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COLONIAL & IMPERIAL LEGACIES,
URBANIZATION VS. INDIGENEITY AND THE
FILIPINO STRUGGLE FOR EQUITY



Index

I. Introduction

A. Setting the Context

1. Drug Trafficking in the Philippines
2. The War on Drugs
3. Communities most affected by the Drug War and Implications
4. Historical Tapestry: Colonialism and Imperialism

II. Foundations of Colonial Influence - The Spanish Regime

A. Spanish Colonialism: The Shaping of Structures

1. Urban Planning and Infrastructure Development
2. Indigenous Subjugation and Urban Transformation
3. Cultural Indoctrination and Social Hierarchies

III. Neo-Colonial Dynamics and Modern Realities - United States

A. The Legacy of Spanish American War

1. U.S. Policy and Colonial Continuation
2. 1935 Philippines Constitution: Implications and Infrastructural Impact

B. Neo-Colonialism and Indoctrination

1. Persistence of Foreign Influence
2. Cultural Assimilation and Policing Culture

C. Policy and Subordination

1. Duterte and U.S. Politicians
2. Socioeconomic Inequality and Structural Poverty
3. Correlation with the War on Drugs

IV. Conclusion - Unraveling the War on Drugs

A. Historical Roots in Colonial Policies

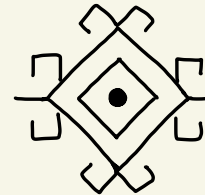
1. A Neo-Liberalist perspective
2. A Hope for Change

Sources

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Introduction

This zine aims to delve into the complexity of the Human Rights Crisis of the War on Drugs happening in the Philippines, and specifically Metro Manila. While there are many intersecting pieces to this crisis, I am critically examining Colonial and Imperial History and tying it to Environmental Justice concerns within the context of the Drug War. These reflections are rooted in historical insights, but not excluding further exploration and supplementation through additional intersections of thought.



A letter from the Philippines

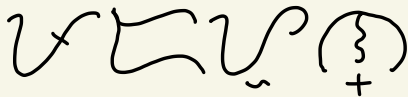
Anak ko,

As you know my story comes from memories of a 5 year old to about 11 years old - 1969-1978. I know you are delving into the troubling realities our country faces, and it makes me think of my own childhood. Amidst these inequalities and struggles, I want to share with you the purest essence of the Philippines, the land that shaped me and continues to shape my understanding of myself.

Jose Rizal once said, "he who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never reach his destination." This resonates deeply within me, for our history, with all its triumphs and tribulations, is intertwined with our identity. Our land has been a battleground, not only against external forces but also against internal struggles created by those influences. Yet, through it all, there's a resilience that defines us, a determination to reclaim what is rightfully ours.

My earliest recollections of the Philippines transport me to the vibrant streets of my childhood, where the aroma of steaming dumplings from Chinese restaurants mingled with scents of PanDeSal, and the local palengke where I would find the freshest milkfish to make Bangus. Kindergarten days spent with my sister, exploring the world, oblivious to the complexities that lay ahead, and the times I would throw her clothes into the floods of typhoons entering our town. Even looking back, I can see that there were many things left by others passing through the Philippines, everything everywhere all at once there were signs that things shaped and shifted with each presence of someone else, but everything we took and it made it ours.

Visits to my grandparents' homes, each brimming with its own stories, make me remember fondly about the green vibrancy of the trees and the livestock that I used to grow up around. At my paternal grandparents', vast expanses of land echoed with the laughter of cousins, amid warehouses housing remnants of war, such as the Jeeps and Jeepneys my cousins and I would ride. And at my maternal grandparents', a bustling furniture store served as our playground, and a place of rest for myself at the end of school days. Through all these memories, the beauty of community subtly warms my heart just thinking about it. My Kuyas, Ates, friends and cousins were all family alike, and we shared everything we had. We as Filipinos know how to stick together and create a culture based on supporting each other and sharing what we know. But most of all, we know how to make the best food and have the best celebrations and times where we can forget the stress of time and of life's worries.

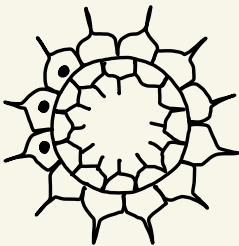


But then, like a sudden storm, tragedy struck with the news of my father's death when I was 5 years old. The night of my father's funeral, my mother was packing for America. Our world shattered, the winds of change swept us away to Baguio, where my grandfather and grandmother would take care of us for the time being. My grandfather then sought solace in his Yamaha store, and we then moved to San Andres, as we awaited the papers that would pave our path to America. Fires, storms and hardships struck me and my siblings, but we prevailed through the strength of family and our inherent resilience we built together. We left for America and I saw my mother again after many years. This was when I was 13.

Amidst the turmoil, there were moments of solace, shared with cherished ones. I remember my brother, sisters, and about our bukid adventures—days spent frolicking in coconut fields, chasing insects, and chasing my sisters in the rain. These memories, though bittersweet at times, are the threads that bind us to our homeland, anchoring us amidst life's burdens and storms. And now that I visit frequently, these memories take on a new light of comfort and of remembering the past as a time of happiness. Although I left the Philippines so young, so much of my perspective on life comes from this land that I am from. It calls back to me, and because of this I have brought you and your brother to see where you come from as well. The land, the people, the storms, the beauty, the ugliness, it all makes our country what it is today.

