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**UNDERNEATH PROSPERITY
MIGRANT WORKERS IN TAIWAN**

By

Wan-Lin Tsao

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

UNDERNEATH PROSPERITY MIGRANT WORKERS IN TAIWAN

By

Wan-Lin Tsao

The presence of migrant workers is a common phenomenon in industrialized countries. Its root reasons are the unequal degree of development of different countries, the imbalance between markets and between demand and supply of manpower. In recent years, Taiwan's prosperity has attracted about 200,000 migrant workers from nearby poorer countries to come to Taiwan. These migrant workers are struggling on the bottom of the social structure and receiving almost no social care. This thesis, a documentary, aims to explore migrant workers' real stories hidden in a corner of Taiwanese society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This video production has been the most unforgettable experience of my life. I was born in a middle-class family in Taiwan and have a good education. I never dreamed that I would work and live with migrant workers. Through this production experience, I did it. This project led me to cross boundaries and barriers between people and look at people based on our humanity.

Sincere thanks to Bob Albers for his instruction and encouragement offered during the whole production process. Working together will be the most treasured memory of mine. I would also like to thank Lisa L. Whiting and David McCarty for their suggestions and concerns.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

Taiwan, a small island without sufficient natural resources, has created an economic miracle mostly due to the Chinese virtue of hard-work and thriftiness. With commodities made in Taiwan found all around the world, by 1994 the per-capita income in Taiwan had risen to ten thousand US dollars per person¹ and people enjoy a better quality of life, but have lost the virtue they had before. Underneath the prosperity of the Taiwanese society, issues such as cultural degradation and economic disorder make the issue of economic growth somewhat of an embarrassment. Instead of enjoying the benefits of an improved economic state, Taiwan is faced with many problems spawned by the same situation Taiwan chose to create.

Many problems following the economic growth have to be resolved. The importation of migrant workers reveals a controversial and complicated situation when paired with Taiwanese social and economic changes in recent years.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the issue of migrant workers in Taiwan from different perspectives while attempting to arrive at a more humane social system beneficial to the Taiwanese society and all workers. In order to explain the significance of this subject matter, brief background information is needed.

A Resolution to Manpower Shortage

As personal income and educational levels grow, most Taiwanese young people are not willing to be blue-collar workers, doing "difficult, dangerous, and dirty"(3D) jobs anymore². The prosperity of

the stock market and service business is more attractive to them. Social values have changed; making money by working at low-class jobs is not dignified at all. A chronic manpower shortage is endangering this country's economic basis since Taiwan's economic growth is heavily dependent on the development of labor-intensive manufacturing industries such as textiles, metal working and electronics assembly. The manpower shortage is also a major cause of delay in construction of some infrastructure projects³.

The importation of migrant workers has served as an effective resolution to this problem. Since the mid-1980s, the number of migrant workers in Taiwan has grown very rapidly, almost out of the government's control. In 1990, Taiwan's government first announced its open policy of legally importing laborers from Southeast Asia. From then on, Taiwan has been gradually opening its doors to legal importation of migrant workers in an effort to relieve the chronic manpower shortage. However, before Taiwan's recent open policy, tens of thousands of illegal migrant workers had been imported by private industries. Even now, the number of those undocumented workers is still far beyond the number of legal migrant workers in Taiwan.

To those migrant workers from less developed countries, such as Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, high wages, usually several times higher than at home, and an abundance of jobs motivate them to come to Taiwan⁴. However, the phenomenon of the increasing inflow of migrant workers brings about more complicated problems to the Taiwanese society and government.

Useful But Troublesome

Taiwan is the second most densely populated country in the world after Bangladesh⁵. More and more migrant workers entering Taiwan and possibly obtaining permanent residency will make Taiwan's high population ratio become worse. Issues such as availability of the social resources, the threat of new diseases, and other social problems such as crimes and racial conflicts are major concerns. The Taiwanese government is trying to reduce any side effects from the importation of migrant workers through strict regulations.

First, legally imported migrant workers are limited to working in certain manufacturing industries, priority construction projects, and such services as domestic helper and living nurses. Employers are also required to take a heavy responsibility of supervision. Under these regulations, a legal migrant worker cannot come with dependents, get married, fail to pass a physical examination, become ill or injured, take a part-time job or "violate social order and good custom": otherwise he or she will be expelled⁶. Those contract workers at construction sites are, for example, required to register before leaving company dormitories at night as a way of discouraging local contacts⁷.

This kind of inhumane treatment results in critics saying the regulations impose unreasonable standards and violate those workers' human rights. Such treatment is also one of reasons that makes more and more legal contract workers escape from employers' supervision, abandon their legal working status, and work illegally in some places in Taiwan⁸. The 1990 shift in policy, from absolute prohibition to

conditional opening to hire migrant workers, does not work well in terms of controlling the growing number of undocumented workers in Taiwan.

Purpose of This Thesis

The significance of problems around the importation of migrant workers has been noticed by the mass media since 1986. However, there is almost no thorough examination about this issue in the form of a television production, especially from the migrant workers' viewpoints. Since the three broadcasting networks are owned or controlled by Taiwan's government, almost all content of television programs facilitate the power of control and maintain the dominant ideology. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to provide alternative perspectives on topics like this, especially for particular marginalized or disempowered social groups, such as low-class laborers.

Based on a humane concern, this thesis is a documentary whose approach focuses mainly on migrant workers' real stories in Taiwan, such as their poor working and living conditions, loneliness, homesickness, and unfair treatment under the government's strict regulations. Further, those stories will be interwoven with the discussion about controversial issues related to the importation of migrant workers in Taiwan, including the broker system and the appropriateness of the policy regarding human rights. By exploring these problems, this production may help the people and government of Taiwan to rethink the issue, resulting in a more productive and healthy society.

Chinese people have long played the role of exporting cheap labor to countries around the world. Since the 16th century, in America, Australia, Europe, even Southeast Asia, those Chinese people suffered the pain of homesickness and struggled in foreign lands for higher wages and better lives. Near the end of the 20th century, the migrant tide seems to be reversed in Taiwan. Due to its rapid economic growth, Taiwan's relatively higher wage level and affluent job opportunities spur enormous numbers of foreign laborers to come there to make quick money; the reason for migration is just the same as that of most Chinese immigrants' in past years.

