

# Filipino Amerasians: Gauging Stigmatization, Intolerance and Hatemongering in a Pluralistic Asia Pacific Society

Peter C. Kutschera  
Philippine Amerasian Research Center

Marie A. Caputi  
Walden University

## ABSTRACT

Empirical and evidence-based researchers have neglected stigmatization, bias, name-calling, intolerance and even hatemongering experienced by military Filipino Amerasians and other biracial Pan Amerasian progeny who were abandoned abroad by their U.S. servicemen fathers. This condition persists in the Philippines and has been reliably documented in other East and Southeast Asian nation-states, such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. A relatively recent multiple-case study investigating psychosocial risk and mental health among Amerasians in Angeles, Pampanga, site of the former Clark Air Base, substantiated long-reported anecdotal claims that Anglo (White) and particularly African (Black) Amerasians were targets of victimization and traumatized by verbal harassment, hate, and occasional violence by mainstream Filipino natives or foreigners. These marginalized Amerasians faced stigmatization and ridicule because of skin color and pigment differences, uncommon facial features, hair texture variances and differential personal demeanors. Even more severe criticism was against Africans and Anglos because of the unproven, stereotypical view that the vast majority of Amerasian mothers were sex workers. For this reason, it was held that many servicemen rejected these children. The notion that within a pluralistic, multiracial society Filipino Amerasians experienced less discrimination and prejudice than might be expected within a more racially homogenous in part set the stage for the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services to diminish easements for Amerasians. In contrast to other nation-states where Amerasians reside (e.g., South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia), the belief is that stigmatization and its correlates are higher. However, these faulty conclusions take on exceptional geopolitical sensitivity in the realities that marginalized Amerasians face in the Philippines, a former U.S. colony and commonwealth.

*Keywords:* Filipino Amerasians, Asian Americans, stigmatization, name-calling, hatemongering

## INTRODUCTION

Estimates vary widely and inconclusively as to the precise number of mixed-heritage, biracial military Filipino Amerasians living in the Republic of the Philippines (“R.P.”) today. However, what remains uncontested is that for a long time anecdotal accounts, news media reports, and a sparse volume of empirical researchers have contended that military Filipino Amerasians and Pan Amerasians (also distributed in other scattered parts of the Western Pacific Basin) face significant stigmatization largely due to their mixed-race characteristics and controversy of birth origin.

The notion of military abandonment of stigmatized and often illegitimate offspring dates to the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) and the early U.S. colonial years of the war’s immediate aftermath (Coffman, 2004; Wolff, 2006). The height of contemporary public concern over the comparatively obscure if underreported Filipino-Amerasian human tragedy seemed to reach its apogee not long after entrenched, permanent bases relocated in 1991-1992. At this time, the Philippine Senate voted not to renew extension of the Republic of the Philippines – United States (“R.P. – U.S.”) Military Bases Agreement of 1947.

Included in the mix were the massive U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, Olongapo; the equally sprawling 13th U.S. Air Force Headquarters Clark Air Base, Angeles (“Clark Air Base”); the Crow Valley Bombing and Gunnery Range, Tarlac; and dozens of smaller Navy, Marine and Air Force installations and camps. Many bases were part of the notorious Angeles, Metro Manila, and Olongapo Amerasian (“AMO”) Triangle, a wide swath of low-lying and semi-mountainous landscape in west central Luzon, believed to contain the highest number of mixed-race Amerasians anywhere in East or Southeast Asia (Kutschera, Pelayo, & Talamera-Sandico, 2012). Attention to the AMO Triangle and the human travail that Filipino Amerasians confronted rapidly lost its luster once the U.S. Court of Claims in Washington D.C. dismissed before trial a \$69 million class action suit, *Acebedo vs. United States* (1993). The suit was brought against the U.S. Government and the Department of Navy on behalf of stranded, abandoned, and orphaned Amerasian children in the areas surrounding U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, Naval Air Station, Cubi Point, and the U.S. Naval Communications Station- Philippines, San Miguel, all located near Olongapo City, Zambales. The cause of action sought child support, day care, job training, and other compensation (Maclear, 1995; Montes, 1995) for many thousands of impoverished Filipina national mothers, caretakers, and foster parents

left with fatherless Amerasian children. However, a group of military Amerasians living in nearby Angeles City, Pampanga, were not in that failed settlement attempt; they are the focus of this study.

This article proceeds in ten sections. Following this Introduction, the next three sections, in order, present a discussion of the demographics of Amerasians in the Philippines, a literature review, and an overview of contemporary Amerasian stigmatization and mental health studies. Section IV briefly outlines the study methodology and sample, while Section V describes in similarly succinct fashion the research instrument and research site. Section VI highlights the research results and findings under this study, with focus on risk factors and case study profiles. Section VII provides a discussion and analysis of the findings, with emphasis on emergent themes and social implication of the military Filipino Amerasian marginalization. Section VIII offers several recommendations on future lines of research and research questions, law and policy matters, and cross-sector engagement in service of this marginalized, stigmatized population. The article concludes with some contextual reminders and open-ended questions on these issues, as well.

## I. DEMOGRAPHICS OF AMERASIANS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Today, the Philippines are known in the Asia Pacific region as an essentially pluralistic culture, with high population of indigenous and foreign-born persons, and diverse societal complexity (Francia, 2010). Demographically, the Philippines were shaped by successive migrations of numerous peoples including Malays, Negritos, Polynesians, Chinese, and Taiwanese, two lengthy periods of Western colonization—the Spanish Imperial period (1521-1898) and the U.S. colonial and commonwealth periods (1898-1934 and 1935-1946 respectively)—plus a conglomeration of nearly a dozen distinctly different native languages and scores of local dialects (Aluit, 1990; Francia, 2010; Luna, 1990; The Philippines, 2013).

