and state discourses about trafficking, which feminist scholar Julietta Hua (2011, xix) argues are constituted by "government documents, media coverage, academic studies, and nonprofit, nongovernmental literatures." She describes the way images of sex workers construct racialized and gendered notions of US national belonging (7). As Hua notes, US "state documents disproportionately represent trafficking victims as immigrants—nonnationals who are outside the normative parameters of national citizenship" (72). While passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) has discursively constructed the "trafficked woman" as a racialized Other within US racial

formations, it has also had negative material effects on the lives of Filipina/o migrant workers in other national sites of Filipina/o transnational migration, such as Japan.

While legislation like the TVPA promises to protect victims, state antitrafficking discourses often limit the transnational mobility of migrants. The material effects of antitrafficking legislation are a key context for situating Filipina/o diasporic feminists' use of the traffic in women discourse. Sociologist Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2008, 137) notes that antitrafficking laws have led to increased migration restrictions specifically for women, often resulting in increased vulnerability and exploitation for Filipina migrant workers. Filipina entertainers in Japan have specifically been targeted as "trafficked persons." In her ethnography of Filipina entertainers / bar workers in Japan, Parreñas argues that the TVPA has led to increased requirements for professional training of Filipina entertainers by the Philippine state and necessitated working with middlemen brokers in the Philippines (137). According to Parreñas, the debt incurred by Filipina entertainers required to undergo expensive "professional" training by Philippine middleman brokers constitutes a form of debt bondage that amounts to coerced labor (157). Thus, the very laws that attempt to prevent trafficking of Filipina/os may actually lead to conditions of forced labor.

State and nongovernmental discourses of trafficking that focus almost exclusively on sex trafficking, equating all forms of sex work with sex trafficking, have negative material effects on the lives of migrant workers more broadly. In contrast to the dominant discourse of sex trafficking, feminist sociologist Kamala Kempadoo (2005, xvii) argues that the majority of trafficking occurs in the hospitality, manufacturing, and service industries, not in the sex industry. However, in the dominant discourse of sex trafficking, voluntary prostitution is linked to sex trafficking, which is framed within a moralizing discourse that Denise Brennan (2010, 143) calls a "sex panic." Brennan argues that the overemphasis on sex trafficking in antitrafficking efforts has resulted in less effort focused on other forms of forced labor (141). For example, in 2004, all but one of the fifty-nine prosecutions brought against traffickers involved sexual exploitation (142). In addition, the TVPA Reauthorization Acts of 2003 and 2005 incorporated an antiprostitution gag rule, which prohibited international NGOs from receiving US funding unless they have a policy explicitly opposing sex work (Chang and Kim 2007, 3). This has alienated sex workers from anti-AIDS/HIV efforts and prevented sex workers from protecting their sexual health, as healthcare

workers and social service providers are required to denounce sex work to receive US funding (Chang and Kim 2007, 15).

In addition, US law enforcement's "raid and rescue" approach to trafficking has led to increased criminalization and detention of immigrants. For example, Grace Chang and Kathleen Kim (2007, 11) note that a 2005 "raid and rescue" case, dubbed Operation Gilded Cage, involved raiding ten brothels in San Francisco, leading to the "rescue" of 120 migrant women. However, after questioning the women and finding out that they were voluntary participants in sex work, and thus not legal victims of trafficking, federal officials placed them in immigration detention. Migrants who identify themselves as voluntary or consenting participants in their migration or employment at any point are deemed ineligible for benefits under T-visas as legal victims of trafficking. US law enforcement's "prosecutorial focus of sex trafficking alienates migrant rights advocates, who fear that antitrafficking work invites excessive prosecution in immigrant communities while ignoring the harm these communities face as exploited workers in domestic work, agricultural work, and in industrial and factory work" (Chang and Kim 2007, 5).

This overemphasis on sex trafficking is characteristic of some Filipina/o American feminist political campaigns as well. For example, Af3irm's Purple Rose Campaign uses a discursive framework that equates trafficking with sexual violence. As one of the oldest Filipina/o American feminist organizations, Af3irm (previously GabNet) has played a significant historical role in the development of Filipina/o American feminisms.[11] Af3irm's website describes the Purple Rose Campaign: "We renew our resolve and push forward as the Purple Rose Campaign evolves to encompass sex trafficking and mail order brides into a nationally-coordinated campaign against sexual violence towards and commodification of transnational/women of color" (Af3irm 2014).

