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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Chamorros, Ghosts, Non-voting Delegates:
GUAM! Where the Production of America's Sovereignty Begins

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Michael Lujan Bevacqua

Committee in charge:

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair
Professor John D. Blanco
Professor Keith L. Camacho
Professor Ross H. Frank
Professor K. Wayne Yang

2010

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The Dissertation of Michael Lujan Bevacqua is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2010

DEDICATION

Este para Si Sumãhi yan Si Akli'e'

Este lokkue' para i anitin i hagas matai na Maga'lâhi Si Chelef (taotao Orote). Ha gof tungo' taimanu pumuha i sakman i enimigu-ña. Puede' ha (gi este na tinige'-hu) para bai hu osge gui'.

EPIGRAPH

No one is as powerful as we make them out to be.

Alice Walker

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Achokka' guaha tiempo gi este na hinanao-hu, sinieñte-ku na taibali este, pat makkat dimasiao, annai mafâtto yu' (put fin) gi i finakpo', hu komprende ta'lo i bali-ña. Meggai na malasgue' giya Guahu gi este na hinanao-hu. Malasgue' i hila'-hu, sa' mañodda' yu' bos para bai hu usa kumentos put asunton *colonization* yan *decolonization*. Malasgue' lokkue i titinos-hu, sa' tumo'a i idea-hu siha. Este na *dissertation*, ha representa i finat na hiniyong i trese años na umeskuekulâ-ku guini giya Guahan yan gi lagu giya California. Annai lahoben yu', ya tumutuhon ha' yu' gi i che'cho' *activist* yan i kinalamten pulitikât put asunton Chamorro siha, guaha manuge'-ku ni' hu chuchule' ha'esta ki pâ'go. "Kada minetmot linahyan u tutuhon ni' un sinangan ha'." I hinengge-ku put este na idea, matulaika didide', lao presisisu ha' yan impottânte este, kalang un finayin pulitikât. Ti siña ta tungo' kontiempo hafa i minagahet na sinangan ni' para u yokyok i guafin "minetmot linahayan." Lao este na chinatsiguru ti i finakpo' (i ettimo na sinangan). Puede ha' gi este na tinige'-hu, meggai

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VITA

- 1998 - 2010 Freelance Artist
- 1998 – 2003 Curator’s Assistant, Isla Center for the Arts, University of Guam
- 2001 B.A. in Art and Literature, University of Guam
- 2004 M.A. in Micronesian Studies, University of Guam
- 2007 M.A. in Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego
- 2006 – 2008 Research Assistant, Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego
- 2006 – 2008 Assistant Managing Editor, *Social Identities*
- 2006 – 2008 Assistant Managing Editor, *African Identities*
- 2008 – 2010 Apprentice Blacksmith under the Chamorro Master *Tun* Joaquin Lujan
- 2009 – 2010 Instructor, History and English, University of Guam
- 2010 Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

PUBLICATIONS

Ghosts, Chamorros and Non-Voting Delegates: Guam! Where the Production of America’s Sovereignty Begins. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2010.

“The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier: Tracing the Militarization of Desire in Guam U.S.A.” *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*. Edited by Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Lujan Camacho. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

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“I am Chamorro,” “My Island is a Big American Footnote” and “I Received a Letter from a Chamorro Soldier in Iraq” *The Space Between: Negotiating Culture, Identity and Place in the Pacific*. Edited by Marata Tamaira. University of Hawai’i Press, 2010.

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“Religion in a Time of War,” “Practices of Ancestral Worship,” “Ancient Chamorro Cosmology,” “Taotaomo’na,” and “Ancestral Worship,” and “Contemporary Manifestations of Ancestral Worship.” Encyclopedia entries written for the online encyclopedia *Guampedia*. 2007.

“Agad’na,” Warfare,” “Mampulitiku,” “Pumeska,” “Mangkalamya,” and “Division of Labor by Age, Gender and Class.” Encyclopedia entries written for the online encyclopedia *Guampedia*. 2006.

“These May or May Not Be Americans: The Patriotic Myth and the Hijacking of Chamorro History in Guam.” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Guam, 2005.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Ethnic Studies

Specialization in:

- Chamorro Studies
- Micronesian Studies
- Pacific Islander Studies
- Indigenous Studies
- Political Theory
- Social Theory
- Military Studies

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Chamorros, Ghosts, Non-voting Delegates:
GUAM! Where the Production of America's Sovereignty Begins

by

Michael Lujan Bevacqua

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair

When asked about decolonization and the rights to self-determination of the peoples of the Micronesian islands, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger infamously stated, "There are only 90,000 people there; who gives a dam?" It is in this sort of similar dismissive logic that colonialism today in place such as the island of Guam is regarded. As a colony in a world which has already gotten over colonialism, a place such as Guam is a sad exception to the existing multicultural family of nations. In this sense, Guam and places like it are insignificant, and say or mean very little in terms of describing or defining the global order today. They exist to simply be attached to other larger nations, and are defined primarily through powerlessness and dependency.

In this dissertation, these relationships and the way they are dominantly articulated today will be challenged and denaturalized. The notions that Guam is an irrelevant effect of the United States, merely a mistake on sovereignty's journey, or a powerless American territory, will be interrogated to reveal their structure. The core of accomplishing this challenge, which amounts to a process of theoretical decolonization, is to re-imagine and re-articulate the meaning of Guam's ambiguous, exceptional status, from one of irrelevance or powerlessness, and reveal the way in which Guam or other sites like it, actually play constitutive roles in producing the powers that claim them.

Therefore this dissertation will seek to decolonization the space between Guam and the United States, and Guam and the concept of sovereignty by showing the structure by which Guam potentially sits at the *center* of American power, and that there are a litany of ways in which its banality, its geography, its coloniality all intersect to constitute the United States, its power, its authority, its might, its sovereignty. Each chapter will represent a different attempt to re-signify that discursive space between Guam and the United States and sovereignty, and to reverse the conventional way in which the space is assumed meaning, and what the tendencies for power and dependency are, or who constitutes who and who is powerful or powerless?

CHAPTER 1: GUAM!

Where the Production of America's Sovereignty Begins!

Hmm [sic] American colonial power is becoming really schizofrantic [sic] over the past year. The Lakota seceded, some Hawaiians are taking back their throne, Guam gets to vote in the DNC, the US has gone suddenly silent about their ridiculous North-Pole-isn't-Canadian bullcrap, and Mexicans have colonized California. The empire's in chaos! this [sic] must be what Confucius meant when he talked about living in exciting times.

hyperspacemonkey, from the website *FARK.com*¹

1. Sinthomes, Slogans and Sovereignty

The title of this chapter and the dissertation in general might seem odd for a number of reasons. It collapses, or causes a collision between, a number of different concepts that many might not be familiar with, or feel go together. First we have Guam, a colony of the United States, or as it is more formally known, a territory or a dependency of it first taken in 1898 during the Spanish American War. It is an island which is blessed with the paradoxical nature of being a tiny, insignificant footnote to the United States in the Western Pacific at one moment, and one of its most important military bases the next. A place which also possesses the curious quality of being a colony and an imperial asset, which in most cases is rejected as being capable of signifying either colonialism or imperialism, as both Guam and its indigenous people are defined primarily through their ability to be liberated by their colonizer. Then we have the United States, which most likely needs no introduction, but when placed next to Guam might find its usual “awesome” power amplified even more.

¹ hyperspacemonkey, from the website *FARK.com*, <http://www.fark.com>. The thread from which this quote was taken was deleted and can no longer be found on the site. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

The reference to its sovereignty however, might cause a few eyebrows to be raised. Sovereignty can refer to many things, but generally deals with nations, their rights, their ability to govern themselves, and their ability to provide stability and security for their way of life. Lastly we have the idea of production, representing the link between Guam and the United States (and its sovereignty). Aside from the literal interpretations, this marker is meant to convey that somehow Guam plays an active role or is a source of the constitution of American sovereignty. It is the curiosity that this title might instill or, the curiousness it exudes, that is the impetus for this dissertation.

The title is drawn from a phrase which began as a tourist slogan for Guam, but has become a slogan representing Guam in general. *Guam: Where America's Day Begins!* can be found on t-shirts, websites, blogs and furthermore, makes appearances in the speech of US Generals, Guam Governors and Senators. Its influence goes beyond its being a mere slogan for tourists, but extends into grounding the political identity of Guam. For those of us who claim Guam as home, this slogan represents a way in which we can overcome the colonial difference that marks all aspects of our lives, so that we may somehow embody America and claim to finally be a secure piece of it. It joins other slogans - most notably: *Guam: America in Asia*, *Guam: The Edge of America*, *Guam: The Tip of America's Spear*. - meant to re-mark or remake the colonial tie between Guam and the United States, Chamorros and their Mother Country, not as a point of inequality or exploitation, but rather as a point of celebratory exceptionality. These are sinthomes, or narrative quilting points, which exist to make natural a certain way of perceiving Guam's relationship to the United States, and thus answer everyday questions of Guam's

“power,” or what it is and is not capable of, what it can and cannot authentically embody or mean.²

These slogans are a point of frustration for someone such as myself, a long-time political and cultural Chamorro scholar-activist, who is interested in Guam’s decolonization rather than the maintenance of its colonization.³ Despite the superficial nature of these slogans, their impact, their power runs very deep in terms of reinforcing/reproducing very real and intimate worlds of dependency. They reinforce colonial fictions as to who makes the colonies possible and who makes them function.

What defines Guam, or more deeply, what makes Guam possible, what makes it secure and prosperous, makes it a place that can be recognized as having value or purpose is this link to the United States. It authorizes Guam as a place in the world through different geopolitical, military, economic and other discourses. As a result, Guam is reduced to an object, an inactive supplementary fragment within the political metaphor - something made by America, a weapon used by America. It is a place that signifies in so many ways Guam’s powerlessness; it is rendered as nothing but a dependency, a dot on a map, the tip of a spear, something that does nothing more than signify the prowess and greatness of the United States.

² According to Lacanian theorist Slavoj Žižek, a sinthome, as opposed to a symptom, is something that does not just signify a system but offers a point through which the system can be unraveled. It is the imaginary point through which an entire ideological network is knotted and thus offers a means through which the system itself can be undermined. In *the Ticklish Subject*, Žižek offers as an example of a sinthome, “single unemployed mother.” It is a point where according to him, “all the lines of predominant ideological argumentation (the return to family values, the rejection of the welfare state and its ‘uncontrolled’ spending, etc. meet.” Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London: Verso, 1999), 176.

³ As a result, I have often tried to invoke the form of the slogan while inserting my own critique. For the publication *DraftNotices*, a magazine published bi-monthly by a coalition of peace and anti-war organizations in San Diego, I wrote an article on the American militarization of Guam. I titled the article “Guam: Where America’s Empire Begins!”

Although as a colony, one might consider sovereignty to be absent with regards to Guam, this is hardly the case. The concept appears everywhere in a multitude of ways, especially by virtue of Guam's exceptional, ambiguous political status. So when I refer to sovereignty in this dissertation, there is no single way I am intending it, but will constantly move throughout different variations of the concept, dragging the site of Guam along with me, seeking its traces, seeking the structure by which Guam, the United States and sovereignty are bound together, and what that can tell us about Guam's colonization and potential decolonization.

I will refer to sovereignty as a dream and a nightmare, a goal and an obstacle; a force or which some strive and struggle for, while others jealously defend. It is considered to be the lynchpin of the world order, a concept which cannot be questioned or supplanted for fear that the world will regress or return to a previous violent moment. It is a theory of rights (and wrongs) for nation-states, a theory for who should have power and who shouldn't. It can be a show of power or strength, it can be the force through which the inconsistencies of a nation are dismissed or dispelled, and a feeling of stability and order is maintained. There is a logic however to this varied and ungrounded way of conceiving and conceptualizing sovereignty, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Specifically for colonies and people still struggling for self-determination, sovereignty can be a frustrating paradox, a source of authority for colonizers and those who build their foundations upon conquest and discovery. At the same time, sovereignty signifies a hope for a radical change of meaning, an end to the trauma of colonization and a path towards decolonization. For indigenous people, such as Chamorros, sovereignty is

a source of power; it can be a path towards finding oneself and one's true powers in a world which is built upon their reduction to ghosts in their own lands.

2. Decolonizing Space

In this dissertation, I will regularly refer to the place or the non-place of Guam in relation to the United States (as an imposing nation-state or political force in the world) and also in relation to the concept of sovereignty. The liability involved in this invoking of a place and a non-place, is due to the inherent lability that Guam is shouldered with as a place and a discursive object. As the ambiguous place of Guam means we cannot ascribe it a singular, particular place, we must instead interrogate its movement and its motion, and thus the focus of this dissertation will be on the discursive spaces that tie together Guam with the United States and sovereignty, and the ways in which these relationships are given meaning or in certain instances deprived of meaning.

The ambiguous relationship that Guam has with the United States is one it seems to share with sovereignty as well. In both instances Guam is more of an object than a subject, and more of a footnote or an accident of history than something which could be considered to be an appropriate object of intellectual inquiry or member of the American family. A part of the United States and at the same time apart from it, a recipient of "state-like treatment," rather than a state, and subsequently, a non-sovereign, non-self-governing territory, which all American legal history argues belongs to the United States.⁴ The discursive spaces that cover the distance between these concepts are both

⁴ The notion of "state-like treatment" as a way of erasing of Guam's colonial status will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

paradoxically ambiguous and always uncertain, there is no place for Guam, and so it constantly moves and there is always a nagging uncertainty as to whether or not Guam is here or not, is included or not, but at the same time, especially in terms of its relationship to the United States, as a dependency, a helpless, powerless speck in the Pacific, a weapon in its arsenal, their shared relationship achieves an almost natural and commonsensical character.

An anonymous visitor to the website *Decolonize Guam*, left a comment which summed up very well, this peculiar status, the strange and curious way that Guam exists, the mixture of uncertainty and certainty which for some reason blends together into this banal colonial brew.⁵ The comment was in response to an article which had been posted titled “War Stories and the Chamorus: journalism and militarism on the tip of the spear” written by a former Guam newspaper reporter Beau Hodai on the deep scars that American colonialism and militarism have left on Chamorros and their lands.⁶ Articles such as this are common on the site, since it is meant to be a collection of different news stories related to militarism and colonialism in the Pacific.⁷ The comment attacked the

⁵ In this dissertation you will find in the footnotes the titles “Anonymous” and “Fulana/Fulanu” used when referring to certain sources. Anonymous is used to refer to those who wrote something on the internet or attached a comment to something on the internet without using their name, and for which there is no means of tracking down their identity. Fulana and Fulanu are the Chamorro words for an anonymous person (with Fulana for women and Fulanu for me). Throughout this dissertation, these terms will be used to designate those whom I interviewed in person, over the phone or via email, who initially consented to talk to me, but later, upon me consulting with them about what from their statements I wished to use, requested that I withhold their names. A number of topics discussed in this dissertation would be considered taboo or “anti-American” amongst some Chamorro families and I sense that this impulse is drawn primarily from that.

⁶ Beau Hodai, “War Stories and Chamorus: Journalism and Militarism on the Tip of the Spear,” *Indian Country News*, http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6896&Itemid=64, July 2009. Site Accessed 10 January 2009.

⁷ The website is run by a group of anonymous Chamorros, of which I am a member. The article in question however was not posted by me.

article as “more leftist garbage” from “younbg [sic] pinheads” who are trying to “take back guam [sic].”⁸

Although we can’t know for certain who the comment was made by, how they identify themselves, or what their place is in relation to Guam, the end of the comment in which asserts a particular ownership over Guam, as belonging to both the United States and the commenter, implies that the commenter sees him or herself as the beneficiary of those naturalized relations between Guam, the United States and sovereignty. Or in another way, the commenter is the subject, into which the ownership of Guam, the power that is produced in those relations is pumped into.