According to the most widely reported and commonly publicized estimates, approximately 50,000 Amerasian infants, children, and adolescents who descended from American servicemen were abandoned, stranded, unsupported, or orphaned on the Philippine Islands (Gastardo-Conaco & Sobritchea, 1999; Levi, 1993; Montes, 1995). That unofficial estimate was made at the time of the U.S. bases withdrawal in 1991-1992. However, Kutschera and Caputi (2012) estimated that when considering all age groups (including adults, the elderly and second-generation Amerasians) the 1992 children estimate did not project the roughly 230,000 to 250,000 or more military Amerasians believed residing in the archipelago today. Significantly, neither U.S. nor Philippine governments in modern times ever

took an authentic or comprehensive census of Amerasians. Moreover, in analyzing findings from the Kutschera and Caputi (2012) research, Bondac (2012) pointed out that Amerasians in the Philippines actually continue to grow at an exponential rate. The approval of the 1999 R.P. – U.S. Status of Forces Agreement permitted U.S. military personnel (e.g., high numbers of private corporate defense contractors accompanying uniformed soldiers) to once again operate and train with the Philippine military. They conducted either publicized training events such as the annual Balikatan exercises in central Luzon or at times classified combat operations against militant Muslim extremists and terrorists with suspected Al-Qaeda links in southwestern Mindanao as part of the Global War on Terrorism.

The vast majority of military origin Amerasians—the forsaken progeny of U.S. uniformed service members, government employee, and corporate military contractor fathers and Filipina national women—became highly marginalized socioeconomically and heavily stigmatized. Kutschera (2013) and Kutschera, Caputi and Talamera-Sandico (2014) maintained that Filipinos, an ostensibly pluralistic and multiracial Asia Pacific people, ostracized many mothers and their Amerasian children because of their reputed involvement as military sex workers. However, the researchers posited that no scientific study of this widely held stereotype is available to determine its veracity.

Currently, the U.S. troops and bases deployed and garrisoned in Pan Amerasian enclave nations include Japan and South Korea as well as the heavily fortified U.S. territory of Guam. Schade (1980) reported wide dispersal of mixed-race military Amerasians in numerous other locales dating to, or even before, World War I, and extending to the Vietnam American War (1964-1975). Such enclaves included Cambodia, mainland China, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Taiwan (Formosa), Thailand, Vietnam, the Marianas Islands, and possibly other scattered Pacific Island groups of Micronesia. Also, new pockets of modern day military Amerasians in Afghanistan and neighboring Muslim countries (including Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) are present in Central Asia, where U.S. Marine, Army, and Air Force (and more recently NATO) troops and units have been active since the onset of the Global War on Terrorism (since officially renamed the “Overseas Contingency Operation”).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A small body of empirical literature, alongside longstanding news media reports and personal anecdotal accounts, confirm significant, consistent levels of stigmatization, discrimination, name-calling, intolerance, harassment, and isolated incitement to physical violence (hatemongering)

against biracial Filipino Amerasians, particularly toward darker-skinned Africans (Blacks). Such aggression and assaults have usually emanated from mainstream or lowlander Filipino natives and in isolated incidents, foreigners were the reported or observed protagonists.

Various inquiries undertaken in the past two decades, including either studies with various sized samples or literature studies and reviews (i.e., Ahern, 1992; Cantani, 1997; Gastardo-Connaco & Sobritchea, 1999; Levi, 1993; Montes, 1995; Sturdevant & Stoltzfus, 1992) report conditions of low socioeconomic and marginalized standards of living for most Filipino Amerasians. Kutschera (2010, 2011) found significant presence of stigmatization, discrimination, name-calling, verbal harassment, and incitement to physical violence (hatemongering) among Amerasians. The multiple-case study linked these conditions to a high number of stigma-tainted psychosocial risk and stress factors and suggested they were strongly related to elevated-to-severe levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and psychosomatic illness found among the sample.

Similar instances of stigmatization, discrimination, verbal harassment, and hatemongering have been reliably, but sporadically, reported in other East and Southeast Asian nation-states with mixed-race Amerasian populations post-U.S. troop and base deployments dating to World War II. Characterized as part of a broader *Pan Amerasian* social construct (Kutschera, 2010, 2011), these enclaves or pockets of military Amerasians were or are possibly large and dispersed enough to stand as a separate or inclusive diaspora apart from the significant Filipino Amerasian diaspora conglomeration (Kutschera, 2013).

The 1982 Amerasian Immigration Act, passed by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Ronald Reagan (Levi, 1993; Montes, 1995), specifically excluded Filipino Amerasians from immigration easements yet generously provided a number of them to other Pan Amerasian groupings. They were excluded, in part, because of the empirically untested belief that Filipinos sustained lesser degrees of stigmatization and discrimination than other military Pan Amerasians did. Additionally, by Congressional definition, the Philippines were not a modern, post-World War II combat fire zone (Ahern, 1992; de Leon, 2012a, 2012b). Although there is no comparative research to support this assumption, Cambodians, Laotians, South Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese Amerasians included in the 1982 legislation were regarded as victims of allegedly greater and more intense measures of stigmatization. Vietnamese Amerasians, for example, faced this criticism and rejection due to their origin at birth, physical features, and phenotypic mannerisms, but they were particularly socially contemptuous because they were held to be the children of enemy U.S. combat and invasion forces (Bass, 1996; McKelvey, 1999).

