

Mediating Global Filipinos: The Filipino Channel and the Filipino Diaspora

By

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## **Abstract**

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*Mediating Global Filipinos: The Filipino Channel and the Filipino Diaspora* examines the notion of the “global Filipino” as imagined and constructed vis-à-vis television programs on The Filipino Channel (TFC). This study contends that transnational Philippine media broadly construct the notion of “global Filipinos” as diverse, productive, multicultural citizens, which in effect establishes a unified overseas Filipino citizenry for Philippine economic welfare and global cultural capital. Despite the network’s attempts at representing difference and inclusion, what the notion of “global Filipinos” does not address are the structural and social inequities that affect the everyday lives Filipino diasporans and the ways in which immigrants and second generation Filipino Americans alike carefully negotiate family ties and the politics of their changing identities and commitments.

Taking into account TFC’s impact on audiences, interviews with first- and second-generation Filipino Americans in San Diego revealed that while they were aware of the global span of Filipino communities, even touting Filipino success, diligence, and adaptability that is often featured in ethnic television media, Filipino American immigrants continued to identify with their regional affiliations even as they gravitated to Philippine-based television media. Furthermore, although there are efforts to expand U.S.-based production to address local issues and broaden its reach across different segments of Filipino American audiences, second generation Filipino Americans sought to understand and express their ethnic identities outside of Philippine-based mediums.

*Para sa akoang pamilya. For my family.*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

“[I]n a global system of production, the material imagination constituting the Philippine nation can be seen as a form of labour... [I]ts material dreams are the consequences of – as well as bear consequences for – that international order of political and economic dreamwork, which I call fantasy-production.”

- Neferti X. M. Tadiar

*“Kapamilya, Kahit Saan Sa Mundo / Family, Wherever You Are in the World”*

*“One country, One station, One people”*

*“Tayo ang TFC / We are TFC”*

- TFC Station ID Slogans

Each weeknight, after arriving home from his swing-shift job at a printing company, my father tuned in to the latest “Filipino news” from *TV Patrol*, an hour-long television news program from the Philippines aired on one of the international channels in Northern California. While growing up, one of my daily chores was to record my dad’s favorite Philippine news program, which he later watched from a VHS tape to see and hear about what was happening in the Philippines – political goings-on, the state of the economy, aftermaths of natural calamities, and other breaking news and events. Though I was responsible for the tape recording of the program, I did not care much for the serious news. Instead, as a young teenager, I found the entertainment segment most interesting and kept an eye and an ear on the TV set if only to see the latest trends hitting the country and hear the juiciest gossip on popular Filipino celebrities. As my dad sat down to eat his late-night dinner and watch the taped news program, he might have as well been in the Philippines, even as he was in an apartment in Mountain View, California. Like many immigrants, the ties to “home” that ethnic media made possible shaped and sustained him in the United States. Since then, new technology has enabled him to access news and an array of programs any time of the day, including satellite TV, cable channels, and the Internet that deliver ethnic media content. Yet, the seemingly mundane task of recording my father’s favorite ethnic television program has profoundly connected me to my dad, to Philippine popular culture, and to audiences of Filipino American media.

Aired in countries across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Australia, and North America, The Filipino Channel (TFC), an international subsidiary channel of the Philippine-based ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation, provides programs that promote the Philippines as “home” for Filipinos, and TFC as the television network that brings Filipinos across the world, together. Touted as “a source of homegrown



information” and a “unifying factor,”<sup>1</sup> TFC programs remain a popular medium through which Filipinos outside the Philippines maintain transnational ties and for Filipino diasporans to feel connected with family and friends despite being geographically apart. Referring to its audiences as *kapamilya* or “part of the family,” The Filipino Channel (TFC) programs appeals to viewers inside as well as outside the Philippines and reify state-led calls for unity and nationalism. As one of the network’s slogans calls forth, Filipinos all over the world are compelled to identify as “one people” under the banner of “one country” through the medium of “one station.”

Studies of Asian diasporas call attention to historical and contemporary circumstances of political turmoil and economic volatility that have driven the movement of people from one place to another.<sup>2</sup> In the present-day Philippines, as Filipinos leave in pursuit of employment or to reunite with families abroad, Philippine government and non-government agencies largely manage the departure of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to and from their destinations.<sup>3</sup> This movement of people, scholars have argued, is largely due to increased demand for low-wage service workers from labor-sending countries to fill global capitalist markets in advanced economies and metropolitan centers.<sup>4</sup> Filipino American experiences, as with Filipinos in other parts of the world, also highlight the significantly linked transnational political, economic, and cultural practices that constitute the Filipino diaspora.<sup>5</sup> Media acts as an intermediary in Philippine migrations, much like the state-sponsored agencies that market Filipinos for their potential to be productive workers and citizens. Media also facilitates the transnational activities of Filipinos overseas. *Mediating Global Filipinos: The Filipino Channel and the Filipino Diaspora* examines the notion of the “global Filipino” as imagined and constructed vis-à-vis television programs on The Filipino Channel (TFC). More specifically, I look at how TFC emerged in relation to earlier forms of Filipino American media in the U.S., how programs produced in the Philippines and the U.S. reconfigure Filipino American identities because of state and media interests, and how Filipino American focus group participants receive and view these productions. Given the reach and efforts of these media productions, it is important to examine their development, and to ask producers how they envision

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1. These phrases were in earlier versions of the ABS-CBN Global website (circa 2005) and appeared in TFC promotional segments aired between programs.

2. Rhacel Parreñas and Lok Siu, *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

3. Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Robyn Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

4. Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998); James Tyner, *Made in the Philippines: Gendered Discourses in the Making of Migrants* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

5. Jonathan Okamura, *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora: Transnational Relations, Identities, and Communities* (New York, Garland Publishers), 1998.

overseas Filipino communities and their lives abroad. Through new, globalized mediums, Filipinos abroad, including Filipino Americans concurrently reveal, navigate, and negotiate the conditions brought about by migration. I ask -- how do Filipino and Filipino Americans redefine their identities, relationships, and communities through ethnic media? My project, in part, aims to understand how Philippine media defines the Filipino diaspora as “global Filipinos” – a term used primarily by media in an attempt to promote a shared identity among overseas Filipinos. To do so, I trace the emergence of TFC and examine the production and content of TFC programs. An important aspect of my project involves the Filipino Americans in San Diego who participated in focus group discussions about their engagement with global Philippine media, particularly with TFC television programs. Their insightful perspectives provided an important gauge of how audiences, across gender and generation, receive and respond to the programs by the ethnic television channel.

Ethnic media such as TFC provide a platform for state and non-state entities to characterize the Filipino diaspora as inclusive of migrants and subsequent generations of Filipinos outside the Philippines. I argue that transnational Philippine media broadly construct the notion of “global Filipinos” as diverse, productive, multicultural citizens, and in so doing, establish a unified overseas Filipino citizenry for Philippine economic welfare and global cultural capital. These characterizations can be represented through an individual who is acclaimed as a “global Filipino,” or it can also refer to a general multitude. As such, ethnic media outlets in conjunction with state-led systems, display racialized and gendered portrayals of Filipino diasporans that operate around consumer capitalism and American ideologies. However, interviews with first and second-generation Filipino Americans in San Diego revealed that while they were aware of the global span of Filipino communities, even touting Filipino success, diligence, and adaptability that is often featured in ethnic television media, Filipino American immigrants continued to identify with their regional affiliations and gravitated to Philippine-based television media. At the same time, second generation Filipino Americans sought to understand and express their ethnic identities outside of Philippine-based mediums, despite the network’s efforts to expand U.S.-based production to address local issues and broaden its reach across different segments of Filipino American audiences.

### **The Philippine Diaspora and Global Filipinos**

In its expansion across the Pacific and under the guise of American exceptionalism, U.S. colonialism entrenched racialized and gendered ideologies that promoted Eurocentric ideals and cast Filipinos as “little brown brothers” as it pursued benevolent assimilation.<sup>6</sup> U.S. occupation of the Philippines in the early twentieth century established government, education, and health institutions that

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6. Rick Baldoz, “Valorizing Racial Boundaries: Hegemony and Conflict in the racialization of Filipino migrant labour in the United States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 6 (2004): 969-986; Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

paved the way for gendered migration of Filipino students, laborers, and professionals to the United States.<sup>7</sup> Over the last century, the uneven, yet “special” relationship between the two countries shaped immigration regulations and entrenched inequities between the Philippines, currently one of the top labor-sending countries in the world, and the United States, a first-world nation that has historically relied on the labor of Filipino immigrant workers.<sup>8</sup> These early migrations, in part, served as precursors for institutionally established overseas labor programs during the Marcos regime that promulgated state-sponsored out-migration of what continues to be growing numbers of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who are contracted to work in a range of occupations in the professional, entertainment, maritime, construction, and service sectors.<sup>9</sup> Not only has the United States benefited from the immigration of Filipino workers, other developed countries in need of specific professional and service labor have as well. In large part due to the labor-export economy that has been established, the Philippines benefits from the remittances that Filipinos abroad contribute. Government sponsored organizations such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and labor placement agencies in the Philippines and abroad ensures the supply of domestic, service, construction, and health professional workers bound for top destinations such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup> Filipino women are typically recruited or channeled into domestic service and care giving industries particularly in Asia, North America, and Europe while Filipino men are generally employed in an array of jobs in the service and hospitality industry, but especially in construction work in the Middle East and in sea-based work.

With one in every ten Filipinos abroad, or approximately 8.6-11 million Filipinos overseas, Filipino remittances contribute a significant portion to the Philippine economy in the form of money sent bank-to-bank on a regular basis, business investments, and return visits.<sup>11</sup> Most overseas Filipinos are permanent migrants (4.1 million) and temporary overseas contract workers (3.9 million) while

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7. Ronald Takaki, “Dollar a Day, Dime a Dance” in *Strangers from a Different Shore* rev. ed. (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 315-354; Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

8. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004).

9. Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*; Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*; Choy, *Empire of Care*.

10. The POEA website reports these countries as the top 4 destinations for newly hired and rehired overseas contract workers between 2008-2012.

11. The website of the Office of the President of the Philippines’ Commission on Filipinos Overseas notes a stock estimate of Filipinos overseas to be around 8.6 million in 2009, while a news article linked to the website estimates around 11 million Filipinos outside the Philippines in 2011; also on the website is a helpful global mapping of overseas Filipinos showing the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Canada as countries with the highest concentrations of overseas Filipinos.

others are considered “irregular” migrants (600,000).<sup>12</sup> Data from the POEA show that in 2012, over 2 million overseas Filipino workers had their contracts processed while 1.8 million were deployed (or in the case of over half these, re-deployed, as they were rehires). With rise of remittances closely associated with the growth of the Philippine economy, the latest figures released by the *Banko Sentral Ng Pilipinas* or Philippine Central Bank reports that overseas Filipinos’ cash remittances totaled over 21 million dollars for the year 2012.<sup>13</sup>

The main focus of my study is to interrogate the notion of “global Filipinos,” particularly as media and Filipino Americans engage with the concept and participate in its construction. I highlight and critique the ways in which this prevalent idea, often used in marketing and promotional efforts by the television network and affiliated agencies, paints a monolithic picture of overseas Filipinos, albeit through a display of difference – one in which Filipinos and those of Filipino descent are diverse and multicultural, and more importantly productive citizens for the Philippine “homeland” as well as in their host or adopted countries. The term, in both the singular or plural form, in many ways, have been shaped by the construction of the Filipino as an ideal worker for the demands of developed nation’s economies and global capitalism. The “Great Filipino Worker,” a phrase used by the Arroyo administration invoked pride in the work of Filipino overseas workers even as Filipino workers are marketed to labor-importing countries.<sup>14</sup> In large part, its significance derives meaning from the sacrifice and service of those who have been called *bagong bayanis* or modern-day heroes which is often used to refer to the millions of other overseas Filipino who provide financial resources to the their families in the Philippines and substantial economic support to the Philippine state in the form of material remittances. “Global Filipinos” functions as an inclusive term that captures not only those who migrate primarily to work abroad for temporary or extended periods and eventually return to the Philippines, but also includes individuals who have permanently settled outside the Philippines (including children of immigrants born and raised outside of the Philippines). Apart from but related to the term *balikbayan*<sup>15</sup>, which refer the Filipinos migrants and those of Filipino descent living overseas who maintain national ties through remittances and return visits, use of the term, particularly in media, actively calls on the Filipino diaspora not only to identify with the Philippines but also to collectively associate themselves with all or other Filipinos around the world.

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12. These figures are based on the stock estimates noted by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas on its website.

13. Statistics on Philippine remittances released by the Central Bank of the Philippines can be found at [www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs\\_ext3.asp](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs_ext3.asp).

14. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*, 3-5.

15. The Philippine National Statistical Coordination Board website ([www.nscb.gov.ph](http://www.nscb.gov.ph)) refers to *balikbayans* as “Philippine nationals who are permanently residing abroad including their spouses and children, regardless of nationality or country of birth” and to “those of Filipino Descent who acquired foreign citizenship and permanent status abroad.”

“Global Filipino” also appears as a moniker for the cosmopolitan individual – someone who has been and seen many places outside the Philippines, someone is knowledgeable of different cultures. This individual, however, is often tied to a national identity, and thus is never truly a person who belongs to the world at large or to humanity as a whole. Therefore, a “global Filipino” is not necessarily fully cosmopolitan in the Eurocentric sense of the word. That is, while depictions emphasize the accomplishments, skills, and talents of those who identify as a person from Filipino ancestry, the term serves as a banner for Philippine nationalism by invoking pride in being Filipino, inciting a collective community of Filipinos all over the world and promoting a sense of obligation to other Filipinos and the Philippines. They are called on by state and non-state agencies to participate in nation building and contribute to the economic welfare and cultural values of the country.

As a popular term used to identify and encompass any and all of Filipino ancestry all over the world, it emerged in response to the conditions engendered by the mass out-migration of Filipinos. The call for unifying Filipinos is in response to the increasing scattering of Filipino migrants; and correspondingly the collective posture of the a global Filipino community is an intentional and active construction largely based on the re-positioning of the Philippines as a labor-sending state and the continuous out-migration and resettlement of Filipinos abroad. Rather than a community-based idea from Filipino diasporans, the term and the concept is largely a state and media construct in response to anxieties over the effects of globalization and weakened national ties perceived to decline among latter generations of Filipinos abroad.

### **State and Media Efforts**

In *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*, Anna Guevarra investigates the labor-brokering process between the Philippines and labor-receiving countries to call attention to the management practices of Philippine state and employment agencies that perpetuate systems of migration and the racial and gendered stereotypes of Filipino migrants. Guevarra argues that as part of the labor-brokering process, the Philippines cultivates and sustains its role and image as a global labor provider (that continues to be complicit with First world demands and unable to effectively challenge uneven relationships between countries) is maintained in part by characterizations of the Philippines as producer of quality labor and idealized workers. Though media representations of Filipino migrants as “global Filipinos” tout the value of Filipino overseas workers, it fall short in complicating the differences that exist between Filipinos in the Philippines and those abroad as well as across Filipino communities outside the Philippines. As media efforts attempt to market to the sensibilities and aspire to service the needs of the growing Filipino diaspora, identifying diasporans as “global Filipinos” applies similar cultural logic through state-led initiatives and popular media. When seen as an extension of migrant Filipino worker, Filipino diasporans including children and descendants of Filipino migrants are also targeted in the Philippine state’s other marketing strategies – largely its tourism industry. While the marketing division of the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) fuels out-migration -- brokering Filipino migrant labor by informing would-be migrants of overseas employment

opportunities and at the same time showcasing Filipino workers' skills and talent to potential overseas employers, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) puts substantial effort to draw Filipino diasporans back to the Philippines by enticing both migrants and second-plus generation Filipinos abroad to visit and invest in the country. Like strategies towards Filipino labor migrants that employ a neoliberal approach – that is, social and economic discipline guised as empowerment,<sup>16</sup> these DOT campaigns can be seen in conjunction with and part of broader strategies by the Philippine state to advance the nation's international image and economic standing.

Media, in line with state projects and institutional actors interpolate potential consumers, tourists, and investors. In 1994, ABS-CBN, a Philippine-based media network, launched The Filipino Channel (TFC), the first ever television channel in North America broadcasting round-the-clock Philippine and U.S.-produced shows. It was a milestone for the giant media network, decades after its founder envisioned providing telecommunications services to Filipinos anywhere they may be in the world. The ABS-CBN television network and TFC at once participate in casting Filipinos as ideal workers for overseas employers even as they offer a service to the Filipino diasporan. Representations of “global Filipinos” in popular ethnic media fail to critically engage and examine the unequal power relationships across groups of Filipinos in the diaspora – differences based on their conditions in receiving countries, on whether they have a path to citizenship and the rights they are granted, on their class and education status as well as the occupations they are in. These differences evince unequal, hierarchal relationships not only between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries, but also between one labor-receiving country and another. More than differences between people, these differences expose conditions on a macro scale, on a global scale. Filipino overseas workers along with nation-states are central actors, wherein migrants' bodies serve as “sites for the construction of and contestation over the national body abroad . . . as objects of the nation's struggle for subject-status on the global scene.”<sup>17</sup>

Transnational ethnic media outlets such as The Filipino Channel (TFC) further popularized the phrase to capture a growing market of overseas Filipinos. Examining the notion of “global Filipinos” reveals the conditions, contradictions, and negotiations faced by Filipino diasporans. Even as the term is an active attempt at creating an overarching ethnic identity, it also concurrently expands and diversifies the racial category of “Filipino,” as representations highlight the heterogeneity of the diaspora as it is often used to showcase differing Filipino lives around the world. As such, it opens up the potential to call attention to the migrants' shared experiences of *dislocation*<sup>18</sup> -- encompassing the experience of separation, isolation, racialization – in the hopes that perhaps somehow these connections, dynamic and

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16. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*, 77-78

17. Neferti X.M. Tadiar, *Fantasy Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 124.

18. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.

varied as they might be, can potentially materialize in improved conditions and resources.

With media and state efforts touting global Filipino-ness, it is important to examine whether Filipino diasporans really see themselves as such. How, if at all, do Filipino diasporans understand and live out their globalized identities and affiliations? Interrogating the notion of “global Filipino” begins to answer these questions and exposes dynamics of migration and diaspora between those “left behind,” those who have left, and those who imagine a return. Revealing the intricacies and conflicted inter-personal relationships that emerge as a result of the location of Filipinos in the diaspora, these depiction range from painful to nostalgic, from deferred dreams to full of promise. I call attention to the significance of ethnic media for Filipino diasporans and what representations of “global Filipino” might mean by examining Filipino and Filipino American media productions and by gleaning insight from interviews with media producers, focus group discussions with Filipinos in the San Diego community, as well as conversations with fellow Filipino Americans.

### **Significance of Diaspora**

Diaspora studies, especially as it intersects with cultural studies, provides an opening for the analysis of migration and community formation, and in particular, the impact of media especially as new technologies allow ease of travel and communication that consequently change the ways individuals and communities across the world perceive themselves and interact with each other.<sup>19</sup> It is vital for studies of diasporas to tackle media studies particularly because powerful, popular media representations can function to maintain racialized and gendered ideologies that characterize migrants’ experiences and the structural inequities that drive their conditions of displacement.<sup>20</sup> Media also serves as a conduit through which transnational desires and practices are manifested. Diasporic communities scattered and displaced by legacies of colonialism and the persistence of economic inequities are held together through memory and nostalgia – that is, the longing and anticipation for a “desired” place and the reality of not being (physically) part of it. Diasporan culture rests on the understanding that migrants and exiles construct, what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined communities” wherein the idea of nation (locally or globally) and its imagined inhabitants are in part created through mass media and the politicized consciousness of its members.<sup>21</sup> Diaspora studies not only give importance to the lives of migrants and refugees who have experienced displacement, but also the memories and desires of subsequent generations. As nation-states participate in diasporic practices, they play a role in the construction

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19. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

20. Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, *Media Worlds: Anthropology on a New Terrain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

21. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

of its diasporic citizens in order to recuperate economic and political interests. It is therefore important, as David Palumbo-Liu reminds us, to “distinguish the degree to which any particular instance of ‘diasporic consciousness’ is made or registered” and consider that “the cultural identification with home is more than (merely) sentimental” but rather is a tangible force with real consequences.<sup>22</sup>

Studies of diasporas demonstrate that communities in transit, whether forced or voluntary, bring identities and cultural practices together which are shared and recreated by migrants and the communities they encounter.<sup>23</sup> They often highlight the centrality of agency in the transnational cultural and political practices exhibited by migrants and diasporic people whose daily lives confront the realities of living with the trauma of exile, isolation, and longing for the familiar. However, these tend to focus on the condition of the individual or community, without giving due assessment of the influence of transnational structures, including media institutions, that are part of a “global assemblage” affecting the interactions of individuals and communities who form the diaspora.<sup>24</sup>

Diaspora studies draw attention to the connections between culture and identity including discussions of the production of the racialized subject. Diaspora, as Hall explains, incites “points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather - since history has intervened - ‘what we have become.’”<sup>25</sup> In highlighting that identity is a process of “‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’” Hall’s discussion calls attention to the role of hegemony in this process – hegemony that is produced by colonial past even as these are coopted and contradicted by the present. To put my project in the context of Stuart Hall’s discussion of diasporic identity, the oneness espoused by the “Filipino-ness” promoted by the state and media, is a collective identity constituted by an “imaginary coherence” which is at the same time set alongside the rupture, disjunction of diaspora. Furthermore, if, as Hall states, “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past,” the construction of “global Filipinos” is a process of positioning and repositioning on the part of the Philippine nation-state and of its

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22. David Palumbo-Liu, “Asian Diasporas, and Yet...,” in *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions*, ed. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok Siu, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 283.

23. Donna Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Sandya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

24. Deidre McKay, *Global Filipinos: Migrant Lives in a Virtual Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 13-14. McKay argues that affect plays a large part in shaping the social relations within a system of institutions understood as a “global assemblage.”

25. Stuart Hall, “*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*,” in *Identity: Community, culture, difference* ed. Johnathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225. Last accessed September 14, 2013 online at: <http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/PrimarySources/HallCulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>



diasporans in light of imperialism and its social consequences.<sup>26</sup>

Studies of diasporic communities show the significance of global networks between countries of origin and countries of settlement and how these shaped the construction of migrant identities. In *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Donna Gabaccia traces the historical formation of a cosmopolitan "Italian" culture and the emergence of Italy as a nation that came out of the various groups of people who left Italy for other places at different historical moments. That is, it was through the experience of migration and settlement elsewhere that many migrants were able to imagine and generate a nation of Italians.<sup>27</sup> Studying the relationship between global and local contexts in diasporic communities, Adam McKeown's comparative regional study of Chinese communities breaks from the sojourner vs. settler dichotomy present in nation-based migration literature by highlighting histories of transnational activities that migration engenders and in which migrants engage in.<sup>28</sup> Institutions and individuals transform and are transformed in the process of interaction. Dynamics across different overseas communities, in the context of, rather than separate from the global, capture the ways in which specific regional or national sites influence each other even as they are shaped by broader, global processes.

In relation to diaspora, in *Against Race*, Gilroy critiques essentialist racial identifications and warns us of the pitfalls in placing 'race' at the center of discussions on global cultural productions. While Gilroy acknowledges the historical social construction of race and the legacies of imperialism and racism, he however does not find race-based approaches a productive method for addressing racism and social inequities and is critical of "camp mentalities," which he describes as appeals to race and national origin as social basis for solidarities.<sup>29</sup> Instead, he emphasizes the importance of hybridity in diasporic cultural practices, that underscore how culture, like identities and affiliations are negotiated and dynamic.<sup>30</sup> In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai, too, grapples with the concept of culture and the transformative potential of cultural practices in the face of discrimination and exclusions. Similar to Gilroy, Appadurai finds culture useful for examining global and national politics of identity, rather than as a means of generating identity politics. Rather than completely dismissing the significance of identity politics as Gilroy does, Appadurai acknowledges the important link between the use of ethnic identity to spur political movements and political movement shaping inter-ethnic relations by noting that nation-states often rely on the use of identity politics to drive its political agenda. He pushes for a conscious, strategic use of ethnicity or "instrumental ethnicity" to complicate the way we interrogate the

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26. Ibid.

27. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*.

28. Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

29. Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 82-83.

30. Ibid., 129.

mobilization of identity politics by nation-states and to understand “the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics...frequently associated with extraterritorial histories and memories, sometimes with refugee status and exile, and almost always with struggles for stronger recognition from existing nation-states or from various transnational bodies” that take place in the context of mass migration, mass mediation, and globalization.<sup>31</sup> Diaspora, therefore, allows for subaltern subjectivities to emerge especially in the cultural politics of historically colonized peoples. It serves a means for exposing and expressing what would otherwise be invisible. As Roland Tolentino explains it, “the diasporic experience allowed Asian Pacific cinemas to make visible other spaces and bodies which would not have been imaginable to have existed or implicated, and to transform newer social identities.”<sup>32</sup> Exposing the “problem of location”<sup>33</sup> in uncovering imagined diasporic ties, Tolentino contends that a historical and political understanding of diaspora may serve to both suture or exacerbate the gap between departure and return. Thus, starting from a historicized politics of diaspora is necessary in understanding how and why nations like the Philippines maintains nationalism.

Concerning the increasingly global movement of people, technology, and finance, Appadurai defined mediascapes to involve a complex array of representations and conditions – “images, narratives, and ethnoscapes” – resulting from “the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media.”<sup>34</sup> Media studies present a means – the methodology and platform – for studying the representation of diasporic communities, including Filipinos in the Asian diaspora. Unfortunately, however, there is a lack of literature on how media participates in this process of Filipino outmigration, transition, and settlement. Instead, what is commonly expected and accepted is that Filipinos who are working poor, middle-class, and educated professionals, especially those with resources to migrate, inevitably leave and eventually find their livelihood and futures elsewhere.

The United States and Canada are especially favored as migrant destinations. As a result of long-standing U.S.-Philippine relations, there are larger networks and communities of Filipinos in North America. In these countries, immigration policies present opportunities for family members to eventually obtain permanent residency and pathways to citizenship, in addition to job prospects and the lure of a better life as presented in media. These sentiments can be understood as a result of

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31. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 14-15.

32. Roland Tolentino, *National/Transnational: Subject Formation, Media, and Cultural Politics in and on the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), 167.

33. Here, Tolentino refers to R. Radhakrishnan’s article “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” *Callaloo* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1993) Special Issue: 750-771

34. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 35, 77.

what Guevarra calls the “ethos of migration,” buttressed by state and non-state institutions that benefit from a systematic and pervasive culture of migration.<sup>35</sup> Media has not only reacted to but also propagates the conditions of migration and diaspora. By looking at the production and reception of television programs largely aimed at Filipino overseas audiences we see how media in part maintains the “ethos of migration” even as it attempts to highlight the lives and contributions of Filipino diasporans in the Philippines and abroad.

Traditional media such as television and increasingly new media such as the internet (as it is also integrated in traditional media platforms) have a powerful influence especially among immigrant groups who look to technology as a source of reassurance and as a means through which they may find a surrogate virtual community. Looking at how media functions allow us to see how it can be more efficacious in attending to and providing for the needs of its audience. It enables us to understand the kinds of services that ethnic media delivers and the ideals they hold. Through an interdisciplinary approach, and in the context of Filipino American history in the U.S., my project examines the significance of global ethnic media for the Filipino diaspora and what it means to produce programs for a broad and diverse audience of Filipino migrants and Filipino Americans.

### **Asian Americans and Media Representations**

I situate my project in Asian diaspora studies as a way to critically engage with both global and national contexts that consider the political and cultural negotiations of and between nations and migrants, the dynamics of transnational institutions, and global cultural representations. Asian diasporas shed light on the condition of communities who have been forcibly dispersed as a result of colonialism, war and militarization, global racial and economic hierarchies, and gendered labor demands.<sup>36</sup> To do so, studies in the field acknowledge the multiple, overlapping connections, both actual and “imagined,” that often tether diasporic communities to a common cultural origin or homeland. Asian diaspora studies force us to grapple with inequity – and how race, gender, and migration come together, as diaspora studies benefits from Asian American scholarship that underscores the process of racialization for Asians in the United States and its impact on generations of Asian Americans and new Asian immigrants.<sup>37</sup> Recognizing the history of Asians in the United States, including Filipinos, show how exclusionary immigrations laws, fueled by racist and xenophobic sentiments, shaped community demographics and

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35. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*, 4-5.

36. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok Siu, *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

37. Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian America Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, rev. ed. (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998); Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” *Politics & Society* 27 (March 1999): 105-138

dynamics.<sup>38</sup> Asian American studies, particularly those that address visual culture, give importance to issues of representation; particularly in response to pervasive stereotypical portrayals and lack of representation of Asian Americans in mainstream media that fail to capture the diversity and complexity of Asian American communities.<sup>39</sup> As Asian American cultural studies scholar Lisa Lowe has argued in *Immigrant Acts*, Asian American cultural productions serve as “countersites to U.S. national memory and national culture” while adamantly insisting on the corporeal, material, at times contradictory, ramifications of such productions.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, as Lowe suggest, these sites particularly reveal the heterogeneity – such as across ethnicity, gender, generation, and class – within groups of those whom society might treat as a homogeneous; the hybridity expressed in the cultural practices stemming from such differences, and the multiplicity of subject positions that individuals take up as they are differently located by shifting power relations stemming from the intersections of race, gender, and class and the impacts of capitalism, patriarchy, and race relations.<sup>41</sup>

Asian American and Filipino American scholarship remind us that Filipinos, like other non-white groups in the U.S., have historically been rendered invisible or stereotypically represented in popular media. Such representations have been fueled by long-standing anti-Asian sentiments and growing fears of Asians as both an external and internal threat. Cast as “coolie,” “deviant,” “yellow peril,” “model minority,” and “gook,” Asians have been represented as a threat to U.S. national body, to the American family, as unassimilable and untrustworthy, and “potentially subversive and disruptive to the emergent heterosexual orthodoxy.”<sup>42</sup> Even though as a result of U.S. occupation of the Philippines, Filipinos held special immigration status as U.S. nationals compared to other Asian groups who were considered aliens ineligible for citizenship and barred entry into the United States, Filipino migrants, faced social exclusion, discrimination, and violence like other Asians in the United States.<sup>43</sup> As white Americans took on the task of civilizing the native, Filipinos at once euphemistically considered “little brown brothers,” however, were also seen as threats and a dangerous, “yellow peril” in the United States. Filipino men were increasingly deemed sexually deviant as Filipino bachelors intermingled with white

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38. Antonio Tiongson, Edgardo Gutierrez, Ricardo Gutierrez, ed., *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

39. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Hyun Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Evelina Galang and Sunaina Maira, ed., *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2003).

40. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 4.

41. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 67.

42. Robert G. Lee, *Oriental: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) 6, 88.

43. Tiongson, Gutierrez, Gutierrez, ed., *Positively No Filipinos Allowed*; Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*.

working class women in public spaces, like the taxi-dance halls. At the height of Filipino immigration and a time of increasing competition over jobs in the late 1920's-early 1930's, anti-miscegenation laws in several states, including California, prevented non-white men from marrying white women. Public displays of interracial relations provoked race riots, as xenophobia intersected with racial tensions and fueled violence against immigrant laborers. These prejudicial, one-dimensional characterizations have been expressed in different forms particularly in popular media. However, in ethnic-specific media, where individuals from ethnic minority groups may have more control over the content and distribution of publications and programs, we may find alternative, contesting representations that could potentially better reflect the conditions and sentiments of the community.

### **Immigrants and Ethnic Media**

Immigrant communities rely on ethnic media, in particular, ethnic television, as an important source of information, as it is for millions of adult ethnic Americans in the United States.<sup>44</sup> Studies of media in the U.S. and other countries have shown that radio, television, films specific to ethnic communities serve as a tool for new immigrants to navigate and make a mark in the places where they live as well as remain informed about and connected with the "homeland," as immigrants and their children maintain transnational ties to negotiate their socio-political positions between their ancestral country of origin and their new country of settlement.<sup>45</sup> With lack of coverage of "minority" communities in U.S. mainstream media, it is often the case that ethnic media via newspapers, television, or the Internet, provide a platform for issues concerning immigrant communities and communities of color to be heard and discussed. Providing "spaces" by and for ethnic audiences, ethnic media, such as in print, broadcast, and the Internet, present sites where notions of local, regional, and global identities take shape.<sup>46</sup> These mediums can incite and "imagined community" of global connections informed by nationalism at the same

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44. Based on a 2005 report by New America Media (formerly New California Media) titled "Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight" which can be found online at <http://www.npr.org/documents/2005/jul/ncmfreport.pdf>.

45. Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Langhorne: Gordon Breach, 1994); Simon Cottle, ed., *Ethnic Minorities and the Media: Changing Cultural Boundaries* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000); John Sinclair and Stuart Cunningham, ed., *Floating Lives: The Media and Asian Diasporas*. (St. Lucia Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2000); Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

46. Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin, *Media Worlds*; Enya Flores-Meiser, "The Filipino-American Press" in *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook*, ed. Sally Miller (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Emily Noelle Ignacio, *Building Diaspora: Filipino Community Formation on the Internet* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

time that “mediascapes” invoke “imagined nostalgia” – that is, feeling a sense of loss for “things that never were” and produce a fantasy of what had never been.<sup>47</sup>

Studies attentive to television media from minority, ethnic communities have come out in recent years, with particular attention to its heightened globalization.<sup>48</sup> For example, in the article titled *Geolinguistic Regions and Diasporas in the Age of Satellite Television*, Josu Albizu illustrates how “globalization is not only strengthening the hegemony of a few dominant languages and cultures on a planetary scale, but is at the same time causing the expansion of other geolinguistic – as well as geocultural – regions, especially within the wealthier countries” as the study’s findings show that while English language broadcasts still dominate, there is a diversity of language and countries of origin that transmit to North America.<sup>49</sup> Studies on ethnic media especially tend to focus on the immigrant generation while literature on the role and impact of ethnic media on second- and subsequent generations is largely lacking. Furthermore, few studies on global ethnic media – television in particular – are interdisciplinary and attentive to the historical, political, and social contexts in which production and reception happens.<sup>50</sup>

Decades before the early days of ABS-CBN international operations where television news and drama programs reached largely immigrant Filipino households in the Bay Area via local public broadcasting channels in the nineties (e.g. KTEH in San Francisco/Bay Area), Filipinos in the U.S. had relied on transnational mass media to receive news about the Philippines and connect with other Filipinos in the U.S. through periodicals and newspapers.<sup>51</sup> As with other immigrant communities, extended family and small ethnic markets also played a role in bringing over and distributing videotapes of movies and popular shows in the Filipino community. These were in addition to the ethnic radio programs and local newspapers and magazines already in circulation. With the development, popularity, and growing convenience of television as a medium, TV programs provided an alternative to ethnic print media and enabled a broader and faster reach to immigrant groups who longed to hear the most up-to-date news and watch the latest shows from their

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47. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 77.

48. Josu Amezaga Albizu, “Geolinguistic Regions and Diasporas in the Age of Satellite Television,” *International Communication Gazette* 69, no. 3 (2007): 239-261; Changho Lee, “Korean immigrants’ viewing patterns of Korean satellite: Television and its role in their lives,” *Asian Journal of Communication*, 14, no. 1 (2004): 68-80; John Sinclair “Minorities, Media, Marketing, and Marginalization,” *Global Media and Communication* 5, no. 2 (2009): 177-196; Hamid Nacify, “Middle Eastern Television in Los Angeles,” in *The Media of Diaspora*, ed. K.H. Karim (London: Routledge, 2003).

49. Albizu, “Geolinguistic Regions and Diasporas in the Age of Satellite Television,” 240.

50. Arlene Davila, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of A People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin, *Media Worlds*.

51. Enya Flores-Meisner, “The Filipino-American Press” in *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, ed. Sally M. Miller (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Jean Vengua, “Migrant Scribes and Poet-Advocates: U.S. Filipino Literary History in West Coast Periodicals, 1905 to 1941” (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 2010).

native countries. Through the purchase of airtime in local TV channels, language-specific programs have and still continue to air regularly on weekdays or weekends in local public television and international channels. This is in addition to television programs that are now available via satellite and cable providers. Tied to the growth of diasporic communities and television networks, films have also been distributed and broadcasted globally such as though selected film screenings outside their countries of origin. Furthermore, new media such as the Internet, with online chat capabilities and social networking sites, present increasingly popular and growing mediums that reach and connect communities locally and globally. Ethnic television networks, including ABS-CBN Global have more recently ventured into internet TV as a method of providing specific, direct programs to its subscription-based audience base.

However, television is an important medium to consider on its own terms because despite new forms of media that have recently emerged, TV continues to be a popular and preferred choice among immigrants in the United States.<sup>52</sup> The digital divide can keep some from equitable access to the know-how, equipment, and resources needed such as computers and the Internet. Compared to the Internet, which requires computer competency and cost of equipment and access, TV is a relatively inexpensive, familiar medium that does not require much technological literacy, and provides immediate access to entertainment and information. Unlike local ethnic newspapers that are often only available once a week or feature films limited to its theater distribution or occasional TV airtime, television is in everyone's home, and TV programs are available on a regular, daily basis. Also worth mentioning is the draw that language-specific television programs have by fostering a sense of belonging for loyal viewers who tune in to their favorite shows.<sup>53</sup> Increasingly, television networks are working together with new media (e.g. email, chat, social networking sites) to reach niche demographics, to try out innovative ways to build a relationship with their audience, especially new, younger audiences, and to stay ahead of their competition. For example, networks such as TFC may gather feedback through texts or emails messages. ABS-CBN also "synergizes" its products across different media forms,<sup>54</sup> which possibly extends both its reach and ability to generate much needed profits especially from its

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52. New California Media, "Ethnic Media in the United States: A Giant Hidden in Plain Sight."

53. In an article about TV viewing practices and social belonging, Derrick, Gabriel, and Hugenberg (2009) determined that viewers tend to watch their favorite programs when feeling lonely, while audiences also reported feeling less lonely when watching their favorite programs, which they attribute to television viewing as a "parasocial" activity that heightened viewers' sense of belonging. Though this study was not specific to ethnic media, it nevertheless brings to bear why immigrant, ethnic minorities may be particularly drawn to ethnic television programs given their experiences away from "home" and far from their families.

54. Danie Rose Sedilla, "Selling the Drama: A Political Economic Analysis of ABS-CBN's Promo materials for Primetime Soap Operas" (Master's thesis, University of the Philippines- Diliman, 2006), 127.

overseas markets. In the case of ABS-CBN, it not only owns the TFC Network, but it also markets and broadcasts films produced by its Star Magic studio through TFC. Thus, while television is a significant medium, other forms of media, including the ways in which the network incorporates traditional and new media is important to highlight.

Americans were instrumental in setting up the media infrastructure in the Philippines including business development, investment, and technical training, which led to future broadcasting outlets, including what has become the ABS-CBN network.<sup>55</sup> Moving away from the U.S.-centeredness of mass media studies<sup>56</sup> while keeping in mind the role of the U.S. on media in “peripheral” countries, I examine the development of transnational ethnic media across the Philippines and U.S. as well as the impetus for television producers who mediate messages and ideologies that reach audiences internationally. Contrasting non-mainstream diasporic cinema from western, Hollywood films, Hamid Naficy’s analysis of diasporic cinema calls attention to the specific way diasporans who direct independent, experimental films reflect and express their experience of dislocation and multiplicity.<sup>57</sup> That is, how individuals away from or exiled from “home” stylistically express the range of languages, characters, and narratives in their work. Although I am looking at television programs and segments rather than films, the messages presented resonates with the feelings and messages evoked by diasporic filmmakers. In the context of a Philippine-based international broadcasting corporation with a mission to reach and serve its large Filipino overseas audience base, the producers, audience, and programs on The Filipino Channel including station identification and interstitial segments, demonstrate the intersecting and contradicting elements of diasporic communities. Moreover, understanding ethnic media in both global and local terms – such as by examining producers and audiences as “situated but universal”<sup>58</sup> and the programs they create and consume – we may begin to see how ethnic media informs and transforms diasporic communities at the level of the individual or household even as programs attempt to bring together a broad, global audience. They reveal diverse, contesting representations and expose both the heterogeneity of Filipino and Filipino American communities as well as the points of commonality where disparate groups may connect.

### **Filipino American Studies**

In the United States, Filipino Americans make up the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Asian American ethnic group. According to the 2010 U.S. Census Report, there are currently over 3.4 million Filipino Americans in the United States. The significant

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55. Raul Rodrigo, *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN* (Quezon City: ABS-CBN Publishing, 2006).

56. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin, *Media Worlds*.

57. Hamid Naficy, “From Accented Cinema to Multiplex Cinema,” in *Convergence Media History*, ed. Janet Staiger and Sabine Hake (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

58. Ibid.



increase in Asians, including Filipinos, in the U.S. in the last half-century has in large part been a result of the establishment of family-preference and occupational-based migration through the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, the landmark immigration law that granted special categories for Filipino professionals and their families to enter. Prior to 1965, Filipinos like other Asian groups had been barred entry and faced strict parameters. Unlike earlier waves of immigrants from the Philippines who were generally composed of male Filipino labor migrants, those who arrived after 1965 reflected greater gender and class diversity.<sup>59</sup> My project adds to the growing scholarship on Filipino American communities to reveal how global ethnic media shapes the negotiated dynamics of Filipino American families.

