

**Warriors, at What Cost?**  
**American Samoa and the U.S. Military**

**Siniva Marie Bennett**  
**Master's Portfolio**  
**Center for Pacific Islands Studies**  
**May 26, 2009**

## Introduction

On November 7, 2007 an improvised explosive device in Arad Jabour, Iraq, killed Sgt. Lui Tumanuvao. The governor of American Samoa, Togiola Tulafono, stated in a press release, “It is my prayer that God grant us the peace to comfort all of our hearts on hearing of more sad news of the loss of another American Samoa soldier: U.S. Army Sergeant Lui Tumanuvao of Ili’ili... I would also like to extend our prayers and our support to the entire Tumanuvao, Etuale and Luafalemana families. American Samoa joins me, Mary, Lieutenant Governor Ipulasi and Mrs. Sunia to together share this time of great grief of another great soldier, a son, a husband, a father and a friend who put his life on the line to preserve our way of life.”<sup>1</sup> That November 2007, one of Sgt. Tumanuvao’s relatives was in my *Decolonizing the Pacific* class at the University of Hawaii. I asked my classmate how his cousin, the soldier’s wife, was coping. He said all she could ask was, why? At the time Sgt. Tumanuvao was the sixteenth Samoan to be killed in Iraq.

## In the Times

In the summer of 2005 an article by James Brooke ran in the *New York Times* entitled, “On Farthest U.S. Shores, Iraq is a way to dream.” Brooks wrote: “From Pago Pago in American Samoa to Yap in Micronesia, 4,000 miles to the west, Army recruiters are scouring the Pacific, looking for high school graduates to enlist at a time when the Iraq war is turning off many candidates in the States. The Army has found fertile ground

---

<sup>1</sup> “American Samoan Government.” *Office of the Governor, Press Release: Gov. Togiola offers sympathy on death of Sgt. Lui Tumanuvao in Iraq*. 8 November 2007. State of American Samoa. 12 February 2008. <http://americansamoa.gov/News/tumanuvao.htm>

in the poverty pockets of the Pacific.”<sup>2</sup> Brooks’s points to the poverty in the Pacific territories of the U.S. as the main impetus for continued high recruitment in the islands. He goes on to write, “Despite the casualties, poverty and patriotism fuel enlistments.” The catholic bishop in American Samoa is quoted, “I buried at least one myself, but it hasn’t stopped the number of recruits going in,” said the Rev. J. Quinn Weitzel, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Samoa-Pago Pago. “They still feel like they want to do something special for the United States.” Brooks’s article touches on some of the complicated and difficult circumstances surrounding military recruitment and enlistment in the U.S. territories.

Later that year, in December of 2005, an article in *The Nation* reported American Samoa had the highest per capita death rate in the Iraq war.<sup>3</sup> According to *The Nation*, “The death rate for U.S. residents serving in those conflicts is about 1 per 85,000 residents. Yet nine American Samoans already have died there — a rate of 1 in every 6,422 residents of the islands, according to a review of casualty and other records.”<sup>4</sup> The population of American Samoa numbers just under 70,000. According to *The Nation* the death rate for American Samoa is nearly fifteen times the national average. *The Nation* reported two other U.S. territories, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands, had the second and third highest per capita death rate in the Iraq War. Since 2005 the U.S. Virgin Islands has surpassed the C.N.M.I. with the second highest casualty rate.

---

<sup>2</sup> Brooke, James. “On Farthest U.S. Shores, Iraq is a Way to Dream.” New York Times 31 July 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Friedman, John S. “Iraq Index.” The Nation 19 December 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Scharnberg, Kirsten. “Young Samoans Have Little Choice but to Enlist.” Chicago Tribune 21 March 2007.

American Samoa's Congressman Eni Faleomavaega issued a press release on March 23, 2009 reporting on the statistical tracking of soldiers killed in the war done by USA Today.<sup>5</sup> The press release stated:

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that a recent report published in USA Today on the death rates for each state, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories since the start of the Iraq war shows American Samoa continuing to have the highest rate of deaths per 1-million populations in all of the United States. Published on March 18, 2009, the report (A Statistical profile of America's war dead in Iraq) shows American Samoa leading the United States with a death rate of 138.8 per 1-million population, more than twice that for U.S. Virgin Islands which has the second highest death rate of 54.6, and more than four times that for Vermont with a death rate of 32.2 – the highest among the 50 States and fourth highest overall.<sup>6</sup>

The Samoa Observer reports as of March 2009, seventeen Samoan soldiers have been killed in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Slightly varied numbers have been cited for the number of Samoans killed in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Radio New Zealand posits more than 20 soldiers of Samoan descent may have died as not all Samoan soldiers in the US military would reside in American Samoa.<sup>8</sup> “The exact number of soldiers from American Samoa killed

---

<sup>5</sup> “U.S. House of Representatives.” *Washington, D.C.—American Samoa Death Rate In the Iraq War is Highest Among all States and U.S. Territories*. 23 March 2009. U.S. House of Representatives. 10 April 2009. [http://www.house.gov/list/press/as00\\_faleomavaega/asdeathratehighestamongstates.html](http://www.house.gov/list/press/as00_faleomavaega/asdeathratehighestamongstates.html)

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. House of Representatives.” 2009.

<sup>7</sup> “Sunday Samoan.” *Am Samoa Tops Casualty List for US Troops in Iraq*. 27 March 2009. Samoa Observer. 13 April 2009. [http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php?view=article&id=6183%3Aam-samoa-tops&option=com\\_content&Itemid=66](http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php?view=article&id=6183%3Aam-samoa-tops&option=com_content&Itemid=66)

<sup>8</sup> “Radio New Zealand International.” *High Ranking American Samoan Soldier Dies in Iraq*. 29 June 2008. Radio New Zealand. 6 August 2008. <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=40604>

in the Iraq war is not known because not all soldiers record the territory as their home having entered the military from other states. But the number of fatalities with Samoan ancestry is believed to be more than 20.”<sup>9</sup> The number of Samoan soldiers who have been killed varies considering not every Samoan in the military resides in the territory. However, in a historical context Samoans in the U.S. trace their roots to Samoa, the eastern and western islands. Furthermore though most certainly some Samoans in the U.S. trace roots to the western islands of Samoa, American Samoa is the passageway in most cases to the U.S.

In another 2005 article, this one published in *USA Today*, Gregg Zoroya quotes American Samoa’s Congressman Faleomavaega, “This is one of the misconceptions that people have about Polynesians being laid-back, easygoing, or that they like to play their ukuleles under the palm trees,” says Delegate Eni Faleomavaega, who represents American Samoa in the U.S. Congress. “The fact is, the Polynesians are warriors.”<sup>10</sup> Zoroya goes on to elaborate, “But he and others agree that the benefits of joining the military — good pay, tuition for college and a chance to see the world — are what lure many. “Growing up in the islands, the only thing you know is your house and this little rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean,” says Army Sgt. Mark Time, 28, an Iraq veteran from American Samoa. “Job opportunities are really slim.”<sup>11</sup> Zoroya cites the low wages of all territories at below \$10,000 a year in comparison to a soldier’s income, which will “quickly rise to more than \$20,000 annually within a few years of enlistment.” Zoroya

---

<sup>9</sup> “Radio New Zealand.” 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Zoroya, Greg. “From Tiny Pacific Islands Comes Outsized Sacrifice.” *USA Today* 26 May 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Zoroya. 2005.

quotes a military recruiter stating, "When we tell them about the salary, their eyes just open wide."<sup>12</sup>

Zoroya highlights the pride felt in the territory's military service. He quotes Army Sgt. Mark Time, "I'm proud knowing that my island has played a part in the global war on terrorism," he says. "But it's also sad."<sup>13</sup> Zoroya's article elucidates some of the complicated historical perspectives (Islanders are warriors), as well as the social (fighting for freedom is a good thing) and economic (the military provides you with a good job) factors contributing to military enlistment in U.S. territories. Samoan migration, marked by the military with the Fitafita in the 1950s to the present day, has been a path to greater economic opportunities and it remains a stable choice.

While military recruiters have difficulty meeting quotas during the unpopular war in Iraq, American Samoa continues to affirm the engagement through recruits and rhetoric. However, it is not simply that Samoans are self-selected. Similar to other economically and racially marginalized groups in the rest of the country, Samoans in American Samoa are targeted by recruiters.<sup>14</sup> Understood in this way then the questions is less why are there so many recruits from American Samoa and more why are Samoans recruited so easily? It is no secret in the current war in Iraq recruitment has been a problem for the U.S. military. Recent articles have detailed some of the outcomes of this recruit shortage during this war. Recruiters are aware that the Pacific territories provide "fertile ground."<sup>15</sup> The "poverty pockets" of the nation are active military recruiting

---

<sup>12</sup> Zoroya. 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Zoroya. 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Brooke. 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Brooke. 2005.

grounds where young people are more inclined to enlist due to limited educational and employment opportunities.

*The New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert states it as such, “So here's a question: Should people who are being recruited into the armed forces be told the truth about the risks they are likely to face if they agree to sign up and put on a uniform?”<sup>16</sup> Herbert notes the deceptive nature of recruitment as necessary in an unpopular war. He goes on to say, “Right now, that is not happening. Recruiters desperate for warm bodies to be shipped to Iraq are prowling selected high schools and neighborhoods across the country with sales pitches that touch on everything but the possibility of being maimed or killed in combat.”<sup>17</sup> Despite the reality of war, recruiters avoid speaking about the war. High school students in U.S. territory’s are told going to war is only a possibility and that most would be able to work in offices and get money for college.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, many students in American Samoa can’t pass the ASVAB, the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery Test, thus limiting entry into the military to infantry status.<sup>19</sup> American Samoan’s are often consigned to infantry level positions not by choice, yet this fact is interpreted as indicative of a natural propensity. Field writes in *Island Business*, “One of the reasons Samoans are dying faster is a passion for the infantry and special forces.”<sup>20</sup> He goes on to quote American Samoa’s congressman, “They are gung-ho, they like that kind of stuff. Anything that gets them into the frontline.” Fields writes that Faleomavaega did admit, “that many of the soldiers who had little education and unable to make the

---

<sup>16</sup> Herbert, Bob. “Truth in Recruiting.” *New York Times* 22 August 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Herbert. 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Personal Communication, 17 November 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Scharnberg. 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Field, Michael. “Grieving the Dead Soldiers.” *Islands Business*. 16 June 2007.

officer corps found themselves as frontline grunts.”<sup>21</sup> Kristen Scharnberg noted in her Chicago Tribune article, “Most recruiting offices nationwide are allowed to grant ASVAB exemptions to about 4 percent of their enlistees. In American Samoa during fiscal 2006, some 38 percent of those who enlisted for active duty had scored below 31, as did 32 percent of those who enlisted for the Reserves. Language has something to do with it. In American Samoa, most people speak Samoan the majority of time; the ASVAB takers struggle to comprehend the test, administered only in English.”<sup>22</sup> Scharnberg’s observation belies two problems. First the obvious, recruiters are making large exceptions to grant admittance to Samoans in American Samoa and second the ability of Samoans to pass the ASVAB, a military test used to assess new recruits, is low. According to the Army “The raw score you obtained is also calculated as a Percentile Score. For example, if you scored in the 60th percentile then 40% of the candidates that were tested scored higher than you and 59% had scores that were lower than yours. This score is very important to a recruiter.”<sup>23</sup> The ASVAB minimum of 31 is a requirement to be at the thirty-first percentile. Scharnberg states in reference to American Samoa and the ASVAB, “Every time the test is administered, hundreds show up to take it. Routinely, well more than half fail to score 31, the minimum required to enlist.”<sup>24</sup> The challenge to meet the thirty-first percentile in American Samoa, to have a score better than thirty percent of those who took the test, belies a population that struggles to meet US standards but also suggests US standards may not be applicable.

