

Reframing the Filipina as a Militant:
The Ongoing Revolutionary History of the Philippines

Nicole Avena Reyes
Politics, Philosophy, and Economics: International Studies
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Faculty Adviser: Dr. Espina

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ABSTRACT

Filipino women make up half of Philippine society, and throughout Philippine history, their experiences have been significant in revealing and evaluating oppressive social structures in the Philippines. Militant Filipino women have been at the forefront of social and political movements. The history and influence of the women-led militant revolutionary group MAKIBAKA combat the gender and class structures of Philippine society identified by the National Democratic movement as the three fundamental problems of Filipino society: U.S. imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, feudalism, as well as a fourth problem identified by the founder of MAKIBAKA Lorena Barros as a male authority. MAKIBAKA emerged from the growing political consciousness during the 1970s, known as the First Quarter Storm, but had been deemed an illegal organization by the Philippine government and forced underground. Thus, there needs to be more academic discourse about MAKIBAKA, resulting in a majority of the focus on aboveground struggles and organizations and making any contemporary connections challenging.

Nevertheless, MAKIBAKA contributes to the ongoing Philippine revolutionary history, to conversations about the role of Filipinas in their gender and labor struggles within the semi-colonial and semi-feudal Philippine society from Martial Law to today, and to contemporary resistance movements. This analysis of the 1) intersectional experiences of gender, class, and ethnicity within MAKIBAKA and 2) its development of tactics from grassroots organizing to direct action and advocacy will show MAKIBAKA's contributions to the ongoing revolutionary history of the Philippines and how their strategies of militant resistance to multiple points of oppression have lasting impact and influence on other legal traditional organizations. Studying the societal influence MAKIBAKA has on the Philippines reframes Filipino women through a

de-colonial and de-imperial frame, deconstructing harmful frameworks and portrayals of Filipinas as submissive, exotic, sexualized, and commodified labor and instead amplifying the voices and strength of militant Filipino women in their ongoing quest for the total liberation of all Filipino people.

INTRODUCTION

The identity of the Filipina has been an uneven process often produced through historical and social conditions that create the hegemonic cultural gender constructions and ideologies that exist in Philippine society. What we see now are overly Western values and systems of patriarchy influenced by European feudalism from the Spaniards, the effects of imperialism during WW2, and the current semi-colonial relationship between the Philippines and the United States. Through this lens, the emphasis of how women are viewed is focused on cultivating the image and identity of the Filipina as a submissive creature, an object of pleasure, and a capitalist commodity. As much as foreign influence has shaped the identity of Filipina, much can be said about the domestic histories and structures of precolonial Philippines and how precolonial systems and values resisted Western ideologies. Thus, the development of the identity of Filipino women is complex and takes into account the multifaceted and intersectional experiences of Filipino women that consider their gender, class, and ethnicity with the sectors of its economy and society within a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state.

There are sharp contradictions between men and women in the Philippines, as seen in the economic, political, and academic sectors, according to the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Philippine Office. Even though there are apparent differences in how women are viewed and treated, with a few Filipinas advancing within those fields, the prevalent narrative of how Filipino women are portrayed has resulted in situations where they are disadvantaged and exploited far more than their male counterparts.

This not only results in Filipino women being marginalized, underprivileged, and discriminated against domestically but extends into the global sector. The effects of globalization propagated the initial introduction of these systems of oppression with the invasion of European

colonization, introducing systems of feudalism and patriarchy. Today, the Philippines is an international player because of its geopolitical position and contributions to the global workforce. Filipinos account for most of the migrant work in Asia and the world. About 6,092 Filipinos leave the Philippines every day, according to the Filipino Migrant Center, and a majority of these migrants are women.

Thus, the conditions have primed for an active women's movement that puts women's issues at the forefront of national and international discourse. However, today, Filipino women's actions have been significantly influenced by MAKIBAKA, who asked, "Who can be a revolutionary?" Lorena Barros, founder of MAKIBAKA, stated, "The new woman, the new Filipina, is first and foremost a militant." The role of women in all forms of resistance is often overlooked and diminished throughout Philippine history, reflecting the larger dismissal and erasure of the significant movements of transnational feminism. However, women are integral to resistance due to their nature and societal influence. Thus, this analysis will focus on the 1) intersectional experiences of gender, class, and ethnicity within MAKIBAKA and 2) its development of tactics from grassroots organizing to direct action and advocacy will show MAKIBAKA's contributions to the ongoing revolutionary history of the Philippines and how their strategies of militant resistance to multiple points of oppression have lasting impact and influence on other legal traditional organizations in the Philippines and beyond.

In order to understand the full impact of MAKIBAKA, this paper will first begin by exploring the comprehensive history of the role of Filipinas from the periods of precolonial times to 20th-century social movements from the 1960s-1980s and, in particular, focusing on the National Democratic movement and how it evolved into the formation of multiple women's liberation movements and organizations such as MAKIBAKA and GABRIELA. This analysis

shows the tactics women's organizations such as MAKIBAKA employ in the context of their intersectionality experiences and unique forms of oppression that specifically affect Filipinas. As a result of this detachment from the colonial and imperial frames created by the West, the activism of MAKIBAKA instead reframes the Filipina as a militant. It includes Filipino women in the ongoing history of the Philippines' revolution, and the broader conversations about the role women play in our global society.

Literature Review: Philippine Society and Revolution

Makabayan Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan, also known as MAKIBAKA, is a militant women's organization that emerged in the Philippines as a part of the National Democratic (N.D.) movement, as documented by Filipina activist-scholar and former MAKIBAKA member Judy Taguiwalo. At first, it began as a sector of Kabataang Makabayan (K.M.), which was an underground communist youth organization that was active from 1964 to 1975 and created by Jose Maria Sison and other revolutionaries of that time, as cited by historian Joseph Scalice. MAKIBAKA arose from intense political struggle and activism known as the First Quarter Storm, formed in 1969 and formally introduced to the ND in 1970. MAKIBAKA differentiates itself from K.M. in that it focuses exclusively on the women's liberation movement, which includes the general objectives of the N.D. movement, but with the integral addition of women's issues and intersectionalities of their gender, class, and ethnicity.

