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The Formation of A 'Filipina Feminism': Re-
imagining Filipina Women's Movements in
Conversations with Gabriela over Time

By

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Under the ways of women's movement claim, she is feminist or liberated just because she works in women's movement without waging her own personal battle in her life's life and work. To a woman liberation movement activist, the political must be personal.

- Adul de Leon, a community organizer in Gabriela

Abstract

The women's movement in the Philippines is the product of a long history of struggle and participation in various historical conjunctures. As a nation troubled by a difficult colonial past, it is important to locate the role of women in the quest for independence. As a society characterized by unequal power relations between the masses and the ruling class, it is crucial to place the women's movement in the struggle for democracy, equality, and social justice. As part and parcel of the whole array of social movements in the Philippines, the women's movement developed and responded to the needs of the time. The changes in the nature of the women's movement from one historical period to another were apt responses to the social conditions and to the status of their struggle at different points in the past. Thus, this study explores the history and experiences of Filipina women in Gabriela, the largest women's organization in the Philippines, as they build solidarity and shape women's history over time and across the nation. This paper focuses on Gabriela's shifting gender politics in different political terrains and remakes Filipina feminisms in dialogue with Western Feminism. We use Gabriela's story as a case study to investigate the ways that internal fragmentation and constantly negotiated feminist agendas have affected the remaking of feminism. This paper observes the internal dynamics within women's organizing through a processual lens, allowing us to join voices that unsettle false assumptions around Third World women's experiences and status. The stories we unveil in this study stress the importance of examining the grounded experiences of women's organizing with non-teleological assumptions. The conclusions we draw from the case study urges us to

understand 'Filipina feminism' in its unique positionality which was influenced by anti-imperialism, nationalism, and centered around precarity and multiple temporalities.

Introduction

The unique history of the women's movement in the Philippines-growing out of the nationalist struggle-contributed to international feminism by bringing the women's perspective and needs to bear on shaping the national agenda and attempting to deal with the contradictions of class through a genuine cross-class movement. The characteristics of the contemporary Philippine women's movement - nationalist, militant, and cross-cultural- must be understood in the context of Philippine history, including Filipino indigenous cultures and colonial history, in which we find stories of strong female figures in leading the resistance against foreign rulers. Thus, I venture to look backward at the history of the Filipina women, which is marred by colonialism and imperialism, but fueled by the radical possibilities of resistance.

The Spanish conquest of the Philippines is pointed to as the source of sexist oppression in the Philippines, which destroyed the 'golden age' (Roces and Edwards, 2010) of women's supposedly egalitarian status with men. Sexism is not inherent in their relationships with their male counterparts, but is a phenomenon synonymous with colonization and imperial control. The presence of the Catholic Church was a unique component of the colonial control the Spanish exercised over the Filipino people, but it is the Filipina that have been bearing the brunt of repression by the Catholic Church. To this day, Catholic canon law and ideology directly informs policies pertaining to women's access to family planning resources. Filipina women have little access to contraception, sterilization, and abortion. Catholicism as a repressive machine transcends even class-related issues and has become ingrained in Philippine legal and political structures (Santos, 2004).

Although the imperial conquest of the Philippines brought about a shift in gender roles and class-related hierarchies, it also brought with it a great potential for resistance. Women's participation in affairs dominated by men can be traced back to the Philippine Revolution against Spain (1896-1898) and the Filipino-American War in the years that followed. Gabriela Silang is arguably the first Filipina revolutionary during the initial Spanish conquest of the Philippine Island Ilocos. She is described as 'carrying on the leadership of a rebellion in the Ilocos after her husband's death and was executed by the Spanish authorities' for doing so (Santos, 2004). The largest Filipino political women's organization and the subject of this study, Gabriela, is named for her, as she is widely recognized as the premier revolutionary woman in Filipino history. Filipina women who fought in the battlefield during the Filipino-American war hailed from various parts of the country like Aguada Kahabagan of Laguna, Trinidad Tecson of Bulacan, and Teresa Magbanua of Iloilo (Camagay, 1998). Leonara C. Angeles (1989) argues that the motivations of those revolutionary women were not in "pro-women sentiments," but rather vested in "their deep sense of patriotism or love of country".

During the American colonial period, women's organizations were established as part of the American pacification campaign against the Philippine revolutionaries and later sought suffrage and reforms within the framework of American domination. Women in Filipino elite class led the various women suffrage and reform that were part of a trend to seek liberalization and political rights from the colonial master, a trend which by design failed to call attention to the illegitimacy of the colonial process in Philippine life. It was a subtle brand of political mendicancy and collaboration promoted by the Filipino ruling class which had already made a break with the Philippine revolution. Since that period a US-style democracy and a semi-colonial status were legitimized, women's organizations have taken the pattern of clearly auxiliary

organizations to enhance the status quo: posing as moral guardians of society, promoting inutile reforms, glorifying charity work, drumming up support for the causes of the ruling elite even for the dictatorship that has just fallen, and reinforcing the role of women as wife homemaker and auxiliary to men (WISAP, 1986). Although the U.S. involvement in encouraging the Filipina suffrage movement is an example of ‘the recognition of women’s ability to turn the tide’ (Santos, 1984), those elite women’s organizations with their moralistic elitist and condescending programs can’t address themselves to the progressive and demands of middle- and lower- class Filipino women. In the early 70s the re-emergence of another revolutionary women organization occurred during the period of nationalist and student activism that we now call the *first quarter storm*, when Gabriela’s stories began.

Looking back at the Filipina’s history, the track record displayed a clear commitment to the project of locating the Filipina women- from breaking free of the colonial heritage to a continuing struggle to exercise the power to choose and to have those choices respected (Roces and Edwards, 2010). Furthermore, it also tells us about the unique roots of Filipina women’s oppression, which helps to construct my following analysis on how they have fought against structural oppression and reshaped the national agenda and feminist discourses since 1980s. While the history of the women’s movement(s) can be traced as far back as the Philippine Revolution and the Suffragist Movement, feminist discourses began to be more sharply articulated with the emergence of women’s formations, such as Gabriela. After the late sixties, feminism, to women's organizations and activists, is not just gender ideology but also three-layered identities- organization, movement, and solidarity (Angeles, 2020), as feminists across time share a collective identity that is not essentialist but inclusive, political, “continuously negotiated”, and constantly modified.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I interrogate and move beyond the dominant narratives that depict feminism and introduce my methodology. Second, I rewrite Gabriela's experiences with shifting political terrains from 1984 to 1994 to examine the complex internal dynamics within this organization. Third, I narrate a story of internal fragmentation to analyze the trajectories of changes and argue how Gabriela, under the one label, is constantly morphing while appearing stable. Last, I interrogate how conversations with western and global feminists shape Gabriela's 'stabilities' and remake feminism in the Philippines.

This study aims to ultimately ask: How Gabriela, the largest women's organizing in the Philippines, has addressed internal fragmentation and adapted shifting exterior conditions? How does the stories of Gabriela aid in subverting dominant narratives for explaining why and how feminist movements develop and succeed? How does my analysis of Gabriela complicate its own self-representation- anti-imperialist, nationalist, and feminist? And, perhaps most importantly, how feminism in the leftist organization is iterated and understood in relation to the changing political terrain and outside others?

Literature Review

This study's ultimate goal is to redefine feminism in the Philippines. Thus, 'What is feminism' is a logical question to ask first before moving forward. The scholarly discourse surrounding feminism and other multiracial feminisms in the United States is typically focused not on organization, genealogy, or visibility of these movements, but on periodization as exemplified by the "wave metaphor." The Western feminists support the use of the wave metaphor for discussing periods of high-visibility feminist activism in the U.S. history. Such wave metaphor is used discreetly to categorize different historical feminist movements and then to admonish those movements for their shortcomings related to class, sexuality, and most notably

race. Furthermore, embedded in this metaphor is a narrative that constructs a hegemonic feminism that erases or diminishes the existence of other kinds of subversive feminism knowledge. While most of the scholarly discussion on the wave metaphor regards the divide between the waves and the ideological differences between the waves, those authoritative voices create and maintain an assumption of feminist history that only one group is responsible for feminisms in multiple and concurrent forms and in its own time period.