Gastardo-Conaco and Sobritchea (1999) and Kutschera (2010, 2011), believed to be the two most significant empirical studies published on contemporary military Filipino Amerasians, confirmed marked levels of stigmatization and discrimination. The drivers were essentially two factors: (a) the widespread belief but empirically untested hypothesis that the bulk of Amerasians were offspring of Filipina sex workers and (b) differential physical attributes, including darker skin color, non-conforming facial features, different hair texture and styles, and atypical personal and phenotypic mannerisms. These latter issues particularly affected stigmatization of African Amerasians and made them twice the victim of discrimination (Gastardo-Conaco & Sobritchea, 1999).

### III. CONTEMPORARY AMERASIAN STIGMATIZATION AND MENTAL HEALTH STUDIES

Falk (2001) posited that the view of a propensity for development of stigmatization (and hence intolerance and hatemongering) pronounced among certain groups (e.g., biracial and mixed-heritage individuals, sex workers, the homeless, and immigrants, refugees or displaced populations) often came from majority populations who viewed them as being alien or from the outside. Notably, these conditions or permutations were stigma-related psychosocial risk or potential mental stress factors possessed by many military Filipino Amerasians in the Kutschera field dissertation study (2010, 2011). Conducted over a three-year period (2007-2010), all participants were from the AMO Triangle, most all specifically Angeles, Pampanga, site of the 13th U.S. Air Force Headquarters Clark Air Base.

### IV. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

With a multiple-case study design, Kutschera (2010, 2011) focused on the impact of stigmatization, discrimination and verbal harassment-related psychosocial risk and stress factors and their impact on a sample (N=16) of mixed-parentage Anglo (White) and African (Black) Amerasians. The sample divided into two age groups: adolescents (16-to-19 years) and young adults (20-to-39 years). The sample was nonclinical (i.e., not in mental health treatment). A purposive/judgmental sampling method ensured that the participants had a reasonable likelihood of either encountering stigma due to mixed-heritage origin of birth and physical features or to assure qualities believed typical of the study phenomena (Fortune & Reed, 1999; Rubin & Babbie, 2005).

## V. INSTRUMENTS AND RESEARCH SITE

Data-gathering instruments included a semi-structured, researcher-designed interview guide and the Australian developed Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (“DASS-21”) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The research site was the Angeles-based Amerasian outreach programs of the Philippine Children’s Fund of America (“PCFA”) with cooperation from Pearl S. Buck International, long active in military Amerasian field outreach.

## VI. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### A. *Risk Factors*

A total of 82 physical risk factors (e.g., homelessness and housing insecurity) and 76 mental stress factors (e.g., targets of name-calling, social isolation or living in socially dysfunctional, derivative households headed by mothers engaged in sex work occupations [Kutschera & Talamera-Sandico, 2012]) evolved from the study. Stigma-related risk and stress factors also included: exposure to biracial tension, verbal and physical harassment (intolerance), incitement to physical violence (hatemongering) and resultant or related behaviors including abandonment despair, unresolved grief and loss issues, identity confusion, family disorganization and diminished self-esteem. Strikingly, the administration of the DASS-21 measurement scales revealed over half the sample (62.5 percent) scored severe levels of anxiety and depression, and to a lesser extent stress. More than half the sample also voiced or demonstrated psychosomatic illness suggesting a robust presence of somatization disorder (Kutschera & Sandico, 2013).

### B. *Case Study Profiles*

#### Case 1: Aretha (African Adult Female)

Aretha was a politically astute, articulate African woman in her early 30s, skillfully fluent in English and Pilipino (Tagalog), who had a series of unsatisfying, low paying jobs, promotional setbacks and an incomplete college education. A single woman with no children who sometimes maintained live-in relationships with lesbian partners, Aretha toiled at a variety of jobs including messenger, office assistant, custodian, and data entry clerk and recorder. Aretha claimed to be homeless, unemployed, or underemployed many times in her life. The misfortunes originated because of an ongoing feud with her Filipina national stepmother, whom she claimed

stepped into her life and prevented her from claiming her father's military pension, which she regarded as her birthright inheritance. About two years after her interview for the study, Aretha appeared in *Left Behind by the Ship* (2010), an Italian documentary film depicting stranded first- and second-generation African Amerasian progeny in Subic Bay-Olongapo. At that time, she worked with an Amerasian activist group counseling young Amerasians on how to fill out voluminous forms required by the U.S. Embassy in Manila to commence immigration proceedings as an Amerasian offspring.

Aretha tells a harrowing story of heavy stigmatization and discrimination throughout her life, including job rejection, failure to advance at work, lost university scholarship opportunities, virulent race baiting, and angry name-calling. "Feelings of inferiority," "angry as hell" and "putting up with insulting behavior" are all phrases used during a lengthy and at times rambling interview. Denigrating names have been hurled at her in every stage of her life: school, social situations, and the workplace included "G.I. baby," "African bastard," "African hole," "(n-word)," "alien," "bum," and "kulot" (or kinky hair). "I've been called the worse, most vile names you can ever put against a person: slave, (n-word), black hole, fat lips, mustafa (ugly dark colored person). No one gets used to this and you know what? You have no place to go on this island to try and stop it!"

Sometimes Aretha was blindly held out for ridicule for being the daughter of a sex worker though she believes that neither her natural mother nor her stepmother ever engaged in sex work. "Every Amerasian's mother worked on Fields Avenue (one of the legendary red light district streets located in Balibago, Angles City)—that's the myth."

Aretha obsessed over the stigmatization and intolerance she believed surrounded her well into adulthood, indicative of a life as a tortured journey. Mired in family dysfunction including confrontations, verbal and physical abuse from her stepmother, her teenage and early adult years featured periods of wandering and homelessness. Obviously scarred because of an unrelenting barrage of racist and demeaning name-calling and harassment she had experienced throughout the years, Aretha regarded herself as "a survivor who one day will get off these islands of hell."