Anak ko, our country bears scars, yet beneath the surface lies a beauty that transcends the pain. It's in the resilience of its people, the richness of its culture, and the unyielding spirit that refuses to be extinguished. As you navigate through your studies, remember that amidst the darkness, there's a flicker of hope, a promise of a brighter tomorrow. We are Filipinos, we have the tadhana that binds us together and the will to fight through anything.

Mama



W3A

THE WAR

ON DRUGS

W3A



Drug Trafficking in Metro Manila

Drug trafficking remains a pervasive issue, with the Philippines being a destination and transit point for illegal narcotics. As we take a closer look at the problem, there are many key points that have contributed to the large drug economy's inception that has emerged in the last few decades.

Primarily due to the location of the Philippines in relation to other Southeast Asian countries, this makes it a strategic point to become a gateway for pushing drugs. Additionally, because of the spread of the nation consisting of over 7,000 islands, this makes it hard for law enforcement agencies to monitor and control the movement and trafficking of drugs and related crime through maritime spaces and porous borders.

International and local syndicates exploit these various spots, leading the Philippines to have an extensive, complex and lucrative drug economy that further permeates other forms of exploitation such as the impoverished population and large rates of unemployed people with the demand of these substances. Additionally, due to the lucrative nature of the trade, the people that fall into the cycles of poverty are more likely to engage in the drug economy as a viable way to escape economic hardship and provide temporary relief to instability. While poverty, unemployment and social inequality can be seen as root causes of the supply and demand of these substances, the possibility for the quantity and accessibility of these drugs lies within the reality of the trade and the profit that these large syndicates can capitalize on and provide propaganda on the benefits people can gain from participating in the business.

While the large international and local syndicates gain profit over large trade and distribution of substance, the petty dealings and crime that trickle down is ultimately the scrutinized activity that vulnerable people engage in and fall into the gaze of law enforcement.

To examine further into the consequences of this trade, we can see that it not only affects people, but can alter culture, land and relationships between communities and law enforcement. With large entities propagating the issue, the Philippines government has employed various initiatives and strategies to combat the issue, but most notably has been the War On Drugs, which encompasses the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (Republic Act No. 9165)," entailing that the "punishment for drug trafficking can range from life imprisonment to the death penalty, depending on the quantity and type of drugs involved." While these initiatives have poured tremendous resources into inter-government collaboration and law enforcement, it has mostly turned into the aim at the activity of the drug crime itself:

1. Fatal Drug raids
2. Mass imprisonment of alleged drug crime participants
3. Fatal shootings and murders of users and dealers

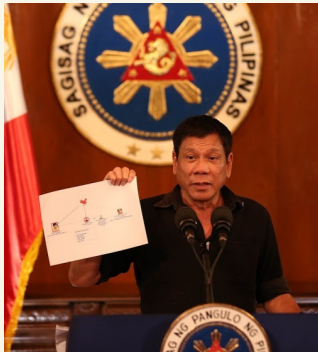
Instead of addressing the root causes of social inequality, inadequate welfare, housing, and unemployment, government actions and affiliated entities often target individuals caught in circumstances beyond their control, perpetuating a cycle of punishment for those seeking an alternative to the harsh realities imposed upon them by the very system they seek to escape. Additionally, due to the large emphasis placed on law enforcement and range of freedom of combating this issue, with a "license to kill," coined by Duterte's orders, the watered down focus of the war becomes a larger power play of politics to keep people in line and order to the systems of government in place.

Additional affects of the Drug Trade:

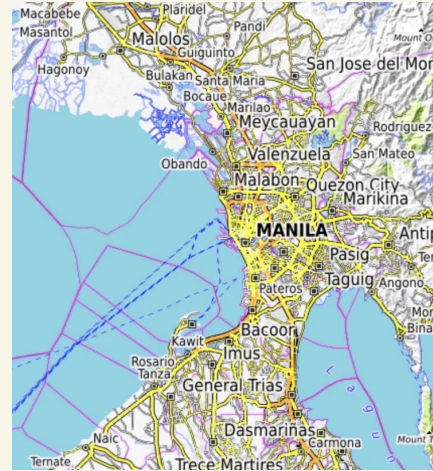
1. Health implications that include the heightened spread of HIV/AIDS due to needle sharing, hospitalizations due to drug-related diseases and premature death due to over-dose
2. Brutality, Violence and Crime are heightened due to competition between dealers, and a rise in law enforcement brutality in line with Duterte's Drug War*
3. Community and Social Fabric can become strained in communities due to families being torn apart getting mixed up in drug trade, as well as lives lost can ruin bonds and stability for families
4. Economic implications can include the hindering of other sectors getting resources, and the divestment of foreign entities due to security and safety concerns

War On Drugs

In the conglomeration of 16 cities known as Metro Manila, a major human rights crisis is occurring at extensive rates, and spreading throughout the entire country of the Philippines. Focusing on this microcosm of the issue, we can see all the intersecting parts of the crisis. This human rights violation is the War On Drugs, and through a critical lens, we can see it is about much more than the substance issue at hand.