Filipino American studies scholars have brought to light how the history of U.S. colonialism, uneven power relationships between nations, racialized and gendered U.S. immigration laws, as well as social exclusion and discriminatory practices have shaped the formation of Filipino communities in the United States.<sup>60</sup> After the end of Philippine-American war, the first cohorts of Filipino migrants to the United States composed of predominantly male and consisted of elite *pensionado* students. These early Filipino student-scholars who studied at U.S. universities were encouraged to return to the Philippines after learning what was deemed as modern and superior Western approaches at U.S. schools in an effort of Americanizing Filipinos in the Philippines – a process which rested on racialized notions of Filipinos as inferior and backwards in need of American tutelage. Agricultural businessmen from Hawai'i and the West Coast also recruited Filipinos and turned to the Philippines as a source of cheap labor, especially after U.S. immigration laws gradually barred other Asian immigrants from entering the United States in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and leading up to complete ban of Asian immigration with the passage of the Exclusion Act of 1924.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, Filipinos were made available to fill in the labor shortages experiences by U.S. industries that were a result of exclusionary immigration policies. With the Philippines as a U.S. territory, Filipinos were allowed to enter as U.S. nationals until the Tydings-McDuffy Act of 1934 also banned Filipino entry. In 1965, The Hart-Cellar Act legislated occupation-based migration for foreign professionals and established quotas based on family-preference with the goal of family reunification. Together with already existing transnational institutional and social ties, this law spurred contemporary trends in Filipino migration to the United States, which allowed Filipinos already in the U.S. to sponsor family members to enter. With provisions for employer recruitment for in-demand professions the law especially

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59. Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

60. E. San Juan, *From Exile to Diaspora: Versions of the Filipino Experience in the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Enrique dela Cruz, ed., "Essays into American Empire in the Philippines," Special Issue. *Amerasia Journal* 24, no. 2 (1998); Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization*; Choy, *Empire of Care*; Yen Le Espiritu, *Homebound: Filipino Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Tiongson, Gutierrez, Gutierrez, ed., *Positively No Filipinos Allowed*.

61. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*.

channeled many Philippine educated health professionals, deemed desirable workers because of their proficiency in the English language and their training in U.S.-established schools in the Philippines.

Like today's OFWs recruited in specific labor industries in other parts of the world, employment-based Filipino migrants in the United States hold working visas (specifically H1B or H2B), many as professional workers contractually recruited to fill labor shortages in niche occupations in health or education sectors. While their mode of immigration may parallel other Filipino workers abroad, the U.S. is regarded as an ideal destination because of there is a pathway to citizenship. Compared to the majority of Filipino migrants who may primarily hold less prestigious occupations and who remain in temporary resident status throughout their overseas stay, Filipino migrants entering the U.S. or Canada are thus considered more fortunate especially because the ability to hold permanent residency status or better yet, citizenship in the migrant receiving country is a significant factor in determining the rights and resources to which migrants are entitled. Undocumented Filipino migrants, regardless of the country in which they reside, also compose a large part of the immigrant community. Often labeled by Filipinos as TNTs or "*tago ng tago*" (in hiding), many undocumented Filipinos in the U.S. initially enter legally but overstay their visas or work permits. However, for the most part, Filipinos entering the United States do so through family reunification provision, which grants permanent residency status and allows them to obtain legal citizenship after a period of residence in the country.

Like other immigrant communities who maintain material, emotional, political transnational ties with their "home" country, Filipinos in the United States continue their commitments despite being thousands of miles away and many years removed from the Philippines. According to a 2012 Pew Research Report on Asian Americans, 52% of Filipino Americans regularly send remittances to their families in the Philippines. Remittances often arrive in the form of currency sent through banks or money remittance services or in the form of material goods shipped in *balikbayan* boxes that are sent through cargo delivery services to close family members on a regular basis or special occasion. These transnational practices are not only facilitated by money transfer and cargo delivery businesses in the Filipino American community but also propped up by Philippine institutions that enable financial and cultural exchanges to take place. Enterprises that offer these services are advertised and promoted in ethnic media outlets and family and cultural expectations reinforce transnational exchanges, even as media also facilitate the continued connection by fostering affect, nostalgia, and feeling of belonging.

In light of scholarly works on diaspora, race, and media, my project asks: How does the Philippine state harness and deploy migrant and diasporic identities? How do migrants and diasporans reconfigure their heterogeneous, multiple, hybrid identities? To begin to answer these questions, this transnational, inter-generational project draws from diasporic and media studies and extends Asian diaspora studies, Filipino American studies, and media studies scholarship across geographic and generational boundaries. It brings these elements together by investigating the emergence and development of global Philippine media in the context of political and economic conditions affecting Filipino communities, the

emerging and prevailing cultural messages found in Filipino and Filipino American media productions, and the reception of transnational television programs by target audience groups.

## **Methods**

My study involved several methodological approaches. Personal and professional networks, both in the Philippines and the U.S., were vital in helping me locate resources and contact key persons, including interview subjects and focus group participants who contributed their time and input and made my research possible. In the Philippines, I examined archived newspaper and magazine articles about the development of Philippine television and telecommunication at the Lopez Museum library and at the University of the Philippines - Diliman. Contacts from the Philippine Department of Tourism also provided me with promotional materials and digital copies of print advertisements. I conducted field research in the Philippines between September 2008 – February 2009, and besides the texts I had examined and collected, I also conducted several interviews including 3 representatives from the Philippine Department of Tourism (including a high-ranking undersecretary and 2 senior staff members from Team North America) and 2 head producers from ABS-CBN Global in the Philippines. Additionally, I visited the ABS-CBN headquarters and observed live studio tapings of popular programs.

In the U.S., I interviewed 1 former ABS-CBN TFC North America writer-producer and conducted 3 focus group discussions of immigrant and U.S.-born Filipino men and women who watch or are exposed to TFC programs on a regular basis. As a regular viewer of TFC programs, I incorporated content analyses of selected, popular TFC programs. For a previous research project, I examined archived materials by early Filipino students and laborers related to the circulation of early Filipino community publications housed at the Bancroft special collections library at the University of California – Berkeley, and included my analyses of these texts as well.

I reviewed the notes and data I collected from archives and analyzed transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions, as well as content from TFC programs to determine the patterns subsequently organized into broader themes. Information from these sources is presented across the chapters of the dissertation, with each chapter highlighting particular examples and texts.

## **Overview of Chapters**

In chapter 2, I introduce the different forms of community media established by Filipino immigrants and subsequent generations from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. For Filipinos in America, this includes the circulation of magazines, newspapers, and television programs. More specifically, I trace the history of ABS-CBN, and particularly the emergence and expansion of TFC, as the network's development reflects the changing political and economic state of affairs in the Philippines and the growing Filipino diaspora to the U.S. and other parts of the world. Interviews with ABS-CBN producers reveal the considerations and contradictions that they face when conceptualizing and implementing new programs, products, and services for Filipino audiences abroad.

In chapter 3, I examine Filipino American viewers' engagement with transnational Philippine media, particularly with television programs offered on The Filipino Channel, to show how audiences receive and interpret the programs and its messages as well as to understand how ethnic media shapes their identities and lives as immigrants and second-generation Filipino Americans.

In chapter 4, I argue that TFC station identification segments, through affective sentiments of nationalism and cultural pride, call on the disparate array of Filipino audiences abroad to collectively identify as "global Filipinos" by assuming the role of *bagong bayanis* or modern-day heroes who dutifully maintain transnational ties. Media representations of the "global Filipino" on TFC not only attract a loyal audience market, but also serve as a part of a state-led apparatus that reminds migrants to be economic benefactors for the nation and to be cultural representatives on behalf of the Filipino race.

In chapter 5, I examine how TFC serves as a platform for the Philippine Department of Tourism and non-profit agencies to reach audiences of Filipino diasporans by embracing and branding Apl de Ap, a Filipino American celebrity, as a *global Filipino*. Harnessing nostalgic longings of a new generation of Filipinos outside the Philippines to endorse tourist attractions, to promote cultural awareness, and to encourage philanthropic engagement, TFC videos featuring Apl de Ap evince the negotiated, complex commitments Filipino Americans must carefully navigate even as they extend Philippine state-led projects that define Filipinos abroad as diverse, productive, multicultural citizens.

In the epilogue, I conclude the dissertation with a summary of the major arguments from previous chapters. I reflect on the process of carrying out this project and offer some thoughts, questions, and future initiatives related to the Filipino diaspora and media.

## Chapter 2

### Changing Media for Filipinos in America and the Diaspora: Early Filipino American Media and the Development of The Filipino Channel

Overseas Filipinos have used different media platforms to reconcile and respond to their *dislocations*. Rhacel Parrenas in *Servants of Globalization* has defined dislocation as the common lived experience of partial citizenship, family separation, contradictory class mobility, and social exclusion across communities of Filipina migrants regardless of context.<sup>1</sup> As Filipino American studies scholars have demonstrated, sites both real and virtual present spaces where Filipino communities form and organize.<sup>2</sup> This chapter looks at forms of community media produced by Filipinos in the U.S. including early student 'zine publications and Filipino community newspapers with particular attention to the emergence of The Filipino Channel (TFC) as the first successfully launched television network for Filipinos outside the Philippines.

The longstanding relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines predicated by U.S. colonialism and the labor-export economic model initially set-up by the Marcos administration has propelled and fashioned the migration of Filipinos not only to the U.S. but also to other parts of the world. This includes elite *pensionado*<sup>3</sup> students educated in U.S. universities in the early 1900's, laborers recruited by agricultural and fishing industries to work in Hawai'i and the west coast in the 1920's, health professionals and students recruited by hospitals in U.S. cities – most of whom arrived after the Immigration Act of 1965 opened the doors for health professionals to work and live in the United States, and family members sponsored by earlier immigrants – most of whom arrived as a result of the Family Reunification Act from the 1965 immigration law. These different groups have, over the last century, created networks of communities that produced and relied on ethnic media. We see this in the development of periodicals among early Filipino students, in the resilience of local community-run newspapers, and the emergence of ethnic television programs aimed at overseas Filipino audiences. Media for

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1. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.

2. Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Emily Noelle Ignacio, *Building Diaspora: Filipino Community Formation on the Internet* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Jean Vengua, "Migrant Scribes and Poet-Advocates: U.S. Filipino Literary History in West Coast Periodicals, 1905 to 1941" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010).

3. *Pensionados* were the first group of Filipino immigrants to the U.S., with the exception of Filipino sailors who jumped ship in what is now Louisiana during the Manila Galleon trade. The early *pensionado* cohort were mainly young men who came to the US to study and then eventually return to the Philippines to be leaders in developing the country after the US set up systems of government, education, and public health.

Filipinos in America reflect the construction of Filipino identity as well as how Filipinos and Filipino Americans understand and negotiate responses to community concerns, at both the local and global levels.

With regards specifically to the television medium, the establishment of an international Filipino television channel was made possible from the momentum and expansion of a newly re-launched ABS-CBN network in the Philippines after years under government sequestration, the knowledge and know-how of Filipino professionals in the U.S. who had previously worked for the network, the vision and monetary investment by the Lopez family to set up the infrastructure for international operations, and a critical mass of diasporic Filipinos that serves as its audience base. To start off, the fledgling ABS-CBN international subsidiary tapped into the migration of Filipinos and patterned itself after where the largest concentrations of Filipinos were present. In doing so, it carried out the Geny “Kapitan” Lopez’s vision to make ABS-CBN programs available to all Filipinos wherever they may be, by extending the network’s reach across the archipelago, and later outside the Philippines. This expansion was made possible because of investment in satellite technology and an international office as well as devoted staff willing to implement the overseas operations.<sup>4</sup> Interviews with ABS-CBN producers reveal the extent to which specific and overarching conditions of Filipino diasporans shape the conceptualization and implementation of new programs for Filipino audiences abroad.

In this chapter, I call attention to the different forms of community media established by Filipino immigrants from the early student-run publications at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to print newspapers over the past several decades, and television programs in the present. Tracing these different media forms remind us that Filipinos outside the Philippines have historically maintained transnational ties even as they use media to negotiate and respond to the conditions of their new location. I discuss the history of ABS-CBN and the emergence of TFC to show how the network’s development reflects the changing political and economic state of affairs in the Philippines as well as in response to the growing Filipino diaspora in the U.S. and other parts of the world.

I argue that Philippine-based producers, in response to the shifting diasporic subject, showed awareness to the kinds of changes and negotiation faced by Filipinos abroad at the same time as they targeted diasporans as a viable audience and consumer market. Philippine-based producers closely link their conceptualization of the Filipino diaspora with the culture of migration<sup>5</sup> and with the advantages of maintaining transnational ties. Philippine producers understood

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4. Ernie Singson, “The Franchise Row,” *BusinessEye*, April 1989. “The Rebirth of the Television Leader,” *Manila Chronicle*, Oct. 28, 1989.

5. Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4; Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 23, 205.

their role to be providers of content that served as a source of escape and emotional support, as well as programs that uphold “identity anchors” wherein the notion of “global Filipinos” provides a means through which Philippine producers may denote such content. In contrast, my interview with a second-generation Filipino American writer-producer revealed divergent approaches to the conceptualization of the audience. While ABS-CBN producers in the Philippines who were largely creating programs for various TFC global regions relied on an audience made up of temporary and permanent Filipino migrants (though they acknowledged the growing importance of young audiences not necessarily born in the Philippines), the U.S.-based former TFC-North America Filipino American producer I interviewed hoped to reach a wider audience primarily of young Filipino and Asian Americans through programs that brought awareness to the issues and concerns most pressing to these potential viewers. The divergent perspectives of the Philippine and U.S. producers I interviewed illustrate critical differences, shaped by understandings of the Filipino diaspora and the role of media, in envisioning and implementing new TFC programs, products, and services.

### **Early Filipino American Ethnic Media in the United States**

Jean Vengua’s extensive archival research on early Filipino writings in the U.S. demonstrates how print publications served as “centers of coherence” where contributors voiced community concerns and showcased literary talent, which then shaped their individual and shared identities as Filipino writers, advocates, and community organizers. Vengua’s examination of these early writings found that anti-colonial movements in the Philippines influenced nationalist, pro-labor, populist writings by Filipinos across both countries. While in the United States, Filipino students published university-based magazines that also circulated across cities in and outside the U.S. (e.g. UK and the Philippines) and that documented the concerns of college-educated Filipinos temporarily residing in the United States.<sup>6</sup> For example, the earliest Filipino students at UC Berkeley produced small publications such as the *Filipino Students' Magazine* that covered students’ activities (such as Rizal Day), a section on the accomplishments of fellow Filipino individuals in other parts of the country, and daily concerns, including advertisements and photos that reflect them. Due to the financial crisis in the late-1920’s, decreased funding support from the university and government cut off the flow of Filipino *pensionados* and the publication of their campus-based periodicals. However, Filipino American newspapers continued to flourish with support from labor unions and community donations, in addition to the amount raised from advertisement

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6. Mario E. Orosa, “The Philippine Pensionado Story,” <http://www.orosa.org/The%20Philippine%20Pensionado%20Story3.pdf>. Last accessed 9/4/2013. Based on archival research, Orosa details the international student program and its prominent participants, also noting that early groups were from prominent families who could afford a university education, while latter groups were selected based on an examination.

revenue.<sup>7</sup> Jean Vengua's research brings to light the literary function of these early newspapers and how they served as early spaces where Filipino American literature became public and egalitarian (compared to the Filipino literature in the Philippines).<sup>8</sup>

Since their early inception at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Filipino American newspapers have experienced periods of growth and decline with respect to the conditions of Filipino migrants in the United States and alongside economic and political developments taking place in the Philippines. In the article "The Filipino-American Press," Enya Flores-Meisner comprehensively examines the development of ethnic Filipino American newspapers and periodicals in relation to the historical events that shaped Filipino communities in the United States over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Filipino American community newspapers proliferated in the 1920's and 1930's which went in hand with greater numbers of working-class Filipino who were not exclusively students. She found that often these small, fleeting presses emerged from informal groups and networks of colleagues and friends who put together the local publication to inform the local Filipino community. These early local presses provided venues for community organizations to cover local affairs most pertinent to the Filipino community served by the publication. Unlike the government-funded student-run periodicals by *pensionado* or "fountain pen" boys, Filipino American newspapers were run by largely working-class Filipinos who were agricultural laborers at the same time as they took on roles as writers and staffers for local newspaper publications with wide Filipino American community appeal such that "the typical newspaper provides something for everyone."<sup>10</sup> Despite the unique elements of each publication as it catered to the geographical region they served, Flores-Meisner points out that there was an underlying uniformity across them —particularly the primary use of the English language and coverage of news from Filipino American communities throughout the U.S., events by hometown associations, news about the Philippines and other places where Filipinos had migrated – similarities which she attributes to the small, interconnected community of journalists that often staffed these publications, and the shared attempt of newspapers to appeal to a wider, national audience in the United States. As Flores-Meisner describes it, the newspapers gave a way for issues of organizational and social exclusion to come forward, with writers and staff comprised of students, labor organizers, entrepreneurs, and journalists from the Philippines who brought in their different interests, talents, and resources, and to some extent different perspectives to engage

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7. Vengua, "Migrant Scribes and Poet-Advocates," 65-66.

8. Ibid.

9. Enya Flores-Meisner, "The Filipino-American Press" in *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, ed. Sally M. Miller (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Flores-Meisner charts them as follows: 3 publications (1900-1910), 5 publications (1911-1920), 21 publications (1921-1930), 20 publications (1931-1949), 16 publications (1941-1950), 12 publications (1951-1960), 7 publications (1961-1970), 37 publications (1971-1980), 1 publication (1980-1981).

10. Flores-Meisner, *The Filipino-American Press*, 87-88.



the local Filipino community readers. These identities were not always distinct; for example, there were individuals who were community leaders even as they managed the business of running a newspaper publication. The newspaper served as a nexus of information for immigrants to find out about establishments that catered to Filipinos or welcomed Filipinos. Capturing the pulse of the Filipino community, these newspapers were a physical manifestation of both the tangible and the intangible space that Filipinos were locally carving out.<sup>11</sup> Filipino newspapers provided one of the few places for Filipinos in the U.S. to articulate concerns and disseminate information.<sup>12</sup>

The notion of “Filipino-ness” began to emerge in the 1930’s and continued into the 1940’s as ethnic presses over the years “managed to articulate ‘Filipino-ness’ within the framework of the communities at home and abroad; against the social structure of the host society; or against a myriad of cultural symbols.”<sup>13</sup> With newspaper staff working across different community publications, the work of producing a newspaper in various locations and for the broader Filipino community in American strengthened the ties among them, despite regional or linguistic differences from Philippine hometowns.<sup>14</sup> Newspapers presented an opening for addressing issues related to Philippine sovereignty as well as discussions concerning the status, rights, and treatment of Filipinos in the United States. Flores-Meiser alludes to Bulosan to consider that perhaps in the process of speaking out about injustice, Filipinos in the United States though from different regional or “tribal” backgrounds in the Philippines, began to collectively identify as Filipinos under a shared cause.<sup>15</sup> There was a tension about advocating for Filipinos’ Americanness and patriotism, even as there were grievances about the exclusion and discrimination that Filipinos faced. Individuals who were deemed successful – perhaps as exemplars of having successfully assimilated to U.S. society - held special recognition and attention as they were featured in the publications. As the most pressing issues varied, the focus of the newspapers also shifted. Flores-Meisner gives the example of the granting of U.S. citizenship to Filipinos who were previously only allowed to be U.S. “nationals” wherein community newspapers shifted their attention to local issues once the broader effort for recognition was thought to have been successfully achieved. Newspapers also became a way for Filipinos to prove their value to the U.S. nation -- as Filipinos enlisted in the U.S.

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11. Rick Bonus, in *Locating Filipino Americans*, on the idea of virtual community space for Filipinos in the United States.

12. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, rev. ed. (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998); Antonio Tiongson, Edgardo Gutierrez, Ricardo Gutierrez, ed., *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

13. Flores-Meisner, *The Filipino-American Press*, 92.

14. *Ibid.*, 90.

15. Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (Washington: University of Washington Press), 1973. Originally published in 1946, Bulosan poignantly captures the collective experiences of migrant Filipino workers who faced and challenged discrimination and exclusion, through a personal narrative of his life.

military during WWII, for example -- the newspapers highlighted their contributions.<sup>16</sup>

Filipino American newspapers grew steadily with frequent turnover, termination, and readership, with only slight variations with each passing decade, with the exception of the precipitous decline in 1960's and the sharp increase in the 1970's.<sup>17</sup> The decline between the numbers of newspapers noted by Flores-Meisner between the 1950's (16 publications) to the 1960's (7 publications) requires further research to explain. Moreover, as a direct consequence of martial law in the Philippines, in the 1970's there was a resurgence in Filipino American news presses, as Flores-Meisner explains how "bans on the Philippine free press caused an exodus of journalists and political critics to the United States and Canada in numbers sufficient to staff anti-Marcos publications and encourage the financial backing of the dislodged political elites."<sup>18</sup> With ample people power from dissidents and greater financial resources from ousted Filipino journalists and politicians, Filipino American newspapers proliferated.

### **Transnational Appeals by Filipinos in America in Early Print Media**

Like the more current versions of transnational ethnic media in the United States, early publications tied what was going on in the Philippines with the lives of Filipinos in America. Filipino *pensionados* – many of who returned to the Philippines after their studies – wrote about development of Philippine industries, including transportation and agriculture, in the student magazines. Those who went back went on to help develop these industries, including becoming involved with newspaper publishing, upon their return.<sup>19</sup> On the complex negotiations Filipino students faced that surfaced in the early student magazines, Vengua writes: "the youthful editors and writers of The Filipino Students' Magazine found themselves already embroiled between opposing camps on the issues of freedom of speech and Philippine independence during their sojourn in the United States, and asked by both sides to question how they were using their education and privilege."<sup>20</sup> As Vengua points out, these choices and actions represent an example of the *bayanihan* spirit in action, wherein Filipino student writers used these early and oftentimes fleeting publications to communicate about the needs of Filipinos in U.S. to the Philippines – such as the devastation after 1906 San Francisco earthquake. They also voiced concerns, anxieties, and protests about the demeaning representations and notions of Filipinos as uncivilized such as in the World's Fair exhibits.

While conducting archival research at the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library for a class assignment, I came across documents that I surmise were originally written

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16. Flores-Meisner, *The Filipino-American Press*.

17. Flores-Meisner, *The Filipino-American Press*, 94.

18. Flores-Meisner, *The Filipino-American Press*, 94.

19. Mario E. Orosa, "The Philippine Pensionado Story,"

<http://www.orosa.org/The%20Philippine%20Pensionado%20Story3.pdf>. Last accessed 9/4/2013.

20. Vengua, "Migrant Scribes and Poet-Advocates," 27.

around the 1930's as three typewritten newspaper editorial articles by a Filipino community leader and journalist in California.<sup>21</sup> These type-written articles, I believe were intended to be sent to the Philippines, particularly to a specific Philippine newspaper, as an accompanying separate handwritten letter sought a newspaper to publish the articles and make known the plight and concerns of Filipino workers in the United States.<sup>22</sup> An excerpt of the handwritten letter states,

*Sa paniniwala kong isang tungkuling mahalaga ng bawa't Pilipino na umaalis sa atin at tumutungo sa ibang lupain ang magmansid at makiramdam sa kanyang lupang tinunguhan, ninanais ko na ako ay mag-abuloy sa inyong pahayagan ng tudling na nauukol sa Pilipino at sa mga taong nakakasakop sa atin. Tangi pa sa rito, nais ko pang magpadala ng balita sa inyo upang malaman ng ating mga kababayan diyan and aming ginagawa dine. Ang lahat ng ito ay aking gagawin ng walang bayad. Inaakala ko, na sa aking ipapadala sa inyo at inyong ilalathala, and ating mga kababayan diyan ay magigising sa katotohanan.*

I believe that it is an important responsibility for every Filipino who leaves for another land to observe and be conscious of the land to which they have gone to. I wish to contribute to your newspaper an editorial regarding Filipinos and the people whose country has us colonized. More than this, I wish to send you news so that our countrymen may be aware of what we are also doing here. All this, I will do without payment. Given my opinions, I hope that by sending this to you and your issue, that our countrymen there [in the Philippines] will be awakened to the truth.

It was powerful to read from original documents the words of Filipinos then (as they do today), which resisted the overt exclusion they encountered and shed light on the racism they faced. Reading the testimonies demonstrated not only the spirit of Filipino nationalism but also the anti-colonialist work that Filipinos engaged in at that point in time. A transnational political, economic, and social consciousness was evident in their words. One article titled "*Kalagayan ng mga Pilipino sa Amerika ay Lumulubha* [The Condition of Filipinos in America is

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21. While these documents, which I located under the James Earl Wood papers collection at the Bancroft Library originally had the name of the author on the by-line, these were crossed off—perhaps for confidentiality reasons especially since they were used in research by James Earl Wood. From what I gathered, the letter is from one of the leaders of Anak ng Bukid, Inc. [Children of the Mountain, Inc.] a Filipino alliance in California with ties to a Filipino newspaper in Salinas, California. James Earl Wood collection on Filipinos in California, BANC MSS C-R 4 Box 2 Folders 17-18, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

22. I translated all documents as best as I could and consulted online Tagalog-English dictionaries to clarify certain words. I am responsible for any errors.

Worsening]” calls attention to the racism and degradation Filipinos faced in the United States. And excerpt of which follows:

*Ang suliranin ng manggagawang Pilipino sa Amerika simula ng magkagulo sa Watsonville ay totoong lumulubha. Ang kalagayan naming dine ay katulad ng isang anak na ulila sa ama at ina at wala ni kamag-anakan man lamang tumingin. Wala kaming kinatawan na dapat lapitan at hingan ng tulong.*

The plight of working Filipinos in America ever since the trouble in Watsonville has really worsened. Our state is also like a child orphaned from its father and mother with no relatives caring for it. We do not have an organized body to which we can approach for help.

Exposing the racial discrimination faced by Filipino workers, the author alludes to the importance of a de-colonial consciousness for Filipinos in the Philippines and the United States. Such consciousness, the author suggests, especially stems from having lived in the land of the colonizer, having been in the United States.

*Inaakala ko na mahalagang bagay na malaman ng ating bayan ang kailangan naming dine, lalung lala na ang pagtingin ng mga Amerikano sa Pilipino. Ang pagtungo naming sa bansang ito ay hindi upang tumuklas ng ikasusulong ng pagiisip at tumaklas ng ikabubuhay lamang, nguni't upang magmasid at makiramdam din sa pakikisama sa ating ng mga nakakasakop sa ating bayan. Inaakala ko na ito ay isang mahalagang tungkulin ng bawat Pilipino na tumungo sa bansang ito...Ang nagpapanigas ng apoy ng galit sa Pilipino ng puti ay hindi dahil sa naiingit sa mga manggagawang Pilipino kungdi sa tunay na pagkarimarim sa lahing Pilipino.*

In my opinion it is important that our country knows of our needs, especially given the way Americans view Filipinos. Our coming to this country is not only to develop our minds and find a living, but also to observe and be conscious of the relationship with our country's colonizer. It is my opinion that this is an important duty for every Filipino who comes to this country...The flame of anger towards Filipinos by whites is not fueled because of their jealousy of Filipino workers but instead by their real loathing for the Filipino race.

The second article titled “*Ang Lahing Pilipino ay Kinakailangang May Sariling Wika* [The Pilipino Race Needs Its Own Language]” demands that different Pilipino languages be taught in schools at the same time it also critically questions the use of English and Spanish as the official languages used in government and education.

*Bilang paghanda natin sa pagsasarili, kinakailangan na ang lahing Pilipino ay mayroon ng kaniyang sariling wika, HINDI HIRAM sa iba. Hindi tayo maaaring magpugay at gumalang sa ating watawat at awitin nating malungkot ang mga pinagdaanang buhay ng ating mga amahan, at ang ating salita ay Ingles...Kung dumating ang panahon na ang bawa't Pilipino ay nagsasalita ng*

*Ingles, masasabi ng daigdig na ang mga Pilipino ay mangmang at kung hindi dumating ang mga Amerikano ay hindi tayo magkakaunawaan sa ating sarili.*

As a way of preparing for our independence, the Filipino race needs its own language, NOT BORROWED from another. We cannot salute and respect our flag and somberly sing about our ancestors' past, and yet our language is in English. If the time comes that every Filipino speaks English, then the world may say that Filipinos are illiterate/uneducated and if not for the Americans we [Filipinos] did not/could not understand each other among ourselves.

The third article, "*Pangalagaan Natin ang Ating Sarili* [Let Us Take Care of Our Self/Own], puts forward a call to Philippine sovereignty, particularly in having Philippine and Filipino-owned and controlled industries, and encourages Filipinos to support such enterprises. As Filipinos at this time were arguing for sovereignty and independence from American occupation, the author of the article is weary of the economic control that American occupiers have over large industries in the islands and foresees a growing militarization of American forces in the Philippines:

*Lalung lumalaki ang pinakikinabangan ng mga Amerikano sa Pilipinas, lalu namang palalakin at dadamihan ang sundalo ng Amerika sa ating bayan upang pangalagaan ang pinakikinabangang ito. Ito nga ang sinasabi ni Gabaldon na bawa't isang dolyar na ilalagay sa ating bayan ay isang pako sa kabaon ng ating kalayaan...Kung tunay na nais nating magsarili, kinakailangan na magpasimula rin tayo ngayon ng paggamit ng ating sariling gawa, ating sapatos, damit, at mga iba pa. Unti unti nating alisin sa atin ang "pagmamahal sa iba kaysa sa atin." ...Hindi tayo magkakaroon ng kalayaan at ang ating gagamitin at kakainin ay manggagaling sa iba.*

America has lucrative interests in the Philippines, and this will especially increase the number of American soldiers in our country to support their interests. This is what Gabaldon meant—every dollar invested in our country is a nail in the coffin of our freedom. If we truly wish to be independent, we need to start using our own products, our shoes, our clothes, among others. Let us slowly remove our notion of "loving others instead of ourselves." ...We will not achieve freedom if what we use and eat comes from another.

Thus, even before the advent of television, Filipinos abroad, such as the writer of the articles, continued to hold interest in the state of the Philippines as a nation even as they wanted to make known to their fellow Filipinos "back home" the struggles of Filipino workers in the United States. Moreover, they linked the plight of Filipino workers in the United States to the movement for Philippine sovereignty from the U.S. occupation in the Philippines.

### **Contemporary Ethnic Newspapers and the Filipino American Community**

Today, ethnic newspapers for Filipino readers are often available free of charge in small Filipino-owned establishments (e.g. restaurants or eateries) and

large grocery store chains that cater to Filipino American shoppers. Studies about the formation of Filipino American communities by Rick Bonus and Benito Vergara respectively devote a significant portion of their work to examine the role of Filipino American newspapers including articles and advertisements contained in them.<sup>23</sup> Bonus' study centered on Filipino newspapers and readers in the San Diego area while Vergara's study focused on Daly City in the San Francisco Bay Area. Bonus asserts that local ethnic newspapers, like other physical and virtual spaces where immigrant cultures thrive, serve as alternative sites for representation – one in which immigrants have the power to transform and challenge mainstream norms.<sup>24</sup> For Vergara, the local ethnic newspaper and the efforts that went into publishing it, illuminated Filipino Americans' "desire for transnationality" as the publication evinced complicated transnational practices that at times were oriented to the Philippines even as they also served as proof of assimilation in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Typically, these newspapers are printed in English, with few words, references, or articles in Tagalog, Cebuano, among other Filipino languages. News articles appearing in contemporary Filipino American newspapers, as in the case of the *Philippine News*, include articles rewritten or republished from stories originally from Philippine newspapers.<sup>26</sup> Like their earlier counterparts, these newspapers also struggle to keep financially afloat and thus heavily rely on advertising revenue to continue printing and distribution. Those who worked for the *Philippine News*, Vergara points out, faced employment uncertainty particularly as the viability of the newspaper was at the mercy of subscription sales and advertising revenue. Staff held it as a side job in addition to their regular day jobs, and did so with the commitment to producing noteworthy stories that mattered to the Filipino community. Debates over what should go on the front pages, about balancing "good news" and "bad news," new content versus reprints, were all part of the considerations that editors made. News about the Philippines often dominated, which typically included "bad news" about natural calamities and political upheavals, as well as breaking stories that the newspaper's owner particularly found compelling, including stories related to the anti-Marcos movement.<sup>27</sup>

The advertisements in local Filipino community newspapers often address the concerns of Filipino immigrants in the United States, particularly immigration and citizenship matters. Advertisements address the issue of immigration status, while telecommunications, grocery stores, cargo shipping and money remittance are geared to the transnational practices of Filipino migrants. Telephone card or long-distance telephone service ads provide information about cheap telephone rates for calls to the Philippines. For Filipino American newspapers, immigration and telecommunication advertisements often bring in the most revenue, as they

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23. Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans*; Benito Vergara, *Pinoy Capital: The Filipino Nation in Daly City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

24. Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans*, 130.

25. Vergara, *Pinoy Capital*, 80.

26. Vergara, *Pinoy Capital*, 92.

27. *Ibid.*, 97.

contribute over \$10,000 per month.<sup>28</sup> Grocery store ads, such as those for Asian or Filipino markets, announce sales or promotions for specialty items often only available in these ethnic markets, while money remittance and courier “*balikbayan* box” businesses publicize services for money transfers and shipment of items in standard cargo boxes from Filipinos in the U.S. to their loved-ones in the Philippines. As Bonus eloquently explains, “the power and appeal of these ads lie in their addressing the persistent liminality of the Filipino American immigrant experience—the desire to keep the lines humming between (at least) two homes, and the need to prevent even the semblance that ties have been severed, often across wide geographical distances.”<sup>29</sup> At the same time that these advertisements help sustain the newspaper’s meager budget and support its existence, they serve as a conduit to providing for the emotional and material needs of families in the Philippines even as they conjure nostalgia and material resources for Filipino migrants overseas.

Print media for Filipinos in the U.S. and the Philippines are directly or indirectly linked. As mentioned earlier, newspapers in the U.S. often reprinted or minimally edited stories that had been written in a Philippine newspaper. When choosing the headline or front-page articles, editors often chose stories oriented to Philippine life and these typically prevailed over U.S.-based stories.<sup>30</sup> It is also interesting to note that the establishment of *Philippine News*, a Filipino American newspaper bear ties with ABS-CBN media and the Lopez family. Established in 1961, the Philippine News started out as a U.S. edition of the Lopez-owned Philippine newspaper, the *Manila Chronicle*.<sup>31</sup> Disagreements between Lopez and Esclamado resulted in a split between the two enterprises and the start of *Philippine News* as an independent Filipino American newspaper that did not rely on the Manila Chronicle as its Philippine counterpart.<sup>32</sup> Years later, however, a fiscal crisis led Escalamado to sell a significant portion of the newspaper which then reestablished the ties with the Philippine media outlet.

### **Developing the ABS-CBN Television Network**

In the last 20 years, a major shift has occurred in the delivery of Filipino American media – the advent of specific cable and satellite channels that offered television programs for Filipinos outside the Philippines. Its content are not only different because of the new forms of media that have materialized but also because of the changing demands of audiences. One of the most significant changes has been the emergence of transnational Filipino channels by leading Philippine networks

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28. Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans*, 138.

29. *Ibid.*, 142.

30. Vergara, *Pinoy Capital*, 97.

31. According to Vergara, Alex Esclamado, founder of Philippine News, had worked for the *Manila Chronicle* under Eugenio Lopez, Sr, who sent Esclamado to the U.S. to study law after successfully carrying out union-busting efforts in the Philippines.

32. Vergara, *Pinoy Capital*, 84.

ABS-CBN and GMA.<sup>33</sup> Tracing the development of television in the Philippines helps us understand how ABS-CBN established the first successful international television channel from the Philippines. There was an ideal combination of a growing market of overseas Filipinos, a visionary leader and determined investor in Eugenio “Kapitan” Lopez, Jr., and the technological developments in satellite television broadcasting that made it faster and cheaper to reach audiences in distant places. In the development and expansion of radio and television in the Philippines, we see the influence of the United States and the events (e.g. WWII) and systems (e.g. economy and education) that brought people, ideas, and goods across the Pacific. In the early years of television in the Philippines, television sets, especially the advent of color TV, were a mark of status – “the latest pigmentation of the prestiged class” which millions of Filipino households clamored for given the five-fold increase in the number of television sets between 1960 and 1965.<sup>34</sup> Hand in hand with the availability of TV sets was the development of television programming, and with regards to ABS-CBN in particular, the network’s establishment relied on the wealth and resources made possible by the prior successes of network owners in industries such as publishing and radio broadcasting. The development of Philippine broadcasting, some scholars have traced, shows American influence that was at the same time tailored and reinterpreted to the cultural mores of Filipino audiences.<sup>35</sup>

In *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN*, Raul Rodrigo chronicles the establishment of the ABS-CBN broadcasting and the legacy of Eugenio “Geny” Lopez, Jr. also known as “Kapitan,” in shaping the growth and development of ABS-CBN from its early beginnings that resulted from a broadcast company merger struggling to hold fiscal and political footing, to a media empire by the Lopez family, to its martial law sequestration, and resurrection post-Marcos years, and its continued expansion to international Filipino markets.<sup>36</sup> In recounting its history, Rodrigo begins with the role of Jim Lindenberg, an American ex-GI who founded Bolinao Electronics in 1946 primarily to supply radio hardware to the French colonial government in Indochina and to Philippine radio companies, before expanding to program and content development by producing and selling radio shows. The network’s emergence can therefore be traced to war remnants (equipment and personnel) that have been reconfigured and repurposed – surplus radio hardware from American occupation and an American soldier who stayed behind. Touting Lindenberg as the “father of Philippine television,” Rodrigo narrates: “Jim was a child of two worlds – American by birth and citizenship, Filipino by upbringing and later by marriage. It seemed somehow fitting that

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33. Although local international channels offer Filipino programming for about an hour each day, these cable and satellite channels differ because they deliver predominantly Tagalog-language content 24-hours everyday that are marketed to overseas Filipinos.

34. “Philippines Discovers Wonder of Living Color in T.V.,” *The Manila Chronicle*, May 12, 1967.

35. Elizabeth Enriquez, *Appropriation of Colonial Broadcasting: A History of Early Radio in the Philippines, 1922-1942* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2008).

36. Raul Rodrigo, *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN* (Quezon City: ABS-CBN Publishing, Inc., 2006).



someone like Jim would one day bring the technological wizardry of one homeland to benefit the other” and together with Antonio Quirino, who owned Alto Broadcasting Systems, in 1951, Lindenberg was able to shift from radio to television, financially and politically building the beginnings of the first Philippine television network.

The merging of Lindenberg’s Bolinao and Quirino’s Alto Broadcasting provided a link between hardware distribution (e.g. selling TV sets) and the political clout and additional financial resources needed to attempt a television network start-up. The early months were filled with instability, which led to an eventual rift between Quirino and Lindenberg in the management of the company and the acquisition of the companies by the Lopez family. In the early 1950s, early TV networks struggled to fill airtime and relied on its affiliate radio networks’ to keep monetarily afloat. Financial turmoil sometimes kept staff from getting paid on time. Despite these difficulties, the desire to successfully establish functioning network, staff and engineers of a burgeoning Philippine television industry sought out exposure and training opportunities in the United States including at the RCA Institute in Camden, New Jersey. Harvard-educated Geny Lopez credits Jim Lindenberg with his early training in the technical and business elements of television broadcasting after he was delegated by his father, Don Eugenio Lopez, Sr., to head the family’s media enterprises and lead its expansion from print and radio to television upon his return to the Philippines in 1953. In 1957, the Lopez family bought out both Bolinao Electronics and Alto Broadcasting for 700,000 pesos and assumed its debts.

ABS-CBN in its current form started as an assemblage of the many disparate pieces of media owned by the Lopez family. The Lopez family had long owned the Manila Chronicle, which was later part of the Chronicle Broadcasting Network, and its acquisition of the Alto Broadcasting Services provided the means for establishing a dominant broadcasting corporation in the Philippines that controlled print, radio, and television. Making ABS-CBN a unified network was not just a legal issue; it was also a matter of creating a unified culture for all employees who were once part of separate organizations. Towards this effort and to brand the burgeoning network giant, the company’s logo was established in 1966, and the official name of ABS-CBN in 1967.

Eugenio Lopez’s vision for the expansion of ABS-CBN in the Philippines – to capture markets throughout Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, and later the world, paved the way for ABS-CBN’s growth and development. He demanded excellence and loyalty from staff and artists from the onset. He promoted the idea of service – that the network’s purpose is first and foremost to serve the Filipino audience. Considered ahead of his time, Lopez pushed to “create a warm and personal feel for what often felt like an impersonal medium,” thereby securing that ABS-CBN not only get the viewers’ attention and loyalty but also their business.<sup>37</sup> Moving away from canned programs to live broadcasts, entertainment shows such as *Hiyas Ng Tahanan*

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37. Rodrigo, *Kapitan*, 116.

were a major hit.<sup>38</sup> Whereas in the 1950's the TV set was a symbol of high social status, by the 1960's television sets were increasingly more common in households in the metropolitan Manila and such that by the middle of the decade 40% of households in the area owned TV set, of whom 60% were middle or lower class households.<sup>39</sup>

To make Geny Lopez's dream into reality, to unite the Filipino audience through "bridges on the air," ABS-CBN became an increasingly central pillar in Philippine media, especially with its acquisition of the Philippine Telegraph and Telecommunications Company (PT&T) and such that by 1972, ABS-CBN comprised of 21 radio stations and 6 TV stations. Lopez had said: "You could put all the gross sales of the other stations together and they were not even half of the total gross earnings of ABS-CBN. We were by far the largest network, and we were the most dominant force in broadcasting."<sup>40</sup>

However, the Marcos administration also started to crack down on journalists and activists who were vocal dissenters of the military regime. Television, especially a broadcast giant such as ABS-CBN, was a powerful medium that broadcast the opposition's views and delivered content deemed sympathetic to the pro-democracy cause. With the exception of a state-run television channel and newspaper, most media outlets were eventually shut down or censored by the government. Marcos seized ABS-CBN and imprisoned political opponents and perceived threats including Geny Lopez, Jr. Despite the network's closure, former employees held a reunion each year to keep up with what was happening and as a way for Geny to take stock of his "troops" and show loyalty for the network family. The demise of ABS-CBN did not keep former ABS-CBN employees from staying connected, rather, it gave a means for staff to show and solidify their loyalties:

Every year for the next 13 years, some 100-200 ABS-CBN employees would hold a Christmas reunion...the network staff would gather to feed one another's hope that the next year would be the one that would see them all together again back at the Broadcast Center...the tradition held all the way until Dec 1985.<sup>41</sup>

The Lopez family later regained ownership of the network after the 1986 People Power Movement ousted Ferdinand Marcos. After years under the ownership of Marcos cronies, in 1987, then President Cory Aquino ordered the government to sell previously sequestered businesses, including television stations, hotels, and

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38. "New TV programming initiated for viewers," *Daily Mirror*, October 20, 1962; "*Hiyas ng Tahanan*" scored major hit," *Manila Times*, February 9, 1968.

