

I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi— The Journey of Our Words

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Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

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“I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” is dedicated to the Chamoru people, Micronesian peoples, Oceanic peoples, our families, the peoples whose stories we’ve been blessed to hear, and the peoples whose stories have yet to be heard.

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Sainan Yu`os

Guåhan

I manmofo`naigue ham

I mañaina-ta

Chamorus

Our mothers (Tina Quichocho and Dolores Aguon Cruz)

Our fathers (Joseph Quichocho and Victor Quinata Cruz)

Kisha's family

Karlynn Quichocho (sister), Christina Blas and Antoniette Muñoz (aunties), and Josefa and Victoria Muñoz (cousins)

Anghet's family

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Chapter One: Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Anghet Hoppe-Cruz and Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Sisters (written by Jessica “Sita” Garlock)

A coalition of two.
 So impassioned.
 Lives intertwined.
 More than they would like sometimes,
 But really, wouldn't have it any other way.

They say they're not related, but they are.
 Their mother is named Guåhan.
 Who raised them.
 Who taught them.
 Who instilled in them the strength.
 To fight.
 To write.
 To shed light on the many wrongs.

They argue.
 As all sisters do.
 Because of that passion
 For their work
 For each other
 For their mother.
 And come out better on the other side.

Reminded that it is not
 Resolution we are looking for.
 Nor an answer.
 But to build.
 To share.
 To relate.
 Like sisters do.

Our poetry readings entitled “I Kareran I Palábran Måmi (The Journey of Our Words)” and our work together as Chamoru women, poets, activist-researchers, community organizers, and sisters inspired us to work on a collaborative MA portfolio project. The catalyst for our collaborative effort, the “I Kareran I Palábran Måmi” poetry readings, began in May 2009, followed by three

readings through April 2010. Tasked to participate in a blog site for Dr. Vilsoni Hereniko's Researching Oceania class in spring 2009, we responded to course readings, lectures, and discussions in both prose and poetry. By that time, we had taken several Pacific Islands Studies graduate courses, and most of our course readings were written by Polynesians, Melanesians, and white European and American scholars. Micronesian writers, Micronesia in general, was underrepresented. Dr. Hereniko mentions in "Mapping the Territory" that "Micronesia is a late-comer to the literary scene. The absence of any major novelists, playwrights or poets up to now has often been claimed to the result of an education system that did not emphasise creativity" (27). We raised the issue of the lack of Micronesian authored literature of Micronesian peoples to Dr. Hereniko. His advice was to write ourselves.¹ And we did just that. By the end of the semester, we had a collection of powerful poetry and decided to re-present our people, ourselves, through sharing our work. In fall 2009, we committed to doing a collaborative MA portfolio project.

Our portfolio is dedicated to speaking against the colonization of Guåhan and, to a lesser extent, the other islands in Micronesia. The main purposes for this portfolio project were to utilize performance and written poetry that would cut across the boundaries of age, gender, socioeconomic status, and religious and cultural beliefs. Furthermore, the portfolio attempts to decolonize western curricula and the field of Pacific Islands Studies by choosing the communal over the individual and honoring our oral histories/storytelling through using poetry as a means to heal, to feel empowered, to be resilient, to "write" the wrongs.

Our portfolio is composed of several chapters. The first chapter is our collaborative introduction to the portfolio. In the first part of the introduction, we briefly discuss the evolution of "I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi" and the genesis of our collaborative MA project. The purposes of our portfolio and what we hope will be the outcomes of the project are also discussed. Following are our separate reflections of this journey, both individually and together.

Chapters 2 and 3 include papers which discuss various themes and issues that are raised in our poetry. In chapter 2, Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho` deals with issues surrounding Chamoru culture, identity, and the importance of Chamoru poetry, particularly poetry written by Chamoru women, as tools of resistance and survivance. In chapter 3, Anghet Hoppe-Cruz addresses issues of Micronesian healthcare and overall health of Micronesians and the impact on health as a result of militarization. Anghet's work with the Micronesian community in Hawai`i for three years is prevalent throughout much of her poetry.

Chapter 4 consists of reflections on our poetry readings and on our overall collaborative portfolio journey. We each wrote two reflections, one after each spring 2010 reading. These reflections are significant in that they allow others to better understand what our work together has been like; they essentially give people the chance to experience "I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi" with us.

Chapter 5 is our favorite component, the words that brought us together, our poetry. Our words are very important to us and, while we are excited to share our stories, we are also aware of the power of words. We certainly want everyone to love our words, to listen to our stories, and to side with us in our struggles, but we know this may not always be the case. Still, our poetry is our attempt at giving voice and life to stories that may have otherwise been untold. Our poetry is categorized according to theme. These themes include “Håyi i Famalao`an Chamoru? (Who are Chamoru Women?),” “I Manaotao Tãno` (The People of the Land),” “Ginen Guinaiya (With Love),” “Occupied Nation,” “Luluki Ham! (Free Us!).”

Finally, we close with a collaborative poem we wrote. It reflects our collaborative work and our continued work at present, from two different Islands in the Ocean. Our poetry is our effort to confront sensitive issues that for too long have been spoken about behind closed doors, if spoken about at all. Our poetry is an addition to the voices that have come before us, fighting for our people, for justice, for freedom. We have chosen to include these chapters so that readers could read our poetry and gain a sense of what our work is and what it means to us. Moreover, through our work, we hope that our readers can get a better understanding of our culture, history, people, and home, at least in our eyes.

“I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century...”

-Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

A few words on Our Journey from Anghet

It all began with a story, it seems. For us, all stories are the blocks we live on, what we turn to for faith, for love, for strength. They are not always pretty, our stories. For Kisha Ann Borja-Kicho`cho` and me, I Kareran I Palãbran Mãmì, translated in English as “The Journey of Our Words,” is a story of so much more than resistance poetry. On May 12, 2010, Nainoa Thompson addressed the first graduating class of the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work and shared a very personal story of the triumphs and tragedies of the Hokule`a voyage, which are the triumphs and tragedies of a people, his people, the Kanaka Maoli. Like Nainoa, we too are voyaging, our vessel is our words, the wind that pushes and guides us, our people, our history, forward. Nainoa shared that the Hokule`a was critical to the survival of his people, because voyaging is the identity not just of Kanaka Maoli, but of all Polynesians. For me, I Kareran I Palãbran Mãmì is a starting point, representing a voyage that reaffirms our identity as Chamoru people and reconnects us to our sisters and brothers of Oceania, more specifically the peoples of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Belau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and, last but not least, Hawai`i (all of which are US-affiliated nations).

I arrived in Hawai`i in the spring of 1997. The greatest gift Hawai`i has given me is the awakening of my spirit to myself as an indigenous woman. I didn`t realize it the moment it happened, but in retrospect ten years later, in 2007, while listening to a Kanaka Maoli, Hinano

Rosa, discuss cultural historical trauma, the pain I felt had a name. Then in 2009, I pinpointed the moment the awakening began. It was in the spring of 1997 as I rode past the Hawai`i State Capitol and saw a sea of hula hālau in my favorite color red, the color of life, and vibrant yellow. I got off the nearest stop and ran back to the capitol. What I witnessed that day was the 1997 Gathering Rights Protest. Just as I reached the capitol, the sea of hālau began to undulate to the sound of the ipu ringing in the still air. And I began to sob. It was the kind of wailing that only Hawaiians (indigenous people in general) know...of deep loss, of abuse...I stood there stunned in my sadness. I could not understand, but I knew that the pain I felt was not just empathic, it was real. I only needed to discover what lay buried within me.

Digging up that sadness and exploring its depth and origins began in 2007 when I enrolled in the Master's of Social Work (MSW) program at the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa. Hinano Rosa spoke at the very last seminar session of the semester, and I knew without a doubt that I had to explore the cultural historical trauma of my people, the Chamoru people. So in the fall of 2008, I began coursework with the Center for Pacific Islands Studies (CPIS), whose curriculum promotes decolonization and challenges colonialism. The skillset offered by the MSW program provides hands-on direct learning tools for a practicing clinician. What CPIS supplemented my MSW program with was the truth; for me, anyway, you cannot begin to discuss the issues of poverty and oppression which as a social justice advocate is my mission to end, without discussing the root of them. They are rooted in colonialism. Since we live in the Pacific, the most colonized region of the world, by the United States of America in particular, it is only fitting that we begin the dialogue of colonialism and of domestic violence.

"My Name Is Truth," written in the Spring of 2009, began my journey; it had been years since I even attempted to write at all. It was the first poem I ever performed and is special to me, encompassing cultural historical trauma and the indirect ills indigenous societies are impacted by as a result of colonization/militarization. Though subtle domestic violence is a theme that recurs throughout my work, I have lived it silently and have begun to speak out against it in connection to militarization and colonization. Further exploration and research are required to validate my hypothesis that colonization and militarization factors into the increased incidence of domestic violence in the Mariana Islands and Micronesian islands. The traditional matriarchal system of the Chamorus was challenged by the emasculation of our men through a forced cash-based economic system, thus stripping them of their traditional roles as farmers and fisherman.

CPIS's coursework was rigorous; the added layer of intensity was the decolonization curriculum. We were un-learning history and learning how to re-present that history. Some of my resistance was not new to me or my consciousness, but the CPIS coursework took it to a whole new level. It is a tragedy though, to be in a class at 30 years old and learn the truth, that the country you pledge allegiance to, really has not an ounce of respect for the lives and health of your people. I felt many times as I learned of the ways in which research was used as a tool against indigenous people, or the history of Guåhan's liberation, and the tragic BRAVO nuclear

testing in the Marshall Islands that I needed a friend. I needed a sister. And there she was, Kisha Ann Borja-Kicho`cho`. In Kisha, I found a woman, a Chamoru like myself, whose lens of oppression layer after layer was being lifted. Empowered by our newfound knowledge, empowered by each other, and fueled by the assumed lack of presence or intellectual contributions being made by Chamorus, we began our journey, I Kareran I Palâbran Mâmi, together.

“beware of the brown-skinned women / for we are full of surprises.”

–Anghet Hoppe-Cruz, “Beware”

A few words on Our Journey from Kisha

Being away from Guåhan hasn't been easy for me. It's not that I do not like Hawai`i or haven't enjoyed living here these past six years; it's more of a feeling that I know this isn't my home(land), so there would always be an ache inside of me, an emptiness that only planting my feet in the sands of Ritidian or digging my hands into the dirt of grandpa's Dairy Road ranch could fill.

At the same time, however, I am grateful to Hawai`i and to the Kanaka Maoli, because it is this place and its people that awoke me from my dormancy. I was born and raised on Guåhan and in 2004, I left to Hawai`i for college. It was during my first semester of college, in my Writing 1200 class (Research, Writing, and Argument) at Hawai`i Pacific University (HPU), that my professor, who was also a lawyer, gave the class the Rice v. Cayetano case to read (To briefly describe the case, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs—OHA—which was created in 1978 to “improve the lives of Hawaiians,” was an organization where trustees had to be of Hawaiian ancestry and who were voted into office by Hawaiians. In March 1996, Big Island resident Harold Rice applied for an OHA trustee election ballot and was denied because he was not Hawaiian. In April that year, Rice filed a lawsuit against the state government, “claiming that his rejection violate[d] the 14th and 15th amendments of the U.S. Constitution.” In 2000, the US Supreme Court ruled in favor of Rice. [Source: “Top Court Backs Rice in OHA Vote Challenge,” in the Feb. 23, 2000 Honolulu Star-Bulletin]). I had never been exposed to these kinds of truths before. I knew nothing at the time about Hawai`i. What I thought was Hawai`i was actually a commodified, exoticized, cheapened, touristic version of what the place really was. But as I read through the case and my professor told the class more about it, I felt that the story sounded all too familiar. It sounded like the stories of Chamorus on Guåhan, how the so-called residents of the island (whose families had lived on Guåhan for generations) felt that they had claims to Chamoru rights, lands, and culture. Learning more truths about Hawai`i and Kanaka Maoli over the years inspired me to learn more about Guåhan and Chamorus, the place and people I come from. More importantly, I was forced to un-cover my shielded view of what the US had done to my home and people and to my sisters and brothers of Oceania and around the world.

Throughout my life, I had been taught more about the United States of America than about my own island, or even the whole Mariana Islands. I never questioned my education (or lack thereof) because it was completely normal. Singing the national anthem, pledging to the American flag, memorizing the states and capitals (and their location on the “United States of America Map”), memorizing and reciting the names of the US presidents (in the order of the terms they served), and reenacting the Civil War, where I was a confederate dressed in gray and my “enemies” in navy blue. It was no wonder that I became a proud American and a not-so-proud Chamoru. At 18, I was in for an awakening, a long-awaited, unexpected, revival of my self, as a Chamoru, a Micronesian, a Pacific Islander, an indigenous being. One day, I awoke to a yearning of learning about my people and the injustices we have had to deal with since Magellan landed on the island in 1521, and there was no way I was going back to sleep. But as I faced each day, each truth, each injustice, I discovered that there were many moments when I would rather be in a deep, numbing sleep. Worst of all, I felt very lonely in my thoughts. In HPU. In Hawai`i in general. At home on Guåhan. Every chance I got, I would talk to many of my friends who, though called Guåhan home, refused to understand what I was talking about and instead looked at me as if I was crazy, while simultaneously brushing off my passion to speak the truths as my being a shoe-in to become the next leader of I Nasion Chamoru (The Chamoru Nation, a Chamoru activist group viewed by many people on Guåhan as being very radical). For years, I felt alone. I wrote research papers about identity, US colonialism, and the future political status of Guåhan. I wrote poetry about the same issues. My professors graded me, and my classmates supported me, yet no one really understood what I was talking about.

Throughout my undergraduate years, I was the only Chamoru in my classes, and I became so used to it, that I forgot what it was like to see my own people. But in August 2008, in Dr. Terence Wesley-Smith’s Learning Oceania class, I met Anghet “Angela” Hoppe-Cruz.

I found someone I could talk with (not to), someone I could share my thoughts and pains with, someone who knew what it was like to be a Chamoru woman living away from home for years and loved and missed it so much, that it was all we would talk about. I saw a sister in her. I still do.

Our work together as collaborative thesis partners, as organizers in our communities, as Chamoru women working to protect our home, culture, and people, has not been without its challenges. But through all the moments of awkward silences, avoidance of discussing what’s wrong, and actually discussing what’s wrong, we are continuing on our journey, not just as thesis partners, but as sisters and daughters of the our ancestral homeland, Guåhan.

We hope that our work will raise consciousness in those who are unaware of what has happened and continues to happen to the Chamorus. We further hope that through gaining awareness of the injustices imposed on the Chamorus and other indigenous peoples of Oceania, that readers will join us on our journey, revealing to others the truths about the lies we’ve all been taught to believe. Guåhan means “we have,” and with our poetry, our stories, and our truths, we will

speak of what belongs to our people, of what has been stolen from us, and against all the injustices that have been imposed on us, i manaotao tãno` yan tãsi, the people of the land and ocean, our people, *us*.

Note

¹ As of 2010, we have both been published in the Center for Pacific Islands Studies graduate student publication *The Space Between* (edited by Marata Tamaira), and our work will also be featured in the first-ever Micronesian anthology (forthcoming, edited by Dr. Evelyn Flores and Emilihter Kihleng).

Chapter Two

Fanggi`i I Linachi Siha—Sinangan Inaguaguati yan i Lina`la` Minesngon:
“Kantan Chamoritta” siha gi Siklon benti i unu (*Writing the Wrongs—Poetry*
as Resistance and Survivance: “Kantan Chamorittas” in the 21st Century)

Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Fanggi`i I Linachi Siha—Sinangan Inaguaguati yan i Lina`la` Minesngon: “Kantan Chamoritta”
siha gi Siklon benti i unu (Writing the Wrongs—Poetry as Resistance and Survivance: “Kantan
Chamorittas” in the 21st Century)

Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Ginen i sisun nanã-hu,	From the breasts of my mother,
Ginen i guãlo` gi tano`-ta...	From the gardens of our land...
I hagã`-ta ginen hãga` nãnan nanã-hu...	Our blood is of my grandmother’s blood...

(“Nãnan Nanã-hu,” a Chamoru chant by I Fanlalai`an)

I TINITUHON (THE BEGINNING): INTRODUCTION

Guãhan, also known as Guam, is the largest and southernmost of the fifteen islands known as the Mariana Islands, in the “Pacific Ocean” (Perez, “A Chamorro Re-Telling” 70).ⁱ It measures at about 30 miles in length and 4 to 12 miles in width (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 110). The indigenous people of the Marianas are the Chamorus.ⁱⁱ According to the 2000 Census, the total population on Guãhan was 154, 805, of whom 65, 243 (42.15%) were Chamoruⁱⁱⁱ (Guam State Data Center Bureau of Statistics and Plans).^{iv} Guãhan was severed from the rest of the Mariana Islands (known as the Northern Mariana Islands) in 1898, after the Spanish-American War, when Spain gave up control of Guãhan to the US and control of Northern Marianas to Germany. Guãhan has been an “unincorporated US territory” since August 1950, meaning that residents are US citizens but cannot vote for US president and have only a nonvoting representative in the US Congress (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 112; “Part I: Political Status” 17).

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

[W]e have a lot of work ahead of us. We know what we have got to do, and we're going to do it step by step. We will free our people from the bondage of colonial slavery. It is now or never. It is almost too late. We have to save what's left. (Santos, "The Existence" 121)

This paper will look at the poetry of two Chamoru women poets from Guåhan and how poetry can be used as a tool of resistance and a means of "survivance." Resistance, as used in this paper, is defined as "an active quest for justice, and as a means of collectively empowering a particular group of activists, not merely as a reactive phenomenon created in response to power and its abuses" (DeShazer 2). In the words of Mary K. DeShazer, author of *A Poetics of Resistance—Women Writing in El Salvador, South Africa, and the United States*:

I use the term resistance as an umbrella covering poetry that challenges oppressive governments, policies, and institutions but often goes beyond mere opposition [...Resistance poetry itself] offers and supports various counterhegemonic models of social justice and racial/gender/class empowerment [...]. (2)

Moreover, survivance is a word that was coined in 1998 by Gerald Vizenor, an Ojibwe writer, scholar, and activist (Nelson 6). It is a combination of both "survival" and "endurance" (Carson 444). According to Vizenor, "[S]urvivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence [...S]urvivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (qtd. in Carson 444). Survival denotes the continuance of past practices; survivance is the continuance of past practices *and* the combination and creation of new ones (Nelson 6, emphasis added). Further,

indigenous peoples' stories of survivance display the active presence of the peoples in addition to the active resistance toward the "dominant cultural narratives" (Carson 444).

In fino` Chamoru, there are no words which directly translate into resistance and survivance, but there are phrases which come close. "Inaguaguati" is closest in meaning to resistance. "Lina`la` minesngon" means life of endurance, survivance. As a collective community, Chamorus must come together to resist the colonial leaders and institutions which continue to deny us our basic rights as the indigenous children of Guåhan. We must do this if we are to continue into our future.

The two Chamoru poets were born and raised on the island of Guåhan. They are second generation post-WWII children, products of the public high school system, and the first of their families to graduate from college. In fall 2008, they met for the first time in a Pacific Islands Studies graduate course at UH-Mānoa, learned that they were from the same place, and instantly became friends. But it wasn't until the spring of 2009 that their relationship with poetry became official through their hosting and performing the first-ever "I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi" ("The Journey of Our Words") poetry reading. Both had been writing for years individually, yet neither fully understood the capacity of their work, together, as far as being a way out, even a way in, to the exposures of the truths and stories of their people and home. They had maintained close connections with home, and their poetry allowed them to continue to do so. The hugua` na palao`an Chamoru ni chume`lu yan mantituge` whose poetry serves as a tool of resistance and a means of survivance for Chamorus and whose poetry will be featured in this paper are Anghet Hoppe-Cruz and Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`.

Perhaps what ties Hoppe-Cruz and Borja-Kicho`cho` together in addition to their poetry is that they are activists and community organizers (they most recently established Fight for

Guåhan).^v Their work separately and collaboratively in the classroom, with “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi,” and with Fight for Guåhan, really shows the love they have for their home and people. As women of a colonized nation, it is only fitting that the two work to raise consciousness about US imperialism and work in solidarity with allies from across Oceania in sovereignty movements, demilitarization struggles, and decolonization efforts. Though speaking of Kanaka Maoli women, the following quote from Haunani-Kay Trask is applicable to many indigenous women, including Chamoru women: “Women are at the forefront of the sovereignty movement” (*From a Native Daughter* 191). “[...T]he main reason women lead the nationalist front today is simply that women have not lost sight of the *lāhui*, that is, of the nation” (94). Albert Wendt states the following in reference to Maori and Hawaiian women but again which can be said of women throughout Oceania:

[Maori] women make up the strongest group in the [sovereignty] leadership [...] The reason is simple. Indigenous women are discriminated against doubly—as women and as Maori or Hawaiian. They have suffered more than the men. It’s the women who have kept the families going in the whole struggle. That’s why when they turn their attention to organizing the movement, they’re far stronger than the men. (Hereniko and Hanlon 89)

While Pacific Islander men have been known to control women and exercise their patriarchal ways, “[...] they have certainly not succeeded in silencing women poets,” some of which include Grace Mera Molisa of Vanuatu, Konai Helu Thaman of Tonga, Jully Makini of the Solomon Islands, Haunani-Kay Trask of Hawai’i, Nora Vagi Brash of Papua New Guinea, Ruth Saovana-Spriggs of Bougainville, and Momoe Malietoa Von Reiche and Makerita Va’ai of Sāmoa (Clarke 14-15). In Micronesia, some female poets include Teresia Teaiwa (of i-Kiribati ancestry),

Emelihter Kihleng of Pohnpei, Cecilia “Lee” Perez and Anne Perez Hattori of Guåhan. Hoppe-Cruz and Borja-Kicho`cho` are also part of this growing list of female poets of Oceania.

It is important to note that Hoppe-Cruz and Borja-Kicho`cho` acknowledge and have been inspired by the work of their predecessors, Chamoru female poets, Lee Perez and Anne Perez Hattori. This paper will feature some of Perez’s and Hattori’s works as well. It is hoped and anticipated that this paper can initiate dialogue on the poetry and other creative works of the Chamoru people and the importance of poetry to and for Chamorus as a process of resistance and survivance.

FINALOFFAN GUÅHAN (HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GUÅHAN AND ITS CHAMORUS)

“In the Chamoru world view, the Mariana Islands lie at the center of the universe and all human life began in [Guåhan]” (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 110).

