

A Long History of Exclusion

Hafa Adai yan buenas! (Hello and good day) Your Excellency Mr. Chairman Jorge Aguello, and distinguished members of the Fourth Committee: *Dangkolu na si Yu'os ma'ase* (sincere thank you) for your invitation to participate at this important testimony for the remainder of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in the 21st Century.

I am Michael Anthony Tuncap, a Chamorro teacher and national community organizer from the University of California at Berkeley. I was born in the village of Aniguak, Guam and I am the Great Grandson of Ana Acfalle of Merizo and Ramona Terlaje of Aniguak. I am here as the Famoksaiyan Trustee to the Pacific Islander Commission at the University of California Berkeley. Famoksaiyan and the UC Pacific Islander Commission work together as an advisory council of indigenous scholars, teachers and community leaders from Guam, American Samoa, Tonga, the Philippines and Hawai'i. Our collective mission is to promote the human and civil rights of indigenous Pacific Islanders through education, community organizing and health advocacy. We have been brought together by the struggle to survive the recent military expansion and nuclear testing of our Pacific homeland.

The continued occupation of American military forces in Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands are rooted in a system of racial inequality between European Americans, Asian and Pacific settlers and the indigenous Chamorro people. Since our initial contact with the United States in 1898, massive pacification and military occupation have prevented the Chamoru people from exercising our inalienable right to self determination. My testimony today focuses on the structural relationship between racism and American military occupation in Guam and the Northern Mariana's. Colonial ideas of racial and gendered superiority have shaped a long history of military violence and U.S economic security. American military aggression has shaped the public policies and immigration laws that led to the genocide of the Western frontier, legalized chattel slavery and the colonization of the Pacific. These militarized conditions are still prevalent in institutions that define American citizenship for many of our brothers and sisters in the Pacific and Caribbean colonies.

Over the last 20 years, the UN Fourth Committee on Decolonization has heard testimonies from former Guam Senator Hope Alvarez Cristobal, Sabina Perez, and many other indigenous world leaders. Their testimonies demonstrate the connection between racial ideologies and institutional discrimination resulting from American militarism. The history of American imperialism is deeply connected to a long history of exclusion, manifesting it in forms of violence both physical and social. We, the people of Guam, recognize that race continues to define the boundaries of the nation and the constituents of a militarized territory. Why are the American people in the Mariana's denied the right to vote? Why are American bases in Guam if the people lack political voting rights? What role has race played in the political relationship between the United States and their Chamoru territories? How can the United States ignore the United Nations Declaration for decolonization and the inalienable right of self determination for indigenous people?

“We the citizens for justice and peace on Guam voice our concern to the joint military exercises amid three aircraft carriers in the Pacific. We oppose the scheduled transfer of more than 7000 US Marines, and the increasing military presence post-September 11, 2001. We strongly believe that increased militarization on Guam is a violation of the human rights to self-determination of the indigenous people. The United States is legally responsible under international law to protect the people of the island and the culture of the Chamorro people and that the intensified militarization of Guam and the Asia/Pacific region is a polarizing force that has put our people in grave danger rather than provide stability.”

The history of US militarism demonstrates the continued importance of race in determining national and international relations. The native and settled people of Guam have endured racial nationalism or exclusion based on continuous and discontinuous understandings of native Pacific Islanders. Social tensions rooted in the history of racism and struggle for minorities to attain “full citizenship.” Senator Cristobal and Sabina Perez have noted the complex ways that citizenship has been curtailed through the resurgence of U.S. militarism.

The legacies of a racialized military occupation in Guam continue to inform a widely accepted belief in difference between the citizen and non-citizen. The colorblind framework of the United States as a ‘nation of immigrants’ ignores the complex differences in the histories and cultures of indigenous Micronesian people, especially in Guam. Military discourses conceal the xenophobic immigration policies and manifestations of US racial ideologies. As Chamorro scholars and policy makers pursue new ways of addressing racial problems of exclusion and citizenship, the question of self-determination in Guam remains unanswered. If we, the people of Guam and the Northern Mariana’s Islands are to survive expanding U.S. militarism.

The Fourth Committee must give top priority to the fulfillment of our inalienable right to self-determination, as affirmed by General Resolutions 1514 and 1541, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Fourth Committee must immediately enact the process of decolonization for Guåhan in lieu of the severe, irreversible impacts of US militarization. This process must include a fully funded and far-reaching education campaign informing all Chamorros from Guåhan of our right to self-determination and decolonization options.

The Fourth Committee must thoroughly investigate the administering power’s noncompliance with its treaty obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to promote economic, social, and cultural well-being on Guåhan.

The Fourth Committee must send UN representatives to the island within the next six months to assess the implications of US militarization plans on the decolonization of Guåhan, and the human rights implications of the cumulative impacts of the US military’s presence on our island. The Fourth Committee must contact Guåhan leaders and delegates who have presented testimony before this body, and UN funding must be allocated immediately to advance this study. We cannot rely on faulty impact studies conducted by the US, which are used to justify their actions rather than truly assess their impacts on our island.

Finally, the Fourth Committee must comply with the recommendations of other UN agencies, especially the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which recently requested an expert seminar be held to examine the impact of the UN decolonization process on indigenous peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

This committee must prioritize collaboration with Chamoru organizations and experts, such as I Nasion Chamoru, Famoksaian, Fuetsan Famalao'an and all those who have provided testimony in the past two decades.

*– Sinangan Si Michael Anthony Tuncap
Famoksaian*