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"THE CASE FOR CATEGORIZATION OF FILIPINO AMERASIANS AS DIASPORA"

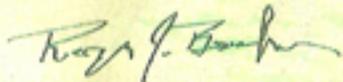
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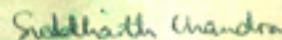
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The Case for Categorization of Military Filipino Amerasians as Diaspora

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The Case for Categorizing Military Filipino Amerasians as Diaspora

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this article is to explore the basis for social scientific categorization of military Filipino Amerasians as an authentic U.S. American Diaspora. An estimated 50,000 biracial Amerasian children became abandoned, orphaned or stranded two decades ago by U.S. servicemen, civilian employees or defense contractor fathers in west central Luzon and other scattered points in the Philippines at the time of the lowering of the stars and stripes flag from the huge Subic Bay naval base on November 24, 1992. When contrasted with such phenomena to mixed-heritage Pan Amerasians in neighboring Southeast and East Asian nation-states, where U.S. military presence either still remains or was a factor for many years, the origins and present status of military Amerasians in the Philippines is much larger than originally reported. A brief review and discussion of current literature relating to traditional, contemporary and changing definitions of diaspora and human dispersals includes implications for Filipino Amerasians who exist today as a mostly isolated, little noticed, under researched and essentially at risk human sub-culture in the former U.S. colony.

Key Words: Filipino Amerasians, Amerasians, Asian Americans, military prostitution, diaspora

Introduction

Military Amerasians, the biracial, mixed-heritage children and adult progeny of U.S. servicemen abandoned, orphaned or stranded in the Philippines and other East and Southeast Asians locales are scattered like an under reported or little noticed American diaspora. They represent a part of that region's landscape dating to 1898 and the Spanish American War (Schade, 1980). That conflict concluded with Imperial Spain's cession of the Philippines to the U.S. as an American colony. Laying the geo-political framework for formation of the diaspora-like Amerasian enclave, the lengthy and essentially subordinate US-RP relationship - one of the oldest and most durable in the region - continued through the Commonwealth years (1934-1941), World War II and the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the creation in 1946 of the independent Republic of the Philippines, and stretched through the protracted Cold War Era (1948-1990), to this day.

The Philippine government was a willing, compliant signatory to the military bases (1947) and mutual defense treaties (1951) (Bengzon & Rodrigo, 1999; Hamilton-Patterson, 1998). These permanent installations and military personnel were in large measure responsible for stimulating burgeoning growth of Amerasian diaspora through the existing system of *military prostitution* (Enloe, 1989; Levi, 1993; Sturdevant & Stoltzfus, 1992), and long standing socialization practices between soldiers and Filipina resident women (Kutschera & Talamera-Sandico, 2011; Ramsay, & Rivele, 1990). Indeed, the Philippine republic remained a stalwart, post independence U.S. security partner in a Neo Colonial Era spanning the late 20th Century and through the first decade of the 21st century to the present. Schade (1980) estimated that by the early 1980s – besides the Philippine Amerasian phenomena - U.S. servicemen, military civilian employees or independent defense contractors sired an estimated total of two million Pan Amerasians of various nationalities (i.e., Cambodian, Japanese, South Korean, Taiwanese, Thai, Filipino, Vietnamese, etc.) across the Western Pacific Basin.

Presently, we are not aware of any social scientists or other academic researchers who have published research articles and offered Filipino Amerasians, or any of the other enclaves of Pan Amerasians, as suitable candidates for diaspora categorization. Kutschera (2010) posited that “the unique sociological configuration of Filipino Amerasians as a diaspora” might make them future candidates for such consideration (p. 8). He cited two other sources, such as Palmer (2000), who maintained that “diasporas are generally defined as the movement, migration, forced relocation, or scattering of a people or their descendants sometimes far from an established homeland” (p. 8). And also San Juan (2006), who maintained that diasporas are determined “not only by a homeland but also by a desire for eventual return, and by collective identity centered on myths and memories of the homeland” (p. 42). Regardless of their location or origin, Palmer further posited that diasporic communities in many instances were “not actual but imaginary and symbolic communities and political constructs. [They] share an emotional attachment to their ancestral land, are cognizant of their dispersal and, if conditions warrant, their oppression and alienation.”