The inflow of migrant workers is a complicated phenomenon resulting from a structural change of Taiwan's society and economy. Since it is a hot issue in Taiwan, lots of archival data are useful in understanding this topic -- most in the printed news media and some in academic journals in Taiwan. The following statement will analyze this from three perspectives; social and economic background, the policy attitude, and social reactions.

Social and Economic Background

Taiwan's economic success is mainly a result of its strategy of dependent development to create its economic growth: dependent on foreign capital, markets, and productive techniques. Since the 1960s, relying on its cheap and sufficient labor to attract foreign capitalists' investment and aggressively developing labor-intensive

industries, Taiwan has overcome disadvantages of deficiency of capital and natural resources. Its rapid industrialization created an economic miracle. Taiwan has been a kind of export processing zone for goods exported to overseas countries, in which America is the biggest target market. After years of development, Taiwan's economic circumstance has encountered a transition from the shortage of capital and surplus of labor force in its early days to the shortage of manpower and surplus of capital since the mid-1980s⁹.

Economic growth is a major cause of the chronic manpower shortage in Taiwan. A continuous upswing of Taiwan's economic performance has been accelerating the improvement of personal income and educational level in Taiwan. More and more young people are willing to pursue higher educational achievement, with less and less motivation to participate in the labor force's lowest class jobs. In an industrialized process, changing the economic structure from manufacturing to service is an inevitable trend. In Taiwan, the economic structure trend toward service businesses also influences the employment structure. As a result, almost half of manpower is in the service businesses now.¹⁰ Besides, the promotion of birth control in the early days is gradually presenting its effect which is also a cause of the supply of labor power being in a downswing.

--"Hot" Money

Taiwan's rapid growth in the past 40 years has resulted in an increase in per capita GNP from US\$137 in 1951 to over US\$10,000 in 1994. This represents one of the fastest increases in GNP in the world¹¹. During the early 1950s the shortage of foreign exchange led

the government to simultaneously adopt the policies of import substitution and export promotion. The adoption of these policies resulted in a turnaround from a trade deficit position before 1971 to a surplus afterward. The continued increase of trade surplus resulted in a rapid accumulation of foreign exchange reserves. At the end of May 1994, the foreign exchange reserves reached 90 billion US\$. This number is just next to that of Japan in the world.¹² As a result of the continuing trade surplus, the foreign exchange reserves keep on going to an abnormal level in Taiwan. However, the government still maintained the same policy. Consequently, in 1986, money supply (M1b) grew by a record 51.42%. The growing trade surplus also brought about a strong pressure of appreciation of the New Taiwan (NT) dollar. But, the Taiwan's Central Bank did not adopt fundamental adjustment measures and still maintained only a gradual appreciation of the NT dollar. This induced the anticipation of a large appreciation of the NT dollar and led to the influx of so-called "hot" money into Taiwan¹³.

--Decline of Social Values

Since 1987, Taiwan has experienced a period of economic disorder because of "too much money". One example is the amazing growth of the Taiwanese stock market. However, the new affluence has changed people's judgment regarding social value. The Taiwanese society has been plagued by an atmosphere of greed, as a side effect of its continual economic growth. Those who can rapidly make fortunes are admired by most people in Taiwan. Since 1987, the Taiwanese stock market has experienced a rocket growth, both in the number of personal investors and the exchange of currency in the stock market. Within three years, the Taiwan Ja-

Chaun Index, the index in the Taiwanese stock markets, climbed from under 1,000 to over 10,000 points. The amount of daily exchange of currency has broken the highest record among the global stock markets; in 1990, the highest record of daily exchanging currency has been over 80 billion US dollars per day in the Taiwanese stock market. Dabbling in stocks has been the most popular "activity" on the island.¹⁴ This special phenomenon was noticed by international media which have satirically called Taiwan the "Republic of Casino", since R.O.C. is the abbreviation of Taiwan's formal name from the "Republic of China".

Following the prosperity of the stock market, around the end of 1980s, illegal gambling games, such as "All Happy" and "Six Directions' Lottery" flourished across the whole island, especially among the less-educated populace: laborers, farmers, housewives, and the like. The speculating games, the stock market, those illegal gambling games plus the rapidly rising price of real estate, resulted in a reallocation of social wealth. A low-class worker could become a millionaire. The dream of winning an instant fortune kept lots of workers away from concentrating on their ordinary jobs and made their working "quality" decline. This kind of social value made the Taiwanese chronic manpower shortage worse.

--Social Movements

After the government lifted Martial Law in 1987, social movements, such as the environmental movement, the farmers' movement, and the laborers' movement, have proliferated throughout Taiwan. The awakening of laborers' rights, the increasing demand for higher wages, less working hours, and more leisure time, is a headache for employers.

Thus, even though there are still lots of laborers not getting involved in the gambling games, many native workers are not ideal to Taiwanese business owners, since they are not cheap and obedient as before.

--Illegal Workers

Relying on migrant manpower from those countries with lower income levels seems to be a good solution to the labor shortage with the best cost efficiency to employers in Taiwan. However, earlier foreign laborers all were illegal workers, who entered into Taiwan through illegal access and were harbored by employers. Thus, it is not known exactly when those illegal workers began to come to Taiwan. Until 1987, the issue of migrant workers was ignored by the news media. According to various archival data, migrant workers were first illegally employed by private small to medium sized factories around the mid-1980s. For the purpose of sustaining their profits in that changing social and economic circumstance, some employers were daring to employ illegal workers without the government's permission.

Those illegal migrant workers usually were introduced by illegal manpower brokers in the form of traveling agents or trade companies who were familiar with the affairs of countries in the Southeast Asia, including Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Since wage levels are about three to ten times higher in Taiwan compared to the income level in their own countries¹⁵, those illegal brokers easily attracted workers to Taiwan, even though they would ask workers to pay a huge commission first. Because those workers are usually in poor economic situations, they have to borrow money or sell lands to get this

huge amount of money in order to attain a low-class job in Taiwan¹⁶. Thus, when they first came, they were in debt. This means that migrant workers had to work for several months to one year to pay back the loans before they really could earn money for their saving. Despite exploitation by brokers, applications of migrants for jobs in Taiwan continue to increase.