No one really knows what Guam is, not Obama, not Biden, and not even the people there who complain out of one side of their mouth and suck on to Uncle Sam wth [sic] the other. The only thing that is certain is that it belongs to us...⁹

In this dissertation, these relationships and the way they are dominantly articulated today will be challenged and denaturalized. The notions that Guam is an irrelevant effect of the United States or a mistake on sovereignty’s journey, or a powerless territory will be picked apart and interrogated. The core of accomplishing this challenge, which amounts to a process of theoretical decolonization, is to re-imagine and re-articulate the meaning of Guam’s ambiguous, exceptional status, from one of irrelevance or powerlessness, and reveal the way in which Guam or other sites like it, actually play constitutive roles in producing the powers that claim them. That the banal veneer that covers them, the commonsensical ways in which they are dismissed as

⁸ Anonymous, “Comment Left on the Blog Post: War Stories from the Tip of the Spear,” *Decolonize Guam*, <http://decolonizeguam.blogspot.com/2009/07/war-stories-from-tip-of-spear.html>, Post Published 10 July 2009. Comment Left 10 July 2009. Site Accessed 10 January 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

meaningless or not enough to express any sort of independence, seem to signify their location as being a great distance away. The decolonizing of the space between Guam and the United States and sovereignty means showing the structure by which Guam potentially sits at the *center* of American power, and that there are a litany of ways in which its banality, its geography, its coloniality all intersect in particular ways, to constitute the United States, its power, its authority, its might, its sovereignty. Each of the different ways in which I define sovereignty, chapter by chapter is an attempt to resignify that discursive space, to reverse the conventional way in which the space is assumed meaning, and what the tendencies for power and dependency are, or who constitutes who and who is powerful or powerless? It is for that reason that this dissertation possesses the peculiar title of “*Guam!: Where the Production of America’s Sovereignty Begins!*”

3. *Activist and Academic Commitments*

It is important to note now that although sovereignty will be constantly, almost obsessively invoked, exemplified and analyzed in this dissertation, the focus here is not on sovereignty, but on Guam and decolonizing it. Much of the unconventional nature of this dissertation, meaning the approach to establishing concepts such as sovereignty, or the methodology I employ for gathering evidence is about the struggle for critiquing a hulking master concept such as sovereignty, or the dominance of the world’s self-proclaimed global sovereign, the United States, from the place of a small, tiny dot of an island in the Western Pacific, and my efforts to ensure that my critiques are not quickly subsumed or washed away by the sweltering authority of that I wish to critique. Over

most of this dissertation's chapters, this image of Guam as something overwhelmed or on the verge of engulfment will constantly be returned to. In particular, in terms of establishing this dissertation and its methodology, and explaining its theoretical foundations, I will regularly invoke this image, in order to explain my taking a particular approach.

The desire to stay committed to Guam and to the development of something useful for working towards various forms of its decolonization is my priority and the key assumption in how this dissertation has been crafted. It is important to note, that this commitment to Guam does not in anyway mean that this dissertation is selfishly about Guam only, or only has relevance to Guam and to Guam issues. As I write about Guam, I am actively challenging the way it is naturally or unnaturally connected to sites in addition to the United States, trying to contest the commonsensical ways in which it belongs or mis-belongs to one body of power or body of knowledge, and work to nudge it towards another. In this section I will outline, first the interventions which I hope that this dissertation can make with an explicit mind towards Guam and its decolonization, and second, the ways in which this dissertation can have a larger and broader impact.

My first priorities are that this dissertation be something which is useful in Guam's decolonization. While at different junctures this term may have a specific meaning, in this instance I am using it in a general way to refer to the re-signifying and contesting of the colonial discourses that pin Guam down, and give it an oppressive aura of smallness, inadequacy and dependency. This dissertation is meant for both academic and non-academic audiences and will hopefully affect the way in which Guam is

presented or treated as an object of intellectual inquiry in academic scholarship, but also as an object of activist discourse.

This dissertation is my most recent attempt at bolstering the small, but very necessary academic field of Chamorro/Guam Studies, which consists of no academic programs, but just a dozen or so scholars mainly situated in Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies.¹⁰ As an intellectual conversation, the field has primarily been concerned with contesting dominant historiography in Guam, and re-asserting the long silenced Chamorro side of Guam's history.¹¹ As Guam remains one of the world's last

¹⁰ Vicente Diaz, Christine Delisle, Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "The State of Chamorro Studies" A Roundtable Discussion at the 2005 American Studies Association Conference, Washington D.C. 6 November 2005.

¹¹ Since the 1970's, but in particular over the past fifteen years, there has been an exciting surge in the production of critical Chamorro scholarship. Of the numerous scholars that have made this possible, there are three in particular with whom my work will be engaged with, former Guam delegate to the United States Congress Robert Underwood, Vicente Diaz and Anne Perez Hattori. The works of Robert Underwood, or the "Godfather" of Chamorro scholarship as I often refer to him, lay the groundwork for all conversations in Guam about issues of decolonization, Chamorro identity and Chamorro self-determination to take place. In the 1987, he along with another pioneering Chamorro scholar, Laura Torres Souder edited *Chamorro Self-Determination*, which provided a generation of Chamorros disillusioned over their ambiguous political existences a language and framework for seeking political change. Over the past three decades, whether as a teacher, a political activist or as Guam's non-voting Delegate to the US Congress, Underwood's work has been instrumental in fostering a critical awareness of the inequities in Guam and the United States political relationship. For example, his series of newspaper articles titled "The Colonial Era: Manning the Helm of the U.S.S. Guam" published in 1977 were one of the first interventions into contesting American benevolence in the colonization of Guam. Rather than regurgitating the canonical narratives of American determined care and concern for Chamorros, Underwood emphasized the obscene underside of their presence, which was not only openly racist and infantilizing, but also confused and completely disorganized. Another article published that same year, "Red Whitewash and Blue: Painting Over the Chamorro Experience" was one of the first critical analysis of Liberation Day and expressions of Chamorro patriotism towards the United States. This article was vital in helping move discussions away from Chamorros as an obvious object of patriotic attachment and reveal the negotiations of indigenous identity, memory and history which were taking place. Vicente Diaz's work focuses on the politics of Chamorro culture and survival. Although not Chamorro, Diaz writes eloquently of the struggles of Chamorros to survive despite the discursive regimes in Guam which have been created to deny that existence. In articles such as "Simply Chamorro: Tales of Demise and Survival in Guam," Diaz's most important intervention is the description of a hybrid and more fluid Chamorro identity, which rudely confronts the anthropological notions of purity and cultural stasis which have entangled and entrapped Chamorros for centuries. "In De-Liberating Liberation Day: History, Memory and Culture in Guam," he builds off of Underwood's work on Chamorro patriotism, delving further into the discourse Chamorros create around their loyalty to the United States and their survival under Japanese occupation during World War II. His efforts prove important in marring that image of the Chamorro as the sublime object of patriotic intersections, by showing the negotiations of resistance and local commemoration which take place, despite

official colonies, with absolutely no pretense to any sort of formal sovereignty over itself, the task for Chamorro and Guam Studies scholars, according to Chamorro Studies scholar Vicente Diaz, is to “reverse the colonial gaze,” this meaning not simply challenging content of a history of Guam, but rather working to affect the presumptions that take place prior to the moment of writing, to begin to re-assert control over the epistemological frameworks for our histories and the knowledge we produce.¹² But as Chamorro/Guam Studies is necessarily related to a larger political and regional project of Pacific Islander Cultural Studies, this dissertation is also very much situated in furthering certain intellectual projects of decolonization that have emerged in recent decades from

the veneer of super patriotism. Anne Perez Hattori’s work has been vital first in understanding Chamorro resistance to United States colonialism and second, in recognizing the coloniality of the US in Guam, and finding ways to see past its claims of simple benevolence. Her pioneering article, *Righting Civil Wrongs: The Guam Congress Walkout of 1949*, has paved the way for new understanding about Chamorro resistance to the United States, by complicating images of Chamorros being passively submissive and loyal colonial subjects incapable of agency or resistance. In her article Hattori chronicles the efforts of several dozens of Chamorros who pushed for civilian rule on Guam, after the United States had reinstated its military dictatorship after recapturing the island from the Japanese in 1944. In her recently published text *Colonial Dis-Ease: US Navy Health Policies in Guam 1898-1941*, Hattori has made another critical intervention into our understandings about how military power operates in Guam, in particular during the first 40 years of American rule. Her text shows a complex network of invasions and inscriptions upon the bodies, minds and spaces of Chamorros on behalf of the United States Navy and their “civilizing” projects, as well as an equally complex network of Chamorro accommodation and resistance to this civilizing. What similarly characterizes the works of these authors is their emphasis on how Chamorros negotiate and thus attain agency throughout various periods of colonization. The imposing of a Chamorro Catholic identity upon Chamorros in the 16th and 17th centuries, must necessarily lead to a discussion about how this imposition was negotiated. What elements were thus eagerly snatched up, rejected or transformed?¹¹ During the period of American education, how was the instruction of Chamorro dirtiness and savagery in schools, negotiated by those who perceived themselves to be the object of the discourse? Survival is what is always emphasized in these texts. Chamorros holding onto a continuity, maintaining a connection which the colonizers wish to destroy or hide. The intent being to irritate dominant colonial narratives as well as re-create the Chamorro as a subject of agency, rather than a mere impure effect of colonization or a dupe upon whom colonial mandates make marks. Thus revealing to ourselves, the living, breathing, speaking and thus negotiating Chamorro which colonizing veils of extinction based on cultural change have kept hidden from us for so long. Vicente M. Diaz, “Deliberating “Liberation Day”: Identity, History, Memory and War in Guam,” *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)*. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama Eds., (Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2001). Anne Perez Hattori, *Colonial Dis-Ease: US Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898-1941*, (Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2004). Robert Underwood, “Red, Whitewash and Blue: Painting over the Chamorro Experience,” *Pacific Daily News*, 17 July 1977, 6-8. *Chamorro Self Determination*, Laura Souder and Robert Underwood, (eds), (Chamorro Studies Association: Hagatna, Guam, 1991).

¹² Vince Diaz, *Personal Communication*, American Studies Association Conference, Washington D.C. 6 November 2005.

the field. Most importantly amongst these is the work of the late Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa, and his call to re-imagine and re-map the Pacific in his seminal essay "Our Sea of Islands."¹³ As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, this dissertation represents one such attempt at further expanding the projects of Chamorro/Guam Studies and Pacific Island Cultural Studies, by reversing the colonial gaze which plagues both Guam and the Pacific in general; and what this amounts to is a re-mapping and re-thinking both Guam, and the spaces that connect it to the Pacific, to the United States and to the world.

At the same time, my intent for this dissertation is to provide a map for perceiving Guam's colonization and decolonization, or the structure by which Guam is fixed upon a bleak map of powerlessness and dependency, and the potential for that to be transformed. Although each chapter represents a particular decolonizing intervention, the bulk of this dissertation is preoccupied with providing a snapshot of the various levels of Guam's colonization, from the massive, formal doctrines and acts, to the most ephemeral and quiet moments. Or in another way, this dissertation is intended to talk about the everyday ways in which Guam's colonization takes place, and how Chamorros and others, whether they be in Guam or the United States can both knowingly and unknowingly facilitate this process, and how they can benefit or become sovereign through it. That is a key point, in linking the powerlessness, the dependency that Chamorros and Guam are cursed with, to the potency, power and sovereignty of the United States, as something which is drawn from Guam and pumped into the United States, whether it be through a military commander, a Senator or a random blogger. The hope for this intervention is that it

¹³ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

provides a map for helping other activists interested in the empowerment of Guam, in the demilitarizing of Guam or the honing of critiques against the United States and its policies towards Guam.

In terms of both activist and academic work, this dissertation is about challenging the narrow way in which Guam exists as a potential object in the world, which as will be repeatedly recounted in this dissertation is either as just a territory which is owned by the United States or one of its military bases in the Pacific. The smallness of Guam, its lack of sovereignty, the acceptance of its ownership by the United States, the way that it does not fit into many of the available classifications for political and cultural communities, all mean that it is often rejected or ignored when the Asia Pacific region or the world is organized in different ways. In this dissertation, that banality of Guam, that veneer that insists an emptiness or a nothingness to Guam, save for what the United States brings there, will be critiqued, and the narrowness of Guam's representations will be bypassed, in hopes of articulating a radically different Guam. What I hope to accomplish is the freeing or "liberating" of Guam from that narrowness of being an American footnote and nothing more, and setting the stage for it to be re-articulated as something which can join others in broad critiques of the United States and its various manifestations of imperialism, colonialism and militarism, but also exemplify the struggles of indigenous and colonized peoples for resistance, and what critiques they represent of nation-states and sovereignty.¹⁴

¹⁴ A similar intervention of this style can be found in the preface to Craig Santos Perez's poetry book *From Unincorporated Territory [hacha]*. After recounting snippets of Guam's colonial history and invoking the "strategic importance" of Guam as site from which attacks can be launched, Perez asserts his own subversive intent for Guam. And that his text be used as a launching point for other counter-narratives and

It is for this, that although Guam is, as a site, in many ways unique, it still possesses importantly similarities to other communities, and this dissertation is not written in any attempt to cut off those possible connections. This will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, as to how the issue of Guam's uniqueness is deployed strategically, but for the moment, I will address what sort of larger implications my project might have for other scholars, whose work doesn't deal with Guam.

A further intent of this dissertation is to provide an intervention into the conceptualizing of sovereignty as a concept, in particular the way it becomes a magical substance through which the rights and power of some are legitimized and the potential rights and power of others are neutralized. The concept of sovereignty is an obtrusive one today, but in Chapter 2 I will discuss the specific, denaturalized way in which I will be conceiving it in this dissertation, or the way I will attempt to invoke the concept but at the same time deprive it of the tranquility and security the concept is generally ascribed, even as it is being critiqued.

As will also be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, this dissertation is meant to join other critical work that comes from disciplines such as Ethnic Studies, American Studies and Pacific Islander Studies, that are designed to not just chronicle the *båba bidan-ñiha*, or bad things, and the history of violence that a particular nation-state or entity (in this case the United States) has committed; but instead go beyond this, into discussing the theoretical ways in which the power or authority of that entity is created. This dissertation is written in such a way as to poke holes in the authority of the United

for voices which are speaking in the interests of Guam and not its colonizers. Craig Santos Perez, *From Unincorporated Territory [hacha]*, (Honolulu: Tinfo Press, 2006).

States, primarily by showing the way in which its power, its sovereignty is built not solely upon massive acts of violence, but more subtle, everyday expulsions and inclusions. And that it is maintained through networks of usually small, minute, exceptional sites, which paradoxically rest on the edges of the United States, but always at its center as well, embedded in the ways it is constituted.

4. From Venerability to Vulnerability

Finally, although this dissertation is written specifically, with a particular small, banal, potentially “irrelevant” site in mind, the discussions and the distinctions I create can have relevance for any scholar whose intended project is fraught with a lack of formal or acceptable evidence, or is foreclosed and are “unincorporated” by the academic disciplines or conversations into which they are intervening.¹⁵ I am wary of making explicit claims to who might be helped by this dissertation, because ultimately the banality of an subject, the sorts of obstacles one might encounter are all contextual, and can be based on how well fate is on your side in terms of readers of manuscripts, dissertation committee members or whether or not something written by a recognized scholarly name has ever mentioned your topic.

That being said, the sites or communities that I will engage with in this dissertation other than Guam can provide us some clues as to how other intellectual projects might be helped by this dissertation. Offshore and interior territories, “secret” military bases, indigenous peoples, colonies, these are all different ghosts which frequent

¹⁵ Robert Warrior, “A Room of One’s Own at the ASA: An Indigenous Provocation,” *American Quarterly*, (55:4), December 2003, 683.

this dissertation along with Guam, and all share similar supplemental relationships to both bodies of knowledge, such as academic or activist conversations and to political organisms, such as nation-states. The grounding of a theory for analyzing the relationships between these ghosts and the bodies which claim them must take great care not to simply reproduce the supplemental naturalness or the insignificance of the site.¹⁶ Or in another way, the smallness, invisibility or banality of your site, already creates a litter of commonsense barriers that you need to pass through, such as explaining why your site isn't too limited, isn't violent enough, or isn't important enough, and you need to be very explicit in deflecting these points and finding ways to incorporate them into your theoretical foundation. These nagging questions don't simply affect the intended object of your research out there in the world, but the very ways in which you are supposed to produce or not produce knowledge about it. Those limitations are in the room as you write, and for those places which suffer against heavy pragmatics about their smallness or insignificance, they must be dealt with carefully.

