Intercommunity ties and the importance of the Springdale community to the Marshall Islands are revealed in the context of a Constitution Day celebration, which brings groups from other migrant communities as well as government ministers and senators from the Islands. One participant recounts his childhood experience of the Bravo thermonuclear test, underscoring that the relationship of the Marshalls with the United States is basically a military one, and describing some of its fraught history.

Carpenter’s documentary ends with Chong-Gum meeting a new immigrant at the airport, telling him how other migrants will help him adapt to this foreign setting, and welcoming him to a new, beautiful “island.”

These documentaries are useful resources for class presentations and are accessible to undergraduates, but require contextualization and discussion. They provide limited accounts of the shifting relationships of Micronesians with outsiders, and ignore structural changes in the US economy that open jobs in various sectors to immigrants. I prefer A New Island for the richness of its case study approach and its direction toward a host-nation audience. Both videos can be useful in expanding the notion of “Peoples of the Pacific” and constructing lessons on transnationalism, migration, globalization, and economic development.

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These two books offer important perspectives and details on aspects of modern New Caledonian history that had been relatively neglected, apart from Ismet Kurtovitch’s excellent doctoral dissertation on the 1940–1953 period in local politics, which came out in print in French in 2000, or more briefly in the volume published on the French Pacific Islands by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff back in 1971. Most publications in English about New Caledonia were inspired by the Kanak-French violence of the 1980s or its aftermath, but these two recent books probe into the wartime and postwar roots of the political tensions that ultimately led to that tragic explosion. Both studies are done by professional historians yet are also very readable for a wider audience.

Dr Kim Munholland teaches modern European and French history at the University of Minnesota. His book opens with the propagandistic cinematic image of Humphrey Bogart
and Claude Rains walking off as friends into the mist at the end of the film *Casablanca* and then proceeds to debunk that portrayal of wartime comradeship. Instead, he argues, relations between US President Franklin Roosevelt and General Charles De Gaulle of the Free French were often less than cordial, representing more of a *mésentente* (political disagreement) than an alliance, a dissidence that would endure in various ways throughout de Gaulle’s political career as he deeply resented American hegemony in his quest to recover the grandeur of France. In particular, this tension manifested itself in New Caledonia, which had a large US military presence during World War Two. First, the local population had to choose between the puppet Vichy regime and the Free French in exile, and some French settlers saw the 1940 defeat by the Nazis as an opportunity to throw off control by Paris entirely. Munholland examines the complexity of that situation, which ended with the Vichy supporters being put on a ship bound for Indochina, but even de Gaulle’s new agent was chased out, after presenting a xenophobic attitude toward the arrival of the Americans under General Alexander Patch in 1942. The US military base would transform New Caledonia economically and help to pave the way for postwar reforms in the territory, which, sadly, opened up new tensions between the indigenous Melanesians, long marginalized on tribal reserves but now suddenly made citizens, and the more conservative settlers who wanted their own form of hierarchical autonomy.

Jean Le Borgne is doubly qualified to write his long, detailed history of the postwar period, because he not only has a doctorate but also was a teacher in New Caledonia for fourteen years, when he served as a government minister for six years under the reformist Union Calédonienne (UC) party until Paris took away the autonomy of the 1950s and reassigned (read expelled) him to France. While his own bitterness over the collusion between local conservatives and metropolitan Gaullists is obvious, he still provides a clearly organized, well-documented narrative of the “recolonization” of the territory by Paris from 1959 to 1968. Imagine if Hawai‘i had had its statehood (1959) unilaterally revoked by the US Congress, so that it became a territory again? That is what France did to New Caledonia, primarily for strategic reasons (nickel mining, combined with nuclear testing in French Polynesia), which provoked an anticolonialist reaction from 1969 on. Local political demands then escalated from restored autonomy to Kanak independence and thus ultimately polarized the territory to the point of violence. Le Borgne provides a multitude of citations and quotations from the French archives and the local press during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as from recent publications, and his direct participation enables him to give the reader a good feel for the mood of people half a century ago. His subtitle, (which translates as “trust betrayed”) is a quotation not from Roch Pidjot or Maurice Lenormand of the Union Calédonienne as one might assume, but rather from Senator Henri Laffleur, a conservative settler who at one point favored departmentalization but
by the 1968 passage of the notorious Billotte laws felt that France had betrayed his country.