To employers in Taiwan, the demand of cheap labor attracts them to those brokers, since hiring migrant workers provides a good way to save money. Archival data indicate that the wage of hiring a migrant worker is only half of that of a native laborer. However, the estimate of the wage gap between foreign and native laborers is smaller in official reports. According to a survey announced this year¹⁷ ", council of Labor Affairs (CLA) in Taiwan, among those legal migrant workers, the average wage of migrant workers is 80.3% of the average wage of native workers, but the average working time of a migrant is 27.8 hours more than a native worker's per month. This survey implies that most migrant workers work overtime because of their obedience, which is the other reason employers hire migrant workers, whether legally or illegally.

Government Policy Attitude

In 1990, the government first permitted the importation of migrant workers but restricted it to 14 high priority projects of infrastructure constructions. This policy generated criticism about "Why government can, but ordinary people can't" in terms of hiring foreign workers. Besides, the shortage of cheap labor and the significant appreciation of the NT dollar against the US dollar since the end of 1986 has created a

tremendous amount of pressure upon domestic export-oriented producers. As a result, these producers, concentrated in the traditional labor-intensive industries, have been forced to consider foreign ventures to Southeast Asia and Mainland China¹⁸. The outflow of capital pressured the Taiwanese government to adopt a larger ranged permission of importing migrant workers. Under these pressures, the government gradually lifted the restriction by allowing selective professions to legally import migrant workers to relieve the manpower shortage as well as the pressure from business owners. Since 1991, the Taiwanese government has announced open lists several times. If a profession is on the open lists, the employer who runs a business in this field can apply for legal importation of migrant workers after passing through an application procedure. The range of those professions on the open lists started from a limitation of 6 professions, then gradually grew to 68 professions then 74 professions, and added 14 professions more at the end of July 1994¹⁹.

The major basis of regulations is the Employment Services Bill passed by the Legislature Yuan in May, 1992, issued by the Council of Labor Affairs. The rationale of regulating migrant workers is to prevent any potential social problems. The regulations place a heavy responsibility on employers, requiring a cash bond of five months pay for each worker and their strict supervision. Besides, a worker can be deported if he or she arrives with dependents, gets married, fails to pass a physical examination, becomes ill or injured, takes a part-time job or "violates social order and good customs." Only 15 employment agencies, manpower brokers, in each foreign country are approved to

recruit single workers over the age of 20 whose one-year contracts may only be renewed once.

At the end of May, 1994, 167,881 migrant workers have been approved to legally work in Taiwan²⁰. Although the number of migrant workers approved by the government is continuously increasing, the actual legal foreign workers entering through legal process are only about 30,000, since most of the approval lists are still tied up in a complicated process of paperwork, which usually takes 6 months to one year to complete.

As mentioned before, the opening policy came after years of harboring tens of thousands of illegal foreign workers. Thus, the major regulatory problem is how to control the existing number of enormous undocumented workers. In the employment rules, employers who illegally hire foreign laborers will be punished. However, even after the police department executed the law to catch illegal employers and sent those cases to courts, the final judgments usually were fines with no further penalty. Because of no serious penalty and other reasons, such as the restrictions on selective professions and the long waiting period demanded by the legal application process, employers still hire illegal migrant workers in Taiwan²¹.

In addition, the government never imagined that opening the doors to legal migrant workers provides another opportunity of increasing illegal workers. After the policy opening, many groups of migrant workers escaped from their original legal employers to work in other places as illegal workers. The police department continuously complains that they do not have enough manpower to catch those escaped foreigners.

Data indicated that there were 1215 escaped legal foreign workers last year, but 761 escapees were still not found this year²².

No one knows the exact number of undocumented workers in Taiwan. The number ranges from 400,000 to 100,000 in various news reports or articles. The Council of the Labor Affairs designed a warning system of controlling the total number of migrant workers in Taiwan, that is, the rate of unemployment and migrant workers from the total number of employment should not be over 3%. Now the unemployment rate is 1.37%²³. However, any plan in terms of controlling the total number of migrants cannot be fulfilled if the number of illegal foreign laborers is still a puzzle.

In fact, the Taiwanese government has been aware of the problem of illegal workers for a long time. But, because of the lack of related laws, not enough budget and manpower, the government's policy attitude is not aggressive with respect to effectively regulating the problem of illegal foreign workers. Indeed, the problem of illegal migrant workers is difficult to resolve since it involves so many issues, such as migrants' human rights, the diplomatic and economic relationships between related countries and Taiwan, the demand of Taiwanese economic development, and so on. Nonetheless, the lack of government efficiency is still regrettable.

Until now, there is no integrated institution for regulating this problem. Thus, different departments within the government have different policy attitudes. For instance, the Council of Labor Affairs suggested that the Industrial Development Bureau should design a long-term plan to resolve the labor shortage problem during the economic transitional period. This plan included assistance to "sunset

industries" moving out to less-developed countries, acceleration of industrial evolution to high-tech industries, and improvement of automation in productivity. Contrarily, the Industrial Development Bureau charged that the Council of Labor Affairs should play a stronger role in controlling migrant workers and that the speed of industrial evolution should be decided by the market, not by the government. These debates are found on various news reports and reveal that administration divisions still have communication problems and no consensus or resolution²⁴.

The policy of regulation is in a floating situation, which could be changed anytime, from complete prohibition to restrictive open door to infrastructure construction, to continuously expanding the range of professions that could legally hire migrant workers. "As long as groups of employers cried, they would get the sugar", one Taiwanese economist criticized²⁵. Under this circumstance, industries determined the shortage of number of laborers by themselves, and later used the research results to ask for an expansion of certain professions to be included on the open lists. Thus, the range of opening is not a result of the government's delicate consideration but a reaction to the endless demands from business owners.