In the beginning, there was no land and no water, no sign of life. But there were two beings, a sister and a brother, named Fu`uña and Puntan. One day, Puntan called Fu`uña because he knew he was dying. He wanted her to fulfill his dreams of creating the world. He told her to use his powers and his body to make the world. And so Fu`uña listened to her brother.

With his back, she made the land and the ocean.

With his chest, she made the sky.

With his eyes, she made the sun and the moon.

With his eyebrows, she made the rainbow.

Seeing that the earth was finished, Fu`uña decided to create the first people. With her powers, she turned herself into a rock. It was from this rock that the first people were born. (paraphrased from “I Tinituhon,” I Fanlalai`an)

Chamorus settled the Marianas over 4,000 years ago, “sharing a unique and special relationship with the land and sea” (Phillips 3). It is believed that Chamorus migrated from Southeast Asia, bringing with them breadfruit, bananas, taro, and coconut (Souder, *Daughters of the Island* 29). Initially, Chamorus resided in “oceanfront villages composed largely of clan

members practicing a matrilineal system of descent” (Hattori 11). At the head of each clan were the maga`håga and maga`låhi, the highest-ranking sister and brother, respectively. “Their authority emanated from their mothers and from the status of their clans [...] as well as on their own personal leadership qualities and abilities” (Kasperbauer 33). Chamorus also practiced a caste system which included the matao (the highest caste, inclusive of the maga`håga and maga`låhi) and the mangachang (lowest-ranking caste). The matao inherited their power and land rights through their matrilineage (personal communication, Jeremy Cepeda and Gregorio Ecle, July 21, 2010). The mangachang, on the other hand, could not rise to power and were restricted from “residing along the oceanfront, fishing in the ocean, and marrying higher-ranking persons” (Cunningham, as cited in Hattori 13).

Today, Chamorus no longer practice the caste system. However, the clan structure and relations are still maintained. Moreover, Chamoru cultural practices and values have played and continue to play a very significant role in our everyday lives and relationships. One important cultural value is inafa`maolek, or interdependence, “being kind and good to one another” (Kasperbauer 29). Chamorus have known and understood “that the clan or extended family, and *not* the individual, serves as the core of society” (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 111). Whether during “canoe building, net making, fishing or babysitting, relationships built on the concept of inafa`maolek enabled clans to rely on each other for whatever need arose” (Hattori 14).

Further, Guåhan and its Chamorus have been occupied by three different nations: Spain (1668-1898), Japan (1941-1944), and the United States (1898-1941; 1944-present) (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 111-114). These occupations will be discussed further in the following sections.

SPANISH OCCUPATION

Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan (who sailed for Spain) landed in Guåhan in 1521. However, it was not until 1668 that the first Spanish settlement was established on the island (Souder, *Daughters of the Island* 31). During that year, “with the establishment on [Guåhan] of the first colonial settlement in the Pacific, Spanish Catholics began challenging many of the ancient practices and beliefs” of the Chamorus (Hattori 14). The Spanish missionaries also told the Chamorus “that the nakedness of their bodies was immoral” and forced them to wear clothing (Kasperbauer 31).

The Spanish priests and missionaries would learn fino`Chamoru (Chamoru language) in order to better communicate and get along with the Chamorus. Such efforts were noticed by Chamorus and allowed for the people to be more easily converted (Sanchez 36). “The missionary effort received its greatest honor when Padre [Diego Luis de] San Vitores converted and baptized High Chief Quipuha [Kipuha]” of Hagåtña, the most esteemed maga`låhi of his time (36). Chief Kipuha gave up his land in Hagåtña for the creation of the first church in the Marianas, the first church in all of Oceania, the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica (36).

By 1670, dissatisfied with the foreign beliefs and practices of the Spanish, Chamorus engaged in open rebellion against the missionaries and soldiers, resulting in the Spanish-Chamoru Wars, which lasted about thirty years (1670-1700) (Souder, *Daughters of the Island* 31). “By the early 1700s, Spanish accounts report[ed] that the population of the Mariana Islands had dropped from an estimated 50,000 to only 3,500, with most deaths attributed to warfare and diseases brought by the Spanish” (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 111; Hattori 14-15).

Knowing that many of their men were being killed, Chamoru women themselves also defied the Spanish following the Spanish-Chamoru Wars. They would purposefully abort their

unborn children knowing that their future offspring's "'freedom' would be denied" (Souder, "Unveiling Herstory" 158). They foresaw the future of their people and knew that there would be much suffering and death at the guns of their colonizer.

AMERICAN OCCUPATION

In 1898, Guåhan was ceded to the US by Spain after the Spanish-American War through the Treaty of Paris ("Maintaining Chamorro Culture" 112). At the end of that year, US President William McKinley stated the following in his Executive Order for Guåhan: "The Secretary of the Navy will take such steps as may be necessary to establish the authority of the United States and to give the necessary protection and Government" (as qtd. in Sanchez 84). In January 1899, US Navy Captain Richard Leary was appointed as the first naval governor of Guåhan by President McKinley. Guåhan and its Chamorus were under the sole control of the US Navy Department and the appointed naval governor. The superiority of the naval department and governor was granted through a document known as the "Instructions for the Military Commander of the Island of Guam, Ladrones, Pacific Ocean" (84). For 50 years, "interrupted only by the Japanese occupation during World War II, Naval Governors administered island affairs through a series of executive orders which dictated appropriate standards and acceptable behavior for the people of this newly acquired territory" (Souder 33). Further, the US Navy's control of Guåhan was non-democratic: "the Chamorro people were not allowed to participate in their government" ("Maintaining Chamorro Culture" 113).

JAPANESE OCCUPATION

On December 7, 1941 (December 8 in Guåhan), Japan bombed Pu`uloa, Hawai`i (most

often referred to as Pearl Harbor). That same day, Japan also bombed, invaded, and occupied Guåhan (Sanchez 174-175). The Japanese treated the Chamorus very harshly, as the Chamorus were “forced to provide food and labor for the Japanese military” (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 113). Japan controlled Guåhan until July 21, 1944. During the almost three-year occupation, Japanese officials tortured and killed many Chamorus. Chamorus were forced to do laborious work and were given rations for food (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 113; Sanchez 186). Chamorus were even forced to march to a concentration camp in Manenggon in the village of Yo`ña. Along the way, many Chamorus got sick and did not survive. If any Chamorus could not handle the long and painful journey, then the Japanese would kill them instantly or leave them to die (Sanchez 227-228).

AMERICAN RE-OCCUPATION

On July 21, 1944, the US returned to Guåhan and recaptured the island and its people from the Japanese (“Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 113). Because of the harsh treatment by the Japanese toward the Chamorus and because of the feelings of nostalgia during the first American occupation, many Chamorus were happy and relieved to see the Americans (Perez, “A Chamorro Re-telling” 71). In the process of recapturing Guåhan, American troops destroyed major villages of the island, such as Hagåtña and Sumai, claiming “that it was necessary to destroy the [cities] to prevent Japanese troops from using buildings as cover against advancing [US] Marines” (Sanchez 235). This was why Chamorus were forced into refugee camps after the war: Their island had been decimated (244).

While many Chamorus were excited and grateful for the return of the US, there were also Chamorus who resisted the US government, especially when the military began seizing Chamoru

lands. “By 1948, the US military and other parts of the federal government had taken 42 percent of Guam’s land. These lands were used primarily for military bases. Some lands [...were] used as military parks and recreational areas” (Maintaining Chamorro Culture” 114). Until this day, there are still unresolved land problems, including Chamorus trying to reclaim US occupied lands and, due to the scarcity of land (and even great financial need), there are often familial conflicts over lands. Yet despite the Chamorus’ “long history of foreign rule, [they] have proven themselves to be a strong, durable, and flexible people who can survive under even the most difficult conditions” (114).

CHAMORU ACTIVISM

Throughout Chamoru history, there have been Chamorus who opposed colonial rule, imposed government policies, and other things of such nature, and could therefore be dubbed as activists. There were Chamoru chiefs such as Hurao and Matã`pang who openly defied the Spanish in the 1600s. There were the Chamoru women who purposefully aborted their unborn children following the Spanish-Chamoru Wars. There was Father Jesus Baza Dueñas who, during the Japanese occupation in WWII, kept practicing and teaching the Catholic faith to Chamorus.

In the 1970s, Chamoru activism grew out of the movement against the passing of the proposed Guam Constitution which, if ratified, “would have put [Guåhan] in a status closer to statehood,” thus resolving the much debated issue of political status (San Agustin 145). Out of this proposed Guam Constitution came the growing Chamoru activist movement, namely the emergence of three Chamoru grassroots organizations: the Peoples Alliance for Responsible Alternatives (PARA), the Peoples Alliance for Dignified Alternatives (PADA), and the Guam

Landowners Association (GLA) (145). Each organization opposed the Guam Constitution. Eventually, PARA and PADA joined together to form PARA-PADA, which literally means “stop [the] slap” (145).^{vi} GLA was an ally of PARA-PADA; its goal was the return of property taken from Chamorus by the US government during and after WWII. The Guam Constitution was never passed (152).

It was PARA-PADA and the GLA that would lead the way in the establishment of other organizations that would promote Chamoru rights and culture, self-determination and change in political status, and other related issues. Such groups included the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPIR, founded by educator and activist Dr. Chris Perez Howard), the Chamorro Grassroots Movement, the Guåhan Congress, and the Guam National Party, most of which though short-lived, helped to bring attention to very important issues (San Agustin 152). In the early 1990s, I Nasion Chamoru (The Chamoru Nation) was formed by Anghet Santos, a Chamoru activist and senator who fought for the return of Chamoru lands from the US military. The Guåhan Coalition for Peace and Justice was later formed. In November 2009, in response to the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the proposed US military buildup, the We Are Guåhan coalition was formed and has been the main organization in anti-buildup efforts, raising consciousness and mobilizing people both on and off Guåhan.^{vii} Off island, there has also been movement, Chamorus and others from Guåhan who continue to support those at home. One group formed in the 2000s is known as Famoksaiyan (which translates to “the place or time of nurturing” or the time to paddle forward and move ahead”) is based of California (“Famoksaiyan” blog site). Another group, formed in February 2010, is Fight for Guåhan (fight for what “we have”), which is based out of Hawai`i. When looking at the history of Chamoru activism, it becomes quite evident that there are several organizations and groups involved, but

they all have common goals as their motivations, goals which include the reclamation of Chamoru rights, Chamoru self-determination, and the return of Chamoru lands.

KANTAN CHAMORRITAS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ABOUT CHAMORU WOMEN

POETS

'Poets are born, but they are not born poets. Society creates the system that the poet is born into, and the poet has to work at becoming a poet through this system. Through poetry, the poet tries to bring about change in the society. Poets are teachers of change, critics of society. The poet is but a tool of society [...the one who] exposes the good and the bad of society.' (Noonuccal, as qtd. in MacKay 95)

In Guåhan, poetry *written* by Chamorus is a relatively new creative venture. Chamorus have long recited their poetry out loud, but they rarely wrote the words down. A prime example of this spoken word medium is Kantan Chamorrta (*kanta* means to sing). Kantan Chamorrta is a phrase referring to “a verse form that the [Chamorus...] have passed down in their folk literature for generations” (Souder, “Kantan Chamorrta” 189). Chamoru women (*Chamorritas* as they are often called) were the ones who participated in this spoken word form, especially at parties and other social gatherings and after a long day of work (189). The women would sing the verses they spontaneously composed in the Chamoru language. “The Kantan Chamorrta is always sung by two or more people in a call-and-response fashion” (190). It was often a fun and collective activity. It also “served the function of expressing, in a culturally acceptable way, thoughts that otherwise would have been difficult or sensitive” (190), such as grievances and misunderstandings. For example, below is a Kantan Chamorrta verse pertaining to sexual mimicry:

Antes gi annai tiempo-mu
 Kalan makina hao ni` bibu
 Annai esta ti tiempo-mu
 Kalan puyitos manok hao ni` figo.

A while ago when it was your time
 You were like a fast machine
 Now that time is no longer yours
 You are like a shivering chick.
 (as qtd. in Souder 191)

Throughout the rest of this paper, poetry from Hoppe-Cruz, Borja-Kicho`cho`, Perez, and Hattori is provided. Their poems speak to the everyday realities of Chamorus living on Guåhan as well as Chamorus living abroad. These realities range from what Chamorus have to deal with daily to what they have to deal with throughout their entire lives, from language loss and identity to US colonialism and militarism. These are issues that not all Chamorus are open to speaking about, so in a way, these Chamoru poets are 21st century Kantan Chamorritas.

For the purposes of addressing these various realities, this author has chosen certain poems from these poets and has strategically organized them based on two themes: resistance and survivance. “Not only the content of writing, but the act of writing is political” (Trask 18). Writing poetry is a way of addressing the wrongs of our colonizers, of rebelling against them, and it is how we heal, not as individuals, but as a collective.

POETRY AS RESISTANCE (PART I): AGAINST COLONIALISM AND MILITARISM

*resistance is a woman / whose land is all on fire / perseverance and determination / are
 her daughters [...] / resistance is every woman who / has ever considered taking up /
 arms writing a story leaving the abuse / saving her children or saving herself*
 (“Resistance,” Connie Fife)

In the following poems, Borja-Kicho`cho` and Hattori write against the colonizer and write of the strength of the Chamorus. Borja-Kicho`cho` writes against this idea of “Liberation

Day,” which was dubbed by Chamoru activist Anghet Santos in the 1900s as Re-Occupation Day, and shows that Chamorus have yet to be truly liberated from their American colonizer. Hattori questions the US/American education system that has been imposed on Chamorus and addresses the result of being brainwashed by such propaganda and history.

“Re-Occupation Day (a.k.a. ‘Liberation Day’)” by Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Every 21st of July,
 the people of Guåhan march in their red, white, and blue,
 thanking Uncle Sam and his men in uniform.

The Chamoru people were freed
 from over 300 years of forced Catholicism
 and forced last names,
 from bowing to Yokois
 and forced death marches,
 yet they continue to be enslaved
 by the SPAM-crazed golden arches,
 by drafts and recruitments,
 by “the land of the free.”

I tano` i taotao-hu pã` go iyon-ñiha—

They took Sumai
 and used it for their military.
 They made us citizens
 but denied us the vote.
 They stole our language
 and made us speak English.

Our history books say that we’re free,
 that we’re making good money from tourism.

As I drive through Tomhom,
 my view of the ocean obstructed
 by the Outrigger and the Hyatt,
 I think of the stories Tãta used to tell me
 about the latte stone huts that once lined the ocean
 and how they were bulldozed
 to keep up with the times—

No trespassing signs now line the ocean.

Ti manmalulok i taotao-hu.

My people are not free.

Part of “foreFathers” by Anne Hattori

Our foreFathers,
like washington and jefferson,
franklin and lincoln
who are these gentleMEN anyway
whose faces flatten bulletin boards
and whose manifestos are memorized
by school children islandwide

did they sweat sweet tropical perspiration
did they plant *sun* and pick *lemmai*
and beseech the blessings of *guelas yan guelus*
under the sweltering sun of latitude 14

so why do we
yes, We
teach that They
are everything
or something
or even anything
to us,
Chamorro natives
who work the soil,
ride the sea,
inhale our exhalations,
and inherit the land
immortally.

POETRY AS RESISTANCE (PART II): AGAINST VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

In “Heart and Soul” and “Road through Manenggon,” both Hoppe-Cruz and Borja-Kicho`cho`, respectively, express the pain brought on various Micronesian communities by the US. As Chamorus and other Micronesians become more separated from themselves, as we continue to lose our lands and become displaced and continue to die from diseases, the US

continues its plans to use these separations to fulfill their goal of expansion, its manifest destiny in the Pacific. Speaking against these US plans, Hoppe-Cruz and Borja-Kicho`cho` emphasize the importance of remembering our history, as it continues to repeat itself in our present.

“Heart and Soul” by Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

BRAVO is equivalent to

1000 Hiroshima

BOMBS BOMBS BOMBS

1000

Big Fat Dicks

Penetrating Mother Earth

Kwajalein Kwajalein Kwajalein

Shooting into her

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

Tainting her

Kwajalein’s descendants

Eat, Breathe, Drink, Swim

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

The act of LOVE

She on top, in control

Receiving

Creamy

Sweet

Heart and Soul Man

BRAVO is equivalent to

1000

Hiroshima

BOMBS BOMBS BOMBS

1000

Big Fat Dicks

Penetrating Mother Earth

Kwajalein Kwajalein Kwajalein

Tainting her

Her Daughters' Womb contaminated

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

Killing the fullness of love making

She Wants For Fears receiving

Creamy

Sweet

Heart and Soul Man

She bears the Fruit of Heart & Soul

Disfigured Disheartened Injustice

BRAVO is the equivalent of 1000 Hiroshima

BOMBS

BOMBSBOMBS

B

O

M

B

S

“Road through Manenggon” by Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

We don't need
another road
to divide
sever
and disconnect
our people from each other.

We don't need
another road
that separates

U
S

from our culture
from our ancestors
who sweat and bled
while marching through the hills.

These hills
have natural connections.
When hiking to Segua,
I am part of the rich red dirt.
I am part of the rope
that connects tãno` yan tãsi.

When jumping off Segua,
I hear the voices of those
who have jumped before me.

We don't need another road.

I want to hike Segua.
I need to jump Segua.

My blood,

rich and red,

is yearning for Segua.

POETRY AS SURVIVANCE (PART I): CHAMORU MATRIARCHY

“The Chamorro woman is at once culture-bearer, culture preservationist, and agent of change” (Souder, “Unveiling Herstory” 143). The Chamoru society is a matrilineal society, meaning that the women of our families are highly respected. In Chamoru households, the woman is the head of the house. Even in the 1600s, Spanish Jesuit priest Diego Luis de San Vitores noticed our matrilineal society when he came to Guåhan: “In the home it is the woman who rules, and her husband does not dare give an order contrary to her wishes, nor punish the children, for she will turn upon him and beat him” (as qtd. in Souder 149).

“It is important to recognize that [Chamorus] believed in the ultimate power of women as the source of life and controller of their environment” (Souder, “Unveiling Herstory” 153). The next three poems, “Steadfast Woman,” “Part III: Beware,” and “Nåna” honor our Chamoru women, the women we come from, the women we are.

“Steadfast Woman” by Cecilia “Lee” C. T. Perez

Steadfast woman
Cries with strength.

Gives me strength.
 Let me cry with you
 and speak my voice.

Lush
 are your words of pain.
 Let us reclaim ourselves
 Lush.

My heart is contorted
 and soars
 in grateful pleasure
 for your risk.

“Part III: Beware” (enunciate as you read) by Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

surprised, you compliment my english
 while my sister laughs at the perfection to which my tongue enunciates
 and my elders laugh at my feeble attempts to speak in our native tongue.
 what is it about my english that impresses you so?
 hmmm...is it the color of my skin that caught you off guard?
 did you not think it possible for a brown skinned woman to
 art-iculate

post-ulate

to not be consumed by my colonizer's hate?

beware of the {micro} brown skinned woman

for we are full of surprises

“Nāna” by Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Like the tãsa and haligi of the ancient Chamoru latte stone
 so, too, does your body maintain the shape
 of the healthy Chamoru woman.
 With those full-figured hips
 features delivered
 through natural birth for generations
 and with those powerful arms
 reaching for the past calling on our mañaina
 you have remained strong throughout the years
 continuously inspire me to live my culture
 allow me to grow into a young Chamoru woman myself.
 Through you I have witnessed the persistence
 and endurance of my ancestors who never failed in constructing a latte.
 I gima` taotao mo`na the house of the ancient people.
 Hågu i acho` latte-ku. You are my latte stone.

POETRY AS SURVIVANCE (PART II): HÅYI HIT? (WHO ARE WE?)

Chamoru identity has been a very sensitive issue for Chamorus. What it means to be Chamoru, from the Chamoru perspective, varies, often depending on factors such as gender, location, and age. Some of the everyday identity issues that Chamorus have to deal with are language loss, the inability to speak our mother tongue, fino` Chamoru (Chamoru language); we have been unable to live off the lands and the ocean like our ancestors; and we have been

strongly influenced by the colonizer, thus resulting in our inability to see ourselves for who we truly are: Chamorus, not Guamanians, and most definitely not Americans. Poetry is an avenue for us to address questions and affirmations of who we are. While a contentious topic, Chamoru identity is important to think about and discuss. As is evident in the following poems, solidifying our identities is crucial to our survivance.

“Chamoru Renaissance” by Lee Perez

It’s fashion
now
to claim
our roots
but yet
we cannot
face
we’ve stepped
across
a line
so thin
and shifted
to the other
side.

And though
we strain
to shape our
selves
exactly
to our past,
culture moves
like drifts of sand
and there is
no going back.

“I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century” by Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
living in this place called Hawai`i,
thousands of miles away from this place I call
Guåhan.

Guåhan
 means “we have”
 good food
 love
 and
 curvy, sexy, beautiful women
 like
 me.

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 trying to find balance between change and continuity,
 attempting to stabilize what is left of my unstable
 memories
 memories which have triggered holes in my already traumatized soul,
 a soul suffocated by communities and hotels and “No Trespassing” signs,
 all of which attempt to disconnect us from the one thing
 we can still claim as ours.
 But how can we call ourselves, i manaotao tãno`,
 the people of the land,
 if we have been misplaced and displaced
 in our very own home?

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 screaming for America to release control of me,
 working to turn my peaceful palms
 into fists of stone,
 so that I can fight
 as a woman
 as a daughter,
 a protector of Guåhan.

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 and like my brothers and sisters standing next to me,
 am a citizen of the U.S. of A.,
 not by choice but by force,
 where we are neither black nor white,
 but
 Brown.
 Brown-skinned beauties who get lumped
 into categories
 of Asian/Pacific Islander,
 Non-Micronesian.
 In this country,
 we are neither valid nor invalid.
 We ARE the “gray area.”
 We are illegitimate offspring

of great old, non-existing “Uncle Sam,”
 yankee doodle fucking dandy,
 who says we’re legit
 ONLY
 when he needs brown bodies to die for his shit.

POETRY AS SURVIVANCE (PART III): TINIGE` I LACHI SIHA (WRITING THE
 WRONGS)

Haunani-Kay Trask said that “if you don’t resist, you’re gonna die” (personal communication). Poetry allows us as indigenous Pacific Islanders to continue our resistance in the decolonial struggle, so that we can maintain our survivance, in spite all of the colonial chaos. It also provides a space for us to write the wrongs of our past and present, to write the wrongs of the colonizer, and to write the wrongs of even ourselves, with hope that we will not repeat the wrongs. These last two poems address the issue of writing the wrongs, which is an expression of freedom. How can we re-gain the freedom that our ancestors once had?

