

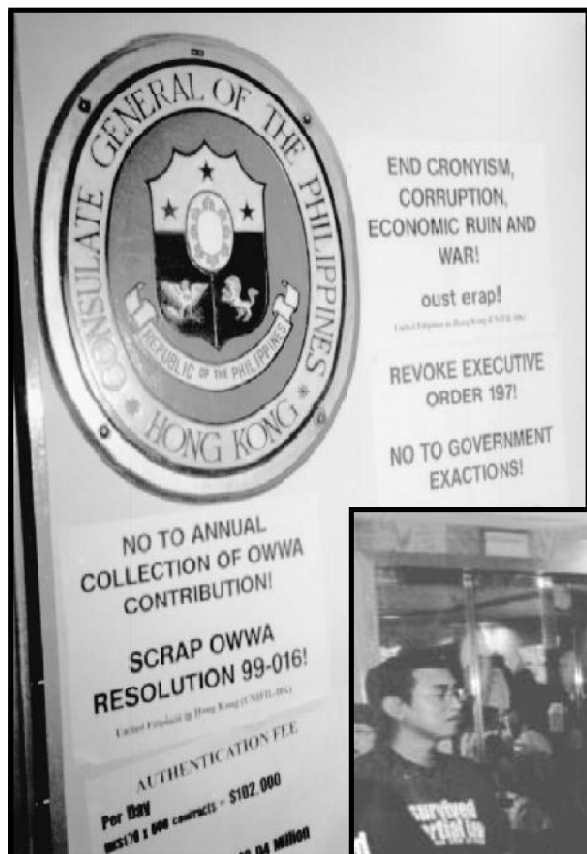
# New Migrant FOCUS



Issue # 13

Oct 2000

A monthly newsletter of the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers - Hongkong (MFMW)



## Kampanya Laban sa Dagdag na Bayarin at Sobrang Singilin sa mga OFWs, Lumalakas!



Lumalakas ang kampanyang isinusulong ng United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-HK) laban sa bagong patakaran ng OWWA na sumingil ng taunang US\$25 na membership fee sa bawat OFW (OWWA Resolution 99-016) at ang pagtataas ng mga singilin sa Konsulado (authentication at notary fees) sanhi ng Executive Order 197 ni Presidente Estrada.

Umaabot na sa mahigit na 13,000 pirma ang nakalap ng UNIFIL sa isinasagawang Signature Campaign laban sa mga nabanggit na singilin sa Konsulado. Kasama ng UNIFIL ang Abra Tinguian Ilocano Society (ATIS) at Cordillera Alliance (CORALL) sa paglulunsad ng nasabing signature campaign. Ang target na bilang ng pirma ay 20,000 sa buong Hong Kong at tinatayang malalampasan ang target na ito dahil sa malakas na suportang

ipinakikita ng mga Pilipinong migrante sa kampanyang ito. Isusumite sa Kongreso at Senado ang mga makakalap na pirma upang mahadlangan ang pagpapatupad ng OWWA Resolution 99-016 at ang pagpapawalang bisa sa Executive Order 197.

Kaugnay din nito, umaabot na sa pitong (7) kongresista at dalawang (2) senador ang nagpahayag ng kanilang suporta sa ipinaglaban ng mga Pilipino sa Hong Kong. Sila ay sina Congressmen ADIONG, Mamintal "Mike" – 1<sup>st</sup> District, Lanao del Sur (LAMP), AROYO, Joker – 1<sup>st</sup> District, Makati City (Independent), HERRERA, Ernesto "Boy" – 1<sup>st</sup> District, Bohol, LEDESMA, Julio IV – 1<sup>st</sup> District, Negros Occidental (LAMP), PAEZ, Cresente "Cris" - Party List (Coop-Natcco), RECTO, Ralph – 4<sup>th</sup> District, Batangas (LAMP), TANADA, Wigberto "Bobby" – 4<sup>th</sup> District, Quezon (LP), at Senators, DRILON, Franklin - Senate President at OPLE, Blas - Senate President Protempore.

Ayon sa UNIFIL, malaking tulong sa pagpapalaganap ng kampanya ang suporta ng midya. Halimbawa, patuloy na lumalabas sa mga libreng Pilipinong pahayagan dito sa Hong Kong ang kampanya ng UNIFIL. Maging sa mga pangunahing pahayagan sa Pilipinas (Philippine Daily

[sundan sa p.2](#)

### What's Inside

A Dark Month for Filipinos **2**

**4** Know your Rights

Our Faith, Our Struggle **5**

**6** This Month's Top Stories

Tribal Filipino Sunday **7**

**8** Martial Law Remembered

## EDITORIAL

# A Dark Month for Filipinos

*The month of September resonates with dark foreboding in Philippine history.*

**On 28 September 1901**, local resistance fighters in Samar attacked the American detachment of 78 officers and men in Balangiga, Samar. Scores died and many more were wounded. It was a victory for a bolo-bearing ragtag army. But American reprisal was vicious. Gen. Jacob H. Smith, a US Civil War veteran and a veteran of the Indian Wars, commanded the Sixth Separate Brigade, created specially to handle the situation in Samar. Smith's infamous words were, "I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn the better you will please me. I want all persons killed who are capable of bearing arms in actual hostilities against the United States."

