

**HEARING THE VOICES OF FILIPINO WOMEN:  
VIOLENCE, MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND  
CONTESTED REALITIES**

**By**

**Cleonicki Saroca  
BSocSci (Hons)  
University of Newcastle**

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**School of Social Sciences  
Discipline of Sociology  
University of Newcastle**

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## **STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a feminist exploration of how violence against Filipino women in Australia is represented in the Australian and Philippine media and the relationship between the women's lives and media images of their abuse. It is fundamentally concerned with the problem of the absent and silenced voices of Filipino women in media portrayals of violence. It aims at creating a space in which the women's stories can be told. Based on interview data and discourse analysis of Australian and Philippine newspaper articles, the study investigates how the homicides and disappearance of seven Filipino women are represented. Case studies drawn from interviews with family members and friends of these women comprise the core of the study. An exploration of additional articles and interviews further reinforces the issues and themes that emerge in the case studies.

The case studies contextualise the women's experiences. Analysing media images in light of the interviews reinstates the absent and silenced voice in media accounts of violence. By charting the lives of these seven women, their hopes and aspirations as well as the pain and fear they suffered at the hands of abusive male partners, the case studies illuminate the way media accounts have largely misrepresented their experiences. Many of the Australian articles, in particular, bore little resemblance to the women's lived realities. Juxtaposing Australian with Philippine portrayals further illuminates the racism and sexism of a large section of the Australian print media. A major theme to emerge out of this study is that the relationship between media image and actual violence also involves struggle and conflict over constructions of identity. It is a site of contested realities.

Most of the articles analysed in this study failed to tell the story from the deceased woman's perspective. It is argued that to hear these women's voices, journalists need to move beyond using sexist, racist and class-based stereotypes, such as mail order bride, to describe Filipino women or explain their abuse. It also means accounting for the history of domestic violence that was a large part of their lives.



## ABBREVIATIONS

CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CATW-AP	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific
CFED	Collective of Filipinas for Empowerment and Development
CPCA	Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia
FWWP	New South Wales Filipino Women's Working Party
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KAKAMMPI	Kapisanan ng mga Kamag-anak ng Migranteng Manggagawang Pilipino, Inc
KALAKASAN	Kababaihan Laban sa Karahasan
KALAYAAN	Katipunan ng Kababaihan Para sa Kalayaan
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NGO	Non-government organisation
NSW	New South Wales
OCW	Overseas Contract Worker
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
PCIJ	Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism
PO	People's organisations
POEA	Philippines Overseas Employment Administration
Qld	Queensland
R & R	Rest and Recreation
SAMPA	Samahan ng Pilipino sa Australia
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programs
SPAN	Solidarity Philippines Australia Network
US	United States
USA	United States of America
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
WEDPRO	Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization
WB	World Bank

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