

Filipino Studies

Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora

Edited by Martin F. Manalansan IV
and Augusto F. Espiritu



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CONTENTS

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A Wondrous World of Small Places *Childhood Education, US Colonial Biopolitics, and the Global Filipino*

KIMBERLY ALIDIO

In this chapter, I argue for an expanded vocabulary with which to discuss US colonial power. I borrow from interdisciplinary theories of biopolitics, sovereignty, settler colonialism, and childhood to investigate the critical role of the early twentieth-century Filipino schoolchild to the generative and creative forms of US rule in the Philippines. Because I am invested in the many conversations that make up Filipino Studies, my analysis offers a possible way to link the global imaginary of historical US colonialism with the contemporary figure of the Global Filipino. This genealogy of a global space that set the terms of Filipino liberal, modern agency points to, I hope, further discussions of what sovereign liberation may look like: a deep, collective reevaluation of what constitutes Filipino life.

Global Imaginary and the Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation

"The earth is so vast and so full of wonderful things," states the *Filipino Teacher's Manual*, published in 1908. Counseling instructors to the American colonial public schools on how to teach geography to Filipino children, the *Manual* declares, "In studying the great picture of the world, which geography shows us, many new thoughts come to our minds and the power of imagination is increased as we try to form ideas of the various countries that we read about. The pupil's thought and imagination must be awakened."¹ This brief fragment of colonial pedagogy offers a glimpse of Filipino children's "education of desire" for the expansive possibilities of a global, even planetary, consciousness.²

The *Manual* shared a particularly colonial cosmopolitan orientation with related early twentieth-century educational texts, including English-language primers used in Philippine schools, American colonial teachers' reports, internationalist juvenile literature, and a small amount of Filipino schoolchildren's essays and letters published or available in the archives. The *Manual* guides the "native" Filipino teacher, soon to supplant Americans in nonsupervisory teaching positions in 1908, to direct the child to be a cosmopolitan learner: a discoverer of the world's oceans, land formations, climate variations, cultural diversity, and many countries.³ In the process, the Filipino teacher refrains, as Tyson Lewis puts it, from "enforcing a sovereign decision . . . or performative control" upon the student.⁴ In this scene of the Filipino teacher and pupil experiencing a concordant "awakening" of their own distinct capacities to reason, we can find the almost invisible hand of US colonial power. Military, economic, and political dominance marked the global space securing Filipino life, survival, and full capacity.

What does this short passage from the *Filipino Teacher's Manual* tell us about the US colonization of the Philippines (1898–1946) as a process of occupation enacting US sovereign power in place of Filipino national sovereignty? Educating Filipinos into a particular global imaginary was an important way in which the US colonial state worked as a disciplinary and biopolitical regime. In conversation with various interdisciplinary scholars of biopolitical administration and settler colonialism, I propose that US colonialism held sway over the Philippines by constituting Filipino life as the materialized sign of its sovereign power. Perhaps just as effectively as meting out deadly violence, US colonialism preserved Filipinos' biological survival and health on the level of the population. Throughout the twentieth century, the US colonial order promised a globalized future for the Philippines as a democratic and self-governing, independent nation through individual Filipinos' achievement of full subjecthood, reason, and incorporation into US-led geopolitical and economic regimes.

This was more than a rhetorical or ideological justification; it was also a critical exercise of colonial power: US colonial modernity in the Philippines governed Filipino life in a generative manner by characterizing it as perpetually emergent, on the levels of the individual and the collective, into self-regulation. In the colonial regime, Filipino ontologi-

cal survival was based on the principle that full national sovereignty was impossible at the time of turn-of-the-century US military occupation. US sovereign power maintained that Filipino autonomous subjectivity was always subject to institutionalized conditions of punishment and associated with “bare life” and death.⁵ Filipino national and biological life, under the sign of US colonial modernity, was to flourish sometime in the conditional, speculative future, and in an expansive global space shared by other self-determining nations and societies. As Achille Mbembe suggests, Western modernity was primarily a project of biopolitical sovereignty, rather than normative concepts of democracy and reason.⁶ The US colonial state did not simply repress Filipino “resistance” but also worked to govern over and claim Filipino possession of an autonomous self and nationhood. US sovereignty over Filipinos became entangled with and reproduced Filipino’s impulses for a continued existence.