— *Sunugin ang Samar!* — He wanted to make Samar a "howling wilderness." At the end of 1901, 5 battalions were in Samar. Smith decimated half of the population of Samar and got what he wanted.

Philippine resistance to American imperialism continued. In the south, the Americans had to come up with the .45 caliber pistol to stop dead the Muslim fighters as the Remington and Mausers seemed not to affect them. As the Philippine-American War continued, the American military in the Philippines created and trained the Philippine Scouts, a low-intensity conflict strategy of proxy war, to let Filipinos fight America's war in the Philippines. Later on the Philippine Military Academy was established patterned after the American West Point. The Philippine Scouts later on became the Philippine Constabulary and later on became the Philippine National Police.

**On 21 September 1972**, the then President Ferdinand E. Marcos declared Martial Law.

He abolished Congress and had his opponents and critics arrested. He gagged the press and allowed only the "good and the beautiful" to be published. Dissent was suppressed with an iron fist. He curtailed the people's rights enshrined in the Constitution, the worst of which was the implementation of warrant-less arrests. Dissenters were labeled communists, whether true or not, hunted down, arrested or disappeared, victims of extra-judicial executions. Marcos relied heavily on the military and the Philippine Constabulary headed by Lt. Gen. Fidel "Eddie" Ramos, to suppress dissent. The military got the biggest budgetary allocation all throughout the martial law era. Martial Law bred a military devoid of any understanding of and respect for the people's basic and fundamental rights.



Martial Law also gave rise to crony capitalism — close Marcos confidants, financial supporters and golfing partners cornered huge government projects funded from foreign loans. Corruption in government was endemic that a foreign magazine called it *plutocracy* — the rule of thieves. Many of the Marcoses' cronies and underlings are back in power. First it was Ramos. Now we have Estrada.

**On 17 September 2000**, the Philippine government started bombing Jolo.

The kidnapping of tourists in a Malaysian beach resort by the Jolo-based Abu Sayaff resulted to an all-out military action against the Mindanao Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Maguindanao, some 1000 kilometers away. The massive military operation included armored vehicles and bombings and strafings by the Philippine

Air Force. As in any war, women and children suffered the most. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons sought shelter in government refugee centers. The Abu Sayaff kidnappings gave the government a pretext to destroy the physical structures of the MILF.

Now the military is subjecting some of the Abu Sayaff's camps to massive ground and air operations despite the 17 hostages still in their hands. A media blackout is imposed but as civilian refugees in various government shelters increased, tales of indiscriminate and excessive military activities begin to filter out. What the public tend to forget is that today's military leaders were the junior officers during the Marcos era.

To the mind of the public, there are no differences between the MILF and the Abu Sayaff. The political underpinnings of the MILF and the economic opportunism of the Abu Sayaff are conveniently ignored. They are simply lumped up together either as *Muslim* rebels or *Muslim* terrorists, in other words, reduced into a religious issue. The centuries-old prejudices whipped up by those who benefit from this conflict or by those who knew no better help blur the issues. The fact is, the war in Mindanao is not religious. It is political and economic in nature.

The military solution to the Mindanao problem is not and will never be the answer. Whatever its results will be, this will just add to the pain and rancor the people of Mindanao holds against the central government and these will be passed on to the next generations.

September may well be a dark month for Filipinos. Yet with every commemoration of the dark years of Martial Law, the flames of the Filipino's indomitable will to seek freedom and democracy burns brightly and unceasing. We congratulate all those who marched last September 21. There is still hope after all.

### mula sa p.2

Inquirer, Manila Times, Philippine Star, Manila Bulletin, Today) ay umaabot ang ginagawang paglaban ng mga migranteng Pilipino sa Hong Kong.

Ang kampanyang ito ay sinimulan ng UNIFIL noong May 21 at mula noon ay nagpakita na ng malakas na suporta ang mga Pilipino sa Hong Kong sa kampanyang ito. Sa loob lamang ng dalawang araw ng Linggo ay umabot sa halos 4,000 pirma ang nakalap ng UNIFIL at mga organisasyong kasama nito. Naging matagumpay kaagad ang kampanya dahil hindi naipatupad ang resolusyon noong July 1 at nalipat sa January 2001.

Dahil din sa kampanyang ito ay napilitan ang OWWA na magpadala ng kanyang mga tauhan dito sa Hong Kong. Dumating sina OWWA Deputy Administrator Virginia Son kasama si OWWA Budget and Finance Director Marianito Roque upang idipensa ang pagpapatupad ng nasabing resolusyon. Ganun pa man, hindi natinag ang mga dumalong migrante sa nasabing talakayan sa Konsulado. Bagkus ay ipinahayag nila na ayaw nila sa resolusyon sapagkat ito ay dagdag na bayarin lamang.

