

'No Minors Allowed': Outsider Bar-girls and Trafficking in a Philippines Sex Tourism Industry

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Abstract

This paper considers the political traction that claims to human trafficking are making in the sex tourism industry in the Philippines. The year 2000 saw the first global, legally binding instrument on trafficking produced – the United Nation's *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (The Palermo Protocol). The Protocol penalises the non-consensual movement of people for the purpose of 'exploitation'. In 2003 the Philippines implemented its own legislation, the *Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act* (Republic Act 9208). In particular, anti-trafficking legislation represents the codification of highly contested feminist politics on prostitution as exploitation within international legal conventions.

While prostitution is illegal in the Philippines, in Apalya, Puerto Galera, the sex tourism industry provides commercial sex between non-local Filipinas and foreign men. This paper examines the conditions in the industry such as the accruing of debt, bar regulations, and significantly, the involvement of minor girls, conditions which all generate situations where a trafficking case can be made. Until recently the term trafficking was literally unheard of; however in 2008 a conviction for trafficking in relation to minor girls occurred. The paper investigates the interaction between a coalition of local NGOs, national bodies

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and international agencies primarily US-funded, anti-trafficking groups which instigated this intervention.

Introduction

There has been a strong political divide amongst feminists regarding prostitution, the nature of exploitation and the possibilities of consent, a debate, which is exemplified in anti-trafficking conventions. Anti-prostitution / abolitionist activists argue that 'prostitution' is inherently exploitative with trafficking denoting 'sexual slavery'. In opposition, activists for sex worker rights assert that 'sex work' is a choice, and trafficking discourse undermines the agency of women. In relation to minors, both the United Nations *Palermo Protocol* and the Philippines *Anti-trafficking Act* make the consent of the victim and the intention of the trafficker irrelevant. Anti-trafficking prosecutions have thus converged on minors, represented as inherently innocent and legally unable to consent to sexual acts. Trafficking discourse with its focus on women and children (legally defined as minors) is premised on notions of innocence and vulnerability, thus requiring protection.

Youth - a category of person in between childhood and adulthood - offers insights into adult imaginings of threat and vulnerability, experience and innocence (Talbert and Lesko 2011). Defined in terms of age, though not necessarily stabilised, youth is not a distinct phase universally enacted, but rather is subject to the contexts in which it is produced. Accordingly, the specific legal political and social meanings attached to this category are created within contexts that are also marked by race, sexuality, gender and geography (Lesko 2001). As a transitional category youth is associated with risk, with some youth imbued with notions of innocence, vulnerability and subsequent protection while others are more readily defined in terms of their unruliness, threat and the need for control. For instance, some youth are depicted as being vulnerable, such as young Asian women being subject to sex-trafficking run by organised

criminals, while other youth, often male and racially other have been depicted in themselves as a threat to law and order.²

Politico-legal domains are powerful sites for considering who is *at* risk and who is *a* risk. Childhood in itself is a kind of 'legal strangeness' concerning the boundaries of transition with complex and differing laws about childhood, youth and adulthood (Meiners 2011: 35). Usually under Western law children are not legally responsible, nor are they able to make contracts, including of sexual consent. In terms of youth, transitioning between childhood and adulthood, legal systems have both given protection to minors and produced specific categories of crime and legality, such as juvenile, delinquent, runaway or truant. Such 'status offences' are created and fuelled by public anxieties about youth, including questioning who is endangered and needs protection and who is a potential threat, against whom protection is needed (ibid.).

Foucault's discourses on sexuality and governmentality in modern (Western) societies are two regulatory discourses that can be usefully said to frame contemporary trafficking discourse, with its regulation of sexual identities and the administration of the movement of these subjectivities. In his later work Foucault argued that contemporary sexual discourse produces certain kinds of subjects that have been marked as being both sexual and vulnerable and therefore needing protection; in particular children, and subjects who are seen as predators and dangerous, such as paedophiles (Foucault 1988, Kincaid 2009). Foucault's (1988) concern was that these historically produced categories were being naturalised to produce the born innocent and the born criminal. This then produced a monitoring of types of subjects, the child and the pervert, as respectively endangered and the dangerous, rather than a focus on behaviours or acts (1988:11). Consequently, he cautioned against creating 'a society of dangers' where '[s]exuality will no longer be a kind of behaviour hedged in by precise

² In a notable example, the US has carried out abduction, torture and imprisonment of minors in the War on Terror, with 15-year-olds being imprisoned in Guantanamo (Maira 2012: 240-41). The legal rights guaranteed to youth in the UN Convention of the Rights of Children (1989) are overridden by emphasising youth's threatening nature rather than its vulnerable state. The 'exceptionalism' of youth, as being outside certain legal culpability, therefore pivots upon the politics of US 'exceptionalism' as an imperial power (Talbert and Lesko 2012:12, Maira 2012:244).

prohibitions, but a kind of roaming danger, a sort of omnipresent phantom...’ (ibid.). He argued that new legal systems and new regimes of supervision are arising which both protect specific populations regarded as vulnerable, and regulate new populations considered dangerous.

Foucault (1991) furthermore argued that contemporary Western power operates through governmentality, which signifies a wide range of control techniques or ‘the conduct of conduct’ (1991: 86). Neoliberal governmentality is not about the retreat of the state but rather a change in its terms of engagement in which subjects are governed through their freedom (Foucault 2008). Thus neo-liberalism reduces state welfare and security and simultaneously expects subjects to become free, enterprising and autonomous individuals (Lemke 2001). Subjects with duties and obligations are called upon to become individuals with rights and freedoms in which they are not merely ‘free to choose’ but are *obliged* to be free (Rose 1999). In the case of trafficking, women and children are to be free from all forms of sexual commerce, depicted as a form of sexual slavery, against which state laws and international sanctions are applied. Notions of female vulnerability in trafficking discourses allow nation-states the ‘right to protect’, through practices of exclusion from crossing borders and entering certain areas, which are part of the neoliberal reconfiguration of state power extra-territoriality (Fitzgerald 2010: 294). The notion of vulnerability applies not just to the trafficking victim then, but the perceived threat to the borders of nation states.

