

Session 4 Dehumanized Population

Presentation 2

From 'New Taiwan's Children' to 'Seeds of the Southbound':
A Political and Economic Analysis of the Shifting Gaze
on the Children of Southeast Asian Marriage Migrants in Taiwan

Hsiao-Chuan Hsia

Abstract

In recent years, the media and governmental entities of Southeast Asia have been promoting the cultural and, specifically, the language advantages of what has become known as “the second generation of immigrants.” As migrants within Southeast Asia, women are continually encouraged to teach regional languages and cultures, so that their children can assist once they reach adulthood the Taiwanese expansion efforts in business, thus becoming “vanguards of Taiwan’s deployment in Southeast Asia.” This paper will examine anecdotal evidence and a host of other sources by relating the success stories of these children. Some, who are now adults, have already become financially integral to political and economic initiatives due to their Bahasa-Indonesia language skills. These stories have drawn media attention by successfully demonstrating how children of migrants through marriage can become “vanguards of the Southbound Policy” in the region.

While at present the public discourse appears positive concerning the children of marriage migrants from Southeast Asia, this is a recent occurrence. Only a decade ago these children were believed to be rife with developmental delays. Compounding this perception, their mothers were thought to lack the necessary skills for teaching their own children because of their inferior “population quality.” Moreover, the laws affecting the living conditions of marriage migrants and their children have not changed in order to promote these families and what they offer to Southeast Asian culture. This paper will analyze the political and economic contexts of this drastic shift of discourse concerning the children of marriage migrants from within the Southeast Asian region. The lens will also heavily focus on why the legal changes contradict this seemingly positive shift in both perception and reality.