---

<sup>21</sup> Field. 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Scharnberg. 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Army. “ASVAB”. [http://www.army.com/enlist/asvab\\_score.html](http://www.army.com/enlist/asvab_score.html). 2009

<sup>24</sup> Scharnberg. 2007.



Scharnberg notes that most people speak Samoan however she does not mention that schools in American Samoa teach in English. If Samoans are unable to pass the ASVAB how does this speak to education in American Samoa? The level of education being offered Samoans is not adequate to meet U.S. standards, the standards Samoans in the territory must contest with. While visiting my family in American Samoa in September of 2005 I witnessed some of the impediments young Samoans encounter gaining English literacy. My mother often would help my younger cousins with their homework. One of my cousins had to create sentences out of her spelling words. She had difficulty with a few of the words on the list such as corn and oats. My mother, an elementary school teacher in Oregon, asked her great-niece if she knew what oats were. She did not. My mother then asked her if she could make a sentence out of the word banana. This she could do. Her confidence was regained. Oats, as well as corn, had little context in my young cousin's world of Tutuila, banana however, was well within her scope of comprehension. I illustrate this anecdote as an example of how beginning in early education English comprehension is a challenge in American Samoa, whether it be because of curriculum not catered to students who speak another language outside of the school, or lack of teacher training or the combination thereof. Literacy begins in the earliest grades and is often more difficult as students get older. American Samoa is a part of the U.S. thus comparable education and the opportunity to function within national standards is imperative. As a note the low standard of education in American Samoa is not dissimilar to the "poverty pockets" throughout the rest of the country, primarily urban and rural areas.<sup>25</sup> American Samoa is an example of what isolation politically and economically amounts to in education and opportunity. The situation in American Samoa

---

<sup>25</sup> Field. 2007.

has specificities but it is not unique. Rather it is indicative of the problems of poverty in the U.S. at large.

American Samoa, though small in population represents an island homeland for most Samoans in the United States. The political separation between the western and eastern islands, made more real as time goes on, is still transcended by genealogy and family connecting Samoans in both Samoas. Bradd Shore writes in his essay *Globalization, the nation states and the question of "culture,"*

Today, Samoa, where I did my original fieldwork, is in fact not a place at all but a distributed network of historically linked artifacts, ideas, territories, people and institutions rather than a local entity. On the map, Samoa is two politically distinct groups of islands in the South Pacific, one an independent country and the other a territory of the United States. [v] But Samoa can also be found in Grey Lynn, New Zealand, in Compton, California, in Nanakuli, Hawaii and in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Samoans globally often find genealogy to transcend geography and nationality, whether one is an American or a Kiwi. Shore continues with his analysis:

And Samoa has taken its place in cyberspace as well, through internet sites such as Samoa Net, the Samoan Government Web Site, the website of Manu Samoa (the Samoan national Rugby Team) which features compilations of greetings from Samoans from all over the world, and numerous other internet locations bringing Samoa to the world. More archaically, a good deal of what passes for Samoan culture is also buried in the storage vaults of ethnographic museums in London,

Berlin, New York and Washington, D.C., as well as in numerous ethnographic accounts in scholarly books and films. And of course the same is true for most of what used to pass for the world's spatially bounded cultural units.<sup>26</sup>

The internet has added, expanded and redefined global culture. Taking from Shore's understanding of culture unbounded by space, "Warriors at What Cost" has been translated in website as an extension of this paper. The website distills much of the work in the paper as well as creating a space where a global audience, Samoan or not, can respond to this research as well as add their own thoughts. Making this project accessible through the internet changes the dynamic of the work. The audience who will now encounter and interact with the work has been increased countless fold. Creating a "Warriors at What Cost" website works to democratize this research. A list of the Samoan soldiers who have been killed in Iraq, including Sergeant Lui Tumanuvao, is also part of the website.

American Samoa's unfortunate statistic, the highest per capita deaths in the Iraq War, acts as entrée to begin a conversation and analysis of current circumstances in American Samoa. What is such a statistic predicated on? This analysis looks not to a single cause but to an understanding of a matrix of prevailing circumstances and structures in American Samoa and the United States. American Samoa's colonial relationship to the U.S. beginning with the US military coupled with minimal economic resources has resulted in a military prominence.

---

<sup>26</sup>Shore, Bradd. *Globalization, the nation states and the question of "culture."*  
[http://www.semioticon.com/frontline/bradd\\_shore.htm](http://www.semioticon.com/frontline/bradd_shore.htm)

In a historical context one can begin to understand how the islands known as American Samoa have been shaped by their relationship to the U.S. through colonization, a change from subsistence to cash economy and migration. The economic development of the territory, or the lack thereof, continues to shape migration and federal aid. American Samoa is reliant on the tuna industry and the two tuna canneries that house operations in Pago Pago. American Samoa's dependence on the U.S. financially, a result of colonial acquisition, leaves American Samoa at the debt of the U.S. Paul Sprickard writes in *Pacific Diaspora*:

Colonialism and quasicolonialism created the pathways for migration. They also created economic conditions in many island chains that encouraged people to migrate. Since the European and American intrusions, several island nations have entered the world economy as exporters of raw materials and agricultural products and as importers of cars, appliances, and other manufactured goods. In almost no case has the monetary reward of the exports matched the price of imports. In this situation, Pacific Island nations have had few ways to balance their economies: tourism and foreign aid are two. A third has been the export of people.<sup>27</sup>

One form of migration, or as Sprickard states the 'export of people,' in American Samoa has been the U.S. military.

---

<sup>27</sup> Sprickard, Paul; Rondilla, Joanne L.; Wright, Debbie H. eds. *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and across the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002. Page 8. Print.

American Samoa serves not as a centerpiece, nor an exception, but rather as an example of the lives of a group of people living in the globalized world. This paper situates the territory of American Samoa past, its place in the global market and current discourse surrounding its political state.

## Part 1: History



28

### U.S. Colonization

Beginning this analysis with an understanding of American Samoa's history contextualizes the present day, giving greater understanding to the relationship between American Samoa and the United States. The contemporary moment is but the newest episode in a long story of entanglement between the U.S. and American Samoa.

The history of colonization in American Samoa began with the influx of missionaries, whalers and the U.S Navy in the nineteenth century before cession to the

<sup>28</sup> "National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior." *National Park of American Samoa*. 19 December 2008. U.S. National Park Service. 7 January 2009. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/npsa>

United States in 1900.<sup>29</sup> At the time of cession the process of colonization, particularly Christianizing, was under way.<sup>30</sup> In *American Samoa, 100 years under the U.S. flag*, Robert Schaffer references a letter written by Commander Tilley, US Naval Commander, the first U.S. official to govern the eastern islands of American Samoa, with regard to the Christian transformation of Samoans in 1900, “On May 1<sup>st</sup> Tilley reported to the Navy Department that “The missionaries working in Tutuila and Manu’a have given me much help, especially those of the London Missionary Society... These devoted men have done a noble work, and the task of organizing a government is made easy by reason of their hard and patient labor among the natives. Practically all the natives of Manu’a and most of the natives on Tutuila are professing Christians.”<sup>31</sup> The ability to govern was easier in Tilley’s opinion because of the already prevailing norm of Christianity.

However, for the purposes of this analysis the history of American Samoa will be taken up at the point of cession in 1900, and not missionary contact. Beginning this historical sketch with U.S. colonization is not to undermine “precontact” history or minimize the European contact predating U.S. annexation. Rather to begin with the U.S. is to begin with the relationship that grounds this historical analysis, the colonial relationship between American Samoa and the United States. This relationship has restructured the economic, cultural and social realities of Samoans in American Samoa irrevocably.

---

<sup>29</sup> Lutali, A.P. *My Samoan Journey*. American Samoa: S.N. Publishing, 2001. Page 6. Print.

<sup>30</sup> Schaffer, Robert J. *American Samoa: 100 Years Under the United States Flag*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Island Heritage, 2000. Page 105. Print.

<sup>31</sup> Schaffer. 2000.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

#### Annexation: Eastern Samoa and Manu'a

American Samoa was acquired by the United States through the Treaty of Berlin when the United States, Germany and Great Britain divided the islands of Samoa in 1899.<sup>32</sup> Prior to this American Samoa entered into what was termed a Treaty of Friendship with the U.S. for the use of Pago Pago harbor. Employing the axiom of Manifest Destiny, divine westward expansion, the U.S. utilized the strategic waters of Pago Pago as a refueling station. At the time the U.S. was engaged in an imperial race with other European nations.<sup>33</sup> The U.S. had annexed Hawaii the previous year, 1898 and was also engaged in the Spanish American War in the Philippines. President McKinley regarded the annexation of Hawaii as such, "We need Hawaii just as much and

---

<sup>32</sup> Ahmad, Diana L. "Embracing Manifest Destiny: The Samoan Experience." *Journal of the West*. 45.2 (2006): 48-97. Print.

<sup>33</sup> Hempenstall, Peter. "Imperial maneuvers," *Tides of History*, 1994.



a good deal more than we did California.”<sup>34</sup> Expansion into the Pacific was seen as natural and necessary to the objectives of the United States.<sup>35</sup>

The eastern islands of Samoa were formally acquired by the United States in a 1900 Deed of Cession.<sup>36</sup> In 1899 Germany, Great Britain and the United States agreed upon a division of the islands with Germany controlling the western islands of Samoa and the U.S. controlling Tutuila and Aunu’u in the Treaty of Berlin.<sup>37</sup> Robert Schaffer surmises the division as such, “The people of Samoa, united as a culture for a millennia, now found themselves politically divided. For a brief period they had precariously held on to their political independence, but the international pressures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century made such independence impossible to maintain. The division of Samoa on the eve of the new century would have far reaching implications for both the people and the islands themselves.”<sup>38</sup> The islands of Manu’a, an independent kingdom separate from Samoa, east of Tutuila and Aunu’u were annexed four years later. The king of Manu’a, Tui Manu’a opposed the incorporation of his kingdom into the United States. The circumstances surrounding his acceptance of cession remain somewhat shrouded. In commemoration of one hundred years under U.S. control the American Samoa newspaper *Samoa News* published a historical outline of the history of Manu’a included was the following:

The Manu’a Islands held out for several years before its leaders signed the second Deed of Cession. However, there is a strong possibility that the Tui

---

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad. 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad. 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Ahmad. 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Shaffer. 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Shaffer. 2000.