In order to be effective a project has to find a way to level the playing field, to transform the venerability of the object of your critique, whether it be the concept of sovereignty or the United States nation-state, into a vulnerability. To not do this would simply reinvent the colonial wheel, or led to the reengineering of a ghostly irrelevance, and create a new "critical" way of subsuming that small site into the awesome power of that which already claims it.

¹⁶ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Furthermore, when dealing with small sites, sites which “do not exist” or which are barely there, one regularly encounters problems in terms of methodology and rules of evidence. In the case of Guam, due to its ambiguous political status, there are always problems of whether or not knowledge which is created in order to represent “United States,” or “Asia-Pacific” or “The Pacific,” is meant to include Guam or not. There is also a risk, that if your site in question doesn’t have an established, recognized academic tradition or literature to it, then you’ll be need to wedge yourself into the visibility of an already known entity, or you will need to rely on evidence which is predicated on your powerlessness or your dependency. Neither or these points are intrinsically bad, as mapping comparisons to other communities can be helpful, and so can tracing the necessary absence or the differential inclusion of your site through evidence. But, there are also ways in which you can muffle your critique, by accepting these sorts of methodological and evidentiary limits. In the case of this dissertation, I am careful around these points, since the grounding of Guam through other, larger sites, which share similar histories or contemporary statues can lead to an assumption that Guam could not exist in this dissertation without that backing, that it’s simply not enough on its own. But also, when writing about sovereignty, from places which are trapped in legal mazes designed to keep them from sovereignty or make it appear as if they already have it, to accept only formal or official forms of evidence might imply that there is no other side to the story. In the case of Guam, to simply use political sciences texts or American legal texts on the United States and its sovereignty would most likely reinvigorate the assumption that Guam is only what the United States puts there, and is even defined as an object of academic discourse, by the gaze and the idiosyncrasies of United States academic ideas.

In the first three chapters of this dissertation, I outline my own theoretical foundation for dealing with the smallness of Guam, the general way in which it is treated as not enough to exemplify much of what I'm claiming it can exemplify, and the methodological limits of writing about sovereignty from a place which is not sovereign. These chapters will explain how I am conceptualizing sovereignty in this dissertation and why, how this project represents a decolonizing intervention and finally what my methodology is for writing from the place of Guam about its relationship to the United States and sovereignty.

In order to reveal this structure of these relationships, methodologically, I will use not only academic and theoretical texts on sovereignty and imperialism, but also deploy as text the discourses that reveal the everyday sentiments of those seeking to produce or prevent sovereignty for Guam. Just as Guam sits at the edge of America and the edge of the world, it also sits at the edge of sovereignty. And so this dissertation will not just ground itself in academic texts on sovereignty, but also in the stories, statements and blog comments of Chamorro activists, cultural preservationists, US Congress-people and US military commanders. I will refer to these fragments of discourse as *traces of sovereignty*, or *traces of Guam's sovereignty*, based on the idea that these pieces potentially contain the structure of the relationship that they are formed to describe and can be used in order to illustrate the obscene aspects of Guam's political status, in ways in which more formal forms of evidence might not.

Since Guam persists as more of a ghost with reference to sovereignty than an acceptable object of political inquiry, the capturing of its non-/place can only be achieved through a similar sort of intentionally ambiguous methodological engagement, and a

constant movement between different level of official and unofficial texts. Therefore in terms of evidence, an off-hand remark made by a US Naval Admiral can lead us closer and more quickly to capturing the political status of Guam, than an entire shelf of academic texts on sovereignty or on Guam's political status.

5. Giving Guam a "Sovereignty" Head Start

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will each deal with the relationship between Guam and the United States from a different perspective, or from a different way of conceiving or looking at sovereignty. The site for each chapter, or the location from which the discussion will be situated is chosen with the intent of helping "level the playing field." Or to put it another way, the texts and sites that each chapter is built upon, the places in which the traces of Guam's sovereignty are culled from, are chosen in order to provide Guam *an advantage* in terms being a concrete thing and not some ghostly matter. These are sites in which the relationship between Guam and sovereignty or Guam and the United States is not so fickle or marginal, but seem to appear with a degree of certainty or security.

It would be extremely easy to write a dissertation which chronicled an endless number of ways in which Guam is absent from texts on sovereignty, or texts on US imperialism, or texts dealing with the United States in general. If we were to accept the general ways in which Guam is represented in these texts, then revealing the structure of the relationship would be far too easy, we could assume that there simply is no relationship, or at least none with any critical potential. Guam is not sovereign, and Guam

is a territory of the United States, there is no mutual constitutive relationship, Guam has no effect on the others, does not exemplify anything about them.

To give an advantage to Guam means to analyze it through sites which the relationship can't be so quickly dismissed since there is a clear, albeit sometimes small place for Guam. These sites range from texts on U.S. imperialism, Guam's participation in the 2008 Democratic primary battle for President of the United States, the United Nations and its commitment to eradicating colonialism from the world, notions of cultural sovereignty, and the peculiar status of a non-voting delegate to the United States Congress. All of them provide some sort of gesture which ruins the usual accepted invisibility of Guam, or the idea that Guam's problem is that its not mentioned or just forgotten, or not included. The importance of this intentional positioning of Guam is to ensure that we see that it is not an issue of Guam not being there, but instead one of Guam always already being there, but that it is there in such a way that it doesn't matter, or that despite its presence as an inconsistency within the United States and within sovereignty, it is cursed with a surface that signifies an irrelevance and a distance, an exile to the margins and the edges. These instances where Guam is present but might as well be absent, are the ones in which we can best perceive not just the banality of Guam, but the productive relationship that it shares with the United States, the way its exceptional and ambiguous status constitutes the sovereignty of the United States in certain ways.¹⁷

¹⁷ As will be discussed most concretely in Chapter 4, these sites are all meant to provide a specific location for Guam, and while they don't counter the fluidity of Guam entirely, they do provide an easier reference point through which the relationship between ambiguity and productivity of Guam's political status can be analyzed.

CHAPTER 2: GUAM!

Where One Can Study Sovereignty Without Sovereignty

By positioning forces on Guam, the United States can move quickly and effectively to protect our friends, to defend our interests, to bring relief in times of emergency, and to keep the sea lanes open to commerce and closed to terrorists...This island may be small, but it has tremendous importance to the peace and security in the world.

Dick Cheney, February 22, 2007 speaking to United States troops on Guam.¹

1. "It Could All Come Down To Guam!"

During the spring of 2008, if you were from, or in some way tied to, Guam, you might have found yourself the unexpected recipient of incredible, almost unreal, political power. For people who live in the United States with some sort of discursive tie to Guam – whether they are stationed there as military, have traveled there on vacation, or have immigrated there from Asia – but most specifically for Chamorros from Guam, the world became slightly different, for that link which defined you was, for some reason, getting far more attention than usual. Generally accustomed to the island as being something that is barely known, and rarely mentioned, in the United States, one suddenly found themselves surrounded by Guam mentions! And not just the usual ones, either – as a key American military base in the Western Pacific, or an island prone to getting hit by natural disasters – media tropes that are common fare, that seem to define the only possibility for the sort of attention that Guam receives in the United States.² Whereas these sorts of

¹ Donna Miles, "Cheney Praises Troops in Guam for Ensuring Security in Difficult Times," *American Forces Press Services*, 22 February 2007.

² As will be made more and more clear in this dissertation, much of Guam's anxiety over its identity in the world and in relation to the United States is the way its ambiguous political status and geographic distance from the United States, constantly trap it between the status of being a first world colony and a third world country. The regular tropes of Guam being only mentioned or recognized as a site in the world through the movement of military tropes and a site of an impoverished people in need of

mentions tend to characterize the island as a victim, or a passive host, the new power that those from Guam, including myself, found ourselves bestowed with was vastly different. Instead of being the object of power – “the tip of America’s spear” that the military loves to sharpen – or a rock that gets battered by waves, winds and earthquakes, Guam was suddenly the *subject* of power, a sort of small sovereign subject.³ As I walked around the campus of the University of California, San Diego, sifted through my inbox, or met up with friends, this new power was bestowed upon me with words of surprise, bemusement and disbelief – “This could all come down to Guam!”

What I am referring to, of course, is the “historic” 2008 Democratic Party Presidential primary battle between Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, during which, Guam, an unincorporated territory of the United States, a colony, would get to participate in. Amidst all the excitement of this primary, there was also a trace of nervous anxiety, especially about a place such as a Guam participating in this historic moment. The amusement and disbelief at the possibility of Guam influencing the primary, was accompanied by a quiet fear about whether Guam could be trusted with the power of selecting the next potential leader of the free world. An email I received, through my blog *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, from one American military serviceman, epitomized this fear. In it, the celebratory and complex colonial nature of Guam’s

humanitarian aid however does not skew Guam’s identity one way or the other, but instead maintains the desperate ambiguity. They identify it as more similar to third world developing nation’s, full of violence and in need of help, but they are also acts of God and man which bring the gaze of the United States to Guam and allow it to be recognized, most importantly by the rest of the United States. Kelly Kautz-Marsh, “Guam: Year in Review,” *The Contemporary Pacific*, 16:1, (2004), 120.

³ Christian Caryl, “America’s Unsinkable Fleet: Why the US Military is Pouring Forces into a Remote West Pacific Island,” *Newsweek International*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17202830/site/newsweek/> 26 February 2007. Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

participation became posed as one of power and rights: “*Why should a place I’ve never heard of have a say in who is my next President?*”⁴

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the participation of Guam in the 2008 Democratic Presidential primary elucidates the tendencies and questions of the structures and relations of power between the United States and Guam. It helps clarify the constitution of power itself – i.e. who has power and who *can* have power. This is the central issue that this dissertation addresses – i.e. in the relationship between Guam and the U.S., how is power structured and what is it productive of. This issue, I contend, is tied intimately to that of sovereignty. Thus, this dissertation will examine how the curious, politically ambiguous, place that Guam occupies within the American political landscape, in particular, and the American imaginary, is crucial to the production of American sovereignty. Consequently, in this chapter I explain the particular ways in which sovereignty will be invoked in this dissertation. I will not outline a review of the existing literature on sovereignty in this chapter, but instead discuss the approach that I take to analyzing the concept and how I feel that in case of a site such as Guam it is necessary.

2. Mis-Treating Sovereignty

Over the next few sections I will provide a long introduction to this chapter discussing Guam’s curious participation in the 2008 Democratic primary, which will serve at least three purposes. First, it is meant to provide some background on Guam, just as a way of introducing it to the reader. Second, and closely linked to the first, is that the

⁴ Anonymous, *Email Communication*, 4 April 2008.

primary battle, and the curious place of Guam in that battle over the performing of an American political community, serves as a good metaphor for introducing the space, or the relationship, between Guam and the United States, that is the focus of this dissertation. Thirdly, this narrative is meant to introduce how sovereignty will be dealt with in this dissertation, where it is grounded, how it will appear to be ungrounded and how it will be invoked in the remaining chapters.

A conventional dissertation project at this point would either provide the reader with a genealogy of the concept of sovereignty, where it comes from, tracing back a history or a process of intellectual growth and contestation. Or perhaps it would use this section to engage with different scholars or traditions concerning sovereignty, until a basic definition has been arrived at. I, however, will perform neither of these at this point in the dissertation. This does not mean that definitions of sovereignty will never be provided; on the contrary, I will explore several versions of the concept, each of which represents a shift in the lens of sovereignty, revealing a slightly different way of conceiving how sovereignty produces and captures the world, providing order for relations between nation-states, the maintenance of borders, the identities of communities. I do so in order to highlight how Guam and the United States become bound together and how their power relationships get naturalized. Yet, at this juncture, I will resist the presumed imperative of establishing the concept and building its theoretical foundation. Over the next few sections I will explain why this sort of refusal to ground sovereignty is not only productive to this particular project but, more importantly, is a critical intervention in the field of sovereignty studies, in general.

The treatment of sovereignty will appear to be casual or crass at times, especially for a concept that is usually afforded much intellectual respect in terms of influence. For instance, although the goal in my discussion of the primary battle is to introduce and address the concept of sovereignty, for much of the narrative the concept went unmentioned and only appeared in minute traces along the edges of events and sites mentioned. Even when the concept will be explicitly invoked, it will be done in a casual way, not defined, outlined or grounded in any proper sense, but merely thrown into the mix. It will be a concept deployed amongst many, a lens that might be of some use, yet will be treated, almost gleefully, in the same diffuse and ambiguous way in which Guam appears in the context of, or in relation to, the U.S. This treatment is intentional and follows a discursive strategy propounded most prominently by French philosopher Michel Foucault and deployed by Native American feminist Andrea Smith that enables *a study of sovereignty, without sovereignty*, or in other words a way of talking about sovereignty without privileging it. Finally, this chapter will also address the relationship that this dissertation has with the academic discipline of American Studies, and how the delicate and tenuous relationship it has with it further bolsters the need to conduct a study of sovereignty such as this in an unconventional way.

3. Introducing the 2008 Democratic Primary

During the 2007 run up to the primary season of the following year, the American media and much of the American political establishment fell hard for the myth that Senator Hillary Clinton's nomination for President was inevitable and that the primary

season would be over by the first week of February.⁵ The primary schedule itself helps create this sort of expectation, since it is set up to ensure that, by the time roughly half of the contests have taken place, a nominee should already be chosen. By (the first) Super Tuesday however, on February 5, it was very clear that this race would not be over anytime soon, and suddenly the United States, the legions of political pundits and reporters, the Democratic party, all found themselves overwhelmed with more than half a dozen remaining primaries to contest. Suddenly, the votes of millions who were not really supposed to count, could conceivably count. States and primaries at the end of the calendar, which would usually be ignored, were receiving huge amounts of coverage and were treated as darlings by the campaigns of the two remaining candidates.

But amidst the counting of all these votes that were not supposed to count, there was also new attention being given to a set of votes that too were not assumed to count, in a different, sort of exceptional way, but were suddenly valuable – namely the votes of Democrats in the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. As the struggle over delegates and votes wore on, even the delegate prizes of these two territories was battled over. In the case of Puerto Rico this could be understood, for the delegate total there was 66, and in the waning days of the race, this territorial prize outshined the totals of states such as Montana and West Virginia. In the case of Guam, however the delegate total was minute, with only 4 pledged delegates and 5 super-delegates at stake. Yet, with every delegate crucial at that stage of the race, Guam was thrown onto the American political radar and received a flurry of newspaper and cable news coverage, as well as attention from the

⁵ Walter Shapiro, “How Hillary Could Tank,” *Salon*, http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/10/16/hillary_10/, 16 October 2007. Site Accessed 25 May 2009. Peter Brown, “Mark Warner Out, Hillary Clinton Inevitable?” *Fox News*, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,221661,00.html>, 17 October 2007. Site Accessed 25 May 2009.

candidates themselves, each of whom conducted several interviews with Guam media over the phone or via satellite.⁶ Barack Obama, much to the chagrin of local Hillary volunteer supporters, even went so far as to hire staff on island.⁷ In the primary held on May 3rd, a little over 4,500 Guam Democrats voted, and Senator Barack Obama won the contest by just seven votes.⁸

4. The Long Primary that Would Make History

The Democratic primary was an election about history, or more accurately “history” and “herstory.”⁹ With the Democratic Party playing host to the most “viable” white female and black male candidate for President ever, America had a fantastic decision on its hands. For the excitement of this election was stimulated not just by the prospect of making history, but also by the assumption that the histories of oppression, that have made the United States what it is today, could be resolved in such a simple manner – through the mere act of voting. As one blogger named “StandUpToRacism” rallied Obama supporters with the cry “*Don't Let THEM Steal History Away From You!*” *Vote! And Take Others With You!*”¹⁰ The Democratic primary represented the self-celebrating intersection of two narratives – the greatness of American progress and of American democracy; for not only was there an over-exuberant willingness to make

⁶ Barack Obama, “Open Letter to the People of Guam,” *The Marianas Variety*, 2 May 2008. Mar-Vic Cagurangan, “Clinton Vows Funding for Guam Troop Buildup,” *The Marianas Variety*, 30 April 2008.

