

Filipinos in Imperial America ᜏᜒᜃᜅ ᜆᜄᜎᜓ ᜃ ᜆᜄᜎᜓᜅᜆᜄᜎᜅ ᜃᜆᜅᜆᜃ

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Abstract:

Filipinos comprise a large portion of the population of migrant nannies, domestic workers, and nurses worldwide. High levels of job insecurity and poverty in the Philippines partially account for this. However, American imperialism in the Philippines and racism have also contributed to this over-representation. Although the Philippines has gained independence from direct American rule, many Filipinos today still endure racism and servitude in the United States and beyond.

Thesis:

The over-representation of Filipinos as migrant nannies, domestic workers, and nurses is a consequence of the American imperialist and racist idea that Filipinos were 'inferior' beings whose value was restricted to servitude. The marketing of Filipinos by Filipinos as 'subservient' and as 'natural' caregivers has reinforced this colonial belief and perpetuated serfdom.

Methodology:

Information for this research was obtained from secondary sources including peer-reviewed scholarly books and journals.

Key Findings:

- 1) American Imperialism in the Philippines
 - Began in the late 1800s
 - The Philippines was seen as a 'gateway' to other Asian markets and a source of natural resources and cheap labour.
- 2) Racism
 - Former U.S. Presidents T. Roosevelt and W. McKinley described Filipinos as "sub-human, savages, uncivilized", and like animals.
 - Filipinos were also seen as 'unhygienic.'

3) Migrant Plantation Workers and Nurses During Colonization

- Approximately 120,000 Filipinos worked in American plantations from 1906 to 1935.
- Filipino plantation workers performed some of the most difficult and undesirable tasks; paid the lowest wages; given substandard housing with no privacy; regularly experienced racism, humiliation, violence, and threats of deportation.



© Filipino migrant plantation workers in Hawaii

- Filipino women were educated on 'proper' hygiene practices to 'clean' up the 'dirty' Filipinos and were hired to care for white families.
- Filipino nurses were relegated to lower nursing positions, paid less, and given undesirable tasks.

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4) Migrant Nannies, Domestic Workers, and Nurses After Colonization

- Filipinos continue to migrate to and work in the United States and beyond mainly as nurses and nannies.



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5) Filipinos' Complicity to Servitude

- Filipinos brand fellow Filipinos as 'natural' caregivers.
- The Philippine government and vocational schools encourage Filipinos to become nannies and domestic workers abroad.
- Lack of sustainable housing, employment and wage mobility, and welfare programs especially for working class and poor Filipinos have forced many of them to pursue work abroad. However, immigration and employment laws in several countries often limit them to care giving and domestic work in these places.



© Filipino protesters; *katulong* means a maid or domestic worker

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Conclusions:

- It is not an 'accident', a 'preference', or 'natural' for Filipinos to pursue work as nannies, domestic workers, or nurses.
- The employment of many Filipinos as migrant caregivers and servants is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it has its roots in American imperialism and in racism.
- Filipinos, too, are responsible for perpetuating such servitude.

References: Available upon request

Contact Information: Please contact me via e-mail at rossanne.faye@gmail.com for further questions or comments regarding my presentation and/ or research.

Acknowledgments:

I thank York University's Undergraduate Research Fair founders and Steering Committee for selecting and inviting me to present my research, as well as for providing me with guidance in preparation for the Fair. My thanks also go out to the broader York University community for the wealth of knowledge, services, and support it has provided me over the years. I thank Professor Carlos Torres and TA Rhonda George for providing me with guidance and feedback on this research. Last but not least, I thank my family and friends who continue to support me throughout my undergraduate studies.