

READING ANITA HILL'S TESTIMONY VERSUS THOMAS'S CONFIRMATION

By Wilhelmina Orozco

Now that Judge Clarence Thomas has been confirmed Associate Justice of the Supreme Court by 52 versus 48 dissenting senators, I have begun to think how important the whole issue is at present to the cause of the feminist movement and the struggles of women in the USA and other countries, including my own, the Philippines. Why, because women here are in command of resources, facilities and information which are very important components for conducting feminist struggles. Therefore, we, from developing countries, expect a much higher intensity of struggles from the developed countries.

In particular, the results of American women's efforts, the analysis of how they conduct the feminist cause itself are important for us to find out the viability of legal struggles within the democratic system.

Now, the Hill case is a heavy lesson for us to bear as to how to make societies accept the issues that we are, and have been trying to raise. The issue now is no longer whether Anita won or lost the case, but rather what influence this result will have on the consciousness of the greater majority of women - the natural born, the immigrants and visitors like me included.

To my mind, Thomas's confirmation is not to be seen as a defeat of the feminist cause per se in this particular period of our human development but rather a brilliant experience for us to reflect on how we are conducting our struggles for the legitimization of our feminist perspectives not only in this society and the whole world.

So some of the issues surrounding this matter which I have come to reflect are:

- 1.) The affirmative votes for Thomas could signify the need to exert more effort in raising feminist issues in those states where the "aye" senators come from. Maybe more consciousness-raising sessions have to be conducted in those states.

- 2.) Those states, although a greater majority of their citizens may be liberal, could also possess a group of cynics who devalue elections ; so much so that more conservative groups went to the polls during the last elections in order to seat their own like-minded candidates.

- 3.) Corollarily, the same groups could be more enthusiastic during election time so that they now have their own person in the presidential post. The presidency is an important factor for feminists because of its powers. It can exert a clout even in the

selection of key persons in sensitive posts like the Supreme Court where many legal problems of women could be lodged and resolved with finality, as we have seen. Hence, elections in general have to be taken seriously by feminists. I am not aware of the consensus of American feminists on this matter though.

4.) In terms of strategies and tactics, did the conscious women who campaigned against Thomas's confirmation, personally approach the wives of those affirmative-voting senators? I think majority of the senatorial wives are self-effacing and humble. They could always be projecting the macho views of their own husbands. And so, if a bit of campaigning with them had been done, maybe they could have influenced their husbands to think twice their position on the matter. Evidently, building sisterhood even with wives, and daughters of conservative politicians is highly important. To approach them, we need to talk to them as sisters, not as misguided beings who made the wrong choice of partners in their lives.

Having followed through this case on sexual harassment through print-radio and tv media, I must say that this media coverage in itself is one other triumphant score for the feminist cause. Moreover, Anita Hill, the law professor who made this country of 52 states talk, read, listen and debate on sexual harassment, maybe one person even suffered from nightmares about it, or two including his wife, has really created our story - the women's her(his)tory. She has brought out into the open what has long been considered a private, personal problem of women. Her testimonies of the stance which Judge Clarence Thomas took while she was an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission employee now reprove one thing also: that black women can take up the cudgels of feminist struggles once given the opportunity to do so.

Let us remember then that in our struggles for equality, humane development and peace, nothing is lost or won, but each experience is an opportunity for us to reflect on how we are relating with the closest persons in our lives and with the greater society in general to make them, including the men, accept us as we are, as we should be and as we want to become.

Wilhelmina Orozco is a visiting scholar based at the Center for the Study of Women and Society, City University of New York. Last September, she was invited by Dr. Sue Rosenber Zalk, the director, to talk on the feminist literacy project of MAKAMASA, an urban poor-based women's organization in the Philippines at an international symposium on Women, the Working Environment and Sustainable Development in Urban Communities. Being coordinator of that project, Ms. Orozco has written and published books one of which is entitled, **Feminist Objectives in the Third World and Other Writings**. To advance sisterhood and for psychic benefits, she writes the regular weekly column, "Feminist Reflections" for the Philippine Daily Inquirer, a newspaper in her country. Currently, she wants to absorb as many experiences and thoughts on the women's movement in America, especially those concerning Asian American women.

