



PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**NY PCG INTERVIEWED BY FOX NETWORK REGARDING
REMARKS MADE AGAINST PHILIPPINE MEDICAL SCHOOLS IN
TV SHOW “DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES”**

New York – During an on-air interview on Fox Network’s “The Radio Factor with Bill O’Reilly” (4 October 2007), Vice Consul Leandro Lachica was given the opportunity to address the segment’s discussion of the Philippine reaction to the derogatory remarks made against Philippine medical schools on the ABC TV show “Desperate Housewives”, entitled: “Racist Joke or Overreaction”.

Mr. O’Reilly was of the position that the Philippine government was taking this too seriously, considering “the source”, a satirical comedy, in which the character played by Teri Hatcher has habitually been caught in unlikely comedic situations. Mr. O’Reilly asked if the Vice Consul was seriously offended by the comment, considering it was meant as a joke. Vice Consul Lachica pointed out that if it was a joke, it was not a funny one, as it damages the reputation of Philippine-trained doctors, hurting and offending dedicated professionals who had already complied with licensing and immigration requirements before coming to the US.

The Consulate appreciates the position of Mr. O’Reilly that political correctness may not lend itself to comedic writing. Like the United States, the Philippines respects and upholds the right to free speech, as much as it values the right to laugh. Surveys over the years have shown that Filipinos are the happiest people in the world (World Values Survey, February 2005). Our culture has taught us to find absurdity in adversity. If anything, our flaw may be that we do tend to see humor in everything. The issue is not about “political correctness,” it is about “misrepresentation”.

While some medical schools may have questionable standards, this is true of any country, including the United States. Before a foreign-trained doctor can be allowed to practice in the US, he or she must pass rigorous examinations, more than US trained doctors, and stringent immigration requirements, to be licensed in the US. Filipino doctors have done so in the thousands. Many of them now practice in prominent hospitals, major cities and in underserved areas, providing access to competent medical services in far reaching regions of the US. Freedom of speech entails the singular responsibility of making sure that what you say is accurate and truthful. We cannot allow the impression that doctors

from the Philippines, or any foreign country for that matter, who have qualified and passed the same medical board examinations in the US, are any less qualified than their US colleagues.

In 1981, when President Reagan was shot, his anesthesiologist was a Filipino. Former President Bill Clinton's personal physician was Ret. Admiral Connie Mariano, also a Filipino-American. The White House recognized the skills of our compatriots, entrusting the lives of the most powerful person in the world into Filipino hands. Dr. Enrique M. Ostrea, Jr. has been voted five times as one of the 500 "Best Doctors in America." Dr. Jorge M. Garcia is a renowned cardiothoracic surgeon, a clinical professor at George Washington University and a fellow at the American College of Surgeons. Many other Filipino doctors are as accomplished and respected in various fields of specialization.

In his letter to ABC network, the Philippine Ambassador to the United States explained that "many US hospitals employ a large number of Philippine-trained doctors, nurses and medical technologists, and some hospitals in major cities would in fact not be able to operate at full efficiency without the considerable presence of their Filipino and Filipino-American medical staff."

The Philippine Consulate General recognizes that a television comedy is not the best reference for making an informed opinion. We also recognize the power of media to influence the minds of many. We hope that in future, those in control of popular media are more conscientious and responsible about the impressions and perceptions they create in a multicultural society as rich and diverse as that of the United States. -END-