Aretha self-reported 13 psychosocial risk and stress factors; in a cross-case analysis the results were significantly above the sample mean (9.93). In addition to the aforementioned conditions, including high impact stigmatization from name-calling and verbal harassment at school and on the street, her Axis IV environmental risks included: low medical and mental health access, intense social isolation, low self-esteem, psychosomatic complaints or illness, periods of unemployment, underemployment and housing insecurity. Despite it all, Aretha managed a high enough Global Assess-

ment of Functioning (“GAF”), which enabled her to stay at work even if it is intermittent or sporadic. “I won’t let them get to me,” she insisted. “I am not a bum!”

### Case 2: Marvin (Anglo Adult Male)

An unemployed, socially isolated, single Anglo Amerasian who is in his early 20s and an admitted alcohol and drug abuser, Marvin lived with his natural Filipina mother in a poverty-stricken, government subsidized settlement district near San Fernando, Pampanga. His diminutive family circle survived primarily on subsistence income from a small sari-sari (household-based convenience store) hut. Marvin earned between PHP5000 to 9000 (\$115 to 200 USD monthly) from the store, an above average income for such operations, which enabled him to support his binge beer drinking and *shabu* (crystal methamphetamine) drug habits.

Marvin admitted he often passed time in idleness, fantasizing about meeting his long departed father, a U.S. Marine stationed at Subic Bay. Marvin’s Idaho-born enlisted father met his mother when she worked as a “bar fine” dancer at a club outside the base, which catered to U.S. Seventh Fleet Navy men and Marines on shore leave. His mother’s early avocation and the fact that his father eventually left and never supported the family troubled Marvin profoundly. “Whites were supposed to have it better than Blacks at school, but that wasn’t so when they suspected Mom was a whore,” he starkly admitted. Marvin experienced some of the harshest physical and verbal assaults of any Amerasian kid at school. Unrelenting victimization occurred through physical attacks, shoving incidents, name-calling, and incessant teasing from classmates, hostile neighbors, even street people and strangers.

Marvin was called “tiso’y” (meaning “handsome” in a positive, cheerful sense, but also translating into the demeaning “White boy” in dark tones of voice), “singaw” (alien), and “Amerkanong hilaw” (half-breed), whether the venue was school, neighborhood fiestas, street side, at work, or even from normal interface with Filipino acquaintances. Eventually Marvin learned to steel himself from the hurt through self-imposed social isolation. “They (Africans) have definitely had it much worse than the Whites. . .treated badly, like ‘basura’ (garbage), or ‘azkals,’ or street dogs. . .but we’re not much far behind.”

Marvin self-reported a total of 13 risk and mental stress factors, including such issues as history of homelessness, low access to health care services, low social desirability, excessive school absences and tardiness, numerous psychosomatic ailments including persistent migraine headaches, and sharp back and leg pains. He also experienced somatic symptoms

including onsets of diarrhea or irritable bowel syndrome and presented feelings of not being well physically or mentally. Almost always, Marvin thought that he wasn't worth much as a person and had feelings of low self-esteem; frequently he found it hard to relax. Sometimes he felt so anxious he became conscious of his heart beating erratically despite lack of physical exertion. Clearly, when compared with the majority of sample participants, Marvin exhibited behavior reactions and physical and mental symptoms reflecting severe effects of various levels of stigmatization encountered during early childhood. "I'm still alive so I consider myself a survivor."

### Case 3: Felix (African Adolescent Male)

"I got high. I guess it help me dull the pain [*sic*]. I guess you could call me 'throwaway kid,'" Felix smiled through a mouth of missing teeth and wrinkled, bruised, pockmarked facial skin. The hurt was palpable when he described how classmates called him "Aeta" or the "Igorot" (dark skinned mountain people of west central Luzon) or "ampon," meaning abandoned or sometimes adopted person. Sometimes the stigma and intolerance would manifest itself in something comparatively simple and subtle, such as not being selected or chosen last to play after school for a pickup basketball or soccer game.

Bold confrontations between African Amerasians and Filipino national kids would deteriorate into physical violence and hatemongering (in the sense of inciting or urging others to violence). The majority of kids Filipino or Amerasian would often just stand around like spectators. Felix recalled forlornly that in high school a day would rarely go by without a messy fistfight. Alternatively, pre-planned fights occurred in the play yard after school. "It was mostly always over the racial thing, the skin and hair difference, or some remark like 'you are the bastard son of a prostitute—that's why your Daddy isn't home for his G.I. baby, right. . .right Negro?'"

Felix never met his father and sporadically lived with his mother, whom he thought to be a former bar hostess, dancer and part-time sex worker. She never steadily supported him even during the brief, infrequent times they lived together. A local couple informally adopted him and his sister a few years back. He spent most of his days hanging around the street, carousing with friends, or chatting with neighbors in front of the family's tiny food stall attached to the side of the house. Sometimes Felix, a socially isolated and low self-esteem addled teenager, would venture from home selling cigarettes, chewing gum, and playing cards showing pornographic images along one of the city's traffic congested boulevards. Unsure of his father's identity and conflicted over his own, Felix would act out at

night during neighborhood fiesta nights and binge drink by swilling from cheap pints of Tanduay rum interspersed with Manila beer chasers.

DASS-21 scores revealed Felix struggled with borderline severe anxiety and moderate but significantly elevated depression, along with significant signs of psychosomatic illness. He complained of anxiety, worries, and insecure feelings over gloomy job prospects and past family hurts. Cross-case analysis revealed he had 12 psychosocial risk and stress factors, which placed him among the highest of any adolescent sample participant. Especially painful were stigma and harassment from his days as a skinny, dark-skinned military Amerasian arriving at grade school and finding that he was unwelcome. A sense of physical and mental anguish seems to erupt from many places, he complained: "They (his classmates) just never let you forget that you were different from them in any number of ways."