INVOLVEMENT IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

Member, Philippine Women's Research Collective which produced the Alternative Report on the Status of Philippine Women, and helped coordinate the Asian women's over-all report covering the UN Decade for Women, 1975-85. This group produced a series of pamphlets on the same subject.

Coordinator, Toys for Peace Campaign, under the Forward Looking Women (FLOW), 1987-88.

Coordinator, Feminist Literacy Program, MAKAMASA, an urban poor women-based organization in Tondo, Manila

Coordinator of several celebrations of March 8, International Women's Day.

BOOKS PUBLISHED:

Philippine Women in the World of Work, Manila, 1983.

Feminist Objectives in the Third World and Other Writings, Manila, 1985

Economic Refugees: Voyage of the Commoditized, Manila, 1985

Towards Our Own Image (Women and Films), Manila, 1985

Tayo'y Magbasa, Kabaro! (Let's Read Sister!) (Manila: Makamasa) 1990

UNPUBLISHED WORKS:

Philippine Women's Search for Liberation, (Manila: Philippine Social Science Research Council), 1986.

Halinang Bumasa, Kabaro (first literacy primer)

Women's Primer (third literacy primer)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED:

Philippine Delegate, First International Conference of Women on Film and Video, Amsterdam, Nederland, 1981.

Philippine Delegate (Films), Celebration of the End of the UN Decade for Women, Nairobi, Kenya, 1985.

Philippine Delegate (Media), World Congress of Women, Moscow, USSR, 1987.

Philippine Delegate, Asian Women and Media Exchange, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1988.

Rockefeller Humanist-in-Residence Program 1992-93

WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM, HUNTER COLLEGE, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Cover Sheet

Application for Rockefeller
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MAKAMASA, Urban Poor Women's Organization

Project Title and Brief Description 'MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF PHILIPPINE AND AMERICAN WOMEN AND
ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLITICAL DIRECTIONS OF THE
WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF AMERICAN
COLONIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, 1898-1946.

References

(Please give the names and addresses of three persons from whom you are requesting letters of recommendation.)

1. ALICE CARDONA, Assistant Director, New York State Division for Women
2. SYBIL WONG of Women's International Resource Exchange; and
3. SUE ROSENBERG ZALK, Ph.D., Center for the Study of Women and Society, CUNY

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Tondo, Manila

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

A.B. Speech and Drama University of the Philippines, 1969

M.A. Communications Ateneo de Manila University, 1991

TRAINING COURSES:

Vocational Preparation Seminar-Workshop for Out-of-School Youth,
National Manpower and Youth Council, 1975.

Audio-Visual Workshop, Kodak Phils, Inc., 1974.

Paraprofessional Training Course on Social Work and Community
Development, University of the Philippines, 1975

Management by Objectives, SGV Institute, Makati, MMLA, 1977.

Film Studies: Animation, Women's Independent Cinema House,
Liverpool, 1982
Film and Music, Nottingham, 1982
16mm Film Workshop, Four Corners Cinema,
London, 1982

EMPLOYMENT:

Audio-Visual Specialist, National Manpower and Youth Council,
1974-76

Senior Management Specialist, Office of Budget and Management,
1976-79

Faculty Member, Department of Communication Arts, Philippine
College of Commerce, now Polytechnic University of the
Philippines, 1975

Faculty Member, Department of Communications, Maryknoll College,
1988; Miriam College (formerly Maryknoll); 1989

Training Workshops:

Super 8mm Film Workshop, Communications Foundation for Asia, "Best Film Awardee", Manila

Film Editing Workshop, Goethe Institut Scholar, conducted by Karl Fugunt from Munich, Germany, held in Baguio City

16mm Film Workshop, Four Corners Cinema, London, England

Animation Workshop, Women's Independent Cinema House, Liverpool, England

Music in Cinema, conducted by the Nottingham Independent Filmmakers Association, England

Cuban Cinema, Dartmouth College, England

Conferences and Film Festivals Attended:

Third World Women Filmmakers Workshop Conceptualizer and Coordinator, First International Conference of Women on Film and Video, Amsterdam, Nederland, 1981.