In the policy making process, all workers, both migrant and local, are not considered as a priority. Their rights and needs are almost ignored. Migrants come and are willing to work overtime with minimum wage in bad working conditions. They have no right to complain, because on the contract they signed before they came, there are many blurred statements which render the employer the power to be an arbitrator. For example, the employer can terminate the contract

because of contract worker's "Disobeying the command, order, or instruction of the employer or employer's job site representative" (Article VIII, 10, Employment contract). Thus, contract workers should obey the order of employers, otherwise they may take the risk of being sent back. Under this kind of situation, migrants are deprived of their bargaining power if something unfair or unreasonable happens in their work. Besides, according to Taiwanese law, they have no right to strike which is also a way to stand up and ask for their rights. Local native workers are also losing their bargaining power to ask for better wages or improvement of the working environment because employers now have migrants as a good substitution.²⁶ In fact, after migrant workers' presence in Taiwan, local workers are threatened in terms of working rights.

The diplomatic exchange between Taiwan and Southeast Asia's countries makes it harder for the government to make the right long-term decisions beneficial to Taiwan. Because of the pressure of China, Taiwan has long been isolated in the international diplomatic environment. Thus, the importation of migrant workers becomes a bargaining tool used by Taiwan to win the friendship of foreign countries. Under this kind of consideration, Taiwan only permits Taiwanese employers to import migrant workers from four countries: Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Only 15 employment agencies in each country are approved to recruit laborers, and while the costs of running an employment agency are low, huge profits are made in terms of commission revenues. Thus, Taiwanese Legislature Yuan became a political arena for those competitive agencies during the process of deciding which ones would be on the list of legal agencies. Almost all

competitive agencies have different levels of political background in their own countries and many Taiwanese legislators also got involved²⁷. The situation politicizes the regulation process and makes the "importation system" even more unfair to workers.

Social Reactions

In March, 1988, a Thai laborer murdered his boss because he was not satisfied with the low wage his boss offered. In the same year, sixteen Malaysian workers escaped together from their factory and became a group of wandering homeless in Taipei city since they could not stand their employer's abuse²⁸. Such cases heightened public awareness about the potential problems of the importation of migrant workers. Considering Taiwan's limited living spaces, to most ordinary people, migrant workers are unwelcome guests. Among all news reports or articles, the voice of support for the importation of migrant laborers could only be heard from Taiwanese employers.

Following the phenomenon of the increasing inflow of migrant workers and the increasing number of foreign laborers' criminal cases, many feature reports and editorials in Taiwanese major newspapers or magazines have presented in-depth discussion about this issue since 1987. The appropriateness of the Taiwanese government's policy of regulating foreign workers has also been questioned by economists or sociologists either in the form of academic research papers or columns in newspapers or serious magazines.

In October, 1989, one of Taiwan's most famous magazines, New News Weekly, drew this kind of conclusion about the policy of opening the door to migrant workers:

The permission of legally importing migrant laborers is a policy mistake. The labor shortage is only a short-term problem during the period of Taiwanese rapid economic transformation. Thus, to resolve this problem Taiwan should use a short-term policy. Even though the government thinks this opening policy serves as a transitional resolution, the experience of European countries proved that hiring migrant laborers is "easy to invite but hard to send them out". The short-term residence of foreign laborers increases the dependence of native employers on those migrants. Then, in order to satisfy those employers' demand, the government has to expand those laborers' residency time. Finally, after all social problems stemming from foreign workers become more and more complicated, usually based on humane concern or other reasons, the government has no choice but accepts those foreigners as legal immigrants. Consequently, various social costs and the increasing pressure of high population ratio are far beyond the gain of short-term economic benefits. For a short-term problem, we adopted a policy which will create long term problems. The gain is hard to cover the loss.²⁹

Indeed, the European experience reinforces awareness of negative impact of hiring foreigners. After World War I and World War II, France and Germany imported thousands of foreign laborers for the sake of post-war reconstruction. However, during the worldwide recession of the 1970's, the increased unemployment rate resulted in conflicts between native people and those foreign laborers and their descendants, especially those coming from Africa, Turkey, India, or China. Since

those foreign laborers have different cultural and historical backgrounds, different religions and languages, racial tension and conflicts frequently happened in those European countries. When a recession occurred, those foreign laborers would have a higher possibility of losing jobs. Forced by this pressure, West Germany tried to encourage Turkish people back to their own country, a project that failed³⁰.

The impact of the importation of migrant workers on the Taiwanese society is more significant than the influence of the economic structural adaptation³¹.

In fact, the Taiwanese society has already begun to pay the price of hiring cheap foreign laborers. In addition to various criminal cases, some foreign laborers are bringing dangerous diseases, such as AIDS, to Taiwan. In January 1994, one legal female laborer, who worked in a factory but illegally worked as a prostitute in Taiwan Da-Yun Industrial District, was infected with AIDS. According to the news report, at least one hundred workers, both native or foreign, had sexual relations with her. Although this woman was immediately expelled, this industrial district was plagued by the terror of AIDS. Before this case, in the Da-Yun Industrial District, four Thai female laborers tested positive for HIV last year³².

This example reveals another social issue; the increasing illegal sexual exchange. Since those foreign laborers came to Taiwan alone, satisfying their sexual desires is a big problem. The B.E.S. Engineering Corp., the company taking charge of several projects of infrastructure construction, for example, would bring their foreign workers to "safe places" to satisfy their sexual desires³³. However,

the case in the Da-Yun Industrial District reveals that female foreign workers have the possibility of prostituting themselves to male foreign workers in the same or adjacent working district. Either the employer brings groups of workers to "resolve" their sexual demand or the workers find another access by themselves; both situations make the public not only worry about the increasing possibility of infection of AIDS but also the degradation of social customs. Based on these concerns, the public opinion in Taiwan is generally against the importation of migrant workers.

However, from the migrant workers' viewpoint, there are different versions of stories. Most migrant workers are diligent, obedient, thrifty and frugal in daily expending. They come to Taiwan to make more money not only for themselves but also for their families. In the Philippines, there are at least 55,000 people who go to foreign countries per month to increase their families income. In 1987, according to an official estimate, there were 450,000 people who went to over 80 countries around the world in order to escape the problems of poverty and violence. The exportation of laborers became a path for earning foreign exchange. That is why the ex-president of the Philippines has called them "Filipinos unsung heroes"³⁴.