#### Case 4: Mariah (African Adolescent Female)

A frail, thinly framed asthmatic teenage souvenir vendor, Mariah is one-half Aeta. She is truly an anomaly among the sample as a participant who could be doubly stigmatized. Her Clark Air Base sergeant father was African American; her mother, a dark, full blooded Aeta, the daughter of the indigenous mountain people native to Zambales near Mount Pinatubo. Her father met her mother at Clark Air Base when she worked at the base laundry. So their relationship and Mariah's origin was the natural offshoot of many "boy-girl" or "man-woman" liaisons arising between military personnel and Filipina national women. Yet Mariah remembers that many times she was harassed as much by Filipinos for her very dark skin, as she was for possibly being the daughter of a sex worker. "It was blind sometimes, the kind of criticism we would take; it was mindless."

Mariah's DASS-21 scores indicated she had severe anxiety cutoff levels, and recorded moderate but clearly elevated levels of depression and stress. She self-reported 10 psychosocial personal risk and mental stress factors; cross-case analysis showed this number to be one above the mean for the sample. Negative personal or physical risk factors ranged from high poverty, housing insecurity, and low access to medical and mental health services to low social desirability and excessive school tardiness and absences.

Like many respondents reporting high stigmatization presence in their personal lives, Mariah also exhibited many symptoms of psychosomatic illness with a provisional diagnosis of somatic disorder and possibly comorbid acute anxiety disorder. Her somatic complaints consisted of persistent, severe headaches, unexplained sudden onset of indigestion, diarrhea, intermittent insomnia, and unexplained fatigue. Such conditions were

likely to worsen, given she was reluctant to seek professional help because of low family income and limited access to community health services. Additionally, a tradition among many Aetas was not to go to outside sources for resolution of personal issues or health problems, because their women were reputedly highly skilled in the tradition of herbal medicine. This cultural belief represents a community wisdom and reliance on their wisdom in contrast to that of “outsiders.”

#### Case 5: Michelle (Anglo Adult Female)

Michelle was a light-skinned Amerasian single mother caring for two pre-teen children. Her DASS-21 score readings were among the most normal within the sample. She self-reported a handful of psychosocial risk and stress factors including low income, periodic homelessness, a history of underemployment, witness to intense name-calling, discrimination, and bi-racial stress and originating from a family with derivative family construct features.

Employed at one of the expanding number of corporate telephone call centers, Michelle provided customer service for U.S. corporate account sited at the Clark Freeport Zone. Despite being the best educated of the sample, with a bachelor’s degree in behavioral health, she was unable to find immediate employment as a psychology counselor, which was an original professional goal. At the time of her interview, Michelle believed that having a mixed-race Amerasian origin might have held her back professionally. Yet a few years later, after her employment as an addictions counselor with the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development, Michelle said that being a mixed-heritage Anglo Amerasian with pronounced Caucasian features and light skin color, may have eventually helped her. Upon deeper reflection, she maintained that several of her Anglo Amerasian female friends and acquaintances had experienced similar good fortune related in some measure to their more U.S. American than native Filipina physical appearances and phenotypic mannerisms. She maintained that this so-called *mestiza*, or mixed look favoring the Caucasian side, was very popular and an appearance and style sought by many mainstream, but darker skinned contemporary Filipinas.

Michelle struggled as a daughter from an impoverished household nominally headed by a sex worker. When she reached puberty, she became pregnant and had two out of wedlock children of her own by a wayward, unsupportive Filipino boyfriend. Despite these early personal setbacks, Michelle successfully educated herself by winning several full college tuition scholarships. The great irony, said Michelle, is that to the best of her knowledge, Latino, Chicano, or Hispanic Amerasians have remained essen-

tially unaffected by the stigmatization and intolerance phenomenon. “Unless their mothers are suspected of having been in the sex industry, they probably experienced the least bias from Filipinos. This situation occurred because, by appearance, many Latino Amerasians actually look very Filipino.” Many even had a popular mestizo appearance, but were not necessarily viewed as Amerasian outsiders.”

While growing up, Michelle witnessed race prejudice directed at both Anglos and Africans, but notes that it was always more intense for Africans. “I had a great deal of empathy for them. There is no question they’ve had it the worse.” Michelle claimed she personally witnessed extreme prejudice, name-calling, harassment, even violence and beatings of Africans in high school and in the tent city “resettlement area” in Angeles where her mother and family lived following the disastrous 1991 Mount Pinatubo volcanic eruption.

“In a sense, sometimes it took on an almost illogical and automatically destructive (*sic*) form. Black Amerasians were viewed as outsiders, period. Therefore, they were deserving of what anyone could throw at them!” Later on while working at the call center, she noticed, perhaps in a more subtle application, that “even though African Amerasians were hired and actually sought out because they were capable of speaking clearly and understandably to other African American customers back in the states, they were actually treated poorly. They often had to work night or odd hour shifts and very rarely ever promoted once hired.” As to social settings, Michelle recalled, “It’s was not unusual at all to go to a party, a fiesta and hear someone call out hey, hey ‘tiso’y’ (White) to me, or hey, hey ‘(n-word)’ to my African friend. Then they’d stare us down making us feel unwanted and inferior.” These kinds of comments can get very personal. “My own friends at college automatically assumed my African Amerasian pal was a ‘bar girl’ because of her dark skin. In their view all African women are automatically connected to the *kasarian industriya* (sex industry).”

## VII. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The five representative cases included here reflect a cross section of the sample of 16 adolescent and adult participants in the main study. Many of their testimonials and conditions were also typical across the spectrum of the remaining sample and are discussed below.