Youth and Transnational Governance

The United Nations, as a body of transnational governance, has since its inception been concerned with the welfare of children, culminating in the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which defined a child as anyone less than 18 years old (ibid.). Internationally, the depiction of children as inherently vulnerable and requiring protection has been both a founding promise and at times a political necessity. Such an approach has nonetheless been criticised for representing children as lacking in agency and as little more than potential

victims (Sobes 2012). Such conventions have also been criticised as being a moral crusade in relation to developing world children whose lives do not comply with Western concepts of childhood (Pupavac 2001).³

Following Foucault, Sobes writes that while the child has been the target of regulation and social administration, the newer category of youth has 'gone global' in the name of transnational governmentality (2012). While the category 'youth' is being used to mark anyone in the overlapping but expanded age group of 15 to 24 years, children and youth are not always concisely differentiated, even in UN documents. A prevailing difference is that the child is often linked to medical and psychological knowledge, which nurtures child development, while youth have a greater association to a human resources perspective as productive emergent adults (ibid.). Youth also signifies a 'risk' of deviation from normal development for adult roles in the workforce, political participation, marriage and sexuality (Meiners 2012: 36). In the developing world youth are especially targeted for their potential to produce or undermine national and regional development.⁴

Inciting Agency

Sexuality, which is already so politically and morally loaded, is powerfully amplified in relation to children. Childhood is marked by innocence, a status that can only be lost (Kincaid 1998: 53). Remaining innocent therefore requires the negation of experience including that of a sexual nature. Minors have been conceptualised against ideas of the rational adult. As a consequence, childhood is understood as the domain of spontaneity, play, freedom and emotion in contrast to the adult province of the public, culture, discipline, work, constraint and rationality (Stephens 1995). Moreover, as Meiners (2012: 37) writes, it is nearly

³ These politics of protections have been challenged by a 'rights-based', more participatory approach to children's issues (Jenkins 1998) as well as a greater focus on Western normalisations of childhood (Gadda 2008).

⁴ For example, a UN document noting that 700 million or 45 per cent of the world's population of youth live in the Asia-Pacific represents youth as an 'untapped potential' to 'development in the region' (ESCAP 2012). If not properly managed, youth will become disorderly rather than productive leading to 'delinquency', 'substance abuse' and 'HIV infections' (ibid.). Thus youth 'at risk' become vulnerable and a threat to others, including the state and the international community.

impossible to name child sexual agency and pleasure in a culture where there is sexual violence against women and children. Further, by invoking agency there is an issue of blaming children for provoking their own sexual abuse. Despite these issues, discourses on youth sexuality are concerned with agency, particularly on what it means to knowingly consent and act. As minors are considered pre-rational, they are unable to consent to contracts and are subject to adult protection in the form of external regulation such as the law. As minors are usually not authorised to speak in such a domain, it is less confession than the diagnostic expertise of others that marks them as sexual subjects.

The persistent debate on agency in the context of sex work depicted in terms of free, versus forced, prostitution has been addressed extensively elsewhere (*see* Murray 1998, Doezema 1998, Law 2000). Sandy (2006) argues that anti-prostitution activists have turned to the issue of trafficking where force can be asserted against the notion of choice. In response pro-sex worker rights activists such as Agustin (2006) rebuke the 'sensationalist' melodramas of the prostitute as trafficked victim and subject without agency. She argues that the 'Rescue Industry', the anti-trafficking lobby, has operated by the 'conceptualizing of a class of victims that mandated a class of rescuers' as part of the 'machinery of government' which works to 'control' populations (*ibid.*: 192). Such 'helping practices' infantilise women and exacerbate their stigmatising as victims (*ibid.*: 5). Agustin's literally de-pathologising project then, is to represent 'normal people' looking for 'conventional opportunities' in the 'ordinary' world of migration and sex work (*ibid.*: 8). However, Agustin's use of Foucault on discourse and governmentality to represent control and her efforts to find a level of 'autonomy' (*ibid.*) for her subjects enters a difficult conceptual and political area.

For Foucault, subjectivity is constructed and regulated through discourses, including theories of the person. Moreover, power is not the intentional control of the empowered over the powerless; instead it is socially diffuse, being productive rather than oppressive. Thus subjects are always caught up in the effects of power; there are no outside locations of pure autonomy. The

contentious issue of agency, deliberated on under a number of terms, including subjectivity and responsibility, cannot be settled. It arises as a site of discursive intervention, for accounts of agency are political projects, and are thus ongoing. In particular, trafficking discourse is the site in the production of a legal-political subject where the state and its legal apparatuses create laws that encompass categories of the person, types of sexuality, and penalties for transgression. This includes defining who a sex tourist is according to their 'motivations' (Gunther 1998), the 'consent' of women and minors (CATW 2005), to the 'intentions' of traffickers (Palermo Protocol 2000). An interior state of self-knowing and self-directing rationality, or its absence in the case of minors, is necessary for the purposes of establishing intention and therefore legal responsibility.

Trafficking Discourse

It is only in the past fifteen years that trafficking discourse has emerged from a feminist, usually NGO based, agenda to become an issue of international governance (Kempadoo 2005, Constable 2006; Sandy 2006; Agustin 2006; Ruiz-Austria 2006; Molland 2008; Brennan 2005, 2008; Doezema 2010). Current trafficking discourse revisits racialised social panic at the end of the nineteenth century about the 'White Slave Trade' or the traffic in girls and women for the purposes of prostitution (Soderlund 2005; Agustin 2006; Segrave et al. 2009; Doezema 2010; Reich 2010). Today, globalisation has been depicted as producing a 'modern' kind of slavery: the mass 'sex slavery' of developing world women and children. In historic and contemporary debates then, the focus of trafficking discourse has been on women and children, and sexual exploitation. Sex trafficking has come to stand in for all trafficking, as prostitution has come to epitomise exploitation. In contrast, sex worker rights scholars and activists assert that trafficking discourse has actually generated two covert, and conservative, agendas, an abolitionist anti-prostitution stance and an anti-immigration position which serves to reinforce isolationist immigration policies (Kempadoo 2005; Brennan 2005; Agustin 2006; Constable 2006; Sandy 2006; Segrave et al 2009; Doezema 2010).

The production of anti-trafficking legislation over prostitution as ‘sex work’ or ‘sex slavery’ represents conflicting feminist political and moral battles as codification into international conventions occur (*see* Doezema 2010). Molland (2008) argues this proliferation of discourses on trafficking in persons has worked to invoke a globalised morality and an incitement to abolitionist interventions to eliminate human trafficking. Nevertheless, despite such powerful and universalising claims, human trafficking is not a pre-determined category; instead it can take on a range of different meanings and shape various actions (*ibid.*). This includes attempts to invoke a globalised morality about sex work and consent between the disparate but nevertheless interconnected arenas of the international, national and local.