Although Mina Roces (2012, 66) has noted that the discourse of sex work as a form of sexual violence—often equated with migration practices such as correspondence marriage ("mail order brides")—is a dominant narrative in women's movements in the Philippines, this discourse has been critiqued by some transnational feminist and Filipina/o American feminist scholars as moralistic and implicitly anti–sex worker (Kempadoo 2001; Boris, Gilmore, and Parreñas 2010; Brennan 2010). Given the broader debates on trafficking and sex work among both Philippine feminists and Filipina/o feminists in the diaspora, my intention is not to malign the efforts of Af3irm, or other organizations concerned with the welfare of Filipina

sex workers, but to emphasize how, as Filipina/o American feminist activists and scholars, our use of the discourse of sex trafficking may buttress US state policies that result in increased detention, deportation, and harm to migrant workers.

In contrast to a moralistic framework that equates all forms of gendered labor with sexual labor and thus sexual violence, a discursive and material shift is necessary to safeguard migrant workers' rights. Damayan, a New York City–based workers' rights organization, focuses on domestic labor exploitation, not prostitution, in its antitrafficking campaign, Baklas: Break Free from Labor Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery, which is co-organized by the feminist organization Women Organized to Resist and Defend (WORD). Rather than focus exclusively on sexual labor or prostitution, Damayan looks at cases such as that of Dema Ramos, "a domestic worker, who was trafficked to the US by a Kuwaiti diplomat, and labored as a domestic worker in the household, where she was forced to work at least 18 hours a day, seven days a week with no days off, for approximately 69 cents per hour" (Damayan 2016). Although not explicitly framed in feminist terms, campaigns such as Damayan's Baklas antitrafficking campaign are implicitly feminist in that they struggle against the coercive working conditions of forms of gendered labor—domestic labor—that can rightly be considered human trafficking. Indeed, Brennan (2010, 144) argues that migrants' rights organizations are better situated than antiprostitution organizations to "find trafficked individuals and to facilitate migrant activists in taking leadership roles in the fight for better working conditions."[12] Thus, it is crucial to foreground migrant worker activism as an integral component of Filipina/o American feminist activism.

As feminist scholars and activists, we must work toward combating the conditions of exploited and coerced racialized and gendered migrant labor, while remaining skeptical of moralistic frameworks of trafficking that focus almost exclusively on sexual labor as violence against women. Thus, we need to reframe the traffic in women discourse to address the reality of trafficked migrant labor today. As such, it is crucial that Filipina/o American and Filipina/o diasporic feminists think critically about how to avoid the reification of state and nongovernmental discourses of trafficking that focus almost exclusively on sexual labor—to the detriment of other forms of gendered and racialized labor that are trafficked in a global economy—which also increase the risk of detention and deportation for migrant workers who are targeted by the "raid and rescue" practices of US law enforcement. Emphasizing the politics of representation in the kinds

of language and images we use to discuss gendered labor and antitrafficking campaigns is vital to avoid reproducing an antitrafficking discourse that actually contributes to the increased exploitation and precarity of gendered migrant workers, whether they perform sexual labor or domestic labor. Indeed, Parreñas (2008, 166) argues that feminists must reclaim the discourse of trafficking, unburdening this term of the moralistic, anti–sex work framework that characterizes the dominant form of this discourse and remobilizing it to attend to the actual conditions of coerced labor, both gendered and otherwise, that accompany neoliberal capitalism. Parreñas contends, "'Trafficking' is a term that feminists need to reclaim. We need to recognize that the multiple forms of trafficking in existence in the twenty-first century require multiple solutions. Not all trafficked persons are in need of rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Antitrafficking campaigns should advocate for improved conditions of labor and migration. . . . But, rather than facing restrictions that discourage and make difficult their labor migration to Japan, trafficked persons such as the talents whom I met in Japan need greater control over their migration and labor" (166).

Instead of enacting laws and policies that make migrants even more vulnerable to trafficking, such as the criminalization of sex work or increased requirements for training for entertainers, feminists—and Filipina/o diasporic feminists in particular—must carefully consider how our participation in antitrafficking, anti–sex work discourse may actually contribute to greater precarity for migrants performing gendered labor. To do so, it is essential to differentiate dominant state and popular discourses of trafficking from the ways this discourse can be used productively, and accurately, in grassroots political campaigns.