Naglunsad na rin ng iba't-ibang kilos protesta ang UNIFIL kaugnay ng mga isyung ito. Hindi lamang sa Chater Road at Statue Square nagkaroon ng mga programa ang UNIFIL para tuligsain ang mga nasabing bayarin kundi maging mismong sa Konsulado ay makailang-ulit na nagsagawa ng kilos-protesta ang UNIFIL.

Noon lamang September 20 ay nagsagawa ng kilos-protesta ang UNIFIL sa Konsulado upang tuligsain ang gobyernong Estrada sa ginagawa nitong pagpapahirap sa mamamayang Pilipino kasama na ang mga OFWs. Ipinahayag ng UNIFIL na ang kahirapan sa Pilipinas ay lalong pinalalala ng gobyernong Estrada sa pamamagitan ng kanyang mga kontra-mamamayang patakaran, ng pagbibigay ng pabor sa kanyang mga kaibigang kagaya nina Lucio Tan, Danding Cojuangco at iba pa, sa paglaganap ng korupsiyon sa gobyerno kasama na ang buong pamilya ng pangulo at ang patuloy na pagkawasak ng ekonomiya dahil sa kaguluhang nililikha ni Estrada tulad ng walang habas na pambobomba sa Mindanao.

Kasabay nito ay tinawag ng UNIFIL na sinungaling si OWWA Administrator Eli Gardiner sa ipinangako nitong konsulatasyon sa mga OFWs bago ipatupad ang resolusyon ng OWWA. Tinutukoy nila ang ginawang pagbisita ni Gardiner dito sa Hong Kong noong September 17 upang dumalo sa isang pagtitipon ngunit hindi natupad ang kanyang ipinangakong konsultasyon sa mga OFWs kaugnay ng resolusyon. Dahil sa paglakas ng kampanya na nagresulta sa pagpapahayag ng suporta ng ilang Senador para dito, naiipit ngayon si Gardiner at wala siyang magawa kundi idipensa ang kanilang resolusyon.

Tinuligsa din ng UNIFIL ang ginawang pagtanggap ni Labor Attaché Esperanze Belmonte ng HK\$20,000 na donasyon mula sa Hong Kong Employment Agencies Association Limited (HKEAAL). Sinabi ng UNIFIL na ang pagtanggap ng donasyon mula sa mga ahensyang dapat ay kanyang binabantayan ay kawalan ng delicadeza. Sinabi ng grupo na magkaiba ang interes ng mga migrante at ng mga ahensiya kaya't sa pagtanggap ni Labatt Belmonte ng donasyon mula sa mga ahensiya (kasama na ang napakaraming manlolokong rekruter), sino ang kanyang bibigyan ng proteksyon?

Hinamon din nila ang opisina ni Labatt Belmonte na ilabas ang financial records ng OWWA dito sa Hong Kong upang makita natin kung saan napunta ang perang nakalaan sana sa Filipino Workers Resource Centre (FWRC – OWWA Center) na mahigit na isang taonang nakasara simula nang mapatay si Glenda Giron-Lorio sa loob ng dating OWWA Center sa Ho Man Tin.

Sa kasalukuyan ay patuloy na nakikipag-usap ang UNIFIL sa iba't-ibang mga organisasyon sa Hong Kong upang talakayin sa kanila kung

bakit kailangang labanan at tutulan ng mga migranteng Pilipino ang mga nasabing bayarin. Layunin ng alyansa na maipaliwanag ang isyu ng OWWA Resolution 99-016 at Executive Order 197 upang maging mulat ang pagsuporta ng ating mga kababayan sa isinasagawang kampanya laban dito.

Halimbawa, sa isyu ng OWWA Resolution 99-016, ipinakita ng UNIFIL kung papaanong labing-isang porsyento (11%) o P72 milyon lamang ang talagang napupunta sa direktang serbisyo sa mga migrante at ito ay ayon sa badyet ng OWWA. Ang malaking bahagi ng kabuuang badyet na umaabot sa pitumpung porsyento (70%) ay napupunta sa mga allowances, sweldo, upa sa opisina, mga kagamitan sa opisina at iba't-ibang gastusin ng OWWA lalo na ng kanilang Board of Trustees.

Ipinakita rin ng UNIFIL na ang sweldo ng mga empleyado sa OWWA ay hindi dapat nanggagaling sa OWWA Trust Fund kundi dapat ay nagmumula sa badyet ng gobyerno. Ito ay dahil sa ang OWWA ay isang ahensiya ng gobyerno na nangangasiwa lamang ng Trust Fund ng mga OFWs. Ganun pa man, mahigpit na nilinaw ng UNIFIL na dapat lamang na dagdagan ang sweldo ng mga empleyado sa OWWA dahil sa napakababa nito ngunit ito ay dapat na nanggagaling sa pondo ng gobyerno.

Kaugnay din nito, ipinahayag ng UNIFIL na maging mapagbantay tayong mga migrante dahil sa bantang pagtataas ng mga singilin sa Konsulado sanhi ng Executive Order 197 ni Pangulong Estrada. Ang patakarang ito ng pangulo ay nagtatakda ng minimum na 20% na pagtataas ng presyo sa lahat ng mga singilin ng gobyerno kasama na ang mga konsulado at embahada ng Pilipinas sa labas ng bansa kagaya ng Hong Kong.