The phrases “militant” or “militarism,” often have the prescribed definitions of state militarism, with the assumption that a strong military is equated to the dominant national interest of state officials and the people, as chronicled in Carmi Espineda’s analysis of women’s movements in the Philippines (49). The Philippine government has continually embraced the culture of militarism to maintain the status quo, but the N.D. movement seeks to dismantle the

status quo through militarism. Militarism through N.D. is through intense activism and the act of subverting the status quo in a way that forcibly detaches us from oppressive realities established by the government, which uses violence and force to continue to sustain its regime.

Lorena Barros, an avid women's rights activist, student organizer, and founder of MAKIBAKA, saw that in order for the movement to succeed, they needed to draw support from the women's sector in the Philippines, which is enforced by the phrase "women hold up half the sky," a famous quote from Mao Zedong, a communist leader. Young Filipina students, workers, and professionals joined K.M. and other similar organizations based on a shared goal for the liberation of the Filipino people through genuine democracy and national sovereignty. In addition, those most negatively affected by state militarization are peasant women and children who reside in the countryside (Espineda 53). Women members of K.M. believed that their participation in the revolutionary struggle would produce the emancipation of women. They were inspired by the revolutionary histories that came before them and a sense that, this time, genuine change would come to uplift the oppressive systems that bound women in unfavorable and unlivable conditions. However, K.M. limited the potential work related to women's issues even with the increasing participation from Filipinas, as observed by Lynn Kwiatkowski and Lois West in *Feminist Struggles and Feminist Nationalism in the Philippines* (152) since the doctrines of the N.D. movement are referenced from the work of Jose Sison, *Philippine Society, and Revolution* (PSR).

In Sison's work, he analyzes Philippine society from the viewpoints of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), a variant of Marxist-Leninism that Mao Zedong developed. This political ideology is based on the idea that the people's war is the primary strategy for revolution. In the context of analyzing the Philippines, Sison is first based on how Filipinos understand

Philippine history, which has caused the conditions for the fundamental problems of the Filipino people: the prevailing social structures that have been formed by colonization and imperialism and the strategy and tactics that emerge from this analysis to come to a revolutionary solution (Sison). The book provides a framework for understanding that to analyze Philippine society, we must first conduct a social investigation to understand the root issues Filipinos face.

He first frames Filipino society through a "TATSULOK," a triangle in English. The title Tatsulok is from PSR, which best describes the social classes that continue to exist in Philippine society.

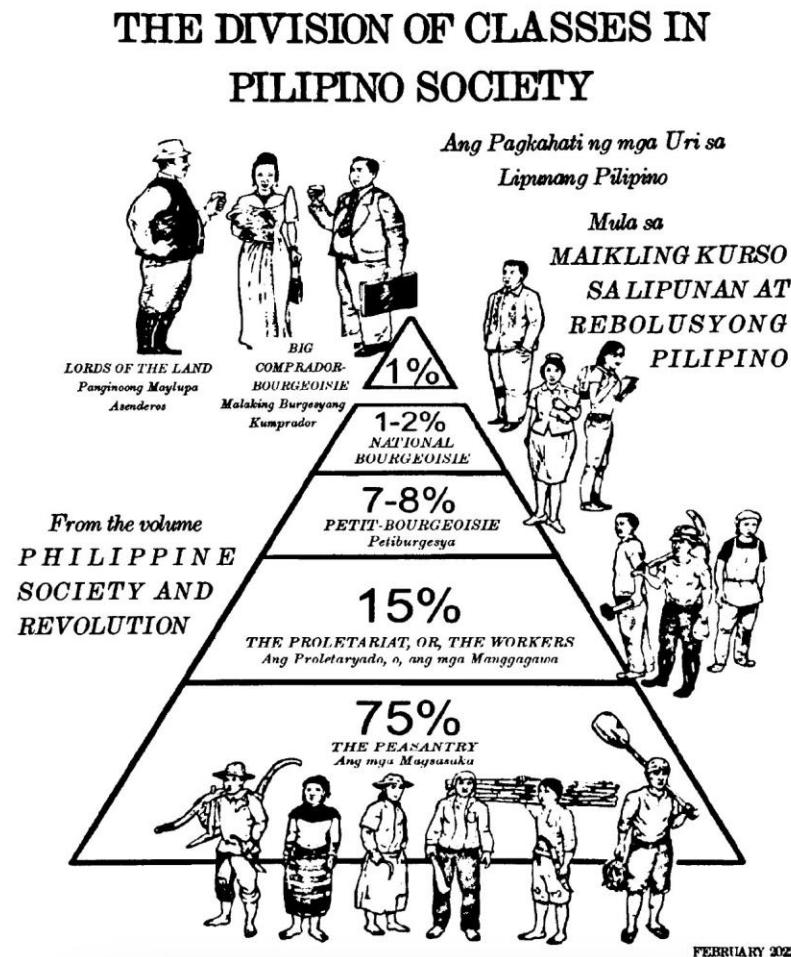


Fig. 1. X post by created by a member Anakbayan, a grassroots youth and student organization that is a sector of the National Democratic movement (Feb. 2022)

The class triangle can be understood through the five distinct class divisions, where each stratum is clearly defined by the distinct differences of large groups of people within the dimensions of social, economic, political organization, and production. At the bottom of the triangle is the peasant class, composed of farmers and unskilled laborers; they make up 75% of Philippines society and are the most impoverished. This analysis is reaffirmed by the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), which assessed at the beginning of 2024 and identified farmers and fisherfolk as the poorest people in the country, citing the work of Philippine journalist Jean Mangaluz. Above them are proletariats or workers, skilled individuals who lack higher education; they comprise 15% of the population. In the Middle is the petit bourgeoisie, composed of skilled workers who have received or are currently receiving higher education; these are the doctors, lawyers, and small business owners, who comprise 7-8% of the population. The next is the national bourgeoisie, who comprise 1-2% of Filipino society and are the middle stratum between the petty and big bourgeoisie; they are also known as the manufacturers and industrialists who represent the capitalist relations of production within the country. Lastly, the top 1% are the big compradors, landlords, and foreign imperialists who own most of the land in the Philippines. This analysis showcases a clear distinction between the exploiters and the exploited. During the political struggle, the intensity of the interactions between the two intensifies and reveals the irreconcilable conflict between the two: the 1% (big compradors and landlords) and the rest of Philippine society (Sison).