The dominant discourse of sex trafficking as the primary form of trafficking relies on what Galusca (2012, 3) terms a "regime of truth," citing Michel Foucault's work on discourse and power. Although Galusca refers specifically to US investigative journalism's sensationalist covering of sex trafficking in the popular media, this "regime of truth" regarding sex trafficking characterizes state and nongovernmental discourses as well. The figure of the victimized trafficked woman also characterizes the work of international feminist NGOs such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), presenting US journalists and feminist activists as Western saviors of trafficked women from the Global South (Galusca 2012, 2). In investigative journalism and popular media in particular, the "regime of truth" about trafficking is constituted through the production of truth claims, "a complex process whereby empirical claims, based on journalistic

investigations and witnessing, draw on emotionally charged imagery of sexual exploitation and commodification" (Galusca 2012, 5). However, this regime of truth is not limited to popular media; it is reproduced in Filipina/o diasporic and Filipina/o American political discourse as well. The risk of representing migrant workers from the Global South as victims in need of saving by feminists in the Global North haunts Filipina/o diasporic and Filipina/o American popular discourse.[13] How, then, can Filipina/o American and Filipina/o diasporic feminists organize against the extreme exploitation of coerced—indeed, trafficked—forms of gendered labor, without reproducing a regime of truth that relies on a static figure of the Filipina victim of sex trafficking? What politics of representation are necessary to avoid the political pitfalls of diasporic feminist solidarity?

NEGOTIATING LEGACIES, FORGING FUTURES: ARTICULATING A COALITIONAL ASIAN AMERICAN FEMINISM

The legacy of Women of Color feminisms and transnational feminisms provides theoretical and political inspiration for future articulations of both Filipina/o American feminisms and Asian American feminisms. While much of the critique of the traffic in women discourse emerges within more recent transnational feminist scholarship, I find it useful to return to Chandra Mohanty's (1997, 7) earlier conceptualization of the Third World woman worker as a subject position from which to imagine and enact transnational feminist politics and solidarity. Mohanty argues that a focus on the Third World woman worker "is not an argument for just recognizing the 'common experiences' of Third-World women workers, it *is* an argument for recognizing (concrete, not abstract) 'common interests' and the potential bases of cross-national solidarity—a common context of struggle." This focus on the Third World woman worker shifts the emphasis from the "victimhood" of trafficked women to an analysis of how the specific social location of the Third World woman worker "illuminates and explains crucial features of the capitalist processes of exploitation and domination" (7). Although Mohanty wrote this article more than twenty years ago, it is worthwhile to revisit the significance of the politics of representation of the Third World woman worker to Filipina/o diasporic feminist solidarity. A focus on the systematic exploitation of racialized and gendered labor, embodied in the figure of the Third World woman worker, encourages us to envision a pro–migrant worker, pro–sex worker approach to ending labor trafficking. In contrast, the dominant discourse of the sexual traffic in

women positions sex workers as victims within a moralistic, heteronormative logic that is often implicitly anti–sex worker.

Thus, Filipina/o American and Filipina/o diasporic feminist solidarity can be imagined and enacted in struggle against the "regime of truth" of sex trafficking, in order to reconceptualize "Third-World women as agents rather than victims" (Mohanty 1997, 7). An emphasis on gendered labor, or "women's work," rather than sexual exploitation and violence, returns us to Mohanty's notion of the Third World woman worker as a key subject position from which to imagine transnational solidarity. Mohanty describes "women's work," or gendered labor, as a key framework of analysis: "I argue for a notion of *political solidarity* and *common interests*, defined as a community or collectivity among women workers across class, race, and national boundaries which is based on shared material interests and identity and common ways of reading the world" (8, emphasis mine). While it may seem that Mohanty is arguing for solidarity based on a common cultural identity or experience, the common interests she speaks of draw on a shared social location in relation to the exploitation of neoliberal capitalism.