To be more specific, the first wave is largely understood as only concerning suffrage, and deeply problematic for its racist overtones. Although the key words for first-wave feminism is women's suffrage, its actual efforts and influences were much wider than that. Women who did not attend formal women's rights conventions from 1820s to 1850s also fought for sex equality in their own communities and participated in politics in innovative ways. Radical Quakers, African American, revolutionary refugees, and immigrant working women, whether or not they embraced the term 'feminism', were passionately committed to racial equality, utopian communalism, Indian rights, health reform, land reform, a religious freedom (Hewitt, 2010). The second wave is well-known for its principles: 'Sisterhood is powerful' and 'the personal is political,' and is criticized for focusing solely on gender the focal point. However, many militant activists or black liberation movement leader during the second wave actually spoke up for women's right, struggle against sexism, and real freedom (Hewitt, 2010). Their stories swayed the hegemonic feminist ideology that 'real' feminists were those who worked exclusively with other women, but rarely have been considered part of second wave history. Furthermore, Multiracial feminists in the second wave also encouraged to extend from 'the personal is political' to 'the political is personal' (Thompson, 2010), which means you don't have to be part of a subordinate group to know an injustice is wrong and to stand against it. The third wave

grows out of poststructuralism and is known for multiculturalism, identity politics, and intersectionality. Nonetheless, the wave metaphor has lent itself to a reduction of the rich and varied contributions of this work various contributions through modular and reductive representations of paradigms such as intersectionality (Fernandes, 2010). What's more important during the third wave is a move from the wave model of feminism to a history rooted in living memory, which is not simply a symbolic strategy for honoring the contributions of previous generations of feminists, but an alternative approach to understand temporality, politics, and subjectivity.

'Third-wave' feminists raised the question of time and historical narratives which points to a non-teleological approach and the political and intellectual significance of history memory. Abandoning the wave model of feminism is a question of remembering that successive generations of feminism can never move beyond past histories through a simplistic attempt at creating a clear temporal break from the past. Alexander's eloquent discussion of the transformative power of memory (Alexander, 1985) provides us with a deeper possibility for producing a richer and more transformative narrative than capturing the complexities of feminist intellectual and social history. Helen Shulman Lorenz (2002) articulated the theory of 'reframing and restoration' in *This Bridge Called My Back*, which continually questions or ruptures naturalized borders and looks for restoration of prior histories. Built on Alexander's and Lorenz's work, instead of understanding the history of feminism as a series of discrete waves, I interpret it as lineages of living memories that contain both the past resources and the potential breakthroughs of the future. I pay attention to the moment of an individual or social entity in dialogue with others at a critical and creative edge where they can see themselves as both 'frame

and rupture' (Lorenz, 2002). In this way we can decenter the conceptions of feminism and really heal for women in protest against conversations designed to marginalize and pathologize them.

The examples of historical Filipina women's movements and the reread of Western Feminism is where my argument begins: Filipina Feminism has come about as a response to anything but hegemonic feminism¹. Since the end of the Philippine-American war, there has been a massive proliferation of women's movements in the Philippines. Arguably, the reason why social movements, including women's movements, continued to proliferate after independence is due to the threadbare economic and political structure left in the wake of colonialism. These movements include communism, feminism, liberal reform, and militarism. Common to each is anti-imperialism in their ideologies and demands for social change. Most of these women's movements remain anti-colonial or anti-imperial at their core, though the woman question is frequently brought up along with the nationalist question (Lacsamana, 2012). The unique roots of Filipina women's oppression as noted above underscore the asymmetrical gender relationships within anti-colonial movements. Revolutionary women were assigned gender specific roles within the organizations. The obvious gendered division of labor within anti-colonial organizations highlighted the ideological schisms between women's liberation and national liberation. Even within leftist organizations who were deeply cognizant of reproductive and productive labor as manifestations of imperial oppression (Lacsamana, 2012), women's liberation was continually subsumed into an overarching class struggle.

Contrary to the narrative that suggests multiple feminisms as a response to hegemonic feminism, it should be noted that leftist feminism in the Philippines actually have more in

¹ I did not suggest that hegemonic feminism doesn't exist. Rather, I understand feminism alternatively using non-teleological approach than the wave approach. I avoid ways of interpretation that contain hegemonic knowledge and construction.

common with other Marxist feminisms in their qualms with the subsuming of the woman question into the class question. Delia Aguilar (1981) points out that some Marxist feminists mistakenly prioritized ideology to draw attention to the oppression of women, while paying little attention to ideological constructs that both reflect and intensify the specific conditions of women's subjugation. The claim that sex and age discrimination are subsumed into proletarian issues by the oppressive power of the bourgeoisie (Marx, 1848) suggests that women's issues have always remained as there has been a dialectical class oppression. Further, the subsuming of the feminist struggle into the "larger" struggle against capitalism ignore the fact that even proletarian men benefit from the free reproductive labor that is typically provided to them by women. Put simply, the primary dialectic indicated by Marx and Engels is not enough to answer the woman question (Hartmann, 1979; Aguilar, 1981). Aforementioned revolutionary women of Filipino anti-colonial movements frequently asserted this idea. The dual dialectical hierarchies: patriarchy and capitalism were simultaneously critiqued in Filipina women's movements (Santiago, 1995; Lacsamana, 2012). Thus, I argue that feminisms in the Philippines have little to no relationship with the constructions of hegemonic feminism, but rather have a distinct relationship with anti-colonialism and the sexism that has become embedded in its social movement. Furthermore, leftist women's movements are in a different light than the widely accepted narrative that says feminism begets feminisms; they respond simultaneously to class and sexist oppression, rather than to the hegemonic feminist core. Gabriela, the largest women's organization after the Marcos regime carries on the leftists' commitment on nationalist, anti-colonial, and anti-sexist project. Though there have been many political change and multiple feminisms since the end of the Marcos regime, women's movements in the Philippines are

continuing the same anti-imperial struggle in its many different forms today as they were fifty years ago.

It's important to note that Gabriela, the cross-class coalition of Filipina women, do not represent a political agenda or one feminism for all Filipina women, but a particular positionality. Even within Gabriela, the conceptions of feminism are constantly morphing and reshaped in dialogue with the changing political terrain and other feminisms. In this paper, we would see that the turn of feminist thought in Gabriela from being based on solidarity, which stipulates a body-soul commitment to a particular brand of feminism, to affinity, which allows for the forging of changing strategic alliances has helped ease the process with which Filipina women appropriate the concept of feminism to their struggles. As Casal de Vela (2012) argued, the present day emphasis on feminisms as a set of theories and practices based on diversity, incorporating multiplicities and contradictions enables it to work on the basis of shifting alliances and short-term agendas, while keeping committed to the vision of gender justice. The story of fragmentation within Gabriela would confirm and consolidate Filipina women's efforts on defining feminism using their own constant negotiated agendas, terms, and perspectives.

I build on these critiques, which underscore the urgency of an alternative theory and method to memory and history of feminism, by studying a cross-class coalition of women's organization in the Philippines. This paper traces the ways Gabriela has made discourses around feminism their own, combining them with anti-imperial, indigenous, and other organizing traditions. In essence, this paper aims to complicate the argument that feminism in the Philippines, especially feminism in leftist organizations, is precipitated from a colonial relationship, and is a response to imperialism, which includes sexism and classism under its umbrella. It aims to look at the complexity of the intersections where race, class, gender,

sexuality, religion, and educational status cross, rather than addressing gender politics as the major focus.

This paper charts new ground by departing from scholarship on Philippine women's organizing which has tended to overlook Gabriela's internal dynamics and shifting political agendas. The case study of Gabriela could add more nuance and different perspectives on third world women's narration and definition of feminism, considering its unique history and national struggle. Furthermore, by using a processual approach to delve into Gabriela's shifting agendas, this paper affirms the indeterminacy and constantly change processes of social-movement organizations, departing from traditional analyses which focus, teleologically, on the strategies and quantifiable outcomes of organizations. The significance of this paper lies not solely in the uncovering of the details about Gabriela's past and evolution, but rather in the suggestion that closer observations into non-Western feminism can strengthen global women's studies scholarship.