39. "Manilans becoming television addicts," *Daily Mirror*, January 20, 1962; "TV set survey," *Manila Times*, March 2, 1966.

40. Rodrigo, *Kapitan*, 195.

41. *Ibid.*, 212.

Philippine airlines in an effort to privatize these industries.<sup>42</sup> To rebuild the network and reclaim its national audience share, ABS-CBN put tremendous effort and investment in projecting an image of the network as innovative, technologically cutting-edge, and in the service of the country and the needs of the Filipino people.<sup>43</sup>

### **Reaching Filipinos in the U.S. and Around the World**

In narrating the history of ABS-CBN's international operation, Rodrigo only attributes a brief section in the end of the full-length, coffee-table book about it. The two main points I derive from his short account are that 1) the venture started by looking at where the largest Filipino overseas markets were present – which were Saipan, Guam, and the San Francisco Bay Area, and 2) that the work to establish the international subsidiary was an incremental and difficult process because the designated ABS-CBN international executives had to convince U.S. cable providers such as TCI (Telecommunication Incorporated) that a cable channel for Filipino audiences was a viable venture. Testing out the Filipino American market, in 1992 ABS-CBN executives approached local Bay Area KTSF-26 to try airing taped programs of Filipino news, soap operas, and dramas for a few hours each week.

Using television as a medium, The Filipino Channel (TFC) is broadcasted worldwide, across Asia-Pacific, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Unlike ethnic newspapers that cater to local and national Filipino communities, television has allowed for a larger, global viewership. Owned by the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation in the Philippines, TFC was first established in the California Bay Area in 1994 and today continues to be offered both as a satellite feed and a cable feed in the United States. Unlike Filipino American newspapers which are available for free, TFC subscribers pay as much as an initial fee of over \$100 dollars for satellite installation, while monthly satellite and cable fees run between \$12 to over \$25 per month depending on the package.<sup>44</sup> Customers can choose to purchase satellite packages that include channels such as the ABS-CBN news channel (broadcasts news from the Philippines all day); Pinoy Central (offers various Filipino shows from different regions in the Philippines), CinemaOne (shows Filipino movies) and TFC (a combination of news and entertainment programs). More recently, TFC Direct has been launched to provide on-demand programming via television or through the Internet. Much like the function of print publications, transnational ethnic television programs appeal to the conditions and

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42. "Cory Orders Sale of 3 TV Stations," *Manila Standard*, November, 5, 1987; "Gov't to Sell 3 TV Stations," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 15, 1987.

43. Maria Rosario Domingo, "An Analysis of ABS-CBN's Station IDs and their effects on the Image of the Station" (Master's thesis, University of the Philippines-Diliman, 1996); "The rebirth of a television leader," *Manila Chronicle*, October 28, 1989; Germaine de Peralta and Carla Lopez, "Broadcast Image Design: Lean, mean advertising tool," *Manila Chronicle*, Special Feature D12 September 18, 1991; "The Sarimanok Soars Anew," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 10, 1993.

44. Satellite services based on online dealer prices and monthly satellite and cable prices based on San Diego area as of 2013.

relationships of immigrants abroad at the same time as they provide a conduit to the Philippines. The first years of TFC were fiscally challenging; with stagnant advertising revenue, the parent company subsidized much of the production costs. At the same time, TFC also actively recruited and trained dealers to help sell the satellite package to Filipino customers. Today, ABS-CBN global is separate from the parent company and is better able to sustain itself, though still not at the level that it is hoped to be.<sup>45</sup>

The growth of ABS-CBN Global, marked by the vision of Geny “Kapitan” Lopez, Jr., is in part a dream fulfilled and shaped by the system and conditions of Filipino migration in the last 50 years. The media organization has flourished because of the training, expertise, and loyalty of network staff, even as it has successfully tapped into the overseas Filipino market made up of temporary and permanent migrants who “crave” for information from the Philippines and long for the familiar sights and sounds of “home.” The network has thrived by being attentive to audience feedback, ensuring that they provide content that is most appealing and popular with audiences, as well as diversifying its content and tailoring it to region-based demands. Moreover, engaging the audience beyond the television medium furthers its success -- the network puts on live tours and taps into already existing community events that are attended by many Filipinos abroad. In recent years, the network has actively attempted to capture the second-generation and non-Filipino market, though limited and far from being successfully achieved. Two Philippine-based TFC management representatives I interviewed echoed the history of ABS-CBN and its international expansion as Raul Rodrigo details it in the *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN*. Continuing the distribution of popular content and adapting to new platforms for the delivery of content were emphasized – both of which relate to ensuring the quality of service that is provided to the viewer.

I interviewed Ned Legaspi, Head of Content Production for ABS-CBN Global, who echoed that the success of ABS-CBN and the future emergence of TFC are owed in large part to the leadership and vision of the network’s original “Kapitan” Geny Lopez.<sup>46</sup> Legaspi describes his former boss as the “brainchild” with the vision and dream to “go global” long before it was made more possible by satellite technology. This goal, Legaspi explained, was for ABS-CBN to reach as many Filipinos – whether across the Philippine archipelago or across the world. Legaspi first started working for the network in 1993 as a freelance writer, fresh out of college. In 1997, he joined ABS-CBN international that at the time was at the early stages of development. In the interview, he recounts the early years of ABS-CBN’s global operations:

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45. In an interview of a former TFC writer, lay-offs and staff turnover took place due to budgetary constraints Filipino and Filipino American staff struggle over producing content that resonates with younger, second-generation Filipino Americans.

46. It is ironic that the Tagalog term *kapitan* or captain, when enunciated differently, can also mean the Tagalog verb for “to hold on” or “to grasp” with ones hands as to keep from falling over.

In 1992, we started doing tape service in the Bay Area San Francisco. So we've been sending a few programs, TV Patrol, and I think if I remember it right, Maalaala Mo Kaya. So for 2 years, we did just that, sending tapes being shown in KTSF and the other affiliate stations. Now in April 4, 1994, that was the landmark date for us because that was when we launched TFC as a channel, The Filipino Channel, in North America. It serviced basically California. And then sometime September that year also, 1994, we went 24/7 on satellite.

When I asked about how those early years were like for the new international channel, he said:

Of course when it started, we were feeling the birth pains because we were new. We were introducing something new. Critical is the awareness level of the people or the acceptability. It was something new. GMA attempted to go global but they didn't succeed. So TFC, The Filipino Channel initially was not...it was not taken...it was novel to them [audiences]. But it took years before it could really, I think it was, it was only able to break even in 1997. So counted what, 4 years?

Despite the early struggle of ABS-CBN international to promote the new channel and stay fiscally sound, the burgeoning network eventually garnered a stable audience base. Legaspi attributed the network's growth to the quality and selection of programs as well as to the strong demand from audiences for programs from the Philippines:

It's a dream. It's very ambitious. Initially, well, we didn't imagine it to be this big. We were just trying it out. So I guess the thirst, the hunger for home, or something, the hunger of Filipinos for something Filipino was so great that you know TFC has become this big now... It was new so you had to educate them. You had to make them aware that there is a channel where they could watch shows coming the Philippines.

The secret, he says, to TFC's success compared to the failed efforts of GMA's initial attempt at establishing an international channel for Filipinos, was that the Lopez family did not give up in the project and had "faith in the media, in what the connection and kind of service they could provide to Filipinos overseas" to provide dedicate sufficient monetary investment needed to establish and sustain TFC's operations during its early years.

Differences in the preferences of overseas Filipino audiences affect both the format and content. According to Legaspi, ABS-CBN Global "take[s] into consideration the tastes and sensibilities of the target market." These differences, Legaspi attributes to the degrees in which Filipinos in the United States for example, have culturally assimilated. He explained how TV Patrol North America is a sanitized version of the one shown in the Philippines, because otherwise the network would get many complaints about the gory nature of the crimes and stories in the news. As he put it: "The Filipino from the Philippines who has transported to

the U.S. is really bound to change. All of a sudden, we realize they don't really like news items with too much blood on it. They hate cruelty to animals, probably because the U.S. promotes the love for animals. And so what we do here in Manila is to not really censor it, but to tailor fit it." Filipinos abroad, he said, "want some form of assurance or validation" such that even when TV Patrol tries to present the reality, audiences may take it as a negative, and would rather learn of more positive news. In response to this feedback, TV Patrol focuses more on news of national relevance rather than local incidents or concerns. Offering programs that are most popular with overseas audiences, TFC presents programming as it is informed by the lives and tastes of Filipinos overseas. According to Legaspi, adult female viewers aged 29-80 years old who prefer straightforward, "plain and simple" programs that do not have many fast cuts when it comes to the editing, dominate the U.S. market.

Other markets, such as the Middle East, are male dominated – and there they balance the content by providing more sports programs through a different channel. The network is also cognizant of the day-to-day routine that its audiences may have. Explaining this, Legaspi describes:

The demographics and the psychographics, these are things that you have to consider in designing the kind of content that would fit for them. In the Middle East for example, they have what they call the broken schedule. So meaning, you report for work at 9 o'clock and then at 1 o'clock you go home. From 1 o'clock to 5 o'clock, you're at home, and then from 6 o'clock to 10 o'clock, that's your second shift. So, there's that gap. If you look at the programming in the Middle East, the good programs are scheduled around that time – and that is to service those subscribers who work on broken shifts.

Here, service is equated with the delivery of program content to as it is tailored to the audiences' way of life. However, despite the different demographic preferences in terms of gender, geography, or age, Legaspi also pointed out that there are "common denominators" such as soap operas that cuts across all age and gender groups.

TFC is also a market-driven endeavor, as much as it espouses to serve its audience. In this way, it is complicit with the system that produces migration rather than being proactively challenging obstacles and confronting the issues that affect immigrants. When asked about the persons or factors most influential in determining what is shown, Legaspi was quick to say that the market is the main determining factor, particularly as it is a subscription-based model. He explains:

It's not free television. Compared to free television, which would be dictated by ratings and advertisers. If you go with a subscription business model, [the] number one [factor] should be the customer. So it's a customer-centric type model. If a majority of customers would want this program be seen at this time, then we follow because we exist because of them. That is the reason why Wowowee, which is in the Philippines a noon-time show, is seen in your prime-time.

TFC receives feedback from customers informally, through a hotline call from a customer service number, an email sent via the website link, or in person when viewers attend live tapings or participate in studio tours. Additionally, it also has a business intelligence group that is in charge of processing raw data before this reaches Legaspi and other network management who eventually make executive decisions about program scheduling and content. Occasional focus groups are used, though Legaspi said that these typically merely validate the feedback that the network receives from individual subscribers.

### **Envisioning the Diasporic Filipino Audience**

In our conversation, Legaspi drew on what he considers the cultural tradition of Filipinos as sojourners (e.g. leaving out of their hometowns) who later return as triumphant heroes as a recurring narrative in Philippine folklore to explain that TFC draws on the same narrative. As he put it, “Filipinos leaving, aside from the economic reasons that they can not find work here, there is also something in our culture . . . that you know, wants us to leave this country and really find ourselves somewhere to challenge our identity.” Thus, to him, “diaspora is already part of [Filipino] culture” and Filipinos are already accustomed with the idea of “leaving the motherland or the province and returning as somebody else, somebody who has already achieved or is already made.” This familiarity may be attributed to the “culture of migration” that has normalized the departure of a significant portion of the population to the extent that the condition of Filipino labor-export is institutionally and culturally accepted (though perhaps with some anxieties) and Filipinos are expected to seek better opportunities outside the Philippines.<sup>47</sup> Speaking of the enormous numbers of Filipino migrants, Legaspi explains how he understands their condition:

When you leave the Philippines, it’s not that something is broken, but something is lost. And you try to look for identity anchors because all of a sudden your identity is challenged by new cultures, new environments, new rules and regulations. All of a sudden, you realize you are different. So you are trying to look for something familiar... When you go outside [the Philippines], you get lonely. Number 1, you don’t get to speak your language – and that alone makes you lonely. Secondly, you don’t get to eat rice. It’s funny, but even myself, when I go out [of the country], I crave for rice! It’s not very Filipino to eat...mashed potatoes.

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47. For studies discussing culture of migration, Pierrette Hondognue-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2003), 4; John Connel, “Niue: Embracing a Culture of Migration,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 6 (2008): 1021-1040, DOI:10.1080/13691830802211315; Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 23, 205.

In his statement, Legaspi uses the word “you” rather than “they” to refer to Filipinos overseas – conscious and actively positioning me (his audience) grouped together among others who have also left (and yet to return). Then, he pauses and takes back his initial statement and rephrases this generalization by saying “although I don’t know about second generation,” indicating that he is aware of the differences among Filipino communities overseas especially in light of younger generations who are born outside the Philippines.

Regardless of these generational differences, Legaspi asserts that TFC is an “identity anchor” that has become integral to the lives of Filipinos abroad. And for second-generation Filipinos, he clarified that the network attempts to re-introduce “not really who Filipinos are, but a glimpse or just a representation of the Filipino.” Moreover, TFC exposes second-generation Filipinos to the Tagalog language so that as Legaspi said, “second-gen or Japinoys or those who grew up already with totally no idea about the Philippines, they learn the language by watching TFC.” This sentiment was also shared by focus group participants, as I discuss in more detail in a subsequent chapter. This effort in language instruction through TFC was evident in a series of “Filipino Ka, Sabihin Mo!” (You are Filipino, Say So!) that were shown in between regular programs as a way to invite viewers to learn the language. This effort is one way that the network responded to feedback from audiences about how TFC helps younger Filipinos abroad pick up Tagalog words or phrases via regular exposure to programs in the language.

### ***Family, Fun, and Bayanihan***

Legaspi considers the plots and emphases of the network’s most popular shows to be “very Filipino” in that they highlight the significance of family and fun. Speaking more about social context from which TFC programs draw upon, the emphasis on family cohesion and togetherness in soap operas, he explains, highlight the discovery of one’s roots and reunion with long-lost family, such as in soap operas where a young kid gets switched at birth or adopted yet ends with the recognition and reconciliation with biological parents. “We like fun,” he chimed, “so we offer shows like ASAP”—a weekly musical-variety show that resonates with Filipino audiences who, according to Legaspi, like “merrymaking, dancing, and singing” and a culture that celebrates people through singing and talent search contests.

Attributing these characteristics to Filipino-ness, producers such as Legaspi generate content considered essential favorites because of cultural tastes even as these light-hearted, entertainment programs transmit feelings of joy and togetherness to buttress a fantasy of home and family that sustains Filipinos abroad. These comments reflect his perceptions about the culture of migration – as an ingrained and normalized process that has become not only an acceptable recourse for millions of Filipinos, but also translate in reading and understanding Filipino myths and history. In the same vein, the values of “*bayanihan*” bring Filipino viewers from disparate parts of the world together, according to Legaspi. He pointed to the *Wowowee*, a once popular variety-game show as an example: “the TFC subscribers who watch there [studio audiences], rarely do they become contestants. [Instead] they are the ones, in fact, giving dollars or helping out –



which in a way they've become the *ninongs* and *ninangs* (godparents)." For Legaspi, generosity is imbued in Filipino culture, to give back "when you've got it made." He parallels this with the overseas Filipino worker remittance system that the Philippine economy relies on. "If not for the remittance, *bagsak na itong ekonomiya natin* (if not for the remittances, our economy will fail)." Acknowledging the network's role in maintaining this economic mechanism, he declares: "I am glad that I work for TFC because we are providing them [Filipino audiences] a service that is enabling them to do what they are supposed to do overseas, which is to work... Because they work, they give back to the Philippines. So, media is beyond relaying information, it's beyond entertainment. TFC is now able or slowly able to build the community, the global Filipino community."

### ***Serving the New Global Filipino Community***

This new and mediated global Filipino community tied by values of family, fun, and bayanihan is incorporated in the vision of the network's original mastermind, "Kapitan" Geny Lopez, who dreamed of reaching every Filipino, first in the Philippines and then all over the world; and secondly, the network's emphasis on service by providing desirable programs. First branching out by regions, initially by establishing itself as an integral part of communities in the United States, and then in the Middle East, later Australia, Japan, Canada, and Europe – TFC slowly pieced together "one global community of Filipinos" and its stronghold on the international Filipino television audience market. Legaspi added that "by the mere presence of the network" and the establishment of news programs specific to each region such as *Balitang America*, *Balitang Middle East*, *Balitang Europe*, the community is served and connected by information that is relevant to and focused on their local lives even as they also cover events that are widely relevant to audiences across different regions. Reaching out to the community involves bringing "home-grown" celebrities to where Filipino subscribers are located. Special events where celebrities make appearances and perform on tour help market the network and its programs at large-scale events intended to remind Filipinos of a Filipino-style, barrio fiesta. "There's the business side to it," Legaspi admitted about the overseas events that cater to the Filipino community and bring together different entities – performers and local businesses – to promote various products to attendees, "but if you dig deeper, there's the service in it, which at the end of the day, solidifies the Filipinos."

When speaking about how second-generation Filipinos factor into the content production, Legaspi described the market as "difficult" and "dynamic." He retorted, "today they want this kind of content, tomorrow they want a different one, because they are so exposed to other stimuli." The ever-evolving tastes of younger generations combined with the various media platforms that they often use – such as the Internet and mobile digital devices – have left the network still figuring out the needs and interests of the second-generation market. Targeting the second-generation Filipino market has also meant offering programs that can capture other ethnic community markets as well. However, Legaspi reiterated, that while efforts to tap into second-generation and non-native speakers of Tagalog are being developed, the main purpose and market for TFC is really the Filipino migrant.

In the Philippines, I also interviewed a production manager for TFC programs who asked that I not disclose her identity. In keeping with my interviewee's request to keep her name confidential, I will use the pseudonym Nenette Domingo when referring to comments from this individual. In describing the international program development unit, Domingo emphasized that the TFC international group independently runs the global operations, though it may carry ABS-CBN programs. That is, TFC global produces content, such as news programs, that serves as a template across general overseas markets in the case of *Balitang America*, *Balitang Middle East*, *Balitang Europe*, and the like. This content is in addition to other region-specific programs that the TFC global production group supports including talk shows and information segments such as *Kwentong Disyerto* (Desert Stories) which is shown in the Middle East region, and *Citizen Pinoy* and *Adobo Nation* which are shown in North America. Interstitials also make up a bulk of the production efforts for TFC global. These are long-form video clips in between regularly scheduled programs. Unlike station IDs or promotional campaigns, which involve marketing and branding the channel, interstitials are designed to "promote culture, heritage, and...being Filipino."<sup>48</sup>

Going global has meant generalizing AND localizing the content in order for the programs to be acceptable and accepted in other places. "We try to template," explained the TFC production manager, "if we produce these programs in North America, then we can duplicate producing the same types of programs for Japan because they are all Filipinos anyway. They just differ in lifestyle, their spending power, and of course their needs, and the job they are in." This template serves as a common denominator across the regional program content. That is, when a particular format is deemed to work for Filipino audiences, such as the news and information program, it can then be modified to suit the demands and address the local concerns and needs of Filipino communities in specific regions. Whereas the ABS-CBN parent company supplies predominantly entertainment programs, TFC global and its respective affiliates in various regions supply largely news and information content particular the to country that Filipinos are in. "That's why we launched *Balitang Australia*, *Balitang America*, *Balitang Middle East*, because the content of the news is really about them [Filipinos] in the country where they are, their community activities. In the Middle East, for example, they are all about Filipinos with labor problems... both good news and bad news, or not so good news."

Interstitials unify the audience as Filipinos by promoting the notion of "Filipino-ness" – the notion of being Filipino by knowing and participating in one's heritage as it is originally rooted in the Philippines. Interstitial programming imagines and intentionally responds to the diasporan viewer through the idea of

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48. Promotional materials mature over time together with the changing development of its audience. For example, when conceptualizing its promotional materials, one producer described how the creative team personifies the network's development from new born (recently launched), to a young child (first few years), to a teenager (after the first decade).

ancestral or shared culture. Though different from station IDs and promotional materials that directly promote the TFC network, interstitials work together with the other TFC program content to build a sense of community among viewers – a global community rooted in Filipino culture – that the audience is called to be a part of. The function of interstitials bleed into the other elements of TFC programming that is constantly responding the dislocation of its audiences. Some examples include segments called “Global Filipino” which features successful individuals of Filipino ancestry, “Pinoy Destination” which features heritage and tourist sites, “Obra” and “Bravura” which feature performing and visual artists, “Orig” and “Good News Philippines” which feature innovative, one-of-a-kind products and entrepreneurial projects.

TFC Global provides feedback to the parent company. They make ABS-CBN aware of the specific conditions and regulations faced by its affiliate networks. “Before we had a lot of problems especially for the Middle East. They did not know that there were limitations, like no *hubaran*, no showing of too much skin.” As a result of the feedback from overseas affiliates, the parent company issued guidelines for the airing of content, subject materials, topics that would interest Filipino overseas audiences, yet conform to the norms of their new environments. Communicating this information to the parent company has impacted the brainstorming of new programs “so that they would now cater to both local and international markets.” Programs are regularly edited prior to its international broadcast. Both producers interviewed used the work “sanitize” to describe the process in which shows are scrutinized and edited for their content to fit the customs and mores of other local contexts. For example, TFC does not show the killing of animals in programs for North America, in the same way that the crucifix is not shown for its programs in the Middle East.

The most successful programs in the overseas market has been the news programs, and according Domingo, these forums have been established as a trusted source of information as well as a place to which Filipinos – whether in the Middle East or North America – can turn to when problems arise. The popularity of news programs, though they follow a “template,” varies depending on the demographics and needs of the Filipino communities. When asked about why Filipinos in America may continue to prefer watching TV Patrol from the Philippines versus news stories from *Balitang America*, Domingo aptly pointed to the different levels of popularity that TFC news programs have across different regions.<sup>49</sup> Highlighting the enhanced reception that *Balitang Middle East* receives compared to other regions, Domingo attributed these differences to how “active” Filipinos are in one region versus

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49. *Balitang America* allows Filipinos in the U.S., especially in California, to learn about local events in their area. These often include Filipino Americans who may have made news in mainstream newscasts, local events held by Filipino and Filipino American organizations, as well as community mobilization and organizing efforts. Besides reporting the news, the show’s segments also serve a similar function as sections of community newspapers and magazines that feature local stories, displaying the accomplishments attained by Filipino Americans as a mark of their social and political status in the United States.

another – activity that she finds being affected by varying circumstances. As she explains, “that really goes to show that Filipinos in the Middle East are really more active than Filipinos in Australia...come to think of it, Filipinos in Australia are really living a better life compared to Filipinos living in the Middle East.” Factors such as acculturation in host societies and the types of communities immigrants are able or to establish in the different geographic regions, conditions which are shaped by the structural and cultural reception of Filipinos overseas, can play a role in the extent to which Filipinos in the Middle East made up of temporary, working immigrants versus Filipinos in Australia or North America largely made up of permanent migrants, families, and multiple generations receive the programs produced specific to Filipinos overseas.

To address these conditions, there is a level of cooperation and coordination between the network and government organizations that serve as sources of information – for example, when there are concerns affecting OFWs that need to be addressed, the network seeks out representatives from the Department of Labor. With regards to the travel shows, the networks seeks out the expertise of the Department of Tourism (DoT), whose assistance is then acknowledged by showing the logo. However, explicit mention of the DoT is avoided so as to not conflate the travel shows with DoT promotional campaigns. Domingo also pointed out that TFC global has attempted to integrate the experiences of Filipino migrants into the segments covered in talk and news programs and in the narratives of melodramas and films. This includes shooting the film or episode abroad in places such as Dubai, Milan, and San Francisco. The popular weekly melodrama, *Maalaala Mo Kaya* (Will You Remember) has also featured stories that speak of the transnational lives of Filipinos overseas. This drama program is particularly inspired by the real-life struggles and stories of its Filipino viewers, in the Philippines or abroad, who send in letters which the program then bases its storylines.

Though both Legaspi and Domingo declined to share specific data on ratings and viewer feedback with me, both producers assured me that the network’s research team collects and tracks this information. In addition to soliciting feedback from viewers, feasibility studies also determine the kinds of shows that are developed by the TFC global team. Upon determining the cost and sustainability, TFC producers seek approval from higher executives, though a team made up of producers and personal assistant researchers are responsible for creating and generating a segment or show. Not all shows have long-term staying power. There is a high turnover of programs, which are in a 13-episode-per-season cycle, as I have observed with TFC North America produced programs and segments. In more recent years, shows such as *Balitang America*, *Citizen Pinoy*, and *Adobo Nation* have remained, though the format and hosts have shifted. Production teams play a large role in making a show happen. In the case of *Kumusta Kabayan*, a phone-in talk show that was aired live to the Middle East and relayed across other regions through TFC, the program covered various topics affecting Filipinos overseas, especially OFWs; however, it ended after assessment of the show concluded that it had exhausted the topics to address, leading to problems with the production team

and the resignation of the executive producer.<sup>50</sup> Another talk show, *Speak Out*, which was produced in the San Francisco Bay Area for 3 years, was canceled because it was too expensive to produce. Budget constraints affect the viability of shows and the TFC global team tries to incorporate product placement and service advertisements in its programs to help fund and sustain programs such as *Adobo Nation* and *Citizen Pinoy*.<sup>51</sup> As Domingo expressed, “if we don’t really get sponsors to buy out, then we don’t push through with it.” In a way traditional talk shows suffer because there is less room for sponsors to incorporate their advertisement in the program – which is perhaps a cheaper alternative for sponsors compared to creating a 30-second advertisement to run during a particular program’s time slot. North America, which carries the largest audience market, is the only location with a production studio and team outside of the Philippines.

TFC Global also tried to capture non-Filipino groups, including non-Filipino spouses, “because they also are decision makers” as one producer said. Tapping into the non-Filipino consumer market meant that language is a major factor in determining the content of programs for overseas audiences. English, with occasional Tagalog, is used in these programs. Interstitials also appeal to non-Filipino audiences, such as the category called “*pusong Pinoy*” (Filipino at heart). In these segments, non-Filipino spouses of TFC subscribers were interviewed to talk about how they have adopted traditionally Filipino customs and immerse in Filipino culture. English subtitles were suggested as a way to attract non-Tagalog speakers. At the time of the interview, none of the TFC programs were subtitled, due to the expense. Producers had discussions over whether or not TFC shows should have subtitles, and the debates were in large part over the cost of providing such service. In the past year, however, TFC has begun to offer subtitles to reruns of one of its popular dramas, *Maalaala Mo Kaya* (Will You Remember), perhaps due to more push for making an appeal to non-Tagalog speaking audiences.

Having been the first to successfully penetrate the overseas Filipino television market, TFC has sustained its preeminence but has also helped launch and reinforces this status as contracted artists are regularly seen through concerts,

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50. Programs such as *Kumusta Kabayan*, though now off-air, discussed issues pertaining to overseas Filipinos and gave a platform for migrants to ask questions and get expert answers regarding their concerns. Topics included: return migration and American ex-patriots, maintaining lasting transnational relationships between spouses and partners, visa application and immigration procedures, and vacationing in the Philippines. The show also allowed Filipino viewers from all over the world to send greetings to their loved ones in the Philippines via text messages (which are shown on the screen) or via the telephone greetings (after they ask their question). While relatives may not directly speak to each other, the show nonetheless provided a forum in which Filipinos all over the world can voice their concerns and well wishes and doing so indirectly connect and “converse” with each other.

51. *Adobo Nation* is a weekly English-language lifestyle program with segments on food, entertainment, health, beauty and fashion. *Citizen Pinoy*, dubbed as one’s “passport to immigration information,” is a talk-show that deals primarily with U.S. immigration issues such as undocumented stay, petitioning family members, and deportation.

films, and service products. The services that ABS-CBN provides, whether it is television programming, DVD movies, concerts, telephone cards, or money remittance provides a “one-stop-shop” mechanism in which Filipinos can be unified.<sup>52</sup> As Domingo described, “we unify Filipinos because we are the only ones they watch, whether they like it or not... now that there is GMA [a rival TV network], we have yet to see the figures...but most of them (subscribers) really come back to TFC because of the stars. Most of the comments are ‘we don’t know the stars on GMA compared to TFC, where the big stars from the Philippines are.” Because of its ability to connect with audiences through shared values, sensibilities, and “starpower” and its capacity to deliver up-to-date, instant information relevant to overseas Filipinos, TFC makes viewers “feel closer to home.” More than a medium for receiving information, access to it facilitates conversations between those overseas and their families in the Philippines because “whatever is going on in the Philippines...they get to see it on TV. And when they call home [the Philippines], they now have a lot of things to talk about because even when they’re in North America, even though they are in Europe, they are really not far behind.”

### ***Making Sense for the Second Gens***

Transnational interchanges in staff provided the North America office with seasoned journalists and media experts – including producers, cameramen, and film editors who were originally from the ABS-CBN office in the Philippines. However, the seamless synthesis of ideas has been a challenge as older, immigrant Filipino executives and producers and younger, Filipino American writers and producers had conflicting approaches. In the U.S., I interviewed a former TFC North America writer and producer, Jericho Saria, a U.S.-born Filipino American who described the tensions and struggles in the production teams who were developing content for U.S.-produced programs on TFC. In his view, “there was a hierarchy. The second-gen were rebellious...and there was not a lot of input from the ‘motherland’ or ‘homeland.’” For Saria, working at TFC North America was an eye-opening experience and a platform for learning about what takes place behind the camera. He learned the grind and thrill of producing news content, with its tight deadlines as *Balitang America* went from a weekly program to a daily program.

Based in the Bay Area, the global breadth and to an extent the national relevance of TFC North America-produced shows was hard to achieve. Correspondents and freelance reporters based in other large U.S. cities were hired to contribute to the coverage of stories from other locations in the United States. Describing his duties, Saria talked about the difficulty of filling content and particularly “wanting a Filipino face for a soundbyte.” Many of the sources were locally based – including feedback from family or people on the streets. According to Saria, east coast Filipinos were looking for stories that touched on issues of personal identity, compared to west coast viewers who were likely drawn to stories of broader social significance. In general, he felt that the producers were “shooting

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52. ABS-CBN Global, via its international sales group, also sells its content to foreign markets through program syndication and licensing deals.

in the dark” and audience feedback was based on anecdotal information, as there was no scientific, concrete or reported data (such as the Nielsen survey) or a comparable channel from which to develop TFC North America. Moreover, the various programs’ dependence on revenue-generating materials means less freedom on the part of producers to come up with innovative, experimental, critical material. During tough financial times, the North America office underwent a re-organization and laid-off a significant number of staff members, including Saria.

Creating new programs that appeal to a broader Filipino overseas audience is difficult and expensive, and thus the tendency for the network to rely on canned programs from the Philippines proves to be an easier choice. Shifting the overall programming from that catered primarily to migrants to involve Filipinos across generations is also difficult because of the network’s lack of understanding of the second generation’s point of view, the entrenched loyalties that keep TFC North America tethered to traditional approaches, the cost of production that prevent the development of innovative and experimental programs, and the challenges of addressing local, regional, national, and global in an in-depth, yet comprehensive way. According to Saria, the parent company did not communicate very well while the TFC North America office did not adapt to the U.S. context and “they run it as they would in the Philippines.” The nebulosity over management of the production may be due to the changing and tenuous relationship between the ABS-CBN parent company and the overseas TFC Global affiliates. This is reflected in what the Philippine-based producers had also described as the constant negotiation between what the parent company controls on one hand, and what the global division is independently conceptualizing and producing on the other hand. In the midst of this, younger producers were left in the sidelines when it concerned long-term planning. According to Saria, young writers and producers like him were not involved in deciding what new programs will be launched. Instead, the process of coming up with a new show is done “inside” – that is, behind closed-door meetings of upper-management. Instead, lower-level producers and writers were only brought in to help generate materials for episodes and segments.

Speak Out is an example of a show that TFC tried to cater to second generation Filipino Americans. However, deciding on what topics the talk show would have guests debate on and “speak out” about was a tricky and contested process. Saria recalled, “they [senior producers] tried to bring in topics that they thought was relevant” that to him were not discerning or significant. Some of the topics that he had suggested include: vegans versus meat-eaters, a debate about the Pilipino Culture Night production in college campuses, and a conversation about Star Wars for a Halloween edition, among other topics that he felt would break pre-conceptions and stereotypes about Filipinos Americans.

The generational clash also surfaced in brainstorming topics for *Adobo Nation* segments. When the idea for a segment about glutathione treatments came up including discussion about the benefits of skin-whitening, JS and a colleague protested, telling older producers “we don’t want to do this...it’s colonial. We got shot down.” He exclaimed, “I don’t want TFC to air things like this that perpetuate colonial beauty standards. In the end, they ended up airing the glutathione story, even though others had contested the idea and not everyone was in full support of

it. Summing up his discontent with TFC North America organization, Saria pointed to the lack of cohesion across the groups involved, explaining: “The problem with TFC was the corporate structure. If you want to have a chance in America, then run it like an American company.” To him, the units were too compartmentalized wherein “everything was done like an assembly line with no synergy.” As he put it, “I finish my piece and then you just push it over to the next. That was one thing I hated. There was no sense of camaraderie. There was an inherent sense of camaraderie but nothing that was generated out of the actual work... I was still proud of what we did, but I felt that we were not in it together.”

Despite his frustration with the lack of coordination between individuals and units, over not being able to contribute to the direction of the programs, and the schisms that transpired behind the scenes, Sarias acknowledges: “[TFC] is the dominant network for Filipino Americans... It’s everywhere...It’s in the community. At events, you see [that] everyone shows up. Even though working there there is bullshit everyday, you realize how really powerful [TFC] is.” It is the realization of the growing influence of ethnic media and the crucial space it carves out in the United States that draws young Filipino Americans like Sarias to contribute their time and talent to developing programs that address and impact the diverse and multi-faceted experiences of Filipino diasporans.

### **Products and Services beyond TV**

Apart from its regular programs, TFC also airs commercials for its array of products and services owned and operated by the ABS-CBN Corporation and over the years an increasing number of advertisements from businesses catering to Filipino consumers. Some of the regular ads include: long-distance telephone services, property sales in the Philippines, business ventures in the Philippines, commercials that cater to local needs such as car and car insurance advertisements, doctor and dental offices, cargo couriers, and money remittance as well as those for ABS-CBN foundation to support public service efforts. Similar advertisements can also be seen on local international channels during the allotted time that Filipino programs are on the air. Charitable appeals include the Adopt-A-Hometown-School Foundation and the *Bantay Bata* [Child Watch] 163. Much like their newspaper counterparts, these different ads tug at both the purse- and heart-strings of Filipino migrants. Given its audio-visual dimensions, television as opposed to newspaper advertisements especially appeals to the loneliness, nostalgia, and responsibility felt by many Filipinos overseas. For example, the long-distance ads offer the convenience and ease of being able to call home anytime, anywhere. The property ads offer the luxury of owning a town home or condominium (perhaps for family members in the Philippines to live in or for migrants to return to when they vacation or retire). Appealing to migrants’ prospects for self-employment in the Philippines, ABS-CBN sponsored segments have offered advice and logistical information on how to start businesses in the Philippines while working (most likely in wage-employment) abroad. While Adopt-A-Hometown-School Foundation, for example, uses celebrity spokespersons to ask for donations to fund public schools all over the Philippines; and *Bantay Bata* features personal stories of different children with special medical or social service needs to encourage viewers



to donate. There are also other commercials, such as those for movie screenings, concerts and performances, and DVDs featuring celebrities from the Philippines. Allowing Filipinos abroad to access Filipino popular culture, events are held at various metropolitan cities (with large concentrations of Filipinos), while Philippine-made products are available at local ethnic markets or online.

Considering the different ways in which Filipinos maintain communication and network ties to the Philippines, the emergence of television as a medium is only one among many different forms of trans/national links. Reflecting on the history of Filipino correspondence to the Philippines as well as the ways in which Filipino newspapers have responded to local and international events, TFC does not seem quite so revolutionary. Instead, TFC possibly because of its global or international dimension, address Filipino migrant concerns more broadly than the more localized dimensions of ethnic newspapers. While TFC engenders a worldwide feeling of “Filipino-ness,” newspapers have historically been more apt to respond to the specific contexts of racialization and exclusion Filipino migrants experience. Compared to the early writings from Filipinos abroad, such as the historically archived newspaper articles, TFC programs in general do not explicitly address the legacies of U.S. colonialism nor confront issues concerning racial exclusion and discrimination, except when it is reported in news programs such as *Balitang America* and its counterparts in other regions. Although television provides a medium wherein Filipinos all over the world seem to be brought closer together especially through the programs geared specifically to transnational communities, despite these programs efforts, it is more conveniently used to serve as a reactionary, if not, conciliatory mechanism that indirectly maintains the political, economic, and social systems tied to the displacement of Filipino migrants. However, television programs such as those produced by TFC has also fostered ways in which Filipinos abroad can conveniently connect, communicate, and respond to the needs of their family and communities in the Philippines. In addition, perhaps the growing demand for channels such as TFC in the United States and in other countries may help Filipinos gain visibility as well as market leverage as telecommunication companies (such as Comcast) seek to profit from Filipino migrants’ limited purchasing power. Since TFC’s inception, other forms of media and Filipino American productions and performances in films and online have sprung up—further generating spaces for identity articulation and community networks. Letters, articles, newspapers, and television have provided concrete and imaginary venues for marginalized Filipinos abroad to address their lived experiences of racism, economic hardship, and exclusion—issues that stem from their position as dislocated migrants from the Philippines even as these spaces also offer reprieve from daily struggles by bridging fragmented ties to “home.”

## Chapter 3

### On Watching TFC: Inter-generational Perspectives on Filipino American Media

In this chapter, I examine Filipino American viewers' engagement with transnational Philippine media, particularly the content of television programs offered on The Filipino Channel, to show how audiences interpret and receive the different programs and to understand how transnational media shapes their identities and lives as immigrants and U.S.-born, second-generation Filipino Americans. Filipino Americans' transnational ties to the Philippines are bridged through media, among the reasons why – to remember and ease feelings of missing people and places, to have something to talk about, to feel like they are there, to help out, to have something to look forward to – all of which may work in tandem with the other ways that ties are maintained such as return visits, money remittances, social gatherings and hometown associations. Philippine-based media actively reaches out to Filipinos abroad, through its Philippine-produced Tagalog-language programs and expands its viewership and service to the Filipino American community by also producing U.S.-based, English language programs. In a series of focus group discussions about media consumption, gender and generational differences between Filipino immigrants and second-generation emerged including the kinds of ties maintained with the Philippines and how media programs are perceived.

Language, content, and family relationships impact who watches and how shows are received. Tagalog-language, “canned” programs from Philippines are more popular than English language programs. Immigrant generation Filipino Americans (first generation) are the network's primary audience and the most loyal base. By contrast, despite efforts to attract second-generation viewers, college-aged Filipino Americans don't subscribe to the network and only watch its programs at the parent's house – where “TFC is always on” and parents, especially mothers “control the remote.” While the second-generation's detachment may be seen as assimilating to U.S. culture and “shedding” their Filipino heritage, it is not essentially the case. Second generation participants expressed pride in theatrical and dance productions, are fans of Filipino American artists on Youtube, and attend or participate in college campus performances.

Filipino Americans, first and second-generation alike, do not readily accept the idea the “global Filipinos” – as a notion used to describe overseas Filipinos as cosmopolitan, multicultural, and productive citizens for the Philippines. While they pointed out how Filipinos are championed and acknowledged that successful individuals are touted as exemplars and recognized the term as projected by the media, in general they did not personally identify with the notion of being a part of a global community of Filipinos. Instead, they self-identified as “Filipino” or “Filipino American,” for immigrant generation participants, regionalism continued to persist despite media efforts to promote Filipino-ness. Second-generation respondents associated “global Filipinos” with migration and adaptability. As children of

immigrants, they described themselves as part of a Filipino American community, albeit oftentimes localized and sometimes transnational, rather than a global one.

### **About the Focus Groups<sup>1</sup>**

The focus group offers a glimpse of audience perspectives through the personal stories of the participants. With this particular group, consisting of Filipinos and Filipino Americans, harnessing their points of view is especially significant particularly as mainstream U.S. media polls or mainstream media research may not always capture or simply does not consider their views to be significant enough to measure. My interviews with ABS-CBN executives revealed that informal feedback given in person or online by TFC viewers as well as results presented by hired marketing groups and third-party research firms help them determine audience views that is then used to develop programming for the network.

I reached out to possible focus group participants online and in person, by circulating the call for participants and mentioning my research project to their circles of family and friends. I tapped into existing networks of personal contacts that referred friends and family. I also posted a note on my social network page calling for Filipino Americans over 18 years old who were familiar with Filipino American television and media programs. Participants had to have been exposed to TFC programs to some degree, but they were not required to be TFC subscribers. I also reached out to UC San Diego campus organizations via email and visited a class on Filipino American Literature to introduce my project and announce the call for participants.

Three focus groups were conducted in the San Diego area. In all, there were sixteen focus group participants -- eight women and eight men. Nine participants had immigrated to the U.S. as adults and identified primarily as first generation Filipino Americans (three women, six men) while seven participants identified as second generation Filipino Americans (five women, two men). Throughout this chapter, I will use pseudonyms in order to get across the ideas expressed by particular participants as well as the flow of the conversations between participants while maintaining their confidentiality.

The first focus group was held in National City, in the southern part of San Diego area and known to have a significant population of Filipino and a larger presence of Filipino-owned businesses. The discussion session was held at a realty office operated by one of the participants and where many of those who participated often hung out with buddies who worked as real estate agents in the office. There were eight participants comprised of six middle-aged Filipino immigrant men in their fifties and sixties including Ronald, Ernie, Hilario, Winston, Sergio, and Richard. Also in the group, a Filipina immigrant woman in her sixties, Doris, the spouse of Ronald, and a second generation Filipino American woman in

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1. Refer to the Appendix for details on the recruitment process, a table of participants, and the focus group discussion guide.

her late twenties, Melinda, who lived in the area and had heard about the focus group through a friend.<sup>2</sup>

The second focus group was held at a community center in Mira Mesa, a suburb in the county of San Diego that is largely composed of diverse Asian immigrant groups, young families, and older white residents. This focus group consisted of three participants: two middle-aged Filipina immigrant women, Rita and Nancy, and a U.S. born Filipina American, Gina, in her late thirties who is also Nancy's daughter. The third focus group was held at my home, also in the Mira Mesa area. All five participants in the third focus group were Filipino Americans in their mid-twenties. Three of the participants were UC San Diego students, Sharon, Aileen, and Nathan, and the other two, Raymond and Dorothy, recent college graduates living in San Diego.