In addition to the determining a biological level of existence, US colonial modernity managed cultural and political-economic forms of life, including Philippine nationalism. Late nineteenth-century Filipino liberal reformers and anticolonial revolutionaries declared the viability of the Filipino national subject, but with the arrival of the United States in 1898 in conjunction with Spanish American War, the Philippine nation’s life remained insecure. US colonial occupation of the Philippines proceeded through clear domination of Filipino people exercised by the American military and civil governments. During the Philippine-American War (1899–1902) and in periods afterward, US practices of torture, mass imprisonment, and village depopulation produced large-scale death. The precarious life of the Philippine nation as the United States intervened in the Filipino anticolonial revolution was tied to the precarious lives of Filipinos who imagined themselves as fully sovereign and independent. In documented instances of direct repression and colonial control, the US military launched brutally violent campaigns against armed, militant Filipino nationalists. The civil government established top-down authority by passing the 1901 Sedition Act and the 1902 Brigandage Act criminalizing all expressions of Filipino nationalism and protecting US military aggression under the umbrella of just law.

In addition to these cases of brutal violence, American colonial power worked in more diffused, widespread and generative ways. The United States came as a guarantor, a protector of Filipino life, preceding aspira-

tions for sovereign national power. The Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation, the 1898 declaration of United States sovereignty as a successor to Spanish political authority in the Philippines, infused colonial rule and military occupation with the notion of guaranteeing Filipino subjects “in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.” The US military was to protect private property, or else give some payment when seizing it, and to open ports to international trade. While referring to Filipino nationalism in negative terms as dissent punishable by US military force, the Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation set the terms by which Filipinos were imagined to flourish as full subjects through reason, rights, and nationhood. The critical message in communicating the US colonial sovereignty was to include Filipinos in the “rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples,” thereby dictating that all those “brought within the lawful rule” were to live and those beyond the law were subject to sociopolitical and biological death.⁷ Since the mid-nineteenth-century, Filipino reformist and revolutionary movements were dynamically engaged with transnational and global modernity, particularly in Southeast Asian, Pacific, and Atlantic exchanges of liberal and revolutionary organizing.⁸ US colonialism sought to make access to global connections into a technology of administrative rule by acting as exclusive gatekeeper of global modernity.

Simply, colonialism deployed discretionary power over subjected peoples’ juridical and ontological conditions. In the process of dispossessing Filipino sovereignty, the United States practiced modes of inclusion and exclusion in such a way as to belie the tendency to see them as logics in fixed opposition to one another. The colonial state and cast the Philippines and other “unincorporated territories” as part of and yet apart from US polity. Formal political control of a multitude of Caribbean, Latin American, and Pacific territories meant that the United States maintained discretionary, colonial power to determine political status. As such, liberal democracy incorporated Filipinos, along with Kanaka Maoli, Chamorus, Puerto Ricans, and others, as colonial subjects placed oddly in relationship to the United States.⁹ Beyond formal political colonialism, US biopolitical regimes expanded military and capitalist economic systems across the world, particularly in “small places” in Latin American and the Asian-Pacific regions, to institute development and modernization schemes in the Global South.

The global imaginary in which Filipinos and others were to be “assimilated” was a spatial and temporal arrangement quite apart from the US nation-state or American national identity.¹⁰ Adapting the civilizationist global purview of classificatory human diversity and histories, the US colonial cosmopolitan vision viewed the world as a potentially liberal, inclusionary, modern, and multicultural empire. In a sense, the US-led geopolitical order expanded and adapted settler colonial logics of elimination and incorporation in an international projection of US settler colonial society.¹¹ Instead of being settled by Anglo-Americans or ruled exclusively by a US imperial state, the globalist version of settler colonialism would be nominally governed by the pursuit of each “small place” for maximal modern life. This is not to say that repressive, violent brutality was outmoded by biopolitical administration, but rather sustained by sovereign power over political, economic, cultural, and biological aspects of life possible within a global modern regime.

The productive, perversely life-giving power of US colonialism serves as a conundrum for those of us concerned with the genocidal effects of US militarization and counterinsurgency.¹² From the Philippine-American War of 1899 to post-2001 American military exercises, the Philippines has been shaped by the US global military complex, often termed by nationalists as “foreign imperialism.” The long historical experience makes the US military regime no longer foreign as such to many nations and American colonies of the Asian-Pacific world.¹³ In the post-Marcos dictatorship and post-US bases era, the US military can be seen as directly or indirectly acting in concert with the Philippine government to perform political and structural violence. Native American Studies scholars illuminate a way to understand both the life-securing and deadly nature of US colonial power by using the term “genocide” to think about how US settler colonialism secures the liberal, democratic settler society by incorporating and amalgamating Indigenous peoples and cultures, as well as eliminating and replacing them on stolen land.¹⁴ A crucial understanding of US colonial regimes may require a close reading of various expressions of power used to govern subjects in all areas of society, political economy, and life.