“Re-search” by Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

*I am from sunsets and gentle waves
 I am from storms
 Bamboo left standing
 I am from a broken heart
 Disillusioned love
 A broken family
 A family that always hoped
 I am from the island of brilliant sunsets
 Red orange flamed skies bleeding into
 the ocean*

*I am from a culture lost,
 Trying to find itself
 I am from the grace of iron wood trees
 I am the grace in the iron wood trees
 The ifit tree, tãya` siha
 Is no more
 I am from the tears of many women
 And the laughter of even more
 Searching finding
 Re-rooting
 I am from Islan Guãhan*

“The Colors of Freedom” by Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

Mañaina-hu,

What did the
sky
look like
before?

Mañaina-hu,

What did the
land
look like
before?

Mañaina-hu,

What did the
ocean
look like
before?

Mañaina-hu,

What did our
people
look like
before?

Clear

Hilet lãnget

Lush

Hilet gada`

Clear

Hilet tãsi

Hilet niyok

Free

I FINAKPO` : THE END

Ginen i sisun nanã-hu,
 Ginen i guãlo` gi tano` -ta...
 I hagã` -ta ginen hãga` nãnan nanã-hu...

From the breast of my mother,
 From the gardens of our land...
 Our blood is of my grandmother's blood...

(“Nãnan Nanã-hu,” I Fanlalai`an)

In 1999, Anghet Santos wrote that “we are morally obligated to disobey unjust laws” (Santos, “Angel Santos Going to Jail”). Poetry allows us to disobey such laws. The Chamoru women poets whose works were shared throughout this paper have proven that our words are our resistance. Poetry is a way for us to continue living, in spite of breathing in all of the toxins from the colonizer. I sinangan-ta inaguaguati-ta yan lina`la` minesngon-ta.^{viii}

In 2010, as decisions continue to be made about the current re-militarization (more commonly referred to as the military buildup) of Guãhan without the Chamorus' consent,^{ix} more Chamorus are realizing and understanding the predicaments that we are put in, from land condemnations, the displacement of our people, unhealthy and unsustainable water and other natural resource issues, to threats on our culture, environment, and social lifestyle. We can no longer wait for the US to free us from its confinements. We need to get the keys and unlock ourselves from these tightly-locked shackles. And, if we cannot find the keys, then we need to use all the strength we have to free ourselves. Our poetry is part of this strength that can free us.

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Glossary

dispensa yo`: Excuse me; I'm sorry; forgive me
 famalao`an: women
 guelas yan guelus: male and female ancestors
 hilet gada`: green (color of premature fruit, eg, banana)
 hilet lânget: blue (color of the sky)
 hilet niyok: brown (color of the coconut)
 hilet tâsi: blue (color of the ocean)
 hugua` na palao`an Chamoru ni chume`lu yan mantituge`: two Chamoru women, sister, and writers
 inafa`maolek: a Chamoru practice of interdependence, reciprocity; lit. means to make good for each other
 inaguaguati: resistance
 lemmai: breadfruit
 lina`la` minesngon: survivance; lit. means life of endurance
 mantituge`: writers
 nâna: mother or grandmother
 suni: taro
 tâno`: land
 tâsi: ocean

Notes

ⁱ I am aware that Portuguese explorer who sailed for Spain, Ferdinand Magellan, encountered the ocean in which Guåhan dwells and named it *Mare Pacificum* (peaceful sea); it is from this name that Pacific Ocean was derived (see Maielua's "Moanaãkea" in *The Space Between—Negotiating Culture, Place, and Identity in the Pacific*, edited by A. Marata Tamaira).

ⁱⁱ There are three ways that people spell the word which refers to the indigenous people, language, and culture of the Marianas: Chamoru, Chamorro, and CHamoru. I have opted to use the first spelling.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the 2000 Census, Chamorus and part-Chamorus are separated, the former making up 57,297, and the latter making up 7,946, amounting to a total of 65,243 (42.15%) of the 154,805 total population of Guåhan. I have chosen to combine both the Chamoru and part-Chamoru populations, as they shouldn't be separated because we are all Chamoru.

^{iv} As of 2010, the Chamoru people make up about 35% of approximately 180,000 residents on the island (see Cristobal).

^v Fight for Guåhan (FFG) promotes decolonization and demilitarization. Currently, its main goal is to raise awareness and protest against the military buildup of the Marianas. Guåhan means "we have," and FFG stands to fight for what we have and reclaim what was lost.

^{vi} "PARA-PADA campaigned to 'PARA' [stop] the constitution because it did not adequately address Chamorro rights and was therefore a 'PARA' [slap] in the faces of the Chamorros" (San Agustin 145).

^{vii} For more information, see the We Are Guåhan web site: weareguahan.com

^{viii} Our poetry is our resistance and survivance.

^{ix} "Guam was not consulted in the decision to move 8,000 Marines -- about half those based in Okinawa -- to the island. The \$13 billion move was negotiated in 2006 between the Bush administration and a previous Japanese government [...]" (Harden).

Returning to My Mother(is)land

Kisha Ann Borja-Kicho`cho`

Returning to My Mother(is)land

Kisha Ann Borja-Kicho`cho`

“Shadows off the flames” by Saili Paulo

Shadows off the flames
 make their faces look lost
 in a mixed colour of orangish brown
 while they dance to a music they call
 their own yet,
 foreign to their fore-fathers.

They don't know who they are,
 their identity is a worn out
 jig-saw puzzle with missing parts
 nobody cares about, so
 they pretend not to care
 and willingly fill the empty spaces
 with dreams and idealisms
 made by others
 Still they are lost
 And still the sad but,
 Hopeful spirits of the ancestors
 look upon them with tears
 in their eyes –
 Hoping for their Return.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHAMORU?

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power [...] identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 394)

Every Chamoru has different thoughts on this question, and thus there are many definitions of what it means to be Chamoru. Being Chamoru is to practice the Chamoru way of life (inafa`maolek and Kostumbren Chamorro) and speak fino` Chamoru (*Chamorro Heritage 23*;

Souder 41-42). Being Chamoru “is first and foremost being of Chamorro blood” (Souder 42). “A Chamoru is a direct descendant of the original inhabitants of [Guåhan...] not determined in degrees or fractions” (Santos, “I Taotao Tåno”).ⁱ There are also the theories about the meaning of the word Chamoru itself. One common theory is that the name is derived from the highest ranking Chamoru caste, the chamorri. Another theory is that the name “Chamorro” was given by the Spanish to mean shorn head because Chamoru men “did shave their heads, leaving a small topknot on the crown” (Plaza 4). Because of the debate surrounding the origin of the term, there are Chamorus who have chosen to refer to themselves as Matao, which was the highest class in pre-Spanish contact Chamoru society (personal communication with Leonard Iriarte, July 2010; *The Official Chamorro-English Dictionary*). In the 1990s, there was much debate regarding the spelling of the name of the indigenous culture and people of Guåhan.ⁱⁱ There were two spellings: Chamoru and Chamorro. Proponents of each spelling had various reasons to justify which was correct and should therefore have been made official. Legislation was eventually passed which stated that “Chamorro” would be the official spelling used in documents, place names, buildings, and facilities (Taitano, “Kumision”). Today, “Chamoru” has been used by many Chamorus in documents and items written in the Chamoru language.ⁱⁱⁱ CHamoru is also another spelling used by Chamorus.

I agree that “[t]he subject of Chamorro identity is rife with controversy” and that there is no one definition of what it means to be Chamoru (Souder 41). Who is considered Chamoru is also controversial, as the Organic Act of Guam (1950) granted US citizenship to “inhabitants” and their children (not just Chamorus) who resided on the island by April 11, 1899, or who were born after this date, thus implying that any ethnic group residing on the island after April 11, 1899 and before 1950 and their descendants could also claim the Chamoru identity and rights

(“The Organic Act of Guam”).^{iv} This has had negative implications on the indigenous Chamoru community who traces their genealogy to before 1898 (in terms of indigenous rights such as rights to lands and cultural practices).

I have asked myself what it means to be Chamoru many times since I arrived in Hawai'i in 2004. Before I left Guåhan, I never really thought about who I was as a Chamoru. I am both Chamoru and Filipino by ethnicity, but I grew up Chamoru, in a Chamoru household, learned Chamoru values and beliefs, went to a lot of Chamoru celebrations and events, and could recite the “Inifresi” and “Fanohge Chamoru.”^v Aside from the time I attended a baptist school,^{vi} I was surrounded by Chamoru people at parties, at the beach, at the stores, and most importantly, at home. While I grew up around fino` Chamoru, nengkanno` Chamoru, dandan Chamoru, taotao Chamoru, inafa`maolek, chenchule`, linamen, ginai mamahlao, oral traditions, my immediate and extended families, the tãno` and tãsi, and social and cultural events, which I strongly believe all helped to shape my Chamoru identity, they were never really articulated for or by me. What made me who I was as a Chamoru were never given names or definitions. I didn't think about being Chamoru; I just was Chamoru. My elders didn't define inafa`maolek for me; I was just taught to be a good person so that in turn, others would be good to me. My family gave chenchule` (mostly in the form of money or food) whenever we went to parties; and when people would come to our parties, they would reciprocate the gifts. Our Chamoru-ness was evident in our everyday actions. But just because my elders around me weren't sitting around a table with papers, pens, and computers, writing about and defining who we were, it doesn't mean that we didn't know who we were and that we weren't critical of who we had become. For example, I remember going to parties and having to mangnginge` my elders (even the ones I didn't know) because if I didn't, then I would embarrass myself and my family and would get spanked at

home. There have also been several occasions where I would speak to elders in English, and they would ask, “Håfa? Ti siña hao fumino` Chamoru?”^{vii} I would look confused, and they could tell my answer was “no.”

During that time, I wasn't too embarrassed because most Chamoru kids I knew couldn't speak fino` Chamoru. It wasn't “cool” then. We wanted to be good English speakers; we wanted to be like the kids on the American TV shows and movies. Chamoru kids who denied their Chamoru heritage and embraced the American culture and dream were commended by their peers. I even remember that when I was in elementary school, I used to tell my classmates that I was half Chamoru, half Filipino, and full English. Not knowing at the time that I was acknowledging a 200% identity, I wanted to somehow prove that even though I was one of the lone brown Pacific Islanders amongst the sea of haole and Asian kids at my baptist school, I was just as good as they were at English.

Those who spoke fino` Chamoru, or who spoke English but had a Chamoru accent, and didn't dress like the Americans, were regarded as “chaud.”^{viii} Chaud had a very negative connotation to it. To the Chamorus in the central part of Guåhan, chaud referred to those who were Chamoru and proudly showed that they were. It also referred to the non-American way some Chamorus dressed and sounded.^{ix} From personal experience, while I was growing up, most Chamorus would proudly say they were Chamoru, but they would never display their pride in the forms of physical objects such as stickers, t-shirts, and jewelry. This was mostly because if they did display their pride, they would be regarded as chaud, teased by their own fellow Chamoru brothers and sisters for being proud of who they were culturally and for showing such pride. I didn't know it when I was a kid, but Chamorus' inability to proudly display their Chamoru-ness was a direct implication of their colonial conditioning. We could proudly hang

the American flag and post “We Support Our Troops” stickers and magnets on our cars and our refrigerators, but we couldn’t wear Chamoru jewelry and clothing or post pro-Chamoru and pro-Guåhan stickers without being criticized and being called chaud.

Today, the term chaud still has a negative connotation. At least where I’m from on the island and the way that I continue to hear it being used, chaud has come to be used very loosely in everyday conversation, sometimes without justification. For example, if something is not visibly aesthetic (like clothes, a house, a car), Chamorus will dub the object as chaud. Chamorus also continue to call other Chamorus chaud for the way they sound and the way they look (eg, if they wear yori and bahåki clothes in public). However, the difference between the time when I was a kid and now is that there is a Chamoru cultural renaissance occurring. Though I didn’t live at home for six years, I did visit twice a year, and each time I came back, I saw more Chamorus being proud of who they were and even more importantly, not being afraid to show it. They would put “Chamoru,” “671” (Guåhan’s area code), and “Che`lu” stickers on their cars and trucks (even stickers with their last names and family names). They would wear Chamoru jewelry made of spondylus (spiny oyster shell which, when sanded down, turns into a bright orange color; worn by Chamoru women) and clam shell (particularly the sinahi, the shape of the crescent moon, signifying the right time to fish and hunt; worn by Chamoru men) which our ancestors carved and wore. They would design and wear t-shirts with Chamoru words (for example, “Fa`nu`i” and “Che`lu”). This movement is making its way to the Chamoru masses.^x

The display of Chamoru-ness hasn’t come only in the form of objects, however. There are also more Chamorus participating in cultural events and hosting activities that focus on us, our culture (such as language revitalization), and our history. Though these same Chamorus who have been actively involved in this cultural revitalization might deny being considered chaud,

many of us have indeed become what we were once ashamed to be. What we viewed as chaud were actually Chamorus who were just proud to be Chamoru and wanted to share their pride with others.

HU DIDINGU I TANO`-HU, HU DIDINGU I SAGÁ-HU (LEAVING MY ISLAND,
LEAVING MY HOME)

Where speaks the knowledge of our ancestors? What of the ancient wisdom that has kept us alive for thousands of years? We must always remember that we are of an ancient people, and it is within ourselves that the spirit lives on. [...] We must not disregard our culture because once we lose insight into our past—once we allow ourselves to forget who we are—then we will forget where we are headed. And if we forget where we are headed, then we will no longer remember where we are from. (Castro 18)

It was during my first semester of college in Hawai`i that I started to question and reflect on who I was as a Chamoru. I was only half Chamoru. I couldn't speak Chamoru. I didn't farm, fish, or hunt. I didn't eat red meat or pork (and have been teased by family and friends alike that I wasn't Chamoru because I didn't eat steak, ribs, Spam, and pig). I started to think that people who were really Chamoru had to act and look a certain way. I felt I wasn't Chamoru enough. I remember feeling so upset and lost because I didn't feel grounded; I was uncomfortable with my Chamoru identity. I was beginning to reject and rid of my imposed Guamanian and American identities. *Who was I?*

“Natives Wanted” by Brandi Nālani McDougall

Do you still hunt and / or gather?
Continue to use plants for healing?
Do you have a dying language
and live in a remote corner
of an island or a rainforest?

Have you contracted foreign diseases
 and are now facing cultural extinction?
 Do you consistently reject the teachings
 of missionaries and settlers?
 Do you still chant, sing, and / or dance
 as your ancestors did? Do you continue
 to revere and / or worship your ancestors?
 Do you still wear traditional attire
 (i.e. loincloths, feathers, animal skins
 or fur, bark cloth, leaves, etc.)
 and / or pierce and / or tattoo and /or scar
 any part of your body? Have you
 maintained your oral traditions
 and thus, received sacred knowledge
 passed down for at least five generations?
 Do you now or have you ever
 practiced human sacrifice and / or eaten
 your enemies (or your friends / family)?
 Do you have a long history of burying
 priceless treasures with your dead
 and still know where they're buried?

If you can answer “yes” to 3 or more of the above
 questions, then you are an ideal subject of study
 for anthropologists, archaeologists, pharmaceutical
 companies, natural historians, museum curators,
 colonial writers, missionaries and tourists.

Disclaimer: Compensation for all sacred artifacts and knowledge may
 be promised though generally not guaranteed. Side of effects of study may
 include (but are not limited to): dispossession, displacement, more dis-
 ease, chronic colonization, exploitation, diabetes, alcoholism / drug
 abuse, severe depression, paranoia, spiritual crisis, xenophobia.

Much of my uncertainty had a lot to do with the fact that I was young, had just moved
 from everyone and everything I knew and the place I called home, and came to attend college on
 an island that seemed so much larger than Guåhan, with about nine times the amount of people.
 Living on Kūhio Avenue, in the heart of Waikīkī, was far away from Chero Street in Mangilao,
 where I grew up. To add to my culture shock, people would always ask me where I was from,
 who Chamorus were, what our culture was like, what the language sounded like. Many people

would ask if Chamorus even had a language and culture because from what they had heard, our language and culture were practically dead. Though I did have a good grasp of my history and culture, I still felt I didn't know enough. I felt as if I always had to justify and defend my culture and my island. According to Chamoru scholar Dr. Robert Underwood, "Identity was not a problem for the Chamorros on Guam [...] until they were told it should be" (Lowenthal 318). Below is a scenario of my experience of meeting people in Hawai'i for the first time and who knew nothing about Guåhan and Chamorus.

"Where are you from?"

Guåhan. [They give me a questionable look.] Guam.

"Where's that at?"

It's a really small island in the Pacific Ocean. It's a 7 ½ hour flight west from here; 3 hours from Japan.

[Some would even ask, "Is that part of the Philippines?"]

"So what do you call people from there...Guamese, Guamish?"

Well, the indigenous people are called Chamorus. And people who aren't Chamoru but who were born and raised there call themselves Guamanian.

"What language do you speak there?"

Chamoru.

"How do you say 'hello' in Chamoru?"

Håfa Adai.

[laughs hysterically] "Haha, half a day , as in not a full day, but half a day!"

[This happens every time I tell people. I do feel offended, and I always think in my head,

No, you idiot!]

Actually, the first “a” in Håfa makes an “aw” sound.

“How do you say ‘goodbye?’”

Adios.

“That’s like Spanish... ‘A-dee-os.’”

It’s spelled the same as in Spanish but pronounced differently.

“So you all are Spanish?”

Well... There are a lot of Spanish influences in the Chamoru culture, such as Catholicism, our last names, and in our language. Spain ruled Guåhan for almost 400 years.

“So are you part of the Philippines?”

I HAGÁ`-HU, I MANGGAFÁ-KU, I HALE`-HU, I TANO`-HU (MY BLOOD, MY FAMILY,
MY ROOTS, MY ISLAND)

To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa, or to destroy their lands with mining, deforestation, bombing, large-scale industrial and urban developments, and the like, is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood, but also and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and from their ultimate claim for the legitimacy of their existence. (Hau`ofa 468-469)

By 2007, I had this desire to be reunited with my mother tongue, to be reconnected with fino` Chamoru. After studying English all my life (and becoming really good at it—I was an English major and tutor and an editor) and Japanese for seven years, and after living away from home, a big part of me felt I needed to re-learn the language I once knew while in my mother’s womb. It is said that language is the carrier of culture (Thiong’o). I had used Chamoru words and phrases in my poetry and everyday conversations, but I had yet to fully speak and understand the language. Since that time I realized how important it is for me to know the language of my

people, I have been on a journey of rediscovery. This journey, this yearning for discovering who I am as a descendant and inheritor of a 4,000-year old nation, led me to absorb as much fino` Chamoru as I could. While on Guåhan during the breaks, I would go to Chamoru chant practice (I Fanlalai`an, led by Leonard Iriarte), would read the “Juan Malimanga” comic strips and the “Fino` Chamoru” lessons in the *Pacific Daily News* (Guåhan’s local newspaper)^{xi}, listen to KISH 102.7 (the Chamoru music radio station), and would beg my dad to speak to me in only Chamoru (which was his first language). In Hawai`i, I would use Chamoru in my poetry and would read copies of Chamoru stories from home.

When I started attending UH-Mānoa in 2008, I felt even more of an urgency to speak and understand Chamoru, as I had gone to the Festival of the Pacific Arts in American Sāmoa and was inspired by all of the Islanders who could speak in their respective languages. So while in graduate school, I audited the Chamoru language class every semester and forced myself to use it in my writing, in e-mails, on facebook, in text messages, and in conversations.

Like many other indigenous peoples, it took for me to leave home in order to appreciate my culture more and to appreciate who I was as a Chamoru. As of 2010, I am in no way fluent in speaking Chamoru, but I can understand and speak it enough to get by in a conversation. And though I strongly agree that my knowledge and fluency of fino` Chamoru can contribute to the perpetuation of Chamoru culture and the continuity of our people, I do not believe that our language is the sole definer of who we are as a people. It is perhaps the most important factor. But Chamorus often judge how Chamoru they themselves or others are based on language skills alone. In addition to language skills, many Chamorus judge the Chamoru-ness of others based on whether or not they fish, farm, or hunt, whether or not they carve “traditional” Chamoru jewelry, whether or not they’re Catholic (because majority of the Chamorus are), where they’re

from in the Mariana Islands (Chamorus themselves often say that those from the Northern Marianas are not as Americanized as those from Guåhan and are thus more Chamoru), if they've been born and raised elsewhere, and the grand separator of our people, who has more blood than whom.^{xiii} These things divide our people individually and communally.

While raised on Guåhan, I didn't have the opportunity to live off the land or to fish. We didn't have the land to farm and didn't live by the ocean. My tåta (my dad's father) raised chickens and pigs at his house and cows at a nearby ranch (which he didn't own), and my grandpa (my mom's father) raised cows and grew banana trees at his ranch, but I was too young then to understand the importance of what they were doing. As for my parents, they recently started growing tumates, green onions, donne`, lemon, mangga, and pugua` behind our house. As much as it disappoints me that I wasn't raised to live off the land and ocean, I am motivated to start doing so.

I am continuing to discover who I am as a Chamoru, who Chamorus are in general. Many of us share similar nostalgic stories of getting flicked in the ear, pinched in the chachaga`, or spanked in the dågan when we were naughty; going to all the gupot—gupot umasagua (fandånggo), fiestas, lisåyu, and interu—and praying and eating Chamoru food (red rice, barbeque chicken and ribs, chicken kelaguen, potato salad, roasted pig, and latiya); playing endless card games and eating canned food (especially Spam, corned beef, and vienna sausage) after a typhoon, when there's no power or water for weeks; going to mom and pop stores to buy pickled papaya and mangga, pickles, rokill and bottles of King Car; strolling around the island. These were some of my experiences growing up as a Chamoru on Guåhan. I might not speak the language fluently (I will get there). I might not farm or fish (I will get there). I might not ever

know all things Chamoru (I will get close). But this does not mean that I am not Chamoru or that I am less Chamoru than those who can do these things.

In Hawai`i, I started the Håfa Adai Club with my friend while at Hawai`i Pacific University, hoping to meet other Chamorus from the Marianas and share our culture and history. While at UH-Mānoa, another friend and I started the Marianas Club, inspired by our Chamoru language class and our predecessor, the Chamoru Club (which stopped in 2004) (personal communication with Brant Songsong, August 2009). This is how I displayed my pride while away from home and how I dealt with not living at home. A few of us also started Fight for Guåhan to address issues related to Chamoru culture and politics on Guåhan. Today, I also wear my spondylus jewelry. I am committed to becoming fluent in fino` Chamoru. I continue to chant with I Fanlalai`an. I will soon begin farming at my grandpa's ranch.