### **How Viewers Connect to TFC**

Though the focus group did not require that participants be TFC subscribers, most Filipino Americans of the immigrant generation (or first-generation as I will interchangeably refer to in this chapter) subscribed to the channel and watched TFC programs on a regular or daily basis. This demonstrates the popularity and market stronghold of TFC among Filipino households. Rita, a working mother of two college-aged children shared what many I've informally talked to have also described -- rushing home after work to catch a favorite soap opera. She commented that she especially related to one of the station's promotion segments (short station advertisements in between programs) that showed Filipinos at work abroad who, right after their work shift, hurry home in order to make it just in time to watch their favorite TFC TV show. Nancy, a wife of a retired Filipino U.S. navy veteran and mother of four adult second-generation Filipino Americans boasted at how she manages to do her household chores and "multitask" even while keeping an eye and an ear on the television tuned to her favorite TFC shows. The all-female focus group especially described their viewing habits as an essential component of their lives and how it was ubiquitously integrated with their daily routine and everyday life:

"I usually watch it when I come home. The shows are from two to four (in the afternoon), and I DVR (digital video recorder) it. I come home at five. So that's when I watch it. And before going to sleep, I have it upstairs, so I can watch the news." (Rita)

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2. Both women in the first focus group spoke much less compared to the frequency and ease with which all of the men in the group did. Melinda, the second-generation woman in her twenties commented only a few times, and it was particularly to voice her opinion on media representations of Filipinos on TFC as well as on Asian American community dynamics. While Doris, the older, first generation woman in her sixties commented only once, towards the end of the session, to add her suggestion of what she would like to see more of on TFC.

“I watch with my husband. Even when I’m washing clothes, I watch it. I set it so loud I can hear it ... Sundays are dedicated to watching *The Buzz* [an entertainment-talk show program]. I want to watch it first-hand [rather than having it recorded].” (Nancy)

Rita, like so many working Filipinos abroad with a hectic workday, makes time to watch TFC. Watching TFC programs becomes a regular part of her daily existence in the U.S. as it serves as a temporary respite from the stress of the daily work grind and brings the comfort of home (being home physically in one’s house as well as feeling at home through TFC) that is looked forward to at the end of a long day. New technology, such as the digital video recorder (DVR), that enables her to record her favorite shows while she is at work reassures her that she is getting the most of what she pays for her subscription as she is sure not to miss any of the programs she wishes to watch.

All of the participants in my research study accessed TFC through cable or home satellite subscriptions, and for some a digital video recorder (DVR) was part of the subscription package. Shaping the audiences’ television-viewing practices, the DVR enables viewers to record a show and watch it at ones convenience, allowing more flexibility on when to watch particular programs. Direct-to-home services like Filipino On Demand that is offered though Comcast cable enable viewers to record, pause, and play programs as they choose, while, unlike the traditional TV format (which includes broadcast, satellite, and cable feeds), Internet TV is also a new venture for TFC that gives audiences the ability to watch shows online and on their mobile devices. At the time that the focus group discussions took place, direct-to-home Filipino On Demand was in its early stages and Internet TV through TFCtv.com was not yet in service. Although TFC and its rival channel, GMA PinoyTV are both available in San Diego, some participants expressed brand loyalty to TFC. As the first network from the Philippines to establish itself in the U.S. (specifically the Bay Area), TFC was first to tap into the market of overseas Filipinos who had craved news and entertainment programs from the Philippines in the most up-to-date means as possible.<sup>3</sup> When talking about subscribing to ABS-CBN’s The Filipino Channel versus GMA’s PinoyTV, Hilario said, “I can’t afford both of them...when you watch, how much can you really watch?” For him, one channel’s worth of programs was enough to keep him informed and connected given the financial considerations and the amount of time he could devote to watching television.

As mentioned by two focus group participants and based on conversations with other Filipino Americans, it is commonly known and accepted that TFC viewers who choose not to subscribe (e.g. seniors with fixed income) get the TFC shows through relatives who record the programs on their behalf. It’s not unheard of for some audiences to record particular weekly shows via VHS tape for another who does not subscribe to the channel or for someone who is not able watch a program

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3. Raul Rodrigo, *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN* (Quezon City: ABS-CBN Publishing, Inc., 2006).

during its regularly scheduled broadcast time. The work of recording on behalf of another family member, especially for elderly parents who live in a household without TFC, can be a shared family task. As Rita described, “My brother, because his mother-in-law doesn’t have TFC . . . whatever they are watching, they are taping it. Then, one week of tapes, then my sister-in-law will bring it to the mother, then watch, then take the old one, and then they re-tape over.” This chore becomes a part of the family routine to fulfill elderly parents’ needs and to ease the responsibility of taking care of them. For Sergio, who has his wife’s parents living as part of their household, he describes how TFC serves to alleviate the older generations’ isolation and enables him to keep them happy: “In my house, I have my in-laws...They get bored. They can’t go out. Wow, it’s easy for me to take care of them. You just watch (TFC) for lunch, dinner, and breakfast.” With time committed to watching TFC, the senior citizen in-laws are kept entertained, keeping tensions that may in any other circumstance arise because of restlessness or loneliness buffered or at least at bay. While ethnic media producers find ways to tap into and expand its market, ethnic media audiences also find ways to receive the content – from subscribing to cable, satellite or direct home media services, learning ways to adapt to traditional and new media formats, and negotiating family circumstances and financial resources available.

ABS-CBN has strategically deployed technological innovation as a way to draw audiences since its “rebirth” post-Marcos regime sequestration<sup>4</sup> and the comments by some of the respondents show the impact that the network’s efforts in improving its technological prowess were recognized by viewers. First-generation Filipino Americans deemed that current TFC programs show improvement compared to television program they remember from the Philippines in years past. Participants’ comments about the prowess of TFC programming, about improvements in television and film technology, and about the quality of performance by the actors go along side with what is seen as development in other infrastructure – highways, roads, housing, shopping districts and resorts which they gather from watching travel shows featuring accommodations and services available for them should they visit. Filipinos abroad, such as the ones who participated in the focus group, who expressed a marked difference in what they remember the Philippines to be versus what they now see on television, are not only enticed to return but also have a particular perspective to gauge the progress of the Philippines from afar. What audiences abroad see may not be accurately representative of all areas of the Philippines, as development happens in particular regions or locales; however, the viewer nonetheless has the impression that the Philippines as a whole is advancing and the government taking tangible steps to

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4. Maria Rosario Domingo, “An Analysis of ABS-CBN’s Station IDs and their effects on the Image of the Station” (Master’s thesis, University of the Philippines-Diliman, 1996); “The rebirth of a television leader,” *Manila Chronicle*, October 28, 1989; Germaine de Peralta and Carla Lopez, “Broadcast Image Design: Lean, mean advertising tool,” *Manila Chronicle*, Special Feature D12 September 18, 1991; “The Sarimanok Soars Anew,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 10, 1993.

develop particular industries. At the same time, the pleasant surprise or expression of approval about what participants perceived to be improvement in the entertainment, tourism, and other industries also signifies how much they have not kept up at the same time that they need to monitor its progress – that is, audiences seek TFC programs are at once surprised at how things have changed even as they are reassured that things are changing particularly by comparing the developments in the Philippines against “first world” standards.

Although participants, particularly first-generation viewers, found the innovation in format remarkable, there were differences between first-generation men and women in the kinds of programs they primarily watched and valued – with men more inclined towards news programs and women towards entertainment-oriented programs. Media studies scholars have paid particular attention to the power of media production and audience reception through the lens of gender.<sup>5</sup> Understanding why gender matters and how it affects audiences’ reception of television programs goes beyond merely inserting women into the equation, rather it takes into account, for example, how gendered norms and relationships shape audiences’ perceptions of what they watch on television.

Among TFC audiences, there are differences in the types of preferred programs between women and men, and between first and second generations. Immigrant mothers commented on the pleasure they derived from watching soap operas and entertainment programs, reflecting their desire for the “insider” scoop about glamorous celebrities and the fantasy of melodrama as a way to connect with their children and friends. For these women, melodramas and entertainment shows were a reprieve from what they felt were debilitating and constant “bad news” from news programs and instead preferred the freedom of fantasy. Most married men in the focus group divulged that they watched TFC soaps and entertainment shows with their wives although they were very explicit about expressing that they don’t favor it – instead attributing their exposure to entertainment shows and melodramas as a result of spending time with their spouse. By contrast, male participants positioned themselves as viewers of news programs. Ironically, Philippine-based news programs like *TV Patrol*, often follow the political drama of “Philippine-style politics” and feature dramatic sagas in their reporting of headline news – arguably much like a soap opera of sorts. Watching these unfold demonstrates the desire for and possible reach of diasporic citizenship – imagining themselves as active participants in the political goings on, and further extending this to their everyday lives as they talk about the content of the programs they watch with friends, as in the case of the participants who worked together at the realty office. Travel programs were liked by both women and men. Attractive sights, historic backdrops, and the latest information on newly built resorts, brought nostalgic sentiments that drew them to the Philippines. For immigrants, it was a way to imagine a possible return to a place that is at once familiar and has changed

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5. Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences* (New York: Routledge Press, 1996); Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

for the better. This return is made even more desirable as they are more able to financially afford to be tourists in their home country.

None of the young, second-generation Filipino American participants who took part in the focus group subscribed to the channel. With the exception of Melinda and Aileen, all second generation Filipino Americans in the focus groups were regularly exposed to TFC programs (if only peripherally) because they lived with or visited parents who were subscribers to the channel. One or both of their parents watched TFC programs regularly such that there was a specific TV in a common area of the house dedicated to it. As second-generation respondents also noticed, one or both TFC and GMA channels are displayed in public areas such as Filipino bakeries, small grocery stores, or eateries to promote the channel and keep customers and workers entertained. They added that they get exposed to the programs when spending time in these venues as well because the TV set is tuned to either one of these two Tagalog-language channels for most of the day. In these spaces, as Raymond described, “when you come in, you automatically know it’s Filipino,” because the images and the language spoken marks the space as ethnically Filipino. At beauty salons, Dorothy commented, having TFC on TV gets clients talking to each other about the programs contents. These interactions support the assertion made by Filipino American Studies scholar Rick Bonus in *Locating Filipino Americans*, that Filipino American identities are performed, expressed, and constructed in spaces (both actual and virtual), that marginalized communities carve out for themselves in ethnic grocery stores, community newspapers, and social halls.<sup>6</sup> As in the politicized spaces that Bonus’ study highlights, the eateries, clinics, and small businesses where TFC programs are publicly shown symbolize the presence of Filipino Americans. Moreover, the diverse interactions and conversations that take place in these spaces can also unveil meaningful exchanges and reinforce community ties.

### **Overview of Select TFC Programs**

Compared to the still-burgeoning overseas produced programs, “canned” TV shows from the Philippines tend to be the most popular programs while U.S.-produced TV shows continue to struggle with attaining a loyal audience and lacked broad viewership despite attempts to appeal to Filipino Americans, specifically second-generation audiences.<sup>7</sup> In the focus group discussions, I asked participants to comment on specific programs to examine their views towards Philippine-based shows across genres such *Wowowee* (variety/game show), *TV Patrol* (news and current affairs), and *Trip Na Trip* (travel/lifestyle) as these compare to U.S.-based shows like *Balitang Amerika* (news and current affairs) and *Citizen Pinoy* (information/talk show). I asked questions about these specific programs to find

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6. Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space in Southern California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

7. According to the producers and executives I interviewed, based on conversations with TFC audiences, and from my own observations and interactions with close friends and family who subscribe to TFC.



out why they favored the particular programs or watched particular shows over others in relation to their converging and differing identities and experiences. Below I provide some background on the programs that participants in general were already familiar with and had shared their thoughts on in the discussion groups.

### ***Wowowee***

All participants across the different focus groups were familiar with the *Wowowee* game show. At the time that the first two focus groups were conducted, *Wowowee* was regularly on air everyday except Sundays. Almost all the focus group participants who were of the immigrant generation tuned in. Nancy and Rita in the second focus group were avid, regular viewers. Many participants had seen the show and were familiar with the program's format.

*Wowowee* was a variety game show with a public service appeal. It was on air from February 2005 to July 2010.<sup>8</sup> Part entertainment program, part reality TV, the program was tremendously popular in the Philippines, where it was aired to live studio audience and broadcast on network TV as a noon-time show each weekday and on Saturdays. *Wowowee* was extremely popular with overseas Filipinos to whom the show paid special attention and recognition. The two-hour program was aired multiple times during the course of a 24-hour period on TFC (noon-time, evenings, and late-night) to accommodate the varying work schedules of potential viewers who could only watch the program outside of its regular noontime slot. The show began with its theme song, "*Wowowee*," fanatically sung by the studio audience with the lyrics displayed karaoke-style on the television screen so that TV viewers can sing along too. The theme song's lyrics<sup>9</sup> suggested that in *Wowowee*, everybody is a winner. Not only did it promise that many will win prizes, but also that those who don't receive monetary prizes can expect to have fun and enjoyment. The show did this by offering valuable prizes to working class Filipino contestants, presenting opportunities for Filipino migrants to openly express altruism, and providing mass entertainment to viewers in the Philippines and all over the world.

Calling all Filipino "kin, countryman, and family in every corner of the world" to join, the game show consisted of several audience participation quiz games. It drew its viewers, regardless of whether they are "with or without money" because they were considered as all part of the Filipino family. Main contestants were largely working class Filipinos who stood in line outside the ABS-CBN studio, sometimes for days, in order for a chance to join "*Pera O Bayong*" (Money or Basket) – the game that served as the highlight of the show by giving away the biggest prizes. Competing players are also drawn from studio audience members who consist of local Filipinos and TFC subscriber return migrants. Given its popularity

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8. Despite years of popularity, the show was canceled in the midst of public controversies, culminating in an irreconcilable clash involving the host and network executives.

9. Please refer to the Appendix for the *Wowowee* theme song lyrics. I translated the lyrics to English and include this in the Appendix as well.

abroad, the show toured cities with large Filipino communities in the U.S., Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe for special episodes.

Its host, Willie Revillame, often touted the show and its prizes as a means of providing for “the future wellbeing” of Filipino *kapamilyas*. Its appeal among hopeful contestants rested primarily on huge jackpot prizes, which include: a fully furnished house and lot, a one million-peso cash prize (approximately \$18,518), and a *jeepney*. For the contestants, these prizes – house, money, and vehicle – symbolized a new beginning, the opportunity to pay for medical bills or a child’s education, the capital for a small business, and a means to earn a livelihood. For TFC subscribers, the show offered them an opportunity to see to their favorite stars in person, to make on-air greetings, and front-row seats to their favorite game show. With hand-written signs and placards inscribed with names of cities all over world, the TFC subscriber audience section displays the different places they have traveled from and the different places abroad where Filipino communities may be found. Often, TFC subscribers in the studio audience brought foreign currency to add to the prize monies to be given to participating contestants.

During one of the shows, Willie Revillame said that *Wowowee* “*ay totoong salamin ng buhay Pilipino* (is a true reflection of Filipino lives).” His statement rings true considering the enduring days-long wait of many Filipinos outside the studio for a chance to be a contestant. The show’s popularity among many Filipinos abroad is contingent on its nostalgic appeal especially who are lonely and separated from their families and long for Filipino-style entertainment. Moreover, the show exposes the stark class disparity – not only between local Filipino contestants and TFC subscriber audience members (migrants returning/visiting from abroad) but also between the well-to-do hosts and the working class Filipinos – and palpably illustrates social divides along not only class but also race and gender in Filipino communities. Given the popularity of the program and Willie Revillame’s background as a host of programs that catered to the populous and their social causes, it did not take long for the producers and the host to realize the effect of *Wowowee* on Filipinos all over the world and draw working class and overseas Filipinos. The show was tapped by the Department of Tourism as a vehicle for promoting its campaigns as well as ABS-CBN Foundation’s *Sagip Kapamilya/Bantay Bata* non-profit, social advocacy organizations under the network.

### ***TV Patrol***

Typical of news programs, segments on *TV Patrol* primarily stem from the TV Patrol broadcasted in the Philippines and starts off with breaking news or major news headlines, local incidents (which are often based on police or first responder activities or reports of emergencies), national weather forecast, news from overseas TFC bureaus or foreign news organizations, entertainment news, and sports. News stories with violent images or considered sensitive topics, while shown in the Philippine version, are edited out to produce the *TV Patrol (Global Edition)* specific to international regions to which it will be aired. Thus, Filipinos abroad get a “sanitized” version of the news compared to audiences in the Philippines that is

tailored to the changing sentiments and lifestyles of overseas Filipinos.<sup>10</sup> Albeit an edited version, the news serves as a barometer of the current state of “home” and helps affirm and justify the choices they had made to leave, or whether to help, and to return.

### ***Balitang America***

*Balitang America* is a daily 30-minute news program hosted by Gel Santos. Relos airs on TFC right after *TV Patrol*. Placing the program right after *TV Patrol* puts it at a prime spot for audiences like Sergio and Hilario to catch it – as they may not otherwise do. Produced by TFC North America, it presents headlines from U.S. events with a particular focus on its impact on Filipino American communities. A mix of English and Tagalog or “Taglish” is used in the news reporting, particularly using Tagalog as a “hook” in announcing the headlines, while video clips interspersed between those from U.S. news organizations and those locally taken by *Balitang America*. Regular segments on the program include: U.S. news, movie reviews, international news (news from outside the U.S.), daily updates on the lowest airfare rates for travel to the Philippines, and poll questions about current event topics and issues and subsequent survey results.

Since the show first aired, it has shifted from a weekly news program to airing every weekday. Other localized news programs have also since emerged in other parts of the world with ABS-CBN subsidiaries and significant Filipino community presence such as in Canada and the Middle East region.<sup>11</sup> Christi Morales, a former news correspondent for *Balitang America* whom I had interviewed for a previous paper distinguished TFC from mainstream U.S. programs explaining that it not only catered to Filipino immigrant need for news and information about the Philippines, but also through local English-language shows cater to issues concerning Filipinos in the U.S. She explained the network’s efforts to develop more local programs that appeal to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Filipinos in America. At the time, TFC North America had just moved to a new and larger space where it is now currently located in Redwood City, California. Morales described how personnel and “talent” are often shared between the Philippines and the U.S. For example, journalists and camera operators are often brought over to the U.S. via “journalist visas” to establish and administer production work, some of whom have opted to stay in the U.S. for a longer term. Aside from sharing staff personnel, news stories and reporting responsibilities are sometimes distributed between the Philippines and abroad. Morales emphasized that stories featured in *Balitang America*, “speaks about mainstream issues and localize it” by taking broad social issues – for example changes in Medicare benefits and Immigration legislation – and

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10. The editing of programs was mentioned in interviews of ABS-CBN network producers and the term “sanitized” was what producers used to describe the process. They emphasized that this was not a process of censorship but rather as a way to edit material deemed unsuitable in other cultural contexts.

11. For more information on the range of programs offered by ABS-CBN Global in specific regions, see <http://www.abs-cbnglobal.com/>.

consider its effects on the Filipino community. She stated, for example, that most of her leads, story ideas, and information rely on Filipino and Filipino American community organizations. Some of the organizations that have either approached her or whom she has approached are: Filipinos for Affirmative Action (FAA), Manilatown Heritage Foundation, Filipino Youth Coalition (FYC), and the Veteran's Equity Center in San Francisco. Aside from Filipino community organizations, she also corresponded with local government offices such as the office of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the San Francisco Mayor's office.

*Balitang America* attempts to function in the same way as the ethnic newspapers, given the programs special attention to the ways that local events affect Filipinos in the U.S. or involve Filipino persons or groups. In an attempt to take a "pulse" of the community's perspective on important issues, "Isyu Ngayon" or "Current Issues" is introduced at the beginning of the programs followed by the survey question of the day. Examples include: Do you think the economy is improving? Should the sale of semi-automatics to the public be totally banned? Then, throughout the program clips of responses from everyday persons "off the street" are shown to provide varying perspectives while the survey numbers of those who texted their response to the question is reported the following day. Wide coverage of local and national issues and perspectives is informative, and especially so given the network's ties to local Filipino American political, social, and cultural organizations that allow reporting on labor-related cases (e.g. anti-trafficking, employment discrimination), and information the public on social services that address concerns of Filipino Americans, particularly Filipino immigrants, as well as cover and promote local performances that bring light to Filipino American experiences.

### ***Citizen Pinoy***

*Citizen Pinoy*, dubbed as one's "passport to immigration information" is a live audience talk show hosted by Michael Garfunkel, a U.S. immigration attorney, and is aired on TFC on weekends and on ANC (ABS-CBN News Channel) on weekends. It first aired in May 2005 and was initially hosted by Filipino American vice-mayor of Daly City, Mike Guingona, *Balitang America*'s producer, Odette Keeley, and Attorney Michael Garfunkel, to tackle U.S. immigration topics such as undocumented stay, petitioning family members, and deportation. In launching the program, Attorney Garfunkel describes its aims: "The show highlights the struggles of Filipinos as they pursue their dreams in America. We will discuss their hardship, the pain of separation from their family and the difficulty of living alone in a strange and far away country. As the show progresses, we will feature how they eventually succeeded in achieving their American dream."<sup>12</sup>

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12. Michael Garfunkel, "Citizen Pinoy: A new TV show providing your passport to immigration information," *Philippine Star*, May 5, 2005. Last Accessed September 8, 2013. <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/276728/citizen-pinoy-new-tv-show-providing-%C2%91your-passport-immigration-information%C2%92>

Today, hosted solely by Gurfinkel, the show is one of the longest running U.S.-based productions on TFC. Unlike other TFC programs, *Citizen Pinoy* is also aired in the Philippines through the ANC Philippine cable channel. The show is based in the TFC North America studio in the San Francisco Bay Area region, where most of its tapings are held. In addition, the show also tours other cities in the U.S. in states such as Hawaii, Nevada, Florida, and New York. The show's format is predominantly a question and answer session, or as it is often phrased "*Your Tanong, My Sagot*" which is a mix of Tagalog and English for "Your Questions, My Answers," with audiences posing pre-selected immigration-related question to attorney Gurfinkel. The show can also feature specific cases that have been successfully resolved by Gurfinkel's law firm team. Topics range from immigration petition denials due to misunderstanding of immigration forms, admittance to previous drug use or fraud, denial of entry to the U.S. and deportation due to invalid visas, and expired petitions. The show interviews family member or invites them to come on as guests to share their heart-wrenching, personal stories of family separation, their frustration with the U.S. immigration system, and how they overcame the struggle to reunite with family members with the help of Gurfinkel's law firm. Though each case varies, their stories serve as examples of what may be commonly experienced "errors" or misinformation in approaching the U.S. immigration bureaucracy, or highlight what other Filipino Americans may have experienced or are currently dealing with in the process of securing U.S. legal status for themselves or family members.

Touting success stories, the program expresses an insistence on the unification of the family through the idealized reunion of family members in the United States. Regardless of how long or complicated a case may be, the law firm is championed as a defender of Filipino families and an ally in one's path to attain U.S. residency and citizenship. Informing audiences of the intricacies of U.S. immigration laws, the shows teach viewers how to navigate the U.S. immigration system and insist that Filipino Americans need to be well educated about the process to minimize or prevent frustration, disappointments, and unhappy endings.

*Citizen Pinoy* blurs the line between public service and promotion for the law firm. According to a former TFC writer and producer I interviewed, the show was a moneymaker for TFC because of its low production cost and high return in marketing and advertising revenue. This may have attributed to the shows longevity along with the pervasive, on-going need in the immigrant Filipino community for legal advice and services that continues to make the show relevant. On the one hand, the show serves to educate and inform audiences of their rights and options as it relates to their immigration status in the United States. On the other hand, as a public service couched in the context of TFC's marketing approach that is "in the service of the Filipino," the talk show has put Gurfinkel in the limelight and through TFC, afforded wide and broad exposure that has made him a respected figure and household name in Filipino American community. Live studio audience members show deference when asking a question, as if interacting with a doctor or esteemed advisor, who then responds with a targeted, clear answer. For audiences, there is a feel of a personal consultation as attorney Gurfinkel responds to in-person or online questions mixing in Tagalog words or expressions while addressing the studio audience viewer and looking straight at the camera to viewers at home. As

the host, Gurfinkel often notes that the details of a case will depend of each person's situation, in addition to providing general advice and information on U.S. laws and how Filipino Americans can tackle their immigration issues, he also advises that audiences seek out legal counsel to ensure that all elements of their individual case are looked into.

### ***Trip Na Trip and Travel Shows***

Travel shows were very popular among the respondents who wanted to see places they ideally would want to visit. Like a travel brochure on TV, shows like *Trip Na Trip* that featured a tourist destination each week provided both escapes as well as practical information. The show's title, *Trip Na Trip*, is a Tag-lish (mix of Tagalog and English) phrase and play on words wherein trip can mean to be another term for travel as well as trip to mean a hobby, fancy, or interest. In this case, combining both is a playfully way of saying that traveling is a kind of thing one likes to do. Places become destinations and heritage is produced through organized, escalated travel that "not only compresses the life world, but also displaces it."<sup>13</sup> These tourist destinations are not only experienced in person, for TFC audiences it is also in their participation tourism through television. Watching a program like *Trip Na Trip* that showcases beautiful scenery served as feast for the eyes, while the show's narration provided details about regional customs and local favorite spots meant to entice viewers to eventually experience them in person.

### **Generational Differences in Viewership**

"The Philippines is just a click away." – Hilario, first-generation Filipino American focus group participant

"We are changing the scene." – Nathan, second-generation Filipino American focus group participant

### ***First-Generation Perspectives***

First-generation Filipino Americans in the focus groups aptly considered TFC as one of the most up-to-date, convenient sources of information from the Philippines. The channel, through the television medium, makes it easy for any Filipino abroad who can afford to subscribe either through satellite or cable providers to tap into programs from the Philippines any time of day. ABS-CBN's flagship international channel, TFC, brings the latest shows abroad by airing a diverse array of programs including news stories within hours of airing on the ABS-CBN network in the Philippines. The increasing shift to television (as audiences were more able to afford TFC subscription and thus relied less on video cassette tapes, intermittent shows on local public broadcast channels, and local community newspapers that featured news from the Philippines) not only allowed audiences to

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13. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

access information faster, but also broadened Philippine popular culture's scope of reach. TFC viewers may find that as an audio-visual medium, watching TV news programs and talk shows involves less time and is more convenient to access compared to reading print media or online newspapers on the Internet. As Hillario put it, "Newspapers are very good but we don't have the luxury of time to read." Moreover, perhaps after a long day's work, they prefer television's unidirectional, passive method of delivery – as they see and hear the content in a way that they find relaxing and entertaining even as they are receiving information.<sup>14</sup> Being able to watch TFC can be a "luxury" especially for those who spend much of their time working long hours, multiple jobs, or in environments where they feel stifled or invisible.

In conducting the focus groups, I was surprised to find the extent to which immigrant women, as wives and mothers, had a lot of influence over when and what their spouses and children see when the TV set is tuned to TFC. Part of this may stem from the way in which programs in general are oriented to or imagines a largely female audience. Men in the first focus group revealed that they watch TFC shows their wives watch. Although these shows are not always their favorites, they watch nevertheless because it's what is on TV when they are spending time with their spouse in the evenings or weekends. As Sergio explained, "When I get home (from work), my wife is watching TFC, and I get influenced by her." Second-generation participants also acknowledged the influence of parents in the TV shows to which they are exposed because as Gina, a second-generation Filipino American in her thirties put it: "Mom controls the remote." This means she is also tuning in to variety programs like *Wowowee* on TFC. Her mom, Nancy, would often call attention to an interesting part of the show, "she (mom) can watch again later in the afternoon to show me if something interesting happened during the program." Besides female viewers, grandparents may also have influence over other family members. In addition to requesting for the TFC channel or taped-shows, they may also watch their favorite programs while caring for young grandkids. Intergenerational dynamics is an interesting area of study and those who have looked at it show that in immigrant families, even as there are particular tensions and conflicts that arise as a result of "culture clash" between U.S.-born children and immigrant parents, the relationships also have room for accommodation and negotiation and may change over time as children and parents grow older, take on different roles, or move out of the household.<sup>15</sup> The interactions that focus group participants described between parents and children demonstrate that these dialogues and exchanges happen as family members watch or are around the television together.

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14. For helpful background on debates in television studies see: Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson, ed., *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). These included discussions of audience reception of television programs, for example, TV as a passive medium compared to engagement with new media platforms.

15. Nancy Foner, ed., *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

Viewers also used TFC programs as a way to monitor and find out what has changed – such as the development of tourism destinations – as well as to confirm their perceptions and expectations about what hasn't changed – such as “Philippine-style politics.” “Without this media, we have to ask ourselves what the Philippines looks like,” Hilario, said. Because viewers received information via live or close-to-live broadcast, they felt more secure about their being far apart from family because they felt they could manage and anticipate change even from abroad. Hilario further explained that because of the news programs, he feels that he is able to know “ahead of time” – of potential natural disasters, calamities, scandals, and threats by knowing about weather forecasts, political goings-on, economic changes, and military activities. This gives those abroad a sense of being in control of their displacement or despite of their displacement. Global ethnic television gives diasporans the status of guardian and a means to watch over and assess the goings on from far away. Given their tangible and intangible contributions, those in the diaspora can hold or seek to gain increased authority, if not over direct decision-making then certainly over being able to voice their perspective, and give legitimacy to their opinions especially given the support they provide their families and the Philippines as a country.

There are different values placed between news programs and entertainment programs. Many of the first-generation male viewers in the focus group particularly Winston who expressed that he did not care for the gossip shows, while others admitted that they watched the variety shows and *teleseryes* (soap operas) but only when their wife was also watching the program. Instead of “trashy” entertainment shows, news programs were preferred, which were considered to have more “professional” personalities and to deliver useful information. One of the most favored programs, according to the male immigrant generation participants that I talked to, is *TV Patrol*. Focus group participants described the program as “serious” and “professional” compared to sitcoms and gossip shows that immigrant men described as “non-sense.” In addition to mainstream news sources such as CNN or national broadcast networks, diasporans may turn to ethnic news media outlets from home countries for more detailed, reliable, and well-rounded coverage of news that may not be otherwise reported in their country of residence.<sup>16</sup> Focus group participants who were first generation, regular viewers reported that they rely on *TV Patrol* on a daily basis as a source of information about Philippine national government, to keep up on issues involving peace and order situations, to hear the latest entertainment gossip, and to look out for weather conditions. Hilario commented that the news program allows him to get the information before he can read about it on newspapers. He was also particularly interested in news stories that mention military affairs, not surprisingly because of the extent to which Filipino American lives are steeped in history of U.S.

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16. Nouredine Miladi “Satellite TV News and the Arab Diaspora in Britain: Comparing Al-Jazeera, the BBC and CNN,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, (August 2006): 947-960; Connie Christiansen, “News Media Consumption among Immigrants in Europe: The Relevance of Diaspora” *Ethnicities* 4, no. 2 (June 2004): 185-207.



militarism, such as Filipino American WWII veterans and Filipino men in the U.S. Navy.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the U.S.-based news program *Balitang America*, which features stories affecting Filipino American lives was described as “different” by one of the participants. Despite the *Balitang America’s* attempt to also include stories from other U.S. cities with its correspondents in cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, Sergio, who is a San Diego resident, echoed what others in the focus group expressed and found the program’s coverage of Filipino American events as being too Bay-Area centered. Compared to *TV Patrol*, the U.S.-produced *Balitang America* program has yet to gain the reputation and popularity among immigrant viewers as a trustworthy source of news for Filipino American viewers.

While Filipino American men who regularly watched *TV Patrol* lauded the program and its ability to bring them the most up-to-date news from the Philippines, women such as Rita and Nancy who are immigrant generation said that they did not always necessarily like the news that they reached them because as Rita put it, “[it] looks like the Philippines and Filipinos have not changed . . . The government is still corrupt. But the newscasters are good.” While Nancy retorted, “sometimes it only seems like bad news.” For the two women, it was often uninteresting and a sore, bitter reminder of the country they had left behind. Participants’ reactions reflected the extended coverage of news stories particularly of political scandals that involve allegations of corruption, election fraud, impeachment trials, and other political power maneuverings that are uncovered and highlighted on the national stage. Although men belittled their soap opera-fan spouses, they reveled in the drama of political scandals and followed how these events unfolded with curiosity and heightened interest through the nightly news.

Considering that both male and female participants commented that they instead turn to local and national channels for U.S. news, the ability of many Filipino Americans to speak English may be a factor in the competition between English language U.S. news channels and English language Filipino American news sources. Unlike other ethnic immigrant groups who may find U.S. news in their native language to be an important source of local information, this was not the case for the Filipino Americans who were in the focus group. Rita declared, “If I want stories about America, I’m going to go to CNN or Fox.” Furthermore, although TV has a mass appeal with broad reach, Filipino immigrant audiences continue to get local Filipino

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17. U.S. military presence in the Philippines paved the way for the recruitment of Filipinos men to serve as stewards in the U.S. Navy. During WWII, Filipinos in the Philippines and the United States especially enlisted to take part in the U.S. war effort and defend the Philippines from Japanese occupation. U.S. immigration laws, for most of the past century, enabled Filipino men who served in U.S. wars in the Philippines WWII to enter the United States. However, despite their history of service, Filipino vetrans in the Philippines and U.S. continue to fight for recognition and benefits. In San Diego, the long-standing presence of the U.S. military industry has contributed to a significant number of Filipino Americans in the community with ties to the U.S. Navy. See Yen Le Espiritu, *Homebound: Filipino Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 17, 27-31; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, rev. ed. (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 359-361.

community news from ethnic newspapers and do not seek this out in programs such as *Balitang America*.

In the same vein, despite *Citizen Pinoy's* attempt to connect with immigrant viewers, participants in the focus group commented that *Citizen Pinoy* is only largely appealing to those who have family members in the process of immigrating to the United States. "Unless you have a specific situation, then there is no need to watch it," Sergio declared. Several participants complained that the questions can be redundant. Perhaps for these focus group participants, seeking legal counsel is equated with having complex legal concerns – such those with undocumented status or atypical immigration concerns, and with the stigma from stories of vulnerable immigrants taken advantage by unscrupulous lawyers. For focus group participants of the first generation, *Citizen Pinoy* was perceived to be more of an advertisement than a service. That is, in addition to helping answer immigration questions and concerns, the show is also seen as a way for attorney Gurfinkel to promote his law firm in the Filipino American community and generate business. "It's more of an advertisement to make the law firm more popular," Hilario said. Sergio shared that a friend who attended one of the show taping had complained of the high rates that the firm charged for "simple cases" which he associated with the high profile, celebrity attorney. However, "it's a business and it's up to people if they want to hire a lawyer from the firm," he added.

Based on my interview with ABS-CBN Global upper-management, the network acknowledges the gendered differences in programs and in and that by and large, the typical TFC viewer is a middle-aged, Filipina immigrant. On the one hand, TFC responds to the popularity of drama and entertainment programs by ensuring that such shows are aired in the evenings or after work hours. While in geographical areas with larger numbers of immigrant Filipino men, such as the Middle East, TFC ensures that programs such as the news and criminal investigation shows get air play during mid-day and afternoon times (as extended breaks during these times are typical in many Middle East countries). Programming therefore is shaped by the labor (or working hours) of Filipino immigrants as the network caters its "weekend" programming according to customary weekends of the particular countries. Additionally, the type of programming – whether they be soap operas or crime investigation programs – appeal to the audiences' preference for dramatic stories. As the often formulaic melodrama (such as in soap operas) or dramatic re-enactments of events play out, such fantasy provides an emotional outlet through which Filipino overseas viewers may connect with and find momentary release from their angst over tense and unresolved family issues or their guilt over leaving their children behind, as well as a relief from the daily work grind and an escape from loneliness.<sup>18</sup>

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18. The melodrama is a historically popular genre in Philippine cinema and television and its popularity continues to the present day. Filipino film studies scholar Rolando Tolentino aptly critiques the function of Philippine melodramas in relation to the conditions of overseas Filipinos.

TFC is a way to remember “home” and tap into “culture,” as was the case with participants who wanted to know more about other places to potentially visit in the Philippines. Immigrant parents see their children’s engagement with TFC programs as an indication of interest in learning about Filipino culture. Seeing their children watch the programs on TFC are taken by the parents as an affirmation, an act of remembering and respecting the traditions, ways, and heritage from which they came. Immigrant parents in the United States, who are more likely to practice traditions from the homeland and who fear that their children are becoming too Americanized, take pride in seeing their children actively try to maintain cultural ties (especially in a way that they themselves also partake in). Rita expressed, “My son watches because of culture. TFC brings culture.” Equating TFC with Filipino culture, she reasoned that for her and her son, it’s a natural thing to want to watch TFC because “it’s our culture [and] we connect.” She explained that because of TFC, her son wants and asks for mementos from the Philippines after seeing it on television. In this sense, TFC brings together viewers and consumers who identify with Filipino culture and this shared interest in the programs and products connects not only mom and son, but also individuals all over the world to each other as well.

In the discussion, Nancy, the stay-at-home mom and wife of a retired Navy veteran was quick to point out that she is drawn to the TFC shows not merely because it’s from a Filipino television station, but that the shows are great even when compared to mainstream U.S. programs – so much so that she has even forgotten all about American soap operas that she used to watch. She finds a vast improvement in the quality of the shows produced as well as the performance of the actors that make the current Philippine-based programs far more “exciting” and “better” than shows and films produced in the Philippines in past years. In light of the lack of representation and at times negative, prejudiced portrayals of the Philippines and Filipinos in Western media, loyal TFC viewers in the United States may find TFC as a welcome respite and a competitive force compared with mainstream television. That the quality of shows have improved matters because it reinforces pride in “products” made in the Philippines -- new television programs and films as a testament to the skills and talents of a new generation of producers and actors are associated with Filipino culture and moreover serves to enhance the representation of the Philippines in the United States and the world. For immigrant generation viewers, TFC enables them to empathize with home, for example how real people and lives are affected by calamities, tragedy, and poverty and also as “winners” and overcoming obstacles as shown in TV news and game shows. Transforming empathy to action, viewers described TFC as a way to also tangibly connect with home, for example in giving donations via its programs or fundraising efforts. Many of the older respondents referred to the Wowowee game show describing how host Willie Revillame invited contestants to share their talents and life stories on air as a means of entertaining audiences and eliciting sympathy from viewers who then give money and gifts to contestants and the show. As Sergio described his feelings towards the show’s contestants, he says “*Maaawa ka* (You feel pity) and you want to donate.” Ronald proudly mentioned that his kids, who had

attended the live showing of *Wowowee*, donated money to the program along with other *balikbayans*<sup>19</sup>.

However, the motives of those who appear on television giving gifts can be called into question – that perhaps it was merely way for some audience members to get to be on camera or to get their names mentioned during the show. “Is it just to get some exposure?” Richard asked, as others reflected on this question left wondering about why or what they may have become a part of when tuning in to such as show. In posing this question, Richard (who was also vocal about not being a TFC subscriber) called others to examine their intentions by questioning not only the show’s seemingly altruistic agenda but also that of their own. Not long after the show first aired, during one of its episodes Willie Revillame announced that the show had accrued over 800,000 pesos (approximately \$14,814) in TFC subscriber donations – donations that could be considered an extension of money remittances that overseas Filipinos are expected to provide. This led to speculation about whether the show was illicitly and deliberately seeking funds from audiences in exchange for special treatment. The show was subject to public controversy regarding the overt donation of money in exchange for on-air greetings – as some episodes had audience members give one of hosts money right after making a greeting to family members on air. This pushed the program to issue the following statement, or an abbreviated version of it, before every episode:

ABS-CBN wishes to inform the public that the company and its employees do not require any payment whatsoever, whether in cash or in kind, for the opportunity to participate in any contest, or make on-air greetings during the program “*Wowowee*.” While ABS-CBN will accept any donations offered by any member of the studio audience, no preferential treatment of any kind is extended to these donors. Any money or gifts given by any member of the viewing audience during the program will be treated as donations for the benefit of the needy and will be distributed accordingly, either during the program or at a later time.

Yet, despite the official disclaimer, the show continued to receive gifts from TFC subscribers – though the hosts at that point would more clearly convey that studio audience and contestants, regardless of whether they gave money or gifts, can make spontaneous on-air greetings. The show awkwardly served as a venue for reunion of long lost family members as it brought family members together – contestants and/or viewers – and established a bond across audience groups through the television.

In as much as TFC engenders sympathy from audiences abroad for Filipinos in the Philippines, TFC in turn also serves as a kind of “care package” from the Philippines for those abroad, particularly in the way that programs are “bundled”

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19. Filipinos from abroad returning to visit the Philippines for short or extended periods of time.

together to offer an array of channels specific to niche demographics of overseas Filipinos (e.g. ANC, CinemaOne, Kapamilya) as a reminder to those abroad that their families and their “home” nation remember and appreciate their sacrifice and service. Part of “caring” for Filipinos abroad, as far as the network is concerned, is by providing the Tagalog-language programs, that make viewers feel “at home” even as these programs evoke cultural pride, a sense of ownership, and dutiful loyalty to the network’s programs. When asked why she watches TFC, Rita exclaimed: “Excuse me! Because I’m Filipino! True blood! Because it’s ours; it’s yours.” Describing how she feels when watching the TFC programs, she explained, “It’s like I’m in the Philippines...When I’m out (of the house) I’m in America, when I’m home, I’m in the Philippines,” expressing the deeply held value of TFC especially as a central, complimentary and necessary aspect of her everyday existence in the United States.