### A. *Emergent Themes*

Among the predominant psychological themes and conceptual patterns emanating from the research interview schedule—many laden with stigma-

related overtones—were expressions of intense abandonment as result of the father’s absence. In several instances, abandonment occurred by both natural parents. Other prominently expressed themes and patterns included stigmatized, intense, and dramatic exposure to racial prejudice, bias, and discrimination by mainstream Filipinos, personal identity conflict, confusion, tension, and social exclusion.

Several themes and patterns percolated from analysis of these case studies. When focus is specifically on testimonials of stigmatization, intolerance, and hatemongering, the themes and patterns which emerged from analysis essentially supported the observations and conclusions drawn in the Cattani (1997), Gastardo-Conaco and Sobritchea (1999) and Kutschera (2010, 2011) research studies, as well as other scattered informal research on the topic (e.g., news media reports and long standing personal anecdotal claims). Hatred and prejudice, which at the least are unacceptable and inappropriate conduct, and at the worse are despicable and repulsive behaviors by most societal standards, manifested themselves in most venal ways against mixed-race Amerasians. Such were truly surprising expressions as the research unfolded, given that the Philippines is known in the Asia Pacific region for its essentially pluralistic culture, high population of persons with foreign-born origins, and diverse societal complexity (Francia, 2010).

The research studies cited above maintained that the primary direction of anti-social behavior and prejudice against Amerasians covered a range of expressions and reactions, but appeared to concentrate summarily on two primary forms. The first is the almost mindless, illogical, and unstudied belief that most Filipina mothers of Amerasian progeny were sex workers (Kutschera, Caputi, & Talamera-Sandico, 2014). The mothers and their children were regarded as totally deserving of universal, unrelenting condemnation and blame from society-at-large. The second form of expressions and reactions focused on attribution of physical and phenotypic differences of Amerasians, predominantly those of African Amerasians. These attributions include anatomical ones (e.g., skin color or pigment, hair texture, shape and slope of head, facial features of the eyes, lips, nose, and ears, and general physique) plus factors such as personal mannerisms, including how a person interacts within the surrounding environment. Falk summarized such reaction phenomena as “sex, rejection and contempt” (2001, p. 265).

Additionally, a more subjective component to this hate formula—relating to individual disposition or the way a person carries or portrays themselves to others – was a form of mannerism (i.e., how they physically and emotionally composed themselves and interacted with the environment surrounding them, sometimes described as a phenotypic component). Falk

maintained that such stigmata have a way of highlighting the differences or enhancing the concept of “the other” or “an outsider,” much in the way that “an immigrant (of which the Amerasian has many characteristics in common) is also, by definition, an outsider and hence the target of stigma.” Falk further noted: “[T]he degree to which the stigma of foreigner or alien to an immigrant varies considerably because of the experiences and cultures from whence the immigrant came varies so much” (2001, p. 219). Thus, as Michelle graphically described her memories and emotional state after witnessing what appeared to be a pattern of banal abuse directed at African Amerasians, she analyzed the events in the following way:

In a sense, sometimes it took on an almost mindless and automatic destructive (*sic*) form. Black Amerasians were viewed as outsiders, period. Therefore, they were deserving of what anyone could throw at them!

Most tellingly, Mariah used the same precise terminology in discussing her own experiences of Filipino violent reactions to the widely held notion that all Amerasians were bastardized, contemptible children of Filipina sex workers: “It was blind sometimes, the kind of criticism we would take. *It was mindless*” (Italics added).

The evidence clearly reflected that the severe level of stigmatization and intolerance directed against military Filipino Amerasians had contributed in a negative way to many of their psychosocial personal risk and stress factors. In the Kutschera (2010, 2011) research, these factors were a contributing and possible causal factor in their high levels of core mental health symptomatology and propensity to develop psychopathology or mental disorder. In retrieving literature for his study, Kutschera cited Finch, Hummer, Kolody, and Vega (2001), who identified the seminal studies of Hughes and Demo (1989) and Pearlin (1989) in categorizing stigmatization and discrimination as stressful life events. Often times these events resulted in or appeared to contribute to anxiety, depression, or general malaise. In the large sample utilized in the Hughes and Demo longitudinal inquiry, a 13-year study of low socioeconomic status and poverty stressed African Americans, the researchers found that “[R]acial inequity and discrimination have serious negative effects on personal self-efficacy” (1989, p. 403).

Klonoff, Landrine, and Ullman (1999) cited an equally lengthy study by Jackson, Brown, Williams, Torres, Sellers, and Brown (1996) on the same population in their own longitudinal study as significant not only in their own research on the subject of stigmatization and discrimination, but also on its impact on psychiatry relating to African Americans. Jackson et

al. had assembled a probability sample of 2,107 African Americans with their interview responses resulted in the finding of a “relationship between racial discrimination and psychological distress or symptoms” (as cited in Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999, p. 330).

Demonstrably, in case study after case study, and not only among the five sample participants from Kutschera (2010, 2011) chosen above for representative discussion, the highest and most widespread core mental health symptomatology recorded was anxiety. For example, study participants Aretha, Marvin, and Felix all presented DASS-21 elevated anxiety ranges from borderline severe to extremely severe. All offered personal accounts of intense experiences and incidents with stigmatic and racial hatred on the part of Filipino antagonists. Each was provisionally diagnosed with an anxiety-related disorder (i.e., generalized anxiety, acute anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder).

Moreover, Aretha, Felix, and Marvin, like Mariah and five other participants in the study, reported many symptoms resembling psychosomatic illness or possible somatic disorder. Johnson (2004) conceptualized that psychosomatic illness was anxiety and stress-related and had valuable diagnostic implications for underlying mental depression and mood disorders, bipolar, anxiety related disorder and stress related illness, symptoms of which all presented in one form or another in the 2007-2010 Angeles study. Fischbein (2011) noted that psychosomatics were routinely described as illnesses in which somatic or physical symptoms presented. However, due to mental trauma, patients do not necessarily recognize the symptoms and thus are they susceptible to receiving misdiagnoses by medical doctors, physician’s assistants, and medical or clinical social workers, as well as psychiatric nurses who may be among the first to receive and examine these patients in a health care setting.