I know now that Chamoru isn't just who I am ethnically and culturally; it is the way I live out my everyday actions. I will continue to remember my past, take care of my island and my people—even when things get difficult—and continue to practice my culture.

As a Chamoru of the 21st century, my identity crisis has been quite an experience. At 24, I have finally come to embrace my Chamoru-ness. At the same time, I still wonder where my journey of rediscovery will continue to take me. I will always love pickled mango and papaya, fiesta food, and dandan Chamoru. I will practice inafa`maolek and chenchule` and will show respect for my elders. But this doesn't mean that I will reject all things non-Chamoru. I still love hip hop, baked ziti, and editing English papers. But I will always be Chamoru, no matter what anyone says, and I can define who I am as a Chamoru in my own way. In the words of Black feminist, activist, and writer Audre Lorde:

[...I]t won't matter particularly whether you are or I am a Black poet lesbian mother lover feeler doer woman, it will only matter that we shared in the rise of that most real and threatening human environment, the right to love, to work, and to define each of us, ourselves. (157)

Guåhu taotao Guåhan. I hagam`-hu ginen i tano` ini. I manggafã-ku ginen i tano` ini. I hale`-hu ginen i tano` ini. I am from Guåhan. My blood is from this land. My family is from this land. My roots are in this land.

I recently moved back to Guåhan. After six years of being away, I am working to acquaint myself with my Island and my people, and rediscovering, relearning, and claiming my Chamoru-ness. I know that they remember me. They know that I am of them. They know that I am home.

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Glossary

bahåki: house/work clothes; non-dressy clothes
 chachaga` : inner thigh
 che`lu: sibling; could also refer to a close friend ; not gender specific
 chenchule` : reciprocal gift-giving, mostly in the form of money or food
 dāgan: buttock
 dandan Chamoru: Chamoru music
 donne` : hot pepper
 fa`nu`i: to show, present, demonstrate
 fino` Chamoru: Chamoru language
 gai mamahlao: to have shame; this is a very important practice because if one were to be tai mamahlao (without shame), then s/he could embarrass her/his family
 inafa`maolek: loosely translated as interdependence, reciprocity
 Kostumbren Chamorro: the blending of pre-contact Chamoru practices and customs with introduced Spanish and other influences and practices
 linamen: respect
 mangga: mango
 mangnginge` : kissing the right hand of an elder as a sign of showing respect; this is done when greeting an elder and again when leaving (an event, mass, a party); it is also done after the recitation of the rosary
 nengkanno` Chamoru: Chamoru food
 pugua` : beetlenut
 tâno` : land
 taotao: person
 tâsi: ocean
 tumates: tomatoes
 yori: slippers

Notes

ⁱ Here, Anghet Santos is referring to blood quantum. See “I Taotao Tano`” article for more information.

ⁱⁱ Chamorus are also indigenous to the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), mostly inhabiting the islands of Sa`ipan, Luta, and Tini`an. However, Guåhan and NMI were severed politically in 1898, following the Spanish-American War, when Guåhan was ceded by Spain to the US, and NMI was ceded to Germany. Because I was born and raised on Guåhan, I will refer to the Chamorus of this particular island, though Chamorus from NMI might share many similar experiences, as we are one people.

ⁱⁱⁱ I have opted to use “Chamoru” in this paper. “Chamorro” will be used in the work of others referenced in this paper because it is the more common spelling.

^{iv} See “Organic Act of Guam” in *Hale`ta—Hinasso` : Tinige` Put Chamorro (Insights: The Chamorro Identity)*, published by the Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1993.

^v The “Inifresi” is a Chamoru pledge, written by Dr. Bernadita Camacho Dungca and the “Fanohge Chamoru” (lit. means stand Chamorus) is Guåhan’s national anthem, composed in English by Dr. Ramon Sablan and translated in Chamoru by Lagrimas Untalan. Children learn and recite the “Inifresi” and sing “Fanohge Chamoru” in the public school system (see <http://ns.gov.gu/fanoghe/>).

^{vi} I am aware that baptist and other religious denominations are often capitalized. I have chosen not to capitalize the religions in this paper.

^{vii} “What? You can’t speak Chamoru?”

^{viii} No one has really written about the term; it used often but not really articulated in writing.

^{ix} In the south, however, the term referred to Chamorus who were Chamoru by blood but did not practice the culture or speak the language. It is interesting to note that Chamorus in NMI do not use the term.

^x In terms of the t-shirt brands, there are now several which have been started by Chamorus, including Che`lu (1995), Fokai Industries (2000), Shoyoroll Clothing Company (2000), and Free Your Mind (2005) (San Nicolas). These brands sell more than nice t-shirts. They have messages which are “based in [the owners’] Guam roots, the ideas they support and the philosophies they follow” (24). Che`lu, for example, a family-owned store at the Chamorro Village in Hagåtña, promotes the importance of culture, family, friendship, history, and respect. And Fokai, a business grown from the mixed martial arts and grappling scene, has a mission to ““exhaust the body, proceed the mind, and cultivate the spirit”” (24-25).

^{xi} The “Juan Malimanga” comic strips are presented daily (except Sundays) in the Pacific Daily News (PDN). They were created by Clotilde Gould in the 1980s. The comics focus on three main characters, Juan Malimanga, Kika, and Nano` and their everyday Chamoru experiences (politics, cultural obligations, etc.). Juan is the main jokester of the three. Auntie Clotilde Gould has since passed, but the comic is still featured in the PDN. In 2009, a Chamoru class and an art class at the University of Guam collaborated to update “Juan Malimanga,” adding more updated current events, politics, and the like to the comic (see pdn.com).

^{xii} In Lisa Kahaleole Hall’s article, “‘Hawaiian at Heart’ and Other Fictions,” (*The Contemporary Pacific* 17.2) she states that “[c]oncepts such as ‘part’ and ‘full,’ 50 percent, or more and less than 50 percent, are colonial constructions that threaten to divide Hawaiians from each other” (405). The same can be said of Chamorus and all other indigenous peoples where blood quantum is applicable.

Chapter Three

Micronesian Lives

Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

Micronesian Lives

Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

Guåhan...Micronesia in the wake of hopelessness, I must stave off being swept away, inspired by words spoken through me by our ancestors, by those who have come and fought before me and for generations to come. Micronesia is home for me, Guåhan my home island is located in this region. The term Micronesia is highly contested by scholars as well as the community which the label has been placed upon. A geographic location of the western pacific, Micronesia is vast, a constellation of islands, together totaling the size of the United States of America (Perez). I am a daughter of Guåhan, Micronesia. I write as a concerned member of this society and this region and am no expert. My experience as a young community organizer, a daughter of Guåhan, Micronesia has inspired this paper as did “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi (The Journey of Our Words)”.

“Micronesia” means / Chuuk / Pohnpei / Kosrae / Yap / Belau / Marshall Islands / Saipan / Guåhan / Luta / Tinian / Nauru / Kiribati / and so many other / small / little / tiny / islands. / But the people of these islands are strong / struggling in a system / that is working against them.

~Kisha Ann Borja-Ki`cho`cho`

Micronesia is beauty. Smiling faces. Generosity. But for most, Micronesia is an absence of presence, “Micro [=] Small Miniscule Invisible Ignored Isolated Distant, “tiny islands” (Kihleng). The focus of this paper is on Micronesia, a discussion of the historical and current injustice bearing down upon the indigenous people belonging to the Micronesian region, specifically, Guåhan and the island nations known as the Freely Associated States (FAS), comprised of Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and Republic of Belau (ROB). Micronesian Lives seeks not to argue Micronesia’s existence but, her struggle to enter the imaginations of their colonizer the United States of America, to break through the periphery and achieve access to justice.

MICRONESIANS / Migrating / Moving / Island hopping / On Continental Air Mike / Departing

from our / islands / Descending upon the U.S. / Movin' on up / Stereotyped /
 Mis[UN]represented / MICRONESIA / colonial constructions / colonial creations...../divisions
 of Pacific Islands MICRONESIA in the Western Pacific / MICRONESIANS don't identify as
 MICRONESIANS.../ WE ARE / Palauans / Pohnpeians / Chuukese / Chamoru / Kosraean /
 Marshallese / Niauans /Yapese / Gilbertese / and MORE.../ MICRONESIAN lacks concrete
 definition / An inadequate / Insufficient / Identity / Misplaced / Bestowed wrongly / Upon a
 large and diverse / Pacific Island population / Who are not under one flag / Who do not speak
 one tongue / Who do not eat the same food And most of all who / Do not want to be recognized
 as one

-Emelihter Kihleng

Overview of Political History: Guåhan and Peoples of Nations Affiliated with the US through the Compact of Free Association

In Kihleng's poem, she asserts that the many islands of Micronesia lumped together would rather not be recognized as one. Review of the political history will provide context to her poem and the complex political relationship between the United States of America (US) and Guåhan and the US and FAS.

1950 Organic Act of Guam was executed in 1950 without the consent of the people. In essence it granted a limited form of US citizenship to Chamoru and residents of Guåhan. That limited form bestows upon the people of Guåhan citizenship without presidential voting rights, and one non-voting Congressional representative (Hattori). Additionally, the constitution does not apply equally to territories as it does to the states, giving the federal government unchecked powers to govern [oppress] the peoples of Guåhan. Historically, there are many examples, the most threatening and real is the impending military buildup, which will be discussed further.

The islands now known as FSM, RMI, and ROP, a.k.a. the Freely Associated States (FAS),

catapulted into US view during World War II and confirmed the value of the islands' locations to US defense (Hezel). In 1947, the US became administrator of the Trust Territory of the Pacific (TTPI), committing to prepare the indigenous peoples for self-governance and improve their health status (as qtd. in NASW, in press). The US commitment to improving the health status of the Peoples of the FAS is an empty promise, and will be discussed further.

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. ... We must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny places we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed place..." (Hau`ofa).

Common Identity Under US Flag

The commonality between Chamorus of Guåhan and FAS citizens is the invisibility we hold crafted by the political relationships between the colonizer the US, which strips us of political power, and at the same time asks us to send our men and women to fight for "freedom", though a star does not represent us on the red, white, and blue. The political statuses held by the FAS and Chamorus of Guåhan garners us invisible.

Staring Down Death

At present, indigenous peoples of Micronesia are staring down death. I brave saying we are being buried alive. As Guåhan braces for a massive US military buildup, unprecedented in its history, the FAS citizens residing on O`ahu have learned that their healthcare will be reduced to a bare minimum. The Guåhan issue will be referred to as the buildup and healthcare issue, Basic Health Hawai`i (BHH). The two issues are separate, but the implications are the same: DEATH—unless we rise, are able to tap into that ancient truth, and harness the fire raging within.

The Buildup

Guåhan is located 3,500 miles away from Hawai`i and has been referred to by key military stakeholders as vital to the security of America. Chamoru lawyer, scholar, and activist Julian Aguon

quoted the following from US Foreign Policy Analyst and author Joseph Gerson: “[A]ll of the Pentagon roadmaps lead to Guam.” Securing a peaceful Pacific has always had to do with the security of the colonizers (Henderson). The buildup, touted as an economic boost for the island of Guåhan, will increase the island population by 45%. Currently, the US military possesses 1/3 of the island property for military housing and practice ranges (DEIS, 2009). Add to that 2,300 more acres of land, not including 30 miles of dredging Apra Harbor (personal communication with B.J. Cruz, 2010). Excitement of the economic bonanza has waned with the environmental impact statement clarifying that military communities will provide for their personnel and dependents, thus limiting the need for outside shopping. A Department of Defense school for all military children will be erected in addition to the one already in place and more are to be built. Of the 80,000 people to come, 18,000 will be foreign workers hired for manual labor positions such as construction. H-2 workers will be compensated handsomely, reports indicate, earning double the salary of what a local construction company is able to offer (DEIS, 2009).

The island resources will be depleted and devastated while US military dependents are provided state of the art education, healthcare and water systems. Thus, scarcity of resources will impact cost of living. Chamorus now a minority will further be threatened by the increased population and cost of living (2000 Census).

The water is boiling on Guåhan as the people brace for the buildup. Chamoru activist Hope Cristobal has advocated at the United Nations on behalf of the Chamoru people since the 1980s; at a UN hearing Cristobal argues, “The United States government was founded on the principle that government is by the people and for the people. Consent has never been sought by the Chamorro people.”

As the day draws near for the buildup, land continues to be cleared, and paved over, pipes fitted, lines drawn, and more signs going up that say: NO TRESSPASSING—FEDERAL PROPERTY. We,

as the Chamoru people are grieving now, not only for our ancestors but for the living and those not yet born. The pain cannot be understood by...that compensation is pointless, because what they were being robbed of was life. A summary of the proposed impacts the US military buildup will have are as follows:

- *The shortfall of drinking water caused by the buildup could lead to exposure to water borne diseases from sewage and run-off water mixing with our drinking water.*
- *Approximately 2,310 Guam residents will be able to hear gunfire from the firing range about as loud as a vacuum cleaner ten feet away.*
- *The DEIS does consider the pollution to our air and possible health impacts on Guam residents caused by the increase in traffic. The demand created by the buildup will increase raw sewage spills and the risk of getting sick from the contamination of our drinking water and ocean.*
- *There will be up to a 13.1 million gallon shortfall of drinking water per day for people living off-base in 2014.*
- *85% of Guam relies on our aquifer for drinking water, yet the DEIS fails to guarantee the protection of our aquifer from bacteria and toxic contaminants.*
- *The expected impact on over 71 acres of Guam's reef is "unprecedented."*
- *The demand created by the buildup will increase raw sewage spills and the risk of getting sick from the contamination of our drinking water and ocean.*

Basic Health Hawai`i

Here in Hawai`i, another tragedy awaits another segment of people of Micronesia, FAS citizens. The state funded Basic Health Hawai`i Program establishes health care coverage to uninsured FAS citizens making them ineligible for Hawai`i's comprehensive Quest-Ace or Quest health plan. In 1996, the Welfare Reform Act was instituted, where once upon signing of the COFA treaty FAS citizens qualified for federal Medicaid, the Welfare Reform Act made FAS ineligible. State and territory

governmental bodies were forced to determine how the FAS community would be provided for. Hawai'i generously provided for FAS citizens health and human services, receiving minimal compensation from the federal government in the form of Compact Impact Aid. Due to the economic crisis, the State of Hawai'i in an effort to save money is implementing BHH as a cost saving measure. All current enrollees of comprehensive state funded health insurance will be dis-enrolled and placed onto BHH with a cap of 7,000. That cap has been met. Following is a summary of the BHH plan:

- *12 outpatient physician visits per year*
- *10 inpatient hospital days per year and in patient physician visits for medically necessary*
- *medical care, surgery, psychiatric treatment*
- *6 mental health visits a year*
- *5 generic medication prescriptions per month per year, to include insulin, plus contraceptives and diabetes supplies*
- *Emergency room services*
- *Lifesaving treatment such as chemotherapy and dialysis treatment will not be covered unless emergency situations arise.*

Conclusion

This is an unsung story, belonging to the Micronesian Islands, the indigenous peoples of Guåhan and the FAS. David Hanlon, in “The ‘Sea of Little Islands’: Examining Micronesia’s Place in ‘Our Sea of Islands,’” suggests it is necessary for “a critical reexamination of historical linkages, as a way to reconnect parts of Oceania termed Melanesia and Micronesia, and against the Polynesian dominance of Pacific Studies. I argue it is necessary for a critical examination of the historical and neocolonial linkages between Guåhan and the FAS, so that we may unite and fight against the effort to erase our people from this earth.

America has succeeded in erasing people of the Micronesian region from the imagination of the

world, from our own imagination. In recent years, Chamorus have experienced a cultural renaissance. At the same time however, this revival is being met with the further militarization of our people, just as peoples of FAS continue to migrate out of their home islands, seeking health care, educational, and economic opportunities, while simultaneously being refused promised healthcare.

“Securing a Peaceful Pacific” has nothing to do with the security, health, and betterment of peoples of the Pacific and everything to do with the security of the colonizers. Security for Pacific colonizers has been garnered in the form of economics and military might, and at the cost of our lives.

I sauna i tumo ya hesedi gi eyi mesmu i masa yi hao. Greater is the fault of he who knows and allows the injustice upon himself. I Kareran I Palâbran Mâmi is one of many fights. Our swords are our tongues. From within the empire, with the tools of the empire, we shall overcome.

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A Micronesian Voice

Exploring the Depths of Silence: Violence in the Micronesian

Communities

Angela T. Hoppe-Cruz

A Micronesian Voice Exploring the Depths of Silence: Violence in the Micronesian
Communities

Angela T. Hoppe-Cruz

Brief History of Micronesia

Micronesia is a constellation of islands, dotting the West Pacific Ocean. There are four archipelagoes: the Mariana Islands, the Carolines, the Marshalls, and Gilbert Islands. Each archipelago is comprised of a number of different islands, each retaining a strong sense of identity and uniqueness.

The Federate States of Micronesia (FSM) is the community of focus in this paper. Given the size, scope of issues, and cultural differences of the islands, including all the communities of the Micronesian islands would prove time consuming and labor intensive, that is, if one wishes to honor the uniqueness of each island group. There are commonalities, but it would be unjust to lump them altogether, without accurately learning of the social-economic situation, access to education, political organization, etc. All these layers of the community impact how one may define violence, challenge it, or condone its presence in the community. The other route, which would be to select two island groups, excludes a wide community. However, it could lay the foundation for future work to be done similarly for other island groups.

I am Micronesian, Too

In 2004, I presented an introductory session on the dynamics of domestic violence to a women's health group at Kokua Kalihi Valley Health Center. The response I received was mocked laughter. "It is their reality," interpreted their translator to me (personal communication, 2004). I felt as though I had failed by not communicating to

them effectively the seriousness of the issue, empowering them to assume control over their lives. Their laughter has haunted me since and fuels my passion and desire to explore the issue of domestic violence.

Four years have lapsed since that presentation, and I have returned to college with the laughter and sadness of those women in mind. As I began exploring the literature on IPV in the Micronesian community, of which little exists, I found a thesis, completed by a Chuukese woman, Joanna Jacobs, entitled “Domestic Violence in the Pacific: An Annotated Bibliography,” in which Jacobs generically defines domestic violence as being limited to spousal partner. I was perplexed by the vagueness of her definition. She had spent many years working as a domestic violence advocate, so I was certain she could have drawn from a number of sources to define domestic violence. But, of course, they would all hail from western scholars and practitioners. Jacobs offered a vague definition because I realized definitions developed by western scholars and practitioners could not define the issue for the community in question. The laughter of the women grew louder as I realized, the “we,” meaning the western agency that I was trained by as well as my western academic schooling, went in and imposed upon the group, a western defined concept and issue, termed domestic violence. So begins the journey to defining violence in the Micronesian community.

But really, what right do I have to explore this topic? I have suffered restless nights pondering this very question. I am of Chamoru descent, but I am Micronesian, too. It was a Chuukese woman that helped me to realize this. In 2007, I organized a talk story session with mental health providers from the island of O`ahu, but who are indigenous Micronesians. There was one woman whose name I cannot recall, but her

face is as vivid as if I had seen her just yesterday. In wanting to break the ice, I asked her where she was from. It was obvious by the urohs she was wearing, her gold tooth, and hair pick, that she was from Micronesia. "From Chuuk." She smiled and politely and reciprocated the question to me. "I am from Guam," I said proudly while smiling back at her. Her face was blank, but at the same time, not. I could not read what she was thinking. An awkward silence fell between us, followed by a firm statement, "You are Micronesian, too." She said it almost as if she dared me to challenge this assertion.

On December 10, 2008, at 1:00am, I awoke thinking of that moment. I whispered softly into the cool air, "I am Micronesian, too." I have every right and, more than a right, a responsibility to explore the issue of domestic violence, with sensitivity, acknowledging the geopolitical forces that have divorced Guam and her indigenous people, Chamorus, from their Micronesian identity.

In *My Urohs*, poet Emelihter Kihleng opens with a poem to Linda Rabon Torres. Initially, I egocentrically assumed that Linda must have been a Chamoru teacher who inspired her poetry. I could not have been farther from the truth. Kihleng's poem defines the awkward silence that befell me and the Chuukese woman who dared me to dispute that I too am Micronesian. It is a poem about the racism perpetrated by one minority group against another, Chamorus against Micronesians. As I conduct this research and involve or hope to involve myself with the community, I must be conscious of this ugly reality and work to create a new reality, a peaceful one. I am reminded of the privilege I hold, as discussed by Katerina Teaiwa and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

I am an outside-insider. You may find it ironic that I am not focusing this paper on the Chamoru community. To be frank, I have not yet gained the courage to.

Chamorus are well-established; having been the most colonized and westernized we are better able to navigate the systems. For example, our language is languishing; at present, there are efforts to revitalize it, in contrast to migrants from FSM or RMI where native tongues are their first languages. Studies indicate that having a better command of the English language allows for greater accessibility to resources. Migrants from Micronesia are more vulnerable as they lack language and cultural accessibility.

Who Am I?

We must not consent to our own abasement, or invisibility -----by anyone.

–Selina Tusitala Marsh

This comment was made in reference to Albert Wendt’s 1976 address, “The colonizers prescribe for us the role of domestic animal, amoral, phallus, the lackey, the comic and lazy, happy-go-lucky fuzzy haired boy [...] We must not consent to our own abasement.”(qtd. in Marsh). The “we” Wendt is referring to are Pacific Islander males. Of great consequence, the mighty women of the Pacific are left in the shadows of the dark. Marsh recognizes this invisibility and asserts our presence, challenging fellow Pacific Islander scholars, men, and women to follow suit. I hope this paper will contribute to the growing voices of women in the discourse and fight for advancement of indigenous Pacific Islander women. Poetry performed and written for the “I Kareran I Palábran Måmi” poetry readings focuses a great deal on domestic violence and other forms of violence in Pacific Island communities.

There are many issues that Pacific Islander women wrestle with. One of great significance is the violence that occurs within their households, in their intimate partner relationships. In a special issue on Domestic Violence in Oceania, Counts opens the

issue by shedding light on the lack of research interest regarding women's issues, specifically violence against women. She cites, "The Anthropology of Violence," not one chapter is devoted to the exploration of violence against women. Women silenced. Shameful is the only way to describe this disconnect considering the development of the feminist movement. In addition, given the increasing number of white female cultural anthropologists, violence against women in Oceania is not an area they have found to be of concern.

It was not until the early 1980s that violence against women became an issue more openly discussed. The discussion must begin by heeding the wisdom asserted by Marsh: In order to deconstruct imperial hegemony, we must begin to question the norm, the norm imposed upon us by our own people. The norm in question is the acceptance of violence against women, the silence of violence, hurting women and as a result, the greater community.