⁷ Ronna Sweeney, “Obama HQ Opens Up in Guam Capitol,” *KUAM News*, 13 April 2008.

⁸ “Obama Wins Guam, Barely,” *USA Today*, 5 May 2008.

⁹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “Two Scandals: What do Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds have to do with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton,” *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2008/02/two-scandals-what-do-harbhajan-singh.html>, 22 February 2008. Site Accessed 18 January 2010.

¹⁰ StanduptoRacism, “Obama Supporters: Don't Let THEM Steal History Away From You! Vote! And Take Others With You!” *NowPublic*, <http://www.nowpublic.com/world/obama-supporters-dont-let-them-steal-history-away-you-vote-and-take-others-you>, 15 October 2008. Site Accessed 14 March 2009.

known that, in the battle between these two candidates, we were bearing witness to the greatness of America, as these candidates were about to break the chains, or the glass ceilings, of the past, but also it appeared that these candidates were truly inspiring a generally politically flaccid nation to come to the polls and vote. The result was that, while the histories of structural discrimination which produce male and white privilege were invoked by both Obama and Clinton, they were used only to create an aura of a positivist, progressive American exceptionalism.¹¹ As if, only in America is this possible.¹² Indeed, the media did its bit too in making sure that little to no mention of any sort of systemic understanding of race and gender could be brought into the conversation.

This self-congratulating lack of critique extended almost seamlessly into the colonies of the United States, so that as the gaze of the nation shifted from its states – i.e. its “real” members, where the “real” Americans live – to America’s territories, the narrative didn’t change much. Just as those from late-voting states such as Indiana, Montana and West Virginia got to share their excitement about participating, so too did Guam. Yet, while people in Montana may have been infused with a full form of *American* excitement over their participation, the language of those on Guam was focused more on their inclusion. That is, the discourse on Guam was not about how the

¹¹ John Blake, “Clinton Tangles With Obama in ‘Oppression Sweepstakes,’” *CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/01/25/race.genderpolitics/index.html>, 25 January 2008. Site Accessed 28 May 2009.

¹² Obama was very successful in using his otherness as a means for invoking some very practical and everyday feelings of American exceptionalism and greatness. Being born from a black father from Kenya and with a name like “Barack Hussein Obama” it could be assumed that Obama had little to no chance of being elected president of the United States, simply because he was too different, too much “change” for America to handle. But in truth, this otherness served him well in being able to touch the exceptionalist core of the United States. As he regularly stated on the campaign trail, that only in America is there place where a skinny kid, with a name like Barak Hussein Obama could ever hope to rise to the highest office in the land. Senator Barack Obama, *Speech Given to the 2004 Democratic National Convention*, http://www.barackobama.com/2004/07/27/keynote_address_at_the_2004_de.php, Boston, Massachusetts, 27 July 2004. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

primary recognized them as already existing Americans, but rather about how it finally offered them the opportunity to finally be acknowledged as part of the American family. A sentiment concisely conveyed in one local news article titled “Guam Democrats are grateful for the privilege of being included.”¹³ The reason for this, of course, is that residents in the colonies of the United States – i.e. American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands – may get to participate in the primaries of America’s political parties, but they do not get to participate in the actual election of the President of the United States. Consequently, in almost all election thus far, their participation had been relatively inconsequential and primarily symbolic. This time, however, their participation actually bore political, and historical, significance.

The political ambiguity of America’s colonies, and the concomitant desire to the be recognized as American, as revealed by the 2008 Democratic primaries, are but a signifier of the many relations of inclusions and exclusions that are constitutive of the modern colonial relationship between the United States and its territories. The following section provides a brief overview of these as pertinent to Guam.

5. A Comfortable Colony

The island of Guam has been an American territory for over a century, since it was taken as a spoil of the Spanish American War in 1898. Since then, it has been a crucial cog in the American military machine in the Asia-Pacific rim – first, as a battleground in World War II, and second, as a key base, a “forward operating point,” in

¹³ Ronna Sweeney, “Guam Democrats Grateful for Privilege of Being Included,” *KUAM News*, 3 May 2008.

American military conflicts in Asia and the Middle East. The island was named in 2006 by *Foreign Policy* magazine as one of the six most important American bases in the world, and is commonly referred to by military commanders as their “unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the Western Pacific.¹⁴ As of 2009, United States Air Force and Naval bases account for 30% of Guam’s 212 square miles. Moreover, it hosts, 4,000 military personnel, at least four dozen fighter planes, half-dozen bombers, the next generation of Predator spydrones, and an unknown number of attack submarines and cruise missiles.¹⁵

For Chamorros, the story of their relationship with the United States is much more complex and ambiguous.¹⁶ For the first five decades of American control, Chamorros found themselves at the mercy of the United States Navy, without any formal political rights or protections, their lives dictated by what one observer enthusiastically termed “dictatorship American style!”¹⁷ This initial colonial effort in Guam was interrupted by World War II, during which time the Japanese invaded and brutally occupied the island for 32 months. Guam was later re-occupied by the United States and a civilian government was established. Since 1950, the political status of the island has slowly developed into a comfortable, but still colonial one.¹⁸

¹⁴ Daniel Widome, “The List: The Six Most Important U.S. Military Bases,” *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3460, May 2006. Site Accessed 6 November 2009. Christian Caryl, “America’s Unsinkable Fleet: Why the US Military is Pouring Forces into a Remote West Pacific Island,” *Newsweek International*, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/68465>, 26 February 2007. Site Accessed 20 May 2009.

¹⁵ Julian Aguon, *Testimony Given to the Seventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, New York City, New York, April 2008.

¹⁶ Vivian Dames, *Rethinking the Circle of Belonging: American Citizenship and the Chamorros of Guam*. Ph.D. Dissertation. (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000.)

¹⁷ Evelyn Nelson. *Dictatorship American Style*. Unpublished article. Micronesian Area Research Center, Mangilao Guam, 2.

¹⁸ Robert Underwood, *The Status of Having No Status*. Speech presented at the annual College of Arts and Sciences Research Conference. University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 26 April 1999.

Today, although residents of Guam, Chamorro or otherwise native-born, are American citizens by virtue of their residence in Guam, they do not receive all the associated rights, such as representation in the United States Congress, save for a single non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives, or a vote for U.S. President. Residents of Guam do not pay Federal taxes but are eligible for many Federal programs such as welfare and food stamps. Despite the geographic and political distance between Guam and its colonizer, the Federal Government has plenary powers over Guam, meaning Federal law supersedes all local law, and the United States Congress has the power to abolish the Government of Guam at any time.

In terms of both, Federal policy and the imagined relationship between the island and the United States nation, Guam is often labeled as something “foreign in a domestic sense.”¹⁹ Only among Pentagon officials and America’s military planners is Guam something securely American. In all other venues - the cultural, political, social – the island’s position in relation to the United States is far more tenuous and ambiguous, often disappearing or completely forgotten. As former Guam representative to the U.S. Congress, Robert Underwood, has noted, the job of the delegate is not to participate in the glories of American democracy or marvel at its wonders, but rather to suffer under its amnesia and poor memory. The function of the delegate is simply to remind Presidents and Congresspeople that Guam exists, and that the United States controls its fate.²⁰

Outside of Federal-territorial relations, the relationship becomes even more difficult to discern. In popular culture and media representations, Guam’s identity is

¹⁹ Arnold Leibowitz, *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States – Territorial Relations*, (Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, 1989).

²⁰ Robert Underwood, *Interview with Author*, Office of Robert Underwood, Hagatña, Guam, 5 December 2002.

particularly labile and scattered. Guam has been portrayed as everything from a military base, a foreign country, a tropical paradise, an island full of cannibals, an island for exiled homosexuals, and Guatemala.²¹ Chamorros and others on Guam may be U.S. citizens, but given their distance from the “U.S. proper,” their smallness, and the sheer ignorance of the American people as to their empire and colonial possessions, the former are constantly treated as something different, something foreign.

6. The Balance Between Silly and Scary

Returning, then, to the context of the 2008 Democratic primary, it must be noted that, just as the “excitement” over the next chapter in American history having finally begun found a convenient way of erasing any possible mention of how false that shift would be, the excitement over the “inclusion” of all “Americans” ended up erasing any substantial mention of the ways in which those from U.S. possessions remained fundamentally excluded, still colonies of the United States. Thus, the political gulf between the United States and Guam was filled not with discussions about the island’s political status, about American colonialism and the ways in which U.S. strategic military interests in the Asia Pacific region have led to massive displacements and upheavals in Chamorro life on Guam. There were few discussions as to why Guam gets to participate in the primaries but not the presidential elections; why it and other territories receive only

²¹ The references here come from the films *Yours Mine and Ours*, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Wedding Crashers*, the television shows *Family Guy* and *Kim Possible*, and the comic book *G.I. Joe Sigma Six*. These sorts of mentions are for most Chamorros or those tied to Guam, like clippings for newspapers or old photos that you keep in shoeboxes. They are moments where the smallness of the island you call home is transcended, even if just for a mere moment, for a singular almost empty mention. Despite this power, the collecting of these mentions can also be incredibly ambivalent. They can instill in you a sense of pride, but can also stir in you feelings of being disrespected and that your home is nothing more than a joke.

half delegate votes, and what “unincorporated territory” means anyways. Or in a more general way, all the discourse on inclusion failed to address why America has colonies full of “American citizens,” who are often treated like a foreign country and foreign citizens? In fact, in early March 2008, Ginny Brown-Waite, a Republican Congresswoman from Florida, had decried Federal monies being sent to the “foreign citizens” of Guam and Puerto Rico.²² She might have made a mistake in terminology, as the peoples of Guam and Puerto Rico are American citizens, but the spirit of her comments were not inaccurate, and are hardly rare.²³

Instead, during the primaries, the political gap, indeed the colonial gap, between these two entities – i.e. the U.S. and Guam – was filled with humor, derision, sarcasm, incredulity, skepticism, and uneasiness. The formal reports all dealt with where Guam was, how many people voted, how many delegates were picked up and by whom. The democratically exciting substance of Guam’s participation was never in question, as all the tropes of Guam being so far away, so small and so insignificant were used to produce it as more evidence of how truly historic this election was. But in the margins of their discourse, in the offhand remarks, in the sub-text of the commentary, Guam’s

²² John Frank, “The ‘Foreign Citizens’ Fallout: Brown-Waite’s description of Puerto Ricans causes ill feelings,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 1 February 2008. The attack came from the fact that Guam and other territories, despite not paying Federal income taxes were set to receive “hundreds of millions of dollars” in stimulus package money.

²³ Matt Corley, “Brown-Waite Refuses to Apologize for Referring to Puerto Ricans and Guamanians as ‘Foreign Citizens,’” *Think Progress*, <http://thinkprogress.org/2008/02/09/brown-waite-apologize/>, 9 February 2008. Site Accessed 29 May 2009. The initial press release which contained the dread phrase referring to the people of the territories as foreign was later changed by the Congresswoman’s office, to simply refer to the residents of Puerto Rico, Guam and other territories. She defended herself by saying that she might have used the wrong terminology (and that ‘territorial citizens’ would have been a better term), but that the spirit of her statements, that these territories are unfairly receiving money and benefits from the United States was still true. Interestingly enough, the blog post which I cite for this incident, which was one of the main articles about it, contains a very glaring error, in that it states that Chamorros became US citizens in the year 1900.

participation was a joke, and an often a frightening one at that. For instance, Larry Sabato, a scholar and CNN commentator, uttered incredulously that Guam hadn't mattered in sixty years, not since it was a battleground for the U.S. and Japan in World War II.²⁴ And this, too, during a segment in which old footage of a different Micronesian island, the island of Yap, was used to represent contemporary life on Guam.²⁵ Similarly, comedian Jon Stewart, on his program *The Daily Show*, referred to Guam as a "turd-shaped paradise" and then exclaimed with mock surprise that Obama and Clinton due to the small margin of victory had "split Guam, the thing's like two miles wide and they split it!"²⁶ Stewart then continued that the race would have been even closer if not for that fact that "the Ferguson's canoe got hit by a sea turtle!" After laughter from both Stewart and the audience, the former then soberly admitted that his statements were "...probably unfair to Guam..." and that "I don't know anything about Guam."²⁷

Political blogs and YouTube channels were rife with comments such as: "Guam, who cares about Guam?" According to one Citizen Kate, who uploaded a report after the results had come in from Guam giving Obama the seven vote edge, "Are you excited? Guam! Who cares? Seriously they can't even vote in the general election! ...And the results are in...and Obama won by a coconut!"²⁸ Many people seemed content to simply make fun of the word "Guam," and blog posts were littered with comments where

²⁴ *The Situation Room*, CNN, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0805/02/sitroom.01.html>, 2 May 2008. Site Accessed 7 January 2009.

²⁵ Kevin Kerrigan, "CNN Apologizes to Guam, Will Air Free Commercials," *The Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/19/cnn-apologizes-to-guam-wi_n_159004.html, 19 January 2009. Site Accessed 29 May 2009.

²⁶ *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, Comedy Central, <http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=167642&title=headlines-panderers-box>, 5 May 2008. Site Accessed 30 May 2009.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ CitizenKate2007, "Citizen Kate Update: Guam," Youtube Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdOmLWV92c>, 4 May 2008. Site Accessed 26 May 2009.

people “one-upped” each other to use the word and sounds of “Guam in silly ways.” One such exchange, “Guam but not forgotten” - “I’m Guama Get You Sucka” - “Would Those Be Guambamacons?” “or Obamaguams?”²⁹

Amid all the dismissals and jokes at the expense of the island, there was a murmur of fear over Guam’s, and more so Puerto Rico’s, participation in the primary. In May, when Hillary Clinton used her anticipated primary victory in Puerto Rico, and the need to take into account the wishes of those voters, to the slate of reasons why she should remain in the race, there were murmurs of disapproval and uncertainty in the press. Chris Matthews, on his show *Hardball*, made repeated statements calling into question the legitimacy of Puerto Rico participating, and more importantly, possibly affecting the primary process, since they aren’t full citizens and could not participate in the vote when it really counted.³⁰ Such discourses reflected a very serious concerns that this American democratic power, this ability to direct the course of the nation, to decide what history it would make, not be left to those who aren’t Americans or, more precisely, who aren’t *really* Americans. For, as someone commented on my blog, this wasn’t just any choice,

²⁹ Laura Clawson, “Guam Thread #3,” *The Daily Kos*, Blog Post Comment Thread, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2008/5/3/143018/4719/103/508399>, 3 May 2008. Site Accessed 1 June 2009.

³⁰ On the May 9th episode of *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, the show’s host Matthews engaging in an interesting discussion with a Senator Clinton representative about whether or not Puerto Rico should count as a primary since they don’t get to vote in the election that counts. Some of Matthews’ more interesting remarks were when he demanded to know of Howard Wolfson whether or not Clinton’s campaign was “willing to say that you have a right to the nomination based on Puerto Rican votes?” After Wolfson responded by asking which votes Clinton should exclude when arguing for her right to the nomination, Matthews exclaimed, “Just people that are not American—are not voting in the American presidential election. That’s all.” After more discussion about whose votes should and should not count, Matthews out of nowhere mentions Guam, and how its nice that they get to participate and all. The exchange on American territories ends with Matthews making a joke that if territories like Guam and Puerto Rico get to participate in the US Democratic primary elections, shouldn’t “the canal zone” participate as well? “Do we still have the Canal Zone?” he asks referring to the former military colony that controlled the Panama Canal, “I guess we don’t have that one anymore.” *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, MSNBC, Transcript: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24540537/>, 9 May 2009. Site Accessed 14 May 2009.

this wasn't about "the electing of one of your village chiefs or medicine men;"³¹ it was a decision over who would be the next leader of the free world, the person who would, paradoxically, both continue American exceptionalist dominance and also "heal its place in the world." Could this power be trusted to people who, in the case of Puerto Rico, wanted Spanish to be their official language?³² Or worse yet, in the case of Guam, to people from a small insignificant "turd-shaped" island with nothing but coconuts?³³

As I argue in the next section, this mockery, this apprehension, with regards to Guam's participation in the primaries, could be explained through feelings of uncertainty over the exercise of a new, *untested power*.