High wages attract most migrant workers coming to Taiwan including higher educated people. According to a survey done by the Commission for Social Development of Chinese Catholic Bishops' conference in Taiwan, among two hundred and twenty respondents, there are one hundred and twenty-five laborers with bachelor's degree but doing low-class jobs in Taiwan³⁵.

In addition to lots of migrant workers having higher educational levels, most migrant workers are faithful, religious people. However, those migrant workers in most cases are only treated as tools of production. They seldom receive any social care. Furthermore, because of language barriers, they are excluded by the local society, or even abused by local capitalists. Under these kinds of circumstances, religion offers them spiritual comforts, and, churches serve as their venue for social activities as well. The Commission for Social Development of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference is the earliest religious organization involved in helping migrants.

Under Taiwanese regulations, legal workers are not protected but controlled. They have to be constantly supervised by employers and have no right to enjoy social lives. Both legal contract workers and undocumented workers face a variety of social cultural and economic difficulties. They are uprooted from their families and loved ones into a culturally alien environment. They must cope with loneliness, the fear of failure and even deportation. To contract workers, the contract acts just as a chain on their necks. They cannot afford to complain because employers might terminate their contract and send them back. Problems in which contract workers involved are endless, such as discrimination not only in pay but also in social status between the migrant and local workers, the harassment suffered from the employers up to the extent of being hurt physically, emotionally, and mentally³⁶. To undocumented workers, the treatment from employers sometimes is better than that of contract workers because undocumented workers are not bound with a contract and could change their jobs at their own wills.

However, they have to hide in an unnoticed corner in the Taiwanese society with the fear of being caught by the police.

Noting the lack of protection for those migrant workers, several social services, usually funded by religious organizations, begun to render help to migrant workers. Some institutions, such as the Hope Worker Center, the Grassroots Women Workers' Center, have gradually expanded their service field from working on native workers' issues to migrant workers', in which the Hope Worker Center is the most active one in seeking for protection of migrants' rights .

In May, 1993, several religious organizations held a news conference in Taiwan to call attention to society's concerns about migrants' basic human rights. On May first, 1993, the Taiwanese Labor Day, the Bishops' Commission for Social Development Concern for Migrant Workers Service went to the Legislature Yuan and presented a petition which suggested legislators should amend the Employment Service Bill, be sympathetic and considerate to those migrants, and generate a more humane law³⁷ . In October, 1993, the international Labor Organization belonging to the United Nations sent a formal letter to the National Industries Guild in Taiwan which mentioned the hopes that the government realizes the importance of protecting migrant laborers' working rights in Taiwan. This has been the first time the UN International Labor Organization has expressed concerns about migrant laborers in Taiwan since Taiwan's government announced its opening policy in 1990³⁸ .

The number of migrant workers in Taiwan is increasing day by day. Issues around migrant workers become more and more significant to the Taiwanese society, both from economic and social perspectives. However,

during the policy-making process, migrant workers' rights are not well considered and protected by the government. Thus, it is urgent to provide a communication vehicle for those migrants. This production project is done for that, to expose their painful and depressed life outside the social mainstream.

Program Rationale

The voice of low-class people is usually ignored in a society, either by most of the media, or the government. Hence, this program, a documentary, tries to be a vehicle for those people to speak up and let other people can hear their voices.

Communication Objective

By portraying migrant workers' lives in Taiwan, this program tries to stimulate people to respect those workers' value, not merely as tools of production, but also as human beings.

Target Audience

The target audience of this program will be people who are concerned with and/or interested in humane issues. Demographically, the audience will be 18 years old and older who are well educated, middle to upper-middle income, open-minded to new information, with the potential of self-reflection, concerned about social unfairness and sympathetic to minority groups.

Program Format

"Underneath prosperity--migrant workers in Taiwan" will be a documentary by recording migrant workers' real stories as a step-point and to explore those contextual and policy issues around the subject matter, mainly from the viewpoint of humanity. Due to the program's purpose, a documentary in a realistic style is the best choice. English is the language used in this program since it is easier to communicate with migrants across nationalities.

Program Content

1. Background information related to the subject matter

The background will be devoted to presenting the historical, causal, and formative context to illustrate the subject matter and provide a comprehension for the audience. In this documentary, the background information is briefly described by a voice-over narration with appropriate video images and interviews with related people, but in a minimal part of the whole program.

2. Migrant laborers' laughter and tears in Taiwan.

Several real cases, both legal and illegal workers, are the main body of this program. Various locations, such as construction sites of the Taipei Rapid Transit System and the North Second Highway, and major industrial districts have been accessed to shoot legal laborers working and living situations and the treatment imposed on them.

It is essential to dig out controversial cases, especially those of illegal migrant workers. Social organizations, such as the Commission for Social Development of Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference, Hope Worker Center, and Grassroots Women workers' center, have been approached to access those cases. Social workers' love and concerns will also be highlighted in this part.

Although their lives are usually lonely and distressed, during the weekend there is still their scarce leisure time, such as in churches. This side of their lives is also included in this program.

Program Elements

--Introduction:

To intrigue the audience at the beginning, this introduction is a montage with compelling images. The contrast between images of Taiwanese prosperity and migrant workers' poverty is the effect the montage intends to create. The juxtaposition of images with appropriate music serves as a hook to grab viewers attention and hold it.

--Footage of migrant workers' working and living conditions in various locations

--Footage of Taiwanese prosperity, crowded traffic, and white-collar workers

--Footage of Philippines (shooting from still pictures and some from newscasts)

--Interviews (most with migrant workers, some with social workers)

--Music (in the opening and ending)

--Voice-over narration (as transitions)

Chapter 4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 80's have seen a phenomenal economic growth in Taiwan, making it one of the most developed countries in Asia. This economic miracle brought a sudden change in the lifestyle of its population. A change so abrupt that even as its citizens are reaping its fruits, they are still racing against time to cope with the rate of this still growing economy.