Being closer to the Philippines while in America means having it both in the foreground and background of one’s daily life. It adds the ambiance of being in the Philippines for Nancy, as she goes about her daily, routine tasks at home. A second-generation respondent who watches it more regularly than other second-generation participants described how the channel virtually transports its audience to the Philippines. Watching TFC to escape from daily stressors by watching tourism-inspired programs were a favorite especially for many of the immigrant generation viewers who enjoyed the images of scenic beaches and mountains. They said that such programs featured a “beautiful” view of different tourist destinations and particularly showcased how these places have changed, developed, and improved. Imagining themselves in these newly developed areas and learning of often unknown heritage sites, it restored diasporic Filipinos’ pride in what the Philippines is able to offer – be it the food, native products and colorful traditions of local cultures, awe-inspiring natural resources, all made possible in more comfortable accommodations. These imaginings not only open up the ideas that it is affordable for Filipinos abroad to visit but also that the Philippines is a tourist draw and immigrant Filipinos abroad with their buying potential can position themselves as such in addition to being a returning immigrant.

It was not a surprise to me that Rita thought of Filipinos who say they do not like TFC to be “*ma-arte na Filipino*” or “snobbish Filipinos.” She associated dislike of TFC with rejection of Filipino culture, particularly of what is considered “low” or mass culture. In the context of the U.S., where the Philippines and Filipino culture has been seen as inferior and marginalized, to this immigrant mother, “these Filipinos” are stuck-up and equated them with ones who speak only English especially when visiting the Philippines. Though “these Filipinos” may take TFC to be a mark of inferiority and prefer to be seen as more assimilated to American culture, she wanted to let them know that for her, the bottom line is: “You’re still Filipino and brown.” In proudly asserting that she watches TFC she asserts herself as Filipino in the United States – a place where she does not feel at home unless she is in her own house. Her assertion to me and others in the group came across as something she would say only because she found it safe to do so because as she had described, her Filipino identity and culture does not hold a prominent place in her daily, public personae and work relationships, despite having lived in the United

States for over 30 years. Instead, her Filipino identity is relegated to and contained in the privacy of her home, in her house, where she is able to speak Tagalog, where she feels she is most understood. However, those she denounces as being “*maarte*” for distancing themselves from Filipino culture may share in the same experience of cultural devaluation that she herself faces daily, as she describes not being able to fully express herself nor feel at home outside of her own house. She followed her cautionary and stern remark to fellow Filipinos by sharing a story about her friend’s African American spouse who watches TFC. She described how he is fluent in Tagalog and is able to converse with her and other Filipinos at get-togethers, including talking about popular Filipino television shows. In giving an example of how non-Filipinos can engage with the programs, she reinforces the idea that affinity to TFC measures one’s acceptance of Filipino culture and identification with a Filipino community. TFC thus becomes a marker of cultural pride and a measure of one’s claim to Filipino-ness. When I first introduced the topic of my project to focus group participants, many excitedly shared just how much they rely on and enjoy the programs by naming the different shows they watch, as if to prove their authenticity and loyalty as Filipino viewers who are not ashamed to claim their Filipino heritage to others and me in the discussion group. It is not surprising then the extent to which one participant went out of her way to say that she is an avid viewer – as a way to express that she is not ashamed to claim her Filipino background.

Though TFC brings together audience from across the world through its programs, watching TFC does not necessarily foster a sense of unity among the viewers. Respondents in the first focus group were adamant that TFC does not serve as a unifying factor because they will still continue to identify with their regional roots. Regionalism in this case refers to particular affinity to a geographically and linguistically different group often marked by areas called “regions.” These areas are used as part of the political structure and a means to address local issues from different areas of the archipelago in relation to the central government that is based in Manila. For the immigrant generation focus group participants, language and local traditions from their respective provinces continue to mark their regional differences. Their responses demonstrate that although TFC does not detach individuals from their strong regional affiliations, it does give its viewers something in common to talk about.

When asked about their thoughts with regards to *Wowowee*, responses from immigrant generation viewers ranged from empathy for the contestants who shared their life stories on air, to admission that *balikbayan* family members had donated money to the program, to questions about the intent of those who donate. As part of an “imagined community”<sup>20</sup> of Filipino viewers, they were especially drawn to the portion of the program when TV host Willie Revillame interviewed contestants about deeply personal stories before coaxing them to sing or dance in front of the studio audience. As Nancy described, “You get to see different talents. You get to

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20. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

know their lives, about poverty, about their children.” The show’s emotional appeal drew from compelling stories of struggle and by championing the ordinary Filipino. Unlike the fantasy of soap operas, *Wowowee* delivered melodrama by drawing from the lives and talents of contestants and tapping into the vulnerable sentiments of its loyal viewers. Audiences get a dose of reality-TV based on contestants’ narratives and performance.

A major portion of the show was devoted to the host talking to each contestant – asking them about their personal lives and daily struggles – to gather what they may use their winnings on. This is sometimes followed by a brief performance or “act” by the contestant on a talent they would like to showcase (such as singing or dancing) to the amusement of the studio audience. On the one hand, this performance was supposed to be the contestant’s 15 minutes of fame; however what it largely did was entertain audiences while stirring empathy for the contestant who was represented as the ordinary Filipino. Targeting the financial concerns (located in the Philippines) and the emotional needs (located in the diaspora), the television show engendered a connection between the Filipino contestant and the Filipino diasporan viewer. These segments in the program spurred audiences in the studio who were TFC subscribers from overseas and those abroad to give cash and gifts for the show’s contestants and hosts and donate money towards the program’s social causes. As Sergio put it, “*Maaawa ka* and you want to donate. (You pity them and you want to donate).” *Wowowee*, as Willie Revillame often touted, was a mirror of Filipino lives – but more than that, the show presented a platform for Filipinos to tell their stories and enact their identities, a stage for Filipinos to perform for the diaspora *and* a means for diasporans to carry out its national obligations. Bringing together the *balikbayan* TFC subscriber with the everyday Filipino – be it tricycle driver, student, beauty pageant contestant, or street sweeper, the odd combination of entertainment and empathy made for a winning formula that made *Wowowee* a popular show especially among overseas Filipinos during its over five year run.

TFC programs that showed travel destinations proved to be popular with the focus group participants, especially the regular TFC viewers who preferred to see more travel and lifestyle programs on air. When describing what the travel shows featured, they talked with excitement, anticipation, and pride about the possibilities of seeing these destinations in person during their next visit. Shows promoting travel to the Philippines were a cultural marketing outlet not only for the tourism industry but also for audiences who understood that their identities were somehow associated with it. That is, if the Philippines is seen as clean, beautiful, and a desirable place, then this representation also extends to them as Filipinos living and working outside the Philippines. Second generation audiences also attach their cultural identities to representations of the Philippines, whether this is on TFC or other mediums. Though it may not directly get them to visit the Philippines, the shows gave a sense of cultural affirmation and a reminder of the Philippines as a place to which they may someday travel. Though the main thrust of the tourism programs are to increase tourist visits, how representations of the Philippines and by extension Filipinos are conveyed and interpreted are just as important as whether this effectively brings diasporans back to visit.

While travel programs indirectly calls on diasporans to take part in rebuilding the Philippines by serving as returning tourists, not all participants in the focus groups felt obliged to travel to the Philippines (at least not physically). Instead, they stated that enjoying the travel programs on TV was enough to bring them back (albeit virtually) and be entertained without directly person -- a way to re-imagine their previous visits or travels from the comfort of their living rooms. However way they view it, the travelogue genre does this by simultaneously displaying the exoticness as well as the familiarity of food, people, and local practices.

Rita described what watching a travel show about the Philippines has made her realize: "When I came here (to America), I haven't seen the Philippines as a whole. But yet they are so beautiful. You go to Laguna, Batangas . . . They are so beautiful. The one [places] that they are showing on Trip Na Trip is one that people don't really know. That's why they are introducing it to us in America, so that when we go home we can think about it and get us to go." Wilfred said of Trip Na Trip: "It's a good program, but to those who have been there, it's not enticing anymore. But to those who haven't seen it's generating interest. But to me who have already seen it, I just tell my wife, 'Oh I've seen it' or 'Oh we have been there.' But I think to those people who not yet been, I think it's a good idea to promote that." Sergio added: "It's so different. It's so tropical... Trip Na Trip is going to local beaches, local provinces. You'll be amazed that oh there's a nice place in a very remote place in the Philippines, like in Palawan. It's very informative on my part. I enjoy it. I'm looking at that places which I haven't been there. Why would I want to go there when I've seen it already [on TV] the scenery and everything? It's very entertaining. It's good. I like it." Hearing participants talk about their interest in learning about "what it's really like" in the various provinces demonstrates the extent to which they each still identified with a particular region in the Philippines as opposed to the country as a whole. Thus, they are not only Filipino Americans as Filipinos in America, but they are also Filipino Americans who continue to see themselves as Ilocanos, Pampangenos, Manilenyos, and so on.

Gina explained what she thought was the purpose of the program: "It shows the Philippines and hopefully promote tourism there because people here [in the United States] go to China for tourism and the Philippines isn't a well known place for tourism. For us, it shows that for Filipinos, we don't have to only visit relatives. There are places we can go to as tourists." Being a second-generation Filipino American, she distinguishes the ways tourism is promoted to non-Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Though there are differences, given that Filipino Americans may have family to see and spend time with, the intended impact of the show is the same -- to get people to visit attractions, stay at hotels, and spend like tourists. Moreover, she echoes the stated aims of the DOT who have targeted Filipino Americans like her demonstrates that television travel shows contributes to and overlaps with the government agency's efforts as it leaves such lasting impression with its audience.

Given that Filipino Americans in general are more fluent in English compared to other immigrant groups for whom English was not taught in schools in their home countries, Filipino immigrant parents may not rely on their children in the



same way as other immigrant families who rely on their U.S. born children to take on responsibilities and tasks typically conducted by adults (e.g. serving translators for DMV, medical appointments, legal issues). However, this does not mean that Filipino American families do not face similar conflicts and tensions as other immigrant families. Expectations, spoken and unspoken, of second generation, U.S.-born children to succeed academically, to be financially better off than their immigrant parents, to “save face” and not bring shame to the family, to conform to gendered expectations of familial obedience cuts across Asian ethnic communities.<sup>21</sup> In the focus groups I conducted, first-generation and second-generation participants were aware of different generational dynamics and needs. This was alluded to in one of the comments Sergio made: “In our association (hometown association), the first generation try to get the kids involved but the kids don’t join because they have their own, with their own platform.” I did not expect to find the extent of acute sensitivity that immigrant parents expressed towards their U.S.-born children. Although “they (second generation) attend because of food...they don’t participate.” So, “the parents have to be a bridge” particularly between the grandparents and kids. Sergio’s comment shows a shared responsibility in reconciling family dynamics between the older generation and younger generation. Rita observed that with her kids, “[TFC] refreshes their memory.” She often watched *teleseryes*<sup>22</sup> with her daughter and laughed when recalling how her daughter gets giddy over actors that they find “*gwapo*” or handsome. Watching TFC soap operas brought together mother-daughter each evening and became a valuable moment for this immigrant, working mother, as it was time she felt she bonded with her daughter. While with regards to her son she said tries to catch TFC whenever he is home from college. Through TFC, she said, he familiarized himself with the ways of life and popular culture from the Philippines. This desire to know the Philippines and Filipino culture, for her, was evidenced in wanting particular items from the Philippines. Encouraging cultural consumerism, TFC interstitial segments and travel shows feature world-class, export quality products from particular regions in the Philippines, and in so doing neatly tie in the country’s tourism industry and marketing project. For Rita and her son, their interest comes from the sense of a shared identity (as Filipinos) as well as the implicit awareness that their common interest of participating in cultural practices (e.g. watching TFC programs, desire for Philippine-made products) helps keep them connected to each other.

### ***Second-Generation Perspectives***

Second generation Filipino American focus group participants shared different perspectives on how and why they connect, if at all, with the programs on TFC and other transnational media from the Philippines. None of them subscribed to TFC, but most, instead were familiar with the programs through parents who subscribed, and all were exposed and watched programs when at family gatherings and public spaces where TFC was on television. Ethnic media can function to

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21. Foner, *Across Generations*.

22. Soap operas aired during the late afternoons and evenings.

reaffirm or reinforce one's sense of national identity.<sup>23</sup> However, this happens differently across generations. Among Indian diasporans in the UK, parents use ethnic media to convey cultural traditions and pass on their native language, while children of immigrants shunned what they perceived to be backward, outdated traditions in favor of mainstream media and "modern" culture.<sup>24</sup> Far from completely disavowing ethnic media, in the U.S., a recent study on second generation Korean Americans' reception of ethnic media showed that affinity to Korean culture, including ethnic media was a means for U.S.-born Koreans to establish boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as well as establish "new ethnicities."<sup>25</sup> This finding coincides with Sunina Maira's study of South Asian youth in New York where she found the second generation generating alternative, critical identities that does not fully embrace cultural practices from their parents' native countries, and at the same time challenges normative Eurocentric, U.S. mainstream culture.<sup>26</sup> In the focus group I conducted, the second-generation Filipino American participants joked over the extent to which their parents or older family members were TFC fanatics; however, they also understood that TFC and other transnational ethnic media was an essential part of their parents' lives in the United States. Aware of their distinct generational point of view, they expressed that though they may not value Philippine-based media in the same way, their parents are especially drawn to the Tagalog language programs because they can identify with the people, places, and circumstances in the programs. In the same way that parents expressed the distance that second generation children have for hometown association, second generation participants noticed the extent to which TFC and other Philippine-based programs are an essential part of immigrant Filipino lives because it brought characters and stories on screen that represent the Philippines and Filipino culture in a way that is directly familiar and appealing to their parents. Mirroring the tensions, conflicts, and conciliations that authors in Nancy Foner's edited work *Across Generations* described, the comments made by first and second generation focus group participants show that apart from generational differences, there are

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23. Marie Gillespie, "Transnational Communications and Diaspora Communities," in *Ethnic Minorities in the Media*, ed. Simon Cottle (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000); Annabelle Sreberny, "Media and Diasporic Consciousness: An Exploration Among Iranians in London," in *Ethnic Minorities in the Media*, ed. Simon Cottle (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000); (2000); K. Viswanath and Pamela Arora. "Ethnic Media in the United States: An Essay on Their Role in Integration, Assimilation, and Social Control" in *Mass Communication and Society* 3, no. 1 (2000): 39-56; Chanhoo Lee. "Korean immigrants' viewing patterns of Korean satellite television and its role in their lives," *Asian Journal of Communication* 4, no. 1 (2004): 68-80.

24. Gillespie, *Transnational Communications and Diaspora Communities*.

25. David Oh, "Mediating the Boundaries: Second-generation Korean American adolescents' use of transnational Korean media as markers of social boundaries," *International Communication Gazette* 74, (2010): 258-276. DOI: 10.1177/1748048511432607

26. Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

also instances of intergenerational implicit understandings and unsaid adjustments that happen between parents and children – understandings and adjustments that may not always be apparent to the other.<sup>27</sup>

Because immigrant parents, particularly women, “control” the living room TV set dedicated to TFC indirectly subjecting their husbands and kids to the programs that they primarily want to watch, some like Nancy, may also tell their kids: “hey, you should watch this” or “check this out” when they see a funny or interesting segment on a program that they want to share with other family members. Second generation participants also pointed out that watching TFC shows with their parents can often serve as segues to side conversations about more serious topics such as loss of a loved one and other topics brought up in soap opera plots or shows. Raymond, a recent college graduate who lives with his parents recalled how he able to talk to his dad about Filipino migration -- a topic that also related to his dad’s employment as an U.S. immigration service officer -- when they both happened to catch an episode of the legal talk-show, *Citizen Pinoy*. While for Gina, an adult Filipino American who often visited her parents, watching “entertainment” programs prompted awkward but eye-opening moments when she and her brother who were not particularly as familiar with cultural cues and did not always understand the humor or jokes, such as in *Wowowee*, whose format she had to decipher and sometimes found to be baffling or offensive. However, because Gina keeps up to date on entertainment programs, she is also able to talk to relatives, especially older family members, about them during family get-togethers.

Unlike comments from first-generation participants who expressed pride in what they felt were improvements in the delivery and quality of Philippine television programs and film, strides in technological innovation did not resonate with second-generation participants. Dorothy commented that she disliked what she considered second-rate shows that were “flashy, big, loud, with the camera in wrong angles and cheesy special effects.” Some programs were also considered unoriginal, as mere “copies” of U.S. versions such as shows like *The Biggest Loser*. For Dorothy, who has grown up watching mostly U.S. television shows in the America including the latest popular shows that are also globally syndicated, the Philippine versions seem like cheap imitations despite the fact that the Philippine version of the programs likely do not have as large a production budget compared to its U.S. counterparts. Thus, these shows, which had branched out from their original versions from overseas, can appear as ineffective attempts at mimicking U.S. norms, practices, and values but with a more dramatic, Filipino-ized flair. The availability of U.S. programs in the Philippines is not new – in past decades, popular U.S. programs have been shown through Philippine television networks, and more recently become available directly through cable and satellite channels. Though today, the highest rated shows in the Philippines tend to be Philippine-produced programs, syndicated shows like *The Biggest Loser* or *Big Brother* are also popular among audiences who are drawn, much like audiences in the U.S., by the spectacle of reality TV. In general, Philippine versions of syndicated programs (e.g. Reality TV

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27. Foner, *Across Generations*.

from the U.S., Korean soap operas, etc) tend not to be shown on TFC (likely for copyright and legal reasons) as the distribution of such shows is limited to the Philippines.

Second generation participants did not regularly watch any TFC programs, and were only vaguely familiar with *TV Patrol* or *Balitang America*. Sharing a sentiment also expressed by a first generation participant about developing programs catered to the Filipino American community, Raymond, a second-generation participant commented that the stories on Filipino American news program “would be good for Filipinos in the Philippines to see...so they know what is going on with the Filipino community here.” However, *Balitang America* is not aired in the Philippines and only select stories from U.S. and other ABS-CBN international bureaus make it to the TV Patrol. These can include stories of Filipino migrants abroad that are seen as critical (e.g. Filipinos in Japan after the tsunami, Filipinos fleeing war-torn countries, Filipinos appealing judicial punishment abroad) or highlighting celebrities in TV reality shows e.g. Jessica Sanchez on American Idol – all needing state or public appeal.

Though lacking popular appeal with Filipino viewers especially in contrast to the Philippine-based news programs on TFC, *Balitang America* is a critical program that represents Filipino Americans as an integral part of U.S. society. Highlighting not only how Filipino Americans are specifically affected by current events in the U.S. but also as social actors and contributors to civic life, political life, and cultural life – thriving, legitimate, and rightfully present in the U.S. rather than only oriented to the Philippines. *Balitang America* actively promotes for the rights and resources for Filipino Americans including news stories covering community efforts aimed at serving the needs of Filipino immigrant workers, seniors, and war veterans. However, it would also be beneficial to further highlight the historical context between the U.S. and Philippines to more explicitly connect Filipino diasporans to shared conditions and experiences that may explain how and why such essential communities exist.

Although some of the second-generation respondents who had TFC in their parents’ home bemoaned that there is often a TV in the living room or common area that is designated just for the TFC channel and they said that they are not necessarily drawn to TFC in the same way that their parents are, they nevertheless felt attached to it. Watching TFC programs means spending time with parents, and opening up conversations or the exchange of opinions about current issues. Having a show about immigration, such as *Citizen Pinoy*, also raises awareness of the importance and pervasiveness of the issues concerning immigration in Filipino American families. As Raymond shared, the show provided him and his dad an opportunity to discuss the topic of Filipino immigration – a topic that he found interesting as he learned about Filipino American immigration history in a college class and realized it also related to his father worked for a U.S. immigration agency.

When asked what kinds of impact the network makes – whether it served to unify or make viewers feel closer to home – the second-generation group, like the first-generation immigrant participants in focus group one, also made a distinction between the medium as a means for community unity versus the programs as a point of commonality. However, second-generation Filipino Americans have a

different lens through which to understand ethnic media. They repeatedly commented that the network is mostly geared towards their parents and grandparents' generation – as if to say it is really not meant for them – even though the network executives I interviewed spoke of being interested in capturing the younger market. Lacking appeal with second-generation audiences, TFC still leaves significant segments of the Filipino American community out. “It’s for our parents” Nathan commented, “something they hang on to as part of their community over there (Philippines)... it does not unify but instead it is a way to remember and they are drawn by nostalgia.” Raymond reflected what TFC producers I interviewed have observed, that new immigrants and groups of Filipinos who have lived most of their life in the Philippines are likely to be viewers while 1.5 and second-generation Filipino Americans are less likely to do so. In the third focus group, Dorothy exclaimed that the medium could “indirectly unify” because it gives people a shared point of reference and something to talk about at group gatherings. “With second and third generation...who are exposed to TFC...when we go to weddings and you put *ocho-ocho* on, everybody’s up in arms and we’re either laughing about it or we’re actually doing it...The fact that we’re talking about TFC brings us together as a community...We watch TFC and we bag on it, but that still makes us connect because we have that similar experiences.”

So what mediums and artists bring young, second generation Filipino Americans together? According to the second-generation participants, Youtube stars like PassionSF, AJ Rafael, Gabe Bondoc, and Happyslip are whom they gravitate towards. These artists’ appeal does not come from performing in Tagalog nor does their popularity come in traditional formats or mediums, but instead second-generation respondents were drawn to performers with whom they could identify – fellow Filipino Americans just like themselves. Sharon confessed, “they don’t sing Filipino songs, but I’m like, ‘Oh, they’re Filipino so I’m gonna support them!’” Her inclination and sentiment, shared by other participants in the group who laughed and nodded in agreement, gets at their shared awareness of the lack of representation that Filipino American artists have in the mainstream mediums. Sharon and others in the group support such artists because they know that they do not have access to mainstream outlets and that part of that may be because in general, the mainstream industry and audience do not always support Filipino American artists. As she explained, “KP (*Kaibigang Pilipino*) had sponsored a concert of Filipino Youtube artist two years, and I have never seen so many Filipinos outside of UCSD actually at UCSD. The word got out...and I was so there.” In *The Day the Dancers Stayed*, Theo Gonzalez traces the history of Filipino cultural performances in the United States, including the PCN (Pilipino Cultural Night) production popular in universities and colleges.<sup>28</sup> Gonzalez contends, as a U.S.-made tradition, the PCN – formulaic as it may be – enables young Filipino American college students to embody and pass on the stories of the Filipino community even as their writing, acting, dancing demonstrate their personal and collective journey to come to terms

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28. Theodore Gonzalvez, *The Day the Dancers Stayed: Performing in the Filipino/American Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

with their Filipino and American selves. Echoed in the focus group, the college-aged participants enthusiastically expressed, Pilipino Culture Night (PCN) productions continues to be a way that second-generation Filipino Americans build community together, a way to express and showcase their experiences and perspectives, and tackle issues of homelands -- the Philippines and the United States. Dance and music were mentioned as just some of the forms of performance wherein Filipino American artists cultivate cultural expression. Sharon aptly and eloquently stated that though “there are not many who we can look up to who are in [these] areas” – speaking to the lack of visibility of Filipino Americans in the mainstream – the few who have made a mark and the everyday expression of identity and culture declares that, “We are not just a silent minority... we can entertain and be passionate about art.”

### **The Relevance of Language**

In the focus group discussions, the topic of language organically came up without me asking a question to prompt it. One’s linguistic fluency or lack thereof in the Tagalog language influenced their affinity to its programs. The ability to speak or understand Tagalog was viewed by the immigrant generation as an important aspect of being able to identify with Filipino culture and identity. Hilario, Sergio, and Richard all lamented that despite efforts to speak to their respective kids in Tagalog, they often received responses in English. It was at that point that I realized that the comment may also apply to me and could have also been directed at me – as I had continuously facilitated the discussion in English despite the fact that the participants were predominantly responding to me Tagalog.

In the focus group with mostly immigrant men, the discussion turned to the topic of language after Hilario shared that when his kids were young, the school had contacted him to express concern about his kids use of Tagalog in the house and he recalled that English was especially given importance by the schools to make sure his child does well. Others then chimed in to share similar experiences and talked about the issue of language in schools – about how school administrators and teachers dictated parents to primarily speak English to their children at home and that Tagalog should be the “second language.” All, except Richard, vocally disagreed with this approach and found that their kids lost the ability to speak Tagalog language as they grew up and were able to pick up other languages, such as English, quickly regardless of such recommendations. Richard shared that he and his non-Filipino spouse instead opted to only speak to their children in English for fear that they may fall behind academically. Defying the school administrators’ recommendations, Hilario proudly said that he insisted in teaching his kids Tagalog.

Filipinos may unify across differences through language. Sergio stated that the unifying language, “even if it’s in English” is necessary because it is one way to tackle linguistic conflicts across Filipinos from different regions. Though he did not prefer English, as this is a foreign language for the Philippines, he saw it as a way that Filipinos can come together to better connect with each other. I find Sergio’s statement somewhat ironic and contradictory considering the comments made earlier by the group about the enforcement of English-language use by schools on the immigrant parents. However, it is important to make a distinction between

what these immigrant parents were suggesting – English as a *shared* language – versus what the school administrators were suggesting – English as the *favored* language, which insinuates hierarchy and dominance of one over another. As Sergio and others were keenly aware, English is an important shared language and U.S. culture a critical shared context especially for second-generation Filipino American college students to connect with each other.

Immigrant participants understood fluency in English to be an advantage, particularly for immigrant Filipinos who arrive in the U.S. already equipped with some ability to communicate in the English language. At the same time, they were also just as quick to point out the complexities of translation – as not all concepts or ideas are easily translated, and gave humorous examples of English used as a medium of instruction. This shows how English, though perhaps convenient to use as a common language across Filipino groups, is not a perfect solution and isn't an easy answer to addressing differences.

In the second focus group, language was directly tied to making TFC viewers “feel closer to home.” “They (ethnic media) use my language... It's like I'm in the Philippines.” Rita said. The language used in the programs she regularly watched was central to her choice in subscribing to TFC and the feeling of belonging that it engendered. She explained, “when I'm out (of the house), I'm in America; when I'm at home, I'm in the Philippines.” That she, who has lived in the U.S. for over 30 years, continues to feel not-at-home in the United States speaks to the exclusion or lack of feeling of belongingness that marginalized groups can experience. It's not a matter of assimilating or not assimilating. Instead, the question is how she navigates the two worlds – of America and Philippines in her life here. As she later exclaimed: “You can take the Filipino out of the Philippines, but you can't take the Philippines out of the Filipino!” Tagalog, as the language used in most of TFC's programs, is one way that the Philippines is brought to the Filipinos abroad. Viewers, like Rita, who told me that if TFC was not in Tagalog she would not watch it, gravitate to TFC programs in large part because hearing Tagalog-language in the shows and films they watch is similar to what they would experience in the Philippines where most local programming is also in Tagalog.

The use of subtitles, related to the issue of language, can be a touchy subject. One participant expressed that she would not enjoy the programs as much if it had subtitles, as another thought it might be too distracting. A former TFC writer and producer whom I interviewed shared that although younger producers had suggested the use of subtitles in TFC programs to upper management, it had been turned down because it was deemed too expensive.<sup>29</sup> Though song lyrics are often shown during variety shows so that audiences can sing along, subtitles can function

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29. The importance of the subtitle and financial consideration related to the issue has also been a factor in Philippine films. *Ploning*, a Philippine film produced by actress Judy Ann Santos which was neither in Tagalog nor English was expensive to produce when submitted for consideration as the Philippines' entry into the 2009 Oscar awards Best Foreign Language Film category. Despite the producers' efforts to raise money and awareness about the film, it was not nominated.

differently in that when watching a film or 2-hour television drama as it may mark film or show as “foreign” or seen as distracting to TFC audiences, many of whom may not find it necessary as they are already fluent in Tagalog. Today, TFC offers subtitles for its popular drama series, *Maalaala Mo Kaya* (Will You Remember?), which is a step towards reaching second-generation Filipino Americans and non-Filipino audiences in households that subscribe to TFC.

### **Connections Across Generations**

“Media is a way to share and to understand our parents’ generation, and what they went through, their choices and their point of views.” – Melinda, second-generation Filipino American on watching Philippine television programs

“Although they don’t speak the language, they value the culture...they dance and perform it.” – Sergio, first-generation immigrant father speaking about his U.S.-born children’s participation in Pilipino Cultural Celebrations

While watching programs may conjure memories of the Philippines for some viewers, Melinda adamantly expressed that TV programs from the Philippines do not remind her of “home.” However, she was quick to point out that despite her dislike for Philippine TV programs, she finds it important to know and learn about her own community. Opinions by focus group participants demonstrated that learning about the Filipino and Filipino American community and how this is takes shape is a multifaceted and personal process that happens in different ways and is understood in different ways.

Despite the generational differences of the first- and second-generation focus group participants, they also seemed to have found some common ground and expressed an often unspoken understanding that was more deeply held than what I had expected. Sergio, in the first focus group raised attention to the possible value (or lack thereof) that is placed on older generations – recalling a video clip about a Filipino senior citizen in the U.S. who earned money collecting soda cans and bottles for recycling at the same time that he was terribly missing the Philippines. The rift between first and second-generation Filipinos is a reality for Hilario who sadly said: “The kids feel that the first generation are backward.” Further complicating the issue, Sergio tried to explain why this might be the case: “When kids go out (in the community or society at large) they have their own identity.” To him, detachment from parental culture does not equate to devaluation of the culture. Instead, there is a different emphasis on culture that he sees often depicted by college-aged, second-generation Asian American like his own children in cultural productions such as in Pilipino Culture Night celebrations. It is a way for them to express their feelings, as Sergio gathered, “although they don’t speak the language, they value the culture...they dance and perform it.” He pointed out that Filipino culture is not entirely associated with fluency in Tagalog or any other Filipino language, but instead it is performed through song, play, and artistry, that portray Philippine and Filipino American history through the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of young, Filipino Americans. Beyond fluency in the Tagalog language, for Sergio, his



children's engagement in social organizations and promotion of Filipino American history – as different as it may be from the history he himself learned in the Philippines – enabled him to witness and take pride in the multiple ways that young generations express their cultural identity. Though it may not always be explicitly stated, there is an earnest attempt between parents and children to understand each other. Moreover, as evinced in their stories about their ethnic television viewing practices and preferences, there is a shared view that, as immigrant families in the U.S., larger social forces and circumstances can bring about crisis in identity and friction between parents and children. However, there are also opportunities for inter-generational negotiations – sometimes expressed publicly, but often under-recognized and happen in the day-to-day lives of Filipino American families.

College is a site where identity formation takes place – or a more pronounced articulation of identity, particularly ethnic identity, is acknowledged and expressed. Richard, who immigrated to the U.S. much earlier than his other “first-gen” colleagues, attended a local community college where he first learned about Filipino American history, including about the first Filipinos in America who jumped ship and settled in Louisiana. Once again emphasizing generational differences particularly in viewing history, Sergio said: “Your history (referring to me as a second-generation Filipino American) and our history are different.” He associated second-generation history with Carlos Bulosan, *manongs*, and farm workers in America, while the first generation's history he says is that of Philippine history which include figures like Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio. Framing knowledge of history in this way, while sensitive to particular histories, however misses and dismisses the social and political links that bind the two generations together. Filipino immigrants in America are as much a part of paving the way for Filipino American history to be recognized, as much as U.S.-born Filipino Americans seek to understand the long-standing historical and contemporary relationship between the Philippines and the United States.

“Media is a way to share and to understand our parents' generation, and what they went through, their choices and their point of views,” explained Melinda, in one of the few times she chimed in in the focus group largely made up of immigrant men. Similar sentiments were also shared by Gina, in the focus group with two immigrant Filipinas, who said she not only tries to catch TFC travel shows but she also watches any Philippine-related programs in other channels such as the History channel that sometimes feature documentaries or stories about the Philippines. She gave the example of watching a program that talked about the WWII Bataan March on The History Channel. These comments demonstrate that the second-generation seek cultural and historical knowledge about the Philippines especially when it is not always available on mainstream and cable outlets in the United States. In a way, these engagements with media are attempts to reconnect or know about one's history not unlike the desire to travel to the Philippines. As she put it, travel programs not only remind her of her trips to the Philippines but they also show “how the Philippines is modern and have lots of things to offer the tourists.” The appeal to memory as well as new and modern accommodations reflects the DOT marketing strategy towards Filipino Americans. Often watching TFC with her parents, she explained why she finds travel programs so appealing:

“You experience the Philippines without having to be there physically” she said, being able to enjoy the Philippines from the comfort of her parent’s living room in the United States. This kind of engagement changes her relationship to the Philippines– being able to live out the fantasy of being not only elsewhere, but specifically the Philippines, a place to which she may imagine a return.

The *Wowowee* program encouraged a kind of “giving back,” particularly from TFC subscribers to Filipino contestants, that poignantly demonstrates a microcosm of the larger remittance system that the Philippine government endorses and that many Filipino migrant families take part in. *Balikbayans* on the show, who audiences at home could easily spot on TV, were encouraged to donate money to the program – part individual act of altruism and part due to expectation given their positions as “TFC subscribers.” These audience members had prominent seats during the show, reserved for them and their family members who wished to see the live show up close, partake in the on-air greetings, or be seen on TV with their respective signs noting where they had traveled. Those watching abroad on their television sets assuaged their nostalgic longing for family, as the atmosphere of generosity and excitement draws them in. Though the show did not start out with the active intent to have TFC viewers as involved and influential as it was, it became a phenomenon that brought immigrant Filipinos such as Nancy and Rita glued to their television sets, and exposed Filipino Americans like Gina to the ways in which the show reached and connected Filipino masses in the Philippines and abroad.

Gina: “I’ve seen it [Wowowee] many, many times . . . It’s not only a game show but it’s also a variety show. It brings out the goodness in people in the Philippines. Willie does a great job of hosing it. Each day the contestants are unique people – people who are born on, or who are twins, or they’re *labanderas* (laundry ladies), or whatever. It brings out each walk of life to the show and they are able to be on TV and say hello to their family and show their talents...Because they have those contests, they allow people to get, to have a little bit of money.”

Nancy: “You get to see their talents and their opinion on some things. They’re so funny. You get to see their true lives – poverty or being rich or being children of government officials. It’s different walks of life.”

Rita: “Not only that, but also families get united.”

Gina: “Good point.” (Nancy nods in agreement too)

Rita: “There’s a son who has been looking for the dad for a long, long time. And I’m sure this did not only happen once. I’m sure it happened many times. So they got connected. Sometimes families lost its way, they get adopted. Families got united because of the show. The show is being broadcast so that even poor people, middle class people, rich people, regardless of their status in life they still watch this. No TV? They can go to the neighbor. This is what the show is bringing.”

Nancy: “And also Willie tries to get involved with all the different kinds of people. The garbage people, cigarette vendors...” (The other two participants agree)

Gina: “What’s cool is that there’s a lot of people that we know. We usually look out in the audience whenever they pick out the ‘*bigatin*’ (the term means heavy hitters or important people, and it was an audience participation segment of the program wherein 10 audience members were selected to participate as contestants) people, we’ll look to see if we know anybody in the audience. And there’s been many times when I say ‘Oh mom, there’s auntie so and so’ and we actually see our friends from San Diego in the audience. So it’s actually cool.”

Because of circumstances that have brought Filipinos to the United States and shaped their experiences here, immigrants and second generation keep ties with the Philippines in many ways, including watching television programs on TFC. The intergenerational differences that immigrant families face at times were bridged with the engagement of first-generation immigrant parents and second-generation adult children in Philippine television programs as a shared reference – as a way for each side to reach out to each other in their own way, though it may not have been directly expressed or explicitly communicated. Audiences’ comments about their television viewing practices and views demonstrate that being global is a condition of Filipino lives. Moreover, this condition of global-ness is what is being projected on television programs and capitalized by both state and media institutions by conjuring a global Filipino community.

In general, immigrant audiences are the main viewers of TFC programming. Despite media efforts to reach out to Filipinos across different generations and geographies under the banner of “global Filipinos,” by and large the notion did not personally resonate with the focus group participants I talked to as they identified more with their regional identities, or as Filipino or Filipino American. The medium of TFC television brings audiences together not because of the lack of differences, but instead watching similar television programs presents a shared experience from which different viewing habits, viewing preferences, and perspectives emerge.

In the next chapter, I look more closely at representations of Filipinos in TFC station identification segments to demonstrate that as part of its mission to unite diverse Filipino audiences around the world, the network draws on notions of nationalism and heroism to define them as “global Filipinos.” I argue that through affective elements, these segments shown in between regularly schedule programs, reminds Filipino diasporans of the expectations to be economic and cultural contributors.

## Chapter 4

### Crafting the Global Filipino: The *Bagong Bayani* on The Filipino Channel (TFC) Station IDs

Since 1994, ABS-CBN Global, previously called ABS-CBN International, through its flagship subsidiary channel, The Filipino Channel (TFC), has brought a variety of programs to millions of Filipinos outside the Philippines, round-the-clock through cable and satellite providers. Broadcasted between regularly scheduled programs throughout the day, station identification (station ID) segments project and epitomize the mission and vision of the network. These segments, as an intermission, give viewers pause from time spent watching back-to-back programs and promotes the network as it airs in countries across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Australia, and North America. While TFC station identification segments vary in length and style, the messages underscored are unanimous; they refer to the service the station provides Filipinos, broadly defined as the *Global Filipino*, and often boast of having a worldwide Filipino audience. In these, TFC highlights “service” as its main purpose, reflecting what ABS-CBN has always promised, that at the center of its mission is to be “in the service of the Filipino.” However, beyond the network’s intent to provide programs that enhance quality of life for a largely immigrant Filipino audience, it is important to ask: How is *Global Filipino* depicted in these segments? What messages are conveyed? What and how are appeals made?

A close analytical reading of TFC station IDs reveals that while “global Filipinos” are represented as diverse and geographically scattered, they are still connected through a sense of ethnic pride and obligation to the Philippines. “Global Filipinos” are defined as and called to serve as new heroes -- in the service of the Philippines and the Filipino race. Representations of “global Filipinos” position the diasporan in relation to the overwhelming departure of millions of Filipinos and to immigrant life abroad, while also reinforcing one’s ties to family left behind and one’s duty to the country of ancestry. Whether it is using documentary-style images (e.g. family videos, photographs) or featuring globally renowned Filipino performers, artists, and athletes, these short segments tug on viewers’ heartstrings, desires, and national pride, calling on overseas audiences to serve their families and the Philippine nation.

In this chapter, I analyze two music video station identification segments, *Lipad Ng Pangarap* or “Flight of Dreams” and *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* or “One Blood, One Race, One Music” that both debuted on TFC in 2004. As a ballad to the diaspora, “Flight of Dreams” poignantly depicts the journey and return of Filipina/o migrants through a documentary-style montage and, in so doing, expresses empathy and understanding for the plight of the Filipino worker. In comparison, “One Blood, One Race” symbolically depicts a diverse collage of images that captures the presence and permanence of Filipinos overseas. It reflects a shift towards an awareness of Filipino communities that include recent and not-so-recent immigrants, as well as new and old generations of Filipinos born and living abroad.

Though the narrative format of the videos are different, both station IDs' underlying message are similar -- both define "global Filipinos" as new and extended versions of *bagong bayanis* or modern-day heroes.<sup>1</sup> In these instances, the *bagong bayani* are presented not just as practitioners of self-sacrifice, but instead of sacrifice tied to nation *and* race. Being a hero in this sense is not just because of the experience of separation from family or economic or social disenfranchisement (because if this was the case, then one could argue that household maids or "helpers" in the Philippines who often leave their home provinces to work in metropolitan suburbs and cities could be regarded as heroic). Instead, what defines *bagong bayani* is the act of displacement or separation from the nation-state as well as one's ability to remit – financially or culturally – to the Philippines at the same time. In other words, they function as a corporeal extension of the nation by extending Filipino culture outside the Philippines.

Considering the position of the Philippines in the global hierarchy of nations, as a former colony of the U.S. and as a developing Third World country relying on the remittances of migrants, one can see that incorporating economic with cultural appeals is a delicately maneuvered strategy by the Philippine government along with non-government institutions. These appeals, often circulated through mass media, produces expectations about Filipino success tied to working abroad that normalizes family separation and Western notions of meritocracy, capitalist consumption, and cosmopolitanism. Moreover, in promoting the notion of "global Filipino" under the banner of nationalism, underlying differences among Filipinos based on race, gender, class are often overlooked and issues of inequities on the national and global scale are unchallenged.

In touting "global Filipinos" media depictions maintain the idea that the economic success for the Philippine state, which results from the skills, talents and qualifications that Filipinos are said to provide, relies on the participation of Filipino bodies as flexible labor in free market, global capitalism. In exchange for assuming its role in this system, the Philippine state as well non-government organizations attempts to provide what limited protection it can provide Filipino migrants through overseas agencies.<sup>2</sup> While Filipino overseas remittances fortify the Philippine economy, the ways in which this global labor exchange ultimately privileges First World industries at the cost of cheapened labor from racialized and gendered denizen subjects are left out of the picture.<sup>3</sup> Though not desired, in large part,

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1. *Bagong bayani* or "new heroes" is a term often ascribed to overseas Filipino workers and migrants. It emerged in state-sponsored programs that promoted out-migration of Filipino laborers first institutionalized during the Marcos regime. The term is used to praise migrants for their personal sacrifice and commitment and to thank them for their contributions to the country.

2. Examples include government bureaus such as Philippine consulate offices, Philippine Overseas Labor offices, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Migrante International.

3. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); James Tyner, *Made in the Philippines: Gendered Discourses in the Making of Migrants* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

partaking in this system becomes a naturalized condition deemed as the only “honorable” way out of dire economic fate.

### **TFC and the *Bagong Bayani* (Modern-Day Hero)**

Though ABS-CBN and its global operations are not state-run entities, through its television programs, they often promote what Arjun Appadurai has termed as “culturalism” – that is, “identity politics mobilized at the level of the nation-state.”<sup>4</sup> Tying popular appeals of the *bagong bayani* or modern-day heroes to craft “global Filipinos,” these station IDs conjure “communities of sentiment”<sup>5</sup> and “imagined communities”<sup>6</sup> by emphasizing the message that duty to the Philippines is not only economic, but cultural as well. That is, despite the lack of physical interaction, Filipino diasporans are called to associate with each other virtually through the reach and interpellation of global television, and in so doing individuals collectively maintain and reinforce their Filipino identities.