Rodrigo Duterte



The War on Drugs began in response to illegal drug trafficking and usage of marijuana and "shabu" or methamphetamine in the Philippines. This campaign allocates funds, focus and policing resources toward this area of crime and was spearheaded by Rodrigo Duterte. As the former mayor of Davao City, Mindanao in the lower main island of the Philippines, he had previously inducted the culture of vigilantism and aggressive tactics towards drug crime in the area, creating the DDS (Davao Death Squad) which would focus on brutal crackdowns of drug crime, and additional eradication of miscellaneous "personal enemies." He was then elected president in 2016 where he then took his agenda to the national stage, and started employing extremist and brutalist rhetoric of going after those involved in drug related activities, mostly focusing on Metro Manila.

This controversial campaign has included the large scale and often brutal implementation of police operations, including a "secret police," and reports of extrajudicial killings and raids that would often not only kill the suspect, but family members or bystanders. The suspects targeted often include alleged drug traffickers, drug dealers and drug users alike, with punishment tactics and consequences extended the same no matter the alleged "size" of crime. Often times, these suspects have been known to come from "unverified lists of people allegedly using or selling drugs," and no matter how long ago the alleged usage or dealings have been, they are irrevocably added to this list.

Common reports relating to Drug War raids and policing have included the imprisonment or killing of citizens without trial, leading to mass incarceration and public displays of bodies in streets, frequent with reporting's of masking tape and cardboard covered over faces with written labels such as "drug lord," or "do not be like him."

Notably, these raids and policing tactics have been employed heavily in urban and poor areas in Metro Manila, and mainly targeting impoverished and informal settlement communities that fall into cycles of poverty, destitution and "garbage culture."



Impoverished Communities most Affected By the Drug War

Poor Slum culture in the Philippines

In Metro Manila, Slum culture is commonplace, and a figure of 20-35% of the population within the sprawling metropolis live within these slums. Through cycles of typhoons, eviction and relocation, these communities often live in informal settlements littered with trash, driftwood and constantly live with uncertainty and fear of instability.

The cycle goes something like this :

1. Residents reside in slums, and build their communities around informal settlement and reliance on each other for resources and support
2. the Philippine government evicts residents, demolishes buildings, gentrifies the area and relocates residents to the outskirts of Manila
3. these residents find resilience within themselves and rebuild their communities in the new area, with informal settlement - often with "shoddy" construction and destabilized communities living in fear of the cycle repeating itself and an inability to adapt and feel secure in their environment
4. These communities then face a heightened disaster risk in relation to tropical storms or typhoons, common in the Philippines, and often they are hit the hardest in the face of these "natural disasters."

Rather than provide solutions for relief and aid to these communities, this cycle often prevails and sets the precedent for how to react to these slums created in the city. The "relatively weak bureaucracy" of Metro Manila often offers few solutions and resorts rather to the "crack down" on slum conditions and punishment of the people residing in these communities.

These are the communities most targeted by the War on Drugs. While drug crime remains a pervasive issue in the Philippines, these communities have become disproportionately targeted due to the lack of care and consideration of citizens living within these communities and lack of visibility that they are a contributing part of society. Because these communities are so easily abandoned and ignored, the violation of human rights is normalized and viewed as "justice." Because of this, the attention focused within these slums are more concentrated towards getting results to fuel the idea of progress in relation to the drug war, rather than valid progress of eradicating the instability that leads to drug activity and crime in the first place. Furthermore, with the instability created and fear-mongering of looming raids and brutality, the so-called "drug culture" within these slums are reinforced as people trying to move up in society are constantly being pushed out of their environment and have no way to provide financial stability for themselves.

Tondo district, "Happyland,"



What is Garbage Culture?

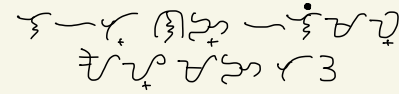
"Garbage culture" is a pervasive issue that is commonly seen within urban poor areas of Metro Manila. This culture touches the impoverished communities in the Philippines which make up 22% percent of the country's entire population (2022). With this widespread poverty, the prevalence of garbage occurs due to the lack of basic amenities of housing, sanitation, and waste management services (garbage collection, recycling facilities, etc.). With this accumulation of trash in streets, alleys and waterways, residents' resort to scavenging to find recyclable materials they can sell for income or otherwise use for their families. While this has been heavily normalized and even living within the litter and trash has been adaptable for these communities, they face many health and environmental hazards such as pests, waterborne diseases, and pollution. This culture has been met with various stigmas and marginalization, leading to their communities being viewed as less than or ignored by the public and government's inefficiencies, although a large percentage within metropolitan areas live within these circumstances. This culture holds a mirror to the vast inequalities in income, accessibility, and housing crisis, and is the consequence of underlying issues of poor infrastructure, poor essential services, and inadequate social services. Furthermore, the marginalization of groups living in these circumstances causes discrimination and further exacerbates socioeconomic disparities and become prime targets for Duterte's vision.