Methodology

This paper is developed from annual reports, conference speeches, community texts, and second-hand interview transcripts. I closely investigate archives to reproduce Gabriela's experiences within changing political terrain and to rebuild Gabriela's memories on feminist struggle. There is a difference between 'the nostalgic yearning for some return' and a living memory that enables us to remember what was contained in the past and what could be transformed to the future. In addition to a chronological analysis of Gabriela's experiences, I intentionally pay attention to the interconnected, in-between moments within Gabriela that serve as patchy landscapes² instead of the outcomes and contributions of Gabriela. This paper uses a

² Shifting assemblages within an organization which remake the collective memories through non-teleological, indeterminate, unplanned encounters with the outside world (Tsing, 2021).

processual approach, an approach that presumes that everything in the social world is continuously in the process of making, remaking, and unmaking itself (and other things), instant by instant (Abbott, 2012). The central topic in a processual framework is the problem of stability: given the permanent fact of change, how does continuity emerge and persist? The processual account views the relations among social groups as empirical and contingent, which helps me to examine the ‘inter-level’ relations- relations between leaders and groups, relations among different ideologies, relations among various groups in Gabriela. Instead of only examining how internal conflicts and collaboration of Gabriela led to the consequences in women’s organizing, this paper captures constantly negotiated decision-making and agendas across time and space. It is those constantly shifting decision-making processes that tells us the secrets of stability and longevity. Thinking through precarity changes social analysis and avoids teleology. Centering on patchy stories and interrogating the problem of stability enables me to unfold on-the-ground in detail and reproduce the untold experiences of Filipina women reshaping feminist discourses.

Meet Gabriela

In the late 1960s, the Philippines was deeply troubled by deteriorating social, political, and economic conditions that related to trade liberalization, oligarchy, and the continued neocolonial economic and military rule of the United States, as the US war in Vietnam escalated (Rocamora, 1994). In this context, the national democratic movement (ND movement) rose to become the largest and most influential left-wing organization in the Philippines from the late 1960s to its split after the early 1990s. The rise of the ND movement paralleled national liberation movements in the Third World after WWII (WISAP 1989). Post-colonial “nationalism” includes a series of political goals that go beyond the establishment of a capitalist

nation-state and merely a form of political independence. For anti-racist leftists globally, “nationalism” is also regarded as an intrinsic part of the class struggle against capitalism, a system regarded as a breeding ground for imperialism and “national” oppressions (Bois, 2007).

After the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the next historical date was the founding of the New People's Army (NPA) in 1969, which split from older left-wing organizations. These groups formed a coalition called the National Democratic Front (NDF), which helped to inspire the larger ND movement. Influenced by Maoism, the ND movement’s political framework emphasized the “semi-feudal” character of Philippine society. Additionally, CPP leader Jose Maria Sison put forth formative critiques of U.S. imperialism, as well as “bureaucrat capitalism”, a term referring to oligarchic interests’ capture of the Philippine state for self-enrichment (Rocamora, 1994). For decades, feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucratic capitalism (elite capitalism), as the main sources of oppression and the target of resistance would have great currency among many communities of the Philippine’s left, including Gabriela.

In 1970, an important precursor of Gabriela appeared; Filipino students helped to form MAKIBAKA, the first women’s organization developed from the ND movement. MAKIBAKA advocates freedom from foreign and feudal oppression as prerequisites for women’s liberation. Its members initially tended to treat women’s oppression as a mere derivative of class exploitation, but MAKIBAKA dwindled because it asserted that women's empowerment would come only when the class revolution had been won, which proved to be ambitious, but perhaps, untimely. Through the 1970s, Filipino women organizers who tried to draw attention to gender oppression were often labeled “divisive” (Aguilar and Aguilar-San Juan, 2005). These women were no longer satisfied with being placed at the margins of the ND movement, and started to

hold forums about organizing autonomous women's movements. Many of them had earned their place in the movements as cultural workers; others had undergone incarceration as political prisoners (de Jesus, 2005). But it was their immersion in the movements that gave them the confidence to express dissent without feeling vulnerable to the charge of 'divisiveness'. When Marcos declared martial law³ in 1972, MAKIBAKA was driven underground and joined the New People's Army's armed struggle. The women of MAKIBAKA answered the call for revolutionary underground work for urban and rural basic masses organizing, for armed struggle. The pressures of martial law on the National Democratic movement caused the disbanding of the still young and struggling MAKIBAKA. But the tradition that the women's organization has left behind- that of addressing the national issues from the particular point of view of women and conversely that of addressing a woman exploitation and oppression in its entirety as Filipino as members of a class and as woman- remains.

Not long after this, Benigno Aquino Jr. was assassinated. This event sparked the outrage of members of the middle class, who took on the streets in unprecedented numbers. The ensuing opening up of what is now referred to as a 'democratic space' led to the mobilization of a wide variety of sectors constituting Philippine society (de Jesus, 2005). Shortly afterward, a semiautonomous women's movement developed and flourished. On October 28th, 1983, women made their voices heard against the Marcos regime's intense political repression and the blatant violation of human rights. More than 10,000 women took to the streets in protest of the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr., and for the other victims of the regime. Pioneering women

³ President Marcos claimed that martial law was in response to the "communist threat" posed by CPP and the sectarian "rebellion" of the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM). While opposition figures accused Marcos of exaggerating these threats, using them as a convenient excuse to consolidate power and extend his tenure beyond the two presidential terms. Martial law was remembered for the cruel abuses of human rights, extrajudicial killings, tortures, 'disappeared', and incarcerations.

leaders like Nelia Sancho and Tecla San Andres Ziga consolidated into one voice to commemorate International Women's Day on March 8th, 1984. Gabriela, a national coalition of women's organizations in the Philippines, came to be. At its inception, Gabriela was interested in harnessing women's power for the anti-Marcos dictatorship movement. The formation of Gabriela stood out with their attempts to expand the purview of social movements, emphasize the equal importance of women's liberation struggles, and transcend the primacy of class in progressive discourse. Gabriela and other women's organizations after 1980s helped effect a change in Philippine left politics, where dominant organizations went from resisting any references to gendered violence as 'divisive,' to incorporating agendas around the latter and women's status as legitimate areas of political concern. The assertion of a distinct feminist agenda integral to national liberation was a response to the limitation of prevailing tendencies and perspectives within the male-dominated social movements.

The building of a women's coalition, Gabriela, across ideological divides at critical historical points was unprecedented. Within this entity, there are four women's groups- National Democrats Women's Group (ND), Social Democrats Women's Group (SD), Socialists Women's Group, and Equal Feminists Group. NDs pay attention to the participants' varied subjectivities and distinct experiences – whether taking into account gender oppression, race, indigenous rights, or conditions of flexible labor. Their goal is to achieve a radical, 'revolutionary' reconfiguring of the state. SDs are more leaning towards 'gender and development' (GAD)⁴ perspective that includes a materialist analysis of neocolonial, class, and race inequalities, alongside patriarchy. Socialists Women's Groups push the emphasis on material and class

⁴ GAD seeks to achieve gender equality as a fundamental value that should be reflected in development choices and contends that women are active agents of development, not just passive recipients of development, but has been criticized for emphasizing the social differences between men and women while neglecting the bonds between them and also the potential for changes in roles.

exploitation further. They critique ‘Women in Development’ as it focuses on ‘gender mainstreaming,’ overlapping with other Third World feminists’ GAD analysis⁵. They further situate women's liberation within the context of the struggle against foreign domination and class oppression. The deepening of the socialist perspective had imbued the national democratic struggle. Equal Feminists Groups, compared with other groups, are those who have more class privileges and narrowly focus on relations between men and women, between public and private sphere.