7. Subjects Supposed To Be In Power, Subjects Supposed To Be Without

Since for most reporters in the United States, and most Americans in general, Guam had never mattered before, never been the source of any sort of sovereign authority or power, for it to suddenly receive this ability to help chart American history was something to be skeptical and uneasy about. Given that what is known about the island is so little anyways, if anything at all, this new power that the island seemed to be bestowed

³¹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Which Way Will Guam Go?" *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2008/05/which-way-will-guam-go.html>, 2 May 2008. Site Accessed 27 March 2009. The comment was submitted to my blog, but I rejected it because of the angry and what I felt to be hateful nature of its tone.

³² James Lubinskas, "The Threat of Puerto Rican Statehood," *The American Renaissance*, (9:3), March 1998.

³³ Throughout my research on Guam in the 2008 Democratic primary I found literally hundreds of mentions of Guam and its participation as given shape or life through the invoking of coconuts. I cannot help but be reminded of the discussion on development and coconuts from David Hanlon's *Remaking Micronesia*. In it, Hanlon discusses how despite the powerful trope that defines the Pacific and Pacific Islands as possessing nothing other than coconuts, and therefore not being able of sustaining itself, Hanlon notes that still in the American colonization of Micronesia, there was still an investment in telling the peoples of the islands what to do with their coconuts and how best to make use of them and integrate them into a modern prosperous economy. David Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia: Discourse Over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*. (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1998).

with, seemed far more than knowledge could justify. Could Guam be trusted with this power? Could they handle it? Would they screw it up?³⁴

This unease was most visible on the popular liberal blog *The Daily Kos*, which featured several short posts dealing with Guam and Puerto Rico's participation, and garnered more than a thousand comments from readers. Kos, the creator of the blog and its most famous personality, helped set the tone for this anxiety on the day of the Guam primary, by providing a weak critique of the participation of the territories. "I'm honestly curious why non-states have primaries? I've got nothing against statehood if they want it, and in that case representation would obviously make sense. But as territories?"³⁵ A few weeks later, in anticipation of the Puerto Rico primary, his rhetoric remained somewhat the same – a more pragmatic, albeit still colonial and blameless critique: if they want to be states then let them participate, if not, then don't let them. He made his point more forcefully in this post however, by making clear what was at stake when places such as Guam and Puerto Rico participate, "...there's no reason why in future nominating contests, any state in our union should take a back seat to a territory."³⁶ Most commentators groaned and complained that Guam is "insignificant" and not worth the

³⁴ Throughout the entire primary process, there were persistent fears at every contest that the electronic voting problems which had plagued previous US elections would persist. When it came Guam's turn to vote in their primary, one commenter on the website *FARK.com*, noted (literally out of nowhere) that, "I bet the people of Guam are better at figuring out voting machines." This comment came amidst a discussion about what Guam's status is exactly, what kind of rights does it have, does it pay Federal taxes, why it gets to vote in the primary but not in the general election. The next response that took up the voting machine issue was "Maybe, but a Guam voting machine is a coconut and two straw baskets...(1 coconut per person, please!)" And the one after that, "I'll bet even the Bushmen of the farking [sic] Kalahari are better at figuring out the voting machines." Message Board Thread, "Guam Officially Means More to Democrat Primaries Than Florida," *FARK*, <http://www.fark.com/cgi/comments.pl?IDLink=3581127>, Thread Started 3 May 2008. Site Accessed 1 June 2009.

³⁵ Kos, "Guam thread," *The Daily Kos*, Link: <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2008/5/3/11165/49831>, 3 May 2008. Site Accessed 13 November 2008.

³⁶ Kos, "Puerto Rico turnout," *The Daily Kos*, Link: <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2008/6/2/10551/71896>, 2 June 2008. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

attention, others complained that there was something fundamentally wrong with the world when they were glued to their computer screens for hours waiting for a handful of people to vote on a tiny island that most admitted to not really knowing where it was.³⁷ One commenter cut through all the hedging and stated what seemed to be the basic point of anxiety: “Wouldn’t it be the ultimate disaster if a place like Guam or Puerto Rico ultimately decided the nomination?”³⁸

There is more to this anxiety than a simple fear that Guam may not be ready for this great democratic responsibility; there is something much deeper at stake here. Firstly, this anxiety can be tied not to the emergence of a new power, but rather the contesting of an existing one.³⁹ For, this now consequential participant, this newly sovereign subject, does not simply displace an old sovereign, but rather rattles and shakes the commonsense

³⁷ A *Slate* blog called the “XX Factor” described the long drawn out primary as a long boring long-term relationship, and invoked Guam as one of those minute meaningless things you should care about, but for some reason seem to in those types of situations. Under a post titled “All Politics are Relational,” Melinda Henneberger blogged the following: “I’ve started viewing it like any long-term relationship, in which just when you think you will never laugh at that stupid joke ever again—well, you do. And just when you’re sure that if one more person says *superdelegate* you will run screaming into the traffic, you suddenly find that embarrassing as it is, you *do* care about Guam. Or so I can imagine.” Melinda Henneberger, “All Politics are Relational,” *Slate*, <http://www.slate.com/blogs/blogs/xxfactor/archive/2008/5/4.aspx>, 4 May 2008. Site Accessed 18 February 2009.

³⁸ What this fear seemed to be most tied to, at least on the surface (albeit never stated), was that a candidate whose “path to victory” went through the territories, couldn’t be considered authentic. It would be an unreal nomination is a place like Puerto Rico or Guam was actually the deciding community or subject. It was not that Republicans could challenge it or call it into question (for instance in the way some claim that Obama isn’t really an American citizen because he was born in Hawai’i), but that it would be tainted somehow, in a way in which you could not really explain, and probably shouldn’t explain, for fear that your own path to imagining and understanding America might dare tread into its margins and colonies. Laura Clawson, “Guam Thread #3,” *The Daily Kos*, Blog Post Comment Thread, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2008/5/3/143018/4719/103/508399>, 3 May 2008. Site Accessed 1 June 2009.

³⁹ We see a similar dynamic in the primary race itself, over the issues of whether or not America is “ready for a woman or a black man” to be their leader. In one of his more lucid moments, Jon Stewart, in an interview on *Larry King Live*, dismissed the stupidity of these discussions about how much change America could handle, sarcastically characterizing the fears implicit in these comments. So if Obama were to be elected, will black people be allowed to do whatever they want? If Hillary gets elected, will men still be allowed to drive? Interview with Jon Stewart, *Larry King Live*, 20 February 2008. Transcript: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0802/20/lkl.01.html>, Site Accessed 14 November 2008.

that is attached to the latter's power, which makes it appear as the source of stability, security and order. With Guam, we see its admittedly tokenistic participation nonetheless provide a very real challenge to "real" Americans. We see a political order that is signified and metaphorized through flags, stories, songs, movies, and all other imaginable forms of media and commodities, being contested; its fragility and instability being revealed. Tainting the delight over the greatness of America's democracy eventually creating the conditions where the citizens of all 50 states could participate, was the anxiety that their participation could be infringed upon, be potentially corrupted. Guam's participation thus represents both a success of America, in the transmission of its ideas and greatness to its colonies; but it also serves as a reminder of its colonies and colonial citizens. America is, after all, not just those represented by the 50 stars on its flag, but also, at the very least, includes an insular empire whose relationship to America is always in question, secure one moment, obscure the next.⁴⁰

Secondly, what we perceive here is the emergence of a question about who in this relationship has power, who is supposed to have power? It does not merely challenge who belongs in the current order, but also what power relations constitute that order. So, in the case of Guam – as a small island, barely American, far away from the United States itself, full of brown people, largely unknown, a mere unincorporated territory – its natural relation to the United States should be one of *obvious powerlessness*. Returning to the angry quote from a military serviceman that I used to introduce this chapter, he spoke for many in the United States when he asked, "*Why should a place I've never heard of*

⁴⁰ It also, as will be discussed at various points throughout this dissertation, contains in interior empire.

*have a say in who is my next President?”*⁴¹ What his comment makes clear is that there is a particular assumed relationship of power between the United States and Guam, which is dependent not on any actual knowledge about Guam, but is in fact even stronger and more forceful, indeed is possible, only through ignorance. In this relationship, we see the United States, its fully enfranchised and real citizens, as the subjects who are supposed to have power.⁴² At the other end of the spectrum we see Guam and its people as those who by virtue of their political and social distance from the United States, are not supposed to have power.⁴³

The small but nonetheless present anxiety that Guam's participation creates is an effect of the fact that the power Guam suddenly found itself with (in the primary) was not created in isolation, but rather intervenes in the current power landscape and threatens to transgress the existing relations. Guam's participation, and even its mere mentioning in this context of political democracy, reveals the possibility that the power relations through which Guam is recognized, if at all, as a insignificant, banal fragment of its empire, are not stable or secure. It highlights the temporal contingency of these relations, so that while they might signify the powerlessness of one (Guam) and the powerfulness of another (the U.S.) at a given moment, but those relations can in fact be changed, and in some cases, can be reversed! Guam occupies an interesting sort of non-place in this cyclone of power and powerlessness. Depending on one's perspective, it either causes or reveals a crack in the current order, an existing instability, an exception around which,

⁴¹ Anonymous, *Email Communication*, 4 April 2008.

⁴² Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, (M.A. Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2007), 60-61.

⁴³ Slavoj Zizek, "The Subject Supposed to Loot and Rape: Fantasy and Reality in New Orleans," *In These Times*, 20 October 2005.

one might argue, there is both the potential for everything and nothing. That is, it is a site where a current sovereign power is both at its strongest and most frail. It is this moment, or rather this *space*, that this dissertation is interested in exploring.⁴⁴

8. *The Ghost of Guam in Sovereignty*⁴⁵

The concept of sovereignty is, at its foundation, that which provides a distinction between inside and outside, those who count and those who don't, those who govern and those who are governed.⁴⁶ Sovereignty is generally articulated as the foundation, or a legal/theoretical cover, for an existing order, a force that reaffirms that very order. It is a concept that emerges to naturalize, or provide a rationale for, power relations; and which provides the framework for transforming power and violence into authority and

⁴⁴ This space will constantly be invoked through the dissertation, but will not be explicitly addressed theoretically until the following chapter.

⁴⁵ Ironically the "ghost of Guam" is usually used in reference to George Tweed, a US Navy radioman who was the sole survivor of the Japanese occupation of Guam in World War II. He was considered to be a symbol of American belonging during World War II, a desperate soul in need and through helping him Chamorros could therefore act upon their desires to remain and stay loyal to the United States. Following the war, he became a much loved and much loathed figure. Towards the end of the Japanese occupation, searches for Tweed, who had been sheltered and provided for by hundreds of Chamorros during the war, became more violent and more intense, resulting in deaths of several Chamorros and near death beatings of others. Many Chamorros thus recall him as a *kubânde* or coward for letting innocent Chamorros die or be beaten for him, while he cowered in the jungle. His memoirs were published immediately after the war, and a universally panned movie titled *No Man is an Island* loosely based on his story was released in 1962. While most Chamorros today have never heard of this film, those who do know of it, tend to have very angry opinions about it. The film is not remembered as being particularly good, interesting, or historically accurate. For those Chamorros who do know about the film, it's most memorable qualities are sources of ethnic irritation. Hollywood in general doesn't have a very good track record for ensuring that ethnic roles are taken by actors who are of that ethnicity, or that films are shot in the locations where the story take place, but for Chamorros unaccustomed to having their island or their race featured on the silver screen, their particular holiday treatment in the film was not appreciated. *No Man is an Island* was filmed in the Philippines, with Filipino actors playing the roles of Chamorros, and when the actors speak to each other in Tagalog, it is referred to (in the film) as Chamorro. George R. Tweed, Blake Clarke, D. Turner Givens, *Robinson Crusoe, U.S.N.: The Adventures of George R. Tweed, Rm1 on Japanese Held Guam*, (California: Pacific Research Institute, 1995).

⁴⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

legitimacy.⁴⁷ It is an idea in which we find both, implicitly and explicitly, the necessary locating of power within one segment of a society and powerlessness in another.⁴⁸ In addition, it is a concept that provides a natural legitimacy to some to the rule, and a natural illegitimacy to others.⁴⁹ In today's world, sovereignty is most known as a concept through which the rights of nation-states are protected and guaranteed. Thus it is something upon which the world depends for maintaining illusions of peace and stability. As politics scholar Maryann Cusimano Love writes in her introduction to the anthology *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, "The modern international system is built upon the foundation of sovereignty," and thus so many of the problems of the contemporary world become tied to the eroding, weakening or besieging of the concept.⁵⁰

But sovereignty is not just about the rights of nation-states in the context of international law. Sovereignty is also referred to when speaking about the potential power and unity, but also the frailty, weakness and dissolution, of a nation and a nation-state. Thus, for instance, when drug dealers from "foreign" nations, usually implying those from the Central and South America, cross regularly into the United States, they threaten American sovereignty not just with their transgression over American borders, but with the moral decay and damage they cause to the "fiber" of the United States. Similarly, the United Nations threatens to impinge upon the sovereignty of the United States in the way its mandates, ranging from climate change, to decolonization and indigenous rights,

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, (New York: Random House, 1980), 91.

⁴⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2006).

⁴⁹ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power*, (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 1991).

⁵⁰ Maryann Cusimano Love, "Global Problems, Global Solutions," *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, Maryann Cusimano Love (ed). (Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 13.

supplant a sovereign American map of American lands, American families, and American resources, replacing it with an international, a foreign, unwelcome one. Should the President of the United States accept a copy of *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, sovereignty is invoked to articulate the gesture as weakening the United States, as if a magic substance that makes a nation strong has been tainted.⁵¹ Sovereignty, then, is integral to the way a community imagines itself and conceives of its natural order.

The apprehension regarding Guam's, unchecked, unknown and hence worrisome power, in terms of its participation in the election of an American president, is central to how Guam is imagined in relation to U.S. *sovereignty*, i.e. where Guam exists in that political order, or what it is assumed to be, in terms of the power and authority of the United States. The loathing, of course, stems from the fact that Guam's place within that sovereignty is meant to be a distant, far away one. As "foreign in a domestic sense," it is a part of the United States, but its place is always ghostly, one which floats back and forth over the borders and the circles of belonging, which never rests in any one place, but is always an exceptional fleeting figure. This non-place of Guam, its status as a marginal footnote of the United States – which translates into a vast metaphorical distance from the United States and its power – can also be found between Guam and the concept of sovereignty itself. Guam is more a ghost of sovereignty than a potential

⁵¹ Mark Smith, "Chavez Gives Obama a History Book," *The Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/18/chavez-gives-obama-a-book_n_188582.html, 19 April 2009. Site Accessed 15 January 2010. "Obama Calls Chavez Gift 'a nice gesture,'" *Fox News.com*, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/04/19/obama-calls-chavez-gift-nice-gesture/>, 19 April 2009. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

subject of it, something that is more likely to be disassociated from the concept, to have no effect on it, than to be found within its broad conceptual trappings.