Educational Biopolitics and Benevolent Assimilation

The Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation is notably focused on Filipino populations. Its statement of liberal individual rights foreshadows the administrative and disciplinary power exerted by US colonial social and political education programs. Promises of continuance and unprecedented thriving in the global modern sphere activated a host of institutions and individuals to perform the work of regulating and managing populations, sometimes directly on behalf of the colonial order but sometimes not.¹⁵ During the Philippine-American War, the US military initiated efforts to teach Filipino children how to speak, read, and write English. Universal schooling was part of an American counterinsurgency operation.¹⁶ At war’s official end in 1902, the US civil government formally organized universal public schooling around the singular aim of childhood English language literacy. Throughout 1901, more than one thousand American teachers joined remaining US military personnel to train an estimated 150,000 school children.¹⁷ The educative colonial regime operated on the productive friction between varied exertions of power: repressive domination and generative administration. Educational biopolitics notably involved the absence of a dominating, repressive colonial power and instead the guiding presence of teachers and, in the case of early twentieth-century Filipino children, the educative US colonial state.¹⁸

The purpose of English-language composition classes was to produce a “natural expression, in simple, clear English, of the child’s own thought, not that of the teacher.”¹⁹ English-language lessons had a number of interrelated functions in the US colonial regime. By learning to write and read English, Filipino children gained rational self-determination to name their practical environment and declare intentional action. Secondly, schoolchildren came to self-realization through literacy by locating themselves in a particular geographical place, and in a specific temporal stage of “racial” history, development, and modernization. Lastly, students cast their awakening subjectivities from their local place outward to the imagined world. American colonial sovereignty defined and claimed each object lesson—language, locality, and globality—so that the Filipino schoolchild would claim each one, in turn, for her own.

English-language composition lessons were intimately tied with the subject of geography, particularly in exercises on composing letters to schoolchildren in other provinces and in the United States.²⁰ In 1905, Fernando Maglayo corresponded from Pangasinan, in northwest Luzon, with Forrest H. Reeder in Sherman, Texas, on the border with Oklahoma. In response to Reeder's questions about the Philippines, Maglayo provided a brief historical narrative, a list of agricultural products, and the names of fruits and trees. He proceeded to locate the topological features near his home province, noting that the neighboring mountainous city of Baguio "is cool nearly like your climate there [in] Tejas." Maglayo closes with further information on his social location: "Friend excuse me because I did not answer your letter sooner because I was busy to prepared the examination. Now I am 12 years old and I have two sisters. Now I am going to take a walk to the street and I closed now give my regard to your parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, friends [sic]. Yours truly."²¹ Students were directed to write letters "made up of simple, direct statements, or questions" maximizing the exchange of information about natural resources, distances to trading capitals, customs, and climate. *The Filipino Teacher's Manual* suggested that "native" instructors familiarize themselves with "English-style" letters comprised of polite, succinct, and yet practical rhetoric. In contrast, Spanish-language letters presumably written by most educated Filipinos used too many adjectives and tended to insincerely flatter the recipient. However foreign and colonial the English language, it was taught by American teachers as a transparently descriptive rhetoric that would presumably "leave him [the Filipino child] free to put in any ideas of his own."²² The educative US colonial regime exercised its power not by repressing Filipino thought and expression under linguistic conventions, but by deploying a communicative medium that generated Filipino "originality" and made it mobile in the English-speaking world.

As a colonial technology, English literacy would be used both to develop individual Filipino self-realization and preserve the life of local Filipino customs and culture.²³ The metropolitan language and publishing system were used in particular ways to get at the local colonial world, conveying to the colonized child both the global imaginary and her intimate surroundings. Americans who had taught in the Philippines wrote textbook primers used widely in provincial elementary and

high schools for several decades. To provide English-language reading material for Filipino self-realization, primers such as the 1904 *Philippine Beginner's Book* sought to mirror the student's subjective experience and social world. The presumed sphere of the Filipino child included the natural and rural landscape of the pastoral tropics, family life, chores, play, the new public schools, and American teachers. It also included the child's local "heritage" of cultural myths, folk tales, and sayings, all translated into English, published in the United States and imported into Philippine schools. Through English-language primers, the US colonial system further anchored itself to native, local, provincial, and folk elements of a Filipino protonationalist selfhood. Revaluing the native and local was what invited Filipinos into participating in the colonial, global system.