Sa kasalukuyan ay naapektuhan na nito ang Authentication at Notarial Fees (mula sa dating HK\$170 tungong HK\$212.50). Dahil dito ay tumaas na muli ang bayad sa pagpo-proseso ng kontrata ng mga katulad nating domestic helper mula sa dating HK\$255 (Authentication Fee \$170 + Verification Fee \$85 = \$255) tungong HK\$297.50 (Authentication \$212.50 + Verification \$85 = \$297.50). Dahil sa paghahangad ng gobyernong Estrada na makalikom ng P24 bilyon ngayong taong ito, inaasahang magtataas din ang iba pang mga singilin ng gobyerno.

Matatandaan na noong 1998, dahil sa kampanya ng Coalition Against Government Exaction (KOALISYON) na binubuo ng mahigit sa 80 organisasyon ng mga Pilipino dito sa Hong Kong sa pangunguna ng UNIFIL, ang bayarin sa kontrata ay bumaba mula HK\$425 sa HK\$255 na lamang. Dahil sa bagong Executive Order 197, ang tagumpay ng mga migrante sa Hong Kong sa pagpapababa ng mga singilin sa Konsulado ay muling binabawi ng gobyernong Estrada.

Nagpahayag ang UNIFIL na patuloy ang laban hanggang sa tuluyang maibasura ang OWWA Resolution 99-016 at mapawalang bisa ang Executive Order 197. Nakatakda ang dalawang malaking pagkilos sa November 12 sa Chater Garden at sa December 31 sa Chater Road bilang bahagi ng kampanya. Nananawagan din sila sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan at sa mga organisasyon dito sa Hong Kong na nais sumuporta sa kampanya na maaari silang tawagan sa 2810-4379 at hanapin si Connie o kaya'y si Eman. Nakahandang magtalakay ang UNIFIL sa mga organisasyong nagnanais na mapalalim ang pag-unawa sa mga isyung ito. #





## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Know your rights... will be a regular column of our Migrant Focus. It will deal with common and not-so-common problems foreign domestic helpers encounter while working in Hong Kong. Examples and cases that will be mentioned or discussed here are those that we, at the Mission, have handled and are stored in our databank. You can also write to us and we will publish and answer your questions in this section.

# What to Do in Cases of Physical Abuse

Working inside the house of an employer 24 hours a day, at an average of 6 days a week makes a foreign domestic helper vulnerable to all kinds of abuses. One of the abuses that can happen is physical abuse. Physical abuse is the most visible form of abuse and may be defined as any act which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonable, severe bodily or unjustifiable punishment. Physical abuse injuries are those resulting from punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning; in other words, harming the person.

If you are physically abused by your employer or any person inside the house of your employer you have to learn to protect yourself against any injury that will be inflicted on you. How to protect yourself will depend on the circumstances you are in. The following steps may help prevent the person from inflicting harm:

1. The most important thing to do is to get away from the person who will do harm on you, by any means, and shout for help. Make a lot of noise to catch the attention of your neighbors or passers-by.
2. You can run away from that person. If you could get away from the place, it's so much the better. But if you are trapped in a household, find a room where you can lock yourself up and a way to reach the outside world: open the windows and shout out loud.
3. If there is telephone within your reach, **call 999**. Briefly give your name and address to the person who answers the phone and shout for HELP! If you fail to mention any identification for any reasons, do not hang up the phone so that the other end would still be able to trace where you are.

If the injury has already been inflicted on you, you still have to:

- a. Get away from the person to prevent further harm.
- b. If you could do some self-defense tactics, do so. It will give you a chance to delay the attacker and find a person or place to seek help.
- c. Run away from the person or place of the incident and seek for help.
- d. Keep calm once you are in safe place and try to keep record of the incident, date, time, place, etc. This information will help you on your defense later on.

In any case, once you are physically abused you have to report the incident as soon as possible to the nearest police station and file a complaint. In giving the report be cooperative when asked for details of the incident. Details are so important as to how harm was inflicted. Visible evidences like bruises, scratches, burns, lacerations and abrasions, missing or loosened tooth, etc., are very important to document or to take note of. You have to undergo medical examination to check the extent of the injury and to have immediate treatment and medication. Medical report is very important, so you have to ask for a copy for your own file. This will be used later on as evidence. The inflicted area should also be photographed to be used as evidence. Remember that in most of the physical abuse cases, very seldom that there are witnesses, so you will be depending on the veracity and weight of evidences.

*Once you have filed a complaint to the police, your statement will be taken. Make sure to get a copy of your own statement. Get the Police Report Number and the name of the attending officer. You will be told to wait for further communications from them to inform you of developments. Further statements may be taken from you. Each time you give one, make sure to have a copy for your own reference. The officer handling the case will keep you informed of the progress of the investigation or you may follow it up yourself. If the Police have gathered sufficient evidences they will file charges against the person who made the abuse. You will stand as witness against the person who allegedly inflicted the injury. If a decision is made not to prosecute, you will be informed of that decision. This will happen if there are no enough evidences to pursue the case.*

However, when there will be prosecution proceedings, you will be told of the steps to follow. Your case officer will explain to you your role as a witness in the prosecution, the date and place of the hearing and the final disposal of the case, including the outcome of any appeal. If the case is successful and the accused is convicted, your legal counsel will then advise you on what steps to further take.