Manu'a may have been threatened and coerced by the US Navy into signing the Deed of Cession of the Manu'a Islands. But so far, no records have surfaced to confirm that possibility, although the Tui Manu'a's resistance to the US Navy's authority is well-documented. It's what made him change his mind that remains murky to this day.<sup>39</sup>

The people of Manu'a attest to U.S. intimidation during this period recalling stories of American gunboats routinely circling the islands.<sup>40</sup> The article goes on to state:

There is a legend that the 'palagi' like to tell about the Tui Manu'a: that, upon signing the Deed of Cession for the Manu'a Islands, he had willingly and submissively offered his title as a gift to the President of the United States. The real story is this: after he reluctantly signed the Deed of Cession, the Tui Manu'a instructed the council with customary authority over the Tui Manu'a that the title must die with him because the fa'aSamoa (or rather the fa'aManu'a) does not permit any human authority higher than the Tui Manu'a.<sup>41</sup> By signing the Deed of Cession, he explained to the Council his titular authority will become subordinate to that of the President of the United States. In his eyes, that was not acceptable.<sup>42</sup> And the title did die with him. It was never offered to the United States as the

---

<sup>39</sup> "Samoa News." *Toasavili Manua Centennial Series*. 9 July 2004. Samoa News. 18 May 2007. <http://www.samoanews.com/Manu%27aSeries.2004/story4.html>

<sup>40</sup> Personal Communication. 2007.

<sup>41</sup> "Samoa News." *Toasavili Manua Centennial Series*. 9 July 2004. Samoa News. 18 May 2007. <http://www.samoanews.com/Manu%27aSeries.2004/story4.html>

<sup>42</sup> Samoa News. 2004.

popular legend would have it. He gave it back to the customary authority, reportedly on the condition that it never be bestowed again.<sup>43</sup>

The actions of the Tui Manu'a historicize a resistance often left out of the popular imagination of the U.S. acquisition of American Samoa. Manu'a is now generally understood as part of American Samoa although no treaty or contract exists binding Manu'a to Tutuila and Aunu'u.<sup>44</sup>

The cession signed as a deed, rather than a treaty holding constitutional power, limited the relationship of American Samoa to the U.S. government. American Samoa's Representative Faleomavaega states in his 1995 book *Navigating the Pacific* "But what has been a source of misinformation for 95 years is that in a Samoan context, this was understood to be a treaty of cession, rather than a deed of cession."<sup>45</sup> He highlights certain discrepancies that have left American Samoa at a disadvantage in its relationship with the United States beginning with the act of cession. Faleomavaega goes on to state, "In fact, in the Samoan version of these official documents, our chiefs used the term feagaiga, which means treaty, but in the English version of these documents, nowhere is the word "treaty" mentioned."<sup>46</sup> It was the Samoan people who were misinformed by the United States not vice versa. "Furthermore," Faleomavaega writes, "the term "deed" implies ownership of property and it certainly does not convey any sense of the rights and privileges of a sovereign people or nation."<sup>47</sup> American Samoa holds no legal sovereignty

---

<sup>43</sup> Samoa News. 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Faleomavaega, Eni Fa'auaa Hunkin. *Navigating the Future: a Samoan Perspective on U.S.-Pacific Relations*. KIN Publications, 1995. Pages 34-35. Print.

<sup>45</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>46</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

with the United States. The chiefs of American Samoa signed a contract they understood under false pretenses as a treaty. “American Samoa cannot afford to sit idly by and pretend that her lands and culture are protected under the present arrangement with the United States,” writes Faleomavaega, “because they are not.”<sup>48</sup> Samoans may occupy American Samoa but they hold no sovereignty over the territory. The legal and historical circumstances of Samoans and American Samoa are distinct but the context and resulting affects are not all together unique.

### National Status and Migration

The U.S. did not ratify the annexation of American Samoa until 1929.<sup>49</sup> However this did not mean American Samoans were fully incorporated into the nation in 1929. Samoans in American Samoa had the distinction of being U.S. nationals and continue to retain this distinction. Faleomavaega writes, in his book *Navigating the Pacific: A Samoan Perspective on U.S.-Pacific Relations*, regarding this distinction, “But residents of American Samoa were U.S. nationals, which by definition meant that they owed permanent allegiance to the United State, but were neither U.S. citizens or aliens.”<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

51

U.S. nationals submit sole allegiance to the United States but do not hold U.S. citizenship. U.S. nationals cannot vote for the president nor can they become President. Faleomavaega goes on to write “U.S. citizens and U.S. nationals residing in the U.S. territories are treated as second-class citizens. They cannot vote for the president of the United States, yet for the most part are subject to the duties typically associated with citizenship, included being drafted into the military. They are subject to taxation by the federal government but have no voting representation in Congress.”<sup>52</sup> The classification of Samoans as U.S. nationals was a deliberate racial distinction implemented to limit equal representation and quell internal American fear toward newly acquired territories. The University of Virginia Health Sciences historical collection on *Politics of the Spanish- American War* states:

---

<sup>51</sup> “Philadelphia Press, 1898.” *Ten Thousand Miles from Tip to Tip*. 12 April 2007. New York Public Library. 10 October 2007. <http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm>

<sup>52</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

Some feared that annexation required the American government to eventually accept these territories as full-fledged states with representatives in Washington. One prominent anti-imperialist remarked: “The prospect of the consequences which would follow the admission of the Spanish creoles and the negroes of West India islands and of the Malays and Tagals of the Philippines to participation in the conduct of our government is so alarming that you instinctively pause before taking the step.”<sup>53</sup>

The category of U.S. national was a specific delineation of allegiance to the nation but a denial of full citizenship to colonized peoples.

The U.S. incorporated groups of non-white peoples into the country by acquisition of their land and territory but did not believe citizenship should be afforded the natives. A particular strain of anti-imperialism at the time feared incorporation of the “savage peoples” from the Philippines to Cuba as equal citizens on the terms that the inclusion of other “colored races” would further sully the racial integrity of the United States. The delineation of U.S. national incorporated the “natives” while limiting their inclusion to something less than full citizens but with the guarantee of allegiance. Imperialists alleged the economic advantages of annexation and stressed America’s moral obligation to “civilize” the world. One imperialist senator declared: “God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No!...He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples.”<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> “Claude Moore Health Sciences.” *Politics of the Spanish-American War*. 5 March 2007. University of Virginia. 12 April 2007. <http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Claude Moore Health Sciences. 2007.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

55

## Navy Rule

Although, the U.S settler population never came in large numbers like they did in Hawai'i and the rest of the U.S., colonization occurred in the governmental and local ideology, shaped primarily by U.S. Navy rule in American Samoa until the 1951. The U.S. navy ruled American Samoa with impunity from 1900-1951, with no elected officials, only a succession of Navy appointed governors<sup>56</sup>. Commander Benjamin F. Tilley, American Samoa's first governor, decreed upon annexation, "The Governor, for

---

<sup>55</sup> "Philadelphia Press, 1898." *Uncle Sam*. 12 April 2007. New York Public Library. 10 October 2007. <http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm> "School Begins"

<sup>56</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

the time being is the head of the Government.”<sup>57</sup> “Fifty-one years,” writes Faleomavaega, “this self-made regulation governed Samoa’s political course with one appointed Naval Governor after another acting as the maker of all laws and all appointments with little regard for the will of the people.”<sup>58</sup> Various scholars dispute the impact of Navy rule in American Samoa under martial law. Some regard the intrusion of the U.S. Navy in a positive light downplaying the nature of the change.

American Samoa Governor Lutali regarded the beginning of the Second World War as a time of great change in the history of American Samoa. He writes in his memoir *My Samoan Journey*, “American Samoa was a quaint and quiet group of islands until 1941 when they began to undergo the type of economic development, political advances, and social changes that our people had never experienced before.”<sup>59</sup> He remarks later on in *My Samoan Journey*, “The war had a tremendous impact on everyone in Tutuila. Not only were the directions of the lives of many Samoans changed, but the entire course of American Samoa’s future took a dramatic turn as a result.”<sup>60</sup> American Samoa was not ravaged by war like other islands in Micronesia and Melanesia where battles were fought but, “American Samoa,” writes Lutali, “was no different from many other island groups in the South Pacific that experienced tremendous change as a result of World War II.”<sup>61</sup>

During World War II, American Samoa was transformed from a subsistence economy to a commercial economy. This new economic prosperity brought on by the activity of the war was short lived. The *Harvard Encyclopedia* entry on American Samoa states, “Before 1951 the American naval base in Pago Pago employed many

---

<sup>57</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Faleomavaega. 1995.

<sup>59</sup> Lutali 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Lutali. 2001.

<sup>61</sup> Lutali. 2001.



Samoans. When the base was shifted to Hawaii in 1951, the Samoan economic boom that had grown out of World War II and the naval presence came to a sudden halt. Left with the options of subsistence farming or, for those who had served with the fitafita guard, moving to Hawaii where they could enlist in the navy, many Samoans chose to emigrate.”<sup>62</sup> In the early 1950’s a large part of American Samoa’s work force, young men, migrated to Hawaii and the US mainland. Lutali writes in *My Samoan Journey* regarding the change brought about by the U.S. military after WWII, “They offered each Samoan Marine or Navy man the option of remaining in the military service as a career, or resign. Those who chose to remain in the military would be transferred to Hawaii and be absorbed into the regular branches of the service...In the years ahead, thousands of American Samoans would find their way to Hawaii and the U.S mainland because of this one military decision.”<sup>63</sup> John Connell states the general circumstances as such, ““In every case the structure of migration will continue to be essentially determined by political and economic forces in metropolitan nations.”<sup>64</sup>

The U.S. military as well the change in the economy during WWII shaped Samoan migration. “An increasingly unfavorable balance of trade,” states the *Harvard Encyclopedia*, “a sudden and severe drought, and unrealistically high expectations for a standard of material life all fueled the Samoans’ desire to migrate to Hawaii.”<sup>65</sup> Changes

---

<sup>62</sup> Thernstrom, Stephan, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Harvard University Press, 1980. Page 764.

<sup>63</sup> Lutali. 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Connell, John. “Pacific Island Voyagers in the Modern World.” *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and across the Pacific*. Spickard, Paul; Rondilla, Joanne L.; Wright, Debbie H. eds. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002. Pages 135-148. Print.

<sup>65</sup> Therstrom. 1980.

in personal expectations and desires amongst Samoans along with economic disparities spurred migration.

With migration to Hawaii, American Samoa entered into a new economy, reliant on migrant remittances. Remittances along with aid brought about an economic model referred to as MIRAB. Bertram and Watters delineate the MIRAB economic model:

The model as a whole and its elements (Mi---migration, R---remittances, A---aid financed, B---bureaucracy) directs attention to a relatively new and largely exogenous set of factors, which do not merely supplement onshore commodity production in the Islands but which have increasingly and decisively dominated the respective islands economies and largely determined their evolution.<sup>66</sup>

This economic form described by Bertram and Watters shapes the economic landscape of small islands not merely supplementing already existing economies but constituting the bulk of the economy. In regards to the shifts brought about locally by remittances John Connell states, “The resultant dependence on remittances has reinforced the belief of individuals, households, and states in the necessity for continued migration”.<sup>67</sup> In the case of American Samoa one half of the economy is based on the tuna industry and the other half can be understood through the MIRAB model along with the U.S. military. The military offers a perhaps more financially secure migration path making it an appealing option. The MIRAB model in the case of American Samoa must be elaborated on to

---

<sup>66</sup> Bertram, Geoffrey; Watters, Ray. “The MIRAB Process: Earlier Analysis in Context.” *Pacific Viewpoint*, 27.1 (1986): 47-59. Print.