The Three Basic Problems Create the Semi-Feudal and Semi-Colonial State

Sison then presents that the Philippines is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and that this claim is defined through three fundamental problems, commonly referred to as “3BP” by the N.D.R. The class triangle thus suffers from U.S. Imperialism, Feudalism, and Bureaucrat

Capitalism, which are the root of the Filipino people's suffering and the formation of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state.

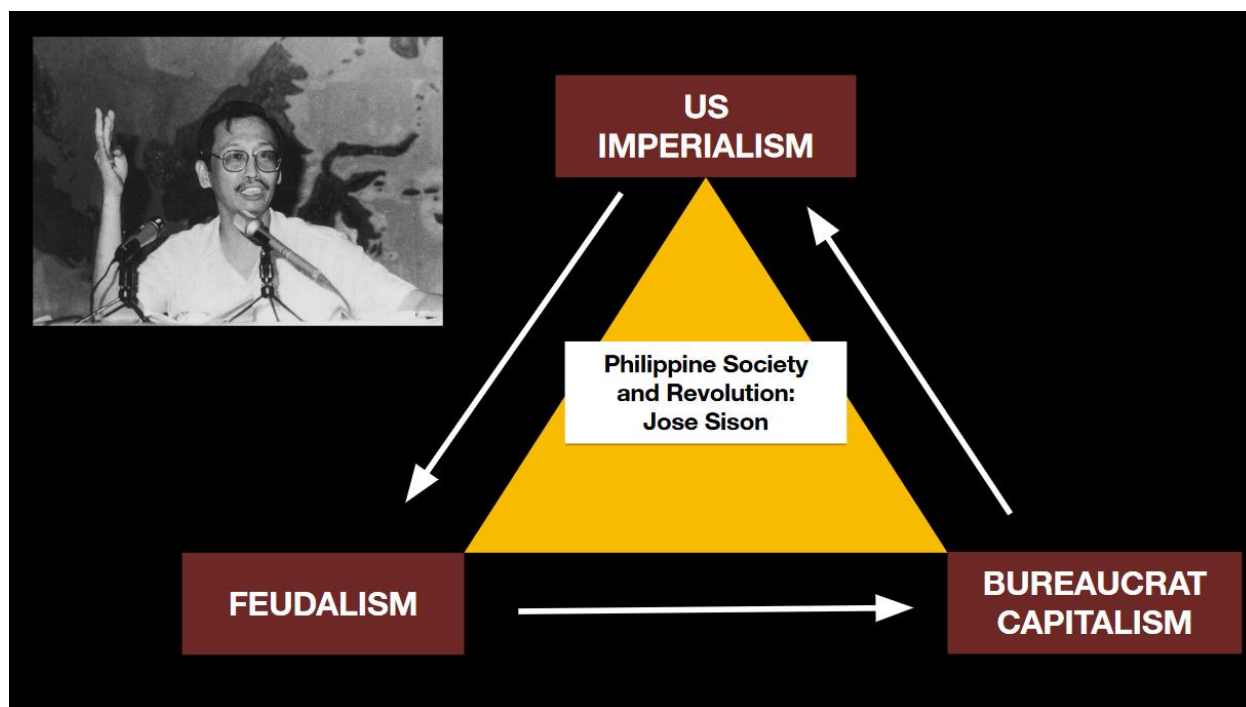


Fig. 2. Author created an image of the three basic problems identified by Jose Sison in his book *Philippine Society and Revolution*

The Philippines is controlled by U.S. imperialism in collusion with the ruling local elite big, bourgeois compradors and the landlord class. They personify the three root causes of poverty that plague Filipino society. According to Sison, imperialism is the last stage of capitalism, where capital is concentrated in the hands of a few oligarchs. Imperialist countries rely on their new colonies for cheap labor, raw materials, and a market for excess products, creating superprofit for imperialists. It needs war to fuel imperialist industries through the production and sales of arms and war equipment. U.S. imperialism controls the Philippine economy, politics, and culture. It dictates foreign policy as played out in Philippine history, seen

through Ferdinand Marcos's regime and persisting today through the Bong Bong Marcos administration and the Biden Administration.

However, these causes go even further back in the Philippines' history of colonization.

Feudalism is a system propagated by two central economic systems put in place by the Spanish: the encomienda system and the hacienda system. The first system was a tribute system based on the extraction of labor from the native people, where the King of Spain endowed land to officials and nobles so they could look over the land they were given. In this case, the system encouraged tax-collecting systems and exhortative labor. The Hacienda system was based on a cash crop system where most of the crops grown were exported for trade and the development of Spain in its attempts to compete with other European capitalism.

Through these two economic systems introduced by Spain, feudalism is characterized by a large population of peasants tilling land they do not own. Landlords own vast lands, exploiting peasants by demanding rent, high interest rates, and other schemes. Peasants often lose what little land they have and become jobless, creating many unemployed people who ensure the country has a steady supply of cheap labor. Feudalism keeps the country economically disadvantaged and ensures cheap labor. Referring back to the class triangle, 75% of the population lives in rural areas due to the continuation of feudalistic practices. Bureaucratic capitalism is when the government is treated like a business and practices the systematic use of violence and repression to maintain the power of the ruling class. This allows government officials (the 1%) to hoard money for personal wealth. Government officials in the reactionary government are representatives and members of big bourgeois comprador and landlord classes. This imbalance of power is exacerbated by the explicitly symbiotic relationship between U.S. imperialism and feudalism, where the Philippines becomes forcibly overly reliant on U.S.

intervention, and the U.S. retains its colonial oversight, even though the Philippines is an independent country.

