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(no subject)

1 message

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To: "senatorterlajeguam@gmail.com" <senatorterlajeguam@gmail.com>

Dear World,

I am a native of Guam, a United States island territory in the Pacific. We natives, or indigenous people, are called Chamorro. Currently, Chamorros are facing something very similar to what the Native Americans and Native Hawaiians have been facing – the repossession of our land by the U.S. Government.

Historical Background:

Our island was conquered and colonized by Spain in the 1500s through 1898. During that period, there was near total genocide of our people as our population was greatly reduced due to our resistance to Spanish colonization which led to war, and the introduction of European diseases. Our people were raped, massacred and enslaved for hundreds of years by the Spaniards. Our land, seas, and our humanity was taken from us. Translate many of the existing indigenous Chamorro last names and you will find that even some of these names represent despair and loss experienced during this period of history.

Then in 1898, the United States took possession of our island following the Spanish-American War.

In 1941, we were conquered by Japan during World War II. We were once again enslaved, placed in concentration camps, worked to death, starved, tortured and killed by the Japanese. My grandparents, survivors of the War, never talked about these things, so we had to learn about this dark period of our history from other survivors who were willing to talk, and through books and scarce written memoirs. It wasn't until my grandma had dementia when she would display symptoms of PTSD such as flashbacks and paranoia, forcing us to board the windows because "the Japanese are coming."

It was not until 1944 when we were liberated by the U.S. from Japanese occupation. Following our liberation, our parents were subject to more oppression. I don't know much about this because once again it is often taboo to talk about such harsh realities; however, it is known that the Americans, among other things, beat our parents for speaking the native language at school. As a result, many of us are unable to speak our native language today.

And although we gained U.S. citizenship, we have never been allowed to vote for president of the United States. We were described as "savage" and "alien races" because we were not Anglo-Saxon. Therefore, we were not granted federal voting rights.

Today, there are two large U.S. military bases on our island: Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam. Guam serves as one of the greatest strategic military locations in the Asia-Pacific region. Our island is also home to one of the highest concentrations of military veterans among U.S. States and territories. One in eight adults on our island have served in the armed forces. As of 2013, the Dept. of Defense controls nearly 36,000 acres of Guam land, or approximately 1/4 of the island. If that area is concentrated, it would be as large as Inalahan, Malessa, Talofoto, and Humatak combined.

Today:

Following a discrimination complaint filed by a non-native resident, the Dept. of Justice, in a letter to our governor, stated it completed an investigation into possible violations of the Fair Housing Act in Guam's land-use policies and practices under the Chamorro Land Trust Act. The Chamorro Land Trust Act allows

natives to lease certain lands for 99 years for \$1 each year. This allows natives to lease some of the lands that were seized or otherwise acquired due to colonization. This is our government's version of Native Chamorro reservations. This land, potentially, could be designated for natives so that in the event much of our island is bought out by non-natives, and should we continue to become more and more of a numerical minority, we would still have some land to facilitate our social, cultural and economic well-being to secure our existence on our island.

However, the U.S. Government believes that this is discrimination, and that these designated ancestral lands should be open to all people, natives and non-natives alike.

Many Chamorros believe that this means that the designated lands -- essentially Native Chamorro reservations -- are once again being claimed by the U.S. Government and non-natives. Many believe that this is equivalent to Native American reservations being stolen once again by non-natives, and equivalent to the repossession of Hawaiian land from Native Hawaiians.

My people were here long before anyone who massacred, raped, enslaved and colonized us; and these very same people are once again trying to steal the little that we have, and threaten the dignity we and our ancestors have long fought and died for. The land that gave us life as a people. The land that was our mother and that gave our mothers life. We ask, why do they continue to take that which is sacred to us only to satisfy their greed? How can you claim something that was never yours and yet stolen over and over again? It is less than 33 miles, but it means everything to us. These lands do not just secure our physical and economic existence, but rather, they spiritually define who we are as a people and what little we have left as a result of colonization and genocide.

In conclusion, I leave you with words that are truer today, more than any other day in modern Chamorro history:

Ginen i mas takhelo' gi Hinasso-ku,
i mas takhalom gi Kurason-hu,
yan i mas figo' na Nina'siñã-hu,
Hu ufresen maisa yu' para bai hu Prutehi
yan hu Difende i Hinengge,
i Kottura,
i Lenguahi,
i Aire,
i Hanom yan i tano' Chamoru,
ni'Irensiã-ku Direchu ginen as Yu'os Tãta.
Este hu Afitma gi hilo' i bipblia yan i banderã-hu, i banderan Guãhan.
Fanohge Chamoru.

Translation:

From the inner-most recesses of my mind,
From deep within my heart,
And with all my might,
This I offer.
To protect and defend
The Beliefs
The Culture
The Language
The Air
The Water and The Land of the Chamoru.
My heritage comes directly from God,
This I affirm on the Bible and my Flag
- The Flag of Guahan.
Stand Up Chamoru.

We request that you share this message so that the world can hear our voices and the voices of our ancestors. We desperately need you.

In solidarity with all indigenous peoples fighting for their rights, we sincerely thank you for your support and love.

Saina Ma'áse,

Genedine Mangloña Aquino

• Please share this in support of the Chamorro people, and in solidarity with all indigenous people fighting for their rights.

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone

