A Nation on the Line

Padios, Jan M.

Published by Duke University Press

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A Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines.
I wrote this book over many seasons and semesters; in half a dozen offices and apartments; in a few countries and time zones; and during significant life events. Although my solitary working style led me to isolation for most of that time, I was never alone.

From start to finish, the call center employees who generously agreed to take part in my research ensured that I would have no shortage of voices in my audio recorder during fieldwork or in my head later, when sitting down to write. While I hope *A Nation on the Line* can be read as one big acknowledgment of the lives and labor of these workers, I would be remiss to not explicitly express my boundless gratitude to each and every person who shared with me the stories and insights that became the basis of this project. They are a reminder that ethnographic knowledge production is a relation built on reciprocity between people and that it thus takes many forms, not simply those bound together in a book.

As an American studies master’s and doctoral student at New York University (NYU), I had the great fortune of being taught, mentored, and advised by an exceptional group of scholars. Arlene Dávila, Lisa Duggan, Radha Hegde, and Andrew Ross—together with Robyn Rodriguez from Rutgers and later the University of California, Davis—were a remarkable dissertation committee for whom I am and always will be immensely appreciative. Arlene Dávila was an especially devoted dissertation committee chair and overall mentor whose invaluable support over a total of nine years meant the difference between surviving academia and thriving in it. Graduate school also gave me the privilege of taking seminars or doing qualifying exams with Adam Green, Philip Harper, Walter Johnson,
Crystal Parikh, Nicholas de Genova, and the late Neil Smith. Discussions and ideas from these experiences often return to me in moments of writing and teaching, reminding me that learning is anything but linear. Through the Asian/Pacific/American studies program at NYU, I also had the honor of learning from the marvelous Luis Francia and meeting Agnes (Bing) Magtoto, a warm and wonderful person who did translation for chapter 5.

In addition, NYU brought me a bevy of friends and colleagues whose brilliance has strengthened every fiber of my being, from my scholarship to my politics. Dinners and phone calls with Miles Grier, organizing and general rabble-rousing with Rana Jaleel, travel and revelry with Johana Londoño and Ariana Ochoa Camacho, and coffee and walks with Dylan Yeats have inspired and sustained me throughout the years. Thanks, as well, to Kari Hensley, Dacia Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, who, along with Ariana, Rana, and Dylan, made up Mortal Kombat, a.k.a. my dissertation writing group; to Andy Cornell, for our conversations on autonomist Marxism; to A. J. Bauer, Emma Kreyche, Marisol LeBrón, Justin Leroy, and Zenia Kish for making the History of Capitalism seminar challenging and fulfilling, and for collaborations on conferences over the years; and to Vanessa Agard-Jones, Becca Howes-Mitchell, Elizabeth Mesok, and Ronak Kapadia, whose kind encouragement and astute comments on early portions of my dissertation during the workshop “Jumping Scales: Studying and Writing about Transnational Processes” (held at NYU’s Institute for Public Knowledge and directed by Sally Merry and Nicolas Guilhot) helped make this project what it is today. Thanks, too, to all the friends and comrades I made through the Graduate Student Organizing Committee/United Auto Workers (gsoc/UAW) Local 2110. You sparked in me a political commitment to workers and labor issues that I have carried forward every day since leaving NYU.