Within PSR, under the subsection "Special Interest Groups," Sison makes the analysis that women compose about one-half of the population, cutting through all the classes listed. Further supported by the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, the Philippines has a total population of 109,035,343, and women make up roughly 50% of the population in the Philippines society; 53.56 million (49.4%) are women (Philippine Statistic Authority). It is then evident that no revolutionary movement can succeed without 50% or more in support of it. Sison also states that roles women can perform in the movement are general and specialized tasks within the revolution. Sison affirms that women have the capacity for liberating themselves from bourgeois misrepresentation as objects of pleasure and commodities. Through this analysis, he comes to the conclusion within this very brief section that the condition for Filipino women as revolutionaries is primed from the start. The 3BP's of the existing and continued oppression of the Filipino people, and it seems through Sison's analysis that the only solution is the People's Democratic Revolution. The role of women is explicitly laid out that they should be involved in the N.D.R. As he states a women's liberation is not solved by becoming free from their oppressors but by deeply unrooting the sources of oppression, which are the three fundamental problems and the class structure of Filipino society. However, even while affirming the potential contributions of women to the N.D.R, Sison only dedicates one paragraph to discussing Filipina oppression, and only to the extent of encouraging them to join the movement as a special interest group, conflated with the concerns of fishermen, youth and students, and other national minorities.

The Fourth Basic Problem

In response to this minimizing of Filipina concerns, Barros adds a fourth kind of oppression that significantly impacts the ways women experience the impacts of the 3BP: male authority.

By adding male authority, making it a fourth fundamental problem, we find that the 3BP objectively exploits Filipino women more than their male counterparts, and its effects are further amplified by male domination or create unique kinds of oppression exclusive to the experiences of Filipino women. This is not to say that Filipino men are the primary perpetrators of the conditions of Filipino women; rather, the creation of a new fundamental problem for women stems from the original three basic problems. Figure 3 shows how each problem operates within semi-feudal and semi-colonial Philippine society. In addition, because a significant portion of the population resides in the countryside, women, who make up half of Philippine society, also reside in the countryside and are half of the class triangle.

This leads to the analysis of the organization MAKIBAKA, which is classified as an underground (U.G.) organization that seeks to empower Filipinas through organized militant resistance, which means that they believe that the solution to state oppression is through violent means and the cessation of control through armed revolution. They are one of many U.G. organizations within the Philippines and stem from a more extensive network of U.G. organizations. MAKIBAKA was the first to properly articulate the ideology that women's liberation could be achieved only in the context of greater social freedom, adding in the fourth basic problem of male authority. For women in MAKIBAKA, total national liberation could be achieved only with the elimination of the "feudal," or patriarchal, treatment of women, commercialization of women's bodies, and other discriminatory practices and structures that inhibit women's total development (Kwiatkowski and West 152). Thus, the paper will focus on

the revolutionary group MAKIBAKA and examine its influences on Filipino society and the conception of a Filipino woman from the 1970s onward.

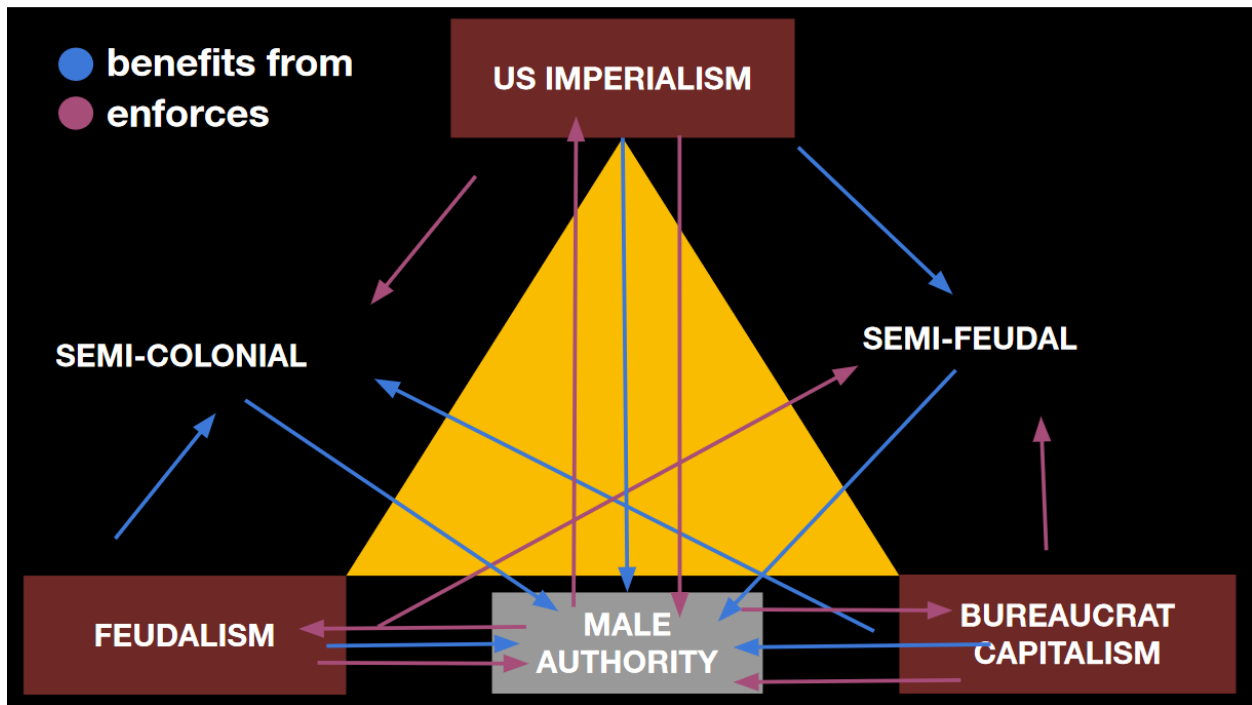


Fig. 3. Author-created image of the three basic problems identified by Jose Sison in his book *Philippine Society and Revolution*, with the addition of a fourth basic problem introduced by Lorena Barros. The image depicts how each problem interacts with semi-feudal and semi-colonial Philippine society.