When those four major groups came together and fought for the anti-Marcos dictatorship movement, Gabriela was envisaged as a genuine coalition of forces of women. In the first year of Gabriela, those political and ideological differences were recognized yet disavowed to derail the efforts toward the building of women’s power (WISAP, 1989). Dorothy Friesen (1989) wrote in a report of the women’s movement in the Philippines that:

By providing a venue for poor, middle, and upper middle class women to act together, GABRIELA is developing a remarkable ability to include more diversity and to channel women's energies (p.678).

Activists and scholars like Friesen had high expectations for this coalition as they believed that Gabriela is hammering out new ways of exposing and dealing with women's oppression in the crucible of day-to-day experience. Members and leaders in Gabriela were full of enthusiasm and energies, firmly confident that this particular combination could bring them unprecedented success. Two leaders in Gabriela, Nelia Sancho and Maita Gomez, asserted that the experience and grass-roots exposure made them convinced that ‘a cross-class women's organization was crucial if women were to successfully change their conditions.’ (WISAP, 1986) Years of

⁵ Gabriela’s criticisms of gender mainstreaming were not a rejection of state reforms for gender equity wholesale – but, similar to Third World feminist challenges to WID, a caution about its blind-spots, and deployment as a tool to co-opt more liberatory agendas against gendered violence. But at the same time, GABRIELA has paralleled and even combined such efforts with opposing neoliberal imperial ‘development’ and militarization.

dedication and commitment working on issues of economic justice within the nationalist movement earned Sancho and Gomez the trust and respect of the movement's decision makers. In fact, these women and groups did earn success to a certain extent. Despite the reality that women's organizing in the Philippines is formed and fragmented along ideological lines, the various progressive women's groups are able to unite on certain issues, especially those that most concern women.

Between 1984 and 1986, Gabriela organized three Violence against Women (VAW) campaigns, which closely connected the exploitation of women to national oppression. It also provided directed services to marginalized women including counseling services to women survivors of VAW, medical missions, free clinics, relief and rehabilitation in times of disaster and capability building training on women's health and women's rights. During 1986 to 1990, with 'democratization' after 1986, National Democrats organizations and movements lost their hegemony over the Philippine left. Gabriela, especially ND members, started to realize the necessity of transforming from National Democrats activists to real 'feminists', and aimed to form a unique definition of Filipina's feminism. They envisioned low-income women's leadership in advocacy for domestic violence legislation, organized more community campaigns on gender equality within and without the household, and built advocacy groups to speak against the objectification and commodification of women (Peredo 1992). During 1991 to 1994, Gabriela experienced the collapse of communist party-state, the unraveling of CPP, and the rapid growth of trans-/inter-national NGOs. Leaders consciously renewed their commitment to mass-based movement-building in reaction to changing political terrain and global contexts. Gabriela gained more connections with transnational activists and NGOs, and organized more campaigns regarding wider issues of reproductive health, militarization, the economy, the environment, and

indigenous women (WISAP, 1989). Slightly learning towards NGOization, Gabriela shifted its agenda to focus more on women's solidarity in the Third World and even global contexts.

From this general story, we see that different women's groups in Gabriela had ideological contradictions, but we also see a community constantly changing across time. According to the processual lens, we see different women's groups in Gabriela as entities, and their ideological contradictions or overlapping as events. Event includes all its facets by making them into a community of fate (Abbott, ch2). Facets are skills, emotions, past experiences, future imagination or hopes, etc. Thus, members in Gabriela, carrying their assembled facets, are subject to a community of fate, which changes (sometimes overlapped and replicated itself) from fighting for anti-Marcos dictatorship, fighting against both state and gender violence, advocating for grassroots/peasant women's rights, building a sense of 'global sisterhood', to organizing service-based, NGO-based activities to address gender issues. We see a common desire to expand and consolidate its influence, a wish for better living conditions for lower-class women, as well as an 'imagination' for women gaining equal rights in a wide range of spheres. What is not seen is how competition, division of labor, ideological contradictions among women's groups in Gabriela have facilitated or constrained their journey towards a community of fate. The understanding of internal dynamics could be partially achieved by understanding the configuration of relationships between/among the individuals in Gabriela. I will further examine this in what follows.

A story of fragmentation- Internal conflicts and fragmentation

Different political ideologies have always mediated and reshaped the power configurations and decision-making within Gabriela, and resulted in various strategies and feminist thoughts across time. Gabriela's emergence marked a transitional moment in Philippine

women's organizing: early members controversially proclaimed themselves 'feminists,' but appropriated the term for themselves and imbued it with their own nationalist content. It appears therefore that unlike in the West where a feminist is anyone who fights for women's rights regardless of political views, the term 'feminist' has taken on a radical leftist connotation and origins, as in the case of other Third World women activists who consciously distinguish their ideology from that of Western feminism. However, the treatment of gender issues within Gabriella as part of the National Democratic movement was not smooth in its inception. Asymmetrical gender relationships within the movement become more apparent, as women were assigned gender specific roles within the organizations. ND organizations in the early 1980s were willing to involve women's organizations in the fight against dictatorship, but only due to the bonus of women effectively attracting funding (Hilhorst, 2003). However, NDs in Gabriela did not realize that they were taken advantage of, at least not in the first two years. At that time, Gabriela saw the inclusion of women along with class issues as both a framework for organizing and for advocacy. Gabriela's main backbone included low-income women's groups such as SAMAKANA (urban poor women), Amihan (peasant women), and KMK (women workers), which all allied with the ND movement. Other women's groups, such as PILIPINA, AWARE, the CAP-Women's Desk, verbally acquiesced to this close connection to the left and prioritized NDs' activities over VAW campaigns and other service-based activities (Santos, 2010; WISAP, 1989). 'The Filipino Women's Manifesto,' a mimeographed sheet written by Gabriela's NDs leaders prepared for the Women's Protest March of October 1985 speaks poignantly of the national crisis and the women's crisis, linking them both to the problems of foreign intervention, economic inequality, and the particularities of the women's experience.

'Our nation is in crisis. We are the housewives who can barely make ends meet...We are the peasant women who do not have access to basic social services...We are the urban poor who

live in extreme poverty...We are the women workers who suffer in sweatshops...We are the marginalized women who are forced to eke out a few pesos selling whatever we can...We are the migrant women workers who are degraded as entertainers...We are the women professionals who in every field, are limited to subordinate positions...We are the street demonstrators whose legitimate protests are met with water cannons and truncheons, tear gas and bullets...We are the martyrs who have been arrested, tortured, raped and murdered. And we say, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.' (The Filipino Women's Manifesto, 1985)

Beginning with 'national crisis', the text points out that Filipina women not only knew because they lived this crisis every day, but also that this crisis exacerbated the specific forms of oppression that they had to contend with as women. The stance of Gabriela, as expressed in this manifesto, is intimately connected with the way in which it began as parcel of the nationalist movement. Clearly through those powerful, poetic sentences we see that 'woman question' is subsumed into many of the concerns of the nationalist movement. Women across classes, in NDs' eyes, could work together to recognize the distinctiveness of women's oppression and channel women's energies to influence the future of the country. The distinctiveness of women's oppression was considered and analyzed as a singularity in terms of class, status, and cultural background. However, the complexity and incompatibility within different women's groups were underestimated, or strategically ignored by NDs in Gabriela.

It is true that Gabriela and its NDs have been active in the nationalist campaigns which emphasize national concerns and have brought a certain panache to these efforts, but cross-class and political ideology-mixes cannot proceed without the recognition that organizational orders within Gabriela should be non-hierarchical. Put another way, although the purposes among different women's groups in Gabriela were sometimes aligned and overlapped so that they were able to achieve a common agenda on certain issues, their purposes (or organizational orders) should not be prioritized or determine each other in a hierarchical way (Abbott, ch2). One women's group's perspective should not be coercive or be imposed on other women's

groups to work on certain issues, otherwise internal conflict would overshadow the progress they'd made.