The Palermo Protocol

The 2000 *UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime* contained a supplementary protocol, the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children* (the Palermo Protocol), which provided the first international legal definition of trafficking. Embedded within a convention on crime the Protocol’s concerns are with movement, means, (threats, coercion, deception) and purpose (exploitation). It addresses the case of children, through the existing UN convention on *Rights of the Child* (1989), as persons under the age of 18. As minors are not able to consent to sexual conduct or coerced movement, the means of recruitment are irrelevant: the movement of a minor for the purposes of exploitation is *always* trafficking. Doezema argues that the Protocol’s grouping together of ‘women and children’ as categories of the vulnerable, particularly the sexually vulnerable, effectively reduces women to the status of children denying them the agency of adulthood (Doezema 2010: 132).⁵

The economic resources to implement the UN Protocol have primarily been funded by the US through USAID financially supporting international NGOs. The

⁵ Another critique has been that a focus on prostitution and women and children as sexually vulnerable fails to take into account the situation of boys/men or other forms of exploitation in labour.

US has also a coercive capacity in threatening economic sanctions by withdrawing all but humanitarian aid in the face of non-compliance (ibid.: 2010; Segrave et al. 2009; Reich 2010). The US's *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* (TVPA) (2000) has produced the Department of State's Annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), which institutes the ranking of states, except the US, according to their anti-trafficking interventions which are indicated by investigations, prosecutions, and especially convictions (Reich 2010: 201).⁶ Rather than a focus on the human rights of trafficked people, there is a concentration instead on criminal procedures by state authorities against states. Trafficked people must act as state witnesses against traffickers in order to gain legal protection as victims (Segrave et al 2010). These people's identification as 'victims' is far less relevant than the state naming them thus: their 'symptoms' are diagnosed by 'experts' (ibid.: 38).

The Philippines Anti-Trafficking Act

In 2003 the Philippines became the first country in the Asia Pacific region to develop its own anti-trafficking legislation. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), the prominent feminist, anti-prostitution NGO with UN advisory status, was influential in producing the Palermo Protocol. In the Philippines the regional office, CATW-AP (Asia Pacific), sponsored the Philippines Anti-Trafficking Act (Doezema 2010: 124). Consequently trafficking as sex trafficking and prostitution as sexual exploitation reverberate in the legislation. In the Philippines issues of transnational migration and legality have usually concentrated on the vast scope of the Overseas Filipino Contract (OCF) workforce, which generates nearly one third of GNP.⁷ Nevertheless, the most contested issue in producing the Philippines Anti-Trafficking Act of 1993 revolved around the issue of prostitution as iconic of exploitation and

⁶ Countries, with the notable exception of the US, are ranked by a three-tier system according to the efficacy of their actions against trafficking. Their success is signalled by prosecutions (Reich 2010: 183; Segrave 2010:150).

⁷ OCWs remit an official \$US 7 billion to an unofficial \$US14 billion (Asian Development Bank) or 32% of Philippines GNP

consequently trafficking.⁸ Ruiz-Austria (2006) states that this dominance is revealed by six out of the eight provisions defining unlawful acts in relation to trafficking stipulating 'for the purpose of prostitution'.

Ruiz-Austria emphasises that the Act has changed the pre-existing Philippines law on prostitution, and by situating prostitution as one of the 'purposes' of trafficking, the Act introduced two new concepts: 'the prostituted' as a 'victim', and trafficking for prostitution as a punishable offence.⁹ Influenced by CATW terminology, 'prostituted women', in which a passive subject is acted upon, moved to a new category, from 'criminal' to 'victim', while those actively 'providing' women for prostitution could now be prosecuted under trafficking laws.

The Moral Economy of Sex Tourism

The following pages are an account of the sex tourism industry in Aplaya focusing on the history of prostitution/commercial sex in the region and the workings of the industry. It centres on the age and status of bar-girls, their non-local standing, and the enticements and disciplines of the bars that propel and constrain girls who work in them. Aplaya, Puerto Galera, is a small beach-side community on the island of Mindoro. Amidst the tourist establishments of bars, restaurants and resorts the go-go bars are little more than concrete bunkers. Their curtained doorways screen-off the bar's activities from the life of the local community. Inside mirrors surround the raised runway where bar-girls dance around poles to rock ballads under strobe lighting. While most bars have some sort of visual sign that they are go-go bars fronting commercial sex, such as an image of a women's body or features of it, these are usually discreet. Instead the most prominent sign on the outside of the bars states: 'No minors allowed'. This

⁸ Cruz Austria (2006) states that the issue of prostitution has dominated debates and supplemented the provision on 'White Slavery' in previous legislation that established criminal liability for pimps and procurers.

⁹ The following account refers to 1995 – 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005, when I conducted ethnographic field research at Aplaya.

sign means the minors of the township, the children of local families. Other people's children, often minors, regularly work in the bars.

Over the past two decades Aplaya has become famed for its beaches and scuba diving, and infamous for sex tourism. Once a fishing village, Aplaya is now dependent on foreign tourism. Only four hours and an AU\$8 fare from Manila by bus and boat, Mindoro is frequently depicted in tourist promotions as a remote island paradise, a world away. Despite this, Puerto Galera has a long history of contact between different kinds of Filipinos and foreigners; from the time it was a sixteenth century Spanish outpost, to its current status as an Internet World Sex Guide hotspot. Today, Aplaya Beach is inhabited by several thousand Filipinos primarily related by kinship; three to four hundred non-local bar-girls; an expatriate community of several hundred; and a transient tourist population. Both of the latter are predominantly made up of foreign men from Australia, Germany, Switzerland, and more recently, Korea.

The large-scale sex tourism industry in the Philippines is a legacy of United States military bases present from the late nineteenth century, when Spain ceded the islands to the U.S., which massively upgraded the bases during the Vietnam War. An accompanying expansion of the R and R (rest and recreation) infrastructure produced extensive bar areas fronting the commercial sex work (CSW) industry. When the bases closed in 1992, foreign male tourists became the primary clientele of these bar areas. These men came to know about the bars through word of mouth and through advertising about sex tourism in the Philippines. Today the advertising of sex tours is prohibited under Philippines law, but the Philippines' reputation for the provision of sex tourism continues, with the Internet an instrument for promoting the industry and a means of linking diverse sex tourism sites.

The major sites devoted to sex tourism in the Philippines have utilised the existing infrastructure of the military areas' rest and recreation industry. The renowned locations for contemporary Philippines sex tourism – Angeles, Subic and Olongapo – were all military bases. These areas had a long history of

foreigner-Filipino transactions, which led to foreign ownership of commercial sex establishments – notoriously Australian in Angeles City (Distore and Hunt 1999; Jeffreys 1999). In Aplaya, however, local political families held power and thus commercial sex as an industry entered into a local political arena. From the 1980s when Aplaya became a tourist destination, largely for scuba divers, foreign men started to bring women from the bar areas down to the island. Entrepreneurs from a local family subsequently established their own bars using this income to secure political office, which in turn has ensured the protection of the CSW industry. To capitalise on perceived tourist desires, while keeping their constituency of local families and their Catholic values intact, they recruited non-kin, non-local females, including some who were minors, to work in the bars. Over the past decade Koreans have become the new commercial sex entrepreneurs in the area, dominating the running of the industry by ‘renting’ the bars off politically connected Filipinos.