To understand the complexities of MAKIBAKA, a comprehensive analysis of the historical context will be needed, such as examining the roles of Filipino women during the precolonial era under colonial Spain and U.S. imperialism. The examination of the role of women in each era provides a basic understanding of the evolutionary role of women within their contemporary societal environments. The importance of studying women as not just participants but as leaders of armed conflict, especially such groups of women that have experienced gendered, ethnic, and class oppression along with their deep history of being under colonial rule,

is paramount to examine the role of women in other similar societies. It also provides a frame for understanding Filipino women as more than a wife, mothers, or poor exotic whom the First World must save. Instead of the role of women as simply victims of state-sponsored violence, the “militant Filipina” is actively against state violence, resisting a regime that seeks to oppress them and society as a whole.

This historical analysis, includes the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos from 1965 to 1986. During this era, he exerted executive power meant to oppress and subjugate the Filipino people through a set of domestic policies and Constitutional overhaul that allowed him to extend his presidential term under Martial Law. Now, contemporary scholarship depicts the Marcos era as one of extensive human rights violations and erasure and egregious revisions made to the history and society of the Philippines, according to Amnesty International. Leading up to the Martial Law was a period known as the First Quarter Storm, a growing anti-imperial and anti-feudal movement set to educate the masses about the worsening conditions of the Filipino people who disagreed with the authoritarian rule of Marcos (Barros). Furthermore, the exploration of other resistance groups that emerged following the First Quarter Storm, such as GABRIELLA, its legal counterpart, attests to the continuing the legacy and spirit of MAKIBAKA.

History of the role of Filipinas

Friesen described one of the reasons why Filipino women were keen and able to resist easily and revolt was due to the long history of a matriarchal dominant society. Precolonial indigenous Filipinos lived in an egalitarian society where the roles of women and men were equally important. This claim is further supported by Filipino academics Feorillo Petronilo Demeterio III and Leslie Anne L. Liwanag of De La Salle University, who detailed two prominent contemporary Filipina philosophers, particularly Mary John Mananzan and her essay

"The Precolonial Filipina." At this time, the Filipina was also known as the *mujer indigina*, a woman who could enjoy the same privileges and opportunities as her male counterpart (Mananzan 1). The type of egalitarian freedom Filipinas could experience during this time was that women could own property, trade, divorce their husbands, and uphold high leadership positions such as village chieftain without a male heir. They also help in high religious and spiritual positions, such as priestesses and healers, described by Jordan Clark of The Aswang Project. The *mujer indigina* was a fundamental pillar of Philippine society as the first lawgiver was a woman by the name of Lubluban; she set the rules and regulations concerning "rituals, inheritance, and property," which was shared through generations by song (Mananzan 3).

However, this dominant matriarchal society shifted into a highly patriarchal society after the arrival of the Spaniards, who reconstructed the indigenous Filipino society, in particular the role of women. The *mujer indigina* did not fit the conventional role of women in Spain and were shocked to find the type of freedom women freely experienced. Thus, the introduction of Catholicism through encouraging and eventually forcing girls and women into these schools to remodel them into the "perfect woman." Catholicism ultimately enforced the vital need for purity and innocence, which was reinforced by the introduction of the Virgin Mary. This remodeling helped transition Filipino society into systems of feudalism that furthered their oppression of Filipinas and established systems that removed women from the economic and political realms. Patriarchy and feudalism work hand in hand to subjugate and exploit Filipino women. The Philippines' attributes still permeate modern Philippine society. Under Spanish rule, elite women could no longer have access to higher education or participate in higher societal roles. Education was still available but limited to the skills and knowledge of pleasing the men in their lives, their fathers, and their husbands (Demeterio III and Liwanag). Peasant women faced not only the

exploitation of their productive labor but also became a commodity to be sold or bought to pay off a debt to the ruling class of compradors and landlords.

This shifted the image of Filipino women from strong warriors to conservative and submissive women, becoming second-class citizens within Filipino society. The Spaniards pushed for a particular archetype known as the Maria Clara concept: the ideal Filipina, described by Lola Keane as submissive, religious, and obedient. The archetype transformed into a character who stars in the famous novel *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)* by Philippine national hero Jose Rizal. Maria Clara is a weak woman whose only substantial role in the novel is to weep and cry and mimic the social consciousness of religious women within Catholic stories. From being one of the most potent and respected groups of society in the Philippines, the new Filipina pushed by the Spaniards was, in all things, a disempowered Maria Clara.

In the same era as Maria Clara, there is the story of resistance. Filipinas were fed up with Spanish rule and the treatment of women, as they were aware of their role before colonization. Women in the pre-colonial Philippines were respected, inherited leadership positions from their fathers, and were equal to men and Gabriela Silang who was inspired by the histories prior became a prominent Filipino woman who led the Ilocano people during Spanish rule for independence. After the death of her husband, Diego Silang, she rallied together an army of about two thousand men fighting the Spaniards with homemade weapons until she was caught and hanged, according to transnational feminist scholar Mina Roces in her section on rethinking the Filipina. The rampant poverty and class inequality have pushed women to mobilize, especially peasant women who suffered all layers of oppression and who also are the backbone of Philippines society. The real Gabriella Silang is the complete opposite of the fictional Maria Clara and dismantles the colonial frame of the Filipina. Gabriella tells the story of a woman as a

revolutionary, not a character in the romantic novel who has devoted her life to purity and male authority. Maria Clara upheld the class system of the petty and upper-class Filipina and Spanish women who settled in the Philippines. To this day, it still holds significant pop culture prevalence within mainstream Filipino society, described by Monique Toda in her article detailing the evolution of depictions of Filipina women.