In August 2012 I joined the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, where I have enjoyed an increasingly rare opportunity in the academy—the chance to stick around, grow intellectually, and enrich my scholarship. First and foremost, I thank Christina Hanhardt for generously lending me her time, attention, and advice. I am undeserving of the many ways Christina has championed me over the years, and I can only hope to do right by her support and return in some small measure her boundless humor, wisdom, brilliance, and friendship. Because of her, along with Janelle Wong, whose loyalty and support I feel at every bench-
mark and hurdle on the road to tenure review, my mentorship at Maryland has left nothing to be desired. To the other faculty members of my department, present and retired—Asim Ali, La Marr Bruce, Robert Chester, Jason Farman, Perla Guerrero, Jim Maffie, Nancy Mirabal, Sheri Parks, Mary Sies, Psyche Williams-Forson, Jo Paoletti, and Nancy Struna—thank you for creating an environment in which thinking critically, caring for students, and supporting junior faculty are the rules rather than the exceptions. Were it not for the work and confidence of the committee that hired me—Michelle Rowley, Christina Hanhardt, Psyche Williams-Forson, Jason Farman, Michael Casiano, and Tiffany Lethobo King—I, and most likely this book, would not be here at all. Moreover, Julia C. Johns and Tammi Archer have been great administrators who keep the wheels on the department, and although we can now only admire her from across campus, Betsy Yuen, our former academic coordinator, still sets the gold standard for administrative assistance and is still a wonderful friend. At Maryland I have also had the honor of working with a number of fantastic graduate students whose intellectual presence pushes me to be a better and more engaged scholar, teacher, and advisor. To the students of AMST 601, Transnational Political Economy and Cultures, and the Cultural Politics of Work and Labor, and to my advisees—thank you. To Sharada Balachandran Orihuela and Perla Guerrero: although we often wondered whether we had each made a huge mistake, I know that becoming friends with you has been one of the best decisions of my life. Thanks, too, to Randy Ontiveros for such easy camaraderie and conversation over the past several years.

For many academics, life’s rhythm is marked by a seemingly endless cycle of applications, deadlines, submissions, and long waits, leading to various measures of exaltation and disappointment. I am fortunate to have received much financial and institutional support for my research and this book. At Maryland I received a Qualitative Seed Grant from the Center for Race, Gender, and Ethnicity; a Summer Research and Scholarship Award from the Graduate School; and subvention from the College of Arts and Humanities and the Department of American Studies. At NYU I was the recipient of the Mellon Dissertation Fellowship in the Humanities, a Torch Fieldwork Fellowship, the Henry H. MacCracken Fellowship, and numerous dean’s fellowships from the Graduate School of Arts and Science, as well as a dissertation grant from the Council for Media and Cul-
ture. For every award that I received, however, there were perhaps half a
dozens that I did not. However, through those experiences I found gen-
erous readers and terrific guidance in Deirdre de la Cruz, Martin Manalan-
san, Akiko Takeyama, and Ara Wilson. Thanks, too, to Sumanth Gopinath,
Jason Stanyek, Carole McGranahan, and John Collins for editorial work on
my publications; Sumanth especially has been a lovely colleague from afar.

Outside of my official institutional affiliations, I have found a scholarly
and spiritual home in the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS).
The care, warmth, and brilliance of the scholars who constitute the associ-
ation is humbling, to say the least. I presented an early draft of the introduc-
tion for this book at the AAAS Faculty Workshop retreat at Northwestern
University in 2014, where Nitasha Sharma and Tina Chen, and the mem-
ers of our breakout group—Jason Chang, Julian Lim, Kevin Escudero,
Jeannie Shinozuka, and Melissa Borja—read it with rigor and offered en-
couragement. Over the years of attending AAAS, I have had the honor and
privilege of presenting my work alongside Michael Paul Atienza, Fritzie
de Mata, Josen Diaz, Robert Diaz, Valerie Francisco, Faith Kares, Victor
Roman Mendoza, Joseph Ponce, and Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez, and I
have learned so much from Vivek Bald, Genevieve Clutario, Augusto Espir-
itu, Kale Bantigue Fajardo, Vernadette Gonzalez, Theo Gonzalvez, Allan
Isaac, Martin Manalansan, Christopher Patterson, and Robyn Rodriguez.
Stanley Thangaraj, whom I met through AAAS and who quickly brought
me into the fold of a New York City–based writing group that included
Griselda Rodriguez and Brian Montes, and, later, included Sarah Muir and
Lili Shi, has been a sharp reader and enthusiastic colleague. In the Philip-
pines I found generous support and friendship from Oscar Campomanes
and Cori Perez, who gave me an intellectual home away from home at the
Ateneo de Manila University, and brilliance, inspiration, and solidarity
from Sarah Raymundo, from the University of the Philippines Dilliman.