The familial obligation of Filipino migrants as wage earners who support and sustain families in the Philippines extends to the broader national family such that a “global Filipino” is also characterized as a model global citizen who buttresses the Philippine economy through regular remittances that materialize in the form of *balikbayan* (return migrant) packages, return visits, and business investments, while at the same time making a mark as a thriving, productive individuals abroad. Moreover, fulfilling his or her cultural obligations, a “global Filipino” is considered to participate in racial uplift by maintaining the values and traditions deemed to be inherently Filipino and representing the Philippines and the Filipino race in a positive light. These expected affiliations, economic and cultural in nature, are intricately tied together and made evident by state and media organizations that reach out to overseas Filipinos.

State and media efforts portray Filipinos as culturally different, yet particularly adaptable to First World, capitalist industries. While state efforts more directly generate citizen-subjects that feed into transnational circuits of capital and labor that produce – what Aihwa Ong refers to as “latitudes of citizenship,” that is, “the processes that distribute disparate forms of legal and labor conditions across new geographies of production” and that stratify ethno-racial groups in different political and economic positions – transnational ethnic media also plays a role in

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Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

4. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 15.

5. In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai cites his previous work to describe “communities of sentiment” as the way in which a group “begins to imagine and feels things together” because of the “conditions of collective reading, criticism and pleasure.” Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 8.

6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

contributing to this process.<sup>7</sup> Depicted as prized and primed workers who are resilient and enterprising, they are thought to successfully navigate challenges that may come up in a foreign country. That the Philippines was a former official U.S. colony and that the Philippines arguably continues to be a neo-colonial state is not seen as a context for inequity, but instead is conceptualized as advantageous. For example, Filipinos' fluency in English and their Americanized educational system are seen as "added export value"<sup>8</sup> that give Filipino migrants a competitive edge against other developing countries vying for First World consideration and approval.

Indirectly tied to state-sponsored labor migration mechanisms, TFC station identification segments function as a reminder to its audience of their roles as *bagong bayanis* that involve economic and cultural duties to support the families and the homeland left behind as well as serving as cultural representatives on their behalf. These appeals are made through affective sentiments of nationalism and community belonging that attempt to unite audiences in and outside the Philippines, while eliding issues of class and gender. This sense of patriotism and inclusion relies on the consent and identification of Filipinos abroad to the idea of a "global Filipino" and their participation in the imagined community that is the Filipino diaspora.

In its attempt to both market and serve "global Filipinos," the network pieces together localized images and practices in order to cater to the tastes and needs not only of Filipino migrants but also to attract second-generation Filipino audiences. The network's station ID videos evince the creation of a kind of "melting pot" where Filipinos across the diaspora, regardless of racial, gender, or class differences come together to uphold ethnic identity and culture. These depictions are in large part a reaction to the multiculturalism of diasporans, although it does so by subsuming differences under the umbrella of a racial identity. Although they appear to be inclusive as anyone born of Filipino ancestry can claim himself or herself as "Filipino" and be claimed as "Filipino" by state and media regardless of where they are born or of their multi-racial identities, they also essentialize and tokenize identity and objectify culture. Featuring an assortment of the different kinds of Filipinos, the underlying agenda set out by the station IDs I describe below stitch together a cohesive Filipino diaspora community. In doing this, the videos to varying extents elide First World/Third World disparities, ignore racial and classed hierarchies, and dismiss gender differences. What results is the treatment of diversity as a marketing strategy, as a commodity, and without regard for addressing difference.

In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo interrogates "imperialist nostalgia" to call attention to the ways in

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7. Aihwa Ong, *Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 282.

8. Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 11, 125-127.

which “innocent yearning” can conceal colonial violence.<sup>9</sup> In line with Rosaldo’s take on nostalgia as a process by which “people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed,” for Filipino migrants, nostalgia is a way of managing feelings of guilt or longing, of coping with the absence of family, of holding on to special memories, and of mitigating the distance from familiar cultural practices because of the changes brought on by migration.<sup>10</sup> However, as Rosaldo cautions, “the relatively benign character of most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia’s capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander.”<sup>11</sup> The network and audience have to critically reflect on representations of Philippine past or family life; otherwise these nostalgic longings elide state and media’s complicity in maintaining race, class, and gender divides at a global scale. If the network relies only on melodramatic, emotional appeal of its programs without grounding it in political and economic contexts, it unfortunately leaves little room for critiquing the histories that continue to propel global inequities.

In branding itself as a service provider, the network also brands the Filipino diaspora. Since its launch in 1994, The Filipino Channel has used a variety of station IDs that range from announcement of network name and logo, catchy phrases or slogans, to lengthy music video to demonstrate its commitment to providing services to overseas Filipino audiences. The services that the network sees itself providing its audiences include the television shows, DVDs, live concerts, and online media content that make Filipino audiences “feel closer to home” – a phrase often expressed in programming and advertising content. Promising to provide both symbolic and tangible links to Philippine culture and current events and to giving Filipinos (locally or globally) a shared medium and a point of connection, the network’s mission is to unite Filipinos regardless of where they are in the world. These ties, which the network maintains and promotes, then shape the creation of a broader, interconnected Filipino community in which the “global Filipino” is part of and participates. Whether originally produced in the Philippines or abroad, station IDs are designed to tout its celebrity “star power,” to demonstrate the geographical breadth of audience reach and to communicate empathy of the issues concerning its viewers as well as its technical prowess as part of a broader promotional campaign.

On TFC, these station IDs blend in with “interstitials” which are long-form video clips, typically a minute long that promote Filipino culture and heritage. As one TFC Global manager explained to me at an interview, the “promo department promotes anything about the channel – imagining the channel, branding the channel, programs in the channel, [while] interstitial production...promote[s] being Filipino.” While there is a distinction made between the teams that produce the promotional segments versus the interstitial segments, given that the interstitials are shown on TFC and other ABS-CBN-owned international channels associate these cultural and heritage segments to the network brand, especially when both station

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9. Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 70.

10. *Ibid.*, 69.

11. *Ibid.*, 70.



IDs and “interstitials” can sometimes use similar formats (e.g. music videos, personal interviews) and can be followed by the network’s logo, slogans, or other products and services associated with the network.

Station IDs typically change after several months of being on the air. This change marks and coincides with different seasons, and includes station IDs released in full and shortened versions. Some station IDs such as those shown during the Christmas holiday season are derived from station IDs produced by and also broadcasted by the ABS-CBN parent network in the Philippines. However, most station IDs shown throughout the year on TFC, such as the ones I describe in greater detail below, are produced specifically for its overseas channels. Both of the award-winning station IDs that I analyze in this chapter debuted in 2004, TFC’s 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation, and reached millions of Filipino audiences across the world at home and at public Filipino-owned establishments.

### ***Lipad Ng Pangarap (Flight of Dreams)***<sup>12</sup>

*Lipad Ng Pangarap* or Flight of Dreams, sung by Gary Valenciano, a popular Filipino singer and ABS-CBN contracted talent, features a montage of documentary-style images of Filipinos leaving the Philippines, working abroad, and returning to their families in the Philippines. When it first aired, the music video was ubiquitously associated with TFC and the song dubbed as the network’s theme song. Written and composed by Arnel de Pano and performed by Dessa, the song was first released under ABS-CBN-owned music label, Star Magic Records. Four years later, TFC adopted it for use in the station IDs and the song subsequently garnered greater recognition and popularity. The song has since been performed by various Filipino artists as an inspirational ballad and a tribute to Filipinos abroad and used in YouTube clips depicting the lives of Filipino overseas workers.

As reflected in the title of the song, the phrase “Flight of Dreams” is aptly wrought with contradictory meanings. The airport scenes literally connote “flight” to represent the departure of thousands of Filipinos for work abroad as the initial montage flashes images of tearful mothers tightly hugging their children and migrants waving their last goodbyes across airport gates to the families on the other side. By extension, it can symbolically mean the opportunity for dreams to soar as migrants search for better lives. Though not explicitly depicted through the images on the video, “flight” also implicitly suggests the fleeing of thousands of Filipinos each day, a mass exodus from dismal economic conditions such as joblessness and poverty. Thus, the video explicitly illustrates, as the camera pans down the listed cities on an airport sign, different places where Filipinos are headed. Flashed only for a brief second, the names of the places do not seem to matter, but instead provides evidence for the multiple destinations.

This particular TFC station ID highlights Filipinos migrating, working, and returning to the Philippines to convey a message that encourages Filipinos to desire

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12. For the full song lyrics and its English translation, please refer to the Appendix. I transcribed the song lyrics from the music video and translated the Taglog lyrics into English.

a “better” life, to seek job opportunities abroad, and to strive for ways to positively represent the Filipino people and the Philippines during their time away. At the same time, the music video’s emotional appeal heightens migrants’ nostalgic feelings about family and the Philippines. It is marked and split into two environments or settings – one is of the studio where the singer, Gary Valenciano, performs the song, and the other of a multiply located diasporic community depicted through actual video footage of Filipinos in different places all over the world. In a way, the minimalist set where Gary Valenciano performs the ballad depicts an ambiguous, liminal site that cannot easily be located – a space that is symbolic of the feeling of being nowhere yet everywhere that global Filipinos may experience. The video starts and ends with the presence of the singer on a stage. This includes an opening scene that situates the singer in the studio and a final scene of the singer sitting on a bench, reading a letter. These bookend scenes allow the viewer to locate and identify the singer either as a non-migrant, one who reminds those overseas of their filial and national connection, or as a migrant outside the Philippines who longs to reconnect with other Filipinos at home and abroad.

The video ballad, as a station ID that was shown intermittently throughout the day, repeatedly provided an explanation for why Filipinos, despite their love for family and country, make the difficult choice to endure the painful, lengthy separation, and the uncertainties that come with it, in exchange for economic prospects abroad. The video serves as a constant reminder for migrants as to why they must silently bear the sacrifices and endure the harsh working conditions, loneliness, and social isolation while abroad. While both men and women migrants send remittances back to their families, migrant mothers -- pulled by increased demand for feminized labor to global cities in First World, industrialized countries<sup>13</sup> -- are often expected to take on a dual role, that of wage earner and emotional caretaker from afar. Negotiating the consequences of being away from their families, migrant women of color who continue to be culturally expected to provide care for their own as well as others’ children, assuage the guilt of not being physically present to care for their own by compensating their absence with financial sustenance.<sup>14</sup> Without acknowledging global pulls driven by the feminization of labor in First World countries, and the gendered and heteronormative notions of family that uphold cultural expectations, migrant mothers are repeatedly and conveniently represented as martyrs caught in an inevitable fate. And, their earnest efforts to connect with their own children depicted as desperate attempts to maintain the family, fulfilled only by returning “home.”

The montage of clips opens with a scenes of the Philippines. Rural landscapes with tall, lush green grass and an unpaved road that stretches out to the horizon mark the “beginning” of the migrant journey. In one sense, this provincial

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13. Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998).

14. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

scene connotes the “underdeveloped” nature of the Philippines in contrast to more “modern” receiving states. Following the images of rural surroundings is an image of a man leaning against a doorway in a home made out of hollow, concrete blocks and a woman holding a young boy by his hand, walking away from the house. The first few scenes, in part, illustrate what often takes place in many migrant households. While migrant mothers are working overseas, the children are usually left in the care of a spouse, of siblings, older children, or grandparents. As the image of the woman and the boy suggests, Filipina migrant mothers and daughters often continue to bear the caregiving responsibility, and remain emotionally bound and financially obligated to their children, spouses, siblings and parents in the Philippines.<sup>15</sup>

Against the backdrop of concrete homes and highways, in the next scenes, the camera angle is in a first-person perspective of a person in a vehicle heading towards an airport. Planes overhead and highway signs direct the viewer to the airport while arrows point the way to “departure.” The images place the audience in the position of either the migrant, who is imminently leaving, or the non-migrant escorting a family member on her way abroad. Gray, hollow blocked homes and asphalt highways, implies a kind of “semi-modernity,” which are, as Filipino American cultural studies scholar Neferti Tadiar posits in *Fantasy Production*, “the technologies of metropolitan desire that help to produce, simultaneously, the transnationalizing national subject.”<sup>16</sup> Part and parcel to maintaining the Filipino diaspora, signs and freeways in the Philippines that mimic their First World counterparts on the one hand usher Filipinos out of the geographical boundaries of the Philippine nation, at the same time providing and allowing pathways for subsequent, desired return.

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15. Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization*, 2001; Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hoschild, ed., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in a Global Economy* (New York: Holt LLC, 2003).

16. Neferti X.M. Tadiar, *Fantasy Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).



Figure 4.1 – Figure 4.2: Scene of Airline Departures and Family Farewells in *Lipad Ng Pangarap*

The heightened emotional appeal of the video ballad tugs at the heartstrings that connect those who must leave to those who must stay. As the montage illustrates, the process of grieving begins at the airport. Long, tearful goodbyes that take place repeatedly, in one documentary clip after another, as migrants return and leave time and time again emblemize the sadness and loss felt over years of separation. However, despite the difficult goodbyes, the song suggests that Filipino migrants have to continue to keep in mind the promise of “progress” – for their

families and for the larger Filipino family.<sup>17</sup> Thus, as one scene shows, Filipino women and men line up, documents in hand, behind glass panes at the immigration office, waiting for their names to be called, for a chance to fly abroad. This scene could be situated in the Philippines as migrants vie for the chance to migrate abroad through a sponsoring family member or employer. But, the scene could also take place anywhere abroad, where migrants must also navigate the bureaucratic process of petitioning, sponsoring, and reuniting with family members outside the Philippines. It also demonstrates that besides individuals making a living out of leaving, there is an entire economic and administrative structure that thrives from such conditions.



Figure 4.3: Scene of Filipinos Applying for Visas from *Lipad Ng Pangarap*

In contrast to the initial rural scene, the montage depicts cityscapes as a place of arrival for migrants abroad. In it, there are tall skyscrapers, busy streets, popular monuments such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Burj Al Arab building in Dubai. Having entered what is understood to be the realm of “modernity” in First World receiving nations, migrants, now part of the diaspora are dwarfed by huge

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17. The notion of progress can be interpreted in the material sense in that working abroad is a step up because of the potential for higher salaries earned outside the Philippines and financial stability for the family members in the Philippines. Leaving can also symbolically signify progress because of notions tied to First World versus Third World differences in standards of living, and that labor policies that promote out-migration is a way for the Philippines to participate in global development and ascend in global standing.

buildings and seem lost in the hustle and bustle of busy city life. While the scene may have been set up to evoke a migrant's first encounter with the first world, this premise is not entirely substantiated, as one can argue that the reach and impact of first world countries are already encountered by migrants long before they set foot abroad. As Appadurai's discussion of modernity aptly puts it –modernity is not achieved at a particular moment in a linear, historical trajectory, but instead informed by communities in transit, through dynamic and shifting relations particularly in a time of increasing electronic communication.<sup>18</sup> The scene also conjures feelings of being “out of place” as migrants are displaced from familiar people and places and thrust into a new, somewhat familiar, yet alienating environment. Such “multiple displacements” experienced by diasporan subjects, including Filipino migrants, result from inequities across nations, social inequalities in both sending and receiving countries, as well as cultural barriers faced by diasporans in the places they live and the places they call home.<sup>19</sup>

Suitcases in hand and backpacks in tow, these scenes depict that Filipino migrants have taken their talents and ambitions elsewhere. They arrive ambivalent but prepared to face head-on the challenges that lie before them. Assuming their role as sojourners and already-heroes that have been deployed to different parts of the world, they are deemed “praiseworthy.” As the lyrics state, migrants will be “saluted” and honored, worthy to be “emulated by those left behind.” Although they are miles apart from their homeland, their praiseworthiness resonates across nations through the television set.

In accordance to the heroic representation of migrants as “*bagong bayanis*” (new heroes) by the state, the song and the accompanying images salute Filipinos abroad as representatives of the Filipino people and the Philippines. The accompanying images portray the gendered division labor that Filipinas and Filipinos overseas take on. Men are shown as construction workers, machinists, and seafarers. Famous landmarks discern their scattered geographic locations – for example, images of Filipino men appear after the image of recognizable landmarks and landscapes from the Middle East denoting the areas where most overseas Filipino men are heavily recruited. There are also other depictions of Filipino men – that of a dentist and another of a clergyman praying in front of an altar – both of whom are shown alongside images of Filipina workers in destination countries like the United States, Canada, and Europe rather than the Middle East. Women in the video, in contrast, are shown as domestic helpers, retail and service workers, entrepreneurs, medical technicians reflecting the gendered dimensions of work abroad. That is, men occupy traditionally male niches, while women are taking on work both in the public and domestic realm.

While women are mainly located in Western countries like the United States or Canada, which are considered prime destinations where family migration and reunification can happen, men, on the other hand, are situated in Middle Eastern

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18. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

19. Rhacel Parreñas and Lok Siu, *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

and places where contracted migrant workers typically go. The contrasts depicted in these scenes barely scratch the surface of the class differences in Filipino migration, between contracted overseas workers and professional migrants who are not only pulled to different parts of the world, but once at their destinations, are also stratified across different labor industries, depending on local and global economic demands. And in a way, these images, as a whole can instead reify the stereotypes and expectations for men to take on more “masculine” forms of work, and for women to take on service and domestic forms of labor. Although Filipinos are also represented in a broad range of service industries, men in these occupations are only represented in passing or overtaken by the stark, dichotomous representations of Filipino overseas workers that relegate masculine labor to the Middle East and service labor to the West.



Figure 4.4 – Figure 4.9: Scenes of Filipino Workers in *Lipad Ng Pangarap*

The images of Filipino workers – as entertainers, service workers, nannies, doctors and nurses, and artists – juxtaposed with the song lyrics suggests that through sacrifice, talent, and success, Filipino migrants set a positive example for the whole world. Representing the migrant’s journey as a way to achieve one’s dreams, the video depicts Filipino migrants as role models for other Filipinos wishing to follow in their footsteps abroad. It sets up migrant bodies as idealized, “model” workers and the Philippines as a “model” labor export-state and prefigures the outmigration of the *bagong bayani* as a way out of poverty and an antidote to social inequality. Rather than challenging the ingrained notions and systems that promote racial, gendered, and national disparities, the video clips instead sell the idea of the *bagong bayani* to prospective and current migrants, recruiters, and employers of the Philippine international labor-brokering system.<sup>20</sup>

Not only does the “model” Filipino become a state representative, but Filipinos as model workers and successful entrepreneurs are shown as exemplar almost self-sacrificing, self-made individuals. Filipinos who have fulfilled their personal aspirations and the “nation’s dreams” illustrate the fulfillment of their American Dream. Without the historical context of struggle for social justice and equity that others in the receiving, adopted country have and continue to fight for, the song bears no mention of attention to structural inequity and disenfranchisement. In doing so, it instead upholds the common assumption that associates unfair and discriminatory conditions with “bad” employers or unscrupulous job placement agents. In lieu of exposing the racist and gendered stereotypes that maintain discriminatory and exploitative practices, the migrant’s struggle is centrally situated in migrants’ efforts to keep ties with family and homeland culture. All this, as the song promotes the idea that through individual hard work and persistence, Filipinos can, as the cliché says, “pull themselves by their bootstraps,” achieve their dreams, and make something of themselves despite the odds.

At the same time that Filipinos are encouraged to make their dreams real and tangible abroad, they are also reminded to return to the Philippines – either as part of the circuitous migration of Filipino contract workers who eventually permanently return home or as Filipino diasporan tourists seeking to reconnect with their ancestral home. Either way, the video conveys that part of making the dream come true is to return. They are called back, where “at the end of [their] diligence and sacrifice” abroad, their families anxiously await them.

The video reenacts the longing of many viewers to return to their families and plays up the obligations and feelings of guilt borne from separation. Unlike men, women can be unfairly expected to take care of their families’ emotional needs despite being physically away, in addition to making the tough decision to live and work away from their families. This reflects what other scholars have shed light on - that women of color mothers in particular are away from their own children, which fuels conflicting emotions and engenders complicated family relationships as they take on care for others’ children, parents, and households, but leave their own

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20. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*.



for others to care for because they themselves are not present.<sup>21</sup> The video does not directly address this – although implicit in scenes of gut-wrenching goodbyes and the relief of return, is that women in these situations are thus torn by conflicting expectations – expectations that are unsustainable and irreconcilable, except through their eventual physical return.

The “sweetness borne out of [migrant] success,” the song lyrics assert, cannot be found elsewhere, especially not in migrants working and staying abroad. Rather, the desired “sweetness” at the end of the struggle is met through the homecoming of Filipino migrants to their families in the Philippines. For the Philippine-state, “sweetness” results from constant remittances gained through migrants who continue to leave and return. For Filipino migrants, the sweet fruits of their enduring labor and the far-reaching future awaiting them are not necessarily found in the horizons of life abroad, but patiently waiting for them in the Philippines. Through the return of migrants, en masse, with bags in hand, the music video suggests return as the resolution of the tensions brought about by separation. Their return proposes an end to the sacrifice, when in reality, many of these returns are likely temporary. Without viable prospects in the Philippines, migrants are re-deployed as they find themselves only staying in the country for a short stay before and having to return abroad to continue working as contract workers.



Figure 4.10: Scene of Migrants Returning in *Lipad Ng Pangarap*

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21. Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization*, 2001; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ehrenreich and Hirsch, *Global Nannies*, 2003.

While overseas contract workers may visit family in the Philippines, the video fails to capture the difficulties associated with return visits (which can be expensive or not possible due to job constraints), nor does the video's narrative reveal the multiple leaving and returning that happens over the course of a lifetime of working abroad. Instead, migrants may more likely regularly send cash remittances or *balikbayan* boxes full of material goods. The video also oversimplifies family interactions, such that the returns are shown to be always happy and does not acknowledge that there are often very real and continuing underlying tensions within families (heightened by separation) that are not easily solved just because one parent or both parents are temporarily present. Furthermore, the montage fails to contextualize how these pressing concerns stem from longstanding, unequal nation-state relations that propel the disproportionate out-migration of Filipinos.

Through an emotional, nostalgic appeal, the song and accompanying video particularly reflects layered dimensions of the diaspora. The video depicts the gendered and class stratifications of Filipinos overseas as images of family and homeland tap into the emotions of migrants abroad, drawing them back to where they belong. At the same time conveying the promise that while Filipina/o migrants may have to leave for economic reasons, both actual and imagined return is possible.

***Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika (One Blood, One Race, One Music)***<sup>22</sup>

In 2004, ABS-CBN International marked its first 10 years with a release of *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* music video featuring Lea Salonga. This aired on The Filipino Channel as part a campaign celebrating the first decade of the international network. As a Filipino singer and actress most popular for her Tony award-winning role as Kim in *Miss Saigon*, a feat that garnered acclaim from Filipinos in and outside of the Philippines as well as international acclaim, Lea Salonga lends her voice to the piece. Unlike the documentary format of the previously described *Lipad Ng Pangarap* video, *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* de-emphasizes strained familial ties and instead extols Filipinos as champions and professionals for their positive contributions to both the Philippines and their adopted countries. This particular station ID not only represents Filipinos as overseas migrant workers who are bound and destined to return. Instead, it also conveys Filipinos – migrant workers or otherwise -- as being everywhere, all the time. It produces a feeling of cosmopolitanism, that Filipinos are globally situated rather than locally situated. The song, through its lyrics, associates the “global Filipino” with scenes of famous landmarks and of Filipinos young and old, in different settings, professions, and attire, juxtaposed with the song's lyrics and melody, all of which creates a powerful message that focuses on the positive

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22. For the full song lyrics and its English translation, please refer to the Appendix. I transcribed the song lyrics from the music video and translated the Taglog lyrics into English.

contributions of Filipinos all over the world and champions the diversity of Filipino accomplishments and talents.

As shown in the initial scene, a child releasing a dove symbolically represents blessing and hope at the beginning of a Filipino migrants' journey. It invokes the divine imagery of the Holy Spirit, when taken along with the religious settings and images in other parts of the video. The dove's flight can also be taken to represent a release or freedom from the constraints of one place or location. Unlike *Lipad Ng Pangarap*, the scene in *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* does not identify the point of departure or country of origin as being the Philippines. Without showing the literal departure of Filipino bodies and airplanes taking off, the dove's flight functions to take the viewer away from the emotionally laden, tearful goodbyes, and instead softens these painful images through the symbolism of the dove. This is soon followed by shots of places distinctly *not* in the Philippines. Monuments, canals, buildings in metropolitan cities, together with Filipinos in cold weather attire signals the viewer that these Filipinos are abroad in Europe or North America, as the camera pans across a close-up of their faces.

*Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* presents a complementary contrast of *Lipad Ng Pangarap*. If *Lipad Ng Pangarap* is about those who leave and return, and about the process of migration, *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* is about what can happen between leaving and returning as well as during the process of settlement. While *Lipad Ng Pangarap* does more to represent overseas contract workers, their constant movement between home and abroad and the impact on family, *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* privileges those who are able to permanently live abroad and highlights the ways they maintain tradition and cultural practices in their families and communities outside the Philippines. Through their presence, Filipino diasporans embody traits of "global Filipinos" as new heroes who carry and disseminate Filipino culture. The new hero is at once a moving and movable laboring body and a settler, who, in tandem with state and media efforts become an agent who carries and maintains often-essentialized facets of Filipino culture to Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike. Moreover, the station ID does not explicitly express nor acknowledges new or hybrid cultures practiced by diasporans. In instances where hybrid and changing practices are represented, it is portrayed within the acceptable parameters of what is regarded as inherently Filipino. Furthermore, approaches towards these diasporic re-articulations tend to reinforce racial categories and cultural hierarchies rather than critically assess or dismantle them.

The title of the song encapsulates the ways in which Filipino diasporans are thought to be associated: kinship through blood ties as "one blood," of the same racial lineage as "one race," and tied by a shared culture as in "one music." Connected biologically, racially, and culturally, these links are depicted as permanent and inseparable. In addressing these links, the song particularly appeals to the senses, emotion, and pride of the audience and espouses a collective desire for a better future for the Philippines and the Filipino people. Nostalgia for home and model minority sentiments are evoked to reinforce the ties between Filipino diasporans to the "homeland" and to each other.

Scholars have written about the significance of traditions, including the invention and emergence of cultural traditions generated from nostalgia and ethnic pride,<sup>23</sup> particularly as ethnic-specific consumer markets of upwardly mobile migrants influence these sentiments.<sup>24</sup> One of the first scenes in *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* is set in a church and shows the Christening of a baby, representing a new beginning, marking permanence in a new place, while at the same time serving as an affirmation of tradition and culture, even in life abroad. The ritual of the baptism not only blesses a new beginning, but incorporates an assumed shared practice among Filipino diasporans – that as devout and steadfast Christians. Erasing the Philippines’ colonial history of imposed Christianity, the scene highlights baptism as a long-held Catholic tradition by Filipinos that connects Filipino diasporans to each other. The video then follows with a montage showing Filipinos in various professions and of different generations – from children, college students, and working professionals, to elderly, older Filipinos. The station ID quickly moves through a series of images showing the diversity of global Filipino workers: surgeons, chefs, artists, designers, and soldiers, thereby demonstrating the range of professions that Filipinos take on and display the process and products of their labor. After these scenes, a prominent image of a bride at first seems to contrast the previous “snapshots” of Filipinos in varying occupations. However, like the scene of the baptism at the beginning of the video, this wedding scene with the bride as the central figure further reifies how Filipinos have and continue to establish their lives abroad while holding on to their faith -- settling down as permanent residents not in the Philippines but elsewhere. This is followed by images of dancers in distinctly “ethnic” or indigenous Filipino attire, and then of a male student in a classroom located inside a brick building reminiscent of Ivy League universities. When taken together with the previous image of the “authentic” pre-colonial Filipino dancers, in a mere few seconds, this classroom scene highlights the institutional education of Filipinos abroad in relation to the Philippines’ rich and colorful history and acknowledges its significance in transforming Filipino minds. Then, in a flash, the viewer is again taken to another location, constantly in a state of transition and never quite established.

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23. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Elizabeth Pleck, *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture and Family Rituals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

24. Marilyn Halter, *Shopping for Identity: the Marketing of Ethnicity* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000).



Figure 4.11 – Figure 4.14: Scenes of Filipinos Working Abroad in *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika*

In this video, like *Lipad Ng Pangarap*, architectural landmarks are used to signal the geographical vastness of the Filipino diaspora. Buildings in the Middle East are juxtaposed with a Filipino construction worker on the job – as if to say, these buildings and structures would not be possible without the labor of overseas Filipino workers. Next, are scenes of a graduation ceremony with university students, then a shot of hotel workers, and a close-up of a pianist. The montage, in part a mix of posed shots, file footage, and landscape scenes, is an attempt to present the diversity of Filipino experiences overseas. At the same, the images used at times seem to literally interpret the lyrics of the song. The video implies that these varied and rich experiences have happened because these individuals ventured to take flight and soar – just like the bird that again appears at mid-point in the music video montage.

As the first half of the song reaches its crescendo, three young children, not coincidentally having different skin hues – one light skinned, one medium skintoned, and one dark skinned – are shown. Whether or not they are all Filipino is left unclear, posing the possibility that all three boys represent the different shades of skin-color in which Filipinos come in, or possibly that the “brown” child in the middle is supposed to representative of Filipinos in relation to white and black racial groups. One can see in their smiling faces the diversity with which Filipino children associate with and the different cultures in which young Filipinos grow and thrive. We see their image as the song lyrics say “*puno ng pag-asa*” or “full of hope.”

This transition point in the song and video provides a brief glimpse of how one could move away from the constrictions of racial categories that can often bind diasporans. Instead, the song signifies that in acknowledging these differences, a brighter and positive future can be found.

In the second half of the video, a new set of snapshot images appear including a boat off the shore, a child running with balloon in hand, and men and women in traditional *barong tagalog* and *filipiniana* dress. The piano again appears, reminiscent of the references to music in the song lyrics. Then, brief shots of what appears to be the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco, followed by a man on the phone, a priest, and a soldier. Next, viewers are taken across the Pacific, to Australia's famous landmark, the Sydney Opera House. Then to a scene with a woman riding an off-road vehicle, her arms in the air and wind blowing through her hair, as a sign flashes on the screen that says "Kangaroo crossing" right before the viewer is shown a man donning a cowboy hat. The next scene places a woman next to cherry blossom trees and a temple, perhaps symbolizing Japan or another East Asian country. Cobble streets with cars and a motorcycle zipping by, a woman restoring artwork in a museum – this setting takes the viewer to scenes of Europe. This is followed by a well-dressed businessman (unlike migrant workers performing manual labor) shaking hands with another man in a turban, signifying a more egalitarian, business relationship between the two someplace in the Middle East. Next, a shot of the Eiffel tower and chefs in a kitchen, then, back to the United States, in New York, scenes of dancers in the studio and a fashion designer surrounded by her apprentices. All of these fleetingly captured on the screen, before a choir dressed in Filipino traditional attire sing in harmony with Lea Salonga to declare that in all of these places, these diverse, hardworking, and accomplished individuals are globally making a mark as "*bagong bayanis*" for the Philippines. The choir then breaks out in chorus, and together sings: "*ma-aasahan natin*" or "ones we can depend on."

Again, the melody crescendos and scenes show graduating students tossing their caps in celebration. The shot cuts to footage of Manny Pacquiao in the boxing ring triumphantly raising his arms up after a victorious bout. This is followed by other footage of a Filipina model on the runway displaying her attire, of the statue of liberty, and a police officer marked as Filipino American by his uniform and the context of preceding images, who salutes the camera. More scenes of everyday life and moments of joy and commemoration – of children at a birthday party, a professional bowler who hits the mark and gets a strike, a Filipino woman and a white man share an embrace – all these scenes of triumph and of successfully acculturating to new places tie to the lyrics and images of celebrating Filipino-ness. Another sports celebrity, Ernie Reyes, Jr., an internationally known billiards player makes a winning shot on the pool table, then a scene of a crowd cheering, and of an older Filipino couple with faces beaming with pride despite the wrinkles that mark their age – hugging each other. While the generational differences are distinguished, this is subsumed by the implication that all Filipinos, young and old, share the accomplishments of Filipino athletes and students alike. It could well be that the network, through this station ID, wanted to showcase the multifaceted experiences of Filipinos, as one newspaper article about the launch of the *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi*,

*Isang Musika* described: “to capture the life and times of Pinoys around the world.”<sup>25</sup> However, I find that the stitched together images, together with the song, produce an effect that merely displays diversity associated to a multicultural, albeit ethnically Filipino project. It is not only a showcase of how Filipinos have retained “homeland” culture and represented the Philippines, but also a display of how Filipinos are adapting to new cultures and thriving outside the Philippines.



Figure 4.15 – Figure 4.18: Scenes of Filipino Lives Abroad in *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika*

The choir concludes the celebratory montage, right before a clip of an airplane touching down on a runway. A young girl at the airport anticipates the flight’s arrival, after this the video shows a quick scene of her running to welcome and embrace her father, the migrant sojourner who has just arrived. The video ends with Lea Salonga, loudly proclaiming the song’s last words, “*inang bansa*” or motherland, before she raises both her arms in the air as an open and triumphant gesture. The finale of the station ID video is marked with “TFC *Isang Dekada*: A Service of ABS-CBN Global,” the network’s logo commemorating its 10-year anniversary.

### Global Filipino Heroes

25. Boy Abunda, “TFC: 10 Years and Going Strong(er).” *The Philippine Star*, May 5, 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com/entertainment/249464/tfc-10-and-going-stronger>. Last accessed 6/22/2013.

In comparing the two videos, *Lipad Ng Pangarap* has a more traditional, linear narrative, clearly marking the journey of migration. This approach captures the attention of older, migrant viewers who prefer linear narratives, according to Ned Legaspi, of ABS-CBN Global who produced the video. *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* has fast cuts, quick shots, which younger audiences prefer, and unlike *Lipad Ng Pangarap* does not rely on linear narrative to tell a story. More open to interpretation and universal appeal, *Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika* enables non-migrant viewers to identify to it as well. Although both station IDs can come across as a piece meal of candid and staged video footage, both of these station IDs create a unifying theme around the idea of “*bagong bayani*” – redefining it to encapsulate migrants’ journeys and the diverse, multifaceted dimensions of a growing diasporic community. Borne out of reality, both of these videos increase audiences’ awareness about the breadth of Filipino out-migration. The images they present bring attention not only to the enormity in the numbers of overseas Filipinos, but also to the variety of occupations, locations, and communities that are present and possible. However, while showcasing these differences, the videos reify traits that characterize Filipinos as model citizens and ideal workers, and maintain the position of the Philippines as largely a labor-sending country in need of remittances and tourists. Without critiquing the conditions of economic inequity and social and political exclusion, these representations normalize the culture of migration and endorse tokenized, assimilative multiculturalism. While promoting Filipino pride and nationalism, these efforts can also serve to buttress a global capitalist economy that privileges the global North, particularly the United States, and in promoting Filipino-ness without regard to pervasive inequities, the video masks race, gender, and class disparities.

### **Station IDs Today: Embodying the Global Community**

In one of its latest campaigns, TFC has re-branded itself as TFC – The Filipino Community, instead of TFC - The Filipino Channel.<sup>26</sup> Almost 10 years since the two previously described station IDs have aired, the new “*Tayo ang TFC*” or “We are TFC” campaign includes personalized, 1-2 minute stories featuring Filipinos from different areas of the world. These are aired separately or as part of the lengthier four minute *Tayo ang TFC* station ID montage. In the station ID version, the short interviews serve as “talking heads” depicting overseas Filipinos from different parts of the world who were interviewed about what they do and why TFC matters to them. Both versions are shown, such that audiences in the United States may likely see short videos featuring a Filipino from the U.S. or another region of the world, or excerpts of the video series in the longer station ID format.

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26. As part of the “*Tayo ang TFC*” or “We are TFC” campaign, several videos were created and categorized under various regions including: North America, particularly USA; Canada; Europe; Middle East; Japan; Asia-Pacific, particularly Singapore; and Australia. This series of videos are shown particularly, although not exclusively, in respective TFC broadcast regions.



Similar to its predecessors, this recent campaign's overall message carries over what previous station IDs have established – the effect of fostering Filipino-ness and a sense of community belonging across Filipinos all over the world. The individuals featured for the U.S. version includes Sammie, a male elderly adult-caregiver and performer; Gracie, a postal clerk, Chuck, flight nurse who immigrated at a young age with his mother, and Regaldo and Leonardo, veterans of WWII. From Canada, there is Chris, a small business owner; Ernie, a barber; Mama Ching, a senior community leader. Others also include Cristy, a hotel worker in the UK; Ed, a sales manager in Saudi Arabia; Marilou, a nanny in Kuwait. In Singapore, there is Lito, a busy tech worker and Christine, a domestic helper; and in Australia, Ester, a wife and working mother; and Yanna, a make-up artist and hairdresser. Acknowledging the hardships of life abroad, which include feeling alone, missing loved-ones, experiencing financial strain, and cultural shock, their stories reinforce the network's intention that despite the loneliness of being away from one's own family, one doesn't feel so alone when watching TFC; despite the hardships faced in adopted lands, TFC can help make life more bearable because of its entertaining programs; and though away from the Philippines, Filipinos can feel proud because TFC reminds them that as part of the Filipino diaspora, they are "global Filipinos" who are and can serve as new heroes. In the segments, when asked to describe Filipinos (and in essence describe themselves), the words used include: hardworking, trustworthy, clean (used both by the nanny and the domestic worker), resilient, competent, tough, *mabait at makisama* (kind and gets along well with others), *maalaga* or caring, sincere, generous and hospitable -- positive characteristics that not only make anyone of Filipino ancestry feel proud, but that also serves to endorse Filipinos as viable, ideal workers and model citizens that both the Philippines and their adopted homelands can count on.

The short, testimonial video segments that are part of the new campaign are encapsulated in a press release and network website page as follows:

*Tayo ang TFC* celebrates both the success of TFC and the enhanced lives of overseas Filipinos and their families. It mirrors their life stories and experiences from the homeland to their struggles and achievements in their adopted land. It shows how TFC has become part and parcel of the Filipinos' lives overseas – bringing joy, pride, a sense of home and family.<sup>27</sup>

What makes this latest version different is that the new segments put an emphasis on the testimonies of individuals in order to deepen the connection between the network and the audience. In the same press release mentioned above, TFC executive John Lazatin explains, "To [customers], we are not just a channel and a provider of various services...TFC has been *Kapamilya* (family member) that helps lead brighter, happier lives wherever Filipinos choose to build their dreams...a

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27. In a press release titled "TFC Shines with Historic Launch of New Global Affinity Campaign: '*Tayo ang TFC*'" issued by ABS-CBN International and TFC North America on April 1, 2011. Retrieved at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/4/prweb8262172.htm>.

beacon of light that will always journey with the Filipino as he brings out his own light into the world for himself, his family and his community.”<sup>28</sup> Through this more personalized approach, the campaign builds on the stated mission of the network – such that its motto of “in the service of the Filipino” means to further spur Filipino diasporans to serve self, family, and others. Blurring the distinctions between the “channel” and the “community,” the network sees itself as representing the Filipino diaspora through the stories and voices of the Filipinos in these videos.

Television as a medium, compared to new media (particularly social media), still largely facilitates information one-directionally – while it can call people to form an imagined community, it does not easily enable dialogue and an interchange of ideas through the medium. These testimonies, I think, mark the network’s earnest attempt, given the medium’s limitations, at giving voice (albeit still with homogenizing tendencies) to the millions of Filipinos in the diaspora for whom the channel and its programs are an important part of life.

Examining TFC station identification segments demonstrate the ways in which the notion of “global Filipinos” has been adapted by the Philippine-based network to promote its services to Filipino audiences around the world. Part of the network’s strategy is to align its programs not only with state approaches but also to cater to popular desires of its largely immigrant audience. The network trumpets service, which, when understood in the context of its station IDs, means being readily available and accessible for audiences, and a platform for representation and advocacy to improve the lives of those part of the overseas Filipino community. In line with neoliberal Philippine state treatment of Filipino migrants, depictions of the “global Filipino” involve representations of the multiple locations, diverse occupations, and cultural intermixing that Filipinos outside the Philippines take part in. All of this yet bound together through a seemingly singular purpose – that is to be ambassadors of the Philippines and exemplar citizens not only of the country of origin, the Philippines, but also of the nations within which Filipinos temporarily or permanently reside. As such, these representations indirectly uphold the national project that promotes a culture out-migration even as they mask fundamental inequities that affect individuals, families, and countries. Exercising precarious negotiations between promoting nationalism and transnational civic participation, through its station IDs, the network fosters a sense of belonging not only for overseas migrants who are expected to eventually return, but also to a new generation of Filipino emigrants and diasporans who have settled elsewhere or may never have set foot in the Philippines yet yearn to connect with an imagined homeland.

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28. Ibid.

## Chapter 5

### Re-Presenting *Global Filipinos*:

#### Apl de AP, Philippine Tourism, and Social Advocacy on The Filipino Channel

Television media serves as a conduit for conveying messages sensitive to state efforts, in reaching Filipino communities outside the Philippines. Through representations of popular celebrities as “global Filipinos,” The Filipino Channel (TFC) serves as a platform for tourism campaigns and non-profit philanthropy that call on Filipino diasporans to intervene in “home” country conditions. Global Filipinos, depicted as migrants and persons of Filipino descent, are especially touted for their talent, success, and cultural pride. I argue that music videos starring Apl de Ap or “Allan Pineda Lindo of Angeles, Pampanga,” a Filipino American rapper, songwriter, producer, and member of the popular hip hop group The Black Eyed Peas (BEP), reveal how identities of 1.5 and second-generation Filipino Americans influence Philippine state projects that are used to reach an audience of Filipino diasporans, particularly U.S.-born Filipino Americans. In marketing campaigns, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT) depicts an image of Apl de Ap as a “global Filipino” who has returned to reestablish his cultural roots and embodies him as the desired multicultural tourist and ardent consumer, given his diverse, international reach. Alongside these portrayals, Apl de Ap at the same time utilizes the media spotlight to promote education and social advocacy organizations based in the Philippines. These efforts, particularly the “We Can Be Anything” campaign, highlight Apl de Ap as a role model for youth empowerment and diaspora civic engagement.