The first turning point is the 1986 snap presidential elections. Gabriela split over the issue of participation in this election. The results of the snap election led to the popular belief that the polls were tampered with and that electoral fraud occurred. NDs in Gabriela actively participated in different debates and campaigns to express aversion and evoke deeper investigation for the voting results. They were aligned with the Catholic Bishop and other ND organizations in asserting that it is Filipinos' serious moral obligation to 'correct the evil' (WISAP, 1989). They protested in the 'People Power' revolution which took over the streets of Metro Manila and helped oust Marcos. During that time, Gabriela devoted almost all her energy to the boycott of Marcos. NDs in Gabriela insisted that addressing the inequality and violence against women was only possible through fighting against national and class oppression. Maita Gomez, the chairperson of Gabriela and the representative of NDs, expressed this insistence on the 1986 International Women's Solidarity Conference:

'Our consciousness about women's issues in the Philippine society must start from a general anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-classist stance. We must continue to be on our guard because a strong fascist bloc associated with the dictatorship, though at the moment seemed to be toe the liberal line, still persists in power.' (WISAP, 1986, p37)

In this statement, leaders in Gabriela made it clear that equality with men is meaningless if we can only be equal with them in poverty and oppression. They were trained and told to think in this way during their encounter and experience with the larger ND movement and Marcos' martial law in the late 1970s. Some of female NDs involved in the leadership of Gabriela had been in the militant nationalist movement for many years before they began to focus their energies directly on the oppression of women (Roces, 2004). Sr. Mary John Mananzan,

another chairperson of Gabriela, presented a speech on the 1986 International Women's Solidarity Conference, which could be interpreted as a questioning of Gomez's ideology:

Like our forerunners in the Katipunan, we simply saw the need for women to be involved in National Democratic movement. We were drawn by the goals and objectives that represent the most urgent demands of the Filipino people: human rights, economic and civil rights, social justice, democratic structures and policies and an end to foreign domination... But addressing the distinctness of a women's movement out of the national democratic struggle, has just begun the task for us. (WISAP, 1986, p98)

Sr. Mananzan expressed her concern of Gabriela overemphasizing national democratic struggle but ignoring the uniqueness and integrity of women's issues. NDs like Gomez took their shared understandings and experiences into Gabriela, while forgetting that other women's groups did not share the exact same feelings as those women's groups came from different political experiences and contexts. More importantly, NDs failed to realize that only involving women in ND movement or subsuming women's issues into Nationalist concerns does not truly empower Filipina women or address women's issues. Core groups of articulate and educated women like Sr. Mananzan were critical of the 'instrumentalist' view of the Filipina women's role in the political struggle. They view that if indeed the women's movement would not seriously tackle women's oppression as women, then why create a separate women's liberation movement at all?

After hurling charges and counter-charges of manipulation against each other (Aguilar, 1995), from the original 41 member groups, at least half decided to leave and NDs, those closely identified with the National Democrats organizations, remained. Some SDs left because they were fed up with the political ideological divisions within Gabriela; others, especially Equal Feminist Groups left because women's issues were not being adequately addressed, and because Equal Feminist Groups failed to bear the radical sense of so-called

women's coalition at all (Anastacio, 2012; Huibin, 2016). In the same speech at the 1986 International Women's Solidarity Conference, Sr. Mananzan concluded:

The third part that I would like to raise is importance of unity in sisterhood. The last things that have happened in Gabriela have been unfortunate. I hope, I really do hope that this convention would heal the wounds that have been inflicted in some way upon women's associations, not by really willful malice but by the many factors that go into human relationships. We cannot really say we have sister hood if in the midst of conflicts cannot come together and tackle our differences. (p88)

As a result, even though Gabriela was built as a coalition of various cross-class women's groups, we can see that from 1984 to 1986, Gabriela's activities, processes of operation, and attitudes toward external changes were guided by a single ideology; that of the National Democrats.

Between 1986 and 1988, Gabriela faced multiple challenges from government repression and from others within their own coalition. Externally, with 'democratization' from 1986 onwards, the Aquino government outlawed peoples' organizations and crushed their initiatives for social reforms. The government capitalized on its democratic or liberal fact to try to isolate communist rebels (WISAP, 1989). Gabriela was labeled as 'communist sympathizers' by the government, and became the targets of systematic harassment ranging from malicious propaganda, denying its press releases, to being surveilled by a nationwide spy network and espionage group. Internally, Gabriela faced the challenge of sharpening and deepening feminist issues as opposed to merely integrating women's issues into its dominant class-oriented political perspective. Adul de Leon, the vice-chairperson of Gabriela Socialist Women's Groups, drew on the necessity of deepening feminist issues and defining 'Filipina Feminism' on the 1989 International Women's Solidarity Conference:

'The Philippine women activist, who was first a National Democratic activist, must now become a feminist. The Philippine Women's movement must develop its feminists: feminist cadres

who can defend its own women ideology within the liberation movement, integrate with the grassroots urban and rural feminist front liners who will speak up for Philippine women in ruling class enclaves and on the streets.' (WISAP, 1989, p44)

Such statements echo the assertions of some feminist groups who insist that the feminist agenda is as valid an agenda as the class agenda, and that the above assertions are not recognizing that the women-focused agenda is as political and ideological as the agenda of other social movements which generally still put a premium on class issues. Women in Gabriela primarily identify with their sectors or ideological blocs, and some regard the “women question” as a secondary and marginal struggle. With the limited interaction and exchange, that is the disconnection between women’s groups and women in the movements, the political and discursive space of these formations become constricted, diminishing their capacity to generate a sharper, more comprehensive agenda that encompasses the different dimensions of the women’s as well as the overall progressive struggle. Therefore, the focus on “typical” women issues is viewed as a necessary stage for a women’s movement that, at the time, was breaking away from and seriously confronting “a very male-dominated discourse.” At this juncture, there seems to be a shared sense that critical reflection and “re-visioning” need to be done. A corollary question can be posited: should not mixed and nationally broad in scope organizations seriously consider the positioning of the feminist agenda in their main programs of actions?

There was a tendency to move from a National Democratic organization to a Filipina Feminist organization. More implicitly, I contend that there was a shifting commitment from left revolutionary politics to more reformist politics which intertwined with ‘prefigurative’. Gabriela's positionality as a Filipino feminist organization didn't change overnight. In fact, Long-time Gabriela leaders remembered the International Women’s Conference in Nairobi in

1985 as a turning point in its instrumental approach towards a more feminist perspective. One of them said in 1994: "when the Gabriela delegation came back from Nairobi, the talk was all about Global sisterhood and women's oppression (Hilhorst, 2003)." From 1985, leaders started to realize the necessity of distinguishing Gabriela from ND movement. That is to say, there is a difference between an association of women and a women's association with a feminist perspective. I argue that the crux of the matter is that a women's association with a feminist perspective is one which is interested in or one concerning itself with the essence of women's oppression as women and not only with the manifestations of such oppression. And such feminist perspective came only lately in Gabriela. After experiencing the loss of major members the previous year, women's groups maintained constant communication and formal meetings, and had generally agreed to dig into women's inequities from the ground up. As a matter of fact, from Adul's speech, we can sense that Filipina women's ideology was respected on its merits and experience of struggle as indigenous, independent, and as meritorious as other earlier Filipina women's ideologies. And this speech also implied that Gabriela started to refine alliance work among its middle classes and working classes. As Adul suggested, the pacing of the political work cannot be overemphasized. Gabriela cannot consider the women's struggle as something isolated from the context of social liberation but should not wait until society is liberated before addressing itself to the women's issues. Political activists are overly impatient to root conscientizing to political ideology, but women's movements must be given the luxury of time to dwell on the personal because this is the key to women's unity and women's action (WISAP, 1991).