Given such variance of criteria Kutschera (2010) held that Filipino Amerasians and possibly Amerasians in general would qualify as a diasporic population on several levels:

1. They were fathered by military communities of U.S. servicemen stationed at permanent U.S. military bases;
2. They were forced to forfeit or suspend claim on their U.S. homeland when their fathers departed;
3. They are scattered at numerous locations in East and Southeast Asia as *Pan Amerasian* population cohorts (i.e., Guam, Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam);
4. They maintain collective identities as Amerasians and cultural and social ties to the U.S. mainland;
5. In significant numbers among the sample, they expressed the desire or sought, however tenuous, to immigrate and claim U.S. American family ties. (Kutschera, 2010, p. 8-9)

Kutschera (2010) also introduced the term and posited that the *Pan Amerasian* social construct is “a general, inclusive reference” to Amerasian population dispersal and the direct result of long standing U.S. military defense policy in East and Southeast Asia. Driven by “U.S. military servicemen, civilian and contractor employees, these servicemen have fought or been assigned or garrisoned in dispersed locations, such as Guam, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam” (p. 189).

Thus, we seek to expand the concept of Filipino Amerasians as diaspora. This concept was an outgrowth of a three-year long study (2007-2010) of Filipino Amerasians residing in the Angeles City, Pampanga area in the vicinity of the former Clark air base. Clark was headquarters of the 13th Air Force and the major air logistics platform for U.S. military air operations in the Western Pacific Basin, most recently as a support hub for the First Persian Gulf War (Operations Desert Storm) in 1990-1991. The study’s primary objective was to investigate the mental health impact of stigmatization and discrimination on adolescent and young adult, biracial Anglo and African Filipinos, abandoned by their servicemen fathers at the time of the closure of Subic and Clark in 1992. A clear majority of 16 sample participants interviewed for the multiple-case qualitative study expressed at least a desire, and in more than a half an ardent yearning to return to their father’s homeland. Many expressed support at returning to the U.S. in the fashion similar to what had occurred with Vietnamese and other Pan Amerasians when the U.S. government relaxed immigration restrictions in the 1980s in the post- Vietnam American War era.

Diaspora Literature Review

More often than not, if noticed or discussed, the uniquely biracial, mixed heritage Amerasian condition is usually included as merely another segment of the generalized Asian American diaspora experience. Such has generally been the case for Amerasians mentioned or provided notice of in contemporary studies of Japanese Americans (Chan, 2007), Korean Americans (Young-ee, 2007) or mixed heritage, multi-racial Asian Americans (Williams-Leon & Nakashima, 2001). Moreover, in instances such as comparatively well researched Vietnamese Amerasians (i.e., Bass, 1996; McKelvey, 1999; Yarborough, 2005), authors intensely studied, discussed and analyzed military Amerasian refugee and immigrant experiences, but avoided any suggestion they merited inclusion or discussion as a diasporic entity in either the U.S. or Vietnam proper.

The unforgiving patriarchal traditions of Asia means that a fatherless, mixed-race child was (and is) abused as a pariah, insulted and sometimes beaten, and routinely denied access to any educational or economic opportunity. In Korea, children are registered in their fathers’ names; those who were

abandoned by their American fathers had no legal existence. Many were killed, and an unknown number of male children were castrated. (Conn, 1996, p. 313)

Schade (1980) reported that in 1957 alone, at the end of the Korean War (1950-1953), at a time of high U.S. troop numbers the Nobel Prize laureate, writer and humanitarian Pearl S. Buck personally estimated that the number of Korean Amerasian children “probably exceeded 25,000” (p. 29). Buck herself was responsible for originating and publicizing the term Amerasian based on her experiences in China in her novel *East Wind, West Wind* (1930). Baker (2004) and Lee (2007) held that the Amerasian population in Korea was essentially the outgrowth of an institutionalization of a military prostitution system organized in the post-World War II years when the U.S. was one of a number of Western allies occupying the United Nations partitioned South Korea.