Women of Color feminisms provide a generative framework for considering Mohanty's call for a transnational "common context of struggle." Sandra Soto's (2005) germinal article, "Where in the Transnational World Are US Women of Color?," elucidates the distinctions and convergences between transnational feminisms and US Women of Color feminisms. Soto argues that, despite attempts by some transnational feminists to distance themselves from Women of Color feminisms, "it is *at best* premature to position women of color (as an area of study and/or political collective) in contradistinction to transnational feminist studies and practices" (117). In response to the argument that the figure of the woman of color functions as a homogenized figure of racial and gender difference, Soto reminds the reader of the original charge of Women of Color feminisms, which, rather than eliding difference—whether racial, national, sexual, gender, or class—has been to emphasize the impossibility of reducing women of color to a unitary, uncomplicated collective (119). Indeed, as the original name of one of the oldest academic feminist of color collectives, the Research Cluster for the Study of Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict (advised by Angela Davis), demonstrates, the coalitional political project of Women of Color feminisms has never been an easy or "natural" project.[14] Chela Sandoval articulates the risk of homogenization in efforts toward a Women of Color feminist coalitional politics in her critique of the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference:

> Though empowered as a unity of women of color, the cost is that we find it easy to objectify the occupants of every other category. The dangers in creating a new heroine, a political "unity" of third world women who together take the power to create new kinds of "others" is that our unity becomes forged at the cost of nurturing a world of "enemies." And in the enthusiasm of our empowered sisterhood, perhaps a greater cost lies in the erasure of our many differences. However, if one attribute of power is its mobile nature, there can be no simple way of identifying our enemies or our friends. (1990, 65)

Sandoval's recognition of the uneasy notion of Women of Color feminisms as a collective project, her emphasis that the "greater cost lies in the erasure of our many differences," reiterates a key tenet of Women of Color feminisms. We are not necessarily "natural" allies. Indeed, these differences are key to identifying what forms of coalitional political work can happen under the banner of Women of Color feminisms. In her reflection on the legacy of *This Bridge Called My Back*, M. Jacqui Alexander (2002, 88) cites Paolo Freire: "To wrestle with these questions we must adopt, as daily practice, ways of being and relating, modes of analyzing, strategies of organizing in which we constantly mobilize identification and solidarity, across all borders, as key elements in the repertoire of risks necessary to see ourselves as part of one another, even in the context of difference." Alexander points to the legacy of Women of Color feminisms in not only building intentional coalition across difference among US women of color, but in recognizing the transnational dimensions of solidarity.

Thus, the legacy of key texts such as *This Bridge Called My Back* is not an essentialist view of women of color as a homogenized collective, but rather one that paves the path for forms of transnational feminist solidarity. Alexander's call to "constantly mobilize identification and solidarity, across all borders" is generative for envisioning forms of Filipina/o American participation in Filipina/o diasporic feminist solidarity. Given our social location in the imperial center, the United States, Filipina/o American feminists' use of the discourse of sex trafficking is especially fraught. Within a broader material context in which US law enforcement targets migrant workers through "raid and rescue" tactics, while the effect of the US TVPA in the Philippines leads to greater debt bondage for Filipina entertainers in Japan, we must be careful in the ways we mobilize a discourse of trafficking. The location of Filipina/o Americans in the United States and the increased criminalization of migrants in the

current US political context make it especially crucial to resist US state policies (such as the TVPA) and practices of antitrafficking that lead to greater detention and deportation of migrants while limiting funds for international NGOs that refuse to take a stance against sex work. A radically different discourse of trafficking that focuses on the rights of all migrant workers—including sex workers—is necessary to enact transnational and diasporic Filipina/o feminist solidarity in the face of neoliberal capitalism.

While Women of Color feminisms, and their intellectual descendants, transnational feminisms, are generative models for envisioning Filipina/o diasporic solidarity, Women of Color feminisms' recognition of intentional coalitional politics across differently racialized and gendered social locations is also a key framework for theorizing the relationship of Filipina/o American feminisms to Asian American feminisms. Echoing both Soto's (2005, 119) and Sandoval's (1990, 65) critiques of uncomplicated notions of unity among Women of Color, we must similarly interrogate the inclusion of Filipina/o American feminisms in the project of Asian American feminisms, if we are to avoid the simplistic notions of unity or inclusion that Soto and Sandoval resist. To do so, it is first necessary to consider the broader relationship between Filipina/o American studies and Asian American studies.

As many Filipina/o American studies scholars have noted, the inclusion of Filipina/o Americans into the project of Asian America is an uneasy one at best, due to the enduring presence of US imperialism as the constitutive condition of possibility for Filipinas/os in the United States (Campomanes 1995, 8; Espiritu 2003, 25; Rodriguez 2006, 148; San Juan 1998, 20). E. San Juan (1998, 20) argues that "the chief distinction of Filipinos from other Asians domiciled here is that their country of origin was the object of violent colonization by US finance capital. It is this foundational event, not the fabled presence in Louisiana of Filipino fugitives from the Spanish galleons, that establishes the limit and potential of the Filipino lifeworld." Asian American studies' tendency to focus on notions of inclusion and exclusion through immigration often obscures US empire as the founding historical event for the presence of Filipinas/os in the United States (Chuh 2003, 34). Thus, the incorporation of Filipina/o American feminisms into Asian American feminisms is not an easy or uncomplicated theoretical and political move.

