

## FORUM KRITIKA

### PHILIPPINE STUDIES: TRANSNATIONALISM AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

#### Introduction

A special session titled “Philippine Studies: Transnationalism and Interdisciplinarity” was held at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention on January 6, 2011 at Diamond Salon 7, J. W. Marriott Hotel in Downtown LA, California, USA. The special session had been conceived, proposed, organized and presided by Dr. Maria Luisa Torres Reyes, founder and present Editor-in-Chief of *Kritika Kultura* and faculty member of the Ateneo de Manila University Department of English. The panelists included Vicente Rafael (University of Washington, Seattle), Cynthia H. Tolentino (University of Oregon), Ruanni Tupas (National University of Singapore), Jeffrey Cabusao (Bryant University), and Charlie Samuya Veric (Yale University).

This special session, which was also billed as part of the “travelling” *Kritika Kultura* Lecture Series, addressed the complex legacy of the Philippine experience of multiple colonialisms, to wit, by Spain, the United States, and Japan, each similar in strategic expansionist trajectories but unique in tactical colonial technologies. Among the questions asked were: What is empire about from the perspective of Philippine Studies, at once a product of colonial discourse and critique? What gives, what takes, between center and periphery within the empire and in the course of empire building? What strategies of “containment” confront the borders? What counterstrategies destabilize center and periphery beyond or despite the constraints borders?

Following the lectures, the discussion among the panelists and the members of the audience revolved around the following specific and general issues:

- Encouraging further research concerning the responses of African-Americans to the Filipino-American War;
- Critiquing the apparent marginality of Philippine Studies within Latin American Studies;
- Understanding how Philippine Studies could be truly “transnational” and “interdisciplinary”;
- Developing and institutionalizing Philippine Studies on predominately white college campuses in the context of the United States;
- Developing Philippine Studies in other parts of the world from transnational perspectives as a form of “borderless studies”;
- Developing Philippine Studies that is both post-national and post-disciplinary;
- Expanding the field of Spanish language and culture to include early historical texts from the Philippines;

- Developing a historical understanding of the development of Philippine Studies as a formal field of inquiry from its inception in the 1970s through pioneering collections such as *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature* (1967);
- Developing new forms of literacy to understand the complex colonial histories of the Philippines;
- Acknowledging the ways in which the push for Philippine Studies challenges students, teachers, and scholars to confront the history of US Empire which is deemed significant given the deep historical amnesia within the United States regarding its own history of imperialism; and
- Examining the connection between African Americans and Filipinos during the Philippine-American war and its implications for forging contemporary connections between the African American struggle for reparations and the Philippine struggle for independence.

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Editor's Note: The information here has been culled from the notes from Dr. Jeff Cabusao and Mr. Charlie Veric.