Schade (1980) estimated 85,000 children alone (not including late adolescents, adults, second or later generations of Amerasians) populated nine East and Southeast Asian locations (Cambodia, mainland Japan, Philippines, Laos, Okinawa, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam) in the early 1980s. The children were the legacy of an estimated “hundreds of thousands of mixed race lives” born in the region since the Spanish American War Era (1898). It is a legacy of “more than 80 years of American child abuse” (p. 1) Schade opined.

Defining the Filipino Amerasian Diaspora

In the Philippines U.S. servicemen, at the height of the Vietnam War (1964-1975), sired children from two essential sources: (a) an estimated 85,000 naval, marine and air force personnel assigned long range to operate some of the largest and oldest naval and air bases in the Western Pacific, and (b) thousands of U.S. troops assigned to Vietnam war duty who crowded the honky tonks, clubs and beaches near the Philippine bases for rest and recuperation leave, known in GI lexicon as R&R (Schade, 1989; Sturdevant & Stoltzfus, 1992). Indeed, both Clark and the Subic Bay naval base were the largest installations of their kind outside of the continental U.S. Following World War II and commonwealth independence in 1946, a cornerstone of U.S.-Philippine relations was the 1947 Military Bases Treaty, a highly constrictive document which essentially expanded U.S. military hold on the archipelago into a de facto Neo-Colonial Era (Johnson, 2004, 2007). But permanent, entrenched U.S. bases, air fields, camps, training ranges and installations, and the Amerasian diaspora it spawned, were an integral part of the Philippine firmament dating to the Philippine American War (1899-1902) (Hamilton-Paterson, 1998; Karnow, 1989), and remnants of these still function on the archipelago today.

To dismiss outright that Filipino Amerasians as a standalone diaspora, or Pan Amerasians collectively, cannot be seriously considered viable candidates for such designation may take serious research to refute definitively. These populations, some of formidable size, not only have long established, unique social, cultural and geo-political attributes. But more plausibly, the variability of both classical and contemporary literature provides the term *diaspora* with nuanced definition possibilities and permutations. The classical anthropological definition described diaspora simply as “People in motion...the offspring of an area who have spread to many lands...a trans-local and interactive system which is strikingly new” (Kottak, 2008, p. 581).

Other traditional definitions of diaspora maintained “that the group that has migrated does not have the choice to return to the homeland (Otalvaro-Hormillosa, 1999, p. 2). Schumann (2007) posited that two of

the most essential requirements were the forceful or involuntary dispersal of a group from the homeland “and its enduring affiliation with this homeland either by collective memories, emotions, imaginations or material exchange,” (p. 11). Certainly Filipino and other Pan Amerasians could arguably maintain that their births on foreign soil by U.S. military personnel assigned there constituted either a forceful or involuntary circumstance. Moreover, ample proof exists that Filipino and Pan Amerasian populations have made and continue to make an on-going effort to stay in contact and maintain communication with their homeland. One verification is to log onto the Internet and search for numerous organizations and websites created by Filipino and Pan Amerasian ethnics devoted to disseminating news or providing locator sites for Amerasians seeking to locate their long lost fathers (Amerasian Research Network, Ltd., 2012, www.AmerasianResearch.org).