‘Bar-Girls’

Aplaya is known as a place where women are recruited into CSW for the first time and as a consequence, Aplaya is renowned for its younger recruits to the industry. Both Filipinos and foreigners largely assumed that the greater majority were between 16 and twenty years of age. It was difficult to accurately assess ages; those under this age are likely to say that they are older, just as bar-girls who are older are likely to claim to be within this age group. I use the colloquial term ‘bar-girls’ here since it is the vernacular term (said in English) to describe the young women who sell sex from particular bars and which they use to describe themselves. I employ the term bar-girls with familiarity, but also some unease as a large number of the bar-girls I encountered were adult women and mothers in their twenties and sometimes thirties, and this term thus infantilises them. Conversely, the term normalises the fact that some of the bar-girls were, in fact, only minors.

Along with ‘dancing girl’, these terms of self-identification imply pleasure coupled with entertainment. The official term Guest Relations Officer (GRO) used

in governmental statements for both compulsory hostess licensing and sexual health checks also euphemises the nature of the 'Hospitality Industry'. It was rarely used in self-definition, and was a term deployed in local and national governmental accounting and surveillance. I also use a term from outside the local arena, commercial sex worker, or its acronym CSW, a term that has yet to arrive in Aplaya, though the colloquial Western term 'working girl' has begun to circulate. CSW is a designation that marks my uneasy and partial alliance with the pro-sex worker rights movement and its refutation of the moral stigma of the term prostitute. However, bar-girls would refute this as their singular, stabilising, possibly professionalising, yet still stigmatising identity. Rather, instead of a specific identity based on sexual typology – either prostitute or sex worker – they move between a number of other identities including tourist industry worker, entrepreneur, girlfriend, wife, mother, and possible migrant (see Law 2000).

Creating a Sex Tourism Industry: Insiders and Outsiders¹⁰

Prostitution is illegal in the Philippines, though is usually overlooked unless specific police and political agendas call for a prosecutions. As Aplaya still operates within, or at least alongside, local Catholic village values, the go-go bars do not operate as brothels. Instead, commercial sex transactions take place in tourist accommodation owned by locals, which also means that income from sex tourism is spread throughout the community. While this connection between the local community and the bar industry occurs, locals continually attempt to separate themselves from the industry that they live off. As a result, no local girls or young women are allowed to work in the bars. In this way local Filipinos are able to keep both familial honour and Catholic values intact. As the bars are run by political figures that rely on votes from the local constituency, care is taken to ensure that local values and local families are not disrupted. As a result, nearly all the young women and girls working in the bars have migrated domestically to

¹⁰ In the notorious case of child sex tourism involving young boys in southern Luzon's Pangasinan, locals with church support stopped providing accommodation and services to foreign male tourists seeking boys for sex. From my own research it appears that one reason this came about was that these were the children of local families.

work in commercial sex. If recruitment by coercion or deception occurs, or if the workers are minors, this can be evaluated as domestic trafficking. This is intensified if the work to be undertaken is commercial sex, where an association if not correlation with exploitation pre-exists.

The commercial sex industry is represented as the domain of two kinds of outsiders – non-local women and foreign men. The operation of an illegal, and for some, an immoral industry in a township linked by kinship and Catholicism has meant that processes of connection and disconnection in relation to it are always occurring. These practices are meant to keep the bars and the local community that live off them separate; however, there are always breaches and everyday erosions.

Bar-girls are recruited from outside the area or migrate to work in commercial sex to provide financial support for their families without shaming them by their proximity. Carrying the stigma of prostitution, bar-girls are not allowed to mix with the families of the town nor are they permitted to marry local men thus becoming part of local families. In contrast, local girls are often chaperoned to protect them from mixing with local and foreign men to ensure the value of their reputations and marital prospects. Participation in the commercial sex industry is usually not an option for a local girl. She would need to dangerously ignore familial expectations to follow this path. As such local girls who do go on to work in commercial sex usually leave the area, going to another bar area where they and their families are unknown thus avoiding dishonour. Despite these considerations though, some local women do work precariously close to the edges of the sex industry. A local girl or young woman might choose work as a waitress and be said to have liaisons with foreigners, and while not overtly working as a bar-girl, risk her reputation for the possibility of marriage to a foreigner.

Other disconnections that are attempted or maintained, could also often fail. Local men are not able to purchase sex from bar-girls as the bar owners fear the wrath of local wives and the disruption of local families, who are relied upon for

political votes. Though not common, tourists can and do pay for a bar-girl for a local man who had provided tourism services. Local youth usually work in family-owned tourist businesses, except those providing commercial sex. Local young men are not as constrained as local girls, who must protect their virtue, on their regular nightly visits to the 'ordinary' discos. There they often become the partners or boyfriends of the teenage bar-girls who are seeking some romance that can be conducted in their own language. The girls also have ready money that they might share with a local young man allowing him to drink and socialise in the expensive tourist bars. Consequently, local doctors have told me that they are treating a significant amount of sexually transmitted diseases in local boys. The drug *shabu* or 'ice' (meth-amphetamine) is regularly used by bar-girls and primarily controlled by those operating the bars. Some local youth, mainly male, who would once have become fishermen or other workers, are able to rely on family money made through land ownership and tourist businesses to live a life of greater leisure enhanced by *shabu* use. As such the social, sexual and drug activities of the bars seep into the local community, connecting them to a world from which they try to disconnect.

While the vast majority of bar-girls are 'stranger women', prostitution as foreign to the workings of the area is a contentious concept. The good girl/local girl versus bad girl/outside girl formula is often depicted as good local repute versus bad outside standards. In this way, girls working in the bars are constituted as not belonging in terms of locality and morality in this Catholic village community. In Aplaya at present there are few notions of national categories such as 'Filipinas', nor are there abstract ideas such as 'youth', but rather status in relation to kinship prevails. This also applies, in most cases, to the age of outsider bar-girls. The local community operates on the principle that these are not the women of their families, rather they are outsiders and therefore outside family and community protection.

Additionally those who run the bars have police and political connections; to come up against these powerful people is considered a high-risk endeavour¹¹¹²

Recruiting ‘Stranger Women’

Many non-local women who came to work in the bars are actively recruited by *mamasans* (female) and, less often, *papasans* (male) bar operators. Frequently the recruiters are women who had themselves previously worked in commercial sex, but are no longer young enough to be employed in the bars. Recruiters receive their income from the bars, or work for those bars directly, and also receive fees from the women. Bar-girls say that recruiters talk of the prosperity of the foreign tourism areas, which are places of entertainment in which they might make their fortune, marry a foreigner and migrate to live overseas.