On the other hand, Gabriella Silang would go on to inspire the formation of one of the most prominent groups that emerged during the First Quarter Storm, the Gabriela Women's Party or GABRIELA, founded in 1984 after women marched in the streets of Manila to defy Ferdinand Marcos' regime. The name was derived from the Filipina revolutionary Gabriela Silang. The organization was an alliance comprised of nationwide grassroots organizations and institutions that addressed various topics but primarily revolving around the three significant concerns of "recognition and promotion of the rights and welfare of women; promotion of the welfare of the family and the rights of children; and the guarantee of the general economic, political, and social conditions necessary for the meaningful exercise of women's rights and for the full promotion of the welfare of women, the family, and children" (Friesen 682). Overall, GABRIELA pushed for the transformation of society as a whole through challenging patriarchy worldwide, beyond the individual cases of oppression Filipino women face. They encouraged their followers to analyze the issues of the Filipino people through a gendered perspective.

The semi-colonial American state only further enforced male control of social, economic, and political life, increasing the imbalance between Filipino men and women. This intensified the inequality, producing conflict and the urgency for women to organize against colonial and gendered oppression. Economic status and social status did not exempt certain women from facing the exploitative nature of the patriarchal and feudal state. The U.S. semi-colonial systems

were no better, and Filipino women were further subjugated into a new form of commodification under U.S. capitalism as a decadent bourgeois culture emerged. In the capitalist labor market, women went into sex work as they became desired by men and inherently became male objects within this new semi-colonial and semi-feudal society.

This only worsened during WWII with Japanese imperialism. During their reign, military officials forced women into sexual slavery, referring to them as "comfort women." The sexualization of Asian women within the region was also enforced by Hollywood and media portrayals presenting Asian women as sex objects, as illustrated in *Kites Journal*. After the war, there was little discussion of what happened to these women and where they disappeared. However, while Western media and the rest of the world portrayed invisibility, in reality, the women during this time were resilient and resisted persistently. The Pacific Atrocities Education provides the example of Nieves Fernandez, one of the lesser-known Filipina guerrilla leaders who led native locals and men into battle, successfully taking out Japanese patrols and soldiers stationed in the city of Tacloban. Many Filipino women characterized themselves during this period as armed, militant women, showcasing that the Filipina is more than an exotic person the West can tame.

Deep historical analysis is essential to understanding the foundation of MAKIBAKA and why it is significant in Philippine history and society. History has shown us that through Spanish, American colonization, and Japanese imperialism, women have had a deep history and transparent participation in their struggle for national liberation. Within a highly patriarchal country, Philippine revolutionary history recognizes MAKIBAKA as a crucial women's movement in the Philippines and a significant contributor to the understanding of Philippine history, overall.

MAKIBAKA Activities and Tactics

As a preface to this work and others that explore subversive organizations deemed “illegal” by their national governments, much remains to be done to locate the specific mechanisms and tactics that MAKIBAKA employed during this era since they have been forced underground and their whereabouts are unknown. However their legacy and message has been scattered within the works of several writers, scholars, and activists who have contributed to the discussion of the conditions of the Filipinas within Philippine society. Barros has stated that the new Filipinas have not only raised their political consciousness but have physically contributed their labor and life to the N.D.R. They are, first and foremost, militant. Sison, who wrote *Philippine Society and Revolution* under his pen name at the time, Amado Guerrero, stated the three basic problems and added a fourth, which is male authority that contributes to the oppression of women. Since women make up "half of the society," they are an integral part of society, thus making their oppression an integral force in the oppressive nature of the society as a whole (Mitchell).

These ideas stemmed during a period of time known as the First Quarter Storm (FQS) which lasted three months, from January 26th to March 17th, 1970, and led to seven significant protests. Activist groups took to the streets to declare that the people's war was the answer to ending Ferdinand Marcos's presidential regime. This period led to increased political participation of women and raised the political consciousness of the Filipino people.

Women's involvement and the FQS can be traced to 1961 with the formation of the Study Society, a growing anti-imperial and anti-feudal movement set to educate the masses about the worsening conditions of the Filipino people. Social unrest was happening in the Philippines and other countries around the world. The youth, in particular, was beginning to become

frustrated with the need for proper governance from the national leader. At the time, more and more people gravitated towards these study circles, correlating with the rise of an authoritarian regime led by Ferdinand Marcos.

The Kabataang Makabayan (K.M.), a radical youth organization that demanded a drastic overhaul of society, was founded in the 1960s. It adopted a national democracy program because it understood the country being inhibited by a conspiracy between U.S. imperialists, major compradors, and big landlords. The program's primary goals were to establish national sovereignty by removing U.S. dominance from the nation, achieve true democracy by giving land to the peasantry, and guarantee political freedom for the vast majority of the populace (Taguiwalo).

K.M. was established in 1964 and subsequently became a movement within universities to reform student affairs by advocating for less tuition, better student facilities, and greater democracy in university governance. It also forged connections with progressive organizations and leaders of trade unions and peasants simultaneously. Additionally, it established student protests against the Philippines' engagement in the Vietnam War. It brought about several unfair accords favoring the United States over the Philippines in 1962, developed in the framework of U.S. imperialism, including agreements allowing U.S. nationals to acquire companies and land and exploit resources from the Philippines (Taguiwalo). This included Laurel Langley, a trade agreement that gave full parity rights to American citizens and businesses, according to the Office of the Historian, and many other agreements that permitted growing military installations on the islands. Filipino women who were still affected by post-colonial and imperial conditions that placed them at the bottom of the social hierarchy felt especially agitated. This led to the formation of women's organizations such as GABRIELA and Makibaka, which forwarded

women's liberation by intimately understanding its linkage with national and class liberation from the four basic problems women experienced.