To sustain this economic rise which is largely small to medium-sized industry based, a constant supply of manpower is needed. This, however, could not be supplied by the Taiwanese population whose younger generation does not see manual labor as an attractive prospect. The labor shortage is squeezing the manufacturers. Faced with this situation, many manufacturers are "exporting" their capital to other countries, mostly job-starved third world countries offering a large supply of labor with relatively low salaries. Others on the other hand "import" the manpower they need and it is at this stage that the migrant workers come to the scene -- with workers mostly coming from the nearby developing countries of South and Southeast Asia. These workers are lured by the growing strength of the Taiwan dollar and they provide an easy, docile and often cheap supply of labor to manufacturers badly in need of them. For these manufacturers, migrant laborer is an economic necessity in order to stay afloat in a fast rising economy.

Responding to this "pull" factors are Taiwan's neighboring countries whose job markets cannot meet the yearly turnout of graduates. These countries have a large supply of a highly literate and skilled labor force willing to work abroad. Most of these countries also depend very much on the foreign remittance of their overseas workers to keep

their economies going. "Push" factors of immigration seem to have bred very well in these countries in perfect conspiracy with the "pull" factors that Taiwan has.

The number of migrant workers coming to Taiwan is growing everyday, both legal and illegal workers. Being treated as a form of cheap labor, migrant workers' rights are ignored either by the government or the majority of Taiwanese people. Lots of unfair situations happen to them. The first one is the exorbitant fees they paid to brokers to get a job. They were recruited by brokers who channel them to factories and demand NT\$ 50,000 to 10,000 per head as a commission³⁹. Contrarily, Taiwanese employers do not pay any thing to those brokers. That reveals the unreasonable and unfair treatment within the whole system.

Being unsure of their rights and unaware of whom to turn to for help, they are easy and unconscious preys for exploitative and fraudulent recruiters and employers. Paralyzed by the language barrier and the fear of being sent back, many do not raise any complaints or have lost their will to do so. The local church and some social services now on the scene open their doors to these helpless workers who arrived at their doorsteps. Meanwhile, the majority of people in Taiwanese society do not pay attention on these "low-class" foreigners.

This documentary exposes the real stories hidden in a corner of Taiwanese society. It imposes some limitation on this production. Although it represents only the tip of the iceberg, their voices, cries and sighs reverberate with tales of the greater majority of migrants, wishing and aching to be heard.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Script: Underneath Prosperity--Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Video

Audio

[OPENING]

Various shots reveal
the prosperity of the
Taipei (High office
buildings with blue sky)
Various shots of laborer'
poor lives juxtaposed with
Taiwanese people, modern
and well-dressed

Shots of laborer' hardworking
(in construction sites and
children factories)

MUSIC FULL

MUSIC UNDER

VOICE 1: I don't want my
suffer what I suffered

VOICE 2: To earn a living here
is not only for myself but also
for my family

VOICE 3: I got no choice, I
have to earn money

VOICE 4: They said you work
hard, you can earn more to
fulfill your dream in only one

Shots of workers

KEY TITLE

[Body]

Shots of working

(Juxtaposition of Taiwanese
white-collar workers and
migrant workers)

Interview shot

KEY NAME

Eamon Sheridan, director of
Hope Worker Center

Various shots in working
scenes

(Daisy's working shots)

(doing all kinds of jobs and

or two years.

MUSIC FULL

FATHER EAMON: Migrants are
foreigners, working in other
countries. They are willing to
work difficult, dangerous ,and
dirty jobs with minimum wages
which most Taiwan people will
not work for. Migrants are
brought to Taiwan for filling
in labor shortage in those jobs.
It's because Taiwan wants some
cheap labor and migrants are
cheap form of labor.

DAISY'S SELF-EXPRESSION:

I am Daisy.

I am married with one son. I
came here to work as a domestic
helper.

We Filipinos came with good
purposes. If our country is in
stable economic situation,

, maybe, we won't work something

taking care a child)

like these kinds of jobs.

I really feel funny about the situation that I am looking after other people's son and my son is looked after by other people too. But, I have nothing to do. Coming here is not only for myself but also for my family, especially for my son. Next time I want him have good education.

Maybe, he will not work this kind of job next time.

Interview shot

ROMY: When I worked in Philippines, I only earned 6,000.

(Romy, a Filipino factory worker)

Here I can earn, maximum, 28,000.

I graduated in college with the degree of civil engineering. I am married with two children.

Shots of his kid's pictures

When I was a child, life in Philippines was hard. Now, I'll do everything for my family, for the future.

Shots of Emelin's working in
an optical product's factory

EMELIN'S SELF EXPRESSION: I used to work in a friend's company in Philippines. After that, I studied again in Master of Arts, majored in counseling in Dela Salle University. I could not finish my thesis because of financial problems. The reason why I work here is to earn more money so that I can pursue my study. Working in abroad is not a joke. It's lonesome. Each time I got their letters I could not control myself to feel lonely. But, when I think about my work, I have to set aside all those sadness, homesickness.

Interview shot

Boyet's working in
a factory

BOYET'S SELF EXPRESSION: I used to work in the China Bank in Philippines, as an accounting clerk. The first time I arrived here, I was assigned in a warehouse. I have to carry a large roll, as tall as I am. we

Interview shot

carried it.

The first three months I was crying and asked myself, why should I do this.

Pictures of his kids

I have two kids. They are still young. Because they are still young, I have to work, work, and work. I called them and my daughter even asked me, when will you go home? Could I go to office? She thought I am in a office.

Boyet's working shots

Pictures in Philippines

BOYET: We gave part of money to our government, in one way or another, we help the government as well. That's why we are called some sort of hero.

Interview shot

EMELIN: "Unsung hero". We are very hard-working. We came here just to work. Everywhere, every country, you can see Filipinos.

Interview shot

FATHER EAMON: Migrant come because they want a better future.