<sup>67</sup> Connell, John. 2002

include the military. Military enlistment in American Samoa ought to be analyzed through an understanding of economics and migration.

*“However, push-pull factors do not adequately capture the effects of global labor and market changes that turned third world countries into sources of cheap nonwhite labor, exploitable raw materials and markets for western manufactured goods.”* <sup>68</sup>

## **Part 2: The Economy**

In order to understand American Samoa socially it is necessary to understand the economy of the most southern U.S. territory. Migration out of American Samoa is predicated on limited resources in the territory. An economic analysis situates the choices of Samoans in American Samoa in economic structures facilitating particular material conditions and possibilities. Short and long term economic possibilities shape the specific economic activity of the people of American Samoa.

The current economic base of American Samoa is shared between two sectors, United States federal financial aid and two tuna canneries. <sup>69</sup> The people of American Samoa are primarily employed by the American Samoa government, tuna canneries, and to a lesser extent the retail and service industry. <sup>70</sup> The Department of Labor states in 2004 government employment in American Samoa accounted for 5,124 jobs, a small margin greater than tuna cannery employment. The American Samoa government employs roughly forty-one percent of the workforce with an average hourly wage of seven dollars and ninety-nine cents an hour. <sup>71</sup> The local government receives most of its funding from federal financial aid. According to a 2008 study, *American Samoa's*

---

<sup>68</sup> Fa'aleava, Toeutu. *Fita'fita: Samoan landsmen in the United States Navy, 1900--1951*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. Page 10. Print.

<sup>69</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. *American Samoa's Economic Future and the Canning Industry*. Samoa: American Samoa Department of Commerce, 2008. Print.

<sup>70</sup> “U.S. Department of Labor.” *Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division*. 9 June 2007. American Samoa. 7 July 2007. <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/as/toc.htm>

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. 2007.

*Economic Future and the Canning Industry*, “The federal government has played an important role in American Samoa’s development. It provides a net injection of federal funds that represents the other one-half of American Samoa’s economic base. The federal government ranks very close to the canneries in importance to the American Samoa economy.”<sup>72</sup> Tuna processing generates the other half of the economy.

American Samoa’s fragile economy depends on two outside sources, the United States federal government and two privately owned tuna canneries. The private sector economy is reliant on two tuna canneries operating in Pago Pago Harbor, Tutuila, StarKist Samoa owned by the Korean company Dongwon as of June 2008 and COS Samoa owned by Chicken of the Sea International based in Bangkok.<sup>73</sup> The two canneries combined account for the world’s largest tuna processing plant.<sup>74</sup> On an island of 52 square miles the impact is pronounced. In 2003 American Samoa’s Congressman wrote in *Pacific Magazine*, “Now, 49 years later, American Samoa is home to the largest tuna cannery in the world and, since 1975 Chicken of the Sea and StarKist have exported billions of dollars worth of canned tuna from American Samoa to the United States. But our history with the industry has been tangled and our future is in dispute.”<sup>75</sup> Since 1954 American Samoa has been entangled with the tuna industry. American Samoa’s economic position remains precarious and will continue in this manner as long as the tuna industry remains the economic engine.

---

<sup>72</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Reuters. “Del Monte Sells Starkist Unit to S. Korean Company.” New York Times. 24 June 2008.

<sup>74</sup> Faleomavaega, Eni. “American Samoa’s Tuna Cannery Worries Untangling Tangled Nets.” Pacific Magazine 1 May 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

A study completed in February of 2008, *American Samoa's Economic Future and the Canning Industry*, prepared by Malcolm D. McPhee & Associates, painted a dire portrait of an economy in need of innovation and diversity.<sup>76</sup> The report, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, summarized the situation of American Samoa with the following, "Need for the Project: American Samoa's largest industry, the tuna canning industry, is in danger of serious decline or actual plant closures. Dramatic increases in American Samoa's minimum wage, the possible loss of federal corporate tax incentives, and reductions in international trade and investment barriers have all eroded the competitive position of the cannery industry in American Samoa."<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately increased wages as mandated by the U.S. federal minimum wage law spells potential economic devastation for American Samoa. The canneries sought American Samoa as a site for tuna not only because of its location but also because of cheap labor.<sup>78</sup>

Now, as American Samoa is ushered into wage parity with the rest of the United States the canneries are seeking larger profit potentials elsewhere. Without competitive structures, mainly a low wage labor force, American Samoa has little to offer corporate profit. According to *American Samoa's Economic Future and the Cannery Industry*:

The American Samoa economy faces an uncertain future. Much depends upon decisions made by the federal government with regard to the minimum wage, tax incentives and financial support. Even if the federal government continues its

---

<sup>76</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

<sup>77</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

current level of financial support, a doubling of American Samoa's minimum wage in a seven-year period could spell the end of the fish processing industry and a calamity for the economy. The economic devastation would be exacerbated by rising prices and costs from arbitrary increases in the minimum wage in other industries. Transportation, energy and utility costs would rise because the canneries would no longer be available to share those costs. Important as they are, these costs would pale in comparison with the job and income losses.<sup>79</sup>

Further complicating the potential economic fallout is the fact that a majority of American Samoa's cannery employees, roughly eighty percent, are "foreign born." Many of these "foreign born" workers are Samoans from the independent country of Samoa, many with close familial ties to American Samoa, or migrants from Tonga, an independent island nation south of Samoa.<sup>80</sup> The scale back of canneries would affect these other island countries economically reliant on migrant remittances.

The federal mandatory minimum wage increase has already affected some cannery employees. Following the 2007 passage of the wage increase Chicken of the Sea laid off 200 employees at COS Samoa. Chicken of the Sea senior vice president of operations Jim Davet stated he was "disappointed" in the wage hikes."<sup>81</sup> Davet went on to say, "We expect to work with Congressman Eni H. Faleomavaega and the U.S. government to establish programs that offset this new minimum wage bill and that will

---

<sup>79</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>80</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>81</sup>

make American Samoa competitive internationally<sup>82</sup> "These issues must be addressed rapidly," Davet said.<sup>83</sup> "We are concerned about the situation the new wage bill creates, and we cannot answer questions regarding future investment and employment until we know what Faleomavaega and the U.S. government will do to offset the negative aspects to the minimum wage and what the new long-term solution for American Samoa will be."<sup>84</sup> Davet continued with, "We can conduct the same operations for significantly less in other parts of the world, but we want to continue trying to do what's best for the people of American Samoa."<sup>85</sup> Chicken of the Sea vows to do what is best for the people of American Samoa while simultaneously stating larger potential profits elsewhere justify laying off 200 hundred employees. It doesn't take much insight to understand firing 200 hundred workers is incongruous with "what is best for the people of American Samoa."

The significance of the canneries in the current economic structure of American Samoa cannot be understated. The canneries employed 5,538 people as of 2002 compared with government employment at 4,187. The average cannery salary as listed by the 2008 study was \$8,920 dollars. The U.S. Department of Labor cites a 2004 survey indicating 4,738 people were employed with an average hourly pay of \$3.60 approximately \$7000 dollars a year. The largest proportion of the population, around thirty percent, earned

---

<sup>82</sup> Associated Press. "Rise in minimum wage sparks layoffs at cannery in American Samoa." Desert News (Salt Lake City). 11 June 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Associated Press. "Rise in minimum wage sparks layoffs at cannery in American Samoa." Desert News (Salt Lake City). 11 June 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Associated Press. "Rise in minimum wage sparks layoffs at cannery in American Samoa." Desert News (Salt Lake City). 11 June 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Associated Press. "Rise in minimum wage sparks layoffs at cannery in American Samoa." Desert News (Salt Lake City). 11 June 2007.



between \$3.25 and \$3.49 primarily through cannery employment.<sup>86</sup> The U.S. congressman from American Samoa, Faleomavaega, states it as such, “In brief, the economy of American Samoa is more than 85 percent dependent either directly or indirectly on the United States tuna and fish processing industries. Two canneries, Chicken of the Sea and StarKist, employ more than 5150 people or 74 percent of the workforce. American Samoa processes about 950 tons of tuna per day equivalent to 22,800 tons of tuna or 20.5 million cases per year.”<sup>87</sup> The structures that make American Samoa economically viable to fish processing are eroding while trade agreements make the incentives once specific to American Samoa available elsewhere. The tuna canneries remain in American Samoa because of low wages and federal incentives, primarily duty free treatment that exempts an average duty of twelve percent on tuna entering the U.S. from American Samoa. However, low wages elsewhere counteract the corporate incentives of duty free tuna making American Samoa less competitive.<sup>88</sup>

In 2003 the Andean Trade Preference Act was another potential threat to American Samoa’s sole industry. H.J. Heinz then parent company to StarKist Tuna sought to include tuna as a preferential product with limited applicable duties.<sup>89</sup> Certain products were set to receive duty free treatment entering the U.S. under the auspice of promoting drug free trade with Andean countries. Faleomavaega wrote in *Pacific Magazine* regarding the Andean Trade Preference Act,

---

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>88</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>89</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

“Had StarKist been successful in its effort to include canned tuna under the provisions of the ATPA, American Samoa would have faced massive unemployment and insurmountable financial difficulties.”<sup>90</sup>

American Samoa is at the whims of the market and currently American Samoa cannot compete. Congressman Faleomavaega writes regarding the intentions of Heinz in 2003, then parent company to StarKist, “More likely, I believe StarKist fought the matter for one reason and one reason only to displace US \$3.60 workers in American Samoa and exploit US \$.60 labor in Ecuador. I do not believe this is what free trade should be about and I am pleased that my colleagues agreed with me on this point and excluded canned tuna from ATPA. Parenthetically, I am pleased that Star Kist has since changed ownership and I am hopeful that our new corporate partner, Del Monte Foods will work with us to rebuild the heap of stones that has collapsed.”<sup>91</sup> The congressman’s sentiment is honorable but his analysis of free trade lacking. The actions of Heinz encapsulate the nature of free trade. Free trade is subject to market competition and American Samoa’s competitiveness is dwindling. Faleomavaega’s laments the exploitation of low-wage workers, but it is precisely this same low pay that once made American Samoa economically viable for tuna industries. Low wage labor drives free trade and eroding trade “barriers” facilitate the activities of corporations. American Samoa was once a more viable location for tuna industry prior to a federally mandated national minimum wage. The Heinz moment passed but there is little protecting American Samoa from future decisions of both canneries to opt for larger profits elsewhere. Had Heinz been successful they would have not only benefited from duty free status on tuna but also wage labor at

---

<sup>90</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>91</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

less than a dollar an hour. American Samoa cannot compete with the sixty to ninety cents an hour wages of Southeast Asia and South America.<sup>92</sup> The lobbying power of large corporations and decreasing barriers in free trade renders American Samoa nearly impotent, with a limited arsenal of negotiating power.

In August of 2007 Governor Togiola's office released a statement and photograph expressing the governor and the territory's gratitude to StarKist. The governor's office stated, "Gov. Togiola expressed his sincere thanks to StarKist Samoa and parent company Del Monte for the continued support to the American Samoa Government and for providing the many jobs on island." The photo captured The StarKist Samoa General Manager presenting the governor with the company's tax payment of 3 million dollars. An affirming relationship with the canneries may be the only pull American Samoa has.