From the standpoint of the Philippine government, the idea of “global Filipinos” is a strategic concept in line with its efforts to generate interest and investment from overseas Filipino migrants, and by extension, Filipino diasporans that span across generations. Apl de Ap has been instrumental in state efforts to reach a broad demographic of Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike through nostalgic and affective appeals that draw younger generations outside the Philippines to reconnect with what they themselves, their parents, or previous generations have left behind. Promoting tourism and philanthropy, the figure of Apl de Ap provides a means for establishing and maintaining transnational ties that take place in large part as attempts to capitalize on the intersection of cultural and political realms of diasporic identity.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Philippine-state’s effort to construct and attach the

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1. In the process, these efforts secure what Cuevas-Hewitt has described as “diasporic pan-nationalisms” – that is, homeland-centered affiliations by Filipino diasporans that are largely circumscribed by ethnic ties. See Marco Cuevas-Hewitt, “The Figure of the ‘Fil-Whatever’: Filipino American Trans-Pacific Social Movements and the Rise of Radical Cosmopolitanism,” *World Anthropologies Network* (2010), [http://www.academia.edu/958997/The\\_Figure\\_of\\_the\\_Fil-Whatever\\_Filipino\\_American\\_Trans-Pacific\\_Social\\_Movements\\_and\\_the\\_Rise\\_of\\_Radical\\_Cosmopolitanism](http://www.academia.edu/958997/The_Figure_of_the_Fil-Whatever_Filipino_American_Trans-Pacific_Social_Movements_and_the_Rise_of_Radical_Cosmopolitanism)

*global* to Filipinos also demonstrates the tension of locating and defining the diaspora as it is at once homeland and ethnic-centric even as it is forced to acknowledge the new roots Filipino migrants establish in their countries of settlement and the interconnection these overseas communities have with each other. Though Filipino diasporans may see themselves removed from the idea of global identification but instead remained tethered to their local, daily realities at the same time as to the transnational ones they have kept with the Philippines,<sup>2</sup> media representations of “global Filipinos” nevertheless insist on a diverse, yet unified diasporan community.

Apl de Ap gained wider recognition in the Filipino American community with the release of “The Apl Song” in 2003 and “Bebot” in 2005. Since then, Apl has focused much of his professional energies in transnational work, including a collaboration with the Philippine Department of Tourism to produce the “Take U to the Philippines” video in 2009 and to support education advocacy through the “We Can Be Anything” video in 2011. Apl successfully negotiates multiple crossings – firstly as a Filipino American rapper and hip hop group member of the BEP in the U.S., and secondly as a Filipino American returning to the Philippines to establish solo artistic and mainstream projects. I examine Apl’s videos on TFC to understand how representations of “global Filipinos” appropriate Apl de Ap’s cultural identity as a diasporic figure that is “becoming as well as being.”<sup>3</sup> Even as Filipino Americans like Apl de Ap may search for inspiration from ethnic heritage because of their disidentification with U.S. mainstream culture, transnational Philippine media promoting tourism also rely on nostalgic sentiments to conjure “Filipino-ness” and purposefully involve Filipino diasporans to appeal to a broader market.<sup>4</sup>

Allan Pineda Lindo grew up as an Amerasian – mixed-race as a son of an African American serviceman and a Filipina mother – and spent his early youth in Sapang Bato, a small town near Angeles City near the U.S. Clark Airbase where he

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2. As reflected in the focus group participants’ comments discussed in a previous chapter, instead of a global sense of Filipino-ness, their identifications were primarily based on local and transnational, region-based ties. For other studies that note the prevalence of region-based identities among Filipino immigrants, see Deidre McKay, *Global Filipinos: Migrant Lives in the Virtual Village* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

3. I draw from Sunaina Maira’s work on youth subculture and identity wherein she references Stuart Hall in discussing South Asian youth’s negotiated, hybrid cultural practices. See Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 147 and Stuart Hall, “*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*,” in *Identity: Community, culture, difference*, ed. Johnathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225, last accessed September 14, 2013 online at: <http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/PrimarySources/HallCulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>

4. In my interviews with DOT officials, I learned that cultural awareness is a key strategy for marketing the Philippines to Filipino diasporans as a place to discover and expand knowledge of ethnic and family heritage.

was exposed to American popular culture and break dancing at an early age.<sup>5</sup> As a teenager, he was transnationally adopted by an American family through the Pearl Buck Foundation.<sup>6</sup> Unlike typical representations of multiracial Filipinos that privilege Spanish and Chinese *mestizos* and lighter skin color in the Philippines, Apl de Ap, as a black Amerasian who is Filipino and African American, signifies alternative depictions of hybrid Filipino identities.<sup>7</sup>

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe reminds us that “hybridities are always in the process of, on the one hand, being appropriated and commodified by commercial culture and, on the other hand, of being rearticulated for the creation on oppositional ‘resistance cultures.’”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as Aihwa Ong also points out, mixed-race personalities and depictions of cultural hybridity in Asian television programs, particularly those geared to younger audiences, can reify Eurocentric standards of beauty and heteronormative, gendered fantasies of cosmopolitanism.<sup>9</sup> In this vein, I argue that transnational projects instituted by state apparatuses like the Philippine Department of Tourism, projects that capitalize on the desire and increased ability of Filipinos outside the Philippines to maintain homeland connections,<sup>10</sup> participate

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5. Benjamin Pimentel, “No matter how successful he gets, Black Eyed Peas' Apl never forgets his roots in a Filipino barrio, and his all-Tagalog hip-hop hit proves it,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 8, 2005, <http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/No-matter-how-succesful-he-gets-Black-Eyed-Peas-2617906.php>.

6. The young Allan Pineda Lindo was sponsored by an American to receive treatment for an eye condition in the United States, through the Pearl Buck Foundation, an international organization that assists poor, orphaned Amerasian children. His adoption to Joe Ben Hudgens was made permanent three years after he first visited the U.S., as Lindo's biological mother, Christina Pineda, made the hard decision to give him up for adoption to the Los Angeles-based American family sponsors. Accounts of Apl's personal biography appear in online news articles, sources, and podcasts. See: Cynthia de Castro, “The Apl that gave back to the tree,” *Asian Journal*, November 25, 2008; Pimentel, “No matter how successful he gets, Black Eyed Peas' Apl never forgets his roots in a Filipino barrio, and his all-Tagalog hip-hop hit proves it,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 8, 2005; Apl de Ap, interview by Benjamin Pimentel, SF Gate podcast, posted at <http://blog.sfgate.com/chroncast/2005/08/08/black-eyed-peas-apl-talks-about-his-filipino-roots/>; and Suzanne Toro, “Full Circle with Apl de Ap and Pearl S. Buck” online at <http://www.articlebiz.com/article/1051262338-1-full-circle-with-apldeap-and-pearl-s-buck/>, last accessed June 22, 2013.

7. Joanne Rondilla and Paul Spickard, *Is Lighter Better?: Skin-tone discrimination among Asian Americans* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 5; Joanne Rondilla, “Filipinos and the Color Complex: Ideal Asian Beauty” in *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 63-80.

8. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: on Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 82.

9. Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

10. These connections can be tangible (e.g. money remittances, care packages, returning to visit) or intangible (e.g. regular conversations with family members because of ease of communication, memories or plans of visits to the Philippines).

in similar racial and gendered schemas. However, while the Philippine state tries to both exoticize and deliberately arrest Apl's hybrid ethnic and cultural identity by appropriating it for mass consumption, the state-crafted diasporic figure for which Apl serves as a stand-in is simultaneously negotiated, as Apl de Ap actively repositions himself in other contexts.

Diasporans connect with homeland, particularly via the Internet, to develop new ties, nourish old ties, and rediscover lost ties weaving their loyalties as they engage with different forms of homeland media.<sup>11</sup> Faster forms of communication spurred by new technologies and the growth of global media<sup>12</sup> including the television platform and online sites have served as distribution outlets and a means of access for audiences around the world to the visual and audio content of his work and have aided in spreading his popularity. Outlets of cultural display and dialogue include mainstream or cable TV channels in the U.S. or the Philippines, on ethnic TV like TFC, or on the Internet, particularly on Youtube.<sup>13</sup> Media depictions of remembrance, return, and rescue, transform Filipino American celebrities such as Apl de Ap into a "global Filipino" champion. Serving as an honorary ambassador for the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT) in 2009, Apl de Ap in "Take U to the Philippines" is depicted as a contemporary Filipino diasporan who has suitably returned to reconnect with his roots and serves as a personal tour guide. As representations of Filipino American celebrities travel to and from the Philippines through television and online media, they promote the Philippines as homeland that is an exotic, yet familiar destination for new generations of Filipino and non-Filipino visitors.

Transnational productions play on feelings of nostalgia as they extend state-initiated projects. Further instilling the "ethos of labor migration"<sup>14</sup> institutionalized by government agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), media representations of Apl de Ap tout inclusion and acceptance, with undercurrents that prop up the myth of meritocracy and the American Dream. However, media efforts to reach diasporans through celebrities like Apl de Ap also revamp the country's image beyond that of a country that exports domestic helpers,

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11. Harry H. Hiller and Tara M. Franz, "New ties, old ties and lost ties: the use of the internet in diaspora," *New Media and Society* 6, no. 6 (2004): 731-752; Jonathan Corpus Ong, "Watching the Nation, Singing the Nation: London-Based Filipino Migrants' Identity Constructions in News and Karaoke Practices," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 2, (2009) 160-181. DOI: 10.1111/j.1753-9137.2009.01033.x

12. By global media, I mean various forms of telecommunication (e.g. satellite TV, the Internet) that expanded information exchange that once was primarily localized to a region or country to now an international, worldwide scale.

13. These media productions are simultaneously global and transnational. It is global because it is distributed and can be accessed by anyone in the world; and it is transnational because the response and relational link it generally creates orients audiences outside the Philippines to the Philippines, or audiences in the Philippines to the West, specifically the United States.

14. Anna Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: the Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 4-5.

nurses, seafarers, and construction workers. Rather, Apl stands in for a different kind of Filipino – one who has successfully entered and impacted the American music industry at the same time that he signifies a degree of multicultural acceptance – wherein differences have been resolved but not further interrogated. Breaking barriers and dissolving difference, Apl’s “value” is partly derived from his racialization as a dark-skinned Filipino and his personal story of transnational adoption such that media representations featuring Apl de Ap as a “global Filipino” convey the notion that Filipino-ness absorbs anyone who is of Philippine ancestry (regardless of class, skin color, region, or other differences).<sup>15</sup>

Apl de Ap’s involvement with Philippine state projects and non-profit organizations demonstrates that as a Filipino American and transnational adoptee, he navigates a complex relationship of cultural understanding, community commitments, and consumerism – a position in which many young Filipino Americans and Filipino diasporan youth may relate. The DoT markets the Philippines as a diverse, tropical playground with lots to offer young, new and returning Filipinos and foreign visitors. Second and third generation Filipino Americans who are seen as having comparable spending capabilities as mainstream Americans are called to take part in experiencing the newly developed Philippine tourist industry. By raising cultural awareness, the DoT and TFC tap into the racialized identities of diasporans to call them back to re-connect with their Philippine heritage. That is, government agencies’ efforts assume a narrative of “rescuing” Filipino Americans from cultural amnesia even as they call attention to and position the Filipino diasporan in economically “rescuing” the Philippines.<sup>16</sup> In this way, transnational media adapts and contributes to the cultural logic<sup>17</sup> that presents the Philippines as a global labor resource. However, in this “fantasy-production,”<sup>18</sup> understanding the diasporic subject as a “national resource” and a “subjective resource,” as Tadiar reminds us, is imperative as this presents contradictions and audacious speculations about the “collective creative capacities” of Filipinos in the diaspora.<sup>19</sup>

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15. Parallel to what Guevarra has argued as the racialized and gendered ideologies about Filipina women’s labor that characterizes them as having “added export value” because they are thought to be more qualified and naturally primed for care work.

16. The Experience Philippines campaign is an example of the DoT’s marketing strategy and its implementation, aimed at second and third generation Filipino Americans.

17. Beyond the economic logic of Philippine out-migration, Guevarra argues that cultural logic -- generated from an ethos of labor migration and racialized and gendered ideologies about Filipino migrants -- propels the coordinated institutional processes that maintain Filipino labor migration.

18. Neferti X.M. Tadiar, *Fantasy Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 4-6.

19. According to Tadiar, by understanding the difference between Filipinas, particularly Filipina domestic helpers, as “national resource” versus “subjective resource”, we can begin to understand the contradictions and possibilities that the Filipina domestic ‘subject’ offers. Instead of restoring a heteronormative nuclear and national family as a response to the separation and dismemberment produced

Filipino diasporans may identify with Filipinos in other countries because of a shared Filipino heritage or racially as Filipinos despite the fact that nationality and its ties to citizenship can unequally locate individuals in the diaspora. While Philippine state-driven projects in large part construct the global identity of Filipinos around the world, there are different conditions across labor-receiving states that govern the rights and conditions of Filipinos in diaspora. As such, Filipino diasporans respond to different pulls from nation-states – pulls from the Philippines as well as from the diverging adopted countries. Tied to this, diasporans' varied pasts all linked by "the ghosts of a traumatic imperial history" and the experience of migration can differently shape these knowledges, feelings, and practices with which Filipino diasporans, including, Filipino Americans, must come to grips.<sup>20</sup> Confronting the ghostly matters and hauntings of past inequities and injustices is in effect bringing to the fore histories that have been rendered invisible and to understand how the subalterned Other is constituted.<sup>21</sup> As a way to confront these conditions and gaps, diasporans in search of wholeness can look to the past for affirmation of identity and to draw on material traditions for notions of authenticity to finding meaningful connections between two or more homes. In the process, they may reconfigure their inquiry into expressions of "critical nostalgia" – drawing on the past to find a sense of belonging, to imagine counter-hegemonic practices, and to challenge the status quo.<sup>22</sup> Building on the notion first introduced by Raymond Williams, "critical nostalgia" as James Clifford explains, facilitates a "break with the hegemonic, corrupt present by asserting a reality of a radical alternative."<sup>23</sup> These acts can culminate to what Marco Cuevas-Hewitt has referred to as a "diasporic social movements" which arise when cultural identities and the transformative potential and practice of culture are realized in political acts.<sup>24</sup> For young diasporans, the politics of belonging may come into play as well – as cultural boundaries and political commitments are defined, challenged, and assessed.<sup>25</sup>

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my migration, Tadiar argues that one must also look towards what the possibilities for new kinds of families and affiliations to emerge in order to reveal the possibilities of domestic Filipina subjects' political power in their work as care givers. This material and subjective critique, Tadiar contends, enables domestics' laboring bodies to resist being objectified by the state as symbols of the nation and instead, the dignity of their laboring bodies are recovered through the power of their "collective creative capacities" as exemplified in their writings and artwork. See Tadia, *Fantasy-Production*, 129-135.

20. José B. Capino, *Dream Factories of a Former Colony: American Fantasies, Philippine Cinema* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 138.

21. Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

22. According to Clifford, critical nostalgia challenges present conditions by making meaning of the past. See James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 114.

23. Ibid.

24. Cuevas-Hewitt, "The Figure of the 'Fil-Whatever.'"

25. Maira, *Desis in the House*.



However, it is also important to be aware of the ways in which these sentiments can be appropriated by institutions, particularly state institutions that call on diasporan involvement, for commercial purposes.

### **The Philippine Tourism Industry and the Filipino Diaspora**

The Philippines relies on tourism as an economic generator and the Philippine government has made extensive efforts to reach out to potential tourists by promoting a sense of 'hereness' needed to turn a location into a destination.<sup>26</sup> A recent Department of Tourism (DoT) report shows that in 2009, tourism contributed to 6% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and close to 10% of total employment (3.5 million jobs).<sup>27</sup> During her term, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed The Tourism Act of 2009 which solidified policies geared to make the Philippines both a "travel destination" and an "investment haven" by offering tax incentives, deregulating airline and other tourism-related industries, and establishing Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZ) to generate private-public development ventures.<sup>28</sup>

Transnational projects instituted by the state apparatuses like the DoT tap into and capitalize on the desire and ability of those abroad to maintain homeland connections. Similar to the entrenched labor brokering system elaborated by Anna Romina Guevarra wherein specific state-led strategies aimed at Filipino labor migrants use social and economic discipline guised as empowerment, the Philippine state has further developed these strategies which today are not only aimed at Filipino migrants but also applied it to diasporans.<sup>29</sup> Most recently, the term "diaspora" has been prominently used in state campaigns, including the "Diaspora to Development (D2D)" campaign initiated in 2011 by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas. In late 2000s, the DoT launched campaigns with Filipino American celebrities such as Apl de Ap and YouTube comedian Christine "Happyslip" Gambito as vehicles for spurring interest among Filipinos who have never visited or have long since visited the Philippines. These efforts emphasized a sense of ethnic renewal or discovery, inviting the celebrities to excursions and tours in different places while sharing their journey with fellow Filipino diasporans in various media

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26. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 7.

27. Philippine Department of Tourism, *Formulation of the Philippine National Tourism Development Plan 2011-2016: Discussion Paper for the Formulation of a Vision, Strategic Directions, and Outline Action Program for the Accelerated Development of Philippine Tourism*. Accessed online at: <http://www.visitmyphilippines.com/images/ads/38a34b7fe73c3ee97d853252b804c7ba.pdf>. Last accessed: September 14, 2013.

28. The law's passage was announced in a press release on the DoT website at: <http://www.tourism.gov.ph/Pages/20091015TourismActof2009.aspx>. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo touted the law in a speech to the first convening of the newly created Tourism Congress. Her speech can be accessed online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzJKJT701jk&feature=relmfu>. News also reached Filipinos abroad through ethnic newspapers. See "GMA signs National Tourism Bill," *The Filipino Reporter*, May 15-21, 2009.

29. Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*.

platforms.<sup>30</sup> This strategy, in addition to targeted campaigns centered on eco-tourism and medical tourism, attract a wide range of tourists from Asia, Europe, and North America, of Filipino ancestry or otherwise, to the Philippines.<sup>31</sup> The DoT videos demonstrate the tensions that draw Filipino American celebrities to particular methods of cultural display, by a sense of obligation to help the Philippines and its economy, and a desire to know, trace, and continue to connect with their roots. These pulls expose cultures on display -- cultures as heritage as promoted by state government and the cultural engagement of diasporans.

Appealing to both Filipino diasporans and a wider set of potential consumers, the DoT targets multiple groups of tourists to the Philippines. The bureau has over 20 satellite offices worldwide geared to reach the international market. Visitors from Korea lead the number of tourists to the Philippines (26%), with the U.S. in second (15%), Japan (9%), China (6%), and Taiwan (4%) behind it.<sup>32</sup> In a DoT report of visitors to the Philippines by country of residence, in 2011, over 624,000 were visitors from the United States. Between 2010 and 2011, there was approximately a 4% increase in the total number of visitors from the United States. That many tourists to the Philippines come from the United States, placing the U.S. second and the only non-East Asian country on the top 5 list of tourist sources for the Philippines, is a testament to the long-standing ties between the two countries part and parcel to the legacies of U.S. colonialism and U.S.-Philippine relations over time. To cater to the large U.S. market, particularly to U.S.-born Filipinos in America, the Philippine Department of Tourism has 4 offices in the United States -- in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago. The buying power of Filipino American visitors who are targeted by the DoT is a major reason for this effort. As former DoT Undersecretary Albuero explained when I interviewed him: "We want to get the mainstream American, meaning the white Americans and the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Filipino Americans because the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, they spend like Americans already."<sup>33</sup>

While non-Filipinos may be regarded as tourists and return migrants as *balikbayans*, Filipino diasporans can occupy an in-between category of visitors. They are tourists whose visits are often short-term, temporary, with no assurance of return visits. But they are also considered *balikbayans*, like the Filipino migrants, returning to their country of ancestry. In DoT statistical reports, entering tourists are counted by their country of citizenship, so Filipino Americans who are naturalized U.S. citizens and Filipino Americans born in the United States for example are counted as U.S. tourists. Tourists with Philippine passports are in a

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30. We see this in the creation of Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZs) as stipulated in the Tourism Act of 2009.

31. Based on my interviews with DoT officials and DoT Team North America representatives as well as advertising campaign materials that the marketing staff shared with me.

32. Philippine Department of Tourism website, "Visitor Arrival to the Philippines by Country of Residence: January-December 2011" accessed online at: <http://www.visitmyphilippines.com/images/ads/213d01b36f178176144f4cf3abe93b34.pdf>

33. Phineas Albuero, (former Philippine DoT Undersecretary of Special Concerns), interview, October 27, 2008.

separate category and so are Overseas Filipino Workers. Multiple campaigns have been launched by the DoT to entice domestic and international tourism.<sup>34</sup> Local culture, historic landmarks, natural resources are all part of promoting the Philippines as a prime destination to see, taste, and experience life in the Philippines. For second-plus generation Filipino diasporans, it is marketed as a place to discover and expand one's knowledge of one's heritage and as a place to connect with never-before met relatives.

### **Young Filipino Diasporans and Reconnecting with the Philippines**

Affective affiliations play a part in Filipino Americans' remembrance and return.<sup>35</sup> Apl de Ap's journey to self-discovery traces memories and stories of life in the Philippines, and often echo a search for his desires to belong, get answers, and see a part of himself that he may not or could not otherwise find in the United States. As a transnational adoptee who at a young age severed ties to his native country for another life in the United States, Apl is not unlike other transnational, transracial adoptees negotiating their "disidentification" with adopted and native countries and who long for "real" experiences once returning to their country of birth.<sup>36</sup> Other Filipino American celebrities like Christine "Happyslip" Gambito have also expressed affective sentiments as reasons behind her work with the Philippine DoT – and such feelings especially resonate with diasporans, particularly second-generation youth seeking a deeper understanding of their identities and ethnic heritage.<sup>37</sup> For young Filipinos in the diaspora, "long distance nationalism" may not be enough as they may seek knowledge and awareness beyond the traditional institutional confines of the American education system.<sup>38</sup> In *Desis in the House*, Sunaina Marr Maira sheds light on the ways in which nostalgia informs South Asian youth identity in New York who "fashion their ethnic identities deliberately and self-

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34. This includes the popular and long-standing "WOW Philippines" campaign initiated by former Secretary Richard Gordon in 2002 and sustained and enhanced by Secretary Ace Durano during Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's term through a variety of other specific campaigns such as Experience Philippines and Awesome Philippines for international markets. In 2010, with the Aquino administration, Secretary of Tourism Alberto Lim launched the "*Pilipinas kay Ganda*" campaign -- however this quickly fell apart after receiving criticism for being unoriginal and led to the resignation of the Secretary of Tourism. Under the current Secretary of Tourism, the present "It's More Fun in the Philippines" campaign and slogan was launched in January 2012.

35. Neferti X. M. Tadiar, "Popular Laments: Affective literacy, democratization, and war" in *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1 (2009): 1-26

36. Eleana Kim, "Wedding Citizenship and Culture: Korean Adoptees and the Global Family of Korea," *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed. Toby Alice Volkman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

37. Christine Gambito, who used an online platform to create characters inspired by her real-life relatives, connected with many young Filipino Americans who could relate to the idiosyncrasies of the characters she portrayed, appreciating that what made them seemingly unusual also made them funny, loveable, and human, at the same time recognizing that they share in the experience of being different.

38. Capino, *Dream Factories*, 155.

consciously and perform a nostalgia that is seemingly reflexive.”<sup>39</sup> Drawing on Stuart Hall, she explains how identity formation for diasporan youth is a process of “becoming as well as being” wherein the politics of ethnic authenticity as it relates to being Indian or Indianess comes into play in the production and performance of new cultural practices outside of parental expectations and mainstream society’s norms – that is, they are diasporans who are no longer physically tied to a homeland, yet who may feel compelled to produce knowledge, display feelings, and perform practices that substantiate their claims to be part of the homeland and the larger, global ethnic community. She astutely remarks that for these diasporic youth “[b]oth practices of nostalgia and cool are realized through processes of material and cultural consumption. . . These desires and investments are part of the processes of self-making for young consumers and citizens.”<sup>40</sup>

This desire to discover one’s roots resonates in Filipino American performers, like Apl de Ap, who draw inspiration from ethnic heritage, marking traces of the Philippines in new cultural practices and productions that traverse national boundaries. On the one hand, he is at best a representative of the mainstream achievement that Filipinos desire, and at worst, he becomes another token minority, an essentialized representation of multicultural America, and an objectified Filipino American celebrity culturally configured and commodified as a “global Filipino.” In a positive light, Apl as a diasporan artist and performer represents how Filipino Americans take in and rework immigrant experiences and cultural practices. As part of his diasporic experience, he takes hold of the opportunities and agency to reconceptualize racial and national identities as he seeks to define his own personal identity and reimagine his personal ties. In “The Apl Song,” he draws on elements of Filipino culture that have been brought over by previous generations of Filipinos in the United States and in “Bebot” there are contentious elements of Filipino and American popular culture in a struggle to find a place in mainstream U.S. music industry, while “Mama Filipina” and “You Can Be Anything” establish his sustained transnational affiliations and commitments. Spurred by his global celebrity status, Apl’s music paves a way for differently representing and understanding Filipino American lives, in the Philippines and the United States.

### **From Allan Pineda Lindo, Jr. to APL de AP and the Bebot Breakthrough**

In an August 2005 article in the San Francisco Chronicle, Benjamin Pimentel features Filipino American rapper, Allan Pineda Lindo, Jr., and his personal story before joining the popular hip-hop group, The Black Eyed Peas (BEP). In it, Pimentel declares: “No matter how successful he gets, Black Eyed Peas’ Apl never forgets his roots in a Filipino barrio, and his all-Tagalog hip-hop hit proves it.” At the time the article was written, the “all-Tagalog hip-hop hit” to which Pimentel was referring was the controversial “Bebot” – a song included in the BEP’s “Monkey Business” album released in 2005. Previously, Apl was well known among Filipinos and

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39. Maira, *Desis in the House*, 148.

40. *Ibid*, 197.

Filipino Americans for his song titled “The Apl Song” in the Elephunk album (2003).<sup>41</sup>

Demonstrating that he has not forgotten his roots even after his newfound worldwide recognition, Apl calls attention to his Filipino American identity and his personal narrative as an Amerasian adoptee. Using a mix of English and Tagalog language, in “The Apl Song” he shares the story of his journey as a boy from a small town in the Philippines and sheds light on events that affect Filipinos in the Philippines and the United States. The desire to tell others not only about his personal story but also of Filipino American experiences comes across both in the lyrics and the visual narrative of the music video. He opens “The Apl Song” with a sample from “Balita” a song by Asin, a Filipino folk group whose songs were popular during the anti-Martial law movement in the late 70’s, asking listeners to heed his call with refrain: “*Lapit mga kaibigan at makinig kayo. Ako’y may daladalang balita galling sa bayon ko.* / Come close, my friends, and listen. I bring news from my country.” Later, he recollects and asks: “How would you feel if you had to catch your meal?/Build a hut to live and to eat and chill in/Having to pump the water outta the ground.” Drawing on memories in asserting his self-identity, the lyrics exude pride for the place he came from and an appreciation for the spirit of mutual cooperation, as he remembers it to be as he describes, “The way we put things down utilizing what is around...We makin’ it happen, from nothin’ to somethin’/That’s how we be survivin’ back in my homeland...everyone helping’ each other whenever they can.” This spirit of cooperation or *bayanihan* emerges out of the lack of resources and becomes a means of survival.

In “The Apl Song,” he also celebrates his joyous reunion with his mother (and by extension, the motherland). He raps: “I’ve been away half my life and it felt like a dream/To be next to my mom with her home cooked meal/Man, I felt complete, my emotions, I feel.” However, this homecoming turned out to be bittersweet and marked by a disturbing reality he could not ignore – a reality that is made acutely apparent from his visit. As his life-experiences had been changed as a result of migration, an unsettling realization sank in that life in the Philippines may not be as he remembers it and he is forced to recognize the difference between his life in the U.S. and the “mess” in his native country. Referring to the suicide death of one of his siblings, in “The Apl Song” he confesses, “I guess sometimes life’s stresses gets you down/On your knees, oh brother I wish I could have helped you out.” Like many Filipino immigrants who feel an obligation to support immediate and extended families in the Philippines, Apl felt responsible for his brother and brings into sharp relief the stark difference between his own life course in America and that of his brother who stayed behind. Grappling with unanswered questions and a painful chasm, Apl acknowledges his role and pays tribute to the brother he had lost. As the

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41. Jeff Yang, “ASIAN POP Tagalog Invades MTV / Young Filipino American filmmaker will stop at nothing to get Black Eyed Peas’ ‘The Apl Song’ video onto U.S. screens” in *SF Gate online*, July 26, 2004. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2004/07/26/peas.DTL&ao=all>.

lyrics of “The Apl Song” are about Apl’s personal journey, at the same time it is set to sepia-toned visual images of the Philippines and a Filipino American WWII veteran’s life in the United States. Though seemingly incongruous, the music and visuals tether Apl’s life in the Philippines and U.S. yet leaves the type of connection between his past in the Philippines and the plight of Filipinos in America open and to be imagined by the audience.<sup>42</sup>

In his songs, performances, and media appearances, Allan Pineda Lindo as Apl de Ap proclaims his Filipino and American heritage. This can be seen as a gesture towards the multiculturalist presentation and appeal of the Black Eyed Peas, wherein each member is construed as representing a particular racial or ethnic group. On the one hand, Claire Jean Kim’s essay offers an important reminder – that officially sanctioned and institutionally supported multiculturalist approaches that tout diversity can suppress historical complexities of intergroup relations that neither acknowledges privilege nor disturbs unequal power dynamics.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, in an article about Filipino diaspora and post-colonial hip hop, Rachel Devitt also points out that it may be because of “the group’s mainstream success and their genre-hopping aesthetic that afford Apl the position to create tracks like 2003’s ‘The APL Song’ and 2005’s ‘*Bebot*,’ songs that begin to address the elision of Asian Americans and Asian American experiences from pop music and of Filipinos from American culture and history.”<sup>44</sup>

In 2006, Apl de Ap’s U.S. music brought him back to the Philippines, as an emerging celebrity and a returning adoptee. The popularity of “The Apl Song” and subsequently “*Bebot*” placed Allan Pineda Lindo on the map in the Philippines and among Filipino Americans. In contrast to the slow, ballad sound of “The Apl Song,” the all-Tagalog lyrics and upbeat tempo of “*Bebot*,” which means “pretty woman” or a slang for “hot chick” makes it a popular dance music and club-mix. While “The Apl Song” is about homecoming and return journey to the Philippines, “*Bebot*” is more about what he does while he is there and its lyrics situate Apl in the Philippines. While “The Apl Song” received play in radio and TV stations in the Philippines, even as it resonated with Filipino American and non-Tagalog speaking audience, the release of “*Bebot*,” become synonymous with Apl, especially in the Philippines, as it often accompanied his introductions in public appearances.

“*Bebot*” became a proclamation of not only his presence but the fact that he has made it in the U.S. music industry – as he was able to produce a song primarily

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42. Tadiar calls attention to the expressions of lament among young Filipino American diasporans, particularly as these are lyrically and visually conveyed through “The Apl Song,” and the ways it reimagines transnational commitments as the song draws from a previously popular Philippine pro-democracy anthem and portrays the struggles of Filipino WWII veterans. See Tadiar, *Popular Laments*, 19-21.

43. Claire Jean Kim, “Imagining race and nation in multiculturalist America,” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 6 (2004): 987-1005, DOI: 10.1080/0141987042000268567

44. Rachel Devitt, “Lost in Translation: Filipino Diaspora(s), Postcolonial Hip Hop, and the Problems of Keeping It Real for the ‘Contentless’ Black Eyed Peas,” in *Asian Music* 39, n. 1 (Winter/Spring 2008): 108.

in Tagalog on a mainstream American album – a move that hails an overt assertion of Filipino-ness in a place such as the United States. Though the song is not in English, it has appeal with English speakers, whether in the United States or the Philippines, because of its dance-able tempo and rhythm. And, though listeners may not sing along with the Tagalog lyric verses, it was the refrain of “*Bebot/Be-be-be-bebot*” to which the listeners danced and chanted. As a song, “*Bebot*” essentializes Filipino identity and its appeal and unifying effect comes from its commercialized and formulaic approach to hip-hop music packaged for mainstream consumption. The song expresses a more overt claim to being Filipino and the characteristics and practices that are often stereotypically associated with it. In describing these traits, it defines the “authentic” Filipino at the same time that it reifies the stereotypes about Filipinos. References to the manner in which Filipinos eat using hands rather than utensils, “*pag kumain, nagkakamay / when eating, you use your hands*”, and popular Filipino dishes like chicken adobo, and the exoticness of “*balut / fertilized duck egg*”<sup>45</sup> are sprinkled throughout to authenticate claims to Filipino-ness, as if to say, “Look, I know about being Filipino, and it includes these things” and assuming that the audience shares in them as well. Simultaneously, the song purportedly educates the listener about what it means to be a real Filipino.

In “*Bebot*,” Apl marks his transformation from his boyhood days in Sapang Bato in the Philippines to Los Angeles where he found success. He raps about his working class background, the way that American rappers derive authenticity by declaring one’s difficult and dangerous past. References to drinking and desiring beautiful women are sprinkled throughout, and set the vantage point through the male gaze, albeit that of a recovering emasculated man. The music videos for “*Bebot*” highlight the heteronormative elements and the culture of masculinity prevalent in rap performances. Although some may argue that the song is a compliment to pretty Filipina ladies, some Filipino American scholars criticized it for its overt hypersexualization of women and stereotypical portrayals of Filipinos.<sup>46</sup> These representations of race and gender carry over transnationally, as hip-hop becomes more global and widely popular. Critique of the music videos for “*Bebot*” include its portrayal of women as sexual objects – gawked by men at a nightclub as the lyrics say “*Ikaw ay aking bebot*” or “You are my pretty woman.” The song not only positions Apl in his Philippine “ghetto,” like rap songs that

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45. boiled, fertilized duck egg, that is a popular street food in the Philippines.

46. There were two versions of the music video the second of which received more notoriety. The first video, set in a 1930’s taxi dancehall frequented by bachelor Filipinos at that time period, was in part to raise awareness of The Little Manila Foundation’s efforts to restore historical sites. The second version of the music video depicts a house party set in the present day. The latter received public criticism for its overtly hypersexual representation of Filipina women. For further details and discussion about the controversy, see: Erin Pangilinan and Krystle Ignacio, “Bebot Videos: Feminist Critiques,” *About Bebot: A Collective Review* (blog), November 29, 2006, <http://morecomplex.blogspot.com/>. Jeff Yang, “ASIAN POP Tagalog Invades MTV / Young Filipino American filmmaker will stop at nothing to get Black Eyed Peas’ “The Apl Song” video onto U.S. screens” in SF Gate online, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2004/07/26/peas.DTL&ao=all>.

authenticate the artist through their rough beginnings, but it also demeans women as “hot chicks” that men find hard to resist. Along with the objectification of women in the video and the lyrics, the lyrics describe such claim to the “*Bebot*” couched in other lyrics that essentialize Filipino culture in terms of “chicken adobo,” “*balut*,” and “*inuman*” or drinking with other men.

“*Bebot*” was especially popular in the Philippines – a song most Filipinos associated with Apl and often played in the background as he was introduced in public settings. Its upbeat tempo made it a common, catchy song for young Filipinos as a way to declare national pride. It allowed for young Filipinos to declare their Filipino-ness as one that is “cool” and “hip” in part because it is associated with the popular culture from the United States. The refrain of “Filipino/Filipino/Filipino” throughout the song, like the choral catchphrase of “*Bebot/Be-be-be-bebot*,” is a public declaration of ethnic identity – shared between the singer and those chanting along. It has elements of call and response with the song asking its audience “*Kung Pinoy ka, sigaw na, sigaw*” or “If you are Pinoy, scream now.” And with this, the singer, Apl de Ap, also acknowledges the presence of his loyal audience, thanking them for their support.

Neither “The Apl Song” nor “*Bebot*” received widespread recognition in the mainstream American music industry.<sup>47</sup> But by asserting his ethnic identity as a Filipino, disclosing his ties to the Philippines, yet also distinguishing himself as “authentic” hip hop, Apl endeared Filipinos in the Philippines and all over the world. In the U.S. context, the narrative of the transnational adoptee that is part of Apl’s public identity characterizes him an assimilable “other” while the efforts of the Pearl Buck Foundation can be construed as an extension of American missionary work and benevolent assimilation policies at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> In the same way that TV programs from the Philippines are “sanitized” before being aired in the U.S., Apl’s adoption story neatly summarized and packaged in television, newspapers and online accounts often erases the historical, economic, and social complexity of how and why a child like Allan Pineda Lindo may come to be in the United States. The dominant, breakthrough story that emerges in popular media casts him as an ailing, orphaned (particularly by his African American serviceman father) child from the Third World who is rescued from deplorable conditions for better living conditions in the United States, where he is transformed to a famous, international celebrity. It buttresses his Horatio Alger-like story, from rags to riches, and makes him an exemplary figure and epitome of the American Dream. The Hudgens family didn’t just adopt Lindo; he was also culturally adopted into U.S. mainstream “multicultural” society, making it big with The Black Eyed Peas. From the standpoint of the Philippine government, this American success allowed him to gain acceptance in the Philippines. Welcomed back, particularly from the institutional standpoint, his rags to riches story functions to promote its neoliberal

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47. “About Bebot: A Collective Review,” *Blogger*, <http://morecomplex.blogspot.com/>. Last accessed September 17, 2013.

48. Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).



strategies for labor-migration as well as its attempts to draw a larger consumer market for tourism. In addition to and in light of BEP's success in Hollywood, Apl de Ap garnered awards and recognition from both Filipino and Filipino American organizations even as he increased his humanitarian efforts in the Philippines through The Apl Foundation and bolstered support for emerging artists by starting his own Philippine-based record label, Jeepney Records. In 2006, Apl received the Presidential Medal of Merit in the Philippines for returning "home" and bringing the Philippines to the world. After the ceremony, Apl and Wil.I.Am performed the "The Apl Song" and "Bebot" for Philippine President Benigno Aquino, Jr. and other dignitaries at Malacanang Palace.<sup>49</sup> The award served as a symbol of national acceptance and a public endorsement of Apl de Ap as a hero and model global citizen. It is in this transformation and new identity as Apl de Ap, that Allan Pineda Lindo is called to serve.

### **APL and the DoT "Take U To the Philippines"**

In 2009, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DoT) under the leadership of Secretary Ace Durano, partnered with Apl de Ap to developed promotional videos aimed at young, overseas Filipinos. The "Take U to the Philippines" video was distributed and aired in MTV networks across Asia, shown on TFC channels around the world through various satellite and cable providers, as well as made available via YouTube. The music video promotes domestic and international tourism, using Apl de Ap as a means to advance long-standing campaigns launched by the DoT.<sup>50</sup> In *Destination Culture*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that "heritage is created as a process of exhibition...adding value to pastness, exhibition, difference, and, where possible, indigeneity"<sup>51</sup> – and it is increasingly so because of the way that tourism packages travel in Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZs) such as those established by the Philippine Tourism Act of 2009. In these TEZs, tourists can expect to be exposed to an array of local culture, landmarks, and destinations, in an infrastructure that is efficiently linked. Drawn by an obligation to help support the Philippines as well as a desire to trace his roots, in the "Take U to the Philippines" video Apl is tactically positioned to be both a tourist and tourist guide for a country in a quest to be a "tourist destination" and an "investment haven."<sup>52</sup> Rendering his identity as Filipino American consumer and promoter of displayed Filipino culture, he was tasked with supporting an industry that, according to a 2011 report by the

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49. Christine Avendaño, "Pinoy 'Pea' brings 'House' Down," Philippine Daily Inquirer, July 28, 2006, [http://showbizandstyle.inquirer.net/entertainment/entertainment/view/20060728-12190/Pinoy\\_%91Pea%92\\_brings\\_%91House%92\\_down](http://showbizandstyle.inquirer.net/entertainment/entertainment/view/20060728-12190/Pinoy_%91Pea%92_brings_%91House%92_down).

50. These efforts include the popular "WOW Philippines" campaign initiated by former Secretary Richard Gordon in 2002 and expanded by Secretary Ace Durano during President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term.

51. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 149-150.

52. These phrases stem from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's speech at the opening ceremony of the first Philippine Tourism Congress meeting, November 25, 2009. The Philippine Tourism Congress was established after the passage of the Tourism Act 2009.

Philippine Department of Tourism, supplies 6% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 10% of the jobs in the country.

"Take U to the Philippines" paints an intimate picture of a tropical paradise full of excitement and adventure: "Jump on a plane, pro'ly jump on a train/Just you and me yeah just you and me/I can take you where I come from right/Where the water's so warm with the sunlight/Shine all day, Really shine all night/Ma I like you, Yeah I like you/She shine all day, all night too/I could be your boyfriend, I could wife you/Let me take you to the place where I come from/Take you to my hometown cause I wantcha."



Figure 5.1: Scene from Take U to the Philippines displaying landscape



Figure 5.2: Scene from Take U to the Philippines listing destinations

With Apl positioned as a guide and seductive lover for the listener (gendered female), the song calls on its audience to be ready and open to go anywhere, from the “rugged hut” of rural, provincial towns to modern, “splendid villas in the city.” Apl, as depicted on the video, raps the names of one local destination after another, each location captured and identified, as names of different towns and cities flash on the screen. This declaration promotes the diversity of a variety of local cultures and destinations such as Cebu, Palawan, Baguio, and Subic, despite the fact that in an interview Apl admits that his travels have only been to Pampanga (the town he grew up in), Boracay, and Cebu (where the DoT had toured with him in preparation for the campaign).<sup>53</sup> As he takes his guest and the audience on a virtual, whirlwind tour, images of him dancing, traveling on a tricycle (a local form of transportation that is a motorcycle with a covered sidecar) or riding a *jeepney*<sup>54</sup> overlap vibrantly colored names of towns and islands for potential travelers to remember and eventually visit.



Figure 5.3: Scene from Take U to the Philippines depicting female dancer

The visual effects in the video are colorful and festive, though the images are not photographs of places but rather computer generated graphics of moonlit hills, palm trees, waterfalls, and cityscapes that are juxtaposed with text that spell out names of famous tourist destinations in the backdrop providing “proof” of the Philippines as simultaneously modern yet reassuringly native. As such, the video categorizes these places under the umbrella of exotic, tropical paradise, even as the names that distinguish the different destinations from each other direct viewers to

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53. See interviews of Apl de Ap and former Tourism Undersecretary Ace Durano posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtKbhBoblgQ> and at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Z6V27DC58>. Last accessed September 17, 2013.