They don't want to live in

	poverty and nor should they.
Shots of migrants' poor living environment	But, when you go beyond the cover, you see the reality, the costs and prices that people paid. The cost in terms of Philippines or Thailand I think it's huge. They are losing their best people. Their families have been destroyed.
Shots of Migrant workers in their crowded dormitory	<u>NARRATION</u> : TAIWAN IS A DREAM LAND TO THEM. EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE TO PAY HUGE COMMISSIONS TO GET A JOB. THEY STILL COME. FATHER EAMON: They pay exorbitant fee for working. In Philippines, 70,000 Pesos will take 3 to 5 years to earn. They sold their land or borrowed money for coming here. For the first year's work, they are in debts.
Interview shot	
Shots of Filipinos in Philippines	
Shots of migrant workers in working scenes	
interview shot	ZENAIDA: Taiwan is giving us new life, new work, but, we still
(a female Filipino factory	

worker)	have the burden to pay. (CRYING)
Interview shot	Father Eamon: The most evil part is the broker system. They are driving large cars, wearing gold chains, having many computer terminals, all of which have been earned from migrants' borrows.
Shots of Thai workers in different factories	SONNY: Many Thailanders are willing to pay that much just to come to Taiwan.
	ZENAIDA: Some people they borrowed money with interests. If they cannot pay, the interest will be higher and higher.
Interview shot of Sonny	SONNY: So, They have to work one year to pay for the loans.
Interview shot of Zenaída	ZENAIDA: We hope Taiwan can help us do something. OK, we want foreign workers but not to pay so much to come to Taiwan.
Shots of groups of migrants Taipei city	<u>NARRATION</u> : THOUGH THE BROKER SYSTEM IS UNREASONABLE AND UNFAIR, IT DOES NOT IMPEDE THE INCREASING INFLOW OF MIGRANTS TO

Shots of crowded traffic and
people in Taipei city

TAIWAN. AS THE SECOND MOST
DENSELY POPULATED COUNTRY IN THE
WORLD, TAIWAN IS AFRAID OF
INCREASING THE NUMBER OF
PERMANENT RESIDENTS WHICH WILL
MAKE THE POPULATION RATIO WORSE.

Shots of the government's
spokesman speaking in a
news conference

SINCE THE GOVERNMENT FIRST
ANNOUNCED TO ALLOW LEGAL
IMPORTATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS
IN 1990, THE REGULATIONS HAVE
BEEN DESIGNED TO KEEP THOSE
NUMBER DOWN.

Shots of lives in workers'
dormitory

FATHER EAMON: They are not laws
in a civilized society. Migrants
are not allowed to get married,
get pregnant, bring their
family, and to live what they
want to live. They have to live
in a living corner provided by
the company.

Interview shot

The government recently said,
no, no, no, these rights are not
denied. But, if you do get
married, get pregnant, live some
places other than the factory,

you have to leave Taiwan, which is the same. These are fundamental human rights and no body has the right to take it away.

Shots groups of Thai workers in one construction site and their dorm (working, eating, crowded living environment)

NARRATION: IN THIS CONSTRUCTION SITE, 250 THAI WORKERS WORK AND LIVE TOGETHER UNDER THE EMPLOYER'S SUPERVISION. MOST OF THEM ARE FROM THE POOR COUNTRYSIDE OF THAILAND. TO TAIWANESE EMPLOYERS, THEY ARE THE MOST WELCOME GROUP SINCE THEY ARE OBEDIENT AND DILIGENT. THEY CAN'T SPEAK CHINESE OR ENGLISH. THEIR FEELING INSIDE IS HARD TO BE READ FROM THEIR QUIET FACES.

Shots of groups of workers in front of the mail boxes

LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING LETTERS FROM HOME MAY BE THE ONLY CUE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR STATE OF MIND.

Interview shot

ZENAIDA: Even we bring family here, we will not live here forever. But, now my husband,

Shot of a poster of Jesus
on the wall in a shabby room

Shots in the Hope Worker
Center, outside and inside

Shots of people singing psalm
together (Father and people)

Shots of Father's speech
and listeners

Shots of workers
(singing, communion)

children are in Philippines. So,
we don't enjoy the life here.

NARRATION: BUT TO THEM, RELIGION
CAN OFFER SPIRITUAL COMFORTS.

MUSIC UNDER (SINGING PSALM)
EVEN A SMALL CHURCH IN A SMALL
APARTMENT, HUNDREDS OF MIGRANTS
CELEBRATE THE MASS HERE.

HERE IS THE HOPE WORKER CENTER.
FATHER EAMON: I live in a small
country in Taiwan, a small
church, a small parish. This is
about 4, 5 years ago, I began to
meet migrants -----

(his personal experience with
migrants.)

FATHER'S SPEECH IN THE MASS:
Many people will drink wine and
feel better; have cocaine and
feel OK. If religion is doing
that for you, I feel very
disappointed about our
celebration here.

FATHER'S INTERVIEW: If you look
at people as instruments not

	as people, problems followed automatically.
Shots of working in factories and machines	If you bring people in as a cheap form of labor, you are treating them as machines, as tools of production. They are simply a way to lower production costs.
Shots in Philippines	ONE FILIPINO MAID: In Philippines, we were poor, but we enjoyed our life as human beings.
Interview shot of Sonny	SONNY: We are all human beings, something more than money.
Shots of workers in factories	FATHER EAMON: Basically, they are factory workers and domestic helpers. Factory workers are larger group. Working in unsafe conditions is the major problems.
	Or, not getting pay at the right wage, no day off, etc.
Shots of domestic helpers	Then, there are thousands of domestic helpers, many are subjected to sexual harassment.

Back shot of the victim

We have cases people being raped.

Interview shot

BABY: I was raped, I was sexual harassed by a man, my "Lao-Ben" (Chinese, means "boss")

Various shots of Baby

Father Eamon: The girl is often afraid to complain because she has to pay off that debt in Philippines.

Interview shot

BABY: My contract was domestic helper. But, when I came here, I

Various shots of Baby

found that I was a domestic helper and factory worker also. I said nothing about it. I just work, work, and work. Everyday, I only could get 3 hours of sleeping.

Shots of Baby along the beach

Father Eamon: So, she is forced into a form of human's slavery because slavery means no choice.

Interview shot

Baby: I really feel bad about my situation. It became worse and worse.

