

Emma Moody

Paper 2

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It was ten o'clock at night and my day was just getting started. I sat on the floor of our hotel room, trying not to think about the fact that I was in fact sitting on the floor and peered into the mirror brushing mascara over my lashes as my mom stood over me and swiped color onto her lips. My dad walked into the room and offered a cheery, "Looking good ladies!" and squeezed both our shoulders. But the mood in the room was somber and for the past few hours, little conversation had been exchanged between us. The three of us had been crammed into a tiny room at the Eurotel, advertised as the number one businessman's hotel in Angeles City in the Philippines. They advertised cheap, and sometimes themed rooms to rent out at hourly rates; meaning, the Filipino girls who worked the streets of Angeles and the Johns who had purchased them for the night were constantly wandering the halls of the hotel. It was impossible to dismiss the fact that a "reluctant bedfellow" had inhabited the room we now occupied probably just the day before.

Just twenty-four hours before our stay at the Eurotel began, I had reunited with my parents after six months of being separated, as I was a participant on a nine-month mission trip. The parents of my fifty squad-mates and I were given the option of coming to visit us and do ministry with us in our last month in the Philippines, before we left for our final three months in South Africa. The week that the parents were with us we would be working with an organization called Wipe Every Tear (WET). Kenny Sacht, a former high school teacher from Boise, Idaho started WET after watching a video shared on Facebook about the sex tourism industry in the Philippines. It was then that this tenderhearted father of six vowed to take action. He connected

with Rebecca “Becky” Angeles (a former teach as well, but who was born and worked in the Philippines) and with her help, secured a safe house – the Hope House – that would accommodate women and girls who had been exploited as prostitutes in the bars, clubs and spas around the country.¹

Since then, WET has expanded to six safe houses in both the Philippines and Thailand and cares for over 70 women, girls and their children as well as trans-gender sex workers known there as ‘lady boys’. Through donations, WET provides them all with access to high school diplomas and free college degrees, as the large majority of them never had the opportunity or means to pursue a higher education.¹ (Fast forward five years after the start of WET and I was in the Angeles City with Kenny, Becky, my parents and around 100 other people in my program and their parents to spread the word of WET’s mission and hopefully return to one of WET’s safe houses with more women looking for a way out of the industry.)

Though Wipe Every Tear’s mission to put a stop to the exploitation of women and girls through the sex tourism industry is an admirable one, the fact that WET, and many other non-profit organizations that have the desire to see this industry become obsolete, even has a presence in the first place is disheartening. While serving with WET I came in contact with two girls volunteering with a similar organization to WET called the Renew Foundation. The Renew Foundation focuses on putting an end to the sex trade through a three step program; prevention, intervention and reintegration. While WET does a great job targeting intervention and reintegration, I found Renew Foundation’s focus of prevention through advocacy and empowerment programs especially interesting.² The girls I interacted with stressed just deep the

¹ "Wipe Every Tear." <https://wipeeverytear.org>. Web. 10-10-2017 <<https://wipeeverytear.org>>.

² Renew Foundation. “Prevention.” *Prevention*, Renew Foundation, 2011, www.renew-foundation.org/prevention_10.html.

sex trade's roots in the Philippines run, something the authors of *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines* Meredith Ralston and Edna Keeble sum up in this quote:

“We can justifiably speak of a commercial sex sector that is integrated into the economic, social and political life of these countries. The sex business has assumed the dimensions of an industry and has directly or indirectly contributed in no small measure to employment, national income and economic growth.”³

This relationship between this illegal industry and a government that largely ignores it can be traced all the way back to the influx of the Spanish, their lifestyle, government and the Christian religion they brought with them. Before my squad and I met our parents in Angeles, a team of 30 of us were living in the small town of Tacloban, a city sandwiched between the islands of Samar and Leyte in the Southeastern cluster of islands in the Philippines.

Immersed in a place like Tacloban for three months, you begin to pick up on certain aspects of Filipino life that obviously did not originate from the Philippines themselves, additionally, the Spanish classes I took throughout high school made picking out these adopted cultural isms simple. The presence of large, ornate Roman Catholic churches contrasted dramatically in a town ridden with poverty where the “barangays” or neighborhood communities consisted of rows of dirt floor tin shacks held together with salvaged bits of rope. The importance of Roman Catholicism in a Southeast Asian country was the first bit of Spanish influence that really struck me.

