

PRESIDENT

Benjamin J. Hofileña, Jr.
(310) 551-9346
bhofilena@mwe.com

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Francisco Ochoa
(213) 229-5171
fochoa@mayerbrown.com

SECRETARY

Ireneo A. Reus III
(562) 628-5571
ireus@reuslaw.com

TREASURER

Angeli Aragon
(310) 909-8000
aaragon@hinshawlaw.com

CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Eduardo A. Angeles
(213) 978-8100
eduardo.angeles@lacity.org



**PHILIPPINE AMERICAN
BAR ASSOCIATION**

www.pabala.org

MELVIN N.A. AVANZADO

310.201.3556 (direct)
310.712.8556 (facsimile)
mavanzado@jmbm.com

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Allison Aquino
M. Cecilia Amo
Christopher Ayayo
Melvin N.A. Avanzado
Carina Castaneda
Grace Cayanan
Laurie A. Dee
Joy De Leon
Arleen Delos Santos-Aquino
Emma Hilario
Bernie LaForteza
Abraham Lim
Darren Manibog
Arnold Pamplona
Greg N. Santiago
Carolyn Enciso Sieve
Vince Verde
Gilbert Villaflor
Hildegard B. Aguinaldo
(student member)

October 4, 2007

VIA FACSIMILE & REGULAR MAIL

Mr. Stephen McPherson
President of ABC Primetime Entertainment
ABC Television Network
500 South Buena Vista Street
Burbank, California 91521-0001

Re: "Desperate Housewives" Disparagement Of Filipino Medical Community

Dear Mr. McPherson:

I am a member of the Board of Governors of the Philippine American Bar Association (PABA) and a Filipino-American trial lawyer in Los Angeles. On behalf of PABA as representatives of the Filipino-American community in Los Angeles, we write to express our outrage at a highly offensive scene in the season premiere episode ("Now You Know") of the television program, *Desperate Housewives* which was broadcast on your network on Sunday, September 30.

In the offending scene, Teri Hatcher's character, Susan, discusses with her doctor the possibility that she suffers from an early onset of menopause. Not pleased with his diagnosis of her condition, Ms. Hatcher quips that she would first like to check the doctor's diplomas "to make sure they're not from some med school in the Philippines." This comment was uncalled for and unnecessary to the show's story line. More importantly, the comment is highly insensitive to Filipino-Americans, and denigrates all Filipino-American doctors and other health professionals.

Because this remark was so callous and ignorant, we assume that the producers of *Desperate Housewives*, ABC's standards and practices department and you as President of ABC Primetime Entertainment are unaware of the history surrounding the immigration to the United States of Filipinos and the contributions of Filipino medical professionals to American medicine. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 sought to attract professionals to the United States by providing for immigration based on "occupational" preferences. The Act was designed to entice professionals, and specifically medical professionals, to emigrate from their home countries to the United States. My own parents (who were engineers) immigrated to the United States in this manner. However, Filipino doctors and nurses were by far the largest in number of the Filipino professionals who immigrated to the United States as a result of the Act.

For decades, Filipino-American doctors have proudly treated patients in the United States, including three Presidents. A Filipino-American doctor, Rear Admiral (Ret.) Eleanor "Connie" Mariano, was the first military woman to serve as White House physician. She served both President George H.W. Bush and President Bill Clinton. Filipino-American Dr. Jorge Garcia was one of the doctors to treat President Reagan when he was shot in 1981. A Filipina was the first Asian and woman to enter the Harvard University School of Medicine, Dr. Fe del Mundo. Dr. Max Cuesta, the father of another member of our PABA Board of Governors, received his medical degree in the Philippines from the University of Santo Tomas. Dr. Cuesta was a Professor of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Virginia when he retired in 2002. Here in Los Angeles, Filipino-American Dr. Francisco P. Quismorio is a professor at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. Dr. Quismorio is board certified in internal medicine, rheumatology and immunopathology and has been at USC since 1968.