If Women of Color feminisms have taught us to avoid demographic or categorical uses of the term *women of color*, forcing us to think through the intentional use of the term as a form of political coalitional work, can we

use a similar approach to theorize the concept of Asian American feminisms? Filipina/o American feminisms are not categorized within the concept of Asian American feminisms simply due to demographic reasons. Instead, political and intellectual labor must be put into articulating what kinds of coalitional possibility make this a useful and necessary endeavor. What defines the "coalitional moment" of Filipina/o American feminisms as a form of Asian American feminism? A "coalitional moment," according to Karma Chavez (2013, 8), is a moment in which "political issues coincide or merge in the public sphere in ways that create space to reenvision or potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries." From this frame, what kinds of coalitional politics would make the broader rubric of Asian American feminisms key to the goals of Filipina/o American feminisms?

The centrality of anti-imperialist struggle that situates Filipina/o American feminisms within the legacy of Women of Color feminist anti-imperialist critique is also key to envisioning Filipina/o American participation within a broader notion of Asian American feminism. Within the genealogy of Women of Color feminisms, there is a long history of anti-imperialist thought and solidarity with the Global South. From the use of the term *US Third World feminism*, which implies solidarity between US Women of Color and the Global South, to the critiques of US imperialism in *This Bridge Called My Back*, to the more recent political and scholarly work of Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, Women of Color feminisms have long emphasized an analysis of US imperialism as a key tenet of their political critique (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002, xvii; Incite! 2006). Cherrie Moraga (2002, xvi) wrote, in the foreword to the 2002 edition of *This Bridge Called My Back*, "A generation ago, our definition of a US feminism of color was shaped by a late 1970s understanding of colonialism and neocolonialism in the United States, as well as our intra-cultural critique of the sexism and heterosexism in race-based liberation movements." The politics of Third World solidarity that animated earlier iterations of Women of Color feminisms and the explicitly anti-imperialist analysis offered by later iterations—particularly after the start of the war on terror in 2001—are also key elements of contemporary Filipina/o American feminisms, given their focus on the gendered effects of US imperialism in the Philippines and their strong connections with Philippines-based women's organizations.

Likewise, a shift to an explicitly anti-imperialist analytical framework in Asian American feminisms offers a coalitional moment for articulating a common context of struggle with Filipina/o American feminisms, beyond

a simple demographic inclusion of Filipina/o Americans into Asian America. Much like the ways Women of Color feminists identified struggle against US colonialism and imperialism as a coalitional political goal in the 1970s, Asian American feminisms can articulate a similar politics of solidarity with Filipina/o American feminisms, grounded in a shared critique of US empire. Expanding on the foundation of earlier Asian American feminist texts that articulated critiques of transnational gendered Asian and Asian American labor in relation to the US nation-state and global capitalism, Asian American feminisms must foreground US empire, and its relationship to exploited Filipina migrant labor, as key sites of coalitional political struggle with Filipina/o American feminisms.[15]

A CRITICAL LOVE: VISIONS FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND FILIPINA/O AMERICAN FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

As I argued earlier in this chapter, Filipina/o American feminist participation in Filipina/o diasporic political movements hinges on the central figure of the trafficked woman, a sign of the transnational labor upon which the Philippine economy relies in the context of neoliberal capitalism. As such, Filipina/o American feminisms can take political and intellectual inspiration from the legacy of both Women of Color feminisms and transnational feminisms in negotiating the politics of representation in the traffic in women discourse. From transnational feminisms, Filipina/o Americans can return to Mohanty's (1997, 7) consideration of the politics of representing the Third World woman worker. In doing so, we must emphasize the material effects of state and nongovernmental discourses of the traffic in women, taking into consideration the increased exploitation and vulnerability of migrant workers caused by US state laws such as Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Parreñas (2008, 157) argues that the TVPA actually leads to conditions of debt bondage for Filipina bar workers / entertainers in Japan, who are forced to go into debt to finance the increased Philippine state requirements for "professional" training. Similarly, the overemphasis on the moralistic discourse of sex trafficking occludes the actual cases of coerced, trafficked labor, which primarily occur in the hospitality, manufacturing, and service industries (Kempadoo 2005, xvii). By foregrounding the material effects of the discursive construction of trafficking as a "regime of truth," Filipina/o American feminists can interrogate how our political campaigns may contribute to increasing precarity for Filipina/o migrant workers (Galusca 2012, 3). Indeed, a shift to emphasizing migrant workers' rights,