The recruiters travel to poor districts, such as the nearby port city of Batangas, the outer districts of Manila, and certain provincial areas. In contrast to a focus on rural girls in other locations, girls from more urban areas are considered more sophisticated and thus workers with the skills suitable to interact with foreigners. Recruiters also approach women already working in CSW, such as those catering to Filipinos, and those from bars catering to foreigners in Manila and the ex-military bases of Luzon. While some bar-girls come to Aplaya from other bar areas, women who have not previously worked in CSW also make their own way to the bars, often following the advice of other women who accentuate their chances of making money and, most importantly, of marrying a foreigner. Even women who believe they are going to work as service providers in the tourist industry, for example as waitresses, say that if they did go on to work as bar-girls, it was the monetary rewards, the possibility of working anonymously, and, most importantly, the prospect of meeting foreigners and marrying one, which makes sex work possible, viable and, for some, desirable.

¹¹ Despite the absence of brothels in Aplaya, national and international media as well as governmental reports claimed that the girls *en route* to Aplaya were rescued from brothels. Such reports evoke images of the enclosure of girls and young women in highly controlled spaces. In such a scenario a hidden victim is thus uncovered and rescued.

¹² As recently as June 7 2012 Angeles City in the Philippines was subject to the IJM’s undertaking a brothel raid with local police (Mayol 2012).

Selma was one such woman. She moved from commercial sex work herself to recruiting younger women for the industry. Selma lives in Aplaya with her five children – one from a Filipino, two children from liaisons with Europeans, and two children to North Asians. Selma's children represent the history of a woman who first had a child with a Filipino and then supported herself and her first child through sex work. Her subsequent children mark the chronographic flow of international sex tourism, firstly from Europe and then North Asia. Despite embodying this history and living locally for many years, since she had had once been a bar-girl, Selma is still depicted as 'not from Aplaya'. Selma now works by recruiting other women into the bars and also touts for commission from resorts by taking tourists from the port of Batangas to particular resorts and dive shops. When there are few tourists around she works as a vendor peddling tourist items along the beaches. In line with critiques of sex worker identity as if it were singular and fixed (Law 2000), it is important to point out that people like Selma, who might be designated as a recruiter and in some cases possibly 'trafficker', also have multiple identities including ex bar-girl, mother and tourism entrepreneur.

Enticement: Money and Marriage

While some girls enter the bars merely to dance, the greater majority end up going on 'bar-fines', that is, when the customer pays a 'fine' to the bar to have the girl leave her shift in the bar to accompany him. Bar-girls work for a particular bar exclusively and there they receive P80 (\$AU4) for a night's dancing. They also receive commissions from the inflated 'ladies drinks' paid for by a customer for a girl's company. But the real money comes in when a girl is 'bar-fined' by a customer. The bar-fine at all the bars is set at P300 (\$15) while P1000 (\$AU50) is paid directly to the girl for sex. Customers from North Asia – Korea and Japan – are assumed to be richer, and the girls often expect and ask for higher payments and tips from them. If customers do not pay up, the girls have recourse to their *mamasans* who, if the situation is not settled, can go to the *barangay kapitan* (village head) who could threaten a customer with gaol.

Poverty, lack of education, motherhood before marriage, as well as few job opportunities lead young women to look for work outside their communities. But there are also aspirations and attractions; the commercial sex industry in the Philippines is a highly visible and mostly well-paid industry with marriage and possible foreign citizenship as alluring possibilities. In Aplaya life for young women, often teenagers, living at a beach resort amidst foreigners and being taken to bars, restaurants, resorts as well as having access to ready cash is often seen as offering glamour and freedom from familial constraint. Besides, this process of becoming 'modern' by fashioning themselves as 'sexy' (both terms said in English), was seen to be sharing in the freedoms and progress of women in cities and in the West.

Further, bar-girls earn a great deal of money in local terms. In contrast, labourers in the area earn P150 a day (\$AU7.50, \$1 per hour), while waitresses and resort staff received P500 - P1000 (\$AU25 - \$AU50) per week. Bar-girls can make this money in an hour and are the most cash-rich Filipinos in the area, except for those who own these businesses. Not only are they family 'saviours', usually sending money home, their own standard of living improves as they eat in restaurants, buy new clothes, beautify themselves at parlours, and are able to travel.

Most women say that they go to work in the bars for contact with foreigners with the hope of marriage and migration. However, it is much more acceptable to claim to be seeking marriage than making money through selling sex. Many women focus on the possibility of their future marriage rather than the actuality of their present prostitution. Women diminish the stigmatised role of being a *puta* (prostitute) and instead talk about the time when they would be honourable women – wives. Marriage thus acts as an enticement into commercial sex, and a justification for being there. It is not so much the evidence of the actual numbers of women marrying foreigners that propel women into the industry, as their collective aspirations to marry a foreigner and live a 'good life' overseas. In addition, foreigners are known not to care about a woman's virginity in evaluating her as a marital partner. Their families also recognised that while

these girls are to Filipinos usually no longer considered as marriageable, foreigners could and would marry bar-girls and thus would, it is fervently hoped, provide their whole families with assistance.

***Utang* (debt): Credit and Constraint**

In definitions of trafficking, 'debt bondage' is a common definitional feature deployed, especially a debt that ties a woman to commercial sex. Debt bondage is illegal in the Philippines under Republic Act 9208, recently becoming part of the Trafficking Act. In the Philippines however, *utang*, which can be translated as both credit and debt (Rafael 1988) is a common feature of everyday life, especially in provincial (country) areas where patron-client relationship, with its debts and obligations, holds sway (*see* Rafael 1988; Cannel 1999). Social and economic life in Aplaya operates on *utang* for everyone and represents a web of interconnections pervading everyday life. In the bars, debt is accumulated and paid off out of commissions, as an ordinary part of bar work. Apart from initial recruitment fees, bar-girls also accrue debts through their living expenses and especially through larger cash loans. If the women are older, they rent independently. However, if the bar-girls are new recruits or young, they often live as 'stay-ins' in houses owned by the go-go bar operators, under domestic discipline considered almost parental. Payments for 'stay-in' rates, accommodation and food often mean the accumulation of *utang* that is taken out of the bar-girls commissions. Young women, or girls, are often hired for the bars, not just for the presumed desires of clients but because they can be more easily managed by this kind of familial discipline. This familial pattern also works to cloak the stigma, rigour and inequity of the industry, a trade that local women are kept apart from.