For instance in academic literature on sovereignty, Guam is something that seems would be better forgotten.⁵² As anthropologist Ronald Stade notes in his book *Pacific Passages: World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, Guam exists in a “luminal space, betwixt and between, somehow outside the normal order of sovereignty or integration.”⁵³ Guam, then, is that small, tiny mistake, or an inconsistency, in the great progress the world has made, as it has enfolded towards this great contemporary moment.⁵⁴ Any potential critiques that Guam might represent of the world as it is today – its family of nation-states, the concepts which underpin its development – are merely exceptional and can be dismissed through a footnote or the invocation of an intermediary category of

⁵² The only two academic texts which deal explicitly with the concept of sovereignty as Michael P. Perez, “Chamorro Resistance and Prospects for Sovereignty in Guam,” *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed.), (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2005). Ronald Stade, *Pacific Passages, World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, (Stockholm, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1998). There are numerous texts which deal with decolonization and self-determination however, but none of which I would call theoretical or “open” texts. All of these texts are either historical, descriptive, or conceive of Chamorro sovereignty or decolonization in a very narrow sense, usually through the framework provided by the United Nations. Leibowitz, *Defining Status*.... Hope Alvarez Cristobal, “The Organization of People for Indigenous Rights: A Commitment towards Self-Determination,” *Hale'-ta Hinasso: Tinige' Put Chamorro*, (Agana, Guam: Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1993). Robert Underwood and Laura Souder-Jaffrey (eds), *Chamorro Self-Determination*, (Agana, Guam: Chamorro Studies Association, 1990). Joe San Agustin, “The Quest for Commonwealth: A New Chapter in Guam’s History,” *Kinalamten Pulitikat: Sinienten i Chamorro*, (Agana, Guam: Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1996).

⁵³ Stade, 47.

⁵⁴ The liminality of Guam in this conversation is connected to the idea that colonialism is over, or that whatever form it takes now isn’t so bad. Such is the argument of the book *The Last Colonies*, the old colonial wish, that the taking and conquering of these lands could be accepted as based on the need of the newly acquired colonies. Or the idea that this system of dominance was based on their (the colonized’s) need. That they were dependent upon the colonizer. This is authorized the text *The Last Colonies* where they argue for not calling the “last colonies” colonies, but instead dependencies. To be fair, they support his claim based on the idea that the calls for independence or decolonial nationalism of the previous century have long died out. Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *The Last Colonies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4.

political being such as “unincorporated territory” or “non-self-governing territory.”

Again, Guam appears here as a specter more than anything else.

But, apart from explicit mentions in academic literature, sovereignty, in the broader meaning that I introduced at this section’s start, is very much a part of life on Guam, in both positive and negative ways. As a colony caught between the local and the colonial, the domestic and the foreign, always displaying sentiments of patriotism to America yet also feeling disrespected, marginalized unrecognized, Guam is always in confrontation with the notion of sovereignty – whether it might deserve it, whether it can handle it, how much it should have, or whether everything should simply be turned over to Uncle Sam. This apparent skepticism of Guam vis-à-vis its own relation to sovereignty, is a quiet, but crucial element of this dissertation. Yet, in this context (i.e. with respect to the lives of Chamorros and the politics of Guam), and despite the obvious pitfalls and illusions inherent in claims to “sovereignty,” I am less interested in critiquing and more interested in demonstrating the potential power of sovereignty – wherein sovereignty is articulated as self-mastery, self-determination and self-definition.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Some of the literature which has shaped my broader understanding of the concept and critiques of sovereignty. Some of these are critical interventions within certain disciplines shedding light on certain problematic/contradictory aspects of it. Others are meant to be re-articulations of the concept, or to break it from its embeddedness in a particular political scientific or international relations form and give it a different meaning. *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct*, Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities*, Stephen Krasner (ed), (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness; An Indigenous Manifesto*, (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999). Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Scott G. Nelson, *Sovereignty and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination*, (New York: Routledge, 2009). William Rasch, *Sovereignty and its Discontents: On the Primacy of Conflict and the Structure of the Political*, (London: Birkbeck Law Press, 2004). Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004). David E. Jones, “As If The Time Were Now: Deconstructing Agamben,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, (106:2), Spring 2007. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II and III*, Robert Hurley (trans), (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

In general, my approach to sovereignty vis-à-vis Guam will involve not an engagement with the grandness of the concept, but will rather work towards articulating its pervasiveness. To do so means to question seriously what produces sovereignty as such an integral and essential concept, one that is fundamental to the creation and sustenance of the world order. Invoking a tradition, or traditions, of sovereignty can in fact perform the very meaning of the term itself. That is, it can ground the concept in the world and infuse it with a sense of continuity and unity, providing it with a presence in the world which goes far beyond what might have been intended. To settle for painting a picture that captures merely the largeness of the concept is, as Michel Foucault notes, to attribute a unity or stability to the concept.

However, in moving back and forth between describing the grandiosity and the banality of the concept, this dissertation will invoke sovereignty across a spectrum of possible manifestations, from citing scholars and academics who make explicit arguments for what sovereignty is and how it works, to the everyday ways in which the concept serves as a lens into the organizing of human community and the production of their identities. The casual and diffuse way of talking about sovereignty is thus about destabilizing the concept; about taking sovereignty away from the pedestal that it is often placed upon, and which leaves it as a concept beyond critique. Indeed, the ambiguity with which I treat the concept, the lack of any initial substantive grounding, is meant to reflect the conditions of existence that produce Guam, to afford it the same uncomfortable, labile hospitality that Guam is a regular recipient of.

9. Sovereign Magic

In a style more reminiscent of Hollywood film trailers and commercials than political scientific texts, former U.S. Senator Alan Cranston begins his book *The Sovereignty Revolution* with the following passage:

It is worshipped like a God, and as little understood. It is the cause of untold strife and bloodshed. It is at once a source of power and of power's abuse, or order and of anarchy. It can be noble, it can be shameful. It is sovereignty.⁵⁶

This sort of suspenseful supernatural quality might seem a bit overblown and melodramatic to introduce a concept that has generally been reduced to a synonym for the exclusive rights within political borders of nations, but, in truth, this aura is actually quite appropriate. The formation of nations, of states, of various political communities, requires a bit of magic, to both explain the miracle from which they are born and to continuously conjure up the destiny they embody. The appearance of these entities requires the disappearances of others.⁵⁷ That is, the production of sovereignty and of sovereign subjects means the production of governing bodies and the governing of bodies that requires the occasionally grotesque transformation and naturalization of certain forms of violence.⁵⁸ Sovereignty is about authority and power, and, as Jacques Derrida reminds us, all authority has its roots in a “mystical foundation” and the coherence and consistency of any modern state requires various levels of “mysticism.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Alan Cranston, *The Sovereignty Revolution*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1.

⁵⁷ Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *Technologies of The Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (eds), (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority,” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, Drucillia Cornell and Michael Rosenfeld, (New York: Routledge, 1992).

It is this dimension that I am interested in drawing out, or opening up, to reveal what populates this obscene aspect of the writing and the making of sovereignty. This aspect is far from concrete; yet, immensely powerful at times, fragile in small and often ridiculous ways at others, it works like magic in the constitution of sovereignty. Cranston's book doesn't dwell long on this interpretation of sovereignty, and instead quickly descends into what I would argue is a very basic, generic treatise on the development and the current status of the concept of sovereignty. The rest of the book details a very conventional history of the development of internal laws and political science. But this sort of ephemeral mentioning or invoking of the "mystical foundation" of sovereignty is typical in academic domains that claim sovereignty as theirs – i.e. political science and international relations. Sovereignty is a concept that can appear imposing and towering, and this element is brought in as a sort of poetic flourish, or as a means of providing some clear metaphor of power, danger, tragedy, fear, etc. This part of sovereignty is about adding color or emotions, intensity, communicating the necessity of sovereignty, the need to respect it since so much of our everyday securities are apparently tied into the concept's smooth running.

Another similar text meant to provide an overview of the evolution and current constitution of sovereignty is by Robert Jackson's *Sovereignty*. This text also invokes the sorts of moments where sovereignty is not so much a concrete object or a clear invincible force, but is instead a sort of veil. A powerful one nonetheless, but something which can be tarnished, torn, shredded and in some instances cast aside to reveal the obvious instability inherent in it. One of the most telling examples is his use of sovereignty imagery to describe the United States following the September 11th 2001 attacks. Here

the sovereignty of the United States is a magical bubble, but one which is punctured and deflated by not the usual methodological or evidentiary enemies, or compatriots of the concept – i.e. governments, laws, treaties, wars, etc, but instead by a handful of men, who flew themselves and their fellow passengers into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Here sovereignty was signified not just by the “laws” that “protected” the United States or guaranteed its security and safety, but rather it was a *feeling*, or more aptly, the very *appearance* of sovereignty that was violated.⁶⁰

For my project, this version of sovereignty, this dimension of it, as something that, in its effective forms, is spilled out onto the very imagination of its subjects and their identities, is very useful. Another reason for my unconventional approach to discussing sovereignty is to keep this mystical aspect of the concept from being quickly marginalized and buried beneath imposing chapters on the formalization of the concept as understood through elaborations on mutual recognition, legal cases, tribunals, different forms of domestic and international sovereignty, etc. These mazes of discourse all in different ways tend to lead us away from the simple truth that “sovereignty is not a fact” and instead infer that we accept it is a complicated and sometimes contradictory concept which can and must exist.⁶¹

10. The Naivety of Sovereignty

I spoke in the previous chapter of a desire to “level the playing field” in this dissertation so that the academic and historical legacies we see attached to the United

⁶⁰ Chapter 6 of Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty*, (New York: Polity Press, 2007).

⁶¹ Francis Harry Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 1.

States and the concept of sovereignty, and authorize as dominate, superlative forces in the world, do not hold the same sway here. Or in other words, when we analyze together Guam, the US and sovereignty, the waves of colonizing commonsense around Guam (its smallness, its military hypervisibility, its being owned by the United States), and the waves of raw obvious power and authority that surround the United States and sovereignty, do not stand in for a critique or an analysis of their shared structure and are not accepted as *a priori* facts. Although nothing ever exists in any uncontestable form, and any object of discourse is always necessarily open and indeterminate, this in no way means that a shared foundational indeterminacy automatically equalizes them when produced as objects of an academic inquiry. Thus, for instance, while Guam is always fraught with an uncertainty, an ambiguity that defines its existence, the inverse is generally so for the United States and sovereignty. Guam is a, mash-up of inconsistencies, jagged edges of foreign and domestic parts to need to be re-formed so that they can be made to make sense.⁶² The opposite is true for the United States and sovereignty. As well-constituted concepts, ideas or institutions, their vulnerability to the play of meaning is limited. They appear as ancient, established, coherent ideas of the world. Although they may, on close critique, be under the threat of unraveling, or of losing their security and certainty, there is a general consensus about how they exist, and the conditions under which they are present and powerful.⁶³ When dealing with

⁶² One of the great difficulties of the decolonization process in Guam, is that despite the fact that it is meant to provide (should Chamorros chose it) a path outside of the sovereign authority of their current colonizer, the United States has long insisted that any attempt at “self-determination” or “decolonization” in Guam must be consistent with United States Federal law, such as the US Constitution. Underwood, *Status of Having No Status...*

⁶³ This will be discussed more in Chapter 6. In framing of texts such as *Sovereignty, the WTO, and Changing Fundamentals of International Law* and *The Twilight of Sovereignty: How the Information*

foundational concepts – those that are productive of the world, giving it meaning and order – reaching a point of critique, or revealing their structure, is difficult because of the ways in which they are grounded in the world, so that their “obvious”, normalized legacy, obvious, normalized “power,” rarely reveals or challenges their conditions for possibility for their emergence. This is to say that although there may be a tacit acknowledgement that these objects, like all others, are socially constituted, always being contested or challenged, and never certain or secure, such critical stories always remain at the frayed edges, rarely piercing the core of that which is being critiqued. As a result, the ways in which the analysis of an object is grounded, can go far beyond merely providing a framework for what is being studied; it can provide the object of critique a durability, a unity, an inevitability, all of which result in a move further away from understanding the conditions of its possibility.

This is the claim of Michel Foucault in his unique text *The Archeology of Knowledge*.⁶⁴ I say unique because this work, as Foucault himself admits, stands out amongst the majority of his body of work in that it was created with an explicit purpose

Revolution is Transforming Our World, the thing sovereignty, already exists, and so questions of its existence are never directed to a previous moment which might deal with issues of how it comes into being, but rather these questions are securely focused on *where sovereignty is going*. Rather than called into being, we find sovereignty articulated as a once relatively stable and secure concept, which because of various shifting factors is now being called into question, or more appropriately being *besieged or threatened*. The how of sovereignty here becomes a topic of analysis, but only through the trope of threat. Whether it be, *Empire*, illegal immigrants, Capital, rhizomic terrorist cells, the internet, there is a cavalcade of subjects and objects which are crossing borders constantly, and making discernible and open for interrogation the existence of sovereignty, but always in such a way that the “future of sovereignty” is the focus, while the questions of its everyday existence and production are lost. This is also known as the “erosion-of-sovereignty-thesis.” Karen Litfin, “The Greening of Sovereignty: An Introduction,” *The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics*, Karen Litfin (ed), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), 3. For some texts which are examples of this see: John Jackson, *Sovereignty, the WTO, and Changing Fundamentals of International Law*, (Cambridge, Cambridge, 2006). Gidon Gottlieb, *Nations Against States: A New Approach to Ethnic Conflicts and the Decline of Sovereignty*, (New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993). Walter B. Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty: How the Information Revolution is Transforming Our World*, (New York, Scribner Book Company, 1992).

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

of avoiding some of the proclivities that those others possessed. Although amongst academic historians, Foucault is hardly considered to be a member of their ranks or somebody who embodies the proper disciplinary nature of their field, Foucault is nonetheless known for the historical nature of his works. For instance, in *Discipline and Punish*, *Madness and Civilization*, *The Order of Things* and *The Birth of the Clinic* (to name a few) Foucault discusses the ways in which particular discourses emerged at particular historical moments; the ways in which the previously unthinkable became thinkable and how huge bodies of knowledge become legitimated and authorized to study, to speak of and also govern the world around them.⁶⁵ Each text is written as a morass of continuity and discontinuity around a set of ideas such as medicine, science, punishment and so on, meant to disrupt the traditional straight lines of history and progress that guide these bodies of knowledge, to bend, curve and, in some cases, break them.

For a doctrinaire disciplinarian, Foucault's intent might appear to be successful; however, for him, these texts all suffered from quiet, yet potent problems, a unity of discourse that he either did not notice or failed to rid his texts of.⁶⁶ For instance, *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault notes, came "close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history."⁶⁷ *The Archeology of Knowledge*, then, represents a very intentional departure from both the approach of those other works and also the ways in which they

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans), (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁶ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 16.

are interpreted or read. With *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault makes very explicit and careful attempts to outline both, what he is and is not doing, and rid his analysis of these shreds of sovereignty and totality. He does so by attempting to work from a “precarious...blank space” which is created by him ridding his critique of a “whole mass of notions, each of which in its own way, diversifies the theme of unity.”⁶⁸ In the text, Foucault works to create a methodology for understanding discourse, by focusing on the formation of statements and the rules for speech acts. He does not analyze these statements as being created by thinking subjects with motivations, rationality and consciousness, but instead attempts to capture their rules as pure moments, the rules for their emergence and their meaning in a field of a particular discourse. As Slavoj Zizek writes in his text *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, the text represents Foucault’s “key work in delineating the ontology of utterances as pure language events; not elements of a structure, not attributes to the subject who utter them, but events that emerge within a field, function and then disappear.”⁶⁹

Both, the theoretical insight of *The Archeology of Knowledge* and the motivation that led to its writing, are that the history, the legacy, or the tradition, through which we assert the object of our analysis, can easily, silently, quietly, transform that object into a sovereign subject; into something that will exceed our analysis and our ability to critique it. The attribution of speech to a speaking human, its grounding as being uttered by a human, masks the rules by which it exists once uttered. The subject to whom it is attributed becomes the force through which the structure of that utterance is defined, it

⁶⁸ Ibid., 17, 21.

⁶⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, (Routledge, New York, 2004), 71.

stands in for the analysis, and infuses into that speech act the sovereignty of the subject, giving thought domain over the structure, meaning and rules of said act. The same goes for critique in general, in that the “naivety of chronologies” or the “pre-existing forms of continuity”⁷⁰ that academics use to situate their work can leave them and their analysis endlessly trapped, ensnared by a fictitious and false origin which they have inadvertently authorized for the object of their critique. The presence of this origin in one’s critique, regardless of how it slips in, is what can lead to unity, durability and inevitability for what is being analyzed.