rather than a moralizing discourse of sex trafficking, is often more effective in combating the hyperexploitation of gendered Filipina/o labor (Brennan 2010, 144). Ultimately, Filipina/o American feminist participation in Filipina/o diasporic feminist solidarity means recognizing both our differences—in particular, our specific social location in the United States, given the negative effects of US state antitrafficking policies on migrants both here and abroad—as well as our commonalities with comrades across the Filipina/o diaspora.

A return to the vision and legacy of Women of Color feminisms, in its emphasis on an intentional coalitional politics that recognizes—instead of eliding—difference, is crucial for Filipina/o American feminisms, as well as a broader notion of Asian American feminisms. Filipina/o American feminisms can draw inspiration from Women of Color feminisms' emphasis on recognizing difference, as opposed to simplified notions of sameness within collectivity, in theorizing our participation in both Filipina/o diasporic feminisms and Asian American feminisms. As Filipina/o Americans, we are positioned as the supposed inheritors of US capital, as well as racialized minorities in a white supremacist US state. Similarly, Women of Color feminisms' recognition of distinct social locations within political coalitions and their enduring emphasis on anti-imperialist solidarity provide a theoretical and political blueprint for enacting a vision of Asian American feminisms that can encompass the struggle against US empire fundamental to Filipina/o American feminisms.

Avoiding a simple demographic inclusion model, which would posit sameness based on a notion of similar racialization compared to Asians in the United States, a coalitional politics would require Asian American feminists to articulate an investment in struggles against US empire, an essential element of Filipina/o American feminisms. Similarly, it is crucial to distinguish the social locations of various Asian American groups, as the racialization, access to higher education, income levels, and so on, in Filipina/o American communities can vary greatly from other Asian American groups. Lastly, a return to the Women of Color feminist legacy of internal critique and loving disagreement—the "conflict" in the name Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict—is crucial for both Filipina/o American and Asian American feminisms. Here, I take inspiration from feminist activist-scholars such as Nadine Naber (2012), who critiques Arab and Arab American national liberation movements using a feminist and queer analysis even as she remains committed to and imbricated within these movements. Building on the legacies of transnational and

Women of Color feminisms, our movements must be able to sustain these forms of loving internal critique and debate. There is no moving forward without it.

NOTES

1 Pilipino Cultural Nights (PCNs) or Pilipino Cultural Celebrations (PCC) are annual performances organized by Filipina/o American students at universities across the US West Coast. With budgets in the tens of thousands of dollars, these events bring together hundreds of Filipina/o Americans for a night of traditional Philippine dance, hip hop dance, and theater. See Gonzalvez (2009).

2 This analysis of *National Heroes* draws on my discussion of this vignette in my forthcoming book, under contract with the University of Illinois Press.

3 I use the term *Filipina/o American feminisms* to refer to feminist movements made up primarily of Filipina/o Americans and based in the United States. I include Filipina/o American feminisms within the broader notion of Filipina/o diasporic feminisms, which is not limited to the United States. The organizations that make up Filipina/o American feminist movements often emphasize their connection to the Philippines, focusing on the exploitation of gendered Filipina/o labor and the lasting effects of US imperialism. For example, Filipina/o diasporic feminist organizations have emerged in Canada and throughout the multiple sites of the global labor diaspora of Filipinas/os.

4 There is a wide breadth of scholarship in both transnational feminisms and Women of Color feminisms on the gendered and racialized international division of labor. See Chang (2000), Parreñas (2008), R. Rodriguez (2010), and Guevarra (2010).

5 For a description of the Purple Rose Campaign organized by Af3irm, see the #Not YourFetish campaign (Af3irm 2014). See the antitrafficking campaign of Damayan, based in New York City (Damayan 2016). While Af3irm includes both domestic workers and sexual labor under the rubric of trafficking, Damayan focuses on labor abuses of migrant domestic workers.