The accomplishments of these and other Filipino-American medical professionals have always been a source of pride for our community. They are not only our doctors; they are our parents, our relatives, our friends. They perform their duties largely without fanfare. It is outrageous that a popular television show, like *Desperate Housewives*, could so easily belittle and disparage decades of faithful service with one gratuitous and hurtful remark.

According to the most recent census data, Filipino-Americans comprise the second-largest Asian minority group in the United States. Roughly 1.8 million Americans identify themselves as being of Filipino heritage. Almost a million of those Filipino-Americans reside in California. By some accounts, Filipino-Americans are the fastest growing Asian minority community in the United States. Thirty-nine percent of Filipino-Americans hold a bachelor's or higher degree. Although Disney/ABC's marketing department likely has more precise data, publicly available figures suggest that Filipino-Americans command an estimated fifteen billion dollars in annual buying power. We are confident that ABC's advertisers will listen to our objections to a show which disparages members of our community.

PABA is the Los Angeles-based bar association of Filipino-American lawyers. One of our goals is to provide leadership and support to the Filipino-American community,

Mr. Stephen McPherson
October 4, 2007
Page 3

particularly with respect to significant legal issues which affect the members of that community – such as racial discrimination or derogatory remarks about Filipino-Americans.

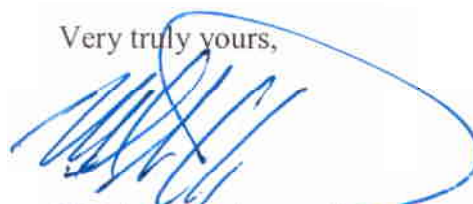
We are obviously concerned that a network in the Disney-ABC Television Group would willingly broadcast such racially insensitive and derogatory remarks that place the Filipino-American medical community in a false light. This incident is particularly outrageous since it comes so soon after Isaiah Washington made similarly insensitive remarks in the context of ABC's other hit program, *Grey's Anatomy*. During that controversy, Disney and ABC made much of Disney's anti-discrimination policy – and Mr. Washington's participation in that program was reportedly terminated in furtherance of that policy. We question the effectiveness of any purported anti-discriminatory policy which would permit such a gratuitous racial attack on Filipino-American doctors and medical professionals.

We have been in contact with other organizations who have expressed their support for our objections to this *Desperate Housewives* episode. We fully expect that other bar associations, minority organizations and other groups concerned about unfair characterizations of minorities in the media will publicly support us in the coming weeks. We are hopeful that you will alleviate the necessity for such a grass roots campaign against your program.

We demand that ABC and the *Desperate Housewives* production team meet with us to determine what you and the program can do to alleviate the damage that this discriminatory and false remark has caused to our constituents. At a minimum, we demand that ABC and the producers of the program broadcast a public apology during the program itself. (The written statement of apology issued yesterday was woefully inadequate on many levels and fails to redress the damage that this discriminatory remark caused.) More importantly, we hope that ABC and Disney will take immediate steps to educate both your standards and practices department as well as your creative personnel to ensure that similar incidents do not occur in the future on any of your programs. While we can appreciate the demands placed upon the producers of television programming, this scene demonstrates a profound ignorance of the significant contributions of Filipino-American medical professionals to our society. ABC needs to acknowledge the offensive nature of this episode and rectify the damage to the members of our community.

We look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Very truly yours,



Melvin N.A. Avanzado

Mr. Stephen McPherson

October 4, 2007

Page 4

cc: Ms. Anne Sweeney
Co-Chair, Disney Media Networks, & President, Disney-ABC Television Group
Mr. Mark Pedowitz
President, ABC Studios
Mr. Marc Cherry
Creator & Executive Producer, *Desperate Housewives*
The Hon. Willy C. Gaa
Ambassador to the United States, Republic of the Philippines
The Hon. Mary Jo A. Bernardo-Aragon
Consul General, Los Angeles, Consulate General of the Philippines