In the study *American Samoa's Economic Future and the Canning Industry* an input- output analysis calculated the multiplier effect of cannery employment. The calculation approximates the cash benefit new industries inject into the surrounding area. In the case of American Samoa, McPhee and Associates used the model to analyze the preexisting economy, primarily the export of tuna and the impact of cannery closures. According to their report the canneries support 8,118 jobs, a distinction from those simply employed by the canneries.<sup>93</sup> Roughly, the canneries support one out of every two jobs in the territory.<sup>94</sup> The multiplier effect of the canneries, understood as the income spent within in local industry, accounts for 45.6 percent of all employment in American

---

<sup>92</sup>Weisman, Jonathan. "Minimum-Wage Bill Stirs Controversy in Pacific Islands." Washington Post. 9 January 2007.

<sup>93</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>94</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

Samoa. Thus, the consumer income of cannery employees is critical in maintaining other local businesses. This form of analysis based on export theory according to economist David W. Hughes contends, “That a region must earn income to survive by producing a good or service that the outside world will purchase.”<sup>95</sup>



96

Despite the canneries presence American Samoa remains economically impoverished. David Cohen, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior, stated in 2006, “American Samoa has the narrowest economic base” of the four U.S. territories.<sup>97</sup> American Samoa also has the lowest per capita income of any U.S. state or territory as well.

Representative Faleomavaega was successful in negotiating with his fellow Democrats in 2007, as American Samoa’s non-voting delegate in the House, and temporarily staving off the increase from reaching American Samoa. The Congressman, a Democrat, cited an inability to compete with low wages in the Philippines and elsewhere

---

<sup>95</sup> Hughes, David W. “Policy Uses of Economic Multiplier and Impact Analysis.” Choice Magazine. 6 February 2003.

<sup>96</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

<sup>97</sup> American Samoa Department of Labor. 2007.

as reason to withhold a federal minimum wage from American Samoa. Democrats supported Faleomavaega and excluded American Samoa.

The congressman had condemned the practices of the tuna industry in American Samoa. He writes in his own book, “I question how an \$11 billion corporation like Heinz can treat our people with such blatant disregard, handsomely profiting from the labor of our people, yet knowingly jeopardizing their health and safety. Conditions are so horrible that some workers have lost legs and fingers. Others have lost their hearing. Many have been exposed to lethal gases and blood-borne diseases that have cause bacteria to grown on their arms. All have been callously denied access to information to protect their basic right to health and safety. These deplorable working condition are without excuse and would not be tolerated anywhere in the Unites Sates.” Faleomavaega’s sentiments and the facts he outlines juxtaposed with his actions to maintain the tuna industry in American Samoa are troubling. “While I understand the changing economic conditions,” he writes, “we cannot and must not rely on a single economic base. This is capitalism at its worst.”<sup>98</sup> How is one to understand American Samoa’s leadership when the deplorable and inhuman conditions of the sole industry in the territory are maintained over and against the health and safety of the people? Are American Samoa’s options so small, or is the tuna industry an economic crutch allowing the territory to just get by without pushing for necessary change? American Samoa requires energies invested along with ingenuity to secure an economic future more diverse, and hopefully healthier than the present structure.

On February 22, 2008 Lt. Governor Ipulasi appeared before the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs giving an official statement of the adverse affects of the

---

<sup>98</sup> Faleomavaega. 2003.

minimum wage increase. Ipulasi outlined the statistics of the territory and the grave impact the increase would have on the territories economy. He stated the following in demonstrating his case to the committee,

“That legislation did call for an after-the-fact review of the consequences. The Department of Labor has now submitted that report to Congress and the report predicts bitter results for the people of American Samoa. For the level of economic development in the territory the Department illustrates the impact in a telling way. The Department states that the mandated wage increase is equivalent to raising the federal minimum wage to \$16.50 an hour in the states. The economic and political fall-out of such a drastic hike for the United States’ economy is obvious. The Territory must now contend with these very consequences.”<sup>99</sup>

With a federal minimum wage mandate in place American Samoa must address how it will keep the canneries when economic viability is available elsewhere through NAFTA, the WTO and the like. *American Samoa’s Economic Future and the Canning Industry* states, “US Other represents only 6.3 percent of the population but 12 percent of establishments, 16 percent of sales, 11 percent of payrolls, and 9 percent of employment. In other words, the share of economic activity of other US citizens is twice their share of the population.”<sup>100</sup> This statistical breakdown excludes the canneries. Including sales generated through the canneries “US Others” hold a staggering 63.7 percent of sales in American Samoa. The 2008 report goes on to state, “American Samoa has not

---

<sup>99</sup>“American Samoa, Office of the Governor.” *Press Release: Lt. Gov. Ipulasi appears at Insular Affairs Subcommittee Minimum Wage Field Hearing*. 22 February 2008. American Samoa. 16 July 2008. [http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage\\_hearing.htm](http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage_hearing.htm)

<sup>100</sup>McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

maintained its proportionate share of the Territory's private sector economy.”<sup>101</sup> Within American Samoa Samoans stand at an economic disadvantage while “US Others” control profits. The per capita income is the lowest in the nation. The EPA states:

The per capita income of American Samoa is only \$4,357, by far the lowest in the U.S., putting it in an economic tier similar to Botswana. 61% of residents live below the U.S. Poverty Line. American Samoa faces significant environmental and public health challenges:

- Almost 40% of residents do not have adequate indoor plumbing (piped water, a toilet or both)
- 17% have tested positive for leptospirosis, a serious waterborne disease associated with improperly managed pig waste.
- Heavy metals and other toxics in the inner portion of Pago Pago Harbor make fish unsafe to eat.<sup>102</sup>

The canneries have ushered in money for some namely, US Other, non-Samoans, while bringing about lasting environmental destruction. John Connell states in his article “Pacific Island Voyagers in the Modern World,” “Exploitation of the extensive fishing resources by developed nations had had limited benefit to the island-states.” As long as a single industry constitutes American Samoa's economic base dependency and insecurity will characterize the territory's economy.

---

<sup>101</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

<sup>102</sup>“United States Environmental Protection Agency.” *Territory of American Samoa*. 10 January 2009. EPA. 20 February 2009. <http://www.epa.gov.region09/islands/samoa.html>

As a note, since this section was complete Chicken of the Sea, owner of COS Samoa announced closure in May 2009 of their American Samoa cannery. The Associated Press reported on May 2, 2009:

One of American Samoa's two tuna canneries is closing in part due to minimum wage increases mandated by federal law. San Diego-based Chicken of the Sea International plans to shut down its COS Samoa Packing plant at the end of September. The cannery has more than 2,000 workers and is one of the territory's largest employers.

The impact on the economy will extend beyond the loss of jobs at the canneries, as the income of cannery workers will no longer be spent in local businesses.





103

Economic development is difficult in a small island, but for American Samoa economic control is also elusive. Though the poverty in American Samoa can be qualified by communal land, meaning land is owned through a family clan, and only those of Samoan descent of at least fifty percent, are entitled to land ownership. Thus, unlike other aboriginal peoples completely divested of land Samoans do have certain economic possibilities of working and controlling their own lands. However, migration out has meant there are fewer and fewer family members to sustain a subsistence or agricultural lifestyle. The reliance on a cash economy and imported goods dominates current consumption practices. Since the influx of the cash economy in the mid-twentieth century and WWII created jobs Samoans look to jobs off islands as providing needed

---

<sup>103</sup> McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. 2008.

income for themselves and their families. The U.S. military beginning with the Fitafita has met this need for many Samoans.

### Part 3: Nationalism and Ideology

The disproportionate number of American Samoa's casualties in the Iraq War has elicited varying levels of response from Samoans and others. In 2007 Sia Figiel, a Samoan novelist and poet, wrote a poem "A Lament in Time of War," a grief laden elegy to American Samoa's dead soldiers.

O how sad, how terribly sad this night is  
 At Pago Pago International Airport  
 Home of teary eyes  
 On stoic silences  
 Broken by the sound of police sirens  
 Military boots stomping  
 A trail of tears.<sup>104</sup>

Michael Field's article in *Islands Business*, "Grieving the Dead Soldiers," published Figiel's poem along with a synopsis of American Samoa's participation in the Iraq War. Field's wrote, "Iraq's ripples are running across the South Pacific, even to families in New Zealand through their island connections. Some of the dead American Samoans were in fact independent Samoans. Soldiers from the Northern Marianas, Guam and the Federated States of Micronesia have also died with United States forces. Six Fijians have died in combat serving with the British Army in Iraq."<sup>105</sup> Field's aptly contextualized

---

<sup>104</sup> Field, Michael. "Grieving the Dead Soldiers." *Islands Business*. 15 May 2007.

<sup>105</sup> Field. 2007.

American Samoa geographically and politically noting family connections between Samoa and American Samoa extending to New Zealand through migration.

Unfortunately the familial ties across national boundaries are often overlooked in understanding the impact of American Samoa's death toll in this war. Samoans all over the U. S. as well as those in New Zealand are affected by the deaths of Samoan family members in the U.S. engagement in the Middle East. The predicament of American Samoa transcends political lines affecting an international community of Samoans.

Field quotes Sia Figiel's summations of the territory's dynamics. Regarding Figiel he writes:

Now involved in education, she says only a few American Samoan students achieve the necessary scores to get scholarships for further schooling in the United States. The military was often the only option. 'The military puts them straight to work which is a better option than staying at home or possibly working at the canneries-straight out of high school,' she says.

Figiel questioned the national government's response to the devastating impact of the death toll in American Samoa, "My question is the silence from Washington. Why is there no further comment from DC? Why is it that they are not directly addressing American Samoa now? Do they really have to wait until another casket returns home in order for them to make their presence?" Figiel was also apt to say despite the casualties, "It would be ludicrous-inconceivable for there to be protests here. I think American Samoans are too loyal, too respectful of their relationship with the United States to ever bring shame."<sup>106</sup> Figiel's articulation may seem contradictory after an explication of the

---

<sup>106</sup> Field. 2007.

impact on the Samoan community, but her summation is accurate. Figiel's "A Lament in Time of War" received a pointed response entitled "Don't Cry for me Sia Figiel." David Rotorua Lousiale Kava, a Samoan at the United States Military Academy at West Point wrote:

It is our lives and our love

And if one day it must be my turn

To make that ultimate sacrifice

All I ask that you please bury my heart

By the Tuasivitasi mountain at the Malaeimi Valley.<sup>107</sup>

Kava was quoted in *Islands Business* saying, "stop scaring our parents and our relatives at home. Above all, don't make it sound as if we are complaining, bringing shame to American Samoa."<sup>108</sup> Kava represents the feelings many Samoans hold. The *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand* states with regard to Samoans and the fa'asamoa, or the Samoan way, "There are also the associated values of alofa (love), tautua (service), fa'aaloalo (respect), feagaiga (a covenant between siblings and others) and usita'i (discipline)."<sup>109</sup> The fa'asamoa remains grounded in respect for those in a place of authority. Respect for any elder, often translates notably to respect for any authority figure, be it a football coach or a military commander or even the US government. The value of tautua, or service is arguably a motivating factor in Samoan enlistment.<sup>110</sup>

Tautua can be understood as the sacrifice and service one is expected to and wants to

---

<sup>107</sup> Field. 2007.