Socialist Groups urgently demanded that Gabriela to focus on the ground-building, mass-based work to prove the worth of Gabriela (Gabriela National Report, 1988). Their local

organizing was directly related to the extent that local leadership had developed collective capacity to respond to women's issues like VAW. For example, Gabriela's strategies to VAW spanned those geared at law enforcement and encouraging state intervention; those cultivated grassroots-women leadership; as well as those focused on building material and social support for survivors, intervening with perpetrators without involving the state directly, and changing community attitudes (WISAP, 1989). The former group of strategies could be characterized as a 'reform' politics focused on influencing the state; and the latter, as a 'prefigurative' politics invested in building sources of power in parallel to, and to some extent alternative to, the state. In Gabriela's on-the-ground interventions, though, reformist and prefigurative strategies are intertwined (Huibin, 2016). Tactics aimed at involving the state have influenced the course of potentially 'prefigurative' politics; they are often mutually reinforcing. Behind all these major strategies and agendas, it is actually Socialists Women's Groups in Gabriela that acted as the organization's main power and ideological force (Sobritchea, 2005). If indeed socialist feminism can be the unifying ideology for women in Gabriela and women in other social movements, mixed political blocs or parties, there is a need to sharpen the discourse for ideological and political unities among women in Gabriela.

Before 1986, NDs in Gabriela did not seek incorporation into nation-state, but a radical, revolutionary reconfiguring of the state. Gabriela and other ND organizations hold political goals that ultimately include insurrectionary visions of a different regime – of taking state power. The revolutionary goals of struggling for larger structural change and remaking a fundamentally different kind of state has been questioned after both external suppression and internal fractures. After 1986, Gabriela started to 'make' power from the ground up as noted above. Rather than simply 'making' power, Gabriela offered a prefigurative political vision

of community self-reliance. Gabriela differed from NGOs and other service-oriented women's organizations, not only because it sought to empower survivors of gendered violence to become organizers – but because through doing so, it potentially could foster poor communities' collective self-reliance and autonomy. At the same time, local organizers in Gabriela still endeavored to wield 'the law' and state policy as clout. The influence of state policy, which serves as a container for power dynamics where it exercises dominion, cannot simply be wished away by those desiring other worlds. Rather, I contend any strategies with 'prefigurative' potential are constantly in dialectical relation to, not independent of, state power. Being labeled as 'communist sympathizers' and suppressed by government, Gabriela had other means of leverage both apart from and in collusion with the threat of state involvement: arranging escapes, influencing social networks, increasing community intervention (Huibin, 2016). Notably, much of this potentially 'prefigurative' power did not necessarily center on restraining the perpetrator directly, but on supporting the survivor's separation, by changing relations of power surrounding them to assert sovereignty.

The immediate consequences of government repression to Gabriela were a decline in collective organizing activities and a shortage of funding. The indirect consequences took another two years to be in a 'concrete' shape and above the surface. But during the next two years, things unfolded themselves, and consequences permeated every aspect of the organization. Gabriela realized that the agendas for 'development' under Aquino's 'democratic' government were actually outlawing people's initiatives (WISAP, 1989). After witnessing human rights abuses continuing to escalate under the Aquino government, Gabriela was divided again in the debate over whether it should cooperate with the state. In the course of disagreements, some SDs (e.g., AWARE) wishing to support Aquino left Gabriela in late

1987; several ND leaders (e.g., Amihan, SAMAKANA) described the fissure as a 'middle class fallout' (Taguiwalo, 1993a) reflecting class biases. Those NDs left as they increasingly found civil society collaboration with the Aquino government hard to reconcile with escalating political killings and militarization. Moderates or centrists such as Equal Feminists' Groups had no mass-base and were only coming in as individuals or members of small groups, but were elected to top posts/leaders. However, their political background failed to maintain close contacts and coordination with Socialist Groups. Some of those Equal Feminists' Groups left and joined Aquino's 'Gender In Development' planning.

Eventually, a 'concrete' shape of the long-run consequences was another round of member loss and socialist Groups' ideology as the single yet weakening ideology in Gabriela. While there is no consensus yet regarding socialist feminism as a frame, there appears to be one common realization shared by both members of the women's movement and women in other social movements: the importance of grappling with the intersection of class and gender, probing the intricate interconnections of patriarchy, poverty and powerlessness. There is still a lot to be done, but apparently more and more formations seem to be compelled and bent on taking up the challenge. Indeed, there was a tacit agreement among the research participants on what the women's movement means: at the barest minimum, any group of women coming together to respond to women's issues is already a movement, if not part of the Philippine women's movement(s) – if indeed the different streams can be reduced to a single unified whole.

It seems like parts of the past experiences of split were replicated in this new process of events. Or to put it in other way, past lives were revitalized in the present and individual and group memories were iterative. There is an assumption, across all forms of historicity,

that the future will more or less be like the past as well as the present. Those certain levels of replication in Gabriela's experience undermined the contingency of the future, but this did not imply stability about consequences of events. We can find that the replication of a trajectory by a repeated process of reconstitution has the property of producing a relative constancy (that is, the split) despite the contingency of every present. The situations of ideological contradictions or split over groups can be foreseen, and the characteristics of past orders were reproducing themselves simultaneously and redeployed in different scales and contents. All those led to an interesting conclusion. Gabriela was the somewhat accidental confluence of a name, a group of people, and various possible trajectories. But this contingency also meant something more than randomness. Different women's groups gathered together to build a coalition, which was determined by their common beliefs towards gender equality, and their common experiences of oppression (despite the degree or the contexts), and the self-unfolding process in these 11 years produced a systematic changes and splits among those women's groups. The fragmentation within Gabriela along political ideological lines and traditions, that are nonetheless progressive despite their minor differences, may be viewed by some as counter-productive to the forging of unity within the movement itself. On the other hand, it may turn out to be even healthier for the women's organization at this stage of its development. A pluralist context in organizing and ideological orientation can become the ideal incubator of feminist ideas on social liberation. This is also an indication of the oft-repeated line that a community of fate of women's experiences exists despite their being divided still along class, ideological, and sectoral lines.

The essential mark of the fractures (the split of Gabriela) is its contagion over time and the consequences of reconstitution. As the population of Gabriela was changing, possible

outcomes of Gabriela were changing, leaders and leading ideologies were changing, but did these combinations of changes spun out some more lasting, if not stable, things such as the nature of changings, the organization itself, or the name ‘Gabriela’? The so-called stability is contextual. It’s unstable in a sense that no single ideology remained through time; it’s unstable in a sense that members in Gabriela come and go over time; it’s unstable in a sense that external events facilitated or constrained the community of fate. It’s stable only in a sense that Gabriela, this name and this coalition, have remained alive. However, fragmentation does not equal to inconstituency, and coalition does not equal to continuity. It would be wrong to assert that the women’s coalition is weak. Within the divided, fragmented, and de-politicized movement, a meaningful ‘women in politics’ intervention still would be valuable to push. It is these divisions, these fragmentations, the refusal of the women’s movement to fall under a monolithic structure and dogma, that is its strength.

Interaction and conversations with Western feminists and global feminists

The previous section tells a story about the fragmentation and fracture of Gabriela. I analyzed the interactions and contradictions among different women’s groups and the immediate vs. long-run consequences of them. The analysis led to a question about the stabilities and longevity of Gabriela. This section explores how Gabriela’s conversation with external organizations shaped and reshaped Gabriela’s feminist discourse and political agenda.