Is this Really a War on Drugs, or a War on the Poor?

With the drug war disproportionately targeting and affecting the poor communities of Metro Manila, the implications and consequences have reverberated and deepened the socioeconomic inequalities and exposed the deeper issues of histories of marginalization. The current disparities that cause infrastructure failures lead to further exploitation and poverty cycles. According to Amnesty International, an international non-governmental organization focused on human rights, their investigation into the crimes of humanity of the Drug War include reports of raids into people's living spaces and the "murders of unarmed people," including those willing and prepared to surrender. This implication includes the fabrication of police reports to avoid contradictions to the police's agenda and allegations that the crimes of these "drug users" are first and foremost the evil presence within these communities.

While this agenda pushes the narrative that the drugs infiltrating these communities are the main issue at hand, there have been cases in which the police have targeted foreign drug traffickers, who are met with arrests without resort to lethal force and murder, leading to the question, why are poor people denied the same protection and dignity? Is this really a war on drugs, or a war on the poor?

With poorer communities being targeted due to the historic neglect and lack of care by the public for their circumstances, the rounding up and killing of these citizens point to a larger reality that this has become an economy of murder. Due to the organized abandonment of these poor enclaves within Metro Manila, systems created have led to an opportunity to exploit the discrepancy and create oppression. Uncovered by Amnesty International, ongoing and past police killings have come from inherent pressures usually driven by leaders and officials at the top receiving orders to move the Drug War forward and fulfill the agenda started by Duterte, without a high regard to the barometer of legitimacy of the "crimes" addressed.



These orders include incentives such as "payment per encounter," a term used to "falsely present extrajudicial executions as legitimate operations." According to an anonymous Senior Police Officer interviewed by Amnesty, "We always get paid by the encounter, the amount ranges from 8,000 pesos (161 US Dollars) to 15,000 pesos (302 US Dollars) ... That amount is per head. So, if the operation is against four people, that's 32,000 pesos, we are paid in cash, secretly, by headquarters, there's no incentive for arresting. We are not paid anything." Police officers have also been known to steal from the victim's homes after their raids to enrich themselves and leave the victim's families ravished without belongings

With the police culture created around "payment per head," this system reinforces an incentive to kill rather than arrest, and with the guise of attacking and ending drug crime, the poor are bearing the brunt of these murders. It is an aimless agenda and a mirror to a criminal underground of the policing culture. Because of the lack of care and support in poorer areas of Metro Manila, these incentives, and top-down orders without much scrutiny lead to the targeting of these groups due to the abandonment of these communities. No longer is it a war on drugs, but a way to reinforce the structures that make the rich richer, and the poor, poorer.



The Police's Murderous War on the Poor

"This is not a war on drugs, but a war on the poor. Often on the flimsiest of evidence, people accused of using or selling drugs are being killed for cash in an economy of murder" Tirana Hassan, Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director.



"I disagree with extrajudicial killings, period," she says.
"Because there is still the law. Everyone should have his day in court."

"And besides, she says, so far it's just the small fry getting killed, not the drug lords."



"Why kill someone who had already surrendered?" Generoso, father of Gener, an alleged drug user.



"Under President Duterte's rule, the national police are breaking laws they are supposed to uphold while profiting from the murder of impoverished people the government was supposed to uplift. The same streets Duterte vowed to rid of crime are now filled with bodies of people illegally killed by his own police."

"The people killed are overwhelmingly drawn from the poorest sections of society and include children, one of them as young as 8 years old."

"The way dead bodies are treated shows how cheaply human life is regarded by the Philippines police. Covered in blood, they are casually dragged in front of horrified relatives, their heads grazing the ground before being dumped out in the open."
Tirana Hasan



The Context of Colonialism and Imperialism

As we look closer at the intersections within the Human Rights crisis in Metro Manila, we also must look critically at the tapestry of history that has shaped it's lines and what has led to the power systems and structures in the Philippines.

While the Philippines has gained sovereignty from looming nation states, it is marked and built from centuries of colonialism, imperialism and foreign influence. These marks have not fully left the nation in terms of policy, influence and culture. It can be said that the Philippines and the structures that make up everyday life is "indelibly marked by the DNA of colonialism."

To look critically at the context of colonialism and imperialism in relation to the War on Drugs, it is vital to look at key components and elements specific to:

1. Foundations of Colonial Influence
2. Neo-Colonialism dynamics and Modern Realities
3. Unraveling the War on Drugs in relation to Policy, Politics, Rhetoric and Policing

Definition of Organized Abandonment - Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a renowned geographer and scholar of mass incarceration and racial capitalism, coined the term "organized abandonment." This term refers to the deliberate elimination and conscious withdrawal of public resources and services from certain communities or populations, often marginalized groups such as the poor, people of color, or those living in urban areas. This withdrawal can take various forms, including cuts to social services, disinvestment in infrastructure, and neglect by government authorities. Organized abandonment perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities by leaving already vulnerable communities further marginalized and without access to the resources necessary for social and economic mobility. Organized abandonment is exceedingly demonstrated in communities affected by the War on Drugs.