In the case of sovereignty, when written of in an academic context, there is generally an emphasis on historicizing the concept, whether in a generic, informational sense to give a notion of where the concept comes from, or in a critical sense, to critique the usual ways in which the concept is assumed to emerge and exist. There are familiar stops along this historical journey, such as the Thirty Year War, the Treaty of Westphalia, the Peace of Utrecht, World War I, the United Nations, the development of international law, and the rise of the nation state form. There are two primary forces which drive these histories: first, the violence of wars in Europe, the wars of imperialism and over colonies, the threat of nuclear weapons. Second, there is the rationality of the figures of these histories that slowly over time have created the system, based on nation-state sovereignty which gives order to the world of today.

For example, in his book *The Sovereignty Revolution*, former US Senator Alan Cranston, provides a narrative for this history of sovereignty, where it comes from, how it emerges from the violent conflicts of the world, and how it eventually leads to the

⁷⁰ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 28, 27.

creation of a more just and peaceful world. The concept becomes embedded not just in the history of the world, but becomes an unfolding, always emerging force, of change and progress. After recounting for several pages that long history, Cranston notes: “Today we live in a world that prides itself on the progress of democracy.”⁷¹ Sovereignty thus becomes the force through which that pride in democracy, in order, in contrast to so much ancient chaos, becomes possible. Although Cranston’s text is much more explicit in its embracing of the marvels of sovereignty than other works on the topic, he is not alone in giving sovereignty this sort of treatment – this grounding in the writing and weaving together of the world, the marking of the concept as a key condition of its possibility.⁷² The repetitive grounding of the concept, the incessant repeating of sovereignty’s “origins” ends up tethering it too well to the world.⁷³ The result is that sovereignty, as a concept, is not only intimately linked to the functioning of the world, shielded as something for which there is no alternative (just chaos), but becomes something whose

⁷¹ Cranston, 30.

⁷² Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23-24.

⁷³ It is likely that I can be criticized for using a voice such as Senator Alan Cranston’s in this dissertation in order to establish academically durable ideas or claims. Cranston, although the author of several books and papers on international affairs, is not an academic and I could be accused of using his text to help set up a straw-target, due to the fact that it isn’t very academically sophisticated in its writing. Cranston invokes sovereignty in more clear and essentialist ways than most academics might, and so citing him is like shooting fish in a barrel. I don’t entirely disagree with this point, however I chose to use Cranston despite this potential critique because of the way in which non-academic texts, or those which are so mired in the conventions of a discipline, often times say better or say more clearly, the very things which that discipline is built up, but secretly disavows. Cranston for instance, will say openly and wholeheartedly things which the discipline of political science has a mess of discursive formations which will appear to qualify and minimize and neutralize the same idea, while nonetheless allowing it to remain intact at the foundation of the conversation. Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 2000), 257.

structure academically is “essentially uncontested” and more often “assumed than elucidated.”⁷⁴

The point here is not whether or not this history, this assessment of its origins is accurate or untrue. The issue is not about what counts as true history, what may be included in the “real list” of watershed moments. In other words, I am not refusing a conventional approach in protest of the fact that the real history of sovereignty remains hidden and must be released! Instead, it is a refusal to participate in this grounding, even if just strategically, in order to further trouble the concept, to trouble the quiet ways in which it draws authority. By not treating sovereignty in any conventional way in this dissertation, I believe I am attempting to follow Foucault’s advice in *The Archeology of Knowledge*. By not providing the usual foundation to sovereignty in establishing my project, I assert that, in analyzing sovereignty in relation to Guam, it is necessary that the “...pre-existing forms of continuity , all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively of course, but the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed.”⁷⁵ My intention is not to understate the potency and power of sovereignty, but only to take great care in how I conjure it into the world of my dissertation, and not to accord it the usual permanence or stability. By withholding this traditional academic veneration of the concept, I can instead focus on the everyday ways in which the concept permeates life, and how this pervasiveness signifies both an omnipresence, but also a weakness, a frailty and vulnerability.

⁷⁴ R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1. Litfin, 3.

⁷⁵ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 25.

The decision to treat sovereignty thus is also productive of my engagement with the particular kind of sovereignty exercised by the United States. That, is by tiptoeing around some of the means by which a concept is sometimes covertly or unintentionally given authority, I am also hoping to deprive the United States of some of the security and stability guaranteed to its own sovereignty. In this regard, I draw inspiration from the work of Native American scholar Andrea Smith,

11. Studying America, Without America

In her article, “American Studies without America,” published in a special “Native Feminisms engage American Studies” issue of *American Quarterly*, Andrea Smith critiques the work of American Studies scholars who make critical assaults on the United States nation-state and its claims to the legitimacy of its violence, because of the way their critiques are weakened by their acceptance of the sovereignty of the United States.⁷⁶ She critiques the arguments scholars such as Amy Kaplan and Judith Butler make against the post-9/11 violence that the United States has committed, because of the ways in which they route their argument through reference to the United States Constitution and how it is being transgressed in the name of a War on Terror.⁷⁷ Smith criticizes this approach because it accepts the legitimacy of a massive American fiction that provides the basis for the claims of the United States to sovereignty, and thus even critiques of the United States ultimately authorize its existence, and provide permanence to its claims.

⁷⁶ Andrea Smith and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, “Native Feminisms engage American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, (60:2), June 2008, 241-249.

⁷⁷ Andrea Smith, “American Studies Without America,” *American Quarterly*, (60:2), June 2008, 310.

Smith's point is very similar to Foucault's in that she too demonstrates that the ways in which we bring an object before us to examine it – i.e. what we use to ground it, and what sort of rules we assume for that evidentiary grounding – will determine if and how that object will be critiqued.⁷⁸ The formal establishing of sovereignty through reference to a legal history, or the conjuring of the United States through reference to its Constitution, can minimize the more obscene ways in which these objects are constituted – ways that might be less academically or publicly acceptable, but are no less crucial. In her article, Smith briefly points out the relationship between the world of laws, or legal origins stories, upon which the United States is based, and Native genocide. She argues that, by asserting the United States as an organism which originates in the writing of its Constitution, the political projects that one creates will always be made to pivot around that, constrained by that story which structures how the United States is perceived. The structure of how one critiques the United States, hence, will always be tainted with the

⁷⁸ The work of Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben, whose work is referenced throughout this dissertation, is a perfect example of this. Agamben's most famous work *Homo Sacer*, is a very insightful analysis how political community come into existence and the violence which is necessary in order to create them and the sovereign, the borders, the law and the figures such as *homo sacer* that together give such a community the possibility of an identity. In order to create his argument and genealogy Agamben relies extensively on legal texts and philosophical/political texts from Europe and its progenitors in Ancient Greece and Rome. As a result Agamben creates a very neat, tidy and ultimately compelling argument which eventually leads to the World War II Nazi concentration camp as the ultimately manifestation of biopower. In my opinion, Agamben reaches this point precisely because of the evidence that he bases himself on. The way he builds his genealogy, around Ancient and Modern European attempts to articulate sovereign power, require that his analysis stay within that conversation about creating and conserving a European progressive rationality. As a result, there a feeling of both relevance and hollowness to considering Agamben when talking about indigenous groups and their colonization by Western powers. But as other theorists such as Achille Mbembe in his article *Necropolitics* shows, while using a similar sort of analysis, but grounding yourself in different evidence (which comes from colonial writings justifying violence and the literal and political emptying of indigenous lands), you can make a very different argument. □ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Achille Mbembe and Libby Meintjes, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture*, (15:1), Winter 2003, 11-40.

rationality of the writing of its origin, the democratic promise that it represents, the progress in the world that it shoulders.

Thus, these formal and rational ways in which we can perceive how the United States came into being and continues to exist, results in the marginalization of the historical and contemporary violence, particularly against Native peoples.⁷⁹ This violence, as Smith notes, is critical in understanding how the United States, as a nation-state and an empire, has emerged and maintains its power. But accepting the Constitution as its origin, makes unintelligible or supplemental, the critiques from those like Native Feminists who argue for a different way of perceiving the origin of the United States, one based on indigenous displacement and genocide. Smith points out that genocide is never against the law in the formation of nation-states; it is usually sanctioned *as* the law in their creation. By not accounting for this form of violence and its centrality in creating the nation-state, one falls for what David Kazanjian calls “the colonizing trick,” which Smith re-articulates as “the liberal myth that the United States is founded on democratic principles rather than being built on pillars of capitalism, colonialism and white supremacy.”⁸⁰ The United States thus becomes a beneficiary of the same spirit of the progress of humanity and sovereignty that sovereignty itself draws from. It becomes embedded in the world, a necessary part of its foundation, something that, while it may not be perfect, is weighted down with enough commonsense so that critiques, such as

⁷⁹ Russell Lawrence Barsh and James Y. Henderson, *The Road: Indian Tribes and Political Liberty*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983). Phillip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (West Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁸⁰ Smith, “American Studies Without America,” 310-311. David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

those of its illegal enactments of violence, cannot pierce it. They cannot reveal any fundamental weakness because they privilege formal pieces of evidence that can contradict each other and prove hypocrisy, but all still point to a permanence of the United States, still adhere to its sovereignty in the world.

Such critiques can only go so far because they do not allow for what a foundational critique of any nation-state requires, namely what the other side of that nation-state looks like? What would a critique of the United States look like if we did not presuppose the existence of that nation-state? What would our critiques look like if we allowed for the possibility of the dissolution of the United States? What alternatives to governance and sovereignty do we limit or prohibit by assuming the presence of the United States and not imagining what life would look like without it? Smith points out that, for those seeking a more just world not based on the violence of nation-states, critiques invested in American sovereignty do not bring one any closer to those goals. In fact it prevents one from reaching a space where those goals can even be imagined:

...consequently the project of imagining alternative forms of governance outside of the United States remains impoverished within the field of American Studies...When we do not presume that the United States should or will always continue to exist, we create the space to reflect on what might be more just forms of governance, not only for Native peoples, but for the rest of the world.⁸¹

Both Smith and Foucault argue for the need to withhold, from that which you are critiquing, those ideas that make it appear as permanent, a unity, an inevitability, that has emerged, to which there can be no alternative. In the various objects that Smith mentions, she is ultimately arguing that in our critiques of the United States, we withhold its

⁸¹ Ibid., 314.

sovereignty, that we refuse it the refuge of a force that makes it impervious to our critiques, and also work to reposition the ways in which its authority and its stability is made. That is, while engaging the ways in which U.S. sovereignty is made, it be disconnected from objects such as the United States Constitution, which generally have a stabilizing function, and hook it into other sites which can destabilize it and reveal its limits.⁸² Thus, it is on the basis of the arguments made by Foucault and Smith that I argue for a need to engage sovereignty by not grounding it. In my methodology chapter I will speak more specifically on how to capture and write of sovereignty without this formalized foundation.

For now, in the final sections of this chapter, I use Smith's critique of the impoverished imagination of American Studies, in order to discuss the tenuous relationship between this dissertation and the academic field that its intent most closely resembles, namely American Studies. I will then conclude this chapter by discussing how this dissertation might represent an important intervention into American Studies and its relationship to the Pacific, through the idea of disrupting the *fantasy of the Pacific* for the United States and what that fantasy produces.

12. American Studies

American Studies, an interdisciplinary field of study which emerged during the Cold War, is centered around questions of what American culture or civilization is and

⁸² Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Layers of Injustice," *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2009/12/annai-hu-taitai-este-na-tinige-indian.html>, 29 December 2009. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

how has it been formed.⁸³ As the United States gained power in the world, the clout of American Studies grew through its acceptance and sometimes celebration of the exceptionalism of the United States. As Donald Pease, a noted American Studies scholar who helped develop a critical trend in the discipline notes, this emphasis on the exceptionality of the United States has led to the academic justification for imperialism ventures by the U.S. state.⁸⁴ In recent years, in particular, in response to the rise of Cultural Studies in the 1970's, and the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, a new branch of American Studies has been formed.⁸⁵ This new trend is less interested in the academic celebration of a unique American essence, but more intent upon revealing the structure through which America emerges in the world, and the historical and contemporary conditions that have made it possible. This approach to American Studies is most generally referred to as "New Americanist" and is tied to the influences of the counter-narratives about the constitution of America emerging from fields such as Indigenous/Native American Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Queer Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Ethnic Studies.⁸⁶ But this approach is most explicitly linked to the influence of Cultural Studies on American Studies.

⁸³ Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America – 1860 – 1920*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1987). Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in American*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁸⁴ Donald Pease, "Re-Thinking 'American Studies After U.S. Exceptionalism,'" *American Literary History*, September 2008, 20.

⁸⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Lawrence Grossberg as quoted in *Details for the Academic Journal 'Cultural Studies'*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/routledge/09502386.html>, 2008. Site Accessed 16 January 2010. *Culture, Media, Language*, Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds), (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁸⁶ Some examples that I have come across which represent different inter-disciplinary interventions into the field: Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). *Postcolonial Theory and the United*

Fundamental to the critique that Cultural Studies represents is the idea that cultures are never sovereign, stable, or exist unto themselves, without diversity or contestation.⁸⁷ Culture is made by a multitude of competing factors, ideas, agents in any given space and, as such, the claims to any unique, authentic or original American culture is a performative gesture, meant to elide far from than it admits to.⁸⁸ Traditionally, American Studies as a discipline, existed to shore up the normative borders of American culture, to police the edges and determine what is and isn't American.⁸⁹ This duty meant defending the true heirs to the American legacy, or defending the whiteness of the nation, thus converting the critiques or claims of non-white populations – whether they be indigenous, slave, or immigrant – to footnotes, to minor characters and voices, which exist to be elevated, to be included, to be recognized. It also meant reinforcing the geographical borders of the United States, thus erasing the history of American conquest, displacement and genocide.⁹⁰

States: Race, Ethnicity and Literature, Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (eds), (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2000). *Post-Colonial America*, C. Richard King (ed), (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Jose David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultures Studies*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997). George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). *Feminist Interventions in Early American Studies*, Mary C. Carruth (ed), (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2006). *Asian American Studies: After Critical Mass*, Kent A. Ono (ed), (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁸⁷ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems," *Culture, Media, Language*, Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds), (London: Routledge, 2005), 27.

⁸⁸ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 16.

⁸⁹ Lipsitz, xvii.

⁹⁰ Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, (Boston, South End Press, 2005). Chris Finley, *Conquest: A Love Story in the New World*, Paper presented at the Indigenous Studies Engages Ethnic Studies Symposium, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, San Diego, 8 May 2009.

The New Americanist trend seeks to challenge most of these assumptions about American culture.⁹¹ It seeks to extend the analysis of the United States beyond its given geographical borders, into the places wherein the influence of its military, its economy, or even just its imagination, reach.⁹² It further assumes that there is no unique or original American culture, just a force that has always been open, contested and changing. Rather than a sovereign, timeless subject of America, evolving over the years (slowly being “colored” by others), we see an American subject constantly being performed, picking up new “authentic” and “invented” pieces from its interactions, and from continual efforts to demarcate its imagined borders that determine the content of its Americanness. American culture is the site whereby the creation of those borders, and the casting of bodies within and without them, forges potent identities of civilization, modernity, progress, modernity, rationality, and exceptionality that become authentic signifiers of Americanness.⁹³ The critical work of this New Americanist trend is to reject the impulse to erase the evidence of these forms of mutual constitution between the United States and its various others.⁹⁴ In other words, it aims to reveal these productive links, the ways in which the identities

⁹¹ Donald E. Pease, “New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon,” *boundary 2*, (17:1), Spring 1990, 1 – 37. *The Futures of American Studies*, Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (eds), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁹² Donald E. Pease, “C.R.L. James, *Moby-Dick*, and the Emergence of Transnational American Studies,” *The Futures of American Studies*, Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (eds), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 149 – 150.

⁹³ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2005).

