

'GI Babies' in the Philippines Seek U.S. Citizenship
New America Media
By: DW Alliance

PHILADELPHIA — Hoping to highlight the lonely fate of Amerasians, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will ask U.S. President George Bush to help the “GI babies” during Bush's visit to Manila next month.

Also known as “Children of the Dust,” Amerasians were born out of relationships between American military servicemen or personnel and Filipino women from 1941 to August 1993.

When the U.S. bases closed down, they left between 20,000 to 50,000 fatherless children mostly living in poverty and deprivation in the Philippines.

In a letter to President Arroyo, the Endowment for Strategic Leadership for Asian Americans (ESLAAI) urged her to include the Amerasians as one of her talking points with President Bush.

The Philippine president responded to Philippine Congressman James Gordon, one of the authors of the bills, that the plight of the Amerasians be discussed with President Bush.

Ernesto Gange, chair of ESLAAI said Amerasians had long been deprived of their natural rights. They face the reality of discrimination and life of destituteness in the Philippines.

Some of these children have been seeking legal claim to allow them to immigrate to the U.S. or even just to visit their fathers and relatives but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

U.S. congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald authored a bill in Congress to empower Amerasians in the Philippines and Japan to immigrate to the U.S. Under U.S. Public Law 97-359, known as the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982, Amerasians born in Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand have been allowed to immigrate to the U.S. and become citizens.

But Filipino and Japanese Amerasians are not included in the law and have been stripped of their right to become U.S. citizens.

“The U.S. is most generous in providing a home for people who were persecuted and discriminated from their native country, yet they refused to acknowledge the Filipino and Japanese Amerasians who were fathered by American servicemen,” Gange said. “These children are American Asians, they are half our children.” He urged Filipino Americans to write to their congressmen to back the bill.

ESLAAI is currently mobilizing Amerasians to greet President Bush when he visits the Central Philippines next month.

Rep. McDonald said that when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines near the former U.S. bases, these children were the victims. They had been abandoned and helpless.

Brad Baldia, managing director of ESLAAI said their group was working with other Asian groups like Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese to lobby for the passage of the bill.

“We strongly support President Bush’s battle cry of ‘No Child shall be left behind,’ when he visits Asia next month. He can tell the Filipino and Japanese Amerasian children, “that they will not be left behind,” Gange said.

The Pearl S. Buck Foundation has extended help to Amerasians by providing livelihood skills training, health benefits and education program.

In a resolution filed by Gordon, he urged the U.S. government to include Filipino Amerasians in the U.S. Public Law so that they can avail of benefits.

“A great number of Filipino Amerasians are living in poverty, in need of support, and would want to find their roots and be reunited with their fathers,” said Gordon.

Ref.: http://www.mixedheritagecenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1420&Itemid=29

Look MUCH more here: www.amerasians.philippineculture.ph