The Angeles research sample frequently presented traces of somatic illness. It requires further understanding of this complex, physical and mentally intertwined disorder on a larger sample and expanded study into the issue of prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms and apparent somatization disorder among Filipino Amerasians (Kutschera & Talamera-Sandico, 2013). The researchers also concluded that the high presence of somatic complaints and illness found in the Angeles sample was primarily anxiety-related, suggesting a profound linkage to the high levels of stigmatized-influenced psychosocial personal risk and mental stress factors, including numerous instances of harassment and hatemongering identified by the nine participants reporting signs of this malady.

B. *Social Implications of the Military Filipino Amerasian Marginalization*

From birth onward, many Filipino Americans have experienced abandonment or neglect is something that many Filipino Amerasians have known intimately from birth. Much of which is attributable to their wayward or stray American military fathers, as well as the institutional practices by and lack of attention from the U.S. Government, as amplification of attitudes and policies that range from outright rejection to bare-minimum response given to this marginalized, stigmatized population. In short, the historical record shows that the U.S. Government, through departmental policy, Congressional acts, and outright inattention and denials of responsibility, appears to have placed Filipino Amerasians at or near the bottom of all Pan Amerasians in terms of providing for or holding out hope for possible future recompense. Supporting this summative claim are the following examples:

1. The U.S. Department of Defense (“DOD”): In a 1970 statement commenting on the unknown number of babies born from G.I. servicemen and Vietnamese national women, the DOD made a well-publicized statement on the condition which stands to this day as its laissez-faire policy affecting all military Pan Amerasians: “The care and welfare of these unfortunate children. . .has never been and is not now considered an area of government responsibility” (Lamb, 2009, p. 1). Ironically, the U.S. Government—not the military—ultimately came to aid Vietnamese Amerasians vis-à-vis the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987, which allowed fast-track immigration for Amerasian refugees; however such a break was never afforded to military Filipino Amerasians.
2. The Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982, along with current U.S. Embassy-Manila and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) restrictions in force and affecting Filipino Amerasian immigration: While allowing liberalized immigration easements for Cambodian, Laotian, South Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese Amerasians, this statute specifically excluded Filipino, Okinawan Japanese, and Taiwanese Amerasians, all of whom were included in the original draft (Ahern, 1992). One of the reasons for Filipino exclusion was the belief that stigmatization and intolerance were greater for other Amerasians, especially Vietnamese, who had been viewed as children of the enemy (McKelvey, 1999). Even today in the Philippines, many marginalized Filipino Amerasians remain resentful and feel they have been forgotten, ignored, and even trashed by their former U.S. colonizers and current allies for having

been excluded from this piece of legislation (Ahern, 1992; de Leon, 2012a, 2012b). Highly restrictive immigration rules administered by the U.S. Embassy-Manila and the USCIS make it extremely difficult for impoverished first- and second-generation Filipinos Amerasians to claim permanent residency or citizenship due in great measure to the onerous paperwork, documentation hurdles, and, at times, seemingly arbitrary or shifting policies and procedures (Kutschera & Caputi, 2012).

3. Stigmatization involving other Pan Amerasians: When responding to the needs of Amerasians, the U.S. Government has tended to favor non-Filipinos (Kutschera & Caputi, 2012). The 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act (“AHA”) underscored this policy by ultimately permitting 26,000 Vietnamese Amerasians and 75,000 of their close relatives to immigrate to the U.S. mainland (Lamb, 2009). The AHA’s legislative history and enactment, and likewise for the 1982 Amerasian Immigration Act, appeared to ignore, if not conveniently or deliberately overlook the fact that large installations in the Philippines were utilized for supreme forward command, military support, and launch platforms for massive naval and air offensives in both the Vietnam American and Korean Wars. These launch facilities included Clark Air Base, Pampanga, the U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, U.S. Naval Air Station Cubi Point, U.S. Naval Communications Station Philippines, San Miguel, Zambales; Mactan Air Base, Cebu, in addition to several others (Ahern, 1992; Karnow, 1989). Historical records and other sources provide ample evidence and relatively reliable documentation that other Pan Amerasians (i.e., Okinawans and other Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese) experienced virulent episodes of stigmatization, intolerance, name-calling, and social exclusion. However, except perhaps for a briefly coordinated U.S. Government effort focused on Vietnamese Amerasians in the post-Vietnam American War era, comprehensive or comparative research studies examining systematically specific levels in these nation-states were either never conducted, unavailable, or unknown. Many isolated, uncoordinated or independent studies, books, or reports have presented evidence and trends of stigmatization, intolerance, hatemongering, and socioeconomic marginalization of Pan Amerasian cohorts (e.g., Bass, 1996; Kim, 2009; Lamb, 2009; Lee, 2007; McKelvey, 1999; Moon, 1997; Sims, 2000; Song, 2003; Wu, 2012; Yarborough, 2005; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). On the subject of military Filipino Amerasians, in particular, the landscape of empirical research and relevant publications is even sparser.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation today, as described in the Kutschera studies (2010, 2011), has not dramatically changed in the Philippines or, for that matter, in the shrinking number of East Asian countries and other areas where U.S. forces remain (primarily Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, and the strategically fortified U.S. territory of Guam). In 2012, the Obama Administration announced its new effort to rebalance or “pivot” emphasis of U.S. international defense posture from the Middle East and other regions of the globe to the Western Pacific Basin (Cloud, 2021; O’Callaghan & Mogato, 2012), which may have some peripheral impact on the largely dormant Amerasian question. The question remains whether these efforts will redirect the public spotlight onto the mostly forgotten, but languishing and perplexing military Amerasian conundrum (Kutschera, 2013).