³ Ralston, Meredith L., and Edna Keeble. *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines*. Kumarian Press, 2009. Pp. 78-83

The church nearest to the compound where we were housed was the largest one in Tacloban. It boasted a huge golden dome that sat atop an equally impressive sanctuary. The church was surrounded on all sides by green grass interrupted by plots of flowers, fountains, statues of saints and angels and in the back, a mass grave of victims who lost their lives in the typhoon that struck in November of 2013.⁴ But, maybe the most interesting observation I made driving by this grand building every day was that the absence of stray dogs that plagued every other square inch of Tacloban but the church.

The inside of the church was perhaps even more impressive than the exterior. The underside of the dome had been frescoed with a heavenly scene complete with angels and men in long flowing robes with their eyes fixed at the apex where the artist completed his work with a dove that looked as if it was descending onto the congregation below. An organ sat across the large sanctuary from the altar where a small Filipino man gave a sermon to what seemed like the entire population of Tacloban every Sunday. Mass at this church in particular was so prevalent that vendors would set up stands outside the church gates and sell fried bread, Filipino BBQ and other foods to either arriving or departing churchgoers.

Another aspect of Spanish culture that had largely become that of Filipino culture as well was the inclusion of words in the native Tagalog language. Some days, my job working for Kids International Ministries in Tacloban included going to schools around town and providing lunch for children who may not see a meal other than the one we bring them. Like many American elementary classrooms, the walls are plastered with brightly colored posters and labels giving the names for things such as chairs, doors, pencils and book bags. A lot of these words either

⁴ Mullen, Jethro. "Super Typhoon Haiyan, One of Strongest Storms Ever, Hits Central Philippines." *CNN.com*, 8 Nov. 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/11/07/world/asia/philippines-typhoon-haiyan/index.html.

resemble or are identical to the Spanish version that I learned while in school, “mesa” means table in both Tagalog and Spanish, and the Filipino “bintana” which means window is very close to the Spanish word “ventana”. These so called “loan words” are not limited to nouns, there are a plethora of verbs and adjectives that have also been adopted from the Spanish language.⁵

With this invasion of a society ruled by the Spanish and so really, the Catholic religion, came the redefinition of womanhood and the role of women in the Filipino society, women went from somewhat equal to their male counterparts – able to participate in important parts of society, make decisions for themselves and their families and enter into relationships with whomever they please – to severely inferior and oppressed. This degradation of women in Filipino society and trade relations that had long time been established between the Philippines and China or other Asian cultures, such as India and Indonesia, opened the door for the commodification of Filipino women’s bodies, a system through which women and girls were traded through treaties and agreements as wives or concubines.³ Additionally, these cultures and the Catholic religion instilled the sociological ideal of the dutiful daughter as explained in regards to prostitution in Thailand by Jan Pettman in *Body Politics: International Sex Tourism*, an ideal the Philippines mirrors:

“But many Thai women, including very young women and those still legally girls, construct themselves as good and dutiful daughters, as hard workers whose sacrifice and

⁵ Bauzon, Leslie E. “Spanish Influence on Language, Culture, and Philippine History.” *Encyclopedia of Southeast Asia: Philippines*, 1991, pp. 1–14., filipinokastila.tripod.com/FilSpa.html.

³ Ralston, Meredith L., and Edna Keeble. *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines*. Kumarian Press, 2009. Pp. 78-83

generosity enable choices and chances for family members, though often in difficult or dreadful circumstance”⁶

It is here, in the mid-sixteenth century, that we can see the rise of prostitution start to take place. After the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, a woman who opted out of the expected role of self-sacrificing family member – putting all of her family’s needs far before those of herself – or, if she was found to have sex before or outside of the institution of marriage, she was immediately labeled as a whore, and from this, there was no coming back. These women became outcasts and were pushed to the outskirts of society, and just like in Biblical times, these women were convinced that this was in fact a fault of their own; they were fallen women and a disappointment to their families. They were left with no choice other than to use sell their body to support themselves and often times, the children sired by her clients.