MAKIBAKA's first significant rally and protest that deviated from the larger N.D. movement was their picketing against the Miss Philippines Beauty Pageant (MPBP) of 1970. MAKIBAKA believed that the role of women in the Philippines was far more critical than their participation and activities in a beauty contest, documented by Leonora Angelecs's article on the women's liberation movements after the FQS (32). MAKIBAKA urged that the role of women, particularly young women and students in the movement, was crucial in bringing to the forefront the fundamental problems that Filipino women experienced. At the time, it was unusual for women to picket and rally together. Although composed mainly of young women, their organization also included women workers, peasant farmers, homemakers, mothers, and professionals who collaborated to create a community and organization that would uplift women through providing social services and programs that the government failed to provide. They would work together to organize daycare centers in poor urban communities and link coalitions such as workers and jeepney drivers (Angelecs 33).

Voices of Filipinas Today

The struggles throughout the 20th century still exist to this day and continue to inspire Filipino women to fight for the betterment of human rights, gender equality, and labor rights. As seen today, Filipina women carry on that revolutionary spirit in an article published by Kenneth Guda. The news article contains the stories of three women human rights defenders as they continue to combat an authoritarian regime and the age of mass disinformation. Ruth Manglalan depicts her story when Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. was assassinated, the contender of Ferdinand Marcos during the presidential elections. This event pushed her to become an activist, and she

eventually joined the women's organization GABRIELA. As an activist, she helped organize campaigns along with youth and students and labor strikes alongside disposed farmworkers. Next was the story of Reyna Valmores, who was newer to social movements, advocating for social equality through LGBTQIA+ rights and providing the perspective of a trans woman and student activist. She was on track to become a scientist in molecular biology and biotechnology. However, she is now a full-time activist working with Bahaghari, which gave her the space and opportunity to explore the social realities of her identity.

Last but not least is Letty Castillo, a labor activist who became more involved with personal events and her experience as an overseas Filipino worker. She eventually moves to Valenzuela and becomes the chairperson of Gabriela-Valenzuela, helping to organize the urban poor and women workers to fight for safe workplace conditions and livable wages. Together, the stories of these women provide the experiences that old problems persist in modern days and that new problems have emerged as Filipinos learn the reality of their conditions. The commonality between these three stories is that each Filipina has been inspired to be a revolutionary through individual and shared experiences of oppression.

A woman always has a rightful place in histories of struggle but the colonial and imperial frameworks of oppression work painstakingly to erase this resistance. The systems created through the colonial rule of Spain and the United States have created a profoundly complicated and oppressive layer that undermines the role of women in Philippine society. Colonial Filipino society often placed women at home, expected to produce offspring and take care of the children while tending to their home and become docile commodified products to be traded, sold, used, and discarded, even today into modern Philippine society. Women in the Philippines face three basic problems: U.S. imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, and feudalism, with a fourth being

male authority. Despite this, Filipino women have become a powerful driving force for revolutionary change through their national democratic movement for social change throughout all strata of society. Participating in revolutionary movements creates the primary conditions for more significant social development and genuine change. Women's liberation is the liberation for all in Philippine society, and reframing the Filipinas as revolutionaries moves the nation closer to the realization of true liberation.

Global Connections: Why is MAKIBAKA's framework and lens significant?

Legal struggle is no longer sufficient to combat Filipino women's four primary struggles. As Filipinas entered the modern age, the civil rights advancements made throughout the 20th century certainly elevated the status of women to hold roles typically dominated by their male counterparts, such as those in national government and owning large conglomerate businesses. However, the position of Filipino women is deeply rooted in the historical underpinnings of differing archetypes and roles, such as the Maria Clara archetype, the role of comfort women during WWII, productive Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), and the modern-day "untapped economic potentials," according to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. Armed or violent resistance is often not perceived as a viable solution to change the conditions of a particular group. However, the act of arming women with the necessary tools to liberate themselves is necessary to remove women from the conventional colonial and imperial frameworks that reduce them to a mere resource. In this way, the militant Filipina is armed with the tools to liberate herself, her nation, and women worldwide. Often, the legal or non-violent struggle has been the dominant solution to improving the primary conditions of a collective. Within the context of Filipino women, they face violence from a myriad of sectors, but mainly the state, society, and male counterparts. This leads to the analysis that non-violent resistance is no longer a viable or

the only form of resistance that Filipino women should employ. In reality, Filipinos' social, political, and economic environment is inhospitable, necessitating more aggressive forms of resistance to impact persistent oppression.

Regarding Filipino history, the deep struggle for liberation from colonizers and imperialism has embedded a revolutionary spirit into their identities. References to Filipino revolutionaries often invoke images of Lapu-Lapu, Emilio Aguinaldo, Andres Bonifacio, and other male historical figures. History honors these revolutionaries, and their contributions to the liberation of the Filipinos are immensely invaluable and indispensable to a fuller understanding of Philippine history. Nevertheless, it is critical to discern that their aims and strategies, while beneficial to the entirety of the population, fails to recognize the specific experiences of other minority groups. Continuing to only hail Filipino men as heroes, perpetuates the role of Filipino women as viewed through the lens of the West.

Cultural studies and media scholar Koichi Iwabuchi's approach in analyzing Asian societies as anchor points entails an Inter-Asian referencing that "offer(s) new perspectives that go beyond a mere replication of theories derived from Western experiences and give nuanced accounts of specific East Asian experiences" (44). Here is a case of inter-Asian referencing: Iwabuchi states that instead of the West being the center for knowledge production, we focus on Asian countries being reference points for each other and seek to advance the de-Westernized production of knowledge. Not only was the Philippines affected by the socialist movement, but other countries within the surrounding regional area were also affected. While this framework is often employed primarily in the realm of media studies and its effects within East Asian cultures, its applications to understanding productions of knowledge about culture locates social movements as sites for cultural production and transnational feminism.