<sup>108</sup> Field. 2007.

<sup>109</sup> *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Samoans.*

<sup>110</sup> *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Samoans.*

show one's family. The Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand is apt to note, "Not every Samoan has the same understanding of the concept. What remains constant is maintaining the family and links with the homeland. Money, prayers, support, food, material goods, and even relatives themselves, circulate within families around the world – wherever Samoan people live and work." Military service is an opportunity to support one's own family as well as serve the larger family of American Samoa and by extension the United States. Kava's sentiment is not uncommon and is indicative of public admiration and acceptance of the U.S. military in the lives of many Samoans in American Samoa.<sup>111</sup>

#### Public Commentary

On May 18, 2008 Governor Togiola of American Samoa deemed the day "Armed Forces Day." He gave the following proclamation:

To all the Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, American Samoa  
Supports you!

The people and government of the United States Territory of American Samoa  
say thank you and God bless you, to all our men and women in the Armed Forces  
of the United States of America for your patriotic service in support of our people  
and our Nation.

---

<sup>111</sup> Field. 2007.

Also, during this 2008 Armed Forces Day remembrance, we specially honor the sons and daughters of American Samoa serving in all the branches of the United States Armed Forces everywhere in the world.

We thank you all for your volunteerism and commitment to defend our flag, our people and our homeland. We thank you also for your commitment to protect the freedom and liberty of all God's people in the world.

Thank you for the freedom, liberty, happiness and pride to be an American that we enjoy because of your service. Be proud of your service, your country and your families.

Our prayers shall be that our God blesses and protect you and your families always.<sup>112</sup>

A month earlier on April seventeenth, American Samoa celebrated Flag Day, the annual commemoration of the raising of the American Flag in 1900 on Tutuila. An article published on the U.S. Marines website described the event, as well as some of the governor's sentiments:

“It was a great benefit to have the Marine band,” said Tulafono. “It was a wonderful musical performance. I want to thank (the Marines) for honoring us for 108 years. It is only fitting to invite the Marine band to help us celebrate,” referring to American Samoa's long military history.

---

<sup>112</sup> “American Samoan Government.” *Office of the Governor, Press Release: Gov. Togiola Proclaims Today “Armed Forces Day”*. 17 May 2008. State of American Samoa. 5 June 2008. <http://americansamoa.gov/news08/PR0805171.htm>

The U.S territory was protected by a U.S. Naval Station, guarded by U.S. Marines, until it became a territory in 1900 and fell under the auspices of the Department of the Interior.

The Marines provided the American Samoa anthem to the arrival of the Governor and later wooed the crowd with a spunky show band performance. In honor of the first lady, the Marines performed her favorite song, Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl."<sup>113</sup>

The presence of U.S. Marines was apropos, seamlessly integrated into American Samoa's celebration of the creation of the territory, as was a classic American song, Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl." Flag day connects the military past and the military present, annually honoring the creation of American Samoa. The idealized relationship of U.S. colonization is memorialized in American Samoa's Flag Day. A point of clarification to the statement made in the above quote, "The U.S territory was protected by a U.S. Naval Station, guarded by U.S. Marines, until it became a territory in 1900 and fell under the auspices of the Department of the Interior," the territory was under the Department of the Navy until 1951 when it came under the Department of the Interior.

### Some Tensions

However, despite the pro-U.S. rhetoric, American Samoa's leadership is not unaware of the imbalance of power between the territory and the U.S. government. Lt.

---

<sup>113</sup> "Marine Forces Pacific." *Marines help celebrate American Samoa's Flag Day*. 17 April 2008. United States Marine Corps. 2 August 2008.  
<http://www.marines.mil/units/marforpac/Pages/MarineshelpcelebrateAmericanSamoa%E2%80%99sFlagDay.aspx4/17/2008>



Governor Ipulasi concluded his official summary of the impact of the federal minimum wage increase on American Samoa with,

“Now that the Department of Labor has documented the dire impact of the 2007 legislative change on American Samoa, I urgently request this Committee and Congress to enact timely remedial legislation. Committee support for the pursuit and enactment of tax and appropriation measures to correct the unintended but very real consequences of past actions is also needed and would be greatly appreciated. We in American Samoa are proud to be Americans and we have served our country with valor and devotion. Remedial legislation will help us to develop our economy so that we can stand with the other territories and the 50 states as one nation.”<sup>114</sup>

Ipulasi’s closing remarks, identical to the governor’s statement to the U.S. Senate on the same subject, pointed to the undeniable military service of American Samoa. In this summation the U.S. House and Senate are confronted with American Samoa’s patriotism, a weighty point during an unpopular military engagement. American Samoa’s desire to “stand with the other territories and the 50 state as one nation” indicates the territory’s position on the periphery. American Samoa does not currently stand equally with the rest of the country. The official statement made by both the governor and lieutenant governor acknowledges that equity with the rest of the United States is a goal for American Samoa and not at present a reality. They acknowledge the economic injustice while

---

<sup>114</sup> “American Samoa Office of the Governor.” *Insular Affairs Subcommittee Minimum Wage Field Hearing*. 22 February 2008. American Samoa. 1 March 2008.  
[http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage\\_hearing.htm](http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage_hearing.htm)

simultaneously invoking American Samoa's patriotism. Patriotism and sacrifice on the battlefield by Samoans is leveraged against the U.S. government and its misdeeds.

American Samoa's economic limits is, at times, levied against the federal government by American Samoa's leaders as a bargaining chip, a point of indignation toward what they view as the federal government's failures towards American Samoa's needs. Samoan military service and sacrifice for the U.S. creates a debt owed American Samoa. The state of American Samoa's economy is regarded as, at least partially, a result of indifference and ineptitude in Washington. The soldier's sacrifice is understood as patriotism to the fullest and must be recognized in kind.

#### The Soldier and the Nation

Benedict Anderson in his text *Imagined Communities* articulated the nation as such,

Finally it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to willingly to die for such limited imaginings.<sup>115</sup>

Military service confirms the validity of the nation one serves, the ultimate display of nationalism. Melani McAlister states in *Epic Encounters*, "The image of the soldier has a long and important history in the construction and reinforcement of national identity."<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. Ed. London; New York: Verso, 2006. Page 7. Print.

<sup>116</sup> McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley, Calif; London: University of California Press, 2001. Print.

The national identity is forced to include soldiers normally excluded based on race primarily as well as class and gender. The soldier, as symbol, is the embodiment of the nation. The soldier is the ultimate nationalist. McAlister aptly cites historian Oscar Campomanes, “the soldier, as both historical referent and contemporary embodiment, often becomes “the common sign in which a whole nation must recognize itself.”<sup>117</sup> To what extent can American Samoa be included in this understanding of nationalism? American Samoa’s governor and Lt. governor deploy an understanding that military service ought to be specially recognized.

Anderson’s three main premises of the nation are explicated as such: it is limited, sovereign and a community.<sup>118</sup> “The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.”<sup>119</sup> Anderson thus articulates a nation that is based on a notion of belonging and exclusion. Anderson’s description of the impassioned lived expression of belonging to a nation is perhaps the most seductive articulation in his analysis of nationalism.

The ultimate commitment, the ultimate sacrifice of one’s own life according to Anderson is predicated on nationalism. This ultimate commitment, especially for those on the periphery is, dialectical, one is committed to the nation and thus serves in the military and one’s service is what ushers in one’s full belonging in the nation.

It is worth taking up Anderson’s articulation of the imagined community that, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each; the nation is

---

<sup>117</sup> McAlister. 2001.

<sup>118</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. Ed. London; New York: Verso, 2006. Page 7. Print.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson. 2006

always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship.”<sup>120</sup> Arguably the ultimate display of this “horizontal comradeship” is the military and in this institution the imagined community of the nation is actualized. And arguably as Anderson states, “...it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to willingly die for such limited imaginings.”<sup>121</sup> However, within the nation there are smaller communities, nations possibly within Benedict’s definition, but also at odds with an overarching national identity.

Beyond the power of nationalism and the military to “unite a nation” there are many countervailing realities. The discourse around the military has shifted and the language of inclusion and opportunity has changed the conversation from the days of Vietnam War protests. The meaning of the military as analyzed by Melani McAlister in *Epic Encounters* has become a place of shared racial space in the U.S., a place of economic opportunity and racial equality. She writes:

In addition, the Left had not fully accounted for the changes in what the military signified in American culture. For those leftists and liberals who had lived through the Vietnam era, had feared the draft, and has seen the returning body bags, the military was a dangerous part of a state apparatus that disproportionately took the lives of people of color and the poor. But over the course of the 1980s, the all-volunteer army had come to mean something very different to most people; it signified not only patriotism but also opportunity; it was not an example of the racism in American life but also potential counter to it.

The racially diverse families who sent their sons and daughters to the Gulf were

---

<sup>120</sup> Anderson. 2006.

<sup>121</sup> Anderson. 2006.

often ambivalent about the risks and the dangers, but they were almost uniformly certain that the “new army” represented them, and that they, in all their diversity, represented America.<sup>122</sup>

Through the military people marginalized by race and class can belong to a multicultural American identity.

McAlister’s articulation of “military multiculturalism” surmises the contemporary nationalist discourse of identity, which stabilizes American identities as multi-racial while relying on the othering of the Middle East. She writes, “What I describe as “military multiculturalism” was enabled by the unquestioned world predominance of the U.S. military, but it was dependent on an understanding of the Middle East as “outside” any meaningful definition of Americanness.”<sup>123</sup> This articulation is a deft illumination of the construction of racial inclusion through the military and war united in opposition against a racialized other, Arabs. The language of “defending freedom” and “protecting liberty” defines a shared outside threat with which the military must necessarily engage. American Samoa and Samoan soldiers as part of the U.S. are equally engaged in defending the country from these threats and thus American Samoa’s leaders demand national recognition. Samoans are most certainly Americans in a military context. American Samoa’s leaders invoke the national duty and national sacrifice by Samoan soldiers as patriotism in practice.

Anderson’s imagined community, for American Samoa, is twofold. It is American Samoa and the U.S. In the military Samoans can experience an economic inclusion, still short of equity, not readily accessible in civilian life. Discursively, in the context of what

---

<sup>122</sup> McAlister. 2001.

<sup>123</sup> McAlister. 2001.

is thought and said about American Samoa, the military gives American Samoa's belonging to the United States a particular narrative. The weight of this, military loyalty, is then levied against the federal government by American Samoa's leaders as a point of contention and indignation toward the federal government's failures to meet American Samoa's needs.