Foundations of Colonial Influence - The Spanish Regime

The Philippines adopts its Christian name for a significant historical reason, tracing back over 400 years. Named after King Philip II of Spain, This stems from the arrival of European Explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who landed on the Philippine Island of Mactan and met his demise at the hands of Lapu-Lapu, a chief of an indigenous tribe. During this period, Filipinos lived in distinct communities with diverse languages, customs, and cultures. While a trade system existed alongside alliances and community ties, our understanding of this era remains limited due to the Spanish expunging written records.

After Magellan's death, more Spanish conquerors returned with purpose and settled in force and colonized the Philippines by establishing townships, coalitions, indoctrination by religion (mainly catholicism), and new forms of government with favor towards Spanish ideology and structure. These changes were often enforced with violence, and notably through coercion. More colonial settlers came to the Philippines and began to incorporate their own culture within the tapestry of Filipino native culture. While this colonial presence was powerful and infiltrated all areas of Filipino life, it was not without strife and resistance. Many uprisings were frequent and recurring with more large-scale immediacy every time. Native uprisings were common, but not all Filipinos shared the same sentiments towards the colonizers. Some learned that if they cooperated or intermarried with the Spanish, they could share privileges or secure more stability in the changing ways of life that the Spaniards enforced at an oppressive scale.

A prime change that occurred at this time of development was the Urban Colonial Planning of cities and Infrastructure development that gave priority to the Spanish and began to racialize spaces to draw lines and create new systems. Additionally the indigenous subjugation and urban transformation and indoctrination of culture and religion served to create social hierarchies and domination through oppression.

To look closer as this history, we can look to various systems that the Spanish implemented over the course of centuries. →

Urban Colonial Planning and (Lack of) Infrastructure Development

This included the implementation of the Hacienda** and Encomienda** systems. Aside from the establishment of a central Spanish government, these systems granted stolen land and labor responsibilities to Spanish settlers and gave priority to Spanish self-elected officials to oversee public projects and proposals. The Encomienda system specifically dealt with land distribution in line with a social hierarchy established in the early days of colonization, in which the Spanish held top positions and subjugated native Filipinos to lower positions and less adequate areas in relation to economic gain and mobility.

This was under the guise that the Spanish would "protect and christianize the indigenous people," but mostly what happened was the "extraction, exploitation and displacement of native peoples." With this system's establishment and the structuring of new cities to mirror Spanish ideals, native populations were subjugated into urbanization and moved away from their practices and ways of life. Due to rapid urbanization and the influx of people from Europe, Filipinos were forced to adapt and change to a system that not only did not serve them, but did not include them in various benefits aside from falling in line or resisting brutal retaliation.

With the implementation of a "Dominator Ecology" in the Philippines, foreign structures and systems frequently disconnected Filipinos from their land, fostering caste systems. The Spanish established a reality where people and the land were "managed remotely," with "remote expertise" and disconnected and assumed superiority. Moreover, perceiving themselves as "fundamentally separate from the land," they regarded it as "devoid of a past or future." This mindset facilitated the then present exploitation and degradation that would reverberate into further forms of subjugation and coercion of peoples and land.

This included the expansion of the Hacienda system, which was later introduced to compound the interest invested in the Encomienda system. While the encomienda system served to act as a way to exploit labor and land from the native population while pretending the people would gain benefits, the Hacienda system reinforced the control the Spanish assumed in the early days of colonization. Here is what this entailed, and how these consequences set up for the marginalization, degradation and structures that pushed Filipinos into cycles of poverty:

H I U B Z

The Hacienda System

Focusing on agricultural "production," this system was implemented when the Spanish had already created "estates," and large landholdings that were grown since the empire's presence in the islands. These estates were called Haciendas. With wealthy Spaniard landowners and families being at the top of these systems, indigenous peasants would be heavily exploited and used to fill rolls of tenants, sharecroppers or laborers. These working conditions were often harsh and often these workers would end up in debt and trapped in cycles "tied to their landowners."

1. Economic Impact - Within this system, the economic impact was characterized by the extraction and exploitation of resources from the land, without providing benefits or opportunities for the indigenous Filipino population. Profits accrued primarily to the Hacendados, or landowners, and the colonial administration, perpetuating cycles of generational wealth that predominantly benefited Spaniards while leaving the majority of the native Filipino population marginalized.
2. Social Fabric - The social implications of this system were marked by entrenched stratification, with the colonial elite enjoying privileges inherent to their status while forcing Filipinos into labor on the Haciendas for minimal to no compensation. These conditions fostered enduring inequalities across various facets of daily life, including race, class, and land ownership, resulting in cycles of poverty that severely restricted upward mobility opportunities.
3. Lack of Structure - with the intricate planning and dominance by the Spanish, their guise of implementing a structure is inherently a lie. While they set themselves up for adequate and functional infrastructure as well as stability, this reality was not extended to native populations displaced for the reason to serve them. While they were taken from their ways of life, they were not given a substitute equal to what the Spanish established, leading to a lack of infrastructure and lack of appropriate housing and access to life's necessities. This then set up a cycle of informal housing and destitution.