The feminist movement of the early 1980s advocated for social justice and equal rights for women, that is, for upper class, Caucasian women. It largely ignored issues experienced by women of color and the discourse at that time and very often today focuses on the most visible ethnic communities: African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Asian-Americans. Which may answer the earlier question, why did the movement not spur greater interest and concern in regards to violence against women?

Since the 1980s, the feminist movement has evolved and become more inclusive. It is the feminist framework from which I aim to approach my research topic. Despite its evolution to include a broader perspective of all women, I feel Pacific Islanders are still on the periphery. They are the invisible minority. It is imperative that the issue be

framed and guided by the unique history and struggles of the Micronesian people.

Adopting a feminist framework from which to guide methodology may prove problematic, further perpetuating the values and stereotypes given to my home community of Micronesia.

Drawing from Selina Tusitala Marsh, I will attempt to utilize feminist methodology, “Pacificiz-ing” it, “[...] recognizing that Pacific women draw heavily from foreign foundational theories, namely feminism, she models mama tama ita after Mana Wahine, a Maori Women’s movement, which encourages us to

assume control over the interpretation of our struggles and to begin to theorize our experiences in ways which make sense for other us and other women....we as [Maori] women should begin with an understanding of our own condition and apply analyses which can give added insight into the complexities of our world.

Domestic Violence in Context

Domestic violence, now referred to widely as intimate partner violence (IPV), is the physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse against an intimate partner. It is recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as a major public health issue. One does not have to stray far to see why. In Hawai`i alone, the numbers are staggering; between October 2007 and December 2008, there have been a total of 14 IPV related deaths. Nine women were killed at the hands of their spouse or partner; of that number, 4 were homicide-suicides. Sadly, included in the total count of lives taken are a Good Samaritan, a child of one of the victims, and the sibling of another, all of whom were attempting to stop the violence (personal communication with Oishi 2008). Let us not forget the children and families that have been left behind.

In 2004, CDC reported 1,544 deaths due to IPV, 25% of which were male and 75% female. The cost is immense, notwithstanding the precious lives lost and the lives that are forever impacted. Monetary loss is estimated at more than 8.3 billion dollars a year, which is spent on mental health and medical care, as well as lost productivity.

The CDC utilizes a four-step process to addressing the issue. For the purposes of this paper, the first two steps are most relevant and include defining the problem, which it affects, and identifying risk and protective factors.

Data documenting the incidence of IPV in the Micronesian community has been hard to come by. Despite the growing population of FSM migrants in Hawai`i, Ana Maring, Hawai`i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence Educator, reports that they have no hard data on this community (personal communication, October 2008). On Guam in the early 1990s, the incidence of IPV was high: 23% of homicides resulted from IPV. In the Marshall Islands, Women Untied Together in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI) reports that almost 80% of women have experienced or are surviving in IPV relationships. I have yet to document the incidence of IPV for the other Micronesian Islands.

One of the factors contributing to difficulty in documenting the incidence of IPV is the Census data format. For years, Pacific Islanders have been lumped together with Asians, hence, Asian-Pacific Islander. So much is lost when collecting data in this fashion, leading one to believe Pacific Islanders from the Micronesian region are on the periphery of US government concern. Countless organizations representing Asian-Pacific Islanders received federal funding to address violence against women; however, their focus often is on Asian immigrants, leaving Pacific Islanders in the dark. One

example of this is the APIA Domestic Violence Action fund. Their contributions to the field of violence against women are admirable, but the lack of representation of the Micronesian region is sorely felt. Native Hawaiians are included, but again, the nuances of our experiences ignored. Thus, adequately developing interventions has proven challenging. This takes me back again to the focus of my paper, defining not for, but by the Micronesian community what intimate partner violence looks like in our community and how we might address it.

Counts suggests using a flexible definition of violence, "...for if we are to understand the nature of family violence in other societies, the perceptions of the people we study must take precedence over definitions derived from Western experience." Furthermore, she states, "If we use the same terms to define them we must take care that the resulting analysis is not misleading." Thus, I hypothesize that the conceptualization of violence, specifically violence against women, directly impacts the ability or inability to efficiently and with cultural humility develop culturally appropriate and relevant intervention for the protection of all concerned, the intimate partners and if present, the child/ren. Such interventions are beneficial not only for the intimate partners but also for the greater community.

So what does feminism have to do with it?

The feminist movement has been alive and well since the 1800s. But, successes from efforts made early on were not realized until the early 1920s, evidenced by the Women's Suffragist movement, the right to vote, and the Equal Rights Opportunity Act. These accomplishments were monumental but benefited a select few. The feminist movement at the time served upper-class white Caucasian women, "...despite the efforts

of the National Association for Colored Women and similar groups, the national feminist movement became identified primarily--and enduringly--as white and upper-class.” It has analyzed and advocated for the end to violence against women, with women of color on the periphery. The feminist movement has kept the issues of women of color at bay. But, it is in my opinion that the best framework and theory is to begin unraveling our stories and weave them back together.

The movement has since evolved greatly to include women of color. However, race relations and discussion in American is too often limited to, Black, White, Hispanic or Asian-American. Through this lens, Pacific Islanders, especially the communities from the Micronesian region, are left in the shadows of the dark. For this reason, using a feminist perspective to guide my research may prove challenging as I define feminism in a Micronesian sense. Ann Takashy, founder of The Women’s Network in Phone, discussed the women’s movement in her home island Chuuk: “Our men they think we are trying to be feminists and militant...all we want is to assume the role of complimenting our men and power sharing.” I will use Takashy’s thoughts to develop a feminist perspective from a Micronesian perspective, drawing from other Pacific Islander scholar feminists, such as Haunani-Kay Trask and Selina Tusitala Marsh. One definition that I feel best embodies, though not fully, the experiences of Micronesian women are included in the text, *Domestic Violence at the Margins*. In the table of contents, the chapter titles listed are book lists: Puerto Rican Battered Women Redefining Gender, Violence, etc. The list includes many ethnic groups that make up America, except Micronesian women. Their definition of violence is applicable, and once modified to fit our brown beautiful skin, we can move forward.

IPV includes but is not limited to, physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual violence and control against women [...and it is defined as] a purposeful course of action, buttressed, by familial, institutional, social and cultural practices...produced out of intersecting relations of gender, race, social class, and sexuality.

Looking Forward

Any hope for the future is rooted in the past. The major contributions made by the women in the past can be again (Micronesian Seminar 1994). With the redefining of violence in the Micronesian community, I envision discussing the issue of domestic violence by illuminating the role women once held as the matriarchs of their communities, specifically the Micronesian communities. But, first we must begin by addressing the present, unraveling the tangled fishnets and labels cast on us before we can set sail again, towards a peaceful future.

We believe in our culture and assume the traditional role that we once held, as complimentary to our men and power sharers.

Ann Takashy, Women's Network, Pohnpei

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Chapter Four

**Reflections on ‘I Kareran I
Palåbran Måmi (The Journey of
Our Words)’ (Part I):
February 12, 2010**

Reflections on “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi: The Journey of Our Words” (Part I):

February 12, 2010 Poetry Reading

Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

Purpose

On May 1, 2009, the “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi (The Journey of Our Words)” poetry reading was presented by Chamoru poets Kisha Ann Borja-Kicho`cho` and Anghet Hoppe-Cruz . It was standing room only. People began to seat themselves on the floor, lined the walls, and flowed out into the hallway, to hear us. We took turns speaking; like the ebb and flow of waves, our voices filled the room. Instinctually, we both knew the power of voice could transmit and transform. What I did not expect was the hunger other people felt, similar to my own, hunger to see and hear Chamoru images, their own stories, our stories. After that day, people from different spheres asked when we would perform again, so we did on November 20, 2009, and again February 12, 2010, and we will again soon. The purpose of this summary is to review the purpose of “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi, reflect on the impact it has had on the audience and myself. Am I successfully meeting the purposes I set out for myself, more importantly for the community I wish to work with, for and belong to? Before I could write a summary, I felt I had to review Kisha’s and my stated purpose for working together and endeavoring on a joint portfolio MA project, (purpose for what? The portfolio purposes are listed later.), which is multipurpose. The purposes are as follows:

1. To write the people, our communities (Chamoru and Micronesian) into the consciousness of this world, this country.
2. To bridge academia with the community it wishes to work with.
3. To highlight issues our community historically rarely challenges, at least openly:
 - a. colonialism/patriarchy/unquestioning patriotism

- b. domestic violence
 - c. suicide
 - d. disparities ranging from health to economics
4. To empower community.

Reviewing and reflecting on our most recent stated purpose as well as the title of our poetry readings “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi (The Journey of Our Words),” many questions regarding who this project is really for surfaced for me. The purposes Kisha and I agreed on for our portfolio are the following:

(1) to explore the history of political activism, specific to the Pacific Islands, investigating what other political activists have done and seeing how we can learn from them and apply some of their successful techniques (as we see fit to the communities we are working with); (2) to utilize performance and/or written poetry in determining how we can communicate most effectively with the people in the communities that we are working with and plan to work with in our professional careers (even across boundaries, such as age, gender, status, and different beliefs). With this project, we aim to decolonize western curricula and to decolonize Pacific Islands Studies by incorporating narrative poetics, honoring our oral histories/storytelling, and choosing the communal over the individual and to use poetry as a means to heal, to feel empowered, to be resilient, to “write” the wrongs.

Through these processes, we hope to accomplish the following objectives: put at the forefront and perpetuate the Chamoru culture; speak out against the injustices brought about by US colonialism; re/present ourselves; create spaces for Chamoru women to speak; instill empowerment in our people; share the Chamoru ways of thinking and doing things; educate through an accessible medium (poetry); encourage and motivate others to partake in the struggle; decolonize and demilitarize; envision home (identity)/ what it means to be Chamoru (in the 21st century); address the issue of Chamoru diaspora.

It may be that I am narrowly interpreting the purpose of our work, but I feel as though our past readings did not connect to the first purpose listed. I also feel that our purposes are one too many. This is coming after soulful reflection. The essence of our culture, Chamoru culture, that is similar in many ways to other island communities shines through. Should this be stated as a purpose or noted as a part of the weaving of our story? Restorative justice, healing, is taking place. In terms of my professional focus, I

question if healing or the dialogue towards healing which our words allow possibility for should be mentioned more prominently as a purpose. More simply, could we frame our purpose more succinctly?

1. Decolonizing as healing through narrative poetics.
2. Resurrect the oral tradition of “Kantan Chamorrta” through the use of narrative poetics, which will perpetuate Chamoru culture and privilege the voice of the Chamoru women.

At the February reading, we introduced briefly who we were to the audience and the work we we're doing together, our life work. I do not feel we accurately stated that we also intend to include the experience of those in attendance to explore the power of narrative poetics, in relation to our home community and communities we have ties to such as those in Micronesia. I struggle with providing a space that feels like “home,” and battle with overly formalizing the process, that we risk losing that sense of home. Articulating our academic purpose more clearly could be strengthened; but how, without taking away from the process.

Sensitive Issues

As a social worker, a key principle when working with individuals and communities is readiness. Is the community ready to hear what we have to say? Are they ready to take action? What types of ways do we provide for individuals to take action? What do we mean by action? Again, this I believe will be my personal piece to the project in reference to domestic violence and suicide. After each reading, I also felt a weight for not having enough literature available, at least a hotline number for people who may be survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, etc. I read body language, a

key social work practice aiding in effective development of intervention. Many of the women and men reacted to my poems “Red” (on domestic violence) and “Dayne” (on suicide). Heads bowed, people would avoid making eye contact with me, or cross their arms and legs as I read my poetry. Healing and empowering are part of our purpose: How do we evaluate if this is being accomplished?

Talk Story

Our other readings did not include a talk story session, which I feel completed the event this February reading. At our previous readings, it was as though we opened a Pandora’s box. This last time, the talk story session made the process much more fulfilling for all involved and offered an opportunity for some who felt comfortable enough to share their experiences with us. I feel honored and burdened at the same time. Yes, this is a graduate portfolio project, but there is a great sense of responsibility we have to deal with the raw emotions our poetry may invoke.

So much came from the talk story. Links between Micronesians from the FSM and Belau were made. A woman from Chuuk in tears said, “Don’t forget about us, from Chuuk. We don’t have the same power you have to speak. Please speak for us, too.” An elder auntie from Belau expressed her heartfelt thanks and admiration for the courage it took and encouraged everyone to *speak*. Then our community members, Chamorus from the Marianas, admitted that issues like domestic violence would dare not be brought up with our own families. It was moving. I wish we could have tape recorded what was shared. The process, the preparation, and the coming together of Chamoru men and women to chant, cook, and share stories, are the essence of home.

Conclusion

To conclude, I believe that we should iron out more clearly our purpose and objectives, as well as our evaluation methods/questions. The response is great, but how do we more accurately capture what we wish to do with that response? I love the linkages being made with outer Micronesian islands and the Kanaka Maoli. An effort, and I believe it is evident in my poetry, is to link Pacific peoples, to see we are fighting the same enemy, and to fight together.

Reflections on “I Kareran I Palâbran Mâmi: The Journey of Our Words” (Part I):

February 12, 2010 Poetry Reading

Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

A Few Words on Rejuvenation and Collaboration

After a recent meeting with our committee (post-February 12 poetry reading) and drawing from committee members’ insight and feedback I have realized Anghet and I are in dire need of relaxation and down time, moments when we can, as individuals, as collaborators, and as friends, step back and reflect on our work. We have done so much together over the past year, and it has all been wonderful. But we have not always gotten along. Sometimes, we would get overwhelmed by our collaborative work and personal life issues and problems and wouldn’t know how to handle those well, and simultaneously deal with the awkward tensions that would arise between the two of us. This is the reality of our situation; it has been the reality of both our friendship and our collaborative work “since ever since” as we like to say on Guåhan.

But compared to last semester and the beginning of this semester, we have definitely grown, as both collaborative partners and as friends. For me at least, I know that I am learning how to communicate more effectively my thoughts and ideas to my partner as well as listen better to her. There have been several times when I would question this collaborative project and just not want to do it. Truthfully, Anghet had to do a lot of convincing for me to be onboard with the project. It wasn’t so much because I didn’t want to be a part of this wonderful, communal, very much Oceanic project (in terms of, again, the communal aspect in addition to the orature and talk story aspects), it was more that I didn’t want to lose one of my closest and dearest friends in the process.

However, since that time of doubt, I have learned that we can work together. It might not always be easy, but it doesn't mean it is not doable. And what I have also discovered is that we can still maintain our friendship. Sure, the lines between us as friends and us as MA partners sometimes get blurred, but in the end, we learn to really see and hear each other, ask each other how we're *really* doing (personal communication with Manulani Meyer, January 2010). Moreover, we learned early on in our work together that we are both very competitive, especially with each other. It is this competition that has left us feeling upset at times, but it also what has kept us fierce. It is what has kept us active in the work that we do. There are so many wonderful things about working together, and of course, as with any relationship, there are also many challenges. But, like my dad always told me when I was growing up, "If you can count more good things than bad, then things really aren't that bad." The good definitely outweighs the challenges of this collaborative work that Anghet and I are pursuing. What a journey this has been so far of our words, our poetry, ourselves as collaborators, ourselves as friends, our stories. I know it will only get better.

Reflections on the February 12, 2010 "I Kareran I Palābran Māmi (The Journey of Our Words)" Poetry Reading

It has been almost a month already since Anghet and my "I Kareran I Palābran Māmi" poetry reading event. The reading was on Friday, February 12, 2010, and was held at the UH-Mānoa Campus Center Executive Dining Room. This was the third poetry reading we've had (we started in May 2009) but the first for our MAportfolio project.

For some strange reason(s), I was really nervous before this past reading. So was Anghet. We were more nervous than usual, so nervous that we had to walk away from the Executive Dining Room and sit at a table, just the two of us, so that we could pray, calm down, and simply just breathe. I could've sworn my heart was beating so fast, I didn't even know what was about to happen. What made me really nervous in particular was that the crowd was a little different. There were a lot of people in the room I didn't know or even those I did know but had never heard Anghet and I read before. Then, there was my friend's mom, a middle-aged Chamoru woman from Guåhan who has been away from home for several years and whose father was a military veteran (I found these things out after the reading). She was a really nice woman, but I had no idea how she would react to our poetry. Some people might say, what's the big deal? Why be worried? Not everyone will always agree, or even like, what you do, say, or write about. But people have to understand, we have to understand, that where we come from, activism (decolonization, demilitarization, anti-US military buildup) in any form is still very much regarded as radical and those who are activists are viewed as and dubbed as "those crazy people." Sign holders, fence climbers—both literally and figuratively—anyone who challenges the powers that be, are for the most part criticized by the general community (though things have been rapidly changing recently because of the proposed military buildup). Overall, any form of resistance has a very negative stigma attached to it, and for those involved, our lives become more and more complicated, physically, emotionally, and culturally, the latter in particular being what makes one who is a part of the struggle want to sometimes be apart from the struggle.

So in the end, what happened with that one Chamoru auntie? She enjoyed the reading and even stayed for the talk story session. She told Anghet and me that she supports whatever her children are involved with. It was a relief to get her approval. And while I do understand that we won't always have everyone's approval and support, it is comforting and motivating when you do.

“The Language of Struggle” (Thiong’o): The Importance of Poetry, Spoken Word, Narrative Poetics, Orature in General

According to Epeli Hau'ofa in “Pasts to Remember,” “If we [Oceanians] fail to construct our own realities other people will do it for us” (453). He further states that we “must therefore actively reconstruct our histories, rewrite our geography, create our own realities [...]” (469). This indeed is a very important part of Anghet and my MA portfolio, writing poetry that addresses our realities and sharing the stories of our people(s).

At the first reading, our main goal was to see if poetry in the spoken form could help in raising and discussing issues that were viewed as taboo, particularly in the communities that we come from or work with. These issues, as mentioned previously in our proposal, include US militarism and colonialism, resistance, violence, abuse, and trauma, particularly in the Chamoru community but also in the greater Micronesian communities (as seen in Anghet's poems, for example, “Heart and Soul” and “I Am Micronesian”).

We have performed “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” three times now, and each time, people have been exposed or re-exposed to the everyday realities that Chamorus and other Micronesians face. At this last reading, however, I realized that it's not just a

Chamoru thing, or a Micronesian thing, and therefore, it's not just for us to deal with. There is a black cloth of death hovering over Oceania, a black cloth that conceals all the wrongs of the colonizers and conceals our small island nations and peoples to the extent that we appear to be nonexistent and thus disposable.

Haunani-Kay Trask states the following in terms of indigenous writers getting published, but which I also think is applicable to indigenous peoples writing and participating in spoken word poetry: "To us, it is a story of colonization and our resistance to it. Publishing for the indigenous writer, then, is not only an ambitious dream, as it is for most writers. *It is a necessary struggle against extinction*" (81, emphasis added). Through actively engaging in spoken word performance, Anghet and I are able to give voice to the silenced voices of many of our women, elders, children, men, to the people that we call mom, dad, sister, brother.

The spoken word performance also helps in continuing the Chamoru practice of oral traditions, which dates back to the time before the Spanish came. Anghet and I might not recite all of our poems in fino` Chamoru (Chamoru language), but our poetry is still very much Chamoru in their themes, their locations, their people, and their voice(s) and stories. Spoken word is especially important at this time of Chamoru history because of all the challenges that we continue to face. Our culture "depends on oral history for its transmission from generation to generation" (Muñoz 69). "I Kareran I Palábran Mâmi" has become part of this oral history.

Thoughts on the Talk Story Session

The spoken word is to relations between human beings what the hand is to relations between human beings and nature. The hand through tools mediates

between human beings and nature and forms the language of real life: spoken words mediate between human beings and form the language of speech.

(Thiong'o 14)

While our poetry readings have been very significant in opening up discussions on taboo issues within our culture, we never talked through these taboo issues or discussed the importance of poetry in the realities that we face, until the February reading. I've seen people cry, become upset, become curious, or even just change right before my eyes from having no clue (or not wanting to have a clue) to quickly gaining a better understanding as to what was happening to our islands and our peoples. Initiating dialogue at our most recent post-poetry reading event was critical.

The talk story session comprised of two groups, a Marianas group (those who call the Marianas their home) and the non-Marianas group (those who don't call the Marianas their home). Overall, I felt that the talk story session was very helpful, especially in terms of moving through the conversation that most of us never really have with each other. In the Marianas group, which Anghet and I both sat in, everyone agreed that poetry had a way of saying whatever we want in ways that we can't normally say things (Vince Laguaña). It is empowering. It is a "way of articulating ourselves" in a few words (Ricky Hernandez). It can be very nostalgic and remindful of the times our grandparents and parents would tell stories (Christopher Santos). It represents the strength of the Chamorus (Masae Kintaro of Belau). It is a way for us (Micronesians) to identify our culture and history (Innocenta Sound-Kikku of Chuuk).

It was quite evident that the talk story session was effective in discussing issues that we normally don't talk about. We had a Chamoru male in his 20's facilitate the talk

story session and a young Chamoru woman scribe. We first went around the group and introduced ourselves, where we came from, and why we attended the reading. After discussing the questions, it was unanimous that we all missed our homes and that we needed a space to talk, and that we didn't have too many chances to talk with each other here in Hawai'i, away from our homes.

In the non-Marianas group, Eri Oura was the facilitator, and Hillary Chen was the scribe. The talk story session allowed us to do exactly what we often become too busy to do: talk and listen to each other. It provided time and space for mediation and support. Where in past readings, people might have left feeling lonely, confused, and upset, the February reading and talk story dialogue allowed for people to feel at least a little less lonely, confused, and upset.

The Next Poetry Reading

Our next reading is slated for April 2010. We are planning to read the same poems we read at the last reading and to have a talk story session. However, we are looking into a different venue from the Campus Center Executive Dining Room; Hālau o Haumea is one option; Kokua Kalihi Valley is another (via Anghet's contacts). The sponsors for the last reading were the UH-Mānoa Center for Pacific Islands Studies program (CPIS), the UH Marianas Club (UHMC), and the Collective for Equality, Justice, and Empowerment (CEJE). For the upcoming reading, the tentative sponsors are CPIS and UHMC.

I think that we should prepare more for the next reading and not wait until the last minute to do things, such as reserve and look at the venue and practice our poetry. We also need to plan out the facilitated discussion a little more. I am aware that Anghet and I

agreed for the most part as to how the reading and talk story session was planned out. But there is one thing that I would like to look into further. For instance in the facilitated discussion, in the Marianas group, there were people who were not from the Marianas in the group. I think that this affects the way people within the group respond to things. Chamorus need their own space to talk, and I think the poetry reading is a good place to start.

