

March 17, 2017, 9:00 a.m. 34th Guam Legislature Public Hearing of Resolution No. 51-34 (LS) and 52-34 (LS)

Oral Testimony

Hope Cristobal – March 17, 2017 - 2:26:27 time lapse

I'm here in support of both of the resolutions, 51-34 and 52-34. And I want to thank you because I see, Vice Speaker, your name on the resolution and I'm wondering whether any of you senators up there are going to be supporting this resolution after hearing all of us here today. We are not just a rag tag group of the people here. We are here because we want to express our heartfelt petitions to you to continue the fight. And if I could, I don't know how many of you understood what Ray has just said. I don't know how many of you truly understood but I'm sure that if you didn't understand his words, that you could perhaps absorb the vibrations and the vibes that he brought with him today. This is a very emotional time for our people and I think we come here because we look at you as our leaders. We can touch you. We can feel you. You can talk. You can respond to us. And you are the only ones that we can hope to find remedy for our problems here on our island. I do not have a prepared statement today but I will speak from my own experience. As you know, I authored the Decolonization Commission Law. As you know I authored the Chamorro Registry Law as a companion to the Decolonization Commission. That occurred after I returned from testimony in Congress in October of 1995, I believe, '96 when they, House Resource Committee had a hearing on the Guam Commonwealth draft. We knew then after that hearing, the sentiments, the two sentiments of the United States government. And we knew then that the United States government has failed us. The United States government continues to fail the people of Guam. If we fight the fight through the court. There is little room through US jurisprudence to win but we will fight because that is what gives us hope to see that our leaders are going to pick up the best that you know, what you have told us during the campaign that you would stand by us and we are looking to you to do that for us. It's a challenge because our land, which by the way is perhaps the connection to the United States. It's about our land. The takings our lands. The United States didn't come here because they are interested in giving us rights. Excuse me. They came here because they took, they wanted to take our lands. And that is the only connection the United States has with us. They don't care that we are human beings. That we have human rights that they have to contend with. The loftiest ideas of America is despicable to us. When you look at our Chamorro culture and how we deal with ourselves and our connections among ourselves, so they talk democracy? This is not just American democracy. We have learned of about democracy and the ideals of democracy but we see that the practices of democracy hinders our growth and development as a people of the land. And with all due respect, Senator San Nicolas, the idea to seek voting for president is not going to maximize the existence of the Chamorro people in the homeland. It will do nothing but allow them to go into the ballot box and put a little tick on a piece of paper that does not acknowledge who I am as a Chamorro in my homeland. Please withdraw that resolution. It does not benefit us at this time. We can perhaps, once we decide on a political status be looking at a presidential vote. At this time we need to hold up our people. We are all out here, many of us crying, pleading, hugging each other, giving each other warmth, trying to survive through these times during Mes Chamorro. We need to bring back the Chamorro registry. And you can do like former Vice Speaker Ben Pangelinan has done. We can take all those who were registered in the Chamorro