As noted, starting from 1986, Gabriela carried a mission of defining feminism and deepening feminist issues. Actually, defining feminism in the Philippines is always a tricky and complicated issue. Many women and activists in the Philippines avoid or reject the ‘feminist’ label because of its association with Western, hegemonic feminism (WISAP, 1994). The strategic “non-feminist” framing is unique within Philippine gender relations, left movements,

and political culture. To be more specific, Filipina feminists in the 1980s and 1990s faced two-pronged criticism—from the religious right over reproductive freedom claims and for transgressing conservative gender norms, and from the nationalist patriarchal Left for not concentrating on class-based, anti-imperialist nationalist projects. (Dañguilan 1997; Tanyag 2015, 2017. Angeles 1989; Pagaduan 1989.) During 1986 to 1991, the Aquino government strongly advocated and implemented the ‘Women In Development’ plan, introducing a lot of foreign funding to domestic women's organizations including Gabriela. Though women’s groups within Gabriela have had disagreement on accepting foreign aids to build mass-based and community projects, Gabriela’s gender analysis has still drawn on western feminist influences carried by the foreign aids. In fact, at the 1985 NGO Women’s Forum in Nairobi, Gabriela delegates was exposed directly to the different currents of feminism in the world, and started to participate in more exchanges expanding their “knowledge and practice of feminism” (Angeles, 1989). For example, one leader in Gabriela, Taguiwalo, reported back to her members in 1986:

‘Such links made GABRIELA more appreciative of Western feminist efforts to view women’s subordination beyond Marxist economic and cultural explanations... The persistence of patriarchy in countries which have had successful revolutions... underscored the need to ensure... gender concerns are treated distinctly from other national and class issues.’ (CWR, 1995)

If I take a snapshot right here, it’s fair to say that at this moment, Gabriela let itself to (partially) fit into the feminist ideology which was developed by western feminists. During the mid 1980s, increased attention to ‘women's empowerment’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’ by international governing bodies, states, and burgeoning NGO sectors helped establish what Richa Nagar has termed a global ‘gender hegemony’ (Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006). Nagar described this gender politics, which dominates international development policy, as an approach to combating gender inequality that typically serves global capital and empire. For instance, she

argued that global feminism usually frames ‘poor women’s empowerment’ around a focus on issues like VAW (narrowly defined) and HIV/AIDS – rather than rising commodity prices or health cuts (caused by privatization). Funding agencies prioritize initiatives for microfinance and perhaps women’s cooperatives, but shy away from promoting unionization or land reform. This kind of ‘gender mainstreaming’ in the neoliberal era directs our attention to certain facets of gendered violence to the exclusion of others, with a tendency not to take on structural violence caused by neoliberal globalization and imperialism. With the introduction of foreign aid and gender mainstreaming ideology, Gabriela enjoyed (if not indulged) an unanticipated, short-lived pleasure of finding like-minded international friends. Gabriela was satisfied with this situation-getting funds to develop its own influences and at the same time exchanging ideas with confidants in totally different contexts. During the late 1980s, the principle ‘Global Sisterhood’ in the U.S women’s movements was well-known in many Third World countries. Cross-racial struggle in the U.S at that time made clear the work that white women needed to do in order for cross-racial sisterhood to really be powerful. By the same token, culture, imperialism, class, and sexuality make the concept of a monolithic ‘Filipina women’ indefensible. When Gabriela was exhausted by internal conflicts and disagreements and was questioned her founding idea of cross-class coalition, the concept of ‘Global Sisterhood’ and the conversation with international feminists enabled Gabriela to regain confidence. This confidence gave Gabriela a sense of self-affirmation to strengthen the cross-class core concept and move forward instead of disintegrating internally.

Through publications and forums, Gabriela leaders helped convene local women’s organizations to define their own Philippine feminist agenda. For instance, Liza Maza helped to form the Laya Women’s Collective, which began publishing Laya Feminist Quarterly in 1992

(CWU 1999). Nelia Sancho, an early secretary general of Gabriela and former beauty queen, defined feminism in the Philippines in 1990,

As 'varied collective political actions of women trans- and post-nationalist activists who, as signifying public agents, challenge the public-private dichotomy embodying gendered hierarchical and sexualized binary thinking that disadvantage, discriminate against, or oppress women and undervalue their work, pay, or potential, especially when this dichotomous thinking is translated into public policy.' (WISAP, 1994)

In 1993, De Vera celebrated Gabriela's advancement of a distinct gender politics at the grassroots level, "not simply as particularizations of general issues" (WISAP, 1994). Rather, women were "developing their own struggles," defining "their own needs" and "ways of envisioning the future" (WISAP, 1994). Furthermore, she argued "this self-definition" fed low-income women's leadership in "people's struggles of all kinds, whether for class, national or gender interests" (WISAP, 1994).

These transnational exchanges illustrate how liberal and global feminist discourses have historically been more institutionally available to Third World women's organizations. However, since 1994, the conversation and exchanges with global feminists and women's organizations changed and resulted in Gabriela's divergence from them. Nelia Sancho (1994) pointed out that:

'In spite of this however we are compelled to deal with the UN, we are not saying that the UN has become the main arena of struggle nor that it will really significantly push women's agenda for liberation. We actively participate in the various conferences being hold such as the forthcoming World Conference on Women in Beijing because we cannot allow the games we have made to be eroded... we are also concretely talking about taking every opportunity to register the strong presence of women as a political force to governments and other agents of imperialist powers.'

Sancho suggests that Filipina women should not overlook the fact that the UN decade of women have significantly placed women issues in the international agenda, but nonetheless should not forget that the UN is primarily an instrument of the world superpowers. She also implies that UN is playing a key role in co-opting the struggle for women's liberation by

attempting to shift the arena to within the walls of multilateral institutions. However, supporting the leadership of only a handful of women whose political positions do not genuinely challenge the inequalities in the world order, it attempts to put the resolution of those issues related to women's liberation in the hands of governments which are largely responsible for putting the situation of women in a sorry state. Thus, it becomes a political necessity for Gabriela and Southern grassroots women to register their leaderships in the global women's movement.

In contrast to Nairobi, at the UN Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, Gabriela clearly differentiated itself from Western imperial feminism (Hilhorst, 2003). MAKIBAKA was also in Beijing, distributing a pamphlet warning against the gender trap, which portrayed the Beijing Platform for action as an imperialist scheme for coopting the world's women, excluding the possibilities for empowerment of women through revolution (Hilhorst, 2003). Seeking like-minded allies, Gabriela and MAKIBAKA led a rally against Hillary Clinton's speech at the NGO Forum to encourage 'putting anti-imperialist back on the agenda of women's international solidarity (Hilhorst, 2003)'. Besides these opening, formal events, informal conversations and indications in local community also confirmed that Gabriela rejected the 'feminist' label and articulated global feminism's marginalization of anti-imperialism. During an interview with Delia Aguilar in 1994, Delia was asked about the influences of western feminist discourse on Filipino women:

'Many US feminists and feminist organizations came and lectured to Filipino women about how, for example, we should not keep blaming colonialism for our problems as women. The message is that, move on, already; you just don't know it but it's your man who is the problem' (de Jesus 2005).

This bothered Filipino women during that time, and they found themselves waging a wholly new educational struggle. Women in Gabriela began reading feminist theory such as works by Bell Hooks in a different way, and started questioning and writing about how

feminist theoretical production in the West could adversely affect Third World women's movement. One affiliated center for Women's Resources in Gabriela published critical analyses of new 'Gender-sensitive Legislative Reforms' economic implications, and spoke out on political limitations of gender mainstreaming, particularly its complicity with neoliberal restructuring and imperialist exploitation (Santiago, 1994). Leaders, especially younger-generation leaders who came to Gabriela after 1990, explicitly denied the concept of 'Women in Development' which was the main agenda supported by some older-generation leaders back in 1986. Younger leaders argued that although it helped focus attention on women's issues and deploy a problem-centric approach to better articulate and address issues of gender violence and reproductive health that have traditionally been ignored by its National Democrats Groups, it grossly ignored the fact that the underdevelopment of women was not simply a question of male domination; but more importantly, the poverty of women was rooted in a world order that is based on profit.

Again, if I take a snapshot right here, we can clearly see that Gabriela has sobered up from the previous joy, and the younger-generation leaders have denied the previous cooperation and communication with the international confidant, as well as the previous joy. Rather than saying that this 'sobriety' is due to Gabriela's deep, internal self-reflection, it is better to evaluate the 'sobriety' as a consequence of younger generations of women entering Gabriela. Younger generations seemed to be no longer bothered by the exhausting ideological divide. They had vague or even no memories of martial law under Marcos' dictatorship; they did not directly suffer from the government repression during the Total War period; they were untouched by the debilitating debates and ideological contradictions that have divided older members in Gabriela. They realized that Filipina women must

prioritize the totality of structural violence that affected people's lives, rather than subordinating these to an agenda that defines gendered violence narrowly. Such a redefinition of feminist politics has implications regarding how we trace feminist genealogies; Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty argue that Third World feminist genealogies should be situated in "complicated overlapping historical matrices of left liberation struggles, contemporary nationalisms (in spite of feminism's contestatory relationship to nationalism), and the very presence and intervention of the state itself". It is those younger generations that, relatively easily, deny Gabriela's previous statements and lead the whole coalition into a new stage. Gabriela's shifting gender politics have been influenced, but not defined by global feminist discourses. Younger generations asserted that Philippine women's movements must be located in the international arena and the international networking of feminists everywhere. They tended to rely on vast international networks in their advocacy work and interact with the world as transnational entities.

