
Migrant Workers

CONTENTS

[Excerpts from 'Manila Colonialism'](#)

[The Sri Vishayan Empire](#)

[Migrant Workers](#)

[Letter to a Nationalist](#)

[Productivity and Luxury](#)

[Ethnic Cleansing in the Philippines](#)

[Why Calabar? Why not Samar?](#)

[Brain Drain and Nationalism](#)

[Manila's Traffic Problems](#)

by jed pensar and herb mantawe

Nowadays, it is commonplace to sensationalize the hardships and abuses that Filipino migrant workers endure abroad as laborers and maids. Media has highlighted this so much so that the same phenomenon occurring right inside the Philippines has been overshadowed.

I refer to the migration of provincianos to Manila and the similar hardships and abuses that they undergo. Strangely enough, there has never been a thundering outcry over provincial lads moving to the more industrialized Manila to work as cheap labor.

Neither has there been a whimper about the thousands of provincianas lured into prostitution in Manila. And talking about maids, knock at any middle or upper class household in Manila and you will immediately identify the provinciana maid greeting you from her Visayan accent.

Why the double standard? Is it all right for a poor Filipino to be exploited just as long as his master is also Filipino?

Injustice is injustice regardless of where it takes place. Manila's colonial dominion over the provinces depends on our inability to recognize internal injustice. Each of us has been raised by government and the media to look up to Manila as the political and cultural superior of all the provinces. By this, we have been

conditioned to accept exploitation of provincial human resources in the streets and brothels of Manila alike as being for the betterment of the country.

HOME

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Only a Philippine confederation wherein Manila has been chopped down to the level of the provinces can address the plight of domestic migrant workers. Only under a decentralized system of government can cultural awareness and industrial development spread out among the provinces. Only then will provincial workers no longer gravitate toward the industrial slums of Manila.

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