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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE #2012-03, Wednesday, February 22, 2012

Filipino-Amerasians Short Changed by U.S. Academia Mental Health Study Lecturer Tells University of the Philippines-Diliman Asian Center Cultural Identities Forum

QUEZON CITY, Metro Manila, the Philippines – The U.S. academic research community has dealt military Filipino Amerasians abandoned and stranded in the Philippines “a tremendous disservice (by failing to adequately study their socioeconomic and mental health needs); it is a record I as an American citizen am not particularly proud of,” P.C. “Pete” Kutschera, Ph.D., LMSW, told the Asian Center Forum on Cross-cultural Identities (Narratives of Resistance and Adaptation) at the University of the Philippines-Diliman here today. Dr. Kutschera, visiting professor and director of the Philippine Amerasian Research Center, College of Social Work, Systems Plus College Foundation in Angeles City, Luzon, questioned, “Where are the great American state universities: Michigan, Wisconsin, UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) and the East West Center, University of Hawaii, all of whom have departments and centers devoted to studies on Southeast, East Asian, Western Pacific studies? I am at a loss, an absolute loss. Why have they not been heard from on the (Filipino) Amerasian question?”

Dr. Kutschera made the remarks in response to an analysis of his presentation by Dr. Alexis S. Montevirgen, Ed.D., co-founder and principal researcher, Deep Roots Educational Consulting, Alameda, CA and a forum discussion panelist. Dr. Montevirgen indicated that the conceptual framework of Kutschera’s research study, “Stigma, Psychosocial Risk and Mental Health Symptomatology among Amerasians in the Philippines: A Multiple Case Study” was Frantz Fanon’s theories and writings on the psychopathology of colonial oppression. Montevirgen noted that many structures of U.S. colonial and neo-colonialism still persist in the archipelago and that the process of decolonization is the “proverbial ‘elephant in the room.’ How do we foster, how do we accelerate decolonization?”

Kutschera’s research underscored the lack of accessible academic research, particularly on Filipino Amerasians and other Pan Amerasian enclaves (Japan [Okinawa], South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and the U.S. Territory of Guam). Empirical research on existing conditions confronting Filipino Amerasians, including larger participant study samples, are need to confirm or dispel findings in his 16 participant sample case study research dissertation published in 2011. The study found severe levels of anxiety and depression, low socioeconomic status, unemployment, housing insecurity, alcohol and drug abuse, identity confusion, and social isolation among both African (Black) and Anglo (White) Amerasians, but particularly Africans residing in Angeles City, site of the former Clark air force base. Other potential study areas include the high incidence of somatic illness, severe family dysfunction and research on whether Filipino Amerasians and Pan Amerasians constitute a de facto Diaspora.

The co-presenter at the forum, Professor Purita Billedo of San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, CA and Kutschera were introduced by Dr. Carolyn I. Sobritchea, Asian Center dean. Dr. Sobritchea’s classic 1999 socioeconomic and family organizational study of over 400 Amerasians titled “Filipino Amerasians: Living in the Margins” had served as part of the basis for his own research. Prof. Billedo discussed the topic “Living Life in the U.S. from an Immigrant’s Perspective.”