Governor Togiola statements on December 7, 2007, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, demonstrate a historical cohesion between the U.S. and the Pacific, "We pay tribute and honor the more than 2,400 American heroes who lost their lives in Pearl Harbor on that fateful day 66 years ago. With deep respect and profound gratitude, we remember them on this somber anniversary and recognize their selfless sacrifice. The people of American Samoa remain grateful for all that they have done in defense of America and the freedom that we continue to enjoy." In 1941 Hawai'i was not yet a state and American Samoa was still under martial law by a naval governor. In this proclamation American Samoa is tied to a particular reading of American history and a historical period unproblematically. During this particular time when Samoans were consigned to serve in a highly racialized and subordinate position as landsmen in the U.S. Navy. Furthermore, American Samoa was still being "administered" by the United States Navy. The Governor's proclamation is indicative of the "idealized relationship" and the imagined community between American Samoa and the United States.<sup>124</sup> Toeutu Fa'aleava surmises it as such, "Selective remembering of Samoan-American history and the continuing U.S. economic support for American Samoa result in blind loyalty to an idealized US. American Samoa continues to receive generous congressional

---

<sup>124</sup> Fa'aleava. 2003.

appropriations for about 50 percent of its annual budget, an estimated 50 million excluding grants through various programs and agencies.”<sup>125</sup>

### National Boundaries

Benedict Anderson constructs a notion of how nations come to be “imagined.” Howard Zinn on the other hand details how these nations are only communities in so much as they are imagined, something of myth and not of material actuality. Zinn writes in *A People’s History of the United States*:

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.<sup>126</sup>

Zinn turns history “the memory of states,” as Kissinger once stated, on its head. History is a site of contested meaning. Zinn’s history is not a victory lap around sites of conquest and domination but a contesting of the casual gloss violence and domination receive in the state’s memory. In the case of American Samoa the history lesson is being taught

---

<sup>125</sup> Fa’aleava. Page 290, 2003.

<sup>126</sup> Zinn, Howard. *A People’s History of the United States*. New York: HarperCollins Publishing Inc., 2001. Pages 7-10. Print.

from the memory of the United States affirmed in the memory of American Samoa's leaders and those who document her history.

The relationship between the islands of eastern Samoa known as American Samoa, and the U.S. has been constructed as positive in public discourse. The ideologies and sentiments of those in the present create an imagined past, a happy marriage from the beginning of "American Samoa."<sup>127</sup> This marriage though unequal, has been accepted and obliged to by many American Samoans. Current displays of patriotism and military service are constructed as natural and represent in the present a symbol of this relationship.<sup>128</sup> Fa'aleava writes concerning the unique paradigm of American Samoa:

It is somewhat politically incorrect amongst communities of color to suggest that a minority group likes the US given its history of discrimination and inequality. But most American Samoans are loyal to the US... In some Samoan circles criticizing the U.S. is asking for a beating. Selective remembering of Samoan-American history and continued economic support for American Samoa result in blind loyalty to an idealized US.<sup>129</sup>

American Samoa's relationship to the US is most often understood positively.

Fa'aleava's work offers a more Zinnian analysis, looking at history beyond the memory of states.

The soldier in Anderson's reading represents a national ideal. The soldier most visibly defends the nation. The benefits afforded the soldier, however, do not necessarily

---

<sup>127</sup> Fa'aleava 2003

<sup>128</sup> Fa'aleava 2003

<sup>129</sup> Fa'aleava 2003



extend in kind to others they may represent or even their kin. The hardship Samoans face in accessing healthcare while residing in American Samoa illustrates the limited status and access of Samoans.

A devastating incident was played out on February 13, 2008 in Honolulu Hawaii. A woman, her fourteen-day-old son and a nurse traveled from American Samoa to Honolulu.<sup>130</sup> The baby was scheduled for heart surgery at Kapi'olani Medical Center. When entering the U.S. from American Samoa one must go through U.S. customs unlike domestic travel between states. Homeland Security detained Luaipou Futi, her baby Michael Futi and nurse Arizona Vaevae at the Honolulu International Airport because of Luaipou Futi's travel documents.<sup>131</sup> During their detention, in a locked room, the baby Michael Futi became distressed in the heat and experienced problems breathing. Vaevae and Futi banged on the locked door pleading for medical attention. Vaevae, the accompanying nurse, had previously suggested to Homeland Security that she and the baby, both U.S. citizens, be allowed to leave for Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children, less than fifteen minutes away from the airport. After Homeland Security opened the door, some thirty minutes after they had been detained in the room, CPR was performed on the baby and after another ten minutes paramedics arrived. The baby died later the same morning. The attorney for the Futi family, Rick Fried, has filed a lawsuit with the federal government for the death of fourteen-day old Michael Futi. Before arriving in Honolulu the prognosis for Michael Futi's was good. His doctors were confident that with corrective surgery he would be able to live a healthy life. Fried stated, "Even if they had a valid cause for holding the mother of the baby ... there is absolutely

---

<sup>130</sup> Nakaso, Dan. "Baby locked up at Honolulu airport dies." *Honolulu Advertiser* 13 February 2008

<sup>131</sup> Nakaso 2008

no basis for holding the baby or the baby's nurse, who traveled with no luggage," Fried said, adding "the baby and the nurse are naturalized American citizens and have a U.S. passport." Three people, two of whom were U.S. citizens, all with valid travel documents, two with U.S. passports were detained at the cost of a two week old child's life. In this case not even the U.S. citizenship of Samoans traveling from American Samoa was a safeguard against an illegal detention. The actions of Homeland Security in this instance demonstrated the precarious and blurry position Samoans and American Samoa occupies in a racialized relationship to the United States. The territorial status of American Samoa could protect and insure the safe and expedited transport of American citizen Michael Futi to a hospital. American Samoa occupies a troubling borderland in a colonial relationship that is something less than full inclusion into the United States. The patriotic rhetoric may be strong but the rate of return of services to Samoans and American Samoa is inadequately low.

American Samoa's past and present is often remembered from the memory of the United States. American Samoa's leaders use history honoring the U.S. in an idealized as well pointing out the deficits of the relationship. In honoring the U.S. and Samoan soldiers, leaders highlight the inequities of the territory when they ask the federal government to allow American Samoa to "stand with the other states and territories." American Samoa's leaders do not question the military service and sacrifice to the U.S., in what Fa'aleava explicates as socially rare and often unthinkable. Rather, the territorial leaders want economic and social parity, highlighting the military service of Samoans, perhaps to expedite long over due equitable measures.

## Conclusion: The Need for Critique

Despite the imbalance of power with the U.S. government American Samoa generally identifies positively with U.S. ideals of freedom and liberty and adheres to these ideals most adamantly through the military service of its residents. This marriage though unequal, has been accepted and obliged to by many Samoans in the U.S. and American Samoa. American Samoa may be a part of the “imagined community” of the U.S. but it remains at a distance, geographically and politically. It is perhaps closest to the U.S. nation in the imagination and as of late through its unfortunate location at the top of per capita casualty statistics in the Iraq War.

The deference paid the U.S. by Samoans keeps the territory closely tied to the U.S. Critiques of the U.S. as noted by Fa’aleava, are socially suspect and could be met with severe rebuke.<sup>132</sup> In her essay “Social Change” Penelope Schoeffel addresses the taboo of cultural critiques. She states, “Nationalist rhetoric has tended to inhibit internal criticism of the political system and status quo, and those who point out unpleasant truths through academic or literary means may be accused of ‘thinking like foreigners’ and of having in some sense sided with the outside world.”<sup>133</sup> The Samoan author Albert Wendt has not shied from internal critique. Schoeffel cites Wendt’s “The Faa-Samoa is Perfect, They Sd” in her analysis.

“The Faa-Samoa is Perfect, They Sd”

The faa-samoa is perfect, they sd

---

<sup>132</sup> Fa’aleava, Page 290 2006

<sup>133</sup> Schoeffel, Penelope. “Social Change,” *Tides of History. The Pacific Islands in the twentieth century ed.* K.R. Howe. UH Press pp 350-380

from behind cocktail bars like pulpits  
double scotch on the rocks, I sd

we have no orphans, no one starves  
we share everything, they sd  
refill my glass, I sd

and we all have alofa  
for one another, they said  
drown me in your alofa then, i sd.

Its true they sd, our samoa  
is a paradise, we venerate our royalty,  
our pastors and leaders and beloved dead

god gave us the faa-samoa and  
only he can take it away, they sd  
amen, i sd

their imported firstclass whisky  
was alive with corpses: my uncle  
and his army of hungry kids,  
malnourished children in dirty wards,

an old woman begging in the bank,  
 my generation migrating overseas  
 for jobs, while politicians  
 and merchants brag obesely  
 in the RSA, and pastors bang  
 out sermons about obedient  
 and righteous life—*aiafu*  
 all growing fat in  
 a blind man's paradise<sup>134</sup>

Wendt's poem challenges the impenetrability of the *fa'asamoa*. His poem references specifics such as the RSA in formerly Western, now independent Samoa. However, his criticisms of the *fa'asamoa* extend beyond any locale. The *fa'asamoa*, in American Samoa, has now come to include honoring ties to the U.S. Criticism of the U.S. is taboo as much as criticisms of the *fa'asamoa* are also taboo. Criticisms, like Wendt, look towards accurate appraisals of reality.

The particulars of American Samoa are unique but the general circumstances are not. The health of the community requires an accurate assessment of these circumstances. The economy is depressed and permanently on a precipice hovering above economic devastation reliant on a single industry, tuna canneries, and federal funding. The tuna canneries offer difficult and at times dangerous work for low wages. Federal funding creates a relationship of dependency relegating American Samoa to the decisions of those in Washington. Military service on the other hand provides employment and a sense of

---

<sup>134</sup> Wendt, Albert. "The *faaSamoa* is Perfect, They sd." Schoeffel, Penelope.

purpose supported in mainstream American rhetoric as well as rhetoric in American Samoa. Contextualizing the circumstances of American Samoa and deconstructing certain mores is the necessary enterprise to begin to think of alternatives to the current limits on the economy, education, etc.

Transformation requires criticism and recognition of our circumstances, recognizing the particulars of the local in the totality of the global, as well as creativity and ingenuity.<sup>135</sup> What are other people in similar circumstances doing? What resources can American Samoa look to? As the developed and industrial world looks to alternative energy and many in the first world place newfound value on the local, a small island steeped in hundreds if not thousands of years of local, subsistence living, need only to look to its own culture it still maintains. Though the cash economy has transformed subsistence living, perhaps it is not too late to adjust modernity in order to reincorporate subsistence practices, still known and used by some, if only to lessen the importation of food such as taro. Could there be incentives for those willing to grow food locally, subsidies for taro farming maybe?

In exploring the particulars of American Samoa one can begin to understand how dilemmas of a small island are not isolated. Edward Said offered this understanding, “For the intellectual the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the suffering of others.”<sup>136</sup> This paper works to universalize American Samoa.

---

<sup>136</sup> Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith lectures*. New York. Pantheon 1994 43-4

Works Cited

Ahmad, Diana L. *Embracing Manifest Destiny: The Samoan Experience*. Journal of the West Vol. 45, No.2

“American Samoan Government.” *Office of the Governor, Press Release: Gov. Togiola offers sympathy on death of Sgt. Lui Tumanuvao in Iraq*. 8 November 2007. State of American Samoa. 12 February 2008.  
<http://americansamoa.gov/News/tumanuvao.htm>

“American Samoa Office of the Governor.” *Insular Affairs Subcommittee Minimum Wage Field Hearing*. 22 February 2008. American Samoa. 1 March 2008.  
[http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage\\_hearing.htm](http://americansamoa.gov/news08/minwage_hearing.htm)

“American Samoan Government.” *Office of the Governor, Press Release: Gov. Togiola Proclaims Today “Armed Forces Day”*. 17 May 2008. State of American Samoa. 5 June 2008. <http://americansamoa.gov/news08/PR0805171.htm>

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Rev. Ed. London; New York; Verso, 2006.