6 The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was passed in 2000, packaged with the Violence Against Women Act (HR 3355), intended in part to provide protection for noncitizen dependents surviving abuse. According to Hua (2011, xvii–xix), the TVPA defined the context of trafficking in terms that emphasized the sexual exploitation of women and children, including "prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, and other commercial sexual services." With the TVPA came the establishment of the US state infrastructure, bureaucracy, and resources to address trafficking, including the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking. Hua notes that between 2001 and 2005, an estimated $375 million was allocated to antitrafficking efforts.

7 See Kempadoo and Doezema (1998) for a critique of the traffic in women discourse.

8 I discuss the position of the figure of the Filipina/o American *balikbayan* (the expatriate who returns to the Philippines) in my forthcoming book from University of Illinois Press. I also discuss Vicente Rafael's analysis of the figure of the Filipina/o American *balikbayan* within the Philippine popular imaginary. Vicente Rafael (2000, 208) distinguishes between overseas contract workers and *balikbayans*:

"Whereas overseas contract workers (OCWs) are seen to return from conditions of near abjection, *balikbayans* are frequently viewed to be steeped in their own sense of superiority, serving only to fill others with a sense of envy."

9 While transnational feminists Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (1998) argue that migrant sex work, which is often collapsed under the traffic in women discourse, is a legitimate form of labor that should come with rights and protections, feminists such as Kathleen Barry (1995) argue that all forms of sex work constitute violence against women. Kathleen Barry founded the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW).

10 Mina Roces (2012) describes the broader narrative of Filipina prostitutes as victims, arguing that this has been a powerful narrative for Filipina feminist organizing in the Philippines. Roces notes that, simultaneously, Filipina women's organizations seek to transform prostitutes into political agents, as "feminist women's organizations have been proactive in forging alliances with the former prostitutes and giving them a feminist education through participation in gender workshops and by co-opting them in some activist campaigns" (64). Roces intentionally uses the term *prostitution*, as this is the discourse used in the Philippines, as opposed to the term *sex work*, which has been taken up by many feminists who argue that sex work is a legitimate form of labor (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). I choose to use the term *sex work* to align myself with the latter position.

11 My intention is not to focus my critique exclusively on Af3irm as an organization. As stated in the previous note, Mina Roces (2012) describes how the discourse of sex trafficking, in which sex workers are presented as victims (whether they are voluntarily participating in the sex trade or not), is a rhetorical and political strategy used by many women's organizations in the Philippines as well. Thus Af3irm is not unique in its emphasis on sex work as a form of violence. Despite my critique of the Purple Rose Campaign's framing of sex trafficking as a form of violence, I recognize Af3irm's (and previously GabNet's) significant contributions to Filipina/o American feminisms, such as its campaigns against the negative effects of economic globalization and forms of US imperialism such as the Visiting Forces Agreement (Enrile and Levid 2009, 102). For a history of GabNet, see Enrile and Levid (2009).

12 Other Filipina diasporic political organizations in the United States, such as Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment (FIRE), based in New York City, organize explicitly around women's issues, while also focusing on migrant labor issues. See FIRE's website, https://firenyc.wordpress.com/about-us.

13 In my forthcoming book, I discuss the politics of representing Filipina sex workers in the Filipina American film *Sin City Diary*, directed by Rachel Rivera (1992).

14 Established in 1991 by graduate students and faculty at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the Research Cluster for the Study of Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict (WOC Research Cluster) was supported by funds provided by Professor Angela Y. Davis, UC Presidential Chair from 1995 to 1998, and the Center for Cultural Studies. The WOC Research Cluster held conferences, organized one of the longest-running Women of Color film festivals, and developed and co-taught curricula. Members of the WOC Research Cluster went on to found the activist-scholar

organization Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. As a member of this group from 2001 to 2008, I co-curated the annual Women of Color film festival, coordinated a research symposium, participated in a dissertation writing group, and co-taught a course, "Women of Color: Genders and Sexualities," with Elisa Diana Huerta. See the Research Cluster's website, http://www2.ucsc.edu/woc/, accessed on August 23, 2016.

15 Here, I recognize the history of foundational Asian American feminist scholars who have focused on critiques of transnational gendered labor under global capitalism. See Lowe (1996) and Kang (1997).