While educating Filipino children in the desire for the global imaginary, the predominate concern of English literacy remained the student's embodied location. By including folktales and stories relating to "Malayan life" and the pastoral tropics, the *Third Insular Reader*, which went into three reprintings from 1905 to 1914, sought to connect Filipino children to their local cultural and social communities as well as to the "greater world." Colonial schooling directed the Filipino child to become attuned to her immediate surroundings. The student, at first, was to recognize and name ordinary objects around her, in addition to her own body. In geography class, she would draw a series of maps, starting with the roads connecting her homes to the neighborhood school, their town, province, archipelago, and, finally, nearby countries. Objects beyond her field of vision were then abstracted as image and word: if mountains can be seen in the distance, there would be other houses, towns, and children on those mountains. Further away were bodies of water, other countries, and capitals. From this regional knowledge base, the child would go on to study China and then the United States. The schoolchild found herself and her local place within the time-space coordinates of American colonial modernity: a panoramic, multicultural global space and a temporal mode of human civilizational, industrial, and democratic development. The particularly childish nature of the colonial geopolitical imaginary was the creative manipulation of scale, size, and distance so that each faraway place was made intimate while far enough to expand children's reasoning capacities. These creative capaci-

ties were essential to travel, migration, and the kinds of felt and flexible relationships within the US-led world.

Child Settlers and Colonial Futures

In the process of composing English-language descriptions of her practical environment, the schoolchild was an agent of remaking her local civil society into the telos of progress and development. More than two hundred miles south of Manila in Banton Island, public high school students in 1905 completed an assignment to write an English-language speech on social and political matters addressed to their class, their town, and “dear countrymen.”²⁴ The students wrote about the promise of their cosmopolitan futures within the US colonial order. In his speech, V. F. Beltran highlights the opportunity to get a college degree in the United States through the scholarship, or *pensionado*, program, established two years before. He cites the chance to travel to St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904 where a large number of Visayans were exhibited as “civilized natives” and their children attended a model school taught by a Filipina teacher.²⁵ Migration and global exchange both allow young Filipinos to invest in their sovereign ambitions. For many of the students, global forces filtered by US colonialism stimulate Filipinos’ realization of their own political rights and national capacities. As Beltran explains, one of the object lessons offered by Americans is self-sufficiency: “While we remain quiet and prosperous under the United States flag, we must not fail how to learn the very interesting things that they teach us, that is, to govern ourselves.” Close identification with outside world does not seem to result in a loss of identity, deracination, or alienation from place of origin. The new colonial order offers the world as a reflective surface. Beltran declares that colonial rule intends that “we might take more interest in our own aspirations.”²⁶ Bantolan high school students identified their cosmopolitan futures with the US-led global imaginary. Filipino schoolchildren were the self-regulating subjects that would mark the new American world order as a constellation of autonomous, liberal democracies. Imperial sovereignty was expressed by the multitude of flourishing singularities.²⁷

Other students wrote that changes in Banton since US colonial rule assured them of the capacity to follow their innermost desires with hard

work and regular school attendance. Describing school programs of physical exercise and public health, Rufina Alma reports, “Not being sick causes the pupils to learn more because I think none of us wishes to miss even . . . a day or a half day of school without a great necessary for that is againts our selves [sic].”²⁸ On the whole, the students documented the newly normative, self-evident and possible in their lives. They presented practical logics of progress that they defined as industrialized modernity, rule of law, and moral perfection. By reading schoolchildren’s papers as authorizing US colonial power over interwoven strands of biological, political, and cultural Filipino life, we may understand the diffused and generative nature of the colonial regime. In a statement of educational biopolitics, David P. Barrows, US colonial education administrator, asserted that Christianized peoples of lowland Luzon and the Visayan Islands, including Spanish- and Chinese-Filipino mestizos, possessed biological capacity and historical desire to flourish in the modern world.²⁹ In contrast were indigenous and Muslim people who were incompletely or entirely not under Spanish colonial rule: such populations were meant to disappear by decay and critical amalgamation into presumably stronger groups. Specific social locations, especially age and locality, carried Barrows’ message. From the perspectives of their small island and their school experiences over the previous four years since the start of US colonial rule, Bantolan high school students educated their own communities on how Filipinos would persevere collectively under American and global power.