Discipline: Bar Regulations

It is in the interests of the bars to have girls who would 'go on' bar-fines. *Mamasans* exert pressure on new girls by a series of practices, which might

include calling in loans or getting experienced girls to encourage them. Women in the bars are subject to fining or banning if they are not 'obedient', and there are accounts of occasional physical threats. This is thought to be fairly rare due to the openness of the international tourist industry, the many forms of transport off the island, the prevalence of telecommunications, and increasingly access to mobile phones and the Internet. Instead, once women are working selling sex, discipline often entails being banned from working, and hence stopping them earning money. Amongst the girls it is widely discussed which bars are the 'strictest' in monitoring their activities, in fining and in enforcing the customer's choice. Moreover, bar-girls who stay out overnight have to pay money to the bars as if they had been paid for sex, even if this has not happened. This is to ensure that girls are not meeting customers in bars and then meeting up secretly later, and keeping all the money. In this way the bar owners try to control bar-girls' sexuality as a commodity. However, while it is difficult for teenage bar-girls to stay out at night with Filipino boyfriends without owing money to the bars, the majority do manage to have liaisons with local boyfriends. The bar considered the 'strictest' could also be known to celebrate a girl's good fortune in achieving a permanent relationship and especially, an overseas marriage.

In summary, by focusing on the conditions in the bars this ethnographic account can be seen to align with the normalising of go-go bar work with the professionalising category 'sex work' and forms of migration to undertake it (Agustin's 2005) rather than circumstances of 'sex slavery'. However, by drawing out the specifics of the industry, my intention is to place it in its cultural context; a context that nevertheless subject to cultural and political transformations. This includes the production of a commercial sex industry in a small Catholic community as the normal state of affairs, while at the same time recruiting only non-local bar-girls to work in the bars.

As the Philippines government is effectively being forced to address trafficking and to make convictions such practices of external recruitment are increasingly likely to be read as domestic trafficking. Trafficking discourse is also likely to be

invoked in relation to terms that refute choice; such as coercion, debt and force. However, while poverty strongly influences women's entry into bar work, aspirations to make money, marry and possibly migrate – the constrained 'choices' within the existing opportunities of CSW – also operate. In Apalya there were few accounts of coercion, force or violence due to the large number of girls available to work in CSW and the open nature of international tourism in the area. There are no brothels or pimps; indicating confinement or direct control, instead commercial sex takes place in general tourist accommodation. Further, there are many forms of transportation to and from the island and many forms of communication on it.

Consequently, the presence of underage girls or legal minors in the industry is the most likely catalyst for anti-trafficking prosecutions. In the case of minors, a legal argument for trafficking does not rely on coercion or intention but upon the age of the person. These subjects, who have already been depicted as vulnerable and in need of protection and legally unable to consent, have thus become the subject of prosecution.

This situation is not without its own ambiguities and moral appraisals, however. Following the UN Convention, the *Rights of the Child* the age of sexual majority in the Philippines is currently 18 years of age. However, sexual consent can be given at an earlier age without the encounter leading to any prosecution. A person is able to legally consent to sexual relations before the age of 18, with prosecution only occurring if the minor is under 12, or else is affected by certain conditions. These conditions include being subject to 'coercion' or 'influence' and/or 'being involved in prostitution' (Act No. 7610). Such laws criminalise child prostitution then, while allowing the sexual consent of a minor within legal marriage, other sexual liaisons and 'non-exploitative' relationships. Furthermore, such laws represent both a moral stance to prostitution and reflect the concerns of Philippines governmental, religious and social groups regarding the vulnerability of the Filipino child and the exploitative reach of the large commercial sex industry in the Philippines. Further, foreigners in sex tourism

locations also cause deep political disquiet for signifying a double inequity; the exploitation of women by men, and the colonial exploitation of Filipinos.

In Aplaya's sex tourism industry 'teenagers' or 'young women' between 16 and 18 (these categories producing types of subjects), are defined under international conventions as legal 'minors'. Many young women of this age are, however, seen to have adult responsibilities to their own offspring or extended family. Nevertheless, anti-trafficking interventions in Aplaya are likely to focus on these minors as they are legally unable to consent, while traffickers' intentions are irrelevant. Thus age is used to standardise categories of the 'innocent', the 'vulnerable' and the 'child' for whom the remedy of 'protection' is available. This makes for less complicated prosecutions and higher rates of conviction, which are needed to ward off economic sanctions.

Trafficking Intervention in Puerto Galera

Trafficking is a unique crime due to the international political pressure on nation states to produce evidence of compliance, by producing victims and prosecutions (Segrave 2009: 38). Consequently the identification of victims of trafficking is has been characterised by a search for victims (ibid. 2009: 39). One result has been the focusing on sites where victims might be 'visible' before being 'hidden'. Given the location of trafficking within the spectre of transnational organised crime, the primary site to search for victims has been at international border by agents of the state (ibid: 40). However, as trafficking has been connected with sex industries (legal and illegal) the brothel has become a site for interventions (ibid: 45).¹³ Further, as this paper shows, the international sex tourist industry has become a site of anti-trafficking interventions. While it is usually the customer who crosses international borders, the movement of females as migrants or coerced victims into the sex industry can be read as domestic trafficking.

¹³ With the assistance of the Foundation, the Batangas Anti-Trafficking Task Force pursued the case, while the Batangas City Prosecutor arraigned the case with legal assistance from the IJM.

The uptake of international trafficking discourse has meant that anti-trafficking interventions have begun to occur in the Philippines. These have been supported by Philippines government agencies, in coalition with international and local NGO's, which receive USAID funding to undertake anti-trafficking interventions. It was directly the result of this process that the first trafficking prosecution in relation to Aplaya's bars occurred. The NGOs were the Philippines based Visayan Forum Foundation Inc. (VFFI), and the US based International Justice Mission (IJM); both Christian NGOs receiving USAID as in-country anti-trafficking service providers. The Visayan Foundation operates trafficking halfway houses throughout the country and provides anti-trafficking training, thus moving from providing shelter to victims to increasingly searching for them (USAID-Philippines 2009). The IJM primarily funds and supports in-country lawyers and police to persecute cases against traffickers (ibid.). More controversially, the IJM has also worked with police to undertake 'brothel raiding' to 'rescue prostitutes', including very recently in the Philippines. A practice argued to problematically align human rights NGOs with the police and the prosecution of sex workers (see Ditmore 2008).

One of the Visayan Foundation's projects along with the Philippine Ports Authority entailed the monitoring of ports as 'sites' where trafficking victims might be 'visible' (USAID-Philippines 2009). As Molland (2008) argues, the designation of 'hotspots' finds, if not produces, sites of assembly and transportation where trafficking is expected to occur, and for which anti-trafficking interventions are created. The assumption then, is that trafficking, due to its illegal nature trafficking is 'hidden' underground, and only becomes 'visible' when victims are being transported. The search for victims means that particular sites are targeted, including sites of transportation where coercion might occur (such as gateways and border zones) and sites of employment where exploitation is expected (such as brothels).