Our Work is Part of a Larger Story

Struggle is the universal language underlying all speech and words of our history. Struggle. Struggle makes history. Struggle makes us. In struggle is our history, our language and our being. That struggle begins wherever we are; in whatever we do: then we become part of those millions whom Martin Carter once saw sleeping not to dream but dreaming to change the world. (Thiong`o 108)

“I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” is a contribution to the struggles of the Chamoru people, Micronesian people, Oceanic people, indigenous people, the people Anghet and I are part of. As we continue on in our work, we realize that our contributions may be small but, when combined with the efforts of other indigenous sisters and brothers and allies, we become a lot closer to winning our struggles.

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**Reflections on “I Kareran I
Palåbran Måmi (The Journey of
Our Words)” (Part II):**

April 9, 2010

Reflections on “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi: The Journey of Our Words” (Part II):

April 9, 2010 Poetry Reading

Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

April 9, 2010 was the last “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” poetry reading Kisha and I hosted. It was the least stressful of all the readings, a no frill event, with light refreshments. It was also the most intimate group we hosted, with about 30 people, the majority being from the Mariana Islands.

I am writing this reflection in Puyallup. Puyallup is a tribe and the county in Washington state where my brother and his family live. It means generous, giving people. Guåhan means we have. Guåhan is home, our home, where we were raised to believe that we had everything we possibly needed, so long as the red, white, and bl[ew] is staked into our soil. Hawai`i is where I reside with my family. It means home to me, too. Living there has awakened me to the ancient wisdom of my people; it has reconnected me to my people, despite the fact that I live 4,000 miles away from physically touching Guåhan. The relevance of Puyallup, Guåhan, and Hawai`i to this reflection regards the fact that I am part of the diaspora, the central theme of this reflection. Below is how I have defined diaspora.

DI[e] AS[s]POR[ous]A

To die

To be the ass considered an ass

To be porous

To be permeable

“I Kareran I Palábran Mâmi” began exactly a year ago, the first Friday in May 2009, when Kisha and I decided to re-present the story of our people, through our eyes. . We decided to let people know that Chamoru people were not going to be silenced. We decided to let people know that we were complex human beings with experiences and words that would make their heads spin. And we did just that. It was not only dizzying for our audience; it was dizzying for me. Talking about human rights violations being perpetrated against us and our people, as we speak, as we write with every breath we take is dizzying.

“At this very second, my home island of Guåhan is being raped. Roads being bulldozed, paved over pipes fitted...signs reading

NO TRESPASSING...” -Hoppe-Cruz, forthcoming

That is what is dizzying. As we lead our lives, blow after blow comes at us. Maintaining objectivity, professionalism, and calm is the struggle for me. There is a rule in the profession of social work: You cannot be of help to others if you are fighting the same monster they are. Negotiating with this monster militarization, I am processing the trauma, the history retold and donning a new lens to view the world from while shaking off the old every day. It is exhausting.

Objectivity equates to a healthy distance between yourself and your research project. It is not possible to assume objectivity when speaking about the future of our children. It is this fact that has made my work—our work—difficult. As a research partner to Kisha, the irony is, in my opinion, that we have not had the heart to heart conversations regarding the themes of our work. We discuss the experience of oppression the travesty of the build up, but not our perceptions of each other as diaspora

and non-diaspora. Moments have come, and we politely shift away from conversations with no intention of hurting each other, and yet our work's mission is to stir up dialogue.

“It makes sense to see poetry as one of the places where the ravages of war- on the psyche, on the land on the culture -are called out and called into question.”

–Juliana Spahr

We must be able to call each other out and “have a critical understanding of some of the tools, the ones which make us feel uncomfortable, which we avoid, for which we have no easy response” (Smith 40). Diaspora is a dirty word, a reactionary identity label, an academic identity label. I would not share with my cousins back home, “I have been living away for so long. I’ve become part of the Chamoru diaspora.” But with few options and for the sake of reference, I will utilize the term diaspora. According to the *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*, diaspora is the dispersion of people, language, etc. The first documented diaspora occurred in 586-587 B.C. when the Jews were exiled to Babylon. Exiled meaning a forced removal from one’s homeland. I consider diaspora for Pacific peoples, for the people my poetry is about, displacement (Tafea Polamalu, personal communication). True, Pacific peoples have been voyaging and migrating for centuries. But, the concept of diaspora or migration shifts, in my opinion, is forced when the reasons for leaving one’s homeland is due to lack of health, economic, or educational opportunities.

In terms of my positionality, I am creating and writing from a place of humanity. I do not claim to be an authority on the experiences of a Micronesian woman from Chuuk or the Marshalls, nor do I claim authority on the experiences of a Chamoru woman, or that of the diaspora. My work aims to break down walls that have divided us and

dismantle language that places a value on one's identity such as "diaspora." For this purpose, I will continue to include Micronesia as part of the conversation, as part of my experience. I am writing as a Chamoru woman who is considered part of the Chamoru diaspora with rich experiences I wish to share as knowledge, as healing, as a step towards unity.

It has been exactly a year since Kisha and I began this "journey of our words." As we prepared for the final reading, we visited the room we had our first reading in. And I remembered the faces of friends, strangers, and mentors and the feeling of victory. Then, I did not understand what I had won, or the power of voice to transmit, to transform, and to empower. It was a small victory against the monsters: militarization and colonization. What possessed us? For a year, Kisha and I sat through Pacific Islands studies courses, with our home island mentioned but a couple of times. In fact, when mentioned, it was to say that Guåhan's culture is dying or that very little scholarly work was being produced. So we joined forces to say that our culture is not dying and that scholarly work is being produced. We also spoke often about how collaborating together would challenge western academia and research, which is why we forged ahead with our current portfolio project.

Re-presentation. Our research is very much about representation. That is what I saw in the faces of the men and women watching us, witnessing us as representatives of a shared experience. In their eyes, I saw an inkling of possibility, that there is more to dream of than joining the army; that they can be more than they can be outside of the army and in the halls of the academy.

“Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions [with the power to shift political and social conditions for the betterment of indigenous peoples]” (Smith 5). Through our work together, we are helping to begin shifting the social conditions of our people. In the last year, the opportunity to practice “research” in *anew* way has been a privilege of mine. I hesitate to say the “indigenous” way, because I am not quite sure what “indigenous research” looks like, but I know what it feels like: uncomfortable, messy, and at the same time, empowering. Research is one concept, but re-searching, taking that data and re-presenting to illustrate a more accurate picture of our experiences as people and as individuals makes it much more of a quagmire. I am new to research and have just begun re-searching, which often times leads me to question my readiness for the collaborative project I have begun with Kisha.

Communication in any relationship is key. The history we have learned together regarding the dispossession of our home island and the continued perpetration of injustice are fresh. As such, discussing concepts such as diaspora, insider/outsider, and research, as well as the themes of our poetry, is painful. This hesitancy on my part to probe more deeply with Kisha is a microcosm of the bigger picture we are battling. Or like everything in life, it is just a matter of lack of time. We as research partners have organized on the front lines of protests and poetry readings, but the content of our poems and substance of our articles are each our own. When I think back to our earlier vision of dismantling the concept of western research by co-authoring our MA portfolio, I didn’t envision how separate our pieces would be, and I struggle with that and wonder if we could have found a common theme in our poetry and written more collaboratively. Part

of the process and reflection for me has centered around what “collaboration” means for two indigenous women. It is what we strive for, and it is what we explain we are doing to others. How do we quantify and evaluate its effectiveness? Or have I become too disconnected, looking to quantify or explain something that may not be explainable?

Method is the approach to completing research. Methodology is discussion regarding theory and analysis of how research should progress (Smith 36). This distinction is important to our research project. In my opinion, we are merely touching the surface of research and, based on this final reading, see us at an exploratory stage, research as I have experienced through *I Kareran I Palâbran Mâmi*, is fluid. We are laying the foundation for further research and exploration with the use of narrative poetics. It has been stated in previous committee meetings that there have not been enough readings to quantify or to make conclusive statements regarding the impact of our work. Nonetheless, this is the beginning, a powerful documentation of the strength of oral tradition, re-presentation, and self-empowerment.

What was most difficult was sitting in the non-Marianas group during the talk story session. I still cannot articulate the anger I felt at being or feeling “separated” from the Marianas group. In the non-Marianas group, there was one haole male law student, two local haole undergraduate students, one doctoral student—who identified as a dual citizen of America and Puerto Rico—two Kanaka Maoli students, myself as a scribe, and Jessica Garlock as a second scribe. Our facilitator, a Kanaka Maoli woman, Shelly, asked an open-ended question: “How did the poetry reading make you feel?” The first to respond was the male law student, who posed a question to me, “Well, I don't understand the analogy your poem, “BRAVO,” is making?” I explained the analogy comparing the

testing of US nuclear weapons without consent of the people is rape. This beginning set the tone of the conversation, which is not to say that it was not enlightening, it was just difficult and underscores how much of a challenge poetry as resistance to the powers that be is. Being vulnerable to members of the community who are in power is described by Smith as one of the risks indigenous researchers and writers take. What we write and our actions may perpetrate further stereotypes, such as we are violent. Another criticism of male law student centered on our language, the use of foul language and how it takes away from the “depth” of our message. Comments on language accessibility were offered too. Ironically, some in our group believe that words in our language be explained at the end of the presentation and or context provided for each poem. This struck me as an issue of accessibility. Accessibility to our knowledge and privilege entitlement, that we should just provide translation struck me. My work uses limited Chamoru, while Kisha’s is far more integrated with Chamoru language. Lastly, the issue of being white in Hawai`i, but not the white people who perpetrated the injustices that Kanaka Maoli live with, or any other indigenous person came to the fore. Two individuals in our group shared how growing up in Hawai`i as haole and loving this place and knowing only what the culture of Hawai`i has is hard for them. They feel responsible and guilty and angry that they’ll never belong to this place...but they didn’t do anything wrong. It was about them and not about the issue of colonialism or the impact it has on the indigenous people of Hawai`i. They did not recognize their privilege, instead of discussing issues raised by the poems, they discussed how they are not at fault for those issues. A member of our group, a Kanaka Maoli shared with me his frustration at how the dialogue shifts from the issues to the individual and their issues. He also

commented on how our project valuable as it is, should explore ways to honor and address the interconnectedness of stories between Kanaka Maoli and Chamorus. How did we come to our consciousness regarding colonialism? If we had not moved to Hawai`i would we be at this level of analysis? Why are we not discussing that link that living in Hawai`i has brought about?

While this conversation is occurring, I am doing my best to be present. But, my heart hurts and longs to be with the Marianas group. The male law student laughed when we explained the groups would be separated and said, “I thought segregation ended decades ago?” Should we have specified this project to focus only on Marianas identified individuals or allowed only them to participate in the talk story? But what of the others and their experience regarding our work and the importance for all to process some of the disturbing content we share? Maybe we should have regrouped at the end? There was much to share with the whole group. The end result of this reading has forced me to look more closely and explore more deeply this phenomena of diaspora.

“Re-Search” by Anghet Hoppe-Cruz

I AM

from

redorange flamed skies

bleeding into

calm teal turquoise blue ocean.

i am

from typhoons

the bamboo, still standing.

i am

from

a culture lost
crying
redorange flamed tears
into
calm teal turquoise blue ocean.
i am
from
the grace of the iron wood trees.
The ifit tree
tâya`siha
is no more.
The spirit of the ifit tree
I AM.
i am
redorange flamed tears of many women.
and
calm teal turquoise blue laughter of even more.
I AM
on fire.
RE-SEARCHING.
The spirit of the ifit tree
in me.
RE-ROOTING.
redeorange flamed tears
in me.
calm teal turquoise blue waters
in me.
I AM
from
ISLAN GUÁHAN.

Reflections on “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi: The Journey of Our Words” (Part II):

April 9, 2010 Poetry Reading

Kisha Borja-Kicho`cho`

“Future Wall” by Kamiliani`anaoke`auinalamalanihuli Chiemi Ishiki-Kalahele

I give my knowledge
to the children I will bear
so they *know the truth*
and what to *do*

I give my pride
to the children I will bear
so they *know who they are*
and that they *can do it*

There are no children yet
but through the unity of our people
we can achieve our lands and sovereignty
I do this for the children I will bear.

Sa` Håfa Bidada-hit Este na “Project”? (Why Are We Doing This Project?)

“[...R]esearch can no longer be conducted with indigenous communities as if their views did not count or their lives did not matter” (Smith 9).

Recently, Anghet and I met to discuss exactly why we were pursuing our portfolio project. What was it that we were trying to do? After tossing ideas back and forth, we concluded that the following would be our purposes: decolonizing *and* healing through narrative poetics (emphasis added); continuing “kantan Chamorrta” through the use of narrative poetics, thus perpetuating the Chamoru culture and privileging the voices of Chamoru women; dialoguing in talk story sessions using narrative poetics as a starting point.

Originally, one of the purposes of the project was to explore the history of activism in Oceania. Realizing the massiveness in such an aim, our committee members suggested that we focus on more specific movements, such as Chamoru activism (Dr. Wesley-Smith) and female activist poets in Oceania (Dr. Goodyear-Ka`opua) such as Teresia Teaiwa, Sia Figiel, and Haunani-Kay Trask. I would say that we have been exploring such movements already, especially since we have become a part of them and also inspired by them. Perhaps we just need to articulate what we have explored and learned from these movements and the women who have written and spoken against the colonizers' grain.

On Almost Calling It Quits

“And it was then I knew that the healing/of all our wounds/is forgiveness/that permits a promise/of our return/at the end” (Walker 104).

With everything going on in our personal lives and with graduation and summer fast approaching, I began to wonder if it were still possible to pursue my collaborative work with Anghet. When I initially mentioned my thoughts to Anghet, she was not thrilled. Neither was I. It wasn't that I didn't want to pursue the project at all; of course I did. It just seemed a little more difficult, considering the lack of time and all that was going on.

After talking our situations through and after using my magical informal social work skills (obtained through my two-year friendship with Anghet), we decided that we weren't going to stop working on our project. In our minds, it was very possible to finish.

What I have learned once again during this collaborative process is how important it is to communicate with one's partner. Anghet and I (and others who know us well)

always tease each other that when working on this portfolio project and other activities and events, we are like a married couple. Our relationship is one that is always moving and changing, one that we always have to work at. Each of us can never tell how the other feels on any given day, what she is expecting, and how she will respond to the other's ideas. But one thing I can say is that what makes this collaborative process a good marriage, one that I actually want to be in, is that there is a lot of passion, love, and support not only for the work that we do, but also for each other. I'm not sure how many more times we might try to call this project off, but I know that we are both very determined to see that it is completed, somehow, sometime soon.

Anghet and I were talking recently about how competitive we were with each other, actually, how competitive we have *always* been with each other. We have also concluded that this has always been a healthy competition, the kind that is used more as a motivation rather than a jealous tendency to hinder each other's work. One Chamoru elder told us that many of our own people, Chamoru people, are very competitive with and jealous of others and are often too proud to help push others forward because they are selfish and unwilling to let anyone succeed more than them. Anghet and I know that this is not the kind of relationship we have. We commend each other for the work that we do (and will continue to do) and wish only the best for each other's future dreams and endeavors.

We are the daughters of Mother Earth [...] I give you my word that I shall continue to struggle for and with you, to think of and work for your well-being as women of color, constantly [...] To honor your beauty and to believe in you without reservation. I know, from experience, that you are good, and that the world is only made better by your presence. I love you. (Walker 107)

Thoughts on “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” (Friday, April 9, 2010)

“This dynamic oral tradition—although severely threatened by waves of colonial disruption, forced assimilation, and cultural homogenization—is being maintained and restored by persistent language keepers and cultural bearers throughout the world” (Nelson 4).

It’s been a few days now since last week’s “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” event. The reading went really well, as did the talk story session. We had an intimate crowd of around 30-35 people, several of whom had never attended our reading before. Amidst the crowd were people of all ages, one of whom was our Chamoru elder, Dr. Faye Untalan (better known to us as Auntie Faye). We’d invited her several times before to our other readings, but she could never make it. When I saw her at the reading, I had to blink a few times before realizing that she was actually there. This was the first time Anghet and I had a Chamoru elder in the audience since we started “I Kareran I Palåbran Måmi” almost a year ago. *What would Auntie Faye think about our poems, profanity, obscenities, and all? Would she be proud or would she be disappointed and disgusted by these two “foul-mouthed” [we’ve been called this before] Chamoru women? What would she have to say?* Compared to the last reading, I wasn’t too nervous, but seeing Auntie Faye made me reconsider my lack of nerves and, for a moment, I contemplated what to read that night, whether I should read my profane pieces or my more subtle, less angry pieces. If I chose the latter, then I would have been playing it safe and would have been compromising my beliefs and what I stand for. Lately I’ve realized that I can no longer shield myself from what others think or are going to think about me and the work that I do. This is not to say that I completely do not care what others think about me and my work or that I do not critically think of what I say and the actions that I take.

For the most part, Anghet and I read most of the poems we read at the last reading. But I did read a couple of new ones. My new poems included “Re-membering My Past” and “Nu i Che`lu-hu Palao`an” (“For My Sister,” which I dedicated to Anghet and my other sisters in the struggle).

After the reading, Auntie Faye came up to Anghet and me and commended us for a great reading. She was very supportive and suggested that she meet with us to talk about our poetry, some thoughts she had about some of them, and the challenges of reading this kind of poetry at home on Guåhan, which is not keen on profanity, obscenities, and talks of decolonization, demilitarization, and anti-tourism. We have yet to meet with Auntie Faye, but it was wonderful that she came and supported us at the reading and offered her time to us. We can only hope that our meeting with her goes well and that we aren’t scrutinized for telling the truths.

The Talk Story Session

“To assume in advance that people will not be interested in, or will not understand, the deeper issues is arrogant. The challenge always is to demystify, to decolonize” (Smith 16).

At this past poetry reading, Anghet and I provided reaction forms and the space for talk story sessions. We used these two forms of communication to determine how useful and effective the poetry reading, as a learning, decolonizing, and healing process. Overall, we received a lot of positive feedback and engaged in very much needed dialogue.

In terms of the talk story session, I once again sat in the Marianas group (comprised of those who call the Marianas home), while Anghet sat in the non-Marianas group (comprised of those who do not call the Marianas home). There was one facilitator

in each group: Chris Santos, the Chamoru man who facilitated at the last talk story session, in the Marianas group, and Shelley Muneoka, a young Kanaka Maoli woman, facilitated in the non-Marianas group. As opposed to the last talk story session where there was only one scribe in each group, at this last talk story, there were two in each group, which included Anghet and me. By having two scribes, Anghet and I were attempting to get a better, more complete sense of what was being discussed in the groups. We provided the discussion questions to the facilitators and scribes prior to the reading so that everyone could know what to expect. The questions included the following:

1. What did the poetry reading evoke for you?
2. How has the reading impacted you? (But in the Marianas group, Chris modified the question: Can you share what's different about your perspective of your worldview of Chamorus, Pacific Islanders, the issues that we face?)
3. Is poetry an appropriate medium for Pacific Islander cultures/Chamoru culture/your culture to discuss taboo subjects?
4. Is it an empowering process? How?
5. What did you learn?

We adopted part of the `Aelike process and had the two groups sit in circles and had everyone speak one at a time after a question was asked. No one could talk again until the circle was completed, so everyone could have a chance to speak. The facilitator guided the group.

In the Marianas group itself, there were twelve people, most of whom had connections to Guåhan and some of whom had connections to Sa`ipan. Except for one young woman, everyone was Chamoru (as opposed to the last talk story session when there were non-Chamorus in the group). There was also one young Chamoru man (about 18 or so) who was raised in Maui. He really seemed to enjoy the reading and the talk story session.

The overall responses in the Marianas group, regarding the poetry and the effectiveness and usefulness of poetry in talking about issues Chamorus normally do not talk about, were very positive. One Chamoru woman said that the poetry was an “eye-opener...definitely...I was on the edge of my seat really wanting to listen.” Another stated, “You walk away a little more educated” every time. A Chamoru man said, “It’s good to see friends get the word out.” The young man raised in Maui realized the biggest thing: the oppression and colonization of the Marianas; he never “realized how bad it was.” Another young woman said, “Everything I think, they write about and say.”

I have realized that in trying to gauge the success of our poetry readings, the usefulness of poetry in raising issues that more often than not go un-raised, it is really both the poems and the talk story sessions that help with the processes of raising awareness, decolonizing, and healing, looking at each other and communicating how we truly feel about who we are, where we come from, and the devastating atrocities that our Chamoru people, indigenous peoples in general, have been forced to suffer from and live through.

Moreover, there were a couple of things that could be improved in regards to the talk story session. One thing that Anghet and I could look into if we had more time is the organization of the talk story groups. As mentioned earlier, for this reading and the one prior, we divided the audience into two groups, the Marianas group and the non-Marianas group. Within the Marianas group, not every person was Chamoru, and I think this is something we could try to make possible at a future reading; there could be a Chamoru group and non-Chamoru group who call the Marianas their home. This would allow for a time and space for the indigenous community which Anghet and I come from to discuss

issues about and relating to Chamorus ourselves. It has also been brought to our attention that the non-Marianas group could also be altered, especially since there is a mixture of indigenous peoples and, for instance, white Americans from the US continent. This is problematic, especially because people in the group not only have different viewpoints and experiences but they also come from very different cultural and environmental backgrounds (some people are Kanaka Maoli from Hawai`i while others are settlers from the US continent, other Pacific Islands, and other countries). These differences can and already have weighed heavily on the conversations that occur within the non-Marianas group.

Another thing that we could improve does not have to do with the actual talk story session itself but the maintenance and continuation of the conversations (and the relationships) that come about during the session. There are various topics, questions, and debated issues that stem from the poetry reading and the talk story. It would be an improvement to see our conversations through to action.

On Becoming Human/People Again: The endangered are tired of being in danger.

“To create something new through that process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness” (Smith 105).

Colonization is a dehumanizing process; it’s necessary for us to decolonize in every possible way so that we can become people again. Part of “recreating our humanness” comes from writing poetry, writing our histories, writing ourselves into these poems and stories, and sharing them with others, people who do not know or people who may think they know but really know nothing at all.