Le Borgne shows that sentiment was strong among local settlers for autonomy during and immediately after World War Two, until they realized that Kanak citizenship meant they no longer had a monopoly on political voice. When Communists first began to organize the Kanak, missionaries encouraged the formation of Catholic and Protestant religious associations that backed the election of Maurice Lenormand (married to a Kanak) as the deputy to Paris in 1951, and then the formation of the Union Calédonienne two years later. The UC would win most elections for the next twenty years, until massive immigration in the 1970s made the Kanak a slight demographic minority—after they had rebounded from near-extinction in the early twentieth century. The 1956 loi cadre (Overseas Reform Act) that granted significant self-governing powers to New Caledonia was contested by conservative settlers, who claimed it was a step toward independence and was intended for France’s African colonies, not for the French Pacific. Lenormand and Pidjot and their followers said repeatedly that they did not want to separate from France, but the conservatives used their ties to the governor and to Paris to spread systematic disinformation to the contrary. Finally, the Gaullists accused the UC of trying to create race hatred (ie, equal rights) and little by little dismantled the autonomy that had been granted by the Socialists. Most notably, Paris deprived the New Caledonian Governing Council of ministerial powers in 1963, and then, in 1968, of control over mining, large-scale investments in development, and the municipal communes. But Le Borgne provides revealing details about Governor Laurent Péchoux’s Machiavellian tactics from 1959 to 1962 as well, from enticing some Kanak leaders away from the UC, to assuming greater authority over local administration, to arranging for Lenormand to be convicted of not preventing his party headquarters from being bombed. The deputy lost his civil rights for five years and had to resign—much like the trumped-up arrest and imprisonment of Pouvana’a O’opa in Tahiti to remove him from the political scene in 1958 (Jean-Marc Regnaut has proven that to be a Gaullist plot).

It is a story filled with high hopes, as New Caledonia was on the peaceful path toward decolonization, in synchronization with the rest of the South Pacific, and the UC passed a series of progressive social welfare measures that are still in effect today. But the story ends with a sense of frustration at missed opportunities, as Péchoux and others reversed course. In a tragicomic aside, Le Borgne mentions that Péchoux told a colleague why France had lost Africa: because of the refrigerator. Once that became available, and administrators were joined by their wives, they lost touch with the pulse of what was happening in the bush! Péchoux himself had suppressed Félix Houphouet-Boigny’s radical anticolonial movement in the Ivory Coast in the early 1950s, which earned him the appointment to New Caledonia, where he appointed special “delegates” to oversee the interior
districts and propagandize against the UC’s moderate leftism. Le Borgne also puts the political struggle in New Caledonia in regional context and makes important references to what was happening in Algeria, which had considerable impact on the minds of local settlers and military men and directly inspired the anti-UC riots of June 1958. There was even talk of bringing in thousands of emigrant settlers from Algeria to New Caledonia in 1962, for the very same reason that France encouraged immigration during the early 1970s nickel boom (ie, to make the separatists a minority), but the idea was successfully delayed by the UC until that later influx was beyond its control. It is ironic that one of the Gaullists’ greatest fears in the 1960s was that the UC would allow INCO, the giant Canadian nickel mining firm, to start up a processing plant in New Caledonia in competition with the Société Le Nickel, which had a monopoly and was owned by the Rothschild Bank, where de Gaulle’s premier, Georges Pompidou, worked whenever he was not helping the general. Today, INCO is trying again to build a processing plant in a more autonomous New Caledonia (thanks to the bloodshed of the 1980s), but now with the blessing of local Gaullists, who enjoy a political majority. As Munholland shows regarding Bogart and Rains in Casablanca, there is always more to the public image than meets the eye. Both of these books help us to see behind the mask of French cooperation and benevolence in the Pacific.

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Vanuatu’s Ambrym Island was a hot-spot for early British anthropologists hunting obscure kinship structure. W H R Rivers, in 1914, recorded an initial version of the West Ambrym kin term system that he collected from William Temar who was training to be a Presbyterian teacher at the Tangoa Training Institute, on Tangoa Island, off Espiritu Santo. The terminological system presented a puzzle in that Ambrymese apply the same kin terms to relatives of different generations such that men’s wives might, sometimes, also be considered their sister’s son’s daughters, their mother’s brother’s daughter’s daughter, their mother’s sister’s daughter’s son’s daughter, and so forth. T T Barnard and Bernard Deacon, Rivers’s students, visited Ambrym in the 1920s to confirm and augment his analysis. They, along with Anthony Radcliffe-Brown, reinterpreted Ambrym Island kinship to be a “six-section system” (rather than residual evidence of gerontocracy, as Rivers had proposed) in which two moieties, comprising three patrilineal groups each, spiral women across generations. Harold Scheffler, who had a look at the system in the 1960s, figured it was an anomalously patrilineal Crow type that merges agnatic kin of different generations (eg, one’s father’s father is also a classificatory brother; one’s mother is also one’s son’s wife).