The Foundation consequently facilitated training sessions with 'frontline' port workers (porters, dock workers, and security guards) to conduct 'pier patrols', by closely watching people travelling in a group (signalled by consecutively

numbered tickets) to see if their interactions suggest trafficking (*The Inquirer* 18/10/07). The Foundation's president Cecilia Flores, conflating all trafficking victims with childhood status contended that trafficking can be recognised by a lack of knowledge, signifying both innocence, and unwillingness, regarding their perilous fate: '... if the children can't explain their relationship with the recruiter, or they don't know exactly where they are going, or what they are going to do there, say who their contact is in their place of destination, then things become very suspicious' (*The Inquirer* 1/03/2012). As part of this monitoring 'suspicious' travellers are taken to halfway houses where the use of a surveillance camera allows social workers to observe behaviour and interpret, and diagnose, the 'hidden' world of trafficking (ibid.).

It was directly the result of this intervention that the port of Batangas, which services boat traffic in and out of Aplaya, became the site of an anti-trafficking intervention. An intervention designed to restrict a perceived flow of child trafficking victims; '... to stem the increasing number of child trafficking cases in the Port of Batangas' (USAID-Philippines 2009). In March 2005, Batangas port security guards notified police of 'a group of young looking girls' who were consecutively ticketed and could not explain their transport arrangements (Visayan Foundation 2005). The woman guiding the group was Nelia Olegasco, a 24-year-old Filipina married to a Korean man with 'business interests' in the bars of Apalya. Olegasco was travelling with five women, two of who were later found to be minors of 16 and 17. As Olegasco '... failed to explain the suspicious nature of the recruitment and present necessary details of the travel', a case for 'qualified trafficking' in relation to the minors was subsequently made against her (ibid.).

Flores stated that the police thought Olegasco's Korean husband was behind the 'trafficking syndicate' but the Olegasco refused to turn state's witness (Visayan Foundation 2008), which would have allowed her to move from perpetrator to, possibly, a victim. However, trafficking is rarely prosecutable in the movement of people, instead it is through particular situations of exploitation where trafficking becomes evident (Segrave 2009: 34). The IJM was aware that this only

created the 'intent to exploit', which is notoriously difficult to prosecute (ibid.). For prosecutors then there was a question of whether a case could be made as the minors were *en route* and had not entered a situation of 'exploitation'; that is, Aplaya's commercial sex industry. Flores noted, 'Like most repeat offenders, she [Olegasco] had brushed up on the law and knew the case against her was weak. Well, the girls were rescued, they hadn't been trafficked yet; no crime had been committed' (Visayan Foundation 2008).

The Batangas case court documents stated that the minors testified that, contrary to the original promise of being employed as waitresses in Batangas City, they learned that they were being recruited as sex workers to Puerto Galera (ibid.). However, as Flores stated it was a 'landmark conviction' because 'intent to exploit' was proven when the court gave weight to the testimony of the victims that the trafficker had '... during the initial stages of the recruitment, forced [a] check on their virginity and ages then told them they are fit to work as guest relations officers and that foreigners would demand them highly for sex-related services' (ibid.).

The court interpreted this as trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, even though the victims had not actually commenced work in prostitution. If intention had been necessary to prove – which it is not in the case of minors – it would have been established on the facts that the judge nevertheless commented upon; the girls were deceived and they were to have ended up working in the commercial sex industry. As there was evidence of the girls having their virginity verified, the trafficker's 'intentions' to sexually exploit physically and morally innocent girls were thus established.

In her account of White Slavery and contemporary trafficking discourse Doezema (2010) writes that abolitionism has relied on the presentation of the prostitute as a victim in order to appeal to reformers and the general public. In both discursive realms narratives on innocence are established by emphasising the victim's youth as innocence, her virginity as purity, her naivety as blamelessness, and her poverty as desperation (ibid.: 20). Today, accounts of

trafficked victims represent them as girls and women from impoverished countries who are young, poor, naïve, and without agency (Constable 2006; Agustin 2006; Doezema 2010). Further, in many accounts distinctions between child and adult are eroded so that all trafficking victims appear as both young and helpless, or childlike (ibid.). The innocence of the victim then works to magnify the image of the immoral trafficker, producing the melodrama of victim and villain (ibid.).

In the case of the anti-trafficking intervention in Aplaya, though minors are subject to ‘qualified trafficking’, in which neither consent nor intention is relevant, both were extensively commented upon in court documents and the media. The innocence of the victims was signified by their youth, just as their sexual purity was confirmed by the verification of their virginity. In turn the recruiter’s checking of their virginity marked her corrupt intention to exploit that purity.

On June 30, 2008 Olegasco was found guilty of ‘qualified trafficking’ under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. She was sentenced to serve life imprisonment, to pay two million pesos for violating the anti-trafficking laws and to pay compensation to the victims for ‘moral damages’ (ibid.). In the same month as Olegasco’s verdict the US State Department removed the Philippines from perilous Tier 2 of its Trafficking in Persons report. Moreover, the report recommended that the Philippines government needed to improve its efforts to prosecute traffickers, provide more resources for prosecutions, address domestic labour trafficking, and implement anti-trafficking awareness campaigns in both the domestic and foreign clients’ sex trade in the Philippines (US State Department 2008). The gaoling of Olegasco has thus been part of double economy: the provision of non-local young women, some of them legally minors, to the sex tourism industry and US led anti-trafficking interventions requiring convictions¹⁴. Additionally, the site has been one where ‘domestic

¹⁴ The TIP report also stated there was a low number of convictions of sex trafficking offenders ‘given the significant scope and magnitude of sex trafficking within the country and to destinations abroad’, and that ‘there were no reported labour trafficking convictions’ (US State Department 2008).

trafficking' occurs, though still focused on sexual commerce, and foreign clients congregate - a sex tourism economy.

In Puerto Galera the provision covering local trafficking education programs resulted in a 'Day Against Human Trafficking', including a music festival complete with national stars (*Puerto Galera Fortnightly* 9/12 2010). Local responses to this agenda noted the duplicity of the normality of the sex industry and of legal minors within it. An online forum reported comments such as, 'What will they do after the concert? Go to the bars, where on any night they get to see underage girls dance? Where it is business as usual?' (ibid.). While another commented 'Guess they'll have to leave out the Aplaya night life so as not to publically appear as hypocrites.' Still another remark pointedly drew attention to Nelia Olegasco and her fate in this double economy (complete with its double standards), the production of a sex tourism industry and of sex trafficking prosecutions:

'The busiest and most vibrant barangay of Puerto Galera and probably in the entire Mindoro Island even finds honorable mention [in US reports] Remarkable that a certain Mrs. Nelia Olegasco is spending a lifetime in prison for feeding that most busy and vibrant barangay of Puerto Galera' (ibid. 8/10/2010).

