

May 1, 2006

# GABRIELA NETWORK US DEFENDS IMMIGRANT AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

for more info:  
log onto [www.gabnet.org](http://www.gabnet.org)  
or email:  
[gabnet@gabnet.org](mailto:gabnet@gabnet.org)

## FILIPINA WOMEN WILL BE ONE OF THE HARDEST HIT IF PROPOSED HOSTILE, ANTI-IMMIGRANT LEGISLATION IS PASSED!

Gabriela Network joins the millions of people across the United States to oppose recent US legislation which threaten the human rights, civil liberties and welfare of all immigrants, and criminalizes even those who attempt to help them – activists, charity and social services providers and even their own family members. Female immigrants -- including Filipinas -- will especially be harmed by such hostile provisions because they increasingly make up the majority of migrants. As of 2000, 51% of all international migrants were women and girls and out of the eight-12 million undocumented migrants currently in the United States, four million are undocumented female immigrants, or 35 percent of the population.

The Philippines exported more than a million people last year, 75% of whom were women. In the United States, the Filipino community is one of the fastest growing immigrant groups numbering an estimated 2.5 million to 3 million Filipinos, including at least about one million who are undocumented, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Some of the legislation even includes detaining and deporting victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. This particular stipulation, along with the police's involvement, especially makes women -- including mail-order brides -- more vulnerable for fewer of them would report abuse or seek help for fear of deportation. Moreover, many women would be more susceptible to labor exploitation, as none of these bills offer strong comprehensive labor rights.

GABRIELA Network condemns the attempts of anti-immigrant parties to portray immigrants as subclass citizens and human beings who do not contribute to American society. Immigrants are the backbone of America. Filipina nurses take care of the sick and the dying, Filipina domestic workers take care of its homes and children, and Filipina teachers educate its future. Indeed, illegal immigrants alone provide America with a fiscal benefit of \$10 billion a year and subsidize social security with \$7 billion annually.

GABRIELA Network also condemns the negligence of the Philippine government, under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, for its lack of action to defend the Filipino community. The Philippines has the largest percentage of its nationals, over 10%, who live and work abroad, the majority of whom are located in the United States. This group is keeping the Philippine economy afloat generating \$10.7 billion in remittances in 2005 alone.

GABRIELA Network also denounces both the US and Philippine governments' gross unwillingness to address the roots of the illegal immigration problem and that is the economic push factors that force more and more women to look for opportunities outside of their countries and to migrate abroad.

GABRIELA Network stands in solidarity with Filipina women and all people to push for a more comprehensive immigration reform which places human rights and social justice above that of alleged security threats and economic exploitation.

*How long exactly does a mother have to wait to feel the arms of her child again? The unavailability of a path to citizenship along with the current immigration backlogs would result in families being separated even more. The majority of Filipinos immigrate to the US through the family-sponsored immigration system. Last year, 73% of immigrants from the Philippines entered the U.S. through family petitions. However, the scenario is bleak. A U.S. citizen parent petitioning an unmarried adult child from the Philippines approximately waits 14 years before their child can join them in America. A U.S. citizen petitioning a sibling must wait even longer – about 22 years.*

**DEFEND WOMEN'S MIGRANT RIGHTS! IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS! NO HUMAN IS ILLEGAL!!!**