Fast forward to post Spanish-American war, which was largely fought on Filipino soil, and America claims the islands as a territory during which they officially ruled over the Philippines until after World War 2, but even then, maintained a pseudo-power presence there into the 1990s.⁸ Prostitution in the Philippines by this point was functioning in the three major forms that we recognize today; street walking, escort services in which the pair meet in either the woman’s house or the client’s. and brothel style prostitution in the thousands of bars and clubs that line the streets of Angeles.³

The day my squad arrived in Angeles with our parents, Kenny invited us to walk around the city and especially encouraged that we take a walk down Walking Street. My parents and I

⁶ Pettman, Jan Jindy. "Body Politics: International Sex Tourism." *Third World Quarterly* 18.1 (1997): 93-108. *CrossRef*. Web.

³ Ralston, Meredith L., and Edna Keeble. *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines*. Kumarian Press, 2009. Pp. 78-83

³ Ralston, Meredith L., and Edna Keeble. *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines*. Kumarian Press, 2009. Pp. 78-83

started the weekend with lunch at the mall about half a mile from the hotel. From the breezeway that fed into the main building of the mall one can see the remnants of Clark Air Force Base and just beyond it, Mt. Pinatubo a volcano that last erupted in 1991 and led to the evacuation of all the American troops that resided in Angeles.^{7, 10} It was after this experience experiencing Angeles with WET that I wrote a blog post titled Dear John(s), an open letter to the men who engage in the exploitation of Filipino women and girls not much older and sometime much younger than me:

“Dear John(s)

I first saw you in the lobby of our hotel, leaning a little too far over the front desk as the concierge blushed and quietly handed you your room key, but I wasn't sure who you were just yet and I didn't want to rush into drawing any conclusions. Then I saw you frequenting the bars at 10am Friday morning. My suspicions grew stronger as you guzzled the beer in front of you and stared, glassy eyed out into the street. The lights and loud music and high heels and forced smiles that filled the street the night before had long gone to bed, all was silent except for the heel clicks of one last straggler. I wasn't certain of your identity until I saw you with her; we were on opposite sides of an intersection waiting to cross. Between cars and trikes and bikes zipping by I caught glimpses of her quietly trying to unlace her fingers from yours, but you would just grab her hand again and pull her closer into your clutches. You, him, one of them, you were a John and she was your prey.

⁷ Diggles, Michael. "The Cataclysmic 1991 Eruption of Mount Pinatubo, Philippines." *https://pubs-usgs-gov.proxy.lib.fsu.edu*. Web. 10/25/17 <<https://pubs-usgs-gov.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/fs/1997/fs113-97/>>.

¹⁰ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Clark Air Base." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 17 Oct. 2013, www.britannica.com/topic/Clark-Air-Base.

Traffic cleared and you crossed, walking straight towards me, but I didn't move.

"How ya doin'," you said in a painfully recognizable American accent, we had the same homeland, but you didn't wait for an answer, you just kept walking, tugging her along behind you. I wasn't going to give you one anyways. I knew coming into this ministry that I would struggle with you the most, I'd even made the commitment to try and extend some grace and maybe love to you and your kind, but in that moment on the street corner all I felt was hatred like none I'd ever felt before. I fought the urge to slap you or yell or rip your hand from her wrist, you were the scum of the Earth and your actions were disgusting and unforgivable.

The rest of the day I saw you everywhere, the mall, the hotel, in taxis, and restaurants, and maybe you weren't always you, but anyone who fit the description of white male was labeled John and I hated you all the more. I tried, I really did, to turn the hate into something, at least pity if nothing else, but all attempts were futile. It was everything about you, the way you dressed, and walked, and talked to her that made me hate you. I pulled my parents closer, not wanting to be protected, but wanting to protect them instead, my dad looped his arm through mine and my mom leaned her head on my shoulder, her tears wet the sleeve of my shirt."⁸

After lunch, my parents and I wandered up and down the mall hallways; here I was met with a scene that I was all too familiar with after the time I spent in Tacloban. Elderly white men strolling past shops with an arm wrapped around a Filipina girl at his side, or, and this made me even more uncomfortable, holding her by her wrist as she reluctantly followed behind everything about her posture suggested total submission because that's what these men paid for. Sometimes,

⁸ Moody, Emma A. "Dear John(s)." *Emma Moody*, The World Race, 18 Feb. 2017, emmamoody.theworldrace.org/post/dear-johns.