54. The *jeepney* is a form of mass transit used primarily by the working class and urban poor. These colorful, ostentatiously decorated vehicles originated from surplus American Jeeps left after WWII that were converted to accommodate more people.

where they may want to go. The computer-generated effects provide a futuristic, dream-like mood while the catchy upbeat sound orients the listener to the future and positions the listener-audience as one who has never been to, or perhaps has only dreamt about, the Philippines.



Figure 5.4: Scene from Take U to the Philippines of Apl on a tricycle

The intended audience of mainly Filipino diasporans and especially second-generation Filipino Americans may identify with the symbols as images or objects they have encountered only in travel brochures, advertisements, or souvenirs, unlike life-like, realistic depictions such as photograph or video footage where audiences directly or narrowly identify with a place or object as some place they have been to or as something they have experienced in the past. Moreover, the futuristic feel of icon-like images from the Philippines created from computer animation conveys a kind of modernity – one that is hinged on symbols of heritage and markers of authenticity. The video poses Apl as one who is able to show the audience around the country (in this case virtually), particularly because of his identification as a Filipino American, positioned as someone who can bridge the native elements of the Philippines with international tourists. And, this position of tour guide that Apl inhabits glosses over any possible contradictions or reservations and instead assumes a natural relationship to the Philippines.

Apl alludes to the political and economic hardships of life in the Philippines in his songs, and in “Take U to the Philippines,” he does so by acknowledging that even in such a beautiful, exciting place “Everybody’s workin’/They survivin’/They want peace/No more fightin’/Wanna see the world?/Don’t be surprised when/I take you to the Philippines.” This stanza, perhaps, is a remnant of Apl’s song titled “The Island Song”, which has a reggae-like sound, a nostalgic yet critical sentiment, with more explicit mention of the political and economic ills that plague the

country.<sup>55</sup> Instead, the DoT favored the catchier, livelier “Take U To the Philippines” as the chosen song for the promotional campaign. Even as Filipino Americans like Apl de Ap may search for inspiration from ethnic heritage and express “critical nostalgia”<sup>56</sup> for the imagined homeland, transnational Philippine media also rely on such nostalgic sentiments and adopt cultural awareness as a strategy to conjure “Filipino-ness” and include diasporans in representations of “global Filipinos” in efforts to promote Philippine tourism.<sup>57</sup> Transnational projects instituted by state apparatuses like the DoT capitalize on the desire and increased ability of Filipinos outside the Philippines to maintain homeland connections<sup>58</sup>. And, similar to the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency’s strategy towards overseas Filipino workers and migrants – an approach that employs a neoliberal strategy in social and economic discipline guised as empowerment<sup>59</sup> – the Philippine Department of Tourism’s approach evinces efforts to capture the Filipino diaspora by reclaiming and reconfiguring a once lost son as an exemplar of “global Filipinos,” in support of larger neoliberal nationalist projects.

### **APL de AP and Appeals of “We Can Be Anything”**

*Mr. Allan Pineda Lindo, Jr., better known as apl.de.ap of the world-famous singing group, The Black Eyed Peas, has found the Filipino hero in himself and has consented to be the iamninoy-iamcory Special Ambassador for Education. In our private conversations, he intimated how much he would want to make use of his gift of music to inspire young Filipinos to dream their dreams and to fulfill their potential as heroes in their own right.*

- Rafael C. Lopa, President & Executive Director, Ninoy & Cory Aquino Foundation speaking at a press conference held to introduce Apl de Ap as the Education Ambassador for the organization, February 28, 2011<sup>60</sup>

Beyond his work with the Department of Tourism and his solo music endeavor, Apl has maintained transnational ties through philanthropic efforts that involve his Apl Foundation alongside education initiatives by other non-profit groups in the Philippines. The We Can Be Anything (WCBA) campaign, launched in

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55. Refer to interviews of Apl de Ap and former Tourism Undersecretary Ace Durano posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtKbhBoblgQ> and at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Z6V27DC58>. Last accessed September 17, 2013.

56. Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” 114.

57. Based on my interviews with DOT officials, I learned that cultural awareness is a key strategy for marketing the Philippines to Filipino diasporans as a place to discover and expand knowledge of ethnic and family heritage.

58. These connections can be tangible (e.g. money remittances, care packages, returning to visit) or intangible (e.g. regular conversations with family members because of ease of communication, memories or plans of visits to the Philippines).

59. Guevarra *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*.

60. “We Can Be Anything,” last accessed September 17, 2013, [http://www.wecanbeanything.com/news\\_apl-de-ap-press-conference-opening-remarks.html](http://www.wecanbeanything.com/news_apl-de-ap-press-conference-opening-remarks.html)

2011, is a partnership between the Apl Foundation and the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Foundation that was initiated in the Philippines and targeted overseas Filipinos through the “We Can Be Anything” music video shown on The Filipino Channel as well as on other television networks and online mediums. In February 2011, Apl actively took part in the EDSA 1 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary<sup>61</sup> celebrations and flew to the Philippines to accept a position as education ambassador for the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Foundation (NCAF) EDSA People Power Movement, in conjunction with his already established Apl Foundation humanitarian efforts. Through the Ayala Foundation and its affiliate Philippine Development Foundation (PhilDev), education projects sponsored by Apl de Ap and his foundation in this collaboration function as transnational, non-profit efforts aimed at inciting US-based Filipino communities to support Philippine-based social development programs particularly in the areas of education, science, and technology.<sup>62</sup> Through such projects Apl de Ap, as a philanthropist-artist and a transnational adoptee, reestablishes ties with his country of birth in an effort to close the fissures and create connections between his two homes. His personal story of loss, sacrifice, and ultimately success resonates in the commitments he has made particularly in the realm of public education as he serves to inspire awareness across Filipinos in the diaspora, and specifically between Filipino Americans and Filipinos. How might Apl inspire a global awareness centered on a “critical nostalgia”? How can his story of being in the margins and emerging in the mainstreams encourage meaningful and effective strategies for providing direct resources and support to those who need it? Apl’s popular global appeal can link the chasms across communities of fans by making his personal story and efforts palpable to the greater public. He embodies hybrid, flexible, in-between identities and presents an example of how one’s place in the margins can be harnessed to ignite action. Through his transnational humanitarian efforts, he calls attention to social concerns to incite positive change and symbolically flexes his hybrid and multiple identities to channel resources into non-profit advocacies that support Amerasian children and public education in the Philippines. Beyond his work with the Department of Tourism and his solo music endeavor, Apl thus displayed his own version of diasporan heroism by working alongside existing organizations in the Philippines. In this way, Apl can represent how Filipino Americans engage and reimagine immigrant cultural practices by acknowledging and connecting his transnational family and global community ties.

The We Can Be Anything (WCBA) education campaign reflects Apl’s life-story and advocacy work – as that of an adoptee who had come from economically

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61. After years under martial law, in 1986, the People Power movement, emboldened by the martyrdom of opposition leader Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, stood ground in the streets of EDSA (Efinanio de los Santos Avenue) and ousted the longstanding military dictator Ferdinand Marcos. This led to the re-establishment of democratic government in the Philippines with the election of Aquino’s widow, Corazon “Cory” Aquino. The EDSA demonstration in February 1986 is often remembered as a historical public protest and a momentous event that propelled the rebirth of democracy in the Philippines.

62. “We Can Be Anything,” last accessed September 17, 2013, <http://www.wecanbeanything.com/campaign.html>

impoverished circumstances and reached global success through opportunities presented by American education and musical enterprise. As “special ambassador for education” for the *iamnino-iamcory* project and the star of the music video, Apl is put up as a role model, described as “having found the hero in himself” like the millions of *bagong bayanis* / modern-day heroes who contribute to the project of national uplift. His individual heroism is also juxtaposed with the leadership and martyrdom of Ninoy Aquino, as the project also called on Filipino youth to be heroes in their own regard by identifying with former Philippine president, Corazon Aquino, and her husband and national hero, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, as model, self-sacrificing leaders in the movement for democracy. More significantly, the construction of the diasporic Filipino hero, as represented through Apl de Ap in particular, is in large part influenced by the American Dream and by a way of understanding multiculturalism that is imported from the United States. Apl’s success, like others designated as “global Filipinos” is defined and validated from seeking opportunities elsewhere. It implies that because of the limited economic opportunities in places such as the Philippines, someone like Apl may not have been able to achieve his dreams had he decided to remain there. Instead, attaining his dream meant going *through* the U.S. and the global recognition from his American-made success further gives reason for exalting him as a hero in the Philippines. In the case of the “We Can Be Anything” video and the broader campaign, Apl as a Filipino diasporan serves as an example for Filipino children (especially poor Filipino children) who, in the video, literally follow him down a road – a road that perhaps may lead them to a place like the United States, hoping to find success at the end of their journey. Although the United States is never explicitly mentioned in the song, it is ever-present as embodied by Apl. He serves as a stand-in to represent American meritocracy - one is free to be whom one wants to be if one works hard and get an education. While America represents redemption from poverty through his adopted family, U.S. education, and economic opportunity that led him to fame, the Philippines represents a condition he overcame, as a place he rose out from, or his version of the “ghetto.”<sup>63</sup>

The “We Can Be Anything” (WCBA) video was produced to promote and secure donations for the foundations’ education advocacy projects. The music video, which premiered in 2011, was shown on The Filipino Channel and is available online, reaching a range of audiences, particularly Filipinos and Filipino diasporans. The WCBA video begins with two children walking towards an indeterminate covered object. Upon pulling the cover, they expose a large, colorful, wooden cart on top of which are different cut out standees<sup>64</sup> fashioned after all sorts of possible professions or occupations. Reminiscent of the “pushcart classroom,” the wooden

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63. In the first lines of The Apl Song, Apl refers to the Philippines as his “version of the ghetto.”

64. A stand-up figure of a character wherein the head or face is cut out such that a person can stand behind it and the front has the person’s face showing while the rest of the body is the character.

cart in the video pays homage to the work of Efren Pinaflorida<sup>65</sup> and the youth who led and participated in grassroots efforts to educate street kids in the Philippines by transporting the classroom to slum neighborhoods using carts equipped with school supplies and educational materials. In the video, as the two kids pull the cart through unpaved dirt paths, slum neighborhoods, and city sidewalks, parallel scenes show Apl walking across a bridge, standing on a small boat, and walking in front of young kids. These are shown together with Apl's words of encouragement to Filipino youth subtitled at the bottom of the screen not only addressed to the kids but also (or even more so) for overseas audiences who are potential donors and supporters:

You can be a doctor  
You can be a governor  
You can be a leader  
You can be a professor  
All you gotta do is dream  
You can be anything  
Get your education  
Change your situation

Singing the "We Can Be Anything" anthem, alongside interspersed clips of the two pushcart kids, Apl figures as a role model -- as someone who got an education and reached his dream. In the song, Apl proclaims: "Cause if I can do it/Then you can do it/And together we can push it/Up the mountain... Cause if I can get it/Then you can get it/And together we can live it/'Cause there is no limit" and in a chorus, the children join in and scream "Do it!" and "Get it!" as they follow him down the road. The video's message declares that education is a necessity every child and everyone must have. The video's message could be construed as promoting some of the continuing "model minority" myth and expectations unduly imposed on Asian groups, particularly in light of the report by the PEW Center Research on Filipino Americans as one of the more successfully assimilated Asian American minority groups.<sup>66</sup> The song lyric's assertion that "There is no limit" does not acknowledge the complicated systems that perpetuate unjust economic conditions and obstacles that hinder poor children from going to school, finding a job, and earning a viable livelihood.

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65. A Filipino awardee for CNN Hero of the Year in 2009.

66. "Pew Research Center: Social and Demographic Trends," *Pew Research Center*, July 12, 2012, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2012/06/SDT-The-Rise-of-Asian-Americans-Full-Report.pdf>





Figure 5.5: Scene from We Can Be Anything of Apl on the streets

While Apl's path to success is an exception, this is suspended for a moment if only to say that with the help of the campaign, challenges such as families not being able to afford tuition, books, and transportation or students attending under-resourced and dilapidated schools, need not be considered major hurdles. Instead, the focus is for young students to dream big because challenges can be tackled and eradicated through the work of the foundation with the support of Filipino diasporans who give back.

Fueled by hope for a better future, the cart makes its way through different neighborhoods and incites the curiosity of children along the way. These scenes are interspersed with shots of Apl together with dark-skinned, Filipino children who are ambiguously racialized as Aetas<sup>67</sup> or black Amerasians sing in refrain to the only words in Tagalog: "*Mga kababayan ko/Magsamahan tayo*" / "My countrymen, let's come together." Apl's figure as a black Amerasian is invoked to portray an association with groups historically marginalized in Philippine society. Asking Filipinos to come together despite difference (in this case, skin-color and class differences), this scene is a call for Filipinos to recognize diversity without necessarily acknowledging structural inequity and a call to accept those who have been historically ostracized, subordinated, and considered "other" because of their skin color or stigmatized social status. In parallel scenes, one by one, the pushcart kids take photos of the other children who giggle and smile as they try out various accessories – whether it be an engineer's hardhat, a chef's hat, an astronaut helmet, a fauxhawk for a rockstar, or the iconic Ninoy Aquino-like eyeglasses.<sup>68</sup> The video

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67. An indigenous group in the Philippines historically stereotyped and discriminated for their darker complexion and afro-textured hair.

68. Ninoy Aquino was a political prisoner and dissident, now recognized as a national hero and martyr who inspired the People Power social movement against the Marcos dictatorship and led to its overthrow. Past images of Ninoy Aquino often show him

shows the children taking their pictures behind the cut out standee. Each child sees their photo, which creates the effect that they see the person who they want to become – a doctor, a cop, a construction worker, or an entrepreneur – making their dreams a possibility even if only for a snapshot of a moment.



Figure 5.6: Scene from We Can Be Anything of the boy taking photographs of other kids on the cart



Figure 5.7: Scene from We Can Be Anything of one of the kids on the pushcart

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with oversized, square-shaped eyeglasses. The distinguishably shaped square eyeglasses now serve as a symbol for the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Foundation, as well as in the promotion of the project through its merchandizing.

The importance of spreading the message of possibility and hope is conveyed as each child attaches their photo to a balloon, and together release them to the open sky where far away, another young child gets to hold the photo, sharing in the dream as well. The music video ends with a silhouette of the two kids still pulling the cart, still making their way to inspire many more. Concluding with the following words: "Help them become what they dream to be and do your share to improve the education situation in the Philippines," the video makes a plea and directs audiences to the website for more information about the campaign. Through *We Can Be Anything*, Apl serves as an example of a Filipino American who has contributed not only in time and money, but also in corporeal presence. He not only embodies a multicultural, diasporan hero but also a kind of utopian future where this is possible. What can be absent in such transnational imaginings, however, is a deeper examination of difference and a challenge to unequal global economic conditions, especially if the campaign's call for diasporic participation does not go beyond monetary donations.

### **APL de AP and Global Filipin@/s**

Ien Ang's poignant remarks concerning hybridity and diaspora best capture Apl de Ap's negotiated position. As she explains it, "Hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution."<sup>69</sup> On the one hand, videos such as "Take U to the Philippines" and "We Can Be Anything" make Apl de Ap an exemplar "global Filipino" to serve a larger social agenda vis-à-vis Philippine-based state and non-state institutions. Just as other nation-states that appropriate and manage multiculturalism and tokenize race<sup>70</sup>, in this facade, Apl's racial identity, understood as a moniker for difference, is exalted. At the same time, Apl leverages his celebrity status and position as a cultural and generational intermediary in an attempt to bridge cultural knowledge and political substance, while the DoT and the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Foundation provides a platform for such cultural and political gestures by selecting him to be the tourism ambassador and the ambassador for educational advocacy, respectively.

With Apl as a stand-in for acceptance and inclusion, there is no need for a mosaic of a diverse Filipino diaspora, as he himself is the mosaic in place of the multiple, mixed, heterogeneous individuals. As a result, what is considered different (or praised as such) becomes a pretense for acceptance in the service of a nationalist agenda that promotes outmigration, yet fails to confront pervasive, global inequalities brought on by institutionally entrenched systems of oppression as well as everyday racism, and gender and class discrimination. Instead, the videos' message in large part call on the participation of diasporans as citizens who

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69. Ien Ang, "Together in Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity" in *Asian Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (2003) 149-150, DOI: 10.1080/10357820308713372.

70. David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 6, 217-218.

give back to the nation (materially and culturally) even from far away, by promoting the American ideals of multicultural democracy and the American Dream – that is, that the heterogeneous body of Filipinos should participate in being a citizen, especially those abroad, because through the support of diasporic Filipinos, Filipinos in the Philippines can thus succeed.

In both the videos discussed in this chapter, we see that Apl is tailored to what Cuevas-Hewitt terms as the “Fil-whatevers,” the heterogeneous Filipino cosmopolitan public regardless of where the “whatever” may be.<sup>71</sup> Apl embodies the heterogeneity of Filipinos as a dark-skinned Filipino American at the same time as he stands in for hybrid culture. His work materially brings together elements of his Filipino-ness and American-ness, although oftentimes-uncomfortable histories that display uneven power relations get masked in the face of representations of global success and cosmopolitanism. His very being is itself exposing the contradictions embedded in the diaspora. His attempt at bridging the gap while being located in-between exemplifies the conflict and displacement faced by diasporans, and in the search to find his roots and the quest to find the part of himself he had lost, he instead creates and produces something else in its place. He is at the same time recouping a nostalgic past even as he tries to imagine and build a new Philippines.

Representations of Apl’s multicultural negotiations simultaneously erase difference, even as he also serves to highlight other kinds of differences. In highlighting difference, displays of Apl’s hybridity oftentimes falls in line with what Kum-Kum Bhavnani has described as situational hybridity – where “the elements/axes of identity simply cut across each other and seem not to be dramatically changed or challenged by the presence of other elements...Situational hybridity usually sidesteps and masks political discourses.”<sup>72</sup> Whereas situational hybridity presents differences in identity without necessarily engaging in critical reflection or interaction, organic hybridity “permits identities to be challenged and to shift...[and] permits an uncoupling of culture from ‘race’...to imagine new subjectivities.”<sup>73</sup> There are moments when representations of Apl, such as in the context of his humanitarian efforts, can be understood as having been driven by or has potential as organic hybridity. I say “potential as” because I see it as arrested cultural hybridity in which “merged” and “fused” elements of culture may be the impetus for a project but in the end do not directly challenge political status-quo and inequitable power dynamics.

In Apl’s decision to return, to collaborate, and to create and produce meaningful, viable work, there is a desire for negotiation, of meeting halfway, and subverting overarching structures and norms at first in order to survive and later in order to forge a new and bold future. Apl best demonstrates this organic hybridity in his expressions of love and loyalty to his mother. She is both a symbol of what

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71. Cuevas-Hewitt, “The Figure of the ‘Fil-whatever,’” 99-100.

72. Kum-Kum Bhavnani, “Organic Hybridity or Commodification of Hybridity: Comments on Mississippi Masala,” in *Meridians* 1, no. 1 (2000): 191-192.

73. Ibid., “Organic Hybridity,” 201.

and why he left. Apl's mother and her choice to give him up for adoption gives reason for his life's journey, his life path as he has come to be. Through her, he cannot deny the Philippines nor the United States. She was an instrumental force in Apl engaging with being Filipino and being American and represented the undeniable, inextricable links between both.

Hybridity emerges in the intersections of race, class, gender, and nationality. In *Flexible Citizenship* (1999), Aihwa Ong calls attention to the function of culturally hybrid figures, such as the Eurasian females who predominate American-influenced television in Asia, that exoticize not-quite Asian subjects at the same time as these recurring figures uphold Eurocentric standard of beauty and physique.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Apl de Ap, who I have argued is a symbol of cultural hybridity in the context of the Philippines and the diaspora, he not only represents an acknowledgement of the multicultural Filipino diaspora, but he also evokes accessibility and cosmopolitan desires. He is accessible because of pop culture and of his humble beginnings; he is desired as a celebrity. However, as a black Amerasian, he is also different from the Eurasian VJs on MTV Asia. While he is exoticized in the same way as Eurasians who are cast as never quite Asian and somewhat "foreign," he is not idealized as a bearer of Eurocentric standard of beauty nor perhaps of normative masculinity. This may be partly the case because the standard perceptions of beauty and physical characteristics, as Ong had described them, are applied unevenly to women more so than men. Furthermore, in light of his success and influence as a global celebrity, Apl's masculinity is recuperated through exoticized and sexualized representations such as in the DoT promotional video, and which allow gendered norms to remain unquestioned and intact.

Cuevas-Hewitt uses the open-ended term "Fil-Whatever" as mentioned by his interviewee to glibly call attention to the ambiguous nature of national and ethnic affiliations of diasporic Filipinos that exists as migrants negotiate their identities in new contexts. He proposes that Filipinos outside the Philippines, whether they be Fil-Americans, Fil-Australians, Fil-Canadian, and other hyphenated identities positioned as such engage in diasporic cosmopolitanisms by going beyond nation-based context and ethnicity based affiliations in their lived, daily practice. In so doing, they may take part, along with Filipino in the Philippines, in "a thousand small hybridities" everyday in contrast to what may officially be deemed "truly Filipino."<sup>75</sup> Drawing from a comment by an interviewee, Cuevas-Hewitt's article refers to the notion of the "Fil-Whatever" in relation to the "global Filipino" – a term that I have described in previous chapters as ubiquitously used in media and deployed by Philippine government institutions. Cuevas-Hewitt writes that the process in which "Fil-whatever," which his interviewee had described as a "Global Filipino," emerges in "the proliferation of new identities and the constant redefinition and renegotiation of old ones. Cultural production and innovation are occurring everyday, both in the Philippines and in the diaspora. Thus, no longer is there only one way of being Filipino, but many. No longer are there just Filipinos,

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74. Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 168-169.

75. Cuevas-Hewitt, "The Figure of the Fil-whatever," 118.

but also Fil-Ams, Fil-Canadians, Fil-Australians, Fil-Italians, *'Fil-Whatevers.'*<sup>76</sup> While Filipino diasporan subject may cast themselves in new ways as Fil-whatevers, I also argue that Apl, as a biracial and multicultural symbol in the DoT and WCBA videos, is figured as a Fil-whatever by the political and social institutions that manage these media productions. And, while it is true that Filipino diasporans like Apl more so than ever create and transform their identities in the face of an increasingly global world, however, far from being just in the general category of “Fil-Whatevers,” being Filipino at different places in the world does carry different meanings, such that Fil-Am means something different from being Fil-Australian, or from being Fil-Canadian, or being a Filipino in Dubai, or Hong Kong, or the Maldives. For one, this hyphenated identity is not something all Filipinos in the diaspora can even claim. It is reserved for those who have a means to structurally and legally take part in (albeit partially or unevenly) their country of residence – conditions that vary greatly across Filipino communities in the diaspora. Use of the terms “Fil-Whatevers” in this case, like “global Filipinos”, can be totalizing in that it has the potential of ignoring how conditions of Filipinos in many migrant receiving countries differ. Many Filipino contract workers do not necessarily have a path to citizenship (unlike the U.S. or Canada), and Filipino immigrants such as those whom I interviewed continued to see their fellow Filipinos as perpetual migrants who are in the perpetual state of being an immigrant rather than being settled – because they do not feel they belong anywhere in the world except perhaps until they return the Philippines or in the fantasy of returning to what they had left.

Diasporic communities are held in tension through memory and nostalgia – the longing for an “imagined” and “desired” place and the reality of not being (physically) part of it. Diaspora, therefore, can also represent the contradictions, by acknowledging place-ness as constituting more than just one site at a time, and the placeness felt by many migrants and subsequent generations. Of being grounded in one place, but feeling connected to multiple others at the same time. Through interrogations of identity and culture, diaspora may underscore how migrants while physically in one place, simultaneously hold and mold two or more worlds together. In the case of TFC – Apl de Ap, these contradictions are illustrated through television programs – music video productions that cater to an international market especially made up of Filipinos abroad, who are driven to identify as “global Filipinos” always connected to the Philippines as “home” and to each other as “family.” And, while transnational media efforts generate and harness national affinities, migrant Filipinos, however, may differently identify and locate themselves in relation to the Philippines and to each other – differences that show how heterogeneity are not easily corralled.

Examining the videos featuring Apl de Ap, especially in light of the focus groups’ views on Filipino migration and the appeal of station ID segments on TFC as discussed in previous chapters, shows that the nation is still very much at work and at the forefront in shaping diasporic lives. Nation-based institutions, such as the DoT or NGOs, show that appeals to the diaspora as in the imagined idea of “global

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76. Ibid., 120.

Filipinos” are very much rooted in the idea of a nation, of race and ethnicity, of cultural likeness and differences. Moreover, diaspora tethered to national as much as global context, Sanya Shukla reminds us, “conveys an affective experience in a world of nations, through its proposition of a global belonging as a means of self and group representation” that is significantly shaped by multiple locations and changing dynamics of place and identity.<sup>77</sup>

As Filipino immigrants and second-generation Filipino American participants had alluded to in the discussions, the *global* in “global Filipino” is produced from a condition that has generated a way of being – that is, the accepted “fact” that “Filipinos are all over the world” is a condition that has in turn prompted Filipinos to be adaptable and able to navigate different cultures and contexts. Filipinos’ adaptability is not only shaped by structural conditions, but it is at the same time symbolic and lived out – and it is these realities that highlight the tensions and anxieties that “Fil-Whatevers” potentially face. As was shared by Filipino American focus group participants, their trips to the Philippines are often contingent on their immigrant parents such that they visit the Philippines because of a family vacation that their parents had planned. Filipino Americans who choose to visit the Philippines of their own accord may choose to do so through transnational non-governmental organizations that also provide humanitarian or service-learning experiences. In these instances, the goals often involve immersion into local Philippine communities through awareness and advocacy rather than the tourist sites and cultural display that the Department of Tourism espouses. Their visits therefore may not necessarily align the agenda and goals of the tourist industry. In this alternative engagement, diaspora consciousness is central to understandings of nation, race, ethnicity, and cultural likeness and differences, for, as Melinda L. de Jesus explains, “diaspora consciousness undergirds our continuing process of decolonization and becoming: relinquishing our reliance upon the schizophrenia of the perpetual present; resisting colonial mentality, deracination, and heteropatriarchal silencing; and refuting the model-minority stereotype of the obsequious, submissive, and/or exotic erotic.”<sup>78</sup>

Whether Filipinos abroad operate in “a thousand small hybridities,” as Cuevas-Hewitt has described and in the sense of organic hybridity that Bhavnani calls for was not easily or entirely apparent. Diasporic cosmopolitanism is already in effect, as one second-generation participant commented, “We can be global in this portion of the world, while other people are global in their area of the world.” But in terms of representing “global Filipinos” through a figure like Apl, this participant was skeptical, stating “No one person can embrace that sense of globalness” while another chimed in saying that new generations of individuals who are publicly of mixed ethnicities could perhaps serve to represent this. By and large, what the

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77. Sandya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4, 13.

78. Melinda L. de Jesús, introduction to *Pinay Power Peminist Critical Theory: Theorizing the Filipina/American Experience*, ed. Medinda L. de Jesús (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12.

participants described –as they reflected and shared about their engagement with and perspectives on TFC programs – is a transnational practice mired in nation-based institutions as well as national and local conditions, but that at the same time carries possibilities for different ways of being and understanding, alternative ways of leveraging hybrid identities and imagining communities across cultures and identities, that can then inspire and embolden future generations of diasporans.

Asian American cultures that cultivate heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity, as Lisa Lowe asserts, propels the recovery of fragmented pasts and opens up a site for different articulations of self and community in response to being rendered as “other” or marginal.<sup>79</sup> Through diasporic consciousness and the production of hybrid cultures, one may begin to examine and incite responses to racism, injustice, and global inequity. Videos featuring *Apl de Ap* demonstrate that Asian American cultural expressions, in the U.S. and beyond, open up discursive and material spaces for reconstituting and remaking global, national, and local communities. In the mediated transnational efforts to which *Apl de Ap* has been a part, we see institutional cooptation as well as earnest cooperation, as much longing for reconciliation as conflicted affiliations, and in all, it speaks of the diaspora as a continually contested, speculative site with unrelenting possibilities.

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79. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 66-68.



## Epilogue

When I first began this research project, my goal was to understand how and why The Filipino Channel (TFC) has become an integral part of Filipino American lives. To do so, I examined its emergence and analyzed its impact on Filipino American audiences. I asked: who watched TFC? And why were audiences (myself included) so drawn to watching particular programs? What messages are conveyed by the network programs and why? At the interstices of diaspora studies, Asian American studies, and media studies, I locate my project in Asian American diaspora studies as a starting point from which to trace media history in Filipino American communities, situate transnational practices, and highlight issues of identity and cultural representation.

Ethnic television programs on TFC aimed at the Filipino diaspora, as I have argued in this dissertation, touts “global Filipinos” as multicultural ambassadors of the Philippines, in conjunction with state interests in priming Filipinos for overseas jobs. Interviews with TFC producers demonstrated an acknowledgment of the negotiations that migrants undergo in their family lives and in their new environments – though this understanding is parlayed with the network’s need to sustain and generate new subscribers and its mission to serve Filipino audiences’ needs. The network pursues these intertwined interests by fostering diasporans’ tangible and intangible attachment to the Philippines and through affective sentiments of Filipino-ness. Further demonstrating that “global Filipinos” is largely a state and media construct in response to anxieties over the effects of globalization and weakened national ties perceived to decline among latter generations of Filipinos abroad, discussions with Filipino Americans in San Diego revealed familiarity with as well as elements of disconnect to the all-encompassing notion. First-generation Filipino Americans in the focus groups held on to regional affiliations much more so than to a national Filipino identity, at the same time that they participated in transnational activities which kept them connected to the Philippines, including being regular viewers of TFC programs. Second-generation Filipino American ties to the Philippines often resonate through Philippine and U.S. cultures that are not necessarily oriented solely to the Philippines, even as U.S.-born Filipino Americans scrutinized TFC for largely appealing to Filipino immigrants. Despite the network’s attempts at representing difference and inclusion, what the notion of “global Filipinos” does not address are the structural and social inequities that affect the everyday lives Filipino diasporans and the ways in which immigrants and second generation Filipino Americans alike carefully negotiate family ties and the politics of their changing identities and commitments.

For this dissertation study, I was more than a researcher and an observer. I was also a member of the audience, a customer, and a consumer. Since moving to the U.S. at the age of 12 together with my parents and brother, ethnic media tethered us to extended family and memories of Cebu, Philippines. Like many immigrant parents, my parents gave what they could to ensure that my brother and I had every opportunity to succeed here. In recent years, health concerns and eventually the loss of their home in Elk Grove, California during the U.S. housing

crisis led my parents to permanently return to the Philippines. Our times together in the U.S. as well as in the Philippines inspired this project.

From August 2008 – February 2009, it was with mixed emotions that I pursued my research agenda even as my parents were undergoing the agonizing process of leaving behind the home that they created in the U.S. to start anew and re-create a home from where they once left. Between shipping furniture, renovating my grandmother's house (which was passed down to my parents), and reconnecting with relatives, I carried on with meeting research contacts, conducting interviews, and library research. While in the Philippines, I was also surprised to find myself less inclined to watch any of the television shows I had previously followed on TFC. What I was instead drawn to was news of the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign along with the spiraling economic crisis happening in the United States. In one of my notes, I commented on my television watching preferences:

November 11, 2008. Although I'm here in the Philippines and Philippine TV programs are at my easiest to access, I still find myself looking for U.S. programs to watch – especially to try to catch up on the news about the elections and the transition to the new administration. Is this the case of “absence makes the heart grow fonder”? Or is it because I am so immersed in Philippine culture and Filipino-ness around me that there is no need to get it through TV only?

Being in a new environment meant a change of pace and routine, which affected my daily TV viewing habits and following the collapse of the banking industry on TV helped make sense of what my parents had and were going through. I also realized that being *in* the Philippines meant that I no longer felt the need to see the Philippines through the television screen. Although I was supposed to feel at home being there, what instead made me feel at home was watching CNN's coverage of Obama's 2008 campaign and his eventual election as President of the United States. For me, watching these events unfold not only brought meaning to why I was there but also served as an inspiration and a “break” from the stark inequities that I felt and saw all around me. My fieldwork, especially the visit to the ADS-CBN studios where I watched the live taping of *Wowowee*, was eye-opening. It was insightful to see what took place behind the scenes – not only the amount of work involved but also the variety of people and idiosyncrasies that do not always come across when merely watching the television show from a TV screen at home. The pride, loyalty, and competitive spirit against rival networks that the ABS-CBN staff exuded were also very palpable. Observing how a show is produced made the people behind the scenes real for me, as I realized that for the hosts, side acts, and crew, a show like *Wowowee* was an integral part of their life as well -- it was labor-intensive and it was their livelihood.

ABS-CBN must balance its business goals with its mission to serve its audiences. As I critique representations of “global Filipinos” on TFC, I recognize the influence and vital role that ethnic television media carries in the Filipino community. Because of its widespread popularity in Filipino communities, it is all

the more important to take into serious and critical consideration its role in constructing and articulating messages to and about the Filipino diaspora.

TFC can be a tool for offering new representations, claiming media space, sparking critical dialogue, and community action. Connecting audiences through a virtual community mediated by the television set or in sharing the experience with watching television with family at home, the TV programs from the Philippines sustain immigrant viewers. Viewers are drawn to these programs in part because compared to mainstream options, ethnic specific programs best caters to their needs and desires. In this sense, TFC, as an ethnic television network in the U.S., offers the possibility for self-representation (in the sense that it is based in the Philippines and owned by Filipinos) and it reaches many households of Filipino diasporans. Ethnic media can be site that fosters critical perspectives that challenge ideas about Filipino identities. In this project, I did not address queer communities and personalities as it relates to TV programs on TFC. Future work needs to include significant attention to representations of gender and sexuality especially as possibilities for alternative representations of Filipino-ness.

TFC is only one aspect of a much broader landscape of ethnic media in the U.S. and across the world. Comparing the TFC network with ethnic television channels geared for other immigrant groups can highlight areas in which these mediums and communities may converge or diverge. My interviews of TFC producers showed their earnest interest in the perspectives of the younger generations prompting the need for critical cross-generational discussions and transnational collaborations. I'm curious to follow how U.S.-based TFC programs will take shape in the coming years. What kinds of shows will be offered? And how will the contributions of new generations of Filipino Americans be incorporated? Given that the Filipino American focus group participants in this project are from San Diego, are their sentiments shared by Filipinos in other parts of the U.S. or Filipinos in other parts of the world? These are questions I find worth exploring to better understand how ethnic media will continue to impact the Filipino diaspora.

Rather than producing programs that react to the conditions of Filipino diasporans, Philippine-based ethnic media could focus resources on generating innovative, insightful programs that involve second- and third-generations of Filipino diasporans as co-creators with fresh perspectives and approaches, especially if the network seeks to expand their audience base and target a younger demographic. Television as a unidirectional medium meant to broadcast its content to audiences has its limitations; but like other forms of media it has the power to create, maintain, and build community. As a future research endeavor, it would also be interesting to explore how ethnic television and social media – as they interact together – directly engage audiences, generate discussions, and incite civic engagement and political action. In the same vein, another possible research project could be to look at how media technology and teaching can go hand in hand to facilitate active, experiential learning.

The Filipino diaspora has changed the production of media in the Philippines and the United States. ABS-CBN and its TFC network, as a case study of global Philippine mass media, demonstrate the power of overseas Filipinos as audiences of ethnic television programs as well as the presence of Filipino diaspora identity in

generating a collective national consciousness. Ethnic television for Filipinos abroad, however, must more actively and creatively confront the inequitable social and political conditions of the Filipino diaspora for future, long-term change to happen.

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## Appendix A: Focus Group Methodology

I recruited focus group participants online and in person, by circulating the call for participants and mentioning my research project to their circles of family and friends. I tapped into existing networks of personal contacts that referred friends and family. I also posted a note on my social network page calling for Filipino Americans over 18 years old who were familiar with Filipino American television and media programs.

The focus group meetings took place at 3 locations in the San Diego area: Focus Group 1 at a realty office in National City, Focus Group 2 at a community center in Mira Mesa, and Focus Group 3 at my home in Mira Mesa. The length of each meeting ranged between 1-2 hours. All focus groups were conducted primarily in the English language, with some participants responding in the Tagalog language in Focus Group 1 and 2. All focus group meetings were videotaped and transcribed. To analyze the focus group responses, I reviewed the video recording and the transcripts and organized the responses into themes. Some of the major themes that emerged include: generational differences, gendered differences, retention of native language and culture, education in the United States, and ethnic identity formation.

### Focus Group Participants:

Focus Group	Pseudonym	Approx. Age	Gender	Country of Birth
1	Doris	61-70	F	Philippines
1	Ernie	51-60	M	Philippines
1	Hilario	51-60	M	Philippines
1	Melinda	21-30	F	United States
1	Richard	61-70	M	Philippines
1	Ronald	61-70	M	Philippines
1	Sergio	51-60	M	Philippines
1	Winston	61-70	M	Philippines
2	Gina	31-40	F	United States
2	Nancy	61-70	F	Philippines
2	Rita	51-60	F	Philippines
3	Aileen	21-30	F	United States
3	Dorothy	21-30	F	United States
3	Nathan	21-30	M	United States
3	Raymond	21-30	M	United States
3	Sharon	21-30	F	Philippines

## **Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide:**

Do you watch television programs from the Philippines?  
If so, how and why do you access these programs?  
If not, why not?

Do you subscribe to a channel that specifically shows TV programs from the Philippines, such as The Filipino Channel (TFC)?  
If so, what made you decide to subscribe?  
If not, why not?

When and where do you usually watch TFC programs? And, with whom?

What shows do you typically watch? Why are you drawn to these particular shows?

TFC often claims that the network helps its viewers “feel closer to home” and its mission statement mentions it serves as a “unifying factor”: What do you think is meant by these phrases? And, do you think these are often the case?  
If so, how and why?  
If not, why not?

For example, are you familiar with one or more of these programs? If so, can you share some of your thoughts about these shows?

Wowowee  
TFC Soap Operas  
TV Patrol  
Citizen Pinoy  
Balitang America  
Travel Time  
Trip Na Trip

I will show you a clip from TFC that you may or may not be familiar with, and then I will ask you for your thoughts on it:

\*Show clip TFC station ID segments\*

If you could create a television show, what kind of program would it be? And, why?

## Appendix B: Song Lyrics

### **Wowowee Theme Song**

*Wowowee, sinong di mawiwili?  
Dahil sa game na to ay di ka magsisisi  
Wowowee, panalo ang marami  
Pagkat walang talo sa Wowowee  
Sa loob at labas ng ating bansa  
Saan man nagmumula  
May pera o wala  
Kasama ko kayo at pwedeng manalo  
Ganyan kung magmahal  
Ang kapamilya nyo*

(English translation)

*Wowowee, who wouldn't be drawn in?  
In this game, you won't have regrets  
Wowowee, many will win  
Because no one loses in Wowowee  
Whether inside and outside of our country  
Wherever you are from  
Whether with or without money  
You are with me, and you can win  
That's how we love  
Our family*

### **Lipad Ng Pangarap (Flight of Dreams)**

Performed by: Gary Valenciano

*Taglay mo sa bagwis ng 'yong pagtayo  
Ang pangako ng walang hangang bukas  
Pabaon nga sa 'yo'y hapdi ng puso  
Aabotin ang pangarap  
Tutularin ka ng susunod na salinlahi  
Kapuripuring pagaalay ng lakas  
Nagpupugay sa makabagong bayani  
And buong bansa'y nagpapasalamat*

*Liparin mo ang hangganan ng langit  
sa ulap ng pag-asa ay iyong makakamit*



*ang tagumpay na bunga ng iyung pagpupunyagi  
Pangarap natin, ng bayan, tinatangi*

*Ingatan mo ang lipad ng pangarap  
Umaasa sa iyo ang bayan mong naghihintay  
Kakamtin mo sa dulo ng pagt'yatyaga't paghihirap  
Ang tamis na dulot ng iyung tagumpay  
Ang tamis na dulot ng iyung tagumpay*

(English Translation)

Bearing in mind your progress  
A vow for an endless future  
Though carrying heartache with you  
Reaching the dream  
You will be emulated by future generations  
For your praiseworthy offer of strength  
Saluting new heroes  
An entire nation is grateful

Fly to the ends of the heavens  
On the clouds of hope you will obtain  
The success that is borne out of your struggle  
Cherishing our dreams and our nation's dreams

Care for the flight of dreams  
Your homeland waits and rests its hopes on you  
You will gain at the end of your diligence and sacrifice  
The sweetness borne out of your success  
The sweetness borne out of your success

***Isang Dugo, Isang Lahi, Isang Musika (One Blood, One Race, One Music)***

Performed by: Lea Salonga

*Isang tinig ang aking narinig  
Minsay nanaginip ating mondu'y umaawit  
Isang himig pagasa ang hatid  
Ang musika'y batid sa bawat puso at isip  
Ikaw at ako tayo ay Pilipino  
Kinilala sa talino at tsaga  
Isang dugo isang lahi at musika  
Taglay ay bukas na puno ng pagasa*

*Isang himig and aking narinig*

*Pagasa ang hatid sa bawat puso at isip  
Isang awit handog at dalangin  
Sa bagong bayani -- Maasahan natin  
Ikaw at ako tanyag na Filipino  
Taas noo karangalan sa mundo  
Isang dugo isang lahi at musika  
Ang inalay mo sa iyong inang bansa*

*At home ka sa TFC*

(English Translation)

I hear one voice  
At times dreaming our world is singing  
One song that brings hope  
Of music felt in every heart and mind  
You and I are Filipino  
Known for intellect and diligence  
One blood, one race, and music  
Bearing a future full of hope

I hear one song  
Bringing hope to each heart and mind  
One song offered and prayed  
For the new hero – we can depend on  
You and I, prominent Filipino  
Heads held high, esteemed in the world  
One blood, one race and music  
You offered to your motherland

You are at home at TFC