When I say “our” and “we,” I am referring to Chamorus and all other indigenous peoples who have become dehumanized. Not that I am speaking for every Chamoru,

Pacific Islander, or other indigenous person, but rather I am speaking for myself and other Chamorus and indigenous peoples that might relate to me or share similar stories. I am a Chamoru daughter, born and raised on Guåhan, a second-generation post-WWII child, the first in my family to attend college, and a product of the public high school system. I am also part of a growing number of Chamoru poets. In the work that I do as an activist and a poet (which to me is one in the same thing), I always put my love for my people and my island at the center, for it is they who motivate me to keep fighting. People always ask me how I came to do the work that I do and, when I think about it, I am actually very young compared to the Chamoru movement to decolonize, to gain the right to self-determination, to get back what belongs to the Chamorus. Though I've been working with others (Chamorus and allies) to raise awareness about the military buildup in the Marianas and Okinawa, to protest the buildup and all other forms of US military violence and occupation, and to promote sovereignty for occupied nations and peoples over the past few years, and writing poetry since I was ten, I am still new to this line of resistance work. However, I know that my family raised me well, to see that when things are not right, they should be made so.

It is time for all of us to stop being treated like animals and to stop hating ourselves and to start reclaiming who and what we are, not in the terms of the colonized and the colonizer, but rather in the terms of the indigenous. The colonizer has viewed indigenous peoples and the ways in which we live(d) very negatively: “[T]hey were not fully human, they were not civilized enough to have systems, they were not literate, their languages and modes of thought were inadequate” (Memmi, as qtd. in Smith 28).

I strongly believe that these poetry readings Anghet and I host and perform are part of this re-humanizing process. This is not to say that we viewed ourselves as non-humans but instead signified our reaffirmation and reclamation of ourselves.

“Reclaiming a voice in this context has also been about reclaiming, reconnecting, and reordering those ways of knowing which were submerged, hidden or driven underground” (Smith 69). Gone are the days when the colonizer ruled everyone and everything. If we could at least be free in our minds, if we could at least remember that when stripped of our colors and identities, we are all the same, then perhaps we can all become human[e] again.

I am a Warrior. She is a Warrior. We are Warriors.

“I am a writer who has inherited two traditions, one colonial, the other resistant” (Trask, “Writing in Captivity,” 17).

Most of my poetry addresses the domination of the US over the Marianas, namely Guåhan, and the Chamoru people. It is this domination that I speak out against and that I fight against every day. If, for now, all I have are my words to use as ammunition against imposed injustices and against the colonizer, then I will gear up for battle and fight with what I got. “Isao-ña i tumungo` ya ha sedi ki ayo i mismo umaisague hao.” (“Greater is the fault of one who knows and allows the injustice upon oneself.”) (Castro 16). I refuse to accept that my people are being treated unjustly and inhumanely and are just barely living. Yet how can we openly talk about issues such as the military buildup and demilitarization when majority of our family members serve active duty in the military, are married into the military, or are employed as civil workers at Naval Station? How can Chamorus of today regain the ways of thinking and doing that our ancestors had?

How can Chamoru women in particular, through women's organizations, the Chamoru language, and education, take appropriate actions to move our people forward? Do Chamorus in general envision positive futures for their children, free of colonialism and violence, where food, economic, and political sovereignty become fulfilled? How will the future generations interpret the collective actions of my generation? All of these questions are crucial to think about and answer, because as warriors of our people, warriors of our lands, warriors of our histories, we are obligated to think and act on these issues.

and when no one else listens/and when no one else understand you/go back to the sea/and scream/(in silence)/and the mana of salt/will heal/over and over/as you begin y(our) journey/again/and again/and again... (Figiel 2)

I am a warrior. My sister Anghet is a warrior. We are warriors. For our people. For our culture. For the land and ocean that we come from. We must never give up, no matter how tired we are. We are warriors forever.

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Chapter Five

**Håyi i Famalao`an Chamoru? *Who
are Chamoru Women?***

I am a Chamoru Woman in the 21st Century

This poem is inspired by Kealoha's "Dichotomy: Hawaiian in the 21st Century," which I heard in 2006 at a Bamboo Ridge event at the UH-Mānoa Campus Center Ballroom (Kealoha's full name is Steven Kealohapau`ole Hong Ming Wong, and he is the founder of Hawai`iSlam, Youth Speaks Hawai`i, and First Thursdays; "Dichotomy" can be viewed at the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ex2NgCAq4bo>). "I am a Chamoru Woman in the 21st Century" is my statement against the US colonialism, militarism, and domination of my home island of Guåhan. This poem is a testament to all that Chamorus, Chamoru women in particular, have endured.

I am a Chamoru Woman in the 21st Century

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 living in this place called Hawai`i,
 thousands of miles away from this place I call
 Guåhan.
 Guåhan
 means “we have”
 good food
 love
 and
 curvy, sexy, beautiful women
 like
 me.

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 trying to find balance between change and continuity,
 attempting to stabilize what is left of my unstable
 memories
 memories which have triggered holes in my already traumatized soul,
 a soul suffocated by communities and hotels and “No Trespassing” signs,
 all of which attempt to disconnect us from the one thing
 we can still claim as ours.
 But how can we call ourselves, i manaotao tåno`,
 the people of the land,
 if we have been misplaced and displaced
 in our very own home?

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 screaming for America to release control of me,
 working to turn my peaceful palms
 into fists of stone,
 so that I can fight
 as a woman
 as a daughter,
 a protector of Guåhan.

I am a Chamoru woman in the 21st century,
 and like my brothers and sisters standing next to me,
 am a citizen of the U.S. of A.,
 not by choice but by force,
 where we are neither black nor white,
 but
 Brown.
 Brown-skinned beauties who get lumped
 into categories
 of Asian/Pacific Islander,
 Non-Micronesian.

In this country,
we are neither valid nor invalid.
We ARE the “gray area.”
We are illegitimate offspring
of great old, non-existing “Uncle Sam,”
yankee doodle fucking dandy,
who says we’re legit
ONLY
when he needs brown bodies to die for his shit.

Sauce and Me

I have lived away from home for so long, I did not realize how far I drifted from foods I love. Returning to the simple for me has been refreshing, but I still struggle with finding balance as a woman clinging to the home she left behind and the woman creating a space that honors the new and the old.

Sauce and Me

Hollandaise

Rich Complex

pleasing to my

palate.

Fina`dene`

Spicy Simple soothing to my

Soul

Nāna *dedicated to famalao`an Chamoru*

The Chamoru culture and society is matrilineal. Chamoru women are the matriarchs of the family and the household and are the major decision-makers. They are highly respected, especially by their children and grandchildren. Like the latte stones, which stood between 6 and 13 feet tall and were once the foundations of Chamorus' homes, Chamoru women are our lattes; they are the foundation and strength of the Chamoru people and culture.

Nāna

Like the tåsa and haligi of the ancient Chamoru latte stone
 so, too, does your body maintain the shape
 of the healthy Chamoru woman.
 With those full-figured hips
 features delivered
 through natural birth for generations
 and with those powerful arms
 reaching for the past calling on our mañaina
 you have remained strong throughout the years
 continuously inspire me to live my culture
 allow me to grow into a young Chamoru woman myself.
 Through you I have witnessed the persistence
 and endurance of my ancestors who never failed in constructing a latte.
 I gima taotao mo`na the house of the ancient people.
 Hågu i acho` latte-ku. You are my latte stone.

Red

Domestic violence is part of my story. As Kisha and I began the journey of our words, I reflected, re-membered the good and bad in my life. This experience has shaped me; in fact, it has built me into the strong woman I am. Our work strives to begin dialogue. This poem was written early on in Kisha's and my relationship. I dared not share it but thought twice as I reflected on the mission and purpose of our work: to break through the silence the many forms of silence that try the spirit of our women and our families. In Pacific Island communities, domestic violence is the unspoken until we are mourning the loss of life.

Red

My favorite color is

Red.

The color

a pool of blood turns after

breathing in fresh air.

I saw this

Red

For the first time

As he held a knife to her neck.

Red

Bleeding life

The Color of life

I don't think he meant to hurt her

As he held the knife to her neck.

"Baby girl, grab Daddy a towel".

I did

"Here daddy."

Red

Bleeding life

The Color of life

Soaking slowly

into a

SunShining

towel

Stained forever

Like me.

Red

Bleeding life

The Color of life

I don't think they, our

Fathers

meant to really hurt they, our

Mothers.

Or us.

My favorite color is

Red

Bleeding Life

The Color of Life

What's yours?

I could be Miss Guam Tourism

Criteria for the Miss Guam Tourism pageant inspired “I could be Miss Guam Tourism.” One day, I was reading the *Pacific Daily News* (Guåhan’s local newspaper) and the criteria for the pageant was listed in an article. As I read the desired requirements, I realized I didn’t meet most of them, leaving me unqualified to compete in the pageant. The poem speaks to the discriminatory criteria and addresses issues of identity and reclamation.

I could be Miss Guam Tourism

if I was 5'3"
and looked good in a bikini.

It doesn't matter
if I know Guåhan's culture and history,
how Chode Mart sells the crunchiest empañada on the island,
or that the best pickled mango can be found in the village of Talo`fo`fo`.

It doesn't matter
if I know that before one enters the jungle,
she must say, "Guella yan Guello"
to show respect for her ancestors.

It doesn't matter if I know that "going around the island" with family
means only going around the South.

And if I said that every Chamoru's childhood
included going to Ipao Beach and capturing dukduk crabs in the sand
and playing with the thickest black balåti,

it still wouldn't matter.

I'm not 5'3".
My dâgan can barely fit into a bikini.

BEWARE

Arriving in Hawai`i in 1997, at the young age of 18, it surprised me how often I was complimented on my English: “Your English is very good. Did you go [to] private school?” I was confused and wondered if I should take these comments as compliments or not. As a student in the Center for Pacific Islands Studies program, I was yet again astonishing people, mostly my Caucasian counterparts, with my English speaking abilities. And at the same time, exposure to decolonization framework and authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o inspired me to learn or attempt to use my language, fino` Chamoru. It was my people who were not impressed and laughed at my attempts to do so. So the contradictions and internal racism are woven into this poem.

BEWARE

surprised, you compliment my english

while my sister laughs at the perfection to which my tongue enunciates

and my elders laugh at my feeble attempts to speak in our native tongue.

what is it about my english that impresses you so?

hmmm...is it the color of my skin that caught you off guard?

did you not think it possible for a brown skinned woman to

art-iculate

post-ulate

to not be consumed by the colonizer's hate?

beware of the {micro} brown skinned woman

for we are broken, yet full of surprises.

I Manaotao Tāno`:
The People of the Land

Walking through Tomhom

Tomhom (also known as Tumon) was once the thriving fishing area of the Chamoru people. Along the shorelines of Tomhom, there were many latte stone dwellings. Within the last forty to fifty years, Tomhom has become over-developed by the tourism industry. The land where lattes once stood and where Chamorus buried their dead and the ocean from which Chamorus fished frequently to nourish their families, have all been devastated by tourism and replaced by cheapened, over-exoticized, over-exploited versions of Chamoru culture.

Walking through Tomhom

I had a dream last night.
 I was walking through the jungle,
 and as I passed each tree,
 they collapsed right beside me.
 The ground was dug up,
 the naked raw earth exposed.

How could this happen—
 to our tãno`
 to our mañaina
 to our manggãfa
 to us?

The big strong hãyon nunu
 the taotao mo`na hid in
 were no more.

I screamed,
 tears numbing my
 blood red face.

As I walked
 through the naked earth,
 my body weakened.

I fell to the ground,
 my palms touching
 the unfamiliar earth,
 my eyes searching
 for the old hãyon nunu,
 my ears open
 to the calling of our mañaina.

I didn't know this earth.
 I couldn't see the trees.
 But
 in the distance,
 I could hear:

“Munga ma`ãñao, hagã-hu.
 Munga ma`ãñao.
 Ningai`an na in dinguhao.”

“It's okay, our daughter.
 It's okay.
 We will never leave you.”

BRAVO for Heart & Soul

Bravo for the Marshallese: Regaining Control in a Post-Nuclear, Post-Colonial World by Holly Baker was an assigned reading for Researching Oceania. I was not aware of this event, despite the fact the Marshall Islands is a hop, skip, and jump away from Guåhan. As a woman, as a mother, as a human being, I was moved to tears. So I wrote about the sadness I felt. I wrote about the fear I would hold if I were directly impacted as women from the Marshall Islands have been. Rape is the analogy I am making to the use of the islands to test nuclear arms. My language is raw, like the wounds and hurt experienced by this community forsaken because as Henry Kissinger deemed, “There are only 90,000 people...who give a damn...” I do.

BRAVO for Heart & Soul

BRAVO is equivalent to

1000 Hiroshima

BOMBS BOMBS BOMBS

1000

Big Fat Dicks

Penetrating

Kwajalein Kwajalein Kwajalein

Shooting into her

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

Tainting Mother Earth

Kwajalein's descendants

Eat, Breathe, Drink, Swim

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

Tainting

The act of LOVE

She on top, in control

Released into her

Creamy

Sweet

Heart and Soul Man

BRAVO is equivalent to

1000

Hiroshima

BOMBS BOMBS BOMBS

1000

Big Fat Dicks

Penetrating Mother Earth

Kwajalein Kwajalein Kwajalein

Tainting Life

Contaminating her Daughters' Womb

Colorless

Tasteless

Heartless Sperm

Killing the fullness of love making

She Wants For Fears The

Creamy

Sweet

Heart and Soul Man

She bears the Fruit of Heart & Soul

Disfigured Disheartened Injustice

BRAVO

the equivalent of 1000 Hiroshima

BOMBS

BOMBSBOMBS

B

O

M

B

S

Mother Earth

With the recent hype of Earth Week and with this recent personal observation of seeing the whole Earth as our Mother and all of us humans as her children, I wrote this poem as a daughter, not just of Guåhan, the Marianas, Micronesia, and Oceania, but of the Earth. No matter what our culture and our location, we are all obligated to take care of Mother Earth. We must remember to reciprocate what she has given to us as her children.

Mother Earth

We're sorry for bombing you.
We're sorry for destroying you.
We're sorry for cutting you.
We're sorry for ruining you.
We're sorry for not taking care of you.
We're sorry for not sharing you.
We're sorry for abusing you.
We're sorry for hitting you.
We're sorry for spitting on you.
We're sorry for drilling you.
We're sorry for terrorizing you.
We're sorry for disobeying you.
We're sorry for selling you.
We're sorry for owning you.
We're sorry for making you private.
We're sorry for crushing you.
We're sorry for polluting you.
We're sorry for fighting over you.

We're sorry for forgetting you.
We're sorry for not appreciating you.

We're sorry
for not remembering
that
every day
should be
Mother Earth
Day.

Constructs of Disease

“Constructs of Disease” was inspired after reading Albert Wendt’s “Towards a New Oceania.”

It was inspired as I witnessed and learned of the many ways we are connected to our Polynesian and Melanesian sisters and brothers. That connection is a shared story of oppression and more importantly, a shared story of resiliency.

Constructs of Disease

1. the constructs of disease	the fading memory, forgotten
MICRO	traditional trade routes
mElA	fading connections
poly	seascapes, landscapes, constellations
nesia	thank god. akua. `aina.
sounds like a disease	for education
severing	'our way' and theirs
sisters.	for i am beginning to
brothers.	hear
severing a	see
sea of islands	feel
creating	the
invisible barriers	MICROmElApoly
nurturing the nesia	in me
am-nesia	i am beginning to RE-MEMEMBER

Composition of Opposition to Violence

On February 21, 2009, Dayne Jason Kuiokalani Carvalho took his life. He was found hanging in his bedroom. Dayne is a childhood friend of my husband, the second of his childhood friends to take their lives, both choosing rope over ocean. A surfer, a musician, a Hawaiian, a Pacific Islander.

Statistically, men are more at risk of completing suicide attempts. Statistically, Pacific Island men are more likely to attempt and succeed in taking their lives than any other ethnicity in the United States.

This poem is dedicated to our Oceanian men. It is for my son, Ethan Victor Na`inoia Hoppe-Cruz, who I hope will always choose the ocean...

Composition of Opposition to Violence

Dayne...have you ever gone walking over emerald green limu, glistening over stark black lava rock, sinking into an ocean of sapphire silencing thoughts of

suicide?

Cradled by the strength of the waves' current, placed onto the shore ALIVE, cleansed, you are ready for another sun scorching day of

life.

Guella yan guello, prima yan primu, che`lu-hu: why do our men of Oceania instead choose to tread on paved over earth, Bud Light in hand, feeding their thoughts of

suicide?

Choosing rope over

ocean.

Guella yan Guello, how can we teach them to hear your voices, to know you are alive within them present in the emerald green limu, the sapphire

ocean?

How can we teach them to ask for help, it's okay to ask for help, they are stronger for asking for help? HE would be alive if ONLY he asked for help.

Guella yan Guello, how can we teach them to return to walking over emerald green limu glistening over stark black lava rock sinking into sapphire ocean silencing their thoughts of

suicide?

To be cradled by the strength of the waves' current, placed onto the shore ALIVE, cleansed he will be ready for another sun scorching day of

life.

Guella yan Guello, ayuda i taotao, pot fabot, ekungok pot fabot.

So, Dayne, does music travel to the heavens for Jesus to hear? For God, ANY god?
And which sad story does he choose to pay attention to,

Whose bass guitar strumming does he compliment?

Ask him Dayne? Ask him how his brain does not explode from the many forms of music wafting up to the heavens floating through the constellations looking for consolation. Like our ancestors looking for land to call home. To ground themselves.

Ask him how his mind does not explode from the many tragic stories that he has to somehow bear witness to, to compartmentalize? because of violence

a week ago to date, you chose rope over ocean.

in that same week, a New York woman beheaded by her husband.

yesterday, Asa enjoying a saimin bowl in the parking lot of an Ewa restaurant stabbed to death.

in Iraq and Afghanistan and Darfur men women children dying. every 6 minutes a woman is beaten by her lover AND that is only in the United States of America.

because of violence

and here we are gathered tonight, to pay tribute to you. How could you, Dayne? Kalani says you left your music as they played your compositions. And the only thought running in my mind is a composition of opposition to this violence. You left your music with broken hearts, left to pick up the pieces, and they your best friends start by drinking. My only hope is that those shards are used to deliver music to be the testimony against the senseless violence that we all with our privilege are implicated in...in one way or another.

Dayne, so which sad story do the Gods listen to? What musical notes do they choose to inspire themselves to keep on keeping on?

And I wonder Dayne as the music wafts up to the sky what you think about your brothers, the men that would take the shirts off their backs for you...do you see the destruction you left. Do you see that they, like you, Bud Light in hand drown out their sorrows and not live them? Not feel them. So that tomorrow when they wake they will instead be kneeling and praying to a ceramic toilet bowl ringed by shit. Do you want to scream at them to stop? All of them, each one of them too drunk to feel what they really need to. So I stand there the entire evening alone cursing you my words floating through the heavens through the constellations looking for consolation like our ancestors looking for land to call home to ground themselves.

I wake this morning, my body heavy with worry Heavy with stories to the sound of rain. Pele, Lono, Jesus Christ, Allah, someone is crying. the music that swirled up throughout the night raining down on us, whole notes half notes three quarter notes. the tears your brothers cry inside. And I begin my composition to opposition of this violence this senseless violence because if i don't my mind will explode from the many stories i am forced to bear witness to compartmentalize. my words are the constellations from which i receive consolation like our ancestors looking for land to call home to ground me.

Re-membering Waikīkī

This poem was inspired by Dr. Lynette Cruz's (HPU) anthropology class, Impacts of Tourism on Local Culture and the book, *Waikīkī: A History of Forgetting and Remembering* by Gaye Chan and Andrea Feeser. I myself was a visitor to Waikīkī, to Kūhiō Avenue in particular. It is easy for one to get lost in the business and crowdedness of the area and to consequently not remember, re-member, or even think about the important, and even tragic, history of the place. Even when it's difficult, we should always acknowledge and remember where we are.

Re-memering Waikīkī

Concrete

jungle—

This is the view I have of Waikīkī
as I look beyond the balcony
of my high-rise condo.

Leahi:

severed in three
by some anonymous hotels.

Waikīkī:

place of “spouting waters”
disconnected from itself
by the Ala Wai.

Once part of a
flourishing ahupua`a,
now part of a multi-million dollar industry.

Roads have replaced streams,
concrete slabs—kalo fields
sunburnt bodies—Hawaiian royalty
and even the local Chinese farmers,
people who would brown, not red.

Staring at this concrete jungle,
my mind triggers thoughts—

of people once thriving but now dying,
people once living off the land and the sea
but now
displaced
replaced by haole tourists
wearing lei,
drinking mai tais,
tanning on the beach
in front of the Royal Hawaiian,
trying to feel like
Hawaiian royalty,
royalty who have become
pictures and paintings
hanging
on walls
and who have been remembered
by haole tourists,
not for what they did,
but for how ridiculously long
their names seem.

Looking at this concrete jungle,
I wonder:

If people driving down below
know this place of “spouting waters.”
If they remember that three years ago,
“spouting waters”
transformed into
raging waters,
flooding Kūhiō and Kalākaua,
its anger spreading,
seeking revenge on those of us
who forgot
to
Remember
that before this concrete jungle lived...
That before this concrete jungle,
lived the people of this land
and of this sea.
That before concrete,
there was swamp
and water,
and people.
Real people
of this place.
People who knew Leahi,

not Diamond Head.

Waikīkī as “spouting waters,”

not a tourist destination.

Wandering through this concrete jungle,
my heart breaks.

How could I forget to remember—

that roads have replaced streams

concrete slabs—kalo fields

sunburnt bodies—the bodies

of Hawaiians and even

the local Chinese farmers

People who would

brown

not

red?

Ginen Guinaiya: *With Love*

Sandals

This is a poem about love and loss. I was inspired to write this poem after the passing of my maternal grandfather in 2007, Juan Aquino Salas. My grandpa lived a life of spontaneity and no regrets. Perhaps this is what we should all do, especially when it comes to loving someone; we should love wholeheartedly.

Sandals

In 1976, Auntie Maria and Uncle Juan
 danced the cha cha for the first time.
 She was in her red shoes;
 he was in his yori.

Every Friday,
 even after their shoes wore out,
 Auntie Maria and Uncle Juan still danced.

Red shoes are dancing shoes.

But Uncle Juan died last week.
 People at the funeral,
 in their black clothes and their black shoes,
 couldn't stop crying over the man—
 who made them kadun mannok,
 taught them how to use a kamyu,
 and told them stories:
 how the two lovers jumped off the cliff,
 how Sirena turned into a mermaid,
 how the flame tree got its flames.

Red shoes are dancing shoes, not funeral shoes.

At the burial,
 Auntie Maria danced her way up
 to the casket
 in her red heels.
 They watched her
 take off her red heels
 and place them
 on top of the red roses
 that covered Uncle Juan's casket—

“Until we dance again,” she said,

“Hu guaiya hao.”