Filipino schoolchildren authored the new “cultural imaginaries” of US occupation, territorialization, and spatial relations.³⁰ To return to the *Filipino Teacher’s Manual* that opened this chapter, I’m interested in the colonial discourses of Filipino schoolchildren awakening to their own reason, expression, and imagination. How might prohibited zones of decay, fantasies of substandard quality of life, and occluded backwardness activate such scenes of awakened capacities? Bantolan high school students illustrated the dystopia of life beyond the US colonial regime, a fantasized version of what Achille Mbembe identifies as “necropolitics,” or the “creation of death-worlds.”³¹ In a speech he titled, “If the Philippines Had Been Independent,” high school student Vicente Villavicencio speculated on the state of lawlessness without US governance: armed conflict, violence, and intimidation by “brigands” would escalate to

threaten foreign investors and incite war with more powerful countries. Less benevolent colonization by Germany, France, England, Russia, or Japan would ensue, possibly closing off imported food and aid needed by a people presently lacking economic self-sufficiency. "Brigands," in American colonial law, included political dissidents and guerrilla insurgents. Accordingly, Villavicencio associated militant revolt against US sovereignty as impractical and, furthermore, deadly to Filipino existence.³² While Filipino guerrillas insisted on their ability to outstaying the more militarily powerful occupying force, colonial "law and order" insisted that well-being, food, security, and a guaranteed future were possible with US sovereignty. Educated to embody the Filipino's collective future as "awakened" people, schoolchildren such as Villavicencio declared effectively, in English, that individual lives within a sovereign Philippines would be marked, at least in the present, by a vulnerable, bare existence.

Children came to the fore of Benevolent Assimilation and colonial biopolitics as a subpopulation made to be distinct from Filipino adults, in a way suggestive of settler colonial projects of institutionally isolating indigenous children for presumed reasons of rescue and civilization.³³ Many American colonial administrators, teachers, and travel writers highlighted the delightfully curious and responsive intelligence of Filipino children; some went further to describe how children's mental acuity faded into dull passivity once they entered puberty. Whether they were peasants or elites, "after a certain age without a start in their more pliable years, the mental soil became hard and difficult to cultivate."³⁴ Several Americans reported that Filipino "adults," including those over the age of fifteen, articulated their own demise by declaring that their "time" had passed. Later, in the interwar period, American colonial teacher and historian Austin Craig confirmed that grown-up Filipinos were as archaic as the horse-driver.

The older generation was to be considered, but the laws of nature and nature's God have unalterably decreed that the future belongs to youth, and not to age. The product of the public schools now growing up are to be given the preference in public service, because they are best qualified for the present system. This is the law of progress, just as, however faithful, the *cochero* has to be replaced by the chauffeur when the automobile comes.³⁵

The potential of the "race" that was found in the child predicted the natural but premature passing of the older generation, classified by the inability to speak English or disconnection from the US-led global imaginary. While marked for death by the "law of progress," Filipino adults did indeed continue to live through the American colonial period. Biopolitical administration located in the adult generation the "antagonisms" to the temporal narrative of colonial modernity.³⁶

In this sense, children were positioned as settlers of US biopolitical colonialism, a separated-out population marked specifically for life. In this context, the 1901 US counterinsurgency campaign in Samar to "kill everyone over ten" was a fatal retribution against Filipino resistance in the form of depopulating an enemy population that nevertheless shared biopolitical concerns with colonial schooling: "awakening" and continued life through the reconstructed child.³⁷ Strictly speaking, Anglo-Americans in the Philippines did not pursue settler colonial practices of eliminating and amalgamating the indigenous and mestizo peoples, dispossessing them of land and sovereignty claims, and replacing existing societies with modern liberal democracies. Nor were Filipino children removed en masse from their parents and home communities or administratively targeted for rescue, as indigenous children were in North America and Australia.³⁸ Rather, the US biopolitical regime in the Philippines expressed sovereign power by holding sway over children's futures and their expressive communication of valuable life.

What was vital about Filipino children was their "natural curiosity" about the world around them. This quality undergirded colonized children's educability, made them take to the "transparent" medium of English, and trained them to be good reporters of local social conditions to global audiences. Childish curiosity was a primitive resource that could be activated for cosmopolitan learning. In early twentieth-century paternalist, civilizationalist racial discourses, all children possessed traits characteristic of their primitive developmental stage: impulse, passion, and rituals of play, as well as curiosity.³⁹ According to an American teacher, children in the Philippines had a distinctive childish and racialist primitivity: "It is among the younger generation that the promise lies. The little ones are bright and gentle and respectful, quite unlike the boisterous denizens of young America."⁴⁰ Filipino children were distinct from adult Filipinos, because the adult is categorically what the