Army. “ASVAB”. 2009. [http://www.army.com/enlist/asvab\\_score.html](http://www.army.com/enlist/asvab_score.html).

Associated Press. "Rise in minimum wage sparks layoffs at cannery in American Samoa." Desert News (Salt Lake City). 11 June 2007.

Bertram Geoffrey and Ray Watters. "The MIRAB Process: Earlier Analysis in Context." *Pacific Viewpoint*, 27(1):47-59, April 1986.

Brooke, James. "On Farthest U.S. Shores, Iraq is a Way to Dream." New York Times 31 July 2005.

"Claude Moore Health Sciences." *Politics of the Spanish-American War*. 5 March 2007. University of Virginia. 12 April 2007.  
<http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm>

Connell, John. "Pacific Island Voyagers in the Modern World." *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and across the Pacific*. Spickard, Paul; Rondilla, Joanne L.; Wright, Debbie H. eds. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002. Pages 135-148. Print.

Fa'aleava, Toeutu. *Fitafita: Samoan landsmen in the United States Navy, 1900--1951*. University of California, Berkeley, 2003



Faleomavaega, Eni Fa'auaa Hunkin. *Navigating the Future: a Samoan Perspective on U.S.-Pacific Relations*. KIN Publications, 1995. Pages 34-35. Print.

Faleomavaega, Eni. "American Samoa's Tuna Cannery Worries Untangling Tangled Nets." Pacific Magazine 1 May 2003.

Field, Michael. "Grieving the Dead Soldiers." *Islands Business*. 15 May 2007.

Friedman, John S. "Iraq Index." The Nation 19 December 2005.

Herbert, Bob. "Truth in Recruiting." New York Times. 22 August 2005

Hempenstall, Peter. "Imperial maneuvers," *Tides of History*, 1994.

Lutali, A.P. *My Samoan Journey*. American Samoa: S.N. Publishing, 2001. Page 6. Print.

"Marine Forces Pacific." *Marines help celebrate American Samoa's Flag Day*. 17 April 2008. United States Marine Corps. 2 August 2008.

<http://www.marines.mil/units/marforpac/Pages/MarineshelpcelebrateAmericanSamoa%E2%80%99sFlagDay.aspx4/17/2008>

McAlister, Melani. *Epic encounters: culture, media, and U.S. interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley, Calif; London: University of California Press, 2001.

McPhee, Malcolm D. et al.; Conway, Dick; Wolman, Lewis. *American Samoa's Economic Future and the Canning Industry*. Samoa: American Samoa Department of Commerce, 2008. Print.

Nakaso, Dan. "Baby locked up at Honolulu airport dies." *Honolulu Advertiser* 13 February 2008

"National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior." *National Park of American Samoa*. 19 December 2008. U.S. National Park Service. 7 January 2009.  
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/npsa>

"Philadelphia Press, 1898." *Ten Thousand Miles from Tip to Tip*. 12 April 2007. New York Public Library. 10 October 2007.  
<http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm>

"Philadelphia Press, 1898." *Uncle Sam*. 12 April 2007. New York Public Library. 10 October 2007.  
<http://www.mury.k12.ut.us/MHS/apus/dbq/2007/group01.htm>"School Begins"

"Radio New Zealand International." *High Ranking American Samoan Soldier Dies in Iraq*. 29 June 2008. Radio New Zealand. 6 August 2008.  
<http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=40604>

Schaffer, Robert J. *American Samoa: 100 Years Under the United States Flag*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Island Heritage, 2000. Page 105. Print.

Reuters. "Del Monte Sells Starkist Unit to S. Korean Company." New York Times. 24 June 2008.

Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual*: The 1993 *Reith lectures*. New York. Pantheon. 1994 43-4

"Samoa News." *Toasavili Manua Centennial Series*. 9 July 2004. Samoa News. 18 May 2007. <http://www.samoanews.com/Manu%27aSeries.2004/story4.html>

Scharnberg, Kirsten. "Young Samoans have little choice but to enlist." Chicago Tribune. 21 March 2007

Schoeffel, Penelope. "Social Change," *Tides of History. The Pacific Islands in the twentieth century* ed. K.R. Howe. UH Press pp 350-380

Spickard, Paul Joanne L. Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright. *Pacific Diaspora: island peoples in the United States and across the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, c2002.

"Sunday Samoan." *Am Samoa Tops Casualty List for US Troops in Iraq*. 27 March 2009. Samoa Observer. 13 April 2009.  
[http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php?view=article&id=6183%3Aam-samoa-tops&option=com\\_content&Itemid=66](http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php?view=article&id=6183%3Aam-samoa-tops&option=com_content&Itemid=66)

Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. *Samoans*. 2009.

Thernstrom, Stephan, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Harvard University Press, 1980. Page 764.

“U.S. Department of Labor.” *Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division*. 9 June 2007. American Samoa. 7 July 2007.  
<http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/as/toc.htm>

“United States Environmental Protection Agency.” *Territory of American Samoa*. 10 January 2009. EPA. 20 February 2009.  
<http://www.epa.gov.region09/islands/samoa.html>

“U.S. House of Representatives.” *Washington, D.C.—American Samoa Death Rate In the Iraq War is Highest Among all States and U.S. Territories*. 23 March 2009. U.S. House of Representatives. 10 April 2009.  
[http://www.house.gov/list/press/as00\\_faleomavaega/asdeathratehighestamongstates.html](http://www.house.gov/list/press/as00_faleomavaega/asdeathratehighestamongstates.html)

Weisman, Jonathan. “Minimum-Wage Bill Stirs Controversy in Pacific Islands.” Washington Post. 9 January 2007.

Wendt, Albert. “The faaSamoa is Perfect, They sd.” Schoeffel, Penelope, “Social Change.”

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: HarperCollins Publishing Inc., 2001. Pages 7-10. Print.

#### References

Aga, Daniel F. "*An examination of American Samoa's political status.*" Golden Gate University, 2001.

Alfred, Taiaiake. *Wasase : indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Peterborough, Ont. : Broadview Press, c2005.

Alaimoana-Nuusa, Repeka L. "Lost in college : the underprepared students at the American Samoa Community College speak." Capella Univeristy 2006.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, 1971.

"American Samoa "High Risk" with Education Grants. Samoa News(Pago Pago, American Samoa) 5 August 2006.

Armstrong, H. W. and Read, R. "Comparing the Economic Performance of Dependent Territories and Sovereign Microstates." Economic Development and Cultural Change, 48: January 2000. 285–306.

Blackford, Mansel G. *Pathways to the present : U.S. development and its consequences in the Pacific*. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, c2007.

Carmichael, Michelle Liulama, Ph.D., *The road less traveled: Samoans and higher education*. Miami University, 2007

Cagurangan, Mar-Vic. Guam, CNMI, American Samoa, Recruiters's Paradise. Mariana Variety (SAIPAN, CNMI) 9 August 2007

Cave, Damien. "Army Recruiters Say They Feel Pressure to Bend Rules." The New York Times 3 May 2005

Cave, Damien. "Uncle Sam Wants You. But He Needs to Adapt." New York Times 8 May 2005

Chappell, David A. "The Forgotten Mau: Anti-Navy Protest in American Samoa, 1920-1935." *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (May, 2000), p 217-260

Cushing, Robert and Bill Bishop. "The Rural War." New York Times 20 July 2005

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Inequality: neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Boston : Beacon Press, 2003.

Estes, S. (2005). *I am a man!: race, manhood, and the civil rights movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Fa'atoafe, Faofia Va'apu'u Pao. *American Samoa vocational education : a proposed school-to-work model for Nu'uuli Polytech high school*. Golden Gate University, 2001

Fanon, Frantz .*The wretched of the earth*. Edition: 1st Evergreen ed. Publisher: New York : Grove Press, 1966, c1963.

Fanon, Frantz.*Black skin, white masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. Publisher: New York, Grove Press [1967]

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish* 2nd Vintage Books ed. Publisher: New York : Vintage Books, 1995.

Geiger, Jeffrey. *Facing the Pacific : Polynesia and the U.S. imperial imagination.*

Honolulu : University of Hawai i Press, c2007.

Isaia, Malopa'upo. *Coming of age in American anthropology : Margaret Mead and paradise.* Universal Publishers, 1999.

Isbister, John. *Promises not kept : poverty and the betrayal of Third World development.* 7th ed. Bloomfield, CT : Kumarian Press, 2006.

Jaimes M. Annette. *The State of Native America : genocide, colonization, and resistance.* Boston : South End Press, 1992.

Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto.* New York, Washington Square Press 1964.

Memmi, Albert. *The colonizer and the colonized.* Boston : Beacon Press, 1991.

O'brien, Timothy L. "How to Pitch the Military When a War Drags On?" New York Times 25 September 2005

Potter, Mark. "Eager to serve in American Samoa." NBC News. 5:30 p.m. HT, 5 March. 2006



Ring, Marianne Mygdal, "Academic resilience in American Samoan community college students : an ethnographic study." Walden Univeristy 2001.

Sagapolutele, Fili. "American Samoa Loses Seventh Soldier In Iraq." Samoa News. (Pago Pago American Samoa) Sept. 29, 2005

Sagapolutele, Fili. "American Samoa Should Consider Citizenship: Activist." Samoa News. (Pago Pago American Samoa) 22 March 2007

Sagapolutele, Fili. "American Samoa Should Consider Citizenship: Governor." Samoa News. (Pago Pago American Samoa) 26 March 2007

Sagapolutele, Fili. Remembering some we have loved and lost in 2008 ." Samoa News.<http://www.samoanewsonline.com/viewstory.php?storyid=3010>

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. Publisher: New York : Vintage Books, 1979, 1978.

Satele, Adele Salamasina. "National culture : its impact on public administration in American Samoa." Golden Gate University, 2000.

Schmitt, Eric. "Army Recruiting More High School Dropouts to Meet Goals." New York Times. 11 June 2005

Shabazz, Saeed. "The Dirty World Of Military Recruiting." New American Media. The Final Call. 26 July 2004

Shore, Bradd. *Globalization, the nation states and the question of "culture."*

[http://www.semioticon.com/frontline/bradd\\_shore.htm](http://www.semioticon.com/frontline/bradd_shore.htm)

Sowell, Teri L. *Worn with pride : celebrating Samoan artistic heritage*. Oceanside

Museum of Art Place Oceanside Calif. Date 2000

Stone Lombardi, Kate. "How the Army Gets What It Wants." -New York Times

6 November 2005

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing methodologies : research and indigenous peoples /*.

Publisher: London ; New York : Zed Books ; New York : Distributed in the USA

exclusively by St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Tinitali, Peter. "Culture, language and colonial discourse: a study of educational

professional preparation in American Samoa." University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2002

Vltchek, Andre. "Samoa One Nation, two failed States." Japan Focus( journal) June 24,

2008

Vltchek, Andre. "The New Pacific wall. Z magazine October 2006

World Statesmen. 29 March 2008. <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/AmSamoa.html>