In an attempt to update older, classical definitions, Safran (1991) held that diaspora was essentially “a group of ethnic expatriates who shared” a close-knit variety of like characters (as cited in Ojalvaro-Hormillosa, p. 2). These characteristics included dispersal to two or more adjacent or overseas regions, possession of a common memory or vision about their homeland, belief they were not fully welcomed or integrated into their current domicile or sometimes felt alienated actually from it, views of their ancestral land of origin as their ideal homeland, belief that they should remain committed to their homeland and continue to relate personally or indirectly with their homeland through variable means including communications, study, or monitoring news emanating from it. Safran (1991) maintained that the Jewish diaspora was an ideal one and held that diaspora such as Filipino Americans and possibly other Asian American diaspora on the U.S. mainland would not constitute a true diaspora since substantial numbers of them have no intention or desire to return to their homelands.

Conversely, Tololyan (2007), one of the contemporary seminal writers on the subject, had correspondingly more stringent criteria. Specifically, the criteria were different and often confused definitions with resulting nuances between bona fide diasporas and so-called ethnic communities or dispersals. “All diasporic communities are also ethnic communities, but not all ethnic communities are diasporic” (p. 649). Tololyan maintained that defining diaspora characteristics required “a culture and a collective memory that preserves elements of the homeland’s language or religious, social, and cultural practice...By contrast, ethnic groups at best exhibit a diluted form of biculturalism.” Tololyan’s criteria for a population’s desire to restore linkages or return to the homeland mandate a high threshold.

Such an effort

takes the form of a sustained and organized commitment to maintaining relations with kin communities elsewhere, and with the homeland, to which diasporas either return literally or, more commonly, ‘re-turn’ without actual repatriation: that is they turn again and again toward the homeland through travel, remittances, cultural exchange, and political lobbying and by various contingent efforts to maintain other links with the homeland. (Tololyan, 2007, p. 649)

Tololyan raised several other points applicable to long entrenched, although quasi-amorphous diaspora definitions, including populations (e.g., Filipino Amerasians) who today, because of age longevity, may be into third and fourth iterative living generations – a problematical progression in Tololyan’s view. Progeny of the initial generation of emigrants at some point are no longer valid members or a “segment” of the homeland’s population in any significant way due to passage of time. “To claim that they continue

to be such a segment only because they share a (increasingly mixed) gene pool incurs a certain danger of biologism, which lingers in most easy-going definitions of diaspora” (Tololyan, 2007, p. 649).

Yet as stringent as Tololyan’s criteria remain, he offered considerable leeway for the Filipino Amerasian argument and one that is more in line with more contemporary, open-minded, radical social scientists offering wider variances of diasporic definition. Among these are Otalvaro-Hormillosa (1999), who outlined a lengthy case for consideration of a Queer Diasporic Model for homosexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gender Asian Americans based on commonality of sexual orientation as its chief defining features. Thus, Tololyan (2007) noted that it may be preferable to view diaspora, not as “a fixed concept and social formation, but as a process of collective identification and form of identity, marked by the ever-changing differences that chart shifting boundaries within other, larger communities” (pp.649-650).

Notably, the contemporary definition is steadily widening and with it new diasporic models (Schumann, 2007; Otalvaro-Hormillosa, 1999; Palmer, 2000; Safron, 1991) to include constructs “informed by (broad categorizations) including race, class, gender, nationality and/or sexuality” (Otalvaro-Hormillosa, 1999, p. 1). Until the late 1960s, Schumann (2007) observed that the term diaspora was almost universally applied “to the historic cases of the Jews, Greeks and Armenians. Since then, new forms of diaspora came into existence with new waves of immigration, new technologies of communication and the abandonment of strict assimilation policies by many nation-states” (pp. 11-12).