Land Trust and put them in the Chamorro registry. The Chamorro registry was passed by law so that we can identify ourselves as Chamorro people that need special care in our homeland. It's still alive and it's still in the books. The Decolonization idea came from the Chamorro Registry but the from the Chamorro Registry stands. If you look back, even Pacific Daily News supported the idea of having a Chamorro Registry so we can identify ourselves for cultural purposes. I understand the difficulties and the struggles that you will have and I understand that perhaps we will lose and we will lose in the US courts. But we look to you. We look to you perhaps through a resolution like this but perhaps through other remedies where you can craft out a way where we the people of Guam can survive as a people. The difficulties that you will have is because Guam has two personalities. We are a US territory and we are also a non-self-governing territory, acknowledged by the United States. Every year acknowledged by the United States, every year at the United Nations. And at the UN, you know although it's just a forum, we go and we plead our case as to how the Chamorro people are faring in a colonial setting. And just to digress quickly, I think one of the best things that any of you can do is relocate your senatorial offices to the steps of the White House and sit there and hold up a sign, "Chamorro Self-Determination". That will get us somewhere, not to the courts but it will make a statement to the world that we are denied this historical right of ours as a non-self-governing territory we talk about decolonization. The only people to decolonize are those who are colonized. And so senators, the vote for decolonization is qualitatively a different kind of a vote. It is not the same as the vote for senator. When you vote once as a people to decolonize, that's it. You're done. We move forward and we decide what status we want. It's a different kind of a vote. You must ask yourselves, why are the people in Arizona, and by the way, Dave Davis is a resident of Arizona, why is Arizona not conducting a plebiscite? They are done. They are done and over with. They have decided to become a state. We don't vote on our decolonization every two years. It's once in the lifetime of a people. It's a people's right, not an individual right. It's a people's right. And it is not the right of the land called Guam. That's why Davis is wrong because when we arrived on that airplane on the US air force up at Andersen, he voted with his feet when he arrived here. People who come here for other reasons than the fact that they are interested in the Chamorro people come for other reasons like economic reasons. They have already voted with their feet. They should not be voting for another people's right. It is the most flagrant discriminatory act that the United States has imposed on us but the ruling of the District Court. They have now perpetrated a racist discriminatory act on us. The US has failed us will continue to fail us but we must not stop fighting. My suggestion regarding the land trust and how we can perhaps quickly remedy and I go along with the idea of some of you, is that we have over 5000 people sitting, waiting for Chamorro Land Trust lands for so many years. Give it out tomorrow. Give all the land out to all those people on the land and we'll be done and over with. We'll solve that problem. There is a lot going on island and I know you have your minds on all these little struggles but this is a big, big fight for us. And I really applaud and I beg you and I know Senator Will Castro, you campaigned on protecting and helping people with the Chamorro Land Trust and I hope that you fight that good fight. And thank you Senator, you recognized the need to touch base with the grassroots. I applaud that. And Senator Mike San Nicolas, I applaud you looking for remedies, but you have to get our people's consent to move forward with a presidential vote, I'm sorry to say. I beg to differ with you. We need to not go that route at this time. So again, Guam with its dual personality of a non-self-governing territory and you're made to address it and the recognition that you are a senator of a colony. You must realize that. You're a senator of a colony. We need dignity and you are the leaders that will help us get our

people to attain political dignity. And we look to you. We cannot just do lip service. We've got to fight tooth and nail and a resolution must evolve into something bigger. Yes, let's take the fight to Congress, but let's fight. It's what gives us the energy. We need to energize our people right now. We are all lying down. We feel defeated because these decision by the US Department of Justice, by the District Court and all the talk by the media out there. You know we need friends but we also offer you our prayers as you do your work that is very difficult. Difficult decisions knowing that you are just a senator of a colony. I know you took the oath but we need to begin to re-think that oath because the reality is, the fight that we are fighting is because we, the Chamorro in our home. You know I just saw my old professor, Dr. Batansas (sp) and he drilled into our head how home is a place that you go to feel good. Isn't it? Home is a place that you go to feel good yet when you look around our home, you look at the social stats, and look and find out who is not feeling good in our home. It's not our visitors. It is not all those people driving around in their BMWs. It is not these businessmen that have come out here to establish business because there is militarization of the Chamorro people happening and they are going to exploit that. We are the ones that are not feeling good in our home. We occupy the lower statistics of our people. Our homeless are increasing and voting for president is not going to remedy that. But fighting for dignity, fighting for political dignity is worth the fight. Just to add a little more, when you look around, we are the ones making the mistakes in our home. We are the most incarcerated people in our home. Those are symptoms of being a colony so we need to lift those burdens off the shoulders of our people so we can thrive. That's what we are looking at when we look at you as everyone has expressed how youthful you all are but behind that youth is the energy and some positive vibes that we get. And we hope and pray that you will all succeed for us. Si Yu'us Ma'ase and thank you very much. I'm sorry Senators, can I just finish? I'd like to invite all of you and everyone here in this room. We are holding a rally at Adelup from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the 31st of this month to express our Chamorro-ness and to request for respect for the Chamorro people. Today I brought this banner, "Respect the Chamoru People" to emphasize the fact that we need to improve in that area. Si Yu'us Ma'ase.