these girls would also take on a flirtatious schoolgirl persona, or maybe these were really just times their real selves were shining through as they were no older than school aged, pointing out dresses in shop windows they liked, asking their costumers to buy them ice cream or movie tickets. However, the single most influential experience I had in Angeles was the two nights I ventured inside the bars and clubs where these women worked and saw first hand how sex was turned into a sellable commodity. I detail that experience, and how I came to actually feel sorry for these men in the rest of my Dear John(s) blog post:

“That night I walked a little taller, puffed out my chest a little, and glared at each and every one of you. The hate you incited in me gave me the need to protect those in my group, especially the ones that had been abused and exploited by you before. But as I walked further down the street and later into the night, the lights and the music began to fade, even the girls by your side began to blur, He wanted me to see you. Walking into yet another club, we sat at a table closest to the stage, but my attention wasn’t drawn to the girls dancing on it, but to you sitting in the shadows of the club. Your eyes were fixed on the girls, but void of any interest. The ladies at your side pawed at you and whispered things into your ears, but any emotion you showed towards them quickly vanished. You were a skeleton of a man, the life and the love that was at some point there was sucked out of you and left you with a black hole for a soul.

As I watched you I thought of the story of the prodigal son in Luke, one of my favorites. Amidst the flashing lights and bad club remixes, I realized that you were that son, the one who had run away from a good and loving father and sought pleasure in worldly ways. The one who was tired of eating pig slop but was so ashamed of what you’d done that you hadn’t returned home yet. And in a way I was the other son, the

older one that brushed my own sin under the rug and scornfully looked down on you for yours. Then I thought about the Father we share, the one who loves each of us equally even though I'm the one on mission to spread His Kingdom and you were the one paying for sex. I prayed for you then, all of you, that like the prodigal son you would someday return home, that you would finally see the error of your ways and overcome the shame that had prevented you from running into His arms before and accepting that you're broken but He can mend you with His perfect forgiveness. I prayed for people like me too, the other sons who despised you for your brokenness all the while trying to conceal and hide our own cracks. I prayed we too would learn to run down that path and embrace you with open arms rejoicing in the fact that despite what you'd done that you had decided to return home.

Sincerely, Emma”⁸

The illegal yet thriving system of prostitution in the Philippines is able to bring in an estimated 6 billion dollars to the islands' economy each year.⁹ Many of these girls come from rural parts of the islands – know as the Provinces – and are tricked into accepting jobs in bars, clubs and spas, all fronts for the prostitution activities that take place inside their walls. They come with the intention to work, earn money and return to their families, but this is rarely accomplished. Instead, many of them end up with new mouths to feed. Whether they knew what they were getting themselves into or were blind sided by the reality of sex trafficking, they are all

⁸ Moody, Emma A. “Dear John(s).” *Emma Moody*, The World Race, 18 Feb. 2017, emmamoody.theworldrace.org/post/dear-johns.

⁹ Havocscope. *Prostitution: Prices and Statistics of the Global Sex Trade*. Havocscope, 2015, p. 9, *A Havocscope Report: Black Market Crime*.

victims of an illegal system that started with the colonization of the country and grew with it and is now brushed under the rug by the Filipino government.

Annotated Bibliography

1. "Wipe Every Tear." <https://wipeeverytear.org>. Web. 10-10-2017

<<https://wipeeverytear.org>>.

This is the website home page for the non-profit organization Wipe Every Tear (WET) referenced multiple times in this paper. This website details how WET got its start as well as who started it, what their mission is, and what they do to tackle the problem of sex tourism in the Philippines. This paper includes the personal experience my teammates and I shared when we collaborated with WET while living in the Philippines. This organization is the reason why I was able to come to know the implications of this industry on a personal level. It should be noted that WET is tied to the Christian religion – as was the mission trip program I was on – and this plays a central role in the work that they do.

2. Renew Foundation. "Prevention." *Prevention*, Renew Foundation, 2011, www.renew-foundation.org/prevention_10.html.

This is the website homepage for the Renew Foundation, an organization I came in contact with while working in the Philippines with Wipe Every Tear. They share a similar mission to WET by rescuing and rehabilitating women exploited in the sex trade, but also focus on prevention. I highlighted the importance of Renew Foundation's preventative work through female empowerment programs and advocacy to further their mission to stop prostitution.