Contemporary Filipino Amerasian Perspectives

By social scientific criteria used to determine diasporas, Filipino Amerasians are above all Pan Amerasians and today probably the largest, most isolated and segregated of the group (Kutschera, Pelayo & Sandico, 2012). As such, they represent compelling candidates for such designation. One explanation why it has not happened previously is that academic discussions are limited because of the paucity of empirical and evidence-based research on Filipino Amerasians, strikingly of both Philippine and U.S. origin (Gastardo-Conaco & Sobritchea, 1999). Both Gastardo-Conaco and Sobritchea (1999), using a Philippine-based, large sample of over 400 Filipino Amerasians and Kutschera (2010) found Filipino Amerasians to be a profoundly at risk population. They constituted a socially isolated sub-culture with consistent evidence of low socioeconomic income or earning capacity, family disorganization, and high numbers of psychosocial physical risk and mental stress factors in their lives. Kutschera (2010), who administered the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales (DASS-21) mental health measurement inventory, found 62% suffered from severe anxiety, depression or stress, probably due to stigma-related stress factors relating to their biracial backgrounds, name calling and harassment and stressful personal circumstances from birth and childhood.

Notably, other variables are in play when it comes to ascribing diaspora suitability. Sizeable numbers of Pan Amerasians were permitted entry to the U.S. mainland through easement of visa restrictions and offers of permanent residence contained in the 1982 Amerasian Immigration Act. While specifically excluding Filipino, Japanese and Taiwanese Amerasians, the act granted immigration easements including permanent residency to Cambodian, Laotian, South Korean, Thai and Vietnamese Amerasians (Gage, 2007; Montes, 1995). In 1887, Congress and President Ronald Reagan opened the door for even greater access to the Vietnamese with the signing of the 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act. It conferred a route to citizenship for Vietnam Amerasians who could reasonably prove paternity while also granting

entry and a clear path to permanent residency for close family members. A total of 26,000 Vietnamese Amerasians and 75,000 relatives ultimately immigrated to the U.S. under the measure, constituting a sizeable dent to an unknown but dwindling number of Amerasians still left residing today in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Lamb, 2009).

For all intent and purposes, Filipino Amerasians remain among the most stationary, poorest and figuratively most exploited and exiled of biracial Pan Amerasians. "In many respects (they) are a stigmatized, poverty ridden and socially marginalized diaspora living on the back warrens of an Asian Pacific nation archipelago in the developing world" (Kutschera, 2010, p. 151). In reality, the route to the paternal birthplace for Filipino Amerasians progeny, like so many among other traditional world-wide diasporas - those yearning for homeland reunification but finding the way blocked (Otalvaro-Hormillosa, 1999) - is fraught with barriers. Such encumbrances originate largely from the U.S. State Department Embassy in Manila and the office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) both in the U.S. and the Philippines. These agencies mandate stringent standards for Filipino Amerasians seeking to immigrate, particularly if they are not minors and entering young adulthood as the overwhelming majority today is.

Immigration application requirements for Filipino Amerasians, many of whom barely survive on a daily basis on severely disadvantaged incomes (Kutschera, 2010; Gastardo-Conaco & Sobritchea, 1999), are much more daunting than they are for wealthier, elite or mainstream Filipino classes. The latter more advantaged individuals can afford the financial means test for obtaining visitor, tourist or professional employment visas and eventual permanent residency.

Amerasians fall under a so-called "Special Immigrant" visa category and must file an approved I-360 petition, the same cumbersome long wait list document that Filipinos who have become naturalized citizens file with the USCIS on the U.S. mainland to petition for immigration of family members back in the Philippines. (Embassy of the U.S., Manila, the Philippines, 2012). Therefore, instead of receiving fast track or privileged "special immigrant" consideration presumably because of their U.S. American father's blood running in their veins, Filipino Amerasians must actually run a stricter gauntlet of documentary proof requirements verifying their mixed heritage legacy.

Included in the immigration application for Amerasians is mandatory completion of the painstakingly notorious four-page checklist (MNL/PPT-6) titled "Requirements for Claiming Derivative U.S. Citizenship by Birth Abroad Through U.S. Citizen Parent (s)," or a modified substitute or permutation of that document (Embassy of the U.S. Manila, the Philippines, 2008). Among other voluminous stipulations the detailed questionnaire requires the full cooperation and consent of the father who may not have been in the applicant's life for years. It is an essentially unreasonable request, given that in many cases natural fathers have routinely avoided, denied or withheld parental responsibilities.