Shots of Baby making a paper flower for the decoration of

I have a record, my diary, but that thing, I don't use any

an incoming wedding

word. I use only a flower put a "X".

Shots of Baby in church with friends

One Sunday, I went out with my friends. I told them my story. They said, if you want to run away, go, we'll help you.

Interview shot of Baby

BABY: If I know things would happen to me, I will never, never, choose to come here. Because of that incidence, I lost my boyfriend in Philippines. (crying)

Shots of Baby
(dancing, laughing)

Now, maybe you can see I'm happy, I am laughing, but deep inside, I can't accept it.

Interview shot

Father Eamon: The problems are endless. They are mounting, mounting, and mounting.

Interview shot
(a Hope's worker)

POWPEE: There are two ways to go: accept it, or move against it but with the risk of being sent back. If they don't want do either way, another choice is to run away. I feel, running away is reasonable. I even support

KEY NAME

Shots of Sonny in Hope
(Listening to Filipino

fellows complains)

KEY NAME

A Volunteer worker in Hope
Interview shot

Shots of group interview
with illegal workers in front
of their house

Shots of their house

Shots of their lives

Shots of group interview

them to run.

SONNY: Every one is helpless but
no one give them a finger to
help.

So many problems. Powpee, Sister
Celine, Father Eamon, can't do
everything all. I just decided
by myself to do volunteer work
for them.

BABY: I met Sonny outside, I
told him my story. He rendered
his help and said we have a
house, you can stay there. Jhun,
I met him also outside. I also
rendered him this house.

NARRATION: THEY RAN AWAY FROM
THEIR BAD EMPLOYERS AND BAD
EXPERIENCE. BUT THEY HAVE TO
HIDE IN A CORNER IN TAIWAN.

SONNY: "TNT", "Targo-non-Targo",
means "Hide-and-Hide". In
Europe, Japan, anywhere, if you
are undocumented workers, you
are called "TNT".

DAISY: Only me is legal; all

in front of the house

illegal.

Sonny's interview shot

SONNY: As an undocumented worker, the fear of being caught is always there.

Boyet's interview shot

BOYET: I do my best at any time, because I don't know what might happen tomorrow. Tomorrow you might be caught.

Shots of Group interview

BABY: Even we have the fear of being caught, we just ignore that feeling.

Various shots of their lives
(dancing, cooking, chatting)

SONNY: No more need to show depression. We are here and have to accept it. It's the life here.

Shots of their house

NARRATION: IN SUCH A SHABBY HOUSE, THEY ARE LIVING A LIFE OF THEIR OWN CHOICE. LIKE LITO AND

Shots of Lito and Mercy
in their wedding

MERCY. AN UNDOCUMENTED WORKER AND A LEGAL DOMESTIC HELPER, THEY CHOSE TO GET MARRIED IN A FOREIGN LAND, EVEN IT'S NOT ALLOWED BY THE TAIWAN'S LAW.

Shots of Father Eamon in that
wedding ceremony

FATHER EAMON: It did not break any law, it's recognized by God.

	Two people are willing to express their love to each other after they overcome so many difficulties.
Various shots of bride and groom	They are doing this totally away people they should be with, their families.
Various shots in the wedding	LITO: I'll never dream I'll marry abroad. I'm just lucky. Mercy's "Lao-Ben" (boss) agrees. If he could not agree, I think we could not get married here. Because her boss studied in the US, they also got married there. They don't want Mercy feel lonely. It's lucky to get a boss like that.
Shots in the Alien Detention Center	<u>NARRATION</u> : NOT EVERYONE IS SO LUCKY. THESE ILLEGAL WORKERS WERE CAUGHT BY POLICE AND PUT HERE WITH CRIMINALS AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. THEY ARE WAITING TO BE DEPORTED. THEIR DREAM MAY NEVER COME TRUE.

Shots in the Detention Area

SINCE THEIR CASES ARE TIED UP WITH SOME ILLEGAL SITUATIONS, SUCH AS KEEPING COUNTERFEIT PASSPORTS OR VISAS, IT WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO GO THROUGH ALL THE COURTROOM PROCESS.

Shots of two women holding their babies in a small room

OCCASIONALLY, THE STAY IS SO LONG. EVEN BABIES HAVE BEEN BORN IN THE PRISON.

Shots of church people's visiting

SOME CHURCH PEOPLE COME OVER, BRINGING LOVE AND HOPE.

BUT, IT DOES NOT RELIEVE THE DESPAIR AND DEPRESSION.

Shots of groups of migrants in different scenes

FATHER EAMON: It's a difficult thing for any society.

Taiwan will expose to 300,000 migrants soon. So, it's a very important moment in Taiwan.

Interview shot

When you work with migrants in Taiwan, you are unfortunately exposed to many bad things. you could get the impression: Taiwan is terrible, but it's not. The majority of people are not abusing people.

Shots of Taiwanese friendly people

Shots reveals Taiwan's
economic situations

It's the system itself is wrong
and needed to be change. The
basis the system based on it's
wrong; it's human not capital.
John Paul II, he said very
clearly: Labor is prior to
capital and no one has the right
to make exorbitant profits at
the expense of workers.

Shots of migrant workers'
working

In Taiwan, in my reading, money
is prior to everything.

Interview shot of Sonny

SONNY: The chairman of CLA
praised migrants' contribution
to Taiwan's economy, but do
nothing to protect migrants.

Interview shot of Celine Chang
(a social worker in Hope)

CELINE CHANG: All news media
exaggerated migrants' negative
impacts like crimes, AIDS. In
fact, the majority of them are
nice people.

Shots of Migrants' work
and life

FATHER RAMON: Migrants all over
the world are treated the same.
They are the bottom of the
social pies, and not considered
to be worthy to pay attention.

It's a human issue. It needs people to break down barriers to understand, we are family of people.

Shots in Hope

(Father and workers joining hands together, communion)

MUSIC UNDER(SINGING PSALM)

We look different, we have different faces, religions, or ethnic, but all should be respected.

[ENDING]

Various shots of all interviewees

MUSIC FULL (INSTRUMENTAL)

Roll Credits

MUSIC OUT

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