## Collect No More than is Appointed You Luke 3:7-14

He [John Baptist] said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits that befit repentance" And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusations; be content with your wages" (RSV)

Luke 3: 7-11 has a parallel in Matthew 3:7-10, however, verses 12-14 are found only in Luke. This is consistent with Luke's interest on the poor, the marginalized and those in the periphery of human society.

In reading the gospels, it is always helpful to read them in the light of the various interacting dimensions: religious, economic, social and political that shape the whole picture of the Jewish homeland.

### SOCIAL DISPARITY, REVOLTS AND SUPPRESSION

Judea, Galilee and the other provinces along with other nations, were parts of the vast expanse of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire by then was a commercialized agrarian empire, characterized by marked social inequality. The ruler and the ruling classes received two thirds of the national income while the rest of the population, who actually made up the majority, scrambled for the remaining third. One can therefore find pronounced differences in power, privilege and honor. The ruler and the ruling classes, who live off the peasants, did not only take the surplus from the peasants; the aristocracy took the land from the peasantry. The aristocracy did not only devour the industry and productivity of the peasantry, the ruler and the ruling classes devoured the peasantry's very identity and dignity. Land was no longer a familial inheritance to be retained by the peasantry. Land now was a business commodity to be exploited by the aristocracy.

As more and more traditional small landowner lost their land, the seething social discontent exploded in sporadic uprisings. In the first two hundred years of Roman colonialization, three major revolts occurred. Rome was merciless in suppressing the revolts. "An imperial heartland can export its violence elsewhere and call it law and order, can even call it peace," says John Dominic Crossan. Roman peace, the pax Romana, was enforced by the soldiers of the vaunted Roman Legion.

### TAXATION IN EARLY ROMAN PALESTINE

There were two kinds of taxes imposed in Roman Palestine at the time of Jesus. These were the direct and the indirect taxes. Direct taxes included the Ground/Land/Soil Tax, which is 1/4 of the grains produced and 1/3 of the oil and wine. This can be paid in kind or its equivalent in money. Poll/Head Tax, which is 1 denarius annually, paid by men from 14-65 years of age and by women 12-65 years of age. Income Tax, which is 1 % of the income. The collection of these is under the supervision of the central government.

For the indirect taxes such as tolls and duties, the Roman Empire implemented a tax-lease system. They assessed a district at a certain figure then sold the right to collect that amount to the highest bidder. As long as Rome received the amount due her, the bidder kept whatever is in excess. This was wide open to all sorts of excesses and abuses.

The apostle Matthew before becoming Jesus' disciple, Zacchaeus and the tax collectors Jesus dined with would have been more accurately called toll-collectors.

### RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS

Aside from these Roman taxes, the people have to meet their religious obligations. They are mandated by divine law to give their tithes and other offerings that involved, animals and other products of the land. Aside from these, to meet the "needs" of the Temple, material support for the Temple were collected, more often than not, involuntarily. Thus they may be

# OUR FAITH, OUR STRUGGLE

by Fr. Dwight dela Torre  
IFI, Chaplain, MFMW

considered taxes. These include wood for the sacrificial fire, incense for the services, lumber, stone and precious metals, cloth for the vestments and paraments. Women weave the curtains for the Temple and Judaeans male contributed 2 denarii annually for the support of the Temple.

The people of Roman Palestine may therefore have been the most taxed people in the world at that time.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S ADMONITIONS TODAY

There is a sector in Philippine society that may be the most heavily taxed. They are the Overseas Filipino Workers. If a Filipino wishes to work outside the country, s/he must apply first for a passport and all the clearances that are prerequisites for this. All these documents are not issued for free.

Per Memorandum of Instruction 8, name hiring is prohibited hence all application must be channeled through a placement agency. The placement fee is equivalent to one month's salary exclusive of documentation and processing cost. The POEA processing fee is 100 USD. The applicant must also shell out 25 USD as Welfare Fund Contribution and 900 Php for the annual Medicare fee. A final 100 Php must be paid for the Overseas Employment Certificate.

In the host country, e.g. HK, an OFW pays 212.50 HKD for the authentication of contract and a verification fee of 85 HKD to the Philippine for those whose application to change employment had been approved. Upon the issuance of the visa the OFW pays 135 HKD at the HK Immigration Department. The 25 USD, which used to be a lifetime contribution, has been changed into a per-contract contribution. Now there is an approved OWWA resolution (99016) that is just waiting for implementation in HK, making this 25 USD OWWA contribution into an annual fee.

On top of all of these, President Estrada issued an Executive Order 197 permitting all government agencies to increase service fees of not lower than 20%.