Also required is irrefutable proof of the U.S. parent's citizenship status at the time of birth, documentary evidence of the American father's physical presence in the U.S. before the applicant's birth and documentary evidence of physical presence of both parents at the same location at the time of conception. Additionally, the embassy interview officer may require certified DNA tissue evidence from both the applicant and both natural parents, an impossible requirement if the parent(s) are uncooperative, geographically unavailable, can't be located or are deceased. "If an applicant doesn't have 100%

cooperation from the father or both parents then reaching these goals are illusionary. Many of us who have experience working Amerasian entry issues view the checklist, or its often arbitrary variations, as ‘the checklist from hell.’ An unrealistic, impractical, totally frustrating document” (Gomez, 2011).

Whether Filipino Amerasians constitute a true diaspora subset or just another of many worldwide human dispersals, a loose, accidental or incidental distribution of human subjects as Tololyan (2007) has described it, will be the research purview of future social science researchers. What is known is that Filipino Amerasians as a biracial human enclave made up of Anglo, African, Latino and even Native American paternal origins will not go away anytime soon and is likely to be quite sizeable for some time.

Significantly, the total number of Filipino Amerasians alive today is probably sizably larger than ever anticipated (Kutschera, Pelayo & Talamera-Sandico, 2012). The proverbial 50,000 Filipino-Amerasian child population estimate of 1992 was largely based on anecdotal and news media derived figures, off and on attributed to the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, one of the long time not-for-profit supporters and advocates for the Amerasian cause. It was also a figure never officially denied from U.S. or Philippine authoritative sources. It referred chiefly to the number of Amerasian babies, children and teens living in and around the military bases straddling the notorious Angeles, Manila and Olongapo “Amerasian Triangle,” nicknamed for short the “AMO Triangle” (Amerasian Research Network, 2012).

This estimate did not necessarily include the Amerasian young surrounding other, widely scattered installations throughout the remaining archipelago. Nor did it include second or succeeding generations of Amerasians, or geriatric and elderly Amerasians whose birth roots reached to the U.S. colonial and commonwealth eras. Kutschera, Pelayo and Talamera (2012) reported that the Filipino Amerasian population in the archipelago is actually expanding exponentially, not only presently, but did also throughout many of the years since the 1992 bases closure. “While not anywhere near the level of the Vietnam and post-Vietnam American War era heyday of military supported prostitution surrounding bases and installations, these new Amerasians are being born primarily from (continued) military personnel fraternization with Filipina national women” (p. 4).

Such estimates come from three present day sources: (a) joint U.S. – Philippine *Balikatan* (Shoulder to Shoulder) military training exercises conducted annually in central Luzon, (b) ongoing and often highly classified U.S. military operations supporting Philippine armed forces battling domestic Muslim, Islamic Moro National Liberation Front, al-Quida and Abu Sayyaf terrorist operatives in southwest and south central Mindanao, and (c) Filipina sex industry entertainers who are impregnated by military contractors and servicemen at clubs surrounding U.S. bases in Japan (primarily Okinawa), South Korea and Guam and who are then forced to return home (Cervantes, 2011; Kutschera, Pelayo & Talamera-Sandico, 2012; Lee, 2007). Given these developments fueling a fresh, new 21st Century Filipino Amerasian, generation, the outright failure of both the U.S. or Philippine government to enumerate this population in any professional or scientific sense, and the history of figures attributed to fecund Pan Amerasian populations dating to the beginning of the 20th Century, it would be plausible to project that the number of present day Amerasians of various generations residing in the Philippine archipelago probably lie between 200,000 and 250,000, and possibly substantially more.