At conferences of international NGOs, Filipinas were often approached and asked to be chairs of panels or rapporteurs because they spoke English, were theoretically informed and extremely organized, and had the patience for NGO work (Friesen, 1989). In this sense, exporting 'Filipina feminism' at conference meetings was a unique strategy for younger generations in Gabriela to speak and act against imperial feminism and 'gender mainstreaming', rejecting the hegemony feminist ideology while at the same time setting their own feminist agenda. Anti-imperialism was first proposed by ND Women's Groups, but was tentatively ignored by Socialist Women's Groups when they were busy addressing women's specific issues and deepening feminism. Now the younger generation brought anti-imperialism back onto Gabriela's agenda. In disavowing what Gabriela's feminist agendas

seem to be, younger generations alter what they reanimated and thus also transformatively entangled the act and agent of 'anti-imperialism' with what is cited. Exporting their feminism and Filipina women's manners at conference meetings did not explicitly overemphasize the anti-imperialism agenda, nor completely ignore the anti-imperialism agenda. The citationality of 'anti-imperialism' practices constitutes an attempt to both individuate from and defer to Western feminists, to be like but not to be older ND Women's Groups, to come close to exterior feminist ideas of alternate value but not too close.

The conversations with outside others along with a citational gesture seems to tell us some of the secrets to longevity. In a world where increasing porous borders were manifold and multiplied, and individual and collective identities were constantly shifted, Gabriela redefined their political agenda and gender discourse on the brink of unraveling, sometimes grabbing external support to build confidence and to maintain durability, sometimes denying parts of past-self and reaffirming other parts of past-self by injecting fresh blood. Gabriela used external influence and generational changes to forget certain characteristics of itself (agendas, goals, beliefs), but also deployed the inner thrust of external influence and generational change to generate a habitual idea and a prospectivity that this coalition should keep going. It does not matter whether the memory, the habitual idea of the past experiences, is 'accurate'. But perhaps, the 'reality' that Gabriela still remains alive is just a symbolic fact that does not change.

Conclusion

This paper examines Gabriela's experiences on women's organizing from one historical period to another, from struggle against anti-dictatorship to struggle against classism and sexism, from addressing internal fragmentation to adapting shifting exterior

conditions. Using archival analysis and a processual approach, I find out that internal conflicts and ideological contradictions within Gabriela have never been solved. There was always a single ideological tendency at different moments, but it changed over time. Leading ideology in this coalition constantly shifts as members come and go. The longevity of Gabriela was not indicative of stability, but the mutual force of the memory and the imagination upon the thick 'present'. The story of fragmentation is rather a story of adaptation, a process of discovering that precarity and changes were the center of organizing and the essence of coalition. Solidarity does nothing to do with stability but with constant negotiation and sacrifice. Ideology shifting in this coalition also parallels with its shifting political strategies- from revolutionary politics to reformist politics intertwined with prefigurative politics. Such social movement strategies are important because of their potential to have a deeper community impact without activating state violence (or bolstering the state's capacity to reify class, race, and gender hierarchies). Gabriela organizers demanded state intervention while creating prefigurative power outside it. Their experiences illustrate fascinating struggles to carry out all these endeavors, rather than to choose exclusively between them. The story of fragmentation upholds that Gabriela is not just an anti-imperialist and nationalist organization, but has transformed overtime as a result of internal conflicts and fragmentation. Beyond its self-representation, Gabriela has been many things under different political terrains.

The conversation with outside others is rather a story of freedom, a process of liberating women from capital, and an alternative representation of feminist thought than a teleological historical narrative of progressive. Gabriela's constantly shifting agendas and feminist thoughts challenged the Western assumptions about agency- which is often viewed

as individual freedom and valorizing individual autonomy working against the structural or normative constraints. Through denying their previous beliefs, citing previous political agendas but infusing with new meanings and purposes, approaching to external support while also keeping a certain distance, Gabriela opened up the new potentials or avenues, in which they can maintain its iterative memory and strengthen its community of fate.

Tracing the internal dynamics and conversation with external entities, this paper joins voices that unsettle false assumptions around Third World women's experiences and status. It reminds us to look into the grounded experiences of women's organizing with non-teleological assumptions. It also urges us to understand feminism in the Philippines in its unique positionality which was influenced by anti-imperialism, nationalism, and centered around precarity and multiple temporalities. The case study of Gabriela underscores that feminism in the Philippines is not a response to United States constructions of hegemonic feminism, but rather has a distinct relationship with anti-colonialism and the sexism that has become embedded in its social movement. As a previous leftist women's movement before 1986, Gabriela's organizing and political agendas rejected the widely accepted narrative that says feminism begets feminisms. Gabriela responds simultaneously to class and sexist oppression, rather than to a constructed hegemonic feminist core. Understanding Filipina Feminism as a response to the patriarchy and the sexism of colonization serves to critique and preclude the notion that Filipina Feminism comes as a response to hegemonic feminism. That is to say, posing Filipina women's movements against the sexism of anti-colonial movements aids in dismantling an ideology that says feminisms cannot exist without a hegemonic feminist center. After 1986, Gabriela adjusted to more reformist and prefigurative politics and developed feminist consciousness from bottom-up, instead of

being held back by the National Liberation Movement Strategic Plan. Feminism in turn became the site of a host of ideological problems not elicited from women's movements. In redefining feminism in the Philippines over a decade, the stories and voices of multiple feminist groups became temporarily homogenized or effaced in an attempt to create a grand narrative of feminism that was conducive to knowledge production and the demands of times. Younger generation of Filipina women came in Gabriela, rejected the grand narrative of 'Filipina Feminism', and helped Gabriela to further recognize their uniqueness. Women's movements in the Philippines against two waves of colonialism, religious oppression, and masculinist politics within nationalist movements make up a rich history of women's resistance in the Philippines, all of which have little to do with hegemonic feminism. Filipina feminists' nationalist and anti-colonial motivations are testaments to the complexity of what galvanizes women's movements to begin. And younger Filipina feminists re-bringing this complexity on table demonstrates the necessity of ongoing resistance. Thus, these two stories of Gabriela remind us that feminism is both a history of ideas and a search for tools of agency and women's empowerment. More broadly, the future of Third World feminisms must be assessed in the face of challenges emanating from fundamentalist forces and from those rooted in the internal dynamics of women's studies. There are underlying commonalities of women's live experiences across nations and cultures, which enable us to universalize such experiences and talk about feminism, just as we can assimilate those of a region to designate a regional, for example, a Third World feminism, or a Filipina Feminism. However, third-world feminists must keep in mind with the changes in their social realities or advent of newer theories and concepts. For, there is no universal

prototype; defining feminism must be rooted in country-specific and time-specific social dynamics.

I wish to end on a note of urgency regarding the perspectives this paper implies, by raising a larger issue around positionality. Within feminist discourse, the notion of “strategic essentialism” put forth by Spivak and Grosz (1990) provide a canonical framework for positioning oneself within these false divides between theory and practice, fluidity and stability. This offers a perspective from which one can both acknowledge the existing fluidity of identity categories, while simultaneously admitting the necessity of presenting those categories as stable enough to facilitate a particular course of action. A change in positionality can radically transform perspectives on the ‘benevolence’ of state policies aimed at ‘sustainable development,’ to critiques of these as containment and even annihilation. When Third World women who are oppressed raise their voices, they need to be heard by people who share the understanding of their positionality and who try to undermine the blinders of First World bias or privilege.

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