The Owl and the Cat

I insisted that my husband erect a clothes line for me. Partly to fulfill my obligation as a caretaker of mother earth, partly to recreate the feeling of home, my childhood home. On a beautiful sunny day, my son peeks his head out our back door while I am hanging laundry, and the following poem ensued. Happiness as a married woman is a give and take. I am happy if I can recreate spaces that feel like home. There is a part of me that may never feel wholly happy until I return to my childhood home, Guåhan. Ethan, my four year old, is the future of our people. He is keen. He knows that complete happiness is questionable for his mama, but he also knows that it is possible, despite the dangers.

The Owl and the Cat

Ethan: Momma are you happy

Me: Of course I am; why?

Ethan: ...Because I just wanted to know. Momma in that story, my picture, there lives a volcano. The owl and the cat are trying to pass it safely but it erupts hot lava

S

I

L

E

N

C

E

Me: What happens next?

Ethan: Somehow they are safe; dancing in the moonlight.

Nu i Che`lu-hu Palao`an

Anghet and I have been through so much, both as sisters and as collaborative thesis partners. We have had our moments of disagreement and our moments of hardcore, fall-off-the-chair, funny moments. Through it all, we accomplished more than we could have ever dreamt possible: four poetry readings, Fight for Guåhan (an organization that fights for what Chamorus have and works to reclaim what was taken), and now, this thesis portfolio. This poem is for my sister, for our “sistership.”

Nu i Che`lu-hu Palao`an

Like the two lovers,
 the sisters tied their hair
 and together
 they jumped off
 Puntan Dos Amantes
 into the tâsi,
 cleansing themselves
 of all
 the pain,
 mistrust,
 hurtful words,
 awkward moments
 of silence.

In this ocean,
 the ocean of their Mother,
 they immerse themselves
 regaining strength,

Loving each other all over again.

Together
 their hair still connected,
 they rise quickly
 through the water
 like dolphins
 and jump
 into the air of their Mother.

Landing back in the ocean,
 the sisters
 hear
 the sâyan tâsi of their father:
 “It’s time to go back.
 Nânan Tâno` is calling for you.”

Their hair now separated,
 the sisters swim back
 to the land
 their Mother.

Mano`oppop
 Gi i inai, mane`ekungok in fino`-ña as Nânan Tâno`.

Laying their bodies to the sand,
they listen to the words of Nānan Tāno`.

“Fanmanaguaiya.
Fana`asi`e`.
Yan hassuyi mo`nana,
na en fanafa`maolek.”

“Love each other.
Forgive each other.
And always remember,
to take care
of each other.”

Occupied Nation

To the Peoples of Nations under US Occupation

After going on a demilitarization tour led by demilitarization activists Terri Keko`olani and Kyle Kajihiro for my Hawai`i Politics class in spring 2010, I wrote this poem. Seeing all of the fence lines and “no trespassing” signs on the drive to the west side of O`ahu was really difficult for me to digest. It reminded me of Guåhan. In thinking about US military presence around the world and how there are over 700 US bases in 130 countries, I wonder what it would be like when the fences and signs come down, when the US no longer occupies nations.

To the Peoples of Nations under US Occupation:

I come from a land,

a small island,
lined with fences
where my people
are used to looking
at the lands of our ancestors
through holes.

I come from a people,

a small people,
lined with wrinkles
deeply entrenched canyons
displayed on their faces,
each red vein in their bloodshot eyes
leading to a time
of death
struggle

War.

I come from a home,

a small home,
lined with love
and hope
and strength
gifted to me by i manggafã-ku
my family.

One day,
we will all be free.

Our nations
will no longer
be confined
by guns, fences, and national security.

But until then,
if ever we forget
why we're in our struggles,

there will be

“No Trespassing” signs
to remind us.

Disposable Humanity

Julian Aguon, Chamoru author, scholar, and activist wrote *What We Bury at Night*, an ethnography of the peoples of Micronesia, peoples whom the United States of America regards in Aguon's terms as "disposable humanity." In doing research, I reviewed countless heroic stories of the fallen heroes of Micronesia. In *The Insular Empire*, there is a clip where new recruits are pledging allegiance to the flag, and I thought to myself, *Can't you see the injustice?*, Thus, this poem was created, a spinoff of the United States of America's national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Disposable Humanity

"...Oh say can you see...
 by the dawn's early light
 what so proudly" you've done
 to a people
 once proud
 'disposable humanity'
 Oh say can you see
 reimbursements reparations are empty promises
 while we lie waiting for death to come
 Oh say can you see
 the many that wear the lens of oppression
 you've fashioned out of dependency
 they sing and honor YOUR Uncle Sam
 Oh say can you see
 disposable humanity
 life liberty and justice for all
 Oh say can you see
 disposable humanity
 dying singing

OH SAY CAN YOU SEE
 FROM THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT WHAT SO PROUDLY

WE HAILED FROM THE TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING?
 WHOSE BROAD STRIPES AND BRIGHT STARS THRU THE PERILOUS
 FIGHT,
 O'ER RAMPARTS WE WATCHED WERE SO GALLANTLY STREAMING
OH SAY DOES THAT STAR SPANGELD BANNER YET WAVE
 O'ER THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME
 OF... 'disposable humanity'

Letter to Miss Seleen

Shannon Seleen is a haole elementary school teacher on Guåhan. In July 2009, she sued the Guam Department of Education for racial discrimination and sought out \$2 million dollars in damages. Every day, Chamorus are discriminated against in our own homeland when we are denied access to lands and beaches that the US claims to “own.” Where is our just compensation?

Letter to Miss Seleen

Dear Miss Seleen:
You say you were
harassed
discriminated against
spit on
for being white
in the land of the brown people?

What about us—
the dark-skinned,
dark-haired,
freckle-less faced
people
who belong to this land?

Where is our
“\$2 million dollars in damages”
for being
harassed
discriminated against
spit on
for over a hundred years
by your white people?

This is our home
but
every day
we are discriminated against
when we have to get special passes
to enter
Naval Station in Sumai
Naval Hospital in Tutuhan
Andersen in Yigu.

We are harassed
by your military
for trying to enter
our lands,
for trying to
get back
what is ours.

Guåhan is an
unincorporated territory,

“belonging” to the US
but not actually part
of the US

That’s discrimination.

We lose ourselves
to the white man’s military,
the white man’s diseases,
the white man’s politics,

All because we’re brown
on our island

But in a white man’s world.

Maj(y)amak (Broken)

In 1997, a sea of hālau stood erect on the lawn of the state capital, fighting for their gathering rights. [not finished] At the sound of an ipu, the sea of hālau began to undulate, and a chant rang out. I began to cry...to sob uncontrollably in public. It was a deep mournful wail. “It was the wail that only Hawaiian [indigenous] people know, harmony existing between the three aspects of language loss, of abuse” (Nainoa Thompson, 2010), but I did not know why I was so saddened. That was the beginning of my awakening to the ancient wisdom of my people, that we were broken.

Realizing the effort to extinguish my language as a tool of the colonizer to control us came much later, and helped me to articulate further why I was saddened that day. “Language carries culture...and culture carries particularly through orature and literature the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world...For a colonial child the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably *broken.*”

Maj(y)amak (Broken)

Part I

Guella yan Guello, what meaning do our words have if we cry to you in English?

Part II

Guâhu

si
chaggi i

fino`

Chamoru

Dispensa yo` ,

guâhu

si
fino`

Chamoru

si
m

aj(y)
a

ma
k

I

am
trying to

speak
the language of the Chamoru people

Forgive me,

My

Chamoru
is

br

o
k e

n

Dear “Uncle Sam”

Since 1898, “Uncle Sam” has represented the freedom and justice “gifted” to the Chamorus by the Americans. He symbolizes a better, happier time after World War II and all the good that has come from being a colony of the US. On Guåhan, we follow the American-style education system. Consequently, we study a lot about the US—its presidents, its history, and its map. I remember that by the time I was 10, I could recite all the states and capitals and the US presidents in the order of the terms they served. This is my letter to “Uncle Sam.”

Dear “Uncle Sam,”

Which star or stripe represents my island?

Why can't I find my island on your map?

Why can't Chamorus
vote for President
as residents
of Guåhan?

Why does our congresswoman just sit in your House,
looking pretty,
only *writing* about what
she wish she could say?

Why does our flag
fly alongside the red flag with the big yellow M,
below your red, white, and blue flag?

Why can't I speak *my* language,
but I can speak *yours*?

“Uncle Sam”:

If we're so “American”

like you say we are,

then which star or stripe

represents *our* island?

p.s. How are you my uncle?

What's your family name?

Security's Whore

I have come to view the relationship with the United States of America and Guåhan as whore for security, not our people, but the United States of America. We should be lucky...that they are here for us, for our security, no? Better them than the Japanese...

Security's Whore

'i'm writing in captivity'
a daughter of colonialism
and
security's whore.

you gasp your thoughts filling the hazy air
times new roman font size 12.
obstructing my view of the sun
setting

a backdrop to the sulfur emitting power plant
gracing Nanakuli's landscape.

it's too late to inhale those thoughts
dirty.

life is in speech death is in speech.

let he or she

who hath not sinned cast the first stone

and as you genuflect towards that aged old pebble
smoothed by storms

don't choke on his cock rising up to cast judgment on me.

instead

enjoy the pregnant pause, ripe with possibilities of
change.

have you not sacrificed your soul for the next generations?

if not...

lucky you

white you

privileged you.

i am writing in captivity

a daughter of colonialism

and

security's whore.

my children will reap the fruits of sacrifice.

Re-Occupation Day (a.k.a. “Liberation Day”) *dedicated to Anghet Santos, who dubbed “Liberation Day” as “Re-Occupation Day”*

Post-WWII, Chamorus began celebrating what has come to be known as Liberation Day, in honor of the “freedom” that the US brought to the Chamorus of Guåhan. A mile of Marine Corps. Drive, commonly known as Marine Drive, Guåhan’s main road, is closed for the “Liberation Day” parade. People camp out on both sides of Marine Drive, along the parade course. In addition to the parade, there is a one-mile “Liberation” run, a grandstand, and a fireworks display and is perhaps the biggest event of the year. It is also one of the most insulting because as American flags wave in the wind, Chamorus are slapped with the red, white, and blue, left disillusioned by “freedom and justice for all.”

Re-Occupation Day (a.k.a. “Liberation Day”)

Every 21st of July,
 the people of Guåhan march in their red, white, and blue,
 thanking Uncle Sam and his men in uniform.

The Chamoru people were freed
 from over 300 years of forced Catholicism
 and forced last names,
 from bowing to Yokois
 and forced death marches,
 yet they continue to be enslaved
 by the SPAM-crazed golden arches,
 by drafts and recruitments,
 by “the land of the free.”

I tano` i taotao-hu pâ`go iyon-ñiha—

They took Sumai
 and used it for their military.
 They made us citizens
 but denied us the vote.
 They stole our language
 and made us speak English.

Our history books say that we’re free,
 that we’re making good money from tourism.

As I drive through Tomhom,
 my view of the ocean obstructed
 by the Outrigger and the Hyatt,
 I think of the stories Tåta used to tell me
 about the latte stone huts that once lined the ocean
 and how they were bulldozed
 to keep up with the times—

No trespassing signs now line the ocean.

Ti manmalulok i taotao-hu.

My people are not free.

Luluki Ham! *Free Us!*

Liberation

This poem emphasizes the importance of words and storytelling as well as our responsibility to take care of our words, to use them carefully, and to remember that they don't belong to us.

Parallel to this liberation of our words is the liberation of ourselves from our colonizers, from the difficult struggles, from imposed institutions and occupations. Until we are able to fully decolonize our homes and peoples, we will never be truly liberated.

Liberation

Many times
I feel my words dry up
like a river in drought
hiding themselves in the little hydration that's left
in the vein-like crevices of the land
where there is nothing to bother them
Abuse them
Overuse them
Exploit them.

But when this river fills itself back up,
my words will come out of the crevices
revealing themselves to the world
flowing through different lands
to different waters
sharing their stories
hoping other words will agree with them
and join them
follow them back
to the Ocean they belong.

In this Ocean,

no longer silenced

my words will be set free.

Puluwat Canoe, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia
July 28, 2009

As I worked on the first draft of my portfolio proposal on the 5th floor of the Hamilton Library, home to the Pacific Collection, a Micronesian security guard walked directly to the Puluwat Canoe, in the far corner of the library.

Puluwat Canoe, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia
July 28, 2009

My friend

I do not know your name

But I know your longing

Is it equal to mine?

Is it as painful?

What have you left behind?

I sit here drowning myself in research.

It brings me closer to my home, to a land

I have not set foot on in four years.

In this room painted in blue, I am transported back.

In this room symbol of the ocean that connects us.

My friend

I watch you, unknowingly.

In your UHM Security Guard uniform.

You walk straight towards her in the corner.

In silence you stand for what seems like an eternity to me.

Staring at Puluwat Canoe, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia, gifted by Rosemary Casey,
to the Pacific Collection

In your longing

do you wish to set sail back to home

deep blue ocean

to a land where your heart

rests?

Have you been away for as long as I?

How often do you trek up to the 5th Floor the Pacific Island Collection, to transport you home?

If only for a minute; that feels like an eternity.

Remembering my Past

As a result of being colonized by Spain for almost 400 years, most Chamorus are Catholic, very strong Catholics at that. It wasn't until the 1900s and 2000s that other religious denominations came to Guåhan and established their communities. In elementary school, I had to live two religious lives, one Catholic and the other Baptist. Looking back, it was nothing but chaos and confusion for an eleven-year old.

Remembering my Past

When I was eight,
my mom sent me to this school,
a baptist one,
(mind you, I was catholic)
and I'm still suffering from
Post-traumatic memory suppression.

Here's why.

This was the school song:

“Red is the color of my dear savior’s blood,
and white symbolizes purity.
Blue’s the royal color
that speaks of the land,
that he has created
for you and me.
These are the colors of the school I attend,
Harvest Christian Academy,
and I hold my banner high,
lift it up into the sky,
for I’m thankful to be in a Christian school.
Yes, I hold my banner high,
lift it up into the sky,
for I’m thankful to be in a Christian school.”

Today
Years after being exposed to the
“have-you-been-saved?-you-better-get-saved-or-you’re-going-to-die-and-go-to-hell” syndrome,
I’ve written my own song:

Red is the color my ancestors’ blood,
and white symbolizes the haole.
Blue’s the very color of our ocean
that the haole has taken
from you and me...

unless you have an ID.

These are the colors of America,
the country that won’t let us go,
so I wave my fist up high,
lift it up into the sky,
for I’m fighting against colonial rule.
Yes, I wave my fist up high,
lift it up into the sky,

for I'm fighting against
colonial
rule.

I know now
that the only thing
I need to be saved from
isn't satan or my sins.

I need to be saved
from
the memories I'm starting to remember.

I am Micronesian, Too

Witi Ihimara hosted a reading in spring 2009, and in his remarks he asked the audience, “What would your oceanic vein look like?” As part of the Chamoru diaspora, as a woman from the region of Micronesia, I have been challenged to own up to the divides that separate our people. This poem speaks to these divides.

I am Micronesian, Too

I AM MICRONESIAN TOO

I AM MICRONESIAN TOO

I AM MICRONESIAN.

With every racist remark, I choke.

“Those lazy Chamorus.”

“Those dumb Chuukese, Marshallese, Pohnpeians.”

“They are so violent, violent drunks.”

“Their women are easy, soft and round as pin cushions.”

Then there is US against US. Chamorus, the Micronesians in Denial.

They link together, interlocking,

a chain, heavy upon my neck,

strangling me.

At the intersection of Keeaumoku and 1350 S. King Street

I begin to gasp for air. Light fades out.

Sounds of my, our, ancestors

fade in-to my consciousness louder and louder

as I lose consciousness.

Sirena Singing

Likiep Laughing

Nan Madol Workers Building

Fouha Creating

Matâpang’s Spear Piercing

My Oceanic Vein bursts open.

My **blood** spilling over onto the intersection of
Keeaumoku and 1350 S. King Street
Breaking the links that poison me.
From me erupts
Spit Fire Hurling Dry Heaving Toxic Waste, Vomit
The color of Hate:
“Those lazy Chamorus”
“Those dumb Chuukese, Marshallese, Pohnpeians”
“Their women are easy, soft and round as pin cushions”
Then there is US against US. Chamorus the Micronesians in Denial.
I awake immobile, to find myself at Fena Lake.
I can see my house from here where I will one day return
to mow the overgrown yard.
The pungent smell of hate lies beside me. As

I RISE

A swarm of Fanihi approach me, a cloud of black.
They dive towards the toxic waste, devour it.
Disappearing into the heavens
extinct.
The voices of my unconscious conscience
ring loudly in my mind, echoing through the mountains of home,
Cross Island Road.
Reminding me,
Listen to your elders, to your mother, Sirena Sings.

Laughter is medicine, Likiep Laughs.

We were never simple beings, Pohnpeians build.

Do not forget from where you have come, Fouha chants.

Blessing the blessings of the church, Matâpang prays.

As they fade into the heavens with the Fanihi,

their voices become the rain, the torrential rain and wind,

a blessing upon

Islan Guåhan.

Raining the answer, my answer to “What would happen if you opened your Oceanic Vein?”

I AM MICRONESIAN TOO

I AM MICRONESIAN TOO

I AM MICRONESIAN.

Re-Search

“Research is a dirty word,” says Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Research is a dirty word until you cleanse yourself of it and re-search, applying the newfound knowledge towards the betterment of your people.

Re-Search

I AM

from

redorange flamed skies

bleeding into

calm tealurquoiseblue ocean.

i am

from typhoons

the bamboo, still standing.

i am

from

a culture *lost*

crying

redorange flamed tears

into

calm tealurquoiseblue ocean.

i am

from

the grace of the iron wood trees.

The ifit tree

tâya` siha

is no more.

The spirit of the ifit tree

I AM.

i am

redorange flamed tears of many women.

and

calm tealurquoiseblue laughter of even more.

I AM

on fire.

RE-SEARCHING.

The spirit of the ifit tree

in me.

RE-ROOTING.

redeorange flamed tears

in me.

calm tealurquoise blue waters

in me.

I AM

from

ISLAN GUÁHAN.

American He`e

Kaleikoa Kaeo first used the he`e (Hawaiian for octopus) as a metaphor to symbolize US military presence in Oceania and throughout the world. Hawai`i is often referred to as the head of the he`e because it houses the Pacific Command (PACOM), the main station of all US military decision-making in the Asia-Pacific regions. In order to successfully kill a he`e, one must bite between its eyes.

American He`e

The tentacles of this large creature
 are deadly
 grabbing hold of the smallest peoples
choking us
 so that we can't say anything
paralyzing us so that action becomes an idea
 rather than
 a reality.

Until we come together
 to bite between the eyes
 of this monstrous creature,
 it will continue to grab
 each and every one of us,
 disconnecting us from our homes,
 feeding off our blood so it can
 stay alive.

Our deaths allow for the he`e's survival.

But with our words of anger,
 eyes of pain,
 tongues of steel,
 and the strongest of our arms

Chamorus

Kanaka Maoli

Samoans

Puerto Ricans

Okinawans

Native Americans

can unify,
 sharpen our teeth,
 and bite
 the fuck
 out
 of
 the
 He`e.

My Name is Truth

This is the first poem I wrote in the spring of 2009. It is this poem that was the catalyst for my journey, our journey. It is this poem that revealed to me the power of words to connect, to re-connect to move people to a different consciousness.

My Name is Truth

My Name is Silence

I once saved Mommy's life when I was 6

I simply refused to leave her side as

Daddy

held a gun to her head.

My Name is Silence.

As a little boy I loved to play with my sister's dolls.

Until uncle ripped her out of my arms growling at my mommy,

"You want to raise a pussy?"

Today I am in love with a man.

So, what DOES that make me? A pussy...

My Name is Silence.

At 16 before the Japanese invasion we farmed our land.

At 3a.m. your Tata woke me in a drunken stupor.

He wanted me to march to Sasalaguan, hagâ-hu; it's like 6 miles from our house, to feed the karibao.

I refused as he stood over me, machete in hand.

I looked him square in the eye,

"You brought me into this world, you go ahead and take me out".

Tâta's machete fell from his hands as tears did from his eyes.

It lay by my feet all day as I laid in the fetal position.

My Name is Silence

I am a Man.

I am a Woman.

I once was a Child.

Look around; Open your eyes to the many Names of Silence

That take Form

Women who spread their legs like wings of love. Hoping for Love.

Proposition H8. Men to Men. Women to Women. Living Loving in Silence.

Slit after slit numbing the fact that the devil, loving uncle to all, sleeps with her, loving her the most at night.

Mother Earth bombed, Kwajalein, her descendants bear the fruit of deformed injustice.

Hit after hit he realizes not what he does as blood drips off her chin. In the back of his mind in his heart of heart his mommy's words replay "Hands are for loving not hurting." so does the sound of war waging against her the sound of love being beat into her by his own father.

The dumping of US nuclear waste off the Wai`anae Coast, the ocean our playground.

Child after child looking trying seeking wandering towards a life better than Tâta could give. Nâna. Mamma. Mommy. Daddy. Uncle. Auntie.

This World could give.

Silence takes the form of

Hate and Self-Hate.

My name WAS silence.

It is now Truth, and

I tell stories.

Truths that I once denied.

Truths that were buried from me, for my protection.

For Uncle Sam.

Truths I wish were not

MINE

YOURS

HIS

HERS

OURS

But

I embrace them as they cling to me like the salt ocean water glistening on my brown skin.

Truths that once spoken

can no longer be

IGNORED.

Concretized, I tell stories to heal.

I didn't know why at first.

And when I spoke my voice the

'ever changing color of the ocean'

opened a

floodgate of hopes and dreams

draped in red dirt

bleeding tears

singing an ocean of

HOPE ALOUD

All in the Name of Silence.

My name is Truth, and

I tell stories.

Continuing Our Journey

Continuing Our Journey

Part I.

Fragments of seashells
Broken but beautiful
Scattered but connected
Collected in the grains of sands
of their hands
i mañaina-ta

Part II.

Motioned by waves
caught in the chaos of storms
calmed by the stars and the moon
Fu`uña and Puntan
Guella and Guello
Nâna and Tâta

Part III.

“Ningai`an na in dinguhao.”
Beware, the Chamoru woman
has found a medicine for the nesia in Micronesia, the AM-nesia,
their words whispered in the wind

Part IV.

On the sands
through the skies
through the lands
on the seas
We will journey onward.