There are approximately 7M of us OFW all over the world. We contribute something like 1B USD annually to the Philippine's economy. What do we get in return from the government for our contributions to the Philippine economy? Nil! Nothing! Sa salita ng mga taga-Bohol, "Jamol!"

In the light of all of these, John's admonitions should still apply today. To the agents of the state and persons in authority John the Baptists still says "Itigil ang pangungurakot sa kabang-bayan. Itigil na ang pagpapayaman ng sarili habang nasa katungkulan! Iigil ang karahasan! Wag maging bantay salakay. Itigil na ang pangangikil sa mga migranteng Pilipino."#

Sources: William Barclay, Luke, Daily Bible Study; John Dominic Crossan, The Historical Jesus; The Birth of Christianity; and The Dark Interval; KC Hanson & Douglas Oakman, Palestine in the time of Jesus; W. Barnes Tatum, John the Baptist + + +

## This Month's TOP STORIES

### PESO CONTINUES TO FALL

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas dipped into the country's dollar reserves to bail out the peso whose plunge to new bottoms beyond P45. BSP has also bowed to raise interest rates and by continuing to intervene in the foreign exchange market to prop up the peso. The twin moves enabled the peso to close stronger at P45.459 to \$1 from P45.53. The new overnight rates, the highest in 17 months, will also likely hobble the central bank's efforts to pump more loanable funds into the economy. "The policy rate adjustments are aimed at addressing the emerging inflationary pressures that could arise from the effects of the weakening of the peso-dollar exchange rate," BSP said. The local currency finished at 45.50 to the dollar from 45.595, breaking seven straight days of decline amid concerns over corruption and cronyism in government and the unresolved hostage crisis in Mindanao.

However, we may see a respite in December when foreign currency remittances by more than four million Filipinos working abroad reach a crescendo during the Christmas holidays.

### OIL PRICE HIKE

OIL company executives yesterday said another round of fuel price increases would be imposed in two weeks' time with the expected further upturn in the prices of international crude with the onset of winter in Western countries. The three major oil refiners Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell and Caltex Philippines raised fuel prices by 45 to 47 centavos per liter on Tuesday, setting the tag price of the cheapest unleaded gasoline at P16.85 and diesel gasoline at P13.05 per liter. Prices of prime commodities have gone up due to the successive fuel prices hike. Prices of petroleum products have increased 14 times since March last year because of the weakening of the peso against the dollar and the rising costs of imported crude oil. Militant groups headed by Kontra Kartel, an umbrella organization of anti-oil price hike groups staged a blockade at oil depots.

### MINDANAO CRISIS

"THE SITUATION cannot last one minute longer. Enough is enough." With these words, aired on national television, a grim-faced President Estrada announced that he had ordered the Armed Forces to launch an assault on the Abu Sayyaf bandits in Sulu and rescue their 19 hostages. War came to Sulu as thousands of soldiers launched a fierce ground assault and helicopter gunships and planes rained bombs on Abu Sayyaf hideouts in the jungles here, while naval blockade trapped terrified residents, and telephone and transportation links to Jolo island were cut off. The military was yesterday checking unconfirmed reports that 12 Christian evangelists were executed by an Abu Sayyaf firing squad after the start of the attack, and that the lone American hostage had been killed during an escape attempt Thursday night or Friday. "I made this difficult decision to authorize the military operations, aware of the grave risks that the hostages and our soldiers would face," "It has become clear that I must act, and act decisively," he said.

### MARCOS MILLIONS

The PCGG yesterday asserted the government's right over the \$35 million Marcos assets which it said it had "uncovered" early this year but which a US District Court has ordered transferred to its custody. Meanwhile, the third prong in the three-way battle for possession of the latest Marcos assets to be uncovered said the discovery of the \$30 million could be part of a plan contrived by the

Marcos family and the Estrada government to delay the termination of a controversial \$150-million settlement agreement. The Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainee Laban sa Detensyon said its suspicions had been aroused after the Hawaii district court deferred anew the termination of a compromise settlement agreement that their US lawyer had concluded with the Marcos heirs. The claimants, however, have not received a single cent from the Marcos heirs since the compromise agreement was signed, and have recently asked the Hawaii court to terminate the settlement so they could again demand for the original compensation awarded them, which has now ballooned to \$2.9 billion.

### LUCIO TAN'S TAX EVASION CHARGES

Denying a hand in the Court of Appeals' dismissal last week of the tax evasion case against his friend and biggest campaign contributor, President Estrada formed a committee of four government officials to study the case. The President formed the committee amid the public uproar over the dismissal of the tax evasion case and allegations that the Department of Justice lost the case because the President instructed the justice official to go easy on Tan. A senator doubted the administration's resolve to pin down Tan, who has been described by Mr. Estrada as the biggest contributor to his presidential campaign in 1998. The creation of a Malacanang committee to study whether the government could still pursue the P25.2-billion tax evasion case against business tycoon Tan, won't erase perceptions of cronyism in the Estrada administration because all the members of the said committee are all Estrada's appointees. An official of the Department of Justice said that the DOJ lost the case because of the President.