Third World Filmmaker Speaker, Oberhausen Film Festival, 1982

International Jury Member, Super 8mm Film Festival, Belgium, 1984

Philippine Delegate, Film Forum, NGO End of the UN Decade for Women Celebration in Nairobi, Kenya

Philippine Delegate to the Mass Media Commission, World Congress of Women, Moscow, USSR, 1987

Philippine Delegate, International Symposium on Women, the Working Conditions and the Environment, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women and Society, City University of New York,

Writings:**Books Published:**

Philippine Women in the World of Work, 1983.

Feminist Objectives in the Third World and Other Writings, 1985.

Economic Refugees: Voyage of the Commoditized, 1985.

Towards Our Own Image, (Women and Cinema), 1985.

Other Writings:

Alternative Media for Relevance: Development, Production and Evaluation of an Alternative Media During the Marcos Regime, MA Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1991.

Mag-Koop Tayo, Kabaro! (Let's Go Coop!) a feminist literacy primer on cooperativism for urban poor women (Unpublished).

Improving Working Women's Lives: A Case Study of the Feminist Literacy Project for Urban Poor Women in Tondo, Manila, 1992.

Huwag Gamitin ang Kamao (Don't Use the Fist!), a primer on Violence Against Women, 1992.

Present Concerns:

Coordination of the Feminist Literacy Program of **MAKAMASA**, an urban-based women's organization in Tondo, Manila.

Coordination of **KAMALAPINA Women in Media-Theatre Collective**, engaged in raising a positive image of women in print and on screens.

"Feminist Reflections," a weekly column in the **Philippine Daily Inquirer**.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF PHILIPPINE AND AMERICAN WOMEN AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLITICAL DIRECTIONS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS
DURING THE PERIOD OF AMERICAN COLONIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES,
1898-1946

Proponent: Wilhelmina Orozco, Independent Scholar

Description of the Project:

Whenever we talk of "Third World" (TW) Women, and "Western" Women, we always think in current economic terms, that the TW are poor and the western women are rich. Yet, located within First World cities are the same TW women who may have acquired already the same economic status of the latter and yet may still be called third world women by virtue of their consciousness. And within the cities of these developing and underdeveloped countries too may be women who exhibit the same kind of consciousness. This situation is traceable to the historical roots of third world consciousness.

That consciousness is rooted essentially in the process of colonization that imposed or is imposing certain dominant images in the minds of third world women. In the case of the Philippines, the process of American colonization from 1898 to 1946 greatly influenced the images of women affecting their own status, roles and participation in the shaping of Philippine history.

This particular study concerns how the colonial media in the Philippines from 1898 to 1946 portrayed Philippine and American women and how these images were related to the political directions of the women's movements and were reflective of the political realities at that time.

Rationale:

The power of media to control the thought processes and to shape the values of the audience has been researched and written about much already. This has been done covering the various types of media from print to radio, tv and film and with different audiences too. Women's studies have also done this, focusing on the ways media shape or produce stereotyped images of women. A few have gone into studying the common roles assigned to women in tv and radio programs defining what is "feminine" or "unfeminine" roles.

In a study by Larry Gross, "Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media," in *Gay People, Sex, and the Media*, (1991) edited by Michelle A. Wolf, and Alfred P. Kielwasser, he briefly characterized the role of the mass media, television in particular in (American) society. Succinctly, he wrote that "the economic political and social integration of modern industrial society allows few communities or individuals to maintain an independent integrity."

He also wrote that "representation in the mediated 'reality' of our mass culture is in itself power...that non-representation maintains the powerless status of groups that do not possess significant material or political power bases." Then, he continued that "when groups or perspectives do attain visibility, the manner of that representation will itself reflect the biases and interests of those elites who define the public agenda. And these elites are (mostly) white, (mostly) middle aged, (mostly) male, (mostly)

middle and upper-middle class, and entirely heterosexual (at least in public).

The assertions of Larry Gross, although pertaining to the current media realities can be readily applied to the historical period under study. The elements he mentioned, of domination-subordination, representation and non-representation, visibility and invisibility reflected in audio-visual images are significant categories for the study which is contextualised within a very obviously unequal political situation.

In the case of the Philippines though, women were barraged with images not only by a dominant male power but those of the 'foreign female power which became the model for them.