REFERENCES

Af3irm. 2014. "Af3irm Marks Milestone 15 Years of the Purple Rose Campaign, Renews Resolve for Justice with Launch of Transnational Work Here and Abroad." Press release, February 14. www.af3irm.org/af3irm/2014/02/af3irm-marks-milestone-15-years-of-the-purple-rose-campaign-renews-resolve-for-justice-with-launch-of-transnational-work-here-and-abroad.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. 2002. "Remembering This Bridge, Remembering Ourselves: Yearning, Memory, and Desire." In *This Bridge We Call Home*, edited by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, 81–103. New York: Routledge.

Barry, Kathleen. 1995. *The Prostitution of Sexuality*. New York: New York University Press.

Boris, Eileen, Stephanie Gilmore, and Rhacel Parreñas. 2010. "Sexual Labors: Interdisciplinary Perspectives toward Sex as Work." *Sexualities* 13 (2): 131–37.

Brennan, Denise. 2010. "Thoughts on Finding and Assisting Individuals in Forced Labor in the USA." *Sexualities* 13 (2): 139–52.

Campomanes, Oscar. 1995. "The New Nation's Forgotten and Forgetful Citizens: Unrepresentability and Unassimiliability in Filipino American Postcolonials." *Hitting Critical Mass, a Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 2 (2): 145–200.

Chang, Grace. 2000. *Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Chang, Grace, and Kathleen Kim. 2007. "Reconceptualizing Approaches to Human Trafficking: New Directions and Perspectives from the Field(s)." *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties* 3 (2): 317–44; Loyola-LA Legal Studies Paper No. 2007-47. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1051601.

Chavez, Karma. 2013. *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Chuh, Kandace. 2003. *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Damayan. 2016. "Baklas: End Labor Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery." Accessed August 23. https://www.damayanmigrants.org/campaigns/baklas.

Enrile, Annalise V., and Jollene Levid. 2009. "GAB Net: A Case Study of Transnational Sisterhood and Organizing." *Amerasia Journal* 35 (1): 92–107.

Espiritu, Yến Lê. 2003. *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Galusca, Roxana. 2012. "Slave Hunters, Brothel Busters, and Feminist Interventions: Investigative Journalists as Anti-Sex-Trafficking Humanitarians." *Feminist Formations* 24 (2): 1–24.

Gonzalvez, Theodore. 2009. *The Day the Dancers Stayed: Performing in the Filipino/American Diaspora*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Guevarra, Anna Romina. 2010. *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: The Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hua, Julietta. 2011. *Trafficking Women's Human Rights*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Incite! Women of Color against Violence. 2006. *The Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*. Boston: South End Press.

Kang, Laura Hyun Yi. 1997. "Si(gh)ting Asian/American Women as Transnational Labor." *positions* 5 (2): 403–37.

Kempadoo, Kamala. 2001. "Women of Color and the Global Sex Trade: Transnational Feminist Perspectives." *Meridians* 1 (2): 28–51.

———. 2005. "Introduction: From Moral Panic to Global Justice: Changing Perspectives on Trafficking." In *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*, edited by Kamala Kempadoo, Jyoti Sanghera, and Bandana Pattanaik, vii–xxxiv. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Kempadoo, Kamala, and Jo Doezema, eds. 1998. *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. New York: Routledge.

Lorde, Audre. 2010. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." In *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, edited by Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, 15–17. New York: McGraw Hill.

Lowe, Lisa. 1996. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mohanty, Chandra. 1997. "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity." In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, edited by Jacqui M. Alexander and Chandra Mohanty, 3–29. New York: Routledge.

Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa. 2002. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Women of Color Press.

Naber, Nadine. 2012. *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*. New York: New York University Press.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2008. *The Force of Domesticity: Filipina Migrants and Globalization*. New York: New York University Press.

Rafael, Vicente. 2000. *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Roces, Mina. 2012. *Women's Movements and the Filipina: 1986–2008*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Rodriguez, Dylan. 2006. "'A Million Deaths?' Genocide and the 'Filipino American' Condition of Possibility." In *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse*, edited by Antonio T. Tiongson Jr., Edgardo V. Gutierrez, and Ricardo V. Gutierrez, 145–161. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. 2010. *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sandoval, Chela. 1990. "Feminism and Racism: A Report on the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference." In *Making Face, Making Soul / Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa, 55–71. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

San Juan, E., Jr. 1998. *Filipino Bodies: From the Philippines to the United States and Around the World*. Boulder, CO: West View Press.

Soto, Sandra. 2005. "Where in the Transnational World Are US Women of Color?" In *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics*, edited by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins, 111–24. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Tadiar, Neferti. 2004. *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.