This connects with Barros's ideas of the women's liberation movement being referenced by and inspiration for other women's liberation movements in other Asian countries, such as the Cultural Revolution in China inspired the National Democratic Movement at the time. However, the establishment of the MAKIBAKA is a significant event in the history of the women's movement in the Philippines and unique in its ability to analyze and articulate the specific oppressions women suffer because of their intersectional experiences that differ from their male counterparts, thereby acting as a site for cultural productions of knowledge in the Philippines. The importance of reframing the role of the Filipina as a militant is to draw in women in the struggle to participate in revolution. The term "militant activist" is also considered a positive term and perspective when examining the actions of women who become more assertive when fighting for their rights. Oftentimes, women who become more confrontational with their government become more vulnerable to violence by the state and are deemed as "communist" (Espineda 55), which allows for further violence against their national state and other international states that seek to diminish their roles in the women's liberation movement.

Through organization and raising Filipino women's political consciousness, women-led social movements become more equipped to understand the social realities where they are fighting an authoritarian regime and addressing the structural inequality within Philippine society. Women's organizations not only mobilize this sector of the population but also rearticulate the women's question, "What is a woman's role in society?" into "What is a woman's role in the revolution?" extending into the broader national and international framework of class and gender oppression. Thus, MAKIBAKA should be acknowledged as a knowledge producer within the realm of academia as it remains a reference point for the women's liberation movement within the region and across the world, as GABRIELA Seattle acknowledges that it is

already recognized within the realm of activism by Filipino women as a solid anchor point of knowledge.

The rhetoric of the social movements of MAKIBAKA illustrate the importance of organization and raising women's political consciousness, in order to equip them to understand the social realities of fighting authoritarian regimes and addressing the structural inequality within their societies. Similarly, in the Philippines, within the region of Southeast Asia, and elsewhere in the developing world, women live in oppressive situations that affect the quality of their lives. The importance of reframing the role of the Filipina as a militant is to draw in the participation of women who can and will engage in the struggle of revolution.

Up to ten percent of the Philippine population has been forced to migrate outside the country (Asis). A majority of these Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are women who enter traditionally feminized industries, like care-taking and nursing. The conditions of Filipinas in foreign countries are similar to the conditions they face in the Philippines. Thus, it is becoming increasingly natural for women to participate in activism, at home in the Philippines and across the geopolitical and economic borders of nation

GABRIELA, also known as the National Alliance of Women, is a grassroots-based alliance of more than 200 organizations seeking to wage a struggle to liberate all oppressed Filipino women in the Philippines and the globe. She was inspired by MAKIBAKA's legacy and the historical figure Gabriela Silang. Gabriela has expanded with chapters based in the United States, Hong Kong, Canada, and several Middle Eastern countries, encompassing more than just Filipino women and also the global working class, which have been identified by Sumampong and Sinclair, members of GABRIELA, as they discuss their reasons for joining the organization.

Highlighting Filipinas' experiences adds to the ongoing discourse surrounding transnational feminism, as women continue to be a part of the broad struggle in the neocolonial and neoliberal world. Transnational feminism seeks to involve women in activist movements worldwide to better understand the intersectional factors, such as colonial legacies, that continue to shape the experiences and lives of women facing exploitation and gender inequality and, as a result, create an anti-colonial and anti-imperial feminist movement. The current academic discipline that seeks to share the voices and tactics of women activists can only be "dynamic and relevant so long as it links itself with the practical women's movement" (Taguiwalo 13) and views women's issues inherently as human rights issues.

Conclusions: Makibaka! Huwag Matakot!

"Makibaka! Huwag Matakot!" is a Tagalog rally cry used during protests or spaces where community is shared. A chant leader will call out, "Makibaka (*Fight*)!" and the crowd shouts, "Huwag Matakot (*Do not be afraid*)!" Filipinos have always had a history as revolutionaries, and their agitation resounds throughout the diaspora. Even though the phrase is in Tagalog, other social movements, especially those with a shared understanding of the liberation movement, deeply feel and understand the intent of the rallying cry. Thus, Filipinas and other women across the globe should not be afraid to step into their role as a militant—who *fight* and *are not afraid*.

Overall, a deep historical analysis is necessary to unroot the fundamental misunderstandings of the role of the Filipina in Philippine society. The Filipina should not be confined in the frameworks that view her as a submissive, exotic, sexualized, and commodified woman. Instead, it is necessary to deconstruct these harmful frameworks and shift understanding of the Filipina as a militant. The establishment of MAKIBAKA is a significant event in the history of the women's movement in the Philippines. It accurately articulates the oppression

women suffer and their intersectional experiences that differ from those of their male counterparts. Such actions by Filipino women seen today have been significantly influenced by the organization MAKIBAKA, which began with the question, "Who can be a revolutionary?" Because women will always be among the first to be affected by societal changes, reframing women as part of the active struggle for their own liberation ultimately establishes the framework for analyzing the role of women in resistance across the globe and simultaneously deconstructs harmful frameworks and portrayals that attempt to erase and subjugate the roles, work, and dignities of women. These Filipino women never forgot and never stopped raising their voices. Filipino women continue to fight for acknowledgment, which they have yet to receive. There are many more stories throughout the Philippines of women's role in the liberation struggle. Women, through the centuries, have continued to be involved in resistance against colonizers and foreign invaders—from the Spanish, to the American, to the Japanese. Barros's 1970 speech intentionally concludes this essay after an analysis of MAKIBAKA's history, as a reminder that it is essential to hear the voices of Filipina women throughout history, emphasize their voices, honor their own words, and learn from their tactics because:

The new woman, the new Filipina, is **first and foremost a militant**. The new Filipina is one who can stay whole days and nights with striking workers, learning from them the social realities which her bourgeois education has kept from her. She is a woman who has discovered the exalting realm of responsibility, **a woman fully engaged in the making of history**. No longer is she a woman for marriage, but more and more **a woman for action**. (emphasis in the original)

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