Intramuros was named
"city within a city"

the main goal of
intramuros was to separate
the new elite class of Spanish
from native Filipinos

Legacies of the Spanish Regime

With systems such as the Encomienda and Hacienda Systems, as well as the indoctrination of culture, religion, urban structure and government ideology, the Spanish created an imbalanced coalition that fed their economy and left native populations destitute. Although resistance and native populations aimed to fight against the Spanish, their mark was indelibly left and have continued to affect the Philippines in the present day. Although the Spanish regime ended in 1898 through the Treaty of Paris, these systems endured long after they were abolished in name. Large landholdings were still in the names of the Spanish elite landholders, and large accumulations of wealth were concentrated alike in the pockets of the Spanish.

The erosion and culture through these systems are only amplified by the intersections of coercion implemented by the Spanish. In the present day, these historical injustices continue to persist and shape socioeconomic landscapes and ideology in connection to preservation of land, social welfare and government systems. The legacies of "colonial-era land tenure systems have contributed to the landlessness, poverty, and vulnerability among indigenous peoples and rural farmers." Additionally, the historic indoctrination of religion and culture further reinforce the "edur[ing] power structures that further marginalize native peoples."

Within the context of the War on Drugs, it is evident that marginalized communities, including the urban poor within Metro Manila slums, are disproportionately affected and tantalized by government crackdowns related to drug crime. The same socioeconomic disparities "rooted in colonial legacies" have created these impoverished communities, and push those within slums to be more susceptible to drug related crime, trafficking, violence and addiction. Furthermore, the government's response to drug crime heavily focused on retaliation rather than rehabilitation fall in line with the "victim-blaming" mentality of colonizers that target impoverished communities and lead to human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings.

The Spanish's colonial regime continues to reverberate in the present-day Philippines, and exacerbates new contemporary issues such as the War on Drugs through the reality of structuring and abandonment of communities that colonization has created. Furthermore, the structures and lasting colonial consequences not only created inequalities and discrepancies in Filipino society, but it paved the way for other colonial powers to compound their efforts and add on to their tactics of extraction and control. This began with the Treaty of Paris, and the transfer of sovereignty to the United States, starting the transition from Spanish colonial rule to American Imperialism and Neo-Colonialist domination.

U.S. Colonial Rule and Neo-Colonial Dynamics

In the aftermath of the Spanish-American war, the Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898, freeing the Philippine's from Spain's sovereignty. Filipinos were then shocked and betrayed to hear that the U.S. would pay "20 million" to annex the entire archipelago of the Philippines under their control. Rebellions would rise under the esteemed general and hero Emilio Aguinaldo, but ultimately, these efforts were squandered by the U.S. military during the Philippine-American War from 1899-1902.

This marked a new era of yet another colonial force infiltrating the Philippines and assuming control from across the ocean. By this point, Filipinos for centuries had been rising up against the Spanish, and a shared nationalism was grown between them. Along with this shared nationalistic identity was the growth of their militarism and their defense. Although resistance was strong against this new precedent of America coming "to save their little brown brother," some Filipinos did "collaborate with the U.S. against their compatriots." These individuals mostly were the "same elite individuals who had just a short time before serving the Spanish."

After this defeat, the U.S. assumed militaristic and capitalistic control over the economic and welfare of the Philippines. Expanding on their global hegemonic presence, they implemented changes to the Philippines and compounded the structures set in place by the Spanish.

U.



COLONIAL

The Education System

during this period of U.S. Colonization, the establishment of an educational system mirroring the American system was put into use. In schools, English would be taught as the medium of instruction, and these systems and language implementation aimed to assimilate Filipinos into American culture and further westernization of systems.

1. Notably, many Filipinos use "Taglish" when speaking, a mixture of Tagalog and English. Many of the older generations of Filipinos have fears that "deep" tagalog will disappear due to the trend of mixing the two languages, almost rendering speaking entirely in Tagalog as "obsolete"

Military Infrastructure Development

As the U.S. assumed control, their main concerns included strategy in relation to having a presence in Asia. This included establishment of military bases such as Naval bases and airfields. These military bases often took the place of indigenous, sacred land and displaced Filipinos, also fostering a culture of dependency around said bases. This led to a rise in prostitution culture and human trafficking around U.S. military bases.

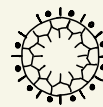
1. Additionally, with the U.S. Military having a looming presence, the Philippines' military eventually became Americanized, adopting military tactics, doctrines as well as organizational structures.
2. U.S. military bases in the Philippines still continue to be an active force, serving the international interest of the United States.

Policing Culture

The Establishment of the Philippine Constabulary (PC) was both a cultural and structural change within law enforcement practices and methodology. This Constabulary was created as a "colonial police force." This force was tasked with the mission to "maintain law and order" through paramilitary organizations and primarily targeting counterinsurgency efforts and "internal security"

1. This included the reorganization of local law enforcement as well, extending to training, ideology and procedures.
2. Jails, courts, and police departments were added to the Filipino Infrastructure at this time.