child promises to become: rational, self-directed, and sovereign. While the hierarchical difference between adult and child remained, Filipino adults were excluded from modern reason and sovereignty by colonial discourses infantilizing them as savage or semicivilized. The Manila branch of the racially segregated YMCA responsible for Filipino men's physical and spiritual health deemed the entire Filipino population "as a race . . . in the childhood of their development, . . . exhibit[ing] all the peculiarities, faults and virtues of a rapidly developing adolescent boy."⁴¹ Furthermore, Filipino children differed from "boisterous" Anglo-American boys and young men by performing a distinctive childishness, attentively oriented toward American teachers and the world's wonders.

Given the many ways that childhood and racial primitivity were intertwined, educators and social scientists concurred with US colonial administrators that the precivilized/ preadult stage should be protected so that primitive traits of curiosity could be properly tapped. As suggested by a close reading of English-language primers published for the Philippines, the US colonial order claimed intimate knowledge with the Filipino child's external environment and interior subjectivity. To a greater extent than other US administrative, state-approved texts, school primers asserted this colonial cosmopolitan familiarity with a colonial population. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century US imperialist debates equivocated on whether the federal government could comprehend what anti-imperialist psychologist and philosopher William James called the "secrets of the Philippine soul" adequately enough to design colonial programs of democratic tutelage and capitalist development.⁴² In contrast, colonial administrators confidently and pragmatically identified Filipino children's vital primitivity as the rightful domain of US knowledge. The ontological condition of Filipino childhood was a temporal period and also a political space of dependency delineated by US colonial power. Through their affective and incipiently rational qualities, Filipino children were both governed and incipiently self-governing subjects.⁴³

The Global Filipino and the Neoliberal Present

The US-led global imaginary transmitted in the formal colonial regime in the Philippines preceded and presaged neoliberal globalization of the late twentieth century and our present time. This era of the Overseas

Filipino Worker (OFW) and, more generally, the Global Filipino can be traced backward through the discipline and management of Filipino subjects and populations into an imagined global sphere. Concepts of biopolitical colonial power and liberal settler colonialism may function as tools to continue conversations in Filipino Studies on several interrelated threads. This chapter's main concern of examining the multiple historical forms of US colonial sovereign power extends beyond Philippine postcolonial independence of 1946 to predominant global imaginary of the turn of the twentieth-first century. Neoliberalism advances a utopian global imaginary based on the belief that, to paraphrase David Harvey, market exchange within a fully integrated global economy constitutes the highest ethic of human activity. Sovereign reason organized to maximize prosperity, growth, and innovation also maximizes human connection across political, cultural, national, and economic divisions.⁴⁴ To illustrate, emotional, and commodity exchanges across the Filipino diaspora are inextricably and metonymically related in Filipino Canadian ethnographic narratives of choosing mass-produced products to pack into *balikbayan* boxes for consumption by family in the Philippines.⁴⁵ Utopian neoliberalism, similar to US colonialism in the Philippines, exercises biopolitical power over populations by reconstituting what it means to be human, free, and happy. The neoliberal argument posits that the Global Filipino is far from dehumanized or disempowered.

Diffused power characterizes late modern, democratic neoliberal societies, in which the state sovereignty is transformed both by the power of the economic market and by discourses of neoliberal individual actors who govern themselves in accordance with the market. Throughout the twentieth century to the present, the Philippines has been considered a viable nation and economy if it is part of the US-dominated global political economy. To maintain nation, family, and selfhood, the Filipino subject must reengineer herself into a global worker, accept training, and repack- age her capacities and culture for the marketplace. Comparative advantage and global competitiveness amount to deadly regulation. To take advantage of neoliberal globalization's opportunities, Filipinos undertake training in globalized arrangements of flexible labor, transnational migration, and self-regulatory cross-cultural conduct. This disciplinary education is a central subject of Anna Guevarra's ethnography of Overseas Filipino

Workers, specifically women nurses and domestic workers exported outside the Philippines by a combination of Philippine state and private institutions. The ideal Great Filipino Worker is trained in techno-professional skills and cross-cultural communication and work styles, adaptable, and properly affective. In fashioning a genealogical link between the colonial Filipino child and the postcolonial Global Filipino, my intention is not to infantilize or sentimentalize the “care labor” of Filipina transnational workers. From Guevarra’s analysis, we see that the affective, gendered, and cultural qualities that grant Filipino workers “added export value” in overseas labor markets are rationalized into techno-professional skills and sovereign, bottom-line management of kinship ties.⁴⁶

The gendered and affective aspect of care labor does not negate or replace Filipino sovereign “dreaming in action.” Neferti Tadiar refers to Filipino women’s creative persistence within the framework of their heteropatriarchal commodification.