Implications of Declaring Filipino Amerasians a Diaspora

Social implications for the proposed categorization of military Filipino Amerasians as diaspora, or possibly other Pan Amerasian enclaves, are significant and potentially could serve to spur evidence based empirical enquiry into an at risk population and long overlooked sub culture. It would work to help awaken interest, or at a minimum raise cognitive intellectual awareness, of an isolated if not silent aspect of Asian American, Philippine American and Diasporic studies long neglected by U.S. academia and the U.S. university and college research community at large (National Amerasian Research Institute, 2012). Fresh interest in the Filipino Amerasian diaspora, largely a product of the worldwide military garrison state and a system of nefarious military prostitution, might also trigger research in military affairs areas involving U.S. American, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations and the African Union whose military forces routinely operate regional, continental or worldwide troop deployments and contingency responses affecting local civilian populations.

Fostering an atmosphere of relentless or sustained academic inquiry of an enduring nature may not be easy. The military industrial complex, the U.S. government and most host nations where Amerasian, Eurasian and other mixed heritage offspring have been sired from military deployment scenarios have been historically resisted, minimized, underplayed or even denied by these authorities (Enloe, 1989; Johnson, 2004, 2007; Schade, 1980). Indeed, in many host nations, including Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, governments themselves have acted in the same manner often because of domestic political reasons or local pressures (Schade, 1980).

It is also troubling that Filipino Amerasians, wracked by long time anecdotal and comparatively thinly researched reports of social stigmatization and discrimination, disadvantaged incomes, social disorganization of its households and troubling mental health issues (Kutschera, 2010) have been equally overlooked by Philippine research and social service agencies alike (Gastardo-Conoco & Sobritchea, 1999). Moreover, as this Amerasian population ages and its largest extant numbers enter early adulthood, the chances of attracting NGO/NGA, not-for-profit, foundational and U.S. or Philippine government assistance monies or any funds for adoption services or adult resettlement initiatives is rapidly evaporating.

The secretary of the cabinet level Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development, Corazon “Dinky” Soliman reported the nation’s top federal welfare agency no longer provides special assistance to Amerasians in the way it has more generously in the past. The problem is now almost solely the responsibility of NGO/NGAs and foreign private foundations Secretary Soliman told GMA TV Channel 7 Manila, the largest television station in the nation Nov. 7, 2011 (Manilad, 2011). Yet many of the old line NGOs that have offered field outreach programs to Amerasian children and teenagers or disadvantaged adults in the past (e.g., the Philippine Children’s Fund of America, the Pearl S. Buck Foundation and Preda Inc.) are reducing or phasing out the programs, or have moved on to other humanitarian pursuits altogether.

In addition to the studying the evidence and prospects for Filipino Amerasian diasporic categorization, researchers need to determine whether the broader Pan Amerasian population, which shares the commonality of having been involuntarily abandoned or stranded by U.S. American fathers, also constitutes a de facto diaspora, or merely a human dispersal or distribution. Tololyan (2007) wrote of a common mistake by some social scientists and more probably news reporters who erroneously define simple dispersals of populations for varying reasons as diaspora. “Though conceptually unity, this is one

of the ways in which the diaspora word is so misused today. For example, the dispersion of poor and often blacks from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina is now routinely called ‘the Katrina diaspora’” (p. 12). Surely the case for a Pan Amerasian diaspora is much stronger than the Katrina reference.

Two characteristics which set Filipino Amerasians apart from other Pan Amerasian enclaves are that most of the others (e.g., Vietnamese, South Koreans, Thais, Cambodians, Laotians, etc.) were offered and many doubtlessly took advantage of opportunities to emigrate to the U.S. via the 1982 and 1987 Amerasian immigration acts. In fact, to this day, a Vietnamese Amerasian has a better chance of successfully filing an admission petition on grounds of political asylum, or under the 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act, than does a Filipino Amerasian faced with the long and laborious visa entry process embedded in USCIS and Manila embassy procedures.