### PAYATAS TRAGEDY

"Don't sue us, sue God." This is what Payatas residents told Quezon City Mayor Ismael Mathay Jr. upon learning that he asked the QC Regional Trial Court to compel the residents to pay him P500,000 in attorney's fees and cost of litigation upon dismissal of the P1-billion class suit the victims had filed against him. Mathay had defended himself in court last Thursday by saying the Payatas tragedy, which has so far claimed over 220 lives, was an "act of God." Delia Badion, leader of the July 10 Payatas Victims Organization, said, "If the tragedy that struck Payatas was an act of God, then why is Mathay suing us for damages? Other residents said the tragedy "was man-made. And the man was Mel Mathay." Eighteen of the residents who had relatives who died in the tragedy filed a P1 billion class suit against Mathay et al. The residents said Mathay's defense only showed that he could no longer hide his guilt and that he has resorted to blaming God for the tragedy if only to shield himself and others from criminal liability.

### RP-TAIWAN AIR DISPUTE OVER

Taiwan and the Philippines have settled an aviation dispute that severed air links between them for nearly a year, and agreed to resume flights by October. Both sides will sign a memorandum of understanding in Taipei. The dispute has proved costly for the Philippines whose tourism industry has suffered. In June, Taipei imposed a three-month ban on the import of Filipino workers to special projects in Taiwan. More than 20,000 jobs in Taiwan resulting in about \$300 million foregone wages were lost this year, Philippine recruiters said. In retaliation for the suspension of the air talks, Taiwan imposed a hiring freeze on Filipino contract workers and cut its importation of electronic goods from the Philippines. As an added burden, travelers to and from Taipei and Manila had to go by way of Hong Kong, which added to their expenses and travel time.

Sa ikalawang linggo ng Oktobre ay ipagdiriwang ang Linggo ng mga Katutubong Pilipino, o ang Tribal Filipino Sunday (TFS) na taunang ginagawa ng mga Indigenous Peoples na migrante. Sinimulan ito noong 1986 ng mga taong-simbahan bilang pakikiisa nila sa pakikipaglaban ng mga minorya o katutubong Pilipino laban sa ginawang pang-aagaw ng pamahalaan ng kanilang mga lupain. Nagtitipun-tipon dito ang mga katutubo mula sa ibat-ibang panig ng Pilipinas mula sa Luzon hanggang Mindanao upang gunitain at palakasin ang pagkakaisa para sa pangangalaga ng kanilang mga lupang minana pa mula sa mga ninuno.

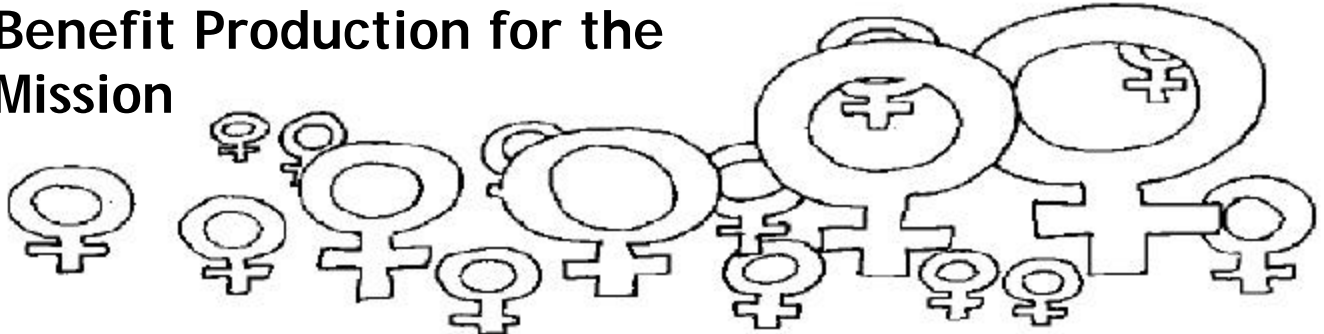
Dito sa Hong Kong, idaraos natin ang Tribal Filipino Sunday sa ika-15 ng Oktobre. Magkakaroon ng ibat-ibang sayaw at awiting nagpapakita ng kultura ng mga taga-Koldilyera at iba pang katutubo ng Pilipinas sa tema ng *"Building Unity Among Indigenous Migrant Filipinos in Hong Kong"*. Ang Supreme Bishop ng Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) at Tagapangulo ng National Council of Churches in the Philippines, The Most Rev. Tomas Millamena ay darating dito bilang panauhing-pandangal at tagapagsalita. Magsasalita ang mga kinatawan ng mga organisasyon sa ilalim ng Cordillera Alliance (CORALL) tungkol sa kasalukuyang kinakaharap nila sa kani-kanilang mga lugar. Magkakaroon din ng magsasalita tungkol sa panginigil sa ating mga migrante

## TRIBAL FILIPINO SUNDAY in Hong Kong



sa pamamagitan ng OWWA Resolution at EO197. Ang mga katutubong Pilipino ay nakakaranas ng dobleng pahirap - maliban pa sa pangangamkam sa kanilang lupain at pagsasamantala sa likas na yaman ay hirap pa rin dito sa ibang bansa ang dinaranas. Sa Oktubre 15, sa pamamagitan ng pagdiriwang ng TRIBAL FILIPINO SUNDAY, ang mga katutubong Pilipino ay magkakaisa para sa kanilang karapatan at kagalingan.