In view of this contemporary state of affairs, the following recommendations are offered:

*Expanding Research:* Given the dearth of research on this population, fostering research community interests and inquiry into the Filipino and Pan Amerasian condition within academia is a critical first step, particularly given that these enclaves possess many characteristics of diaspora populations and may be of great interest to Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies, Anthropology, and related fields (Kutschera & Caputi, 2012).

*Alerting Human Rights Organizations:* Both the U.S. Government and the East and Southeast Asian governments which have hosted U.S. military presence are complicit in, and responsible for, the fate which has befallen military Amerasians, particularly those who remain socioeconomically and psychologically at risk and reflect trauma and damage from prejudice, discrimination, intolerance and hatemongering. Thus, alerting human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as agencies specializing in the reduction of global poverty such as the Asia Foundation, the Asian Development Bank, the UN Development Program, and others, may bring this ignored or minimally discussed human problem out from the shadows.

*Encouraging Military Research and Policy Changes:* The U.S. and other military intervention and peacekeeping powers in the world (e.g., NATO, the U.N., the African Union, Russia, France, etc.) engage in periodic military- or alliance-based field deployments or combat forays. As such, the worldwide potential exists for further interactions between female civilians and male deployment personnel (both military and contractor). Such contacts may increase the likelihood of fraternization and mixed-heritage childbirths, and along with these phenomena the excesses of stigmatization and intolerance experienced by mixed-heritage children as has

occurred in the East and Southeast Asian contexts. Thus, researchers in military science disciplines should initiate focus on evaluating current policies and formulating new ones, and on reviewing command control procedures. The scope of research would include policies related to monitoring troop rest and recuperation, governing off-duty leisure time pursuits, and placing limits or boundaries on troop and military contractor consorting with female civilians (e.g., immigrant and refugee women and girls who might be involved in sex work or sex slavery) in troop-occupied areas.

*Increasing Awareness:* With the documented levels of stigmatization, intolerance, harassment, name-calling, and hatemongering experienced by the majority of impoverished Filipino Amerasians, the potential impact of these phenomena on the population's mental and physical health is an ongoing issue that needs rectification and coordination across multiple domains. Clearly understudied, inadequately researched and reported, and all but ignored by the U.S. Government, the plight of Filipino Amerasians and most other Pan Amerasians is virtually unknown to the American public. With the upsurge in bullying, the reported increase in sex and harassment offenses involving U.S. female troops by male troop cohorts, and comparative violence in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world, these situations are may be related and—assuming that they are—require the kind of coordinated responses and interventions that only result from increased awareness.

*Extending Services to Filipino Amerasians:* Finally, a coordinated, collaborative effort initiated by the UN to establish a consortium of agencies and organizations dedicated to extending their current services to this neglected group is well in order. Federal agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in combination with private funding, need to consider ways to support research and research-based services for this neglected population. Foundations that financially back and otherwise support international and global projects need to consider underwriting research studies and programs to support to this type of consortium on global health concerns.

## CONCLUSION

More than three decades ago, Schade (1980), an authority on the Pan Amerasian human experience and former executive director of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation (now Pearl S. Buck International), wrote that mixed-heritage, biracial Amerasians were the equivalent of abused American children. These children were left forgotten and forsaken in foreign lands by their U.S. servicemen fathers who would never return. He estimated two million

Amerasians were born in East and Southeast Asia between the 1898 Spanish American War and 1980 when he concluded his count. Since that time, tens of thousands of Amerasian childbirths have been attributed to both U.S. servicemen and an increasing number of corporate defense contractors, who directly support the military more than ever.

What occurred with the military Filipino Amerasian marginalization and in numerous other Pan Amerasian enclaves, including documented evidence of intolerance and hatemongering, constitutes a shameful indictment of the U.S. uniformed military services, corporations who employ military civilian contractors, and the nation as a whole. The chance that these dynamics continue, or that a similar scenario presents itself in another part of the world, is not implausible. In view of these continuing conditions, many questions and challenges remain as to how best to serve this marginalized population. Perhaps more fundamentally, however, the questions are: Do these discarded, diaspora populations have the right to a certain quality of life? If so, what is the source of that right? And, what is required to provide these populations with the medical and mental health services needed to fulfill that right?

#### NOTES

Dr. P.C. Kutschera (e-mail: pkuts001@waldenu.edu) is an independent social science researcher and Director of the Philippine Amerasian Research Center (PARC) and Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Work, College of Arts and Sciences, Systems Plus College Foundation (SPCF), Angeles City, Pampanga, 2009, Luzon, Philippines. He is Founder/Chief Academic Officer of PARC-SPCF College's U.S.-based non-profit research collaborative partner, the Amerasian Research Network, Ltd. ([www.AmerasianResearch.org](http://www.AmerasianResearch.org)), 210 Osborne Rd., Albany, New York 12205. A licensed social worker, he holds MSW and BA degrees from the State University of New York (University at Albany and State University College, New Paltz respectively) and received a Ph.D. in human services from Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

Dr. Marie A. Caputi (e-mail: marie.caputi@waldenu.edu) is a Contributing Faculty, Mentor and University Researcher Reviewer for the School of Counseling and Social Service, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Walden University. A veteran social science researcher with a record of journal article publications spanning more than four decades, she is also a Board Trustee and serves on the Advisory Board of the Amerasian Research Network, Ltd. Mailing Address: 7120 S.W. 41 Place, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314-3182.

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