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Political Reforms

During this time, policies and laws were enacted that benefited and were passed with the aim to solidify U.S. interest and control over democratic processes. This primarily included the establishment of a "bicameral legislative system." Modeled after the American system, many laws were passed regarding the governing of towns, educational reform, public health and taxation laws. These were all under the gaze of the American government and their oversight often played a role in the construction of policies.

1. A notable example of how deeply the U.S. was entrenched in the new form of government in the Philippines includes the addition of "qualifications" and "requirements" needed to run for office including "property ownership." this often limited those who could run for office and gave privilege to the elite that were previously privileged in the time of the Spanish.

The Economy

While the Hacienda and Encomienda systems were abolished in name, these structures were still deeply entrenched in the ways of life that Filipinos had come to know. This included the accumulation of wealth to continue to be distributed among few wealthy elites and the continuation of displacement of traditional agricultural practices and knowledge.

1. This also included the incorporation of "American businesses hav[ing] access to Philippines, further integrating the islands into the global economy."
2. This new system of "land tenure" included American corporations having favor over concentrated areas of land, and this marginalized small-scale farmers and indigenous populations
3. The implications of land insecurity among native Filipinos perpetuated cycles of poverty due to hinder access to credit, agricultural opportunities and government services.

U.S. Colonial Legacies

These colonial changes to the Philippine landscape favored American interest and capitalization through extractive practices. Through further skyrocketing of urbanization within this era, with the addition to American controlled industries and corporations, Filipinos were once again left out of the reap of benefits from their own resources, and left to live on the margins of society and wealth. Because of the expansion of U.S. controlled agricultural practices, Filipinos during this era sought to migrate from “rural to urban settings to seek employment in cities like Manila.” This led to the accelerated growth of Metro Manila and the rise of the informal economy and informal settlement communities seeking to better their economic prosperity. Often met with little to no opportunities, migrant workers fell into cycles of poverty and a lack of care from the government focused on U.S. based interests an ocean away.

Furthermore, because of these changes of infrastructure to mainly serve the American way, this facilitated further economic exploitation through the crime of taking space from Filipinos to live, grow and expand their freedoms. The economic and social policies implemented during U.S. colonization “widened the gap between the wealthy elite and the impoverished population,” and led to the organized abandonment of native populations within Metro Manila. This extended into inadequate housing, inadequate provision of basic services such as “water, sanitation and healthcare in many urban areas of Metro Manila and contribut[ed] to the growth of slum areas in Metro Manila.”

These repercussions fueled a national Philippine resistance that deepened the fervor of nationalism and continued resistance towards American Rule. In 1935, America wrote the Philippine Constitution of 1935, and in 1946 post World War II, America finally relinquished control over the islands.

Neo-Colonialism and Impact today to the War on Drugs

Although this independence was a “significant turning point” in Philippine history, scholars often argue that this departure from U.S. colonial control was not so much a complete sovereignty, but an “independence without decolonization.” The realities of the structures created were still the day to day of society.

Looking at the continuing affects of U.S. Colonialism in relation to the War on Drugs, we can see that through patterns of policing, socio-economic domination and government policies mirroring American ideals, the heightened possibility for the violation of human rights astronomically correlates to the War on Drug’s casualties and practices.

With the implication of a neo-colonialist presence in the Philippines, we can see that although the U.S. relinquished complete control, their presence was vehemently stratified through government structures, formal law enforcement establishment, and American interest through inherent national ties and economic practices. On top of these inequalities, discrepancies and constructions of influence created through U.S. Colonization, we can look even further at rhetoric and policies regarding drug reform that with critical analyzation provides context for Duterte’s agenda on Drug crime. These policies further exacerbate already vulnerable communities created by colonialism and corruption.

Narcotic Prohibition between the Philippines and the U.S.

Looking critically at American influence in the Philippines regarding Duterte's drug war, we can look at two intersections that contribute to the large-scale focus on drug crime. Notably, the rhetoric and tactics employed in Duterte's drug war can be related with caution to Ronald Reagan's rhetoric and policies during his campaign against drugs in the 1970's and 80's, as well as the implementation of the "Plan Colombia Model" in which the U.S. established.

The Emphasis on Law and Order and Control

During the U.S. Colonial rule, aside from the establishment of policing practices mirroring the United States, the intrinsic ties created during this time continued to affect national policy with American interest, and heavy influence in regards to politics and culture. Relating to the War on Drugs, the rhetoric employed by Duterte can be likened to that of U.S. politicians such as Ronald Reagan during his campaign against drugs in the 1970's and 80's. This rhetoric shared an emphasis on aggressive law enforcement and punitive measures such as incarceration and minimum sentences for drug related offenses. Furthermore, the drug interdiction and eradication practices can be compared to America's methodology of "cracking down" and the "expansion of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)" during Reagan's efforts to increase funding for "drug interdiction efforts." With Duterte's expansion of drug related policies and funding towards law enforcement recall a similar approach to demolition vs. rehabilitation.