In its idealized and therefore commodifiable form, [Filipina subjectivity] consists of practices of caring for others, of extending oneself to others, of serving and accommodating others. But even within that norm, it also consists of longing for better things, better worlds for oneself and for one’s own and of bravely venturing out into the world with little or no guarantees of safety in search for new possibilities of life. Filipino subjectivity consists of those practices of dreaming in action that are indispensable to the work and commodity identity that Filipinas are called upon, as *Filipinas*, to perform.⁴⁷

While the Global Filipina/o helps to fulfill basic human needs in the informal and formal service industries, she encounters commodified subjection. Still, Filipinas’ capacity to engage with present-day concerns while speculating alternative and other worlds marks her global purview as one of humanist connection, generative of biological and political life. If indeed the Global Filipina has inherited such a role from US biopolitical colonialism and neoliberal globalization, she may use it to sustain life beyond what Tadiar calls the “norm” of her “Filipina subjectivity,” namely, peoples and cultures marked for decay and death.

In the first place, sovereignty in the Filipino diaspora might reimagine the neoliberal representational scheme that manages and regulates

women OFWs by casting them as either extremely vulnerable or supremely empowered. As Anna Guevarra notes, the Philippine state and private agencies exercise their own biopolitical administration by maintaining that OFWs, by *nature*, are not dehumanized objects, debased workers, sexually vulnerable, or robbed of creative free will. If properly trained to regulate their own behavior within a set of known risks of violence and death, OFWs will persevere in a heroic manner. Neoliberal discourse portrays the overseas worker as a full participant in Philippine national life, a rights-based individual, and as a privatized subject capable of “fighting back.” In a documentary called “Empowered Filipina,” sponsored by the Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi, Filipina businesswomen, health-care workers and domestics are shown to be vulnerable to labor and sexual abuse because they are perceived stereotypically as “immoral,” disposable, and less than human. By including domestic workers, nightclub entertainers, and relatively disadvantaged Filipina workers in this discussion, the film provides a cross-class message resisting sexual and bodily violation. Perhaps not surprisingly, Filipina neoliberal agency requires replacing stereotypes of economic and sexual violability with postcolonial assets of professionalism, cosmopolitan education, and English-language literacy.⁴⁸ The effect is to participate in relegating some people marked by economic deprivation and sexual violability—some domestic, entertainment, and sex workers, for instance—beyond the norms of the valued humanity. Doing so misconstrues the many methodologies and epistemologies of how Filipinos persist creatively in the gray zones between informal and formal economies, for example, or more theoretically in the frictions of biopolitical regimes.

Conclusion: Sovereignty in the Diaspora

Creative capacities are essential for insight into colonialism in the past and for displacing present-day colonialism in all its forms. After all, US colonialism and neoliberal globalization have been quite creative in reproducing localized, ethnic, and national identities for the purpose of expressing sovereign power. The habits, inheritance, and effects that produce present-day colonialism, white supremacy, neoliberal globalization, and settler colonialism also maintain self-regulatory liberal, cosmopolitan identities. For example, the biopolitical idea of

decolonization, especially in the diaspora, has been to create new methodologies based on a stable interior self. As Lily Mendoza has noted of the transnational *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement:

Indigenization from within uses the indigenous culture as, at once, the starting point, source and basis of concepts, methods and theories. The goal is not merely to build upon exogenous constructs and indigenize their use and application. It is to develop its own analytical tools, instruments, and conceptual frameworks using the indigenous culture as the main reference point.⁴⁹

The reclaimed selfhood reproduces the settler colonial practices that Scott Morgensen calls “turning native land and culture into an inheritance granting knowledge and ownership of themselves.”⁵⁰ This centers the nonnative Filipino subject by displacing, celebrating and incorporating indigenous peoples. The objective and the method is a reorienting of the self in an imagined indigenous or nationalist space, in the space of the collective, transhistorical “we.” Indigenization apparently directs the global Filipino’s attention inward, away from the gaze and objects of the foreign, and beyond the confines of the present moment and political world. In this example, Filipinos are made to be complicit in the reproduction of biopolitical settler colonial power. Indigenization maximizes nonindigenous Filipino subjectivity by possessively incorporating the presumed “primitivity” or “precolonial” qualities of indigenous peoples of the Philippines in such a way as to displace indigenous people’s inherent sovereignty claims against the Philippine state and nonindigenous Filipinos.⁵¹