Thus, many Pan Amerasian in country enclaves to varying degrees have drawn down in size or lost authenticity, probably substantially in the case of the Vietnamese, South Korean and Japanese. First, many managed to emigrate to the U.S. on their own because of much easier restrictions for Japanese and South Korean citizens gaining admission to the U.S. This has resulted with Amerasians on the U.S. mainland today being assimilated into Asian American diasporas stateside. Second, the case for a plausible Pan Amerasian diaspora made up of Korean, Thai, Japanese or Okinawans is somewhat weakened for reasons of the considerable language, cultural differences geographical barriers among those groups.

The Filipino Amerasian diaspora in the Philippines is the one population comprised mostly of 100% English speakers and the one most likely to remain the largest in terms of raw numbers among Pan Amerasians. Yet this group is also one of the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable in terms of ever realizing its aspirations to return to the patriarchal homeland. There is very little chance of that occurring for any sizeable number of Filipino Amerasians and surely not for the poor who predominate. Their last best hope might be the possibility of a new immigration easement agreement for Filipino Amerasians which could conceivably be worked out as a U.S. concessionary offering, should the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State Departments make a serious attempt to return to the Philippines in some form of new, semi-permanent military re-basing initiative, as has been recently widely speculated in both the Philippine and U.S. news media (Whitlock, 2012).

Conclusion

In a sense it is hard to reckon why a case for categorization of the military Filipino Amerasian diaspora in the former U.S. colony and Neo-Colonial client state (Hamilton-Patterson, 1998; Karnow, 1989) has not been made before. A plausible answer may lie in a noticeable research literature gap pervading Asian American and Filipino American social and cultural studies, both of whom readily recognize the notion of generic formations of Asian and Filipino American diasporas on the U.S. mainland (Lum, 2008). Similarly, there are numerous academic publications and references to the Vietnamese American diaspora on the mainland, an outgrowth of the Vietnam War refugee experience and boat people exodus trauma. Yet serious chroniclers of the Vietnam Amerasian experience (e.g., Bass, 1996; Yarborough, 2005) have remained relatively silent on the matter of including or proposing Amerasians as a part of the broader and generally acknowledged Vietnamese American diaspora.

It may be argued that Filipino Amerasians may never achieve or warrant serious consideration as a diaspora because none of them were ever actually born in the U.S. “homeland,” but rather in a far off land where their military father, the soldier or military civilian, was temporally and perhaps accidentally assigned and where conception, birth and the population dispersal actually occurred.. However this claim is eminently refutable given that, particularly in the case of Filipino Amerasians, the huge, spacious, sprawling and widely dispersed permanent installations, substituted as microcosms of communities nearly identical to those found on the U.S. mainland (Kutschera, 2010). Thus the homeland in a de facto if not literal sense was simply transferred and transformed to the overseas bases rendering the true homeland birth question and linkage irrelevant.

For now, geo-political and social conditions underpinning the existence of the isolated and forgotten Philippine diaspora are likely to remain static. The diaspora will, for instance, increase in size due to relatively modest but expanding U.S. troop deployments and movements, training exercises and occasionally bloody military incursions against Muslim extremists. Indeed, U.S. military personnel and contractor numbers in the Philippines could swell significantly if Washington and Manila agree on specifics of a new DOD alignment plan to shift overseas units and military personnel to a 60%-40% worldwide ratio favoring the Western Pacific (Whitlock, 2012). That being said, the diaspora inevitably grows older. Second and succeeding generations, those sired by first generation Amerasians already born or conceived and remaining there when U.S. bases were at Subic Bay and Clark, are likely to enter adulthood, middle age, become elderly and ultimately expire, or certainly cease to be a “segment,” or the lifeblood, of a vibrant and genuine diaspora (Tololyan, 2007, p. 649).

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