## Monique Wilson Stages Benefit Production for the Mission



An alternative play entitled "The Vagina Monologues" and produced by maverick Philippine theater group THE NEW VOICE COMPANY will be staged at the Fringe Club from October 3-14 featuring three outstanding international actresses - Filipina theater, film and TV actress Monique Wilson, British actress Kate Allert and Hong Kong Chinese actress Colette Koo.

"The Vagina Monologues" reveals a series of different women's stories and experiences, involving their genitalia. The piece was born when playwright, poet, activist and screenwriter Eve Ensler realized that her work, mostly about women, was missing a physiological connection. Ensler says, *"I couldn't be thinking about liberating women without thinking about vaginas. I wanted to know about what women were feeling about their vaginas. As I talked to women, I was so awed and amazed by what people were telling me that I began to think. 'There's a theater piece here'".*

Productions abroad donate a portion of ticket sales to the V-Day Fund, created to support groups working to end violence against women. The New Voice Company supports the PURPLE ROSE CAMPAIGN - a campaign to end the international sex trafficking of Filipino women and children. This is a campaign led by GABRIELA - the National Association of Filipino Women's Groups. In Hong Kong, the production will also support the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers.

# Deja Vu

**Martial Law:  
Never Again!**

For the tens of thousands of the Filipino people who joined the people's action last September 21, the day served as a time to remember the numerous people who suffered, was tortured, or died under the brutal Martial Law regime of Ferdinand Marcos. But the day did not only served to remember martial law and its victims, it was also a day which united the people in a vow to never again allow such tyranny to rule the country.

Led by the September 21 Committee, the rally drew together people from all walks of life and condemned the rising tyrannical rule of the present Estrada regime. The rallyists also lambasted the government for the war it is waging in Mindanao that has victimized tens of thousands of civilians and the militarization in the cities and in the countryside.

Present in the rally were prominent personalities such as Sen. Teofisto Guingona, Cong. Hernani Braganza, former SEC Commissioner Liwayway Vinzon-Chato, Atty. Charito Planas, Fr. Joe Dizon of the September 21 Committee, Sr. Mary John Mananzan of St. Scholastica's College and Gabriela, Elmer Labog of the Kilusang Mayo Uno, and Teddy Casino of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN). Also present were the progressive organizations such as the KMP, Migrante International, Moro-Christian People's Alliance LFS, CEGP, ACT and Anakbayan. Workers, peasants and students from Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog also joined the mobilization.



The different speakers from the different organizations presented their situation especially with regards to human rights abuses against their sector or against the people in their respective regions. Karapatan, a human rights organization, urged the people to continue to support the fight of Martial Law victims for just compensation. This followed after the victims won a partial victory with a court's decision, which gave to the government US\$630M of the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth.

Meanwhile, a stirring speech of a young girl from Payatas brought to the fore, the issue of the urban poor. Che-che, whose family, neighbors and friends suffered during the garbage-slide in Payatas, related the tragedy, which struck her community and how they continue to suffer due to government's neglect. Her simple child-like questions have shown how the present economic and political realities in the country have made the lives of children like her miserable. A woman peasant, on the other hand, told stories about human rights abuses of the government in Southern Tagalog. She ended her speech with a loud call to oust Estrada, which was met by equally loud cheers of support from the people.

A cultural rendition from Sinagbayan moved the audience to tears as they depicted the plight of the Filipino people through a poem, music and dance. The group, accompanied by Tambisan sa Sining and other cultural groups accompanied the marches from welcome Rotonda to Liwasang Bonifacio with their progressive songs.

After the program, the people held a torch march to Mendiola. Along the way they distributed leaflets and shouted slogans which calls for an end to the monthly oil price hike, an end to fascism, for the increase on wages, and for the ouster of Estrada.

September 21 was a day to remember. September 21 was a day to protest for justice, freedom, peace and democracy. September 21 was a day when the Filipino people united and gave the only verdict for the government, which has nothing to show but brutality and violence: Oust Estrada Now!



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## Itaguyod at Suportahan ang New Migrant Focus!

Upang higit na maging makabuluhan ang paglalabas ng Migrant Focus, hinihingi ang inyong tulong at kontribusyon para dito. Maaari po kayong magpadala ng inyong mga balita, litrato, tula, sanaysay, kwento, katanungan o kaya'y mga paksang nais ninyong talakayin ng publikasyong ito. Huwag mag-atubiling ipaabot ang inyong mga komentaryo o mungkahing upang mapahusay ang nilalaman at porma ng Migrant Focus.

Anumang suporta, materyal o pinansyal, ay lubos naming pasasalamat. Ang inyong suporta ay makakatulong upang lalong maparami ang sirkulasyon at abot ng Migrant Focus.

Maraming Salamat at Mabuhay ang Migranteng Pilipino!