Alternately, self-determination cannot be reduced to preserving Filipino liberal agency within a national or global space purporting to be inclusionary, modern, and democratic. While markedly different, the strategies of indigenization, on the one hand, and the pursuit of inclusion into modern rational politics, on the other, both inherit the effects of US biopolitical sovereignty. Stable formulations of a distinctive subjectivity and rootness in place are defined by regimes of Filipino life and death. To move beyond these regimes may denaturalize and transform the interdependent relationships forged from settler migration, militarization, and neoliberal economic power with others, including indigenous peoples, wherever Filipinos work and live.

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Notes

1. Theobald, *Filipino Teacher’s Manual*, pp. 165, 167.
2. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.
3. Popkewitz, “The Reason of Reason.”
4. Lewis, “Biopolitical Utopianism in Educational Theory,” p. 695.
5. Agamben, *Homo sacer*.
6. Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” p. 13; Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*.
7. McKinley, “Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation”; McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire*.
8. Bianco, *Frontier Constitutions*.
9. Burnett and Marshall, *Foreign in a Domestic Sense*.
10. Kramer, *Blood of Government*.
11. Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*.
12. Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse*; Shaw and Francia, *Vestiges of War*.
13. Camacho and Shigematsu, *Militarized Currents*.
14. Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*.
15. McCoy and Scarano, *Colonial Crucible*; Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*.
16. Racelis et al., *Bearers of Benevolence*; Khalili, “Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency.”
17. Racelis et al., *Bearers of Benevolence*, p. 4. Philippine Commission Report, 1901.
18. Lewis, “Biopolitical Utopianism in Educational Theory.” For an argument on repressive domination, see Constantino, “Miseducation of the Filipino.”
19. Theobald, *Filipino Teacher’s Manual*, 123.
20. Newsom and Newsom, *Newsom Language Lessons*.
21. “A Little Filipino Boy’s Letter”; “Filipino School Children.” Spelling and grammatical errors preserved.
22. Theobald, *Filipino Teacher’s Manual*, 119.
23. Theobald, *Filipino Teacher’s Manual*; Blue et al., *Philippine Beginner’s Book*; Gibbs, *Revised Insular Third Reader*; Rafael, *Promise of the Foreign*.

24. Beltran, "Progress."
25. Philippine Exposition Board, *Report*.
26. Beltran, "Progress."
27. Lewis, "Biopolitical Utopianism in Educational Theory" cites John Dewey and Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.
28. Alma, "Our School." Spelling and grammatical errors preserved.
29. Barrows, *Eighth Annual Report of the Director of Education*, p. 35; Barrows, *History of the Philippines*, p. 5.
30. Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 24–25.
31. *Ibid.*, 40.
32. Villavicencio, "If the Philippines Had Been Independent."
33. Smith, *Conquest*; Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*.
34. McGovney, "Education in the Philippines"; Freer, *Philippine Experiences of An American Teacher*, pp. 275–77.
35. Letter from Austin Craig to Josephine Craig, 11 August 1927, excerpted in Racelis et al., *Bearers of Benevolence*, p. 242. See also John, *Philippine Saga*, pp. 114–15.
36. "[N]ew institutions of the [colonial] state call forth among the colonized new modes of resistance that are not, for all that, easily subsumed into modern categories." Lloyd, *Irish Times*, p. 5; Iletto, "Outlines of a Nonlinear Emplotment of Philippine History."
37. Borrinaga, *Balangiga Conflict Revisited*.
38. Wolfe, "Structure and Event"; Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*; Smith, *Conquest*; Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*.
39. Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, p. 45; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; Sánchez-Epplet, *Dependent States*; Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*.
40. Gilbert, *Great White Tribe of Filipina*, 302.
41. Morrill, "Annual Report."
42. James, "Philippines Again," p. 161.
43. Sánchez-Epplet, *Dependent States*.
44. Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
45. *Balikbayar: Return to the Nation*.
46. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams*.
47. Tadiar, "Filipinas 'Living in a Time of War,'" p. 377.
48. *Empowered Filipina*.
49. Mendoza, *Between the Homeland and Diaspora*, p. 47.
50. Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, p. 18.
51. These concluding thoughts are in conversation with Filipino Studies scholars' on settler colonialism and decolonization in the United States: Manalansan, *Global Divas*, pp. 123–24; See Decolonized Eye; Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse*.

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