Hence, the questions that this study will attempt to answer shall be the following:

Social Roles:

In what ways did the media during that colonial period enforce or reenforce the social roles of women? What roles were these? In what ways did the media project or subvert prevailing images of women? In what ways did they contribute to the subversion of the ethnic or national identities of women?

Americanization:

In particular, did media play a role in the development of Americanized consciousness of the Filipino women? What values about

women did media in the Philippines reflect during the colonial period? Did media abet the colonization process of the Filipino women? If so, how and why?

Similarities/Differences:

Were there similarities or differences in the portrayal of Philippine and American women during the same period? What were these similarities and differences? In what ways did they hasten or abate the colonization process?

Resistance:

Was there resistance on the part of Philippine women to the colonization process? What forms of media did they use to project their resistance? What images of women did they project? What values? In what way did racial color affect the portrayal of Philippine and American women in the media?

Women's Movements:

Was there a women's movement at the time? What issues did they carry and in what way were their objectives reflected in the media? What political directions did the women's movement take and how were these reflected in the media?

General Objectives

1. To show the power of media in reflecting dominant-subordinate roles of women;

2. To show how race affects media portrayal in a colonial or unequal political situation; and
3. To show how colonialism affects the images of the colonial masters and the colonized, in particular, the women.

Specific Objectives:

The study aims at attaining the following general objectives:

1. To show how the media projected the values and participation of Filipino women in the shaping of Philippine history;
2. To show the relationship of the media portrayal of Philippine and American women to the political realities in the Philippines;
3. To show how and the ways the portrayal of Philippine women were affected by the race we belonged to;
4. To show how the media reenforced American colonial policies to bring about the domination and/or subordination of women; and
5. To show the differences and similarities in the visual portrayal of Philippine and American women in the printmedia at the time.

Methodology:

This project will undertake a descriptive analysis of the visual images of women in the printmedia covering books, magazines, newspapers, posters, postcards, photos, leaflets and the like that were published during the American period in the Philippines from 1898-1946. It will involve archival research on the historical

documents of the American government in the Philippines, and publications of both private and governmental nature found in the libraries, museums and galleries here in the United States.

B. Current Status of the Project

From 1985 to 1986, I undertook a study on the Americanization of women in the Philippines, entitled: Philippine Women's Search for Liberation, 1898-1946, sponsored by the Philippine Social Science Council. The study focused on the status and role of Philippine women in this particular period - their colonial education, their participation in the campaign to gain the right of suffrage and their involvement in the anti-colonial struggles.

The study was deemed important as it was written from a feminist perspective. Most often in the past, historians, mostly male, neglected women's roles in their writings, as if to say that Philippine history has been shaped and molded by men alone. Or should they mention women at all, their approach is patronizing if not condescending, and at other times, grossly insulting.

The study highlights the thesis that no critical transition in history ever transpired without the participation and contribution of women.

In this regard, I would like to continue this study this time focusing on the MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF PHILIPPINE AND AMERICAN WOMEN

AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLITICAL DIRECTIONS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF AMERICAN COLONIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, FROM 1898 TO 1946.

C. The Residency Program's Theme and Purposes:

This study is highly relevant to the residency program's theme of "Third World" Women, "Western" Women: Differences, Commonalities, and Cross-Currents of Experience. Few cross-cultural (economic, political) studies of this kind exists, especially those written by and from the point of view of Third World women and covering such period. Existing studies of women in that period consist of accounts of how American women lived during that time in the Philippines; or how Philippine women were educated by the American schoolmarm. Books written of the period focused on the political and economic aspects of colonization. None exists on the media portrayal of Philippine and American women, except for my own study which cursorily tackled Philippine women's images in advertising, the magazines, vaudeville, and cabaret clubs.

Other studies rarely tackle the role of women from colonizing countries in the processes of colonization itself. In answer to this gap, this study points out how the American women were used as models for colonizing the minds of Philippine women through the patriarchal structures built by the American male powers.

When planning, pursuing or outlining the directions of the global women's movements, feminist activists and theoreticians can use this study as it provides the roots of inequalities between women and men, and among women as well. It also renders a background of the domination of Third World women through the creation of colonial and patriarchal structures, in particular through media.