Despite common ideas about the hidden world of trafficking and the low visibility of victims, every night in Aplaya many hundreds of bar-girls, young women along with some who are legally minors, dance on stage under bright spotlights. To date no business owners in Puerto Galera have been prosecuted for trafficking. Instead the single prosecution that has occurred related to a recruiter, depicted as a trafficker, who was a young woman herself and a sometime bar-girl who perhaps thought that in marrying a foreigner she had removed herself from commercial sex and its risks. Olegasco faced this conviction alone, her Korean husband, a man with sex tourism industry 'interests', had long since fled the country.¹⁵

¹⁵ As in the drug trafficking business, this trial seemed like the targeting of a small-scale dealer with a large, and protected, industry being left alone.

Conclusions: Sites of Intervention

In discourses on trafficking, prostitution has been actively reinscribed as sexual exploitation. Many of the same fundamental arguments about prostitution/commercial sex and exploitation have followed through a number of debates, from prostitution, sex tourism, child sex tourism and more recently trafficking, often as child sex trafficking. This debate has moved across a range of related sites seeking to represent various victims of exploitation. Abolitionist campaigners cannot hope for great success as laws on prostitution vary both nationally and internationally. Consequently, the debate moved to the 'third world prostitute' as iconic of exploitation (*see* Kempadoo 2005). In response, ethnographic accounts of women's agency within sex tourism industries have been increasingly asserted (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Murray 1998; Law 2000; Brennan 2004). Sex tourism was then often conflated with 'child sex tourism' where consent is not possible and a victim of exploitation is assured. Trafficking has become the newest site for these debates, as the concepts of 'force' or 'forced' refute choice (Sandy 2006). In the case of 'children', or legal minors, trafficking is equivalent to child sex slavery and is depicted in secularised Human Rights discourse as incontestably exploitative, while in religious/moral narratives it is inherently evil. Not unexpectedly, the trafficking of children, the exploitation of those under conditions of force and who are not legally able to consent, has come under scrutiny and the increasingly extra-territorial reaches of international law.

Thus the discourse on trafficking is dominated by a number of associations; trafficking signifies sex trafficking, exploitation denotes prostitution, choice entails coercion if not force. Moreover the case of children as legal minors is intensified by the impossibility of consent. Current efforts to 'rescue prostitutes' and 'punish traffickers', including in the Philippines, need to be seen within the light of such political agendas and their assumptions about exploitation and consent (Soderland 2005). Organisations like the international feminist NGO, CATW, have campaigned on the platform that prostitution is not subject to choice, but to force, and thus is exploitation. CATW was able to influence the

uptake of this political position in anti-trafficking acts both the UN and in countries on the TIP watch-list, such as the Philippines. Abolitionist anti-prostitution politics are thus embedded in contemporary anti-trafficking rhetoric and operations. At their most powerful, they have significant consequences in international legal frameworks such as the UN Palermo Protocol and national legislation such as the Philippines Anti-trafficking in Person Act. The US government has provided the financial power to implement international protocols and to compel compliance with them, and well as funding foreign interventions.¹⁶

US religious assemblies and political parties, seen as conservative upholders of sexual morality, have thus become unlikely allies to anti-prostitution feminists. The IJM's founder Larry Haugan has said that he seeks two reforms, that of international legal justice and American Christianity. He argues that in fighting trafficking the needs of benighted 'neighbours' can re-energise the social conscience of Christians in the US (Power 2009). Notions of rescue of others for the salvation of the self often with a special American twist, in Reich's words, '[b]ringing together Feminists and Evangelicals, anti-trafficking is 'as American as apple pie' (2010: 181).

The fight against trafficking in women, and especially children, has become a 'common denominator political issue', unifying people across diverse political and religious range against apparently unquestionable acts of exploitation (ibid.: 2005; Reich 2010). Thus with the discursive amalgamation of the abolition of slavery and the abolition of prostitution certain US and Philippines political and religious agendas, including feminist politics, have merged to produce the

¹⁶ The US Ambassador, Harry Thomas Jr, stated that '40% of men come to the Philippines for sex tourism' (The Daily Mail 2011). This unsupported statement, and a discussion of the Olegasco case, formed part of the Ambassador's report sent to the State Department for TIP assessment. The embassy documents were revealed by Wikileaks, 'exposing' sex tourism in the Philippines as a public secret, (Taussig 1999), and igniting a controversy. Thomas expressed 'deep regret' adding the US would continue to be a '... strong and dedicated partner of the Filipino people in combating the global scourges of human trafficking and sexual tourism' (The Daily Mail 2011). Justice Secretary Leila de Lima responded by saying that the Philippines was trying to "erase its 1980s reputation as a major destination for sex tourists" and that such comments were "offensive and demeaning" since they portrayed the Philippines as a "country of sex workers" (ibid.). The Philippines government is endeavouring to balance the accessing of US resources to combat sex tourism and trafficking, two terms often conflated under the rubric of sex trafficking, while at the same time disassociating itself from such connections for the sake of its national reputation.

toughest ever penalties against traffickers in the Philippines. This has included a life sentence for Nelia Olegasco, a 24-year-old and thus a youth herself.

Unlike in other policy areas, which are globally sanctioned US sponsored anti-trafficking agenda has not been subject to countries' appeals to principles of sovereignty; instead the legitimacy of anti-trafficking and foreign interventions has been uncontested (Reich 2010: 204). In light of prevailing politics in the Philippines, and the immense amount of US funding that supports abolitionism, it seems highly likely that Filipinos will continue to be subject to two related enterprises: a commerce in sex trafficking, and, it can be argued, a commerce of anti-trafficking interventions.

Trafficking discourse has thus operated to depict an illicit cross-border traffic that troubles the autonomy of subjects and the sovereignty of nations and represents not just a threat to those trafficked, but to those within Western borders.¹⁷ Trafficking discourse has also emerged to refocus on the developing world as source countries, where it finds 'perpetrators' – exploiters of inequity – who act as 'traffickers'. More generalised conditions of inequality between nations and genders thus become literalised and embodied in individual persons. The remedy for such exploitation is then found in prosecuting individual 'traffickers', who violate both 'their' people and 'our' borders – often in the name of universal calls for justice for the innocent.

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¹⁷ While once Western discourses on the topic of prostitution in the developing world focused on *local* industries and their sexual service *providers*, over the past three decades the term sex tourism has emerged working to signify the activities of *foreign* nationals in marketing and *purchasing* sex.

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