Controversies and Human Rights Implications

Both Reagan's and Duterte's policies and tactics have been regarded as controversial and have fallen into categories of human rights concerns. While Reagan's War on Drugs was criticized for its disproportionate impact on communities of color (also systemically and historically oppressed), rise of mass incarceration and militarization of law enforcement, Duterte's campaign has been criticized for extrajudicial killings, inhumane practices and the targeting of marginalized communities, as well as the militarization of law enforcement.

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Plan Colombia Model

The Plan Colombia Model was a program established in the 2000's by the United States aiming to provide military aid and training to countries in Latin America to combat drug trafficking and insurgency movements. While this model aimed to eradicate pervasive drug activity in countries through aid and efficiency of destruction of drug-crops, this model often gained controversy due to the emphasized presence of military and brutalistic approaches towards those involved in Drug crime.

While the Philippines was not directly a player in this model, it is applicable in a sense to the "broader framework" of globalization and "militarized drug control strategies influen[cing] policy discussions and approaches" in the country. The United States additionally "continues to provide substantial financial assistance" in regards to narcotic prohibition in the Philippines including "areas of law enforcement and counter-narcotic efforts." This international "cooperation" further provides the legal and cultural groundwork for national perceptions towards drug, as well as influence for enforcement practices.



Tying it together...

A Neo-Liberalist Perspective

It can be said that The War on Drugs concentrated in Metro Manila exemplifies the structures of organized abandonment inherited from legacies of colonialism and imperial domination while simultaneously reinforcing existing power structures created by this history. This is evidenced through the intersection of socioeconomic disparities and systemic inequalities with the environmental impacts of the War's policing and vigilante tactics, particularly invigorated within Metro Manila's marginalized communities. The implications for social and environmental justice within this urbanization and law enforcement framework underscore the perpetuation of historical injustices shaped by colonialism and imperialism, ultimately highlighting a tragic and colossal violation of human rights.

Through the various intersections of socio-economic disparities and systemic inequalities, the structures at play inherently bear colonial and neo-colonial scars and function with the social hierarchies established during these eras. As seen through the histories depicted within this zine, the legacies starting from over 400 years ago still exist and burgeon into further inequalities such as the Drug War. As this violation of human rights exacerbates and jabs the weak points created by colonialism and imperialism, this only pushes marginalized communities further down and reinforces their cycles of oppression and poverty. By employing neo-colonial law enforcement tactics alongside a bureaucratic emphasis on quantitative outcomes rather than qualitative rehabilitation, the resultant storm encapsulates a carceral and inhumane neo-liberalist strategy for addressing systemic issues, thereby perpetuating a system inherently incapable of serving all.



The emphasis on quantitative results reflects a neoliberal culture prioritizing profit margins over social welfare, human rights, and environmental sustainability. This cultural ethos is rooted in the historical globalization and neoliberal agendas of the Global North, particularly in relation to the colonization and subjugation of the Philippines. Delving deeper into these issues not only identifies the United States and Spain as oppressors of land and people but also highlights the suppression of thought, freedom of expression, and mental prosperity.

To truly address the social and environmental injustices exacerbated by the War on Drugs in Metro Manila, a concerted effort is needed to confront and dismantle the entrenched power structures inherited from colonialism and neo-colonialism. This requires not only accountability for human rights violations but also a commitment to systemic change that prioritizes the rights, dignity, and well-being of all Filipinos. By acknowledging and reckoning with the historical injustices embedded within its policies and institutions, the Philippines can begin to chart a path towards a more equitable, just, and sustainable future for all its citizens.



Hope for a Change?

Although this reality has come to be through history and continuation of practices, there is hope for a better tomorrow, and a restructuring of the land with Filipinos in mind. Though these structures has made way for the War on Drugs, reform and policy change is still possible, and a change towards rehabilitation is being heavily pushed by journalists and activists. Former President Manuel L. Quezon once said, "I would rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by Americans." This rings true throughout the history of resilience by Filipinos not only in relation to colonization by the U.S.



Although the Philippines has been colonized by many oppressive forces, the *lakas** and *bayanihan** inherently in the society of Filipinos prevails and has resisted and moved through these eras with dignity and fervor. Through the youthful population of activists and emerging innovative leaders, the road to "progress" may be fraught with difficulties and obstacles but the harnessing of collective aspirations for a better future will always prevail.

And this "progress" inherently will take on a new meaning for Filipinos. Because although the world may view this future change to be moving on a trajectory towards a new way, taking back connection to land and national heritage is inherently reciprocal in Filipino culture. To say that "progress" is "real" is to say that Filipinos "evolved from primitive, simple civilizations," and that is anything but the truth. The word "progress" will be rendered moot in the context of Filipinos returning to their origins and claiming what is rightfully theirs, dismantling the notion that stepping away from structures given to them is moving forward.

In actuality, the day Filipinos have true sovereignty will be the day things are returned to a true balance, neither forward nor backwards.

Lakas - strength of energy

Bayanihan - literally meaning "being a bayan," this word is derived from the word *Bayan*, meaning "town, nation or community." Thus, being a bayan "refers to the spirit of communal unity and cooperation."



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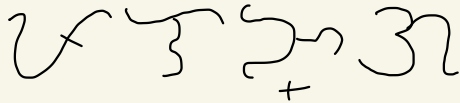
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