In New York City I have wonderful friends and confidants who have
responded to year after year of incremental updates about the book with
unwavering excitement. Emily Clark continues to inspire my writing and
other creative projects, while sustaining me through salad dinners on
weeknights and afternoon hangouts on the weekend. Carolyn and David
Hahn have shown me a level of warmth, caring, and kindness that I look
forward to returning over a lifetime of friendship. Kavita Das and Om Au-
ror have been delightful dinner companions over the years, and I cherish
the parallel progress of Kavita’s book and my own; it’s been fun having a friend and cousin-in-law to trade updates on drafts and the process as a whole. With Isra Ali I have enjoyed mutual cheerleading of our academic accomplishments and not an insignificant amount of fried chicken and pastry. With Amy H. I have shared so much of myself and received twenty years of love, peace, and refuge in return.

To my family: Sid Iyer helped secure the quiet space that I need to write but also made possible beautiful vacations and relaxing Saturdays that helped me forget about the book altogether, often by crowding out my neurotic thoughts with his brilliant humor and engaging conversation. Thank you, Sid, for reminding me that I can only ever do my best and hoping for my sake that I don’t. My parents, Elma and Tony Padios, gave me the tools to not only write a book but believe I could write a book, which is half the battle. Elma Padios now knows more about how academic books get published than she ever expected, and her care, attention, and prayers have meant the world to me. My sister, Mae-Marie Coleman, could not have been a greater model of how to remain focused and persevere despite obstacles and adversity—something it turns out is quite important when writing a book! Also, let the record show that my sister was incredibly nice to me when we were young. People say it’s the gap in our ages, but I know it’s because my sister possesses magnificent powers of care and attention, a vitality I see at work with her husband and son, whom I am grateful to have as a brother-in-law and a nephew. Elson, Norma, and Megan Delid—always right across the Hudson River and always willing to take me (or my stuff) into their home—have shown me steady support since I made New York City my home over twenty years ago. The warmth and love of the members of the Maghinay family and the Padios clan—spread across many provinces, islands, oceans, and continents—have touched every aspect of this book; in many ways, they were its primary motivation. I do not exaggerate when I say none of this would have been possible without Mia and Dixon Chiu, whose care for me in the summer of 2005 was formidable; may Mia, Dylan, Damien, and Mckhyla Brielle get all that they wish for in life, for they surely deserve it. My cousin Tristan (Che Che) Dela Torre Capiendo has been a wonderful friend and informal research assistant to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. Last but not least, Hema and Sivan Iyer have been well-wishers for my success for many years now. I look forward to finding more ways for us to connect as a family.
Finally, there is nothing like writing a book to remind you of all the people who showed you the treasures and joys of literacy. I had many (public school!) teachers—Shelley Sawyers, Denise Ousley, Barbara Walker, and Kristy Kosaka—and professors at Columbia University, especially Taylor Carman, who showed me how to love not only reading but rereading, not only writing but revising, not only books but scholarship. From there came a world of possibilities, including the chance to work with the remarkable Ken Wissoker, who saw this book from start to finish and offered expert guidance along the way; Olivia Polk, who provided invaluable editorial assistance and soothed my anxiety with her quick and thorough email responses; Jade Brooks, who shepherded the book in its early stages; Lisa Bintrim and Susan Albury, who managed the book project, including overseeing the expert copyediting for which Duke books are renowned; Bonnie Perkel, who helped secure subvention; Chad Royal, who set the marketing in motion; and Steve Cohn and Elizabeth Ault, who made *A Nation on the Line* available to Knowledge Unlatched, which will in turn make the book available open access. To them, the many staff members at Duke University Press working behind the scenes, the Duke Faculty Board, and the anonymous reviewers of this book’s early drafts, I owe a great many thanks.