3. Ralston, Meredith L., and Edna Keeble. *Reluctant Bedfellows: Feminism, Activism and Prostitution in the Philippines*. Kumarian Press, 2009. Pp. 78-83

This book covers the key concepts of prostitution and its origins in the Philippines, specifically in Angeles City. It is the source I cite the most in my paper as it provides a detailed origin story of sex tourism in the Philippines all the way back to pre-colonial times. A large majority of the quotes I use come from the chapters “Explanation for Prostitution in the Philippines” (pg. 77-96) and “Sex tourism in Angeles City” (pg. 97-126). This book was extremely helpful to me and acted as a bridge by allowing me to tie my research back to my personal experience.

4. Mullen, Jethro. “Super Typhoon Haiyan, One of Strongest Storms Ever, Hits Central Philippines.” *CNN.com*, 8 Nov. 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/11/07/world/asia/philippines-typhoon-haiyan/index.html.

Typhoon Haiyan was one of the strongest storms to ever hit the Philippines and displace millions of people. While living in Tacloban, one of the cities affected the worst by this natural disaster, I learned that it is during these times, following natural disasters, that recruiters will travel down to the provincial areas of the Philippines and recruit women and girls to return to larger cities, like Angeles with them. They leave sometimes knowing that they will be prostituting themselves, sometimes not, but always with the intention of supporting their families.

5. Bauzon, Leslie E. “Spanish Influence on Language, Culture, and Philippine History.” *Encyclopedia of Southeast Asia: Philippines*, 1991, pp. 1–14., filipinokastila.tripod.com/FilSpa.html.

This article details the influence of Spanish culture on Filipino culture. I used this article just to gather examples of loan words.

6. Pettman, Jan Jindy. "Body Politics: International Sex Tourism." *Third World Quarterly* 18.1 (1997): 93-108. *CrossRef*. Web.

This article, authored by Jan Jindy Pettman, explores sex tourism through “relations between sex and power, men and women, first and third worlds, and sexual relations across state, national, racialized and cultural boundaries.” I use a quote from this article when discussing the influences of Thailand culture and the ideal of the “dutiful daughter” when exploring the origins of prostitution in the Philippines. Though the rest of the article contains relevant information, I chose only to use the quote as it was most relevant to the influence of other cultures in the Philippines’ sex tourism industry.

7. Diggles, Michael. "The Cataclysmic 1991 Eruption of Mount Pinatubo, Philippines." <https://pubs-usgs-gov.proxy.lib.fsu.edu>. Web. 10/25/17 <<https://pubs-usgs-gov.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/fs/1997/fs113-97/>>.

This article details the June 15, 1991 volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. The eruption was caused by a California earthquake that occurred nearly a year before the eruption, but strong enough to disturb the Earth’s crust beneath the volcano. The series of eruptions lasted from June through October, releasing magma and toxic gases. It was the gas and ash released by these eruptions that closed the Clark Air Base in Angeles City. It was the United States military men serving on the base that supported such a thriving prostitution culture in Angeles City.

Similarly, it is largely this age of men, retired from military service that return to Angeles city as sex tourists.

8. Moody, Emma A. "Dear John(s)." *Emma Moody*, The World Race, 18 Feb. 2017, emmamoody.theworldrace.org/post/dear-johns.

I include the entirety of a blog post I wrote while on the World Race about the time I spent working with Wipe Every Tear in two journal like entries in my paper. I wrote this blog post directly after serving with Wipe Every Tear, a time that I was still processing just what I had experienced. The idea to write this blog post came the second night of going out to the bars and clubs when I walked into a bar and saw a man sitting in a Tampa Bay Rays baseball jersey across the room, he had two Filipino girls at his side. It greatly affected me seeing a man from my home town participating in the exploitation of these women.

9. Havocscope. *Prostitution: Prices and Statistics of the Global Sex Trade*. Havocscope, 2015, p. 9, *A Havocscope Report: Black Market Crime*.

Havocscope, a group dedicated to compiling and information and analyzing data about the black market, put this report together. It focuses on the prices and statistics of prostitution in various countries, legal or illegal, and reports data on annual revenue, how many women participate, and around how much these women are prostituted for. I focused on the numbers reported for annual revenue brought into the Philippines through prostitution, the Philippines sits at number nine of the top twenty-four countries bringing in \$6 billion a year. Though I compared this

10. The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Clark Air Base." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 17 Oct. 2013, www.britannica.com/topic/Clark-Air-Base.

This is an article on Clark Air Base. I use it to reference the closure of the base following the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in June, 1991.