⁹⁴ In Lisa Lowe’s article “The International Within the National: American Studies and the Asian American Critique,” she provides an example of this. She frames her discussion of what Asian Americans studies as offering American Studies a means of understanding the ontological structure by which the nation and its I and the rest of the world as Other are created. She argues that “Asian American critique asks us to interrogate the national ontology through which the United States constructs its international “others,” and through which the nation-state has either sought to transform those others in subjects of the national, or, conversely, to subordinate them to objects of the national ontology.” Lisa Lowe, “The International Within the National: American Studies and the Asian American Critique,” *The Futures of American Studies*, Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (eds), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), 76.

and cultural forms of the United States rely upon gestures of exclusion or displacement. Thus, the New Americanist trend disallows the writing of a sovereign, autonomous American subject.⁹⁵

In general, this turn often amounts to the destabilizing and remaking of traditional American Studies subjects, topics or landscapes through a critical lens “borrowed” from disciplines such as Ethnic Studies or Gender and Women’s Studies. But in a more specific way, this intellectual intervention takes key figures or events in the production of Americaness and re-interrogates them to show their productive influence and ties to projects of American imperial expansion or the formation of different exceptionalist American discourses. Furthermore, the relationship the United States has with the sites of its imperialist expansion – whether they be Native American lands, or in Asia, Latin American, the Middle East or the Pacific – is recast in such a way, as to show how these places provided, or continue to provide, some sort of productive power.

13. The Place of the Pacific

In discussing my particular resistance to situating this project in American Studies, I will engage not with the field in general, or even the New Americanist trend, but specifically with the way the discipline works to include or incorporate the Pacific and Pacific Islands into its work. In the past decade, the Pacific has slowly gained more relevance in the field, and become not just an interesting or exotic site on the map of American culture, but a necessary one in understanding how America has been produced

⁹⁵ Although not explicitly within the realm of American Studies, Medya Yegenoglu in her text *Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* makes this point very well. Medya Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123.

over the past two centuries. *Cultures of United States Imperialism* edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* by Amy Kaplan, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Cultures* by John Eperjesi, and *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific, to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond* by Rob Wilson – all these represent critical works in this effort to incorporate the Pacific.⁹⁶ Each of these texts position, through analysis of literature, academic discourse, military discourse, legal texts, film, and other cultural texts, the Pacific as a crucial site in the making of different discourses on American dominance, superiority, authority. Despite the traditional way in which this region (the Pacific and the Pacific rim) is reduced to an imperialist footnote, or a collection of small imperial accidents or mistakes that don't have much relevance to the greater destiny of the United States, the Pacific turn in American Studies works to reveal how the multiple levels in which the Pacific was encountered, engaged and colonized by the United States led to the latter's transformation from a minor nation-state to a global superpower.⁹⁷

It would seem, then, that the study of the Pacific has come a long way since the inception of Pacific Studies as an academic discipline in the 1960's, when it was rooted in the notion that the region was a *tabula rasa*, and thus the writing of it was primarily a recounting of the exploits of European explorers and imperial powers.⁹⁸ My wariness

⁹⁶ *Cultures of US Imperialism*, Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (eds.), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994). Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005). John Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Cultures*, (Lebanon, New Hampshire: Dartmouth, 2005). Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific, to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁹⁷ Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, "Introduction: Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production," *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik (eds). (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁹⁸ J.W. Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," *The Journal of Pacific History*, (1:1), 1966, 6.

about American Studies, though, is due to the fact that despite the critical turn the discipline is experiencing in reimagining the Pacific, the idea of the Pacific as empty still persists, and its status as a space for a fantasy of the exercise of sovereignty by the United States is still being perpetuated. If the world were a neighborhood and its regions divided into different blocks within that community, then the Pacific would be a large, but surprisingly banal and empty, space within that neighborhood. If Africa is, as Mbembe and others have noted, a geographic and temporal warehouse for the nasty, uncivilized desires and fantasies for Europe, then the Pacific would most likely be a vast empty lot in the neighborhood which, occasionally, someone has grand plans for but nothing ever materializes, so that the lot does not seem to have much of an impact on the rest of the neighborhood.⁹⁹

But this emptiness does not in anyway mean that the Pacific is an irrelevant region or has had no impact on history; quite the contrary. The emptiness is precisely what has made it so crucial in the making of empires. Speaking of the role of the Pacific, and the ocean in general, in the development of modern ideas, Chris Connery in his articles, “The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary” and “Ideologies of Land and Sea,” reminds his readers about their centrality in shaping, contrasting or stimulating the way we conceive of space, geography and being.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the cartographies and prescriptions of Empire in both, the 19th and the 20th centuries, were spurred by texts, such as Alfred Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, which called for a

⁹⁹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher L. Connery, “The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary,” *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds), (Druham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000), 284-311. Christopher Connery, “Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements,” *boundary 2*, (28:2), Summer 2001, 173-201.

domination and control of the sea.¹⁰¹ In ideological terms, then, we can extend this past political economy, into the subjectivities and perceptions of modern subjects that are produced through the metaphors of the sea.

The ideas of the smooth and empty space of the ocean, and in particular the Pacific, lead to the most potent fantasies of purity, conquest and sovereignty from Europe and the United States. According to Connery, “Ocean going, for Hegel activated Western history, and the geographical opportunity for ocean exploration was the condition of possibility for Western Europe’s entry into world history.”¹⁰² Then quoting Hegel from

The Philosophy of History:

The sea gives us the idea of indefinite, the unlimited and the infinite; and in feeling his own infinite in that Infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited: to sea invites man to conquest and to piratical plunder, but also to honest gain and to commerce. The land, the mere valley-plain attaches him to the soil; it involves him in an indefinite multitude of dependencies, but the sea carries him out beyond these limited circles of thought and action.¹⁰³

Moreover, Carl Schmitt begins his text *The Nomos of the Earth*, with a line from a Johan Wolfgang Goethe poem, which provides an important segue to my next point. In beginning his attempt to theorize the world, in geographic and spatial terms, and describe the spatial consciousness that has emerged over the past few centuries of European development, Schmitt quotes, “The small and the petty have all trickled away. Only the land and the sea matter here.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power on History: 1660-1783*, (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2009).

¹⁰² Connery, “Ideologies of Land and Sea...,” 182.

¹⁰³ G.F.W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, (New York, Dover 1956), 95.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*, (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2003), 37.

In his article, “Re-centering Pacific Studies,” Pacific Island scholar Terrence Wesley-Smith outlines three primary ways in which the Pacific has been, and continues to be, engaged with academically.¹⁰⁵ The first is the pragmatic administrative assumption that has led to an area studies understanding of the region – i.e. that countries beyond the Pacific will be visiting, trading, colonizing and administrating these islands, and so a healthy body of knowledge needs to be developed about the region. The second reason is closely related to an anthropological academic impulse, tied to the idea that the Pacific represented a sort of fantastic intellectual buffet, ripe for research and experiments on the human condition. In this grand experiment, each island represented a distinct Petri-dish, developed in natural scientific isolation. Since the ocean isolated each of these peoples, one could understand their existences without the mitigating factors of contact zones, trade, language or genetic mixing, and therefore have access to the fundamental nature of the human condition. As one Pacific geographer notoriously noted in 1963, the Pacific represents, “whole congeries of little universes, ready made isolates for study, each capable in appearance at least of being readily grasped as a whole.”¹⁰⁶ The third reason, and by far the least pervasive, is that the study of these islands be driven by the imperative of empowerment, to enable self-determination of one’s own existence and to develop endurance to different forms of continuing imperialism and colonialism.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Terrence Wesley Smith, “Rethinking Pacific Islands Studies” *Pacific Studies*, (18:2), 1995, 115–137.

¹⁰⁶ Oliver Spate as quoted in David Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White, “Introduction,” *Voyaging Through the Contemporary Pacific*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield, 2000), 5.

¹⁰⁷ Most prominently in academic terms, this has led to the emergence of Native Pacific Islander Cultural Studies, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Vicente M. Diaz and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, “Native Pacific Islander Cultural Studies on the Edge,” *The Contemporary Pacific*, (13:2), Fall 2001, 315–341.

14. Sovereignty in the Pacific

American Studies, even in its most critical forms today, does not stray far from the fundamental assumptions that drive the second reason to engage with the Pacific – i.e. the idea of the region as being a ready-made social laboratory. The islanders themselves are often stripped of their agency and their particularities and are reduced to caricatures, signifying the anthropological, linguistic, and cultural structures, but little of their own. In the New Americanist critique, the nature of this use of the Pacific is less unsettling, but still remains.¹⁰⁸ Although American Studies now possesses the intellectual tool kit to critique such colonial/imperialist projects, and to reveal them as being productive of, or having impacts on, both, the Pacific and in the United States, the gaze of their critique remains situated clearly within the imagined boundaries of the United States and, thus, is always constrained by an assumption of the sovereignty of the United States.

I'd like to reiterate here the argument by Andrea Smith on the need for doing American Studies without America, or in this case, talking about the development of American imperial projects or culture in the Pacific, without the United States at the center of the critique. Centering the United States limits analysis by reinforcing the gaze, the power, of the United States even as it is being critiqued. It gives the impression that when talking about the Pacific and its relationship to the United States and its development, one need not consider the islanders who claim those islands, but need only

¹⁰⁸ For instance, in various work the islands and islanders say things about the United States, communicate pieces or large chunks of understanding as to how the United States has or does come into being. Their islands are the fantasy spaces for writers such as Jack London, Ernest Hemingway or Mark Twain, their bodies are the slates upon which exotic and sexualized representations are concocted, their islands fulfill the desires of military commanders, explorers, officers and businessmen, for various forms of discovery and conquest. Rob Wilson provides a very comprehensive overview of many of these "trajectories" in Rob Wilson, "U.S. Trajectories into Hawai'i and the Pacific: Imperial Mappings, Postcolonial Contestations," *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific, to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000), 57-88.

follow the footsteps of Americans, the writing of Americans, the legal and political texts of Americans. The methodology that is derived from the accepting of the sovereignty of the United States in one's analysis runs the risk of reducing critique to a simple extension of the United States, a widening of its borders, an incorporating of the Pacific and Pacific Islanders into the gaze of the United States, but not leaving any room for their alterity or for an existence outside of the United States. The Pacific Islands, and by default their indigenous peoples, become subsumed within a different sort of empire, one which is still based on the idea that the islands' most important value is to prove some larger American point, and thus rather than admit to an inherent alterity of the people of the islands, once again reduce to them to mere tenets living with American laboratories. The writing of American imperialism in the Pacific is left to Americans who visited the Pacific, while the sources which emanate from the Pacific are incidental, not essential, perhaps something colorful to include in an introduction or conclusion, but not really what drives one's analysis.

The result is that the sovereignty of Pacific Islanders and islands – i.e. the writing of them as something other than victim, or a constitutive node of United States imperialism, or as an effect of its gaze – does not enter into the critique. In Rob Wilson's *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific, to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond* for example, while using the case of Hawai'i to deftly talk about issues of global capitalism, culture, and the place of Hawai'i in the U.S. imagination of the Pacific, he has trouble, as Pacific Studies literature scholar Susan Najita notes, in engaging with indigenous movements, and in talking about their sovereignty struggles in the spaces he is

invoking.¹⁰⁹ These sites prove imperialism and colonialism; they contribute to that body of critical knowledge that defies exceptionalist academic and public renderings of the United States. But, in that effort, they place the same old empty map on the Pacific, unwilling to admit to an existence on these islands other than that which is either conservatively or progressively American.¹¹⁰ This flaw appears methodologically as well,

¹⁰⁹ Although Najita does not provide an in-depth analysis of what she means by this, she later implicitly argues that American studies scholarship like that of Wilson's text contrast with hers because of her "island-centered" and "concerned with indigenous nationalisms and claims to land..." Susan Y. Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 7.

¹¹⁰ Candace Fujikane in several of her texts makes a very similar argument about indigenous issues of sovereignty in the Pacific in relation to American-based Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies. Despite the critical or radical dimension of disciplines such as Asian American Studies, American Studies or Ethnic Studies, they still nonetheless have difficulty reconciling with what the political persistence of native/indigenous populations in the American territories and colonies indicate. Namely, that part of any attempt at understanding that nation or that nation-state require that distinctions between settle/native and indigenous/minority not be swept aside, but be understood to be an integral part of making those things possible or legible. Fujikane details a number of reasons why there might be quiet yet firm resistance in these intellectual domains to what pushes for sovereignty of the native peoples of the United States. These include a general distrust of nationalist-sounding arguments, claims of native movements as being essentialist as in harkening back to an essence that never existed, or relying on simplistic and impossible binaries of colonizer/colonized or settler/native. One of the most interesting arguments that Fujikane invokes, is when she draws from the work of Native Hawaiian activist/scholar Haunani-Kay Trask to up the ante of indigenous struggles, by pushing beyond identity into the realm of materiality. Trask argues that indigenous people seeking sovereignty are not limited in their claims to one's of identity or wanting the ability to define their own identities, they also seek to gain control over the resources, the land upon which *all in the United States rely upon to position themselves*. The difficulty in recognizing the right to self-determination, decolonization that indigenous people have is that it, as Fujikane notes it requires self-interrogating and reeducation. Effectively supporting that right or that struggle means first implicating yourself and admitting to how regardless of how critical of the United States nation/nation-state you may be, you nonetheless occupy that category of settler. Second, it means accepting that any possibility of justice in this situation will require that something be given up. This does not mean that power or security only be taken away from some massive institution or from white people or racist people. It means that you might be required to give something up as well, a pound of theoretical flesh so to speak, which could mean setting aside claims to belonging or owning this nation which you may not want to verbalize in polite company, but are nonetheless the ground for your own identity and place in the world. In line with the earlier critique of Andrea Smith with regards to the inability of American Studies to see beyond America, this very much extends into the inability for American Studies to see the Pacific beyond their own imaginary, as a region with some cases which should be analyzed without America, and movements to move beyond America which should be supported as well. Candice Fujikane, "Foregrounding Native Nationalisms: A Critique of Antinationalist Sentiment in Asian American Studies," *Asian American Studies: After Critical Mass*, Kent A. Ono (ed), (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Everyday Habits of Life in Hawai'i*, Candice Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (eds), (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008). Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Apologies, Power and Justice," *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*,

for the evidence that could assert the sovereignty of sites in the Pacific takes a back seat to those which assert an American gaze or claim to these islands.¹¹¹

In the early writing of this dissertation I found myself questioning whether or not I could do my project in the same vein as which Amy Kaplan created *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. When I merely looked at the surface of her argument, I thought yes, absolutely. In two chapters in particular she talks about sites of American domestic imperialism, in Puerto Rico and Hawai'i, and the texts she uses to analyze them come from *The Insular Cases* or the writings and experiences of Mark Twain while in Hawai'i, prior to the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. However, upon reading her text more carefully, I realized that her intent was very different than my own. She was writing as an American Studies scholar, critiquing the United States from the United States, and her chosen texts reflected that.¹¹² But missing in the critiques of America in both, Puerto Rico and Hawai'i, are Puerto Ricans and Hawaiians. I say this glibly, but there is a stronger point behind it. Puerto Rico is written of, analyzed and therefore produced as a site of American colonialism, almost entirely

<http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2009/05/apologies-power-and-justice.html>, 29 May 2009. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

¹¹¹ The trope of Asia/Pacific as a site for analysis and one of contestation has also helped facilitate this erasure. The rearticulation of things such as The Pacific Century, the Pacific Rim and the Asia/Pacific are all ways of creating translational networks and frameworks for thinking about this region of the world, and articulating its importance. Sadly, these frameworks, with a few exceptions, tend to ascribe the thousands of islands and millions of islanders within that region very little importance, save for the ways in which they are used by those who populate the edges of the Pacific, large nations such as China, Australia, Japan and the United States. Arif Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure," *Journal of World History*, (3:1), 1992, 55-79. Wilson and Dirlik, "Introduction: Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production."

¹¹² One of the reasons that I don't see my project possible in the same way, is because Kaplan's model for her chapter on Hawai'i is a common form of American Studies engagement with the Pacific, whereby you follow a noted and accepted American figure who sojourns into the region and then unpack his writings. One of the ways in which I half-jokingly resist any embrace of American Studies with regards to Guam is because no famous American author has ever visited the island and written racist things about it.

through the language and the decisions of *The Insular Cases*. Hawai'i is treated in a similar way. The lack of voices and sources leads to the likely performance of these sites as places with no other side other than the United States, politically or methodologically. It ends up quietly accepting an ancient yet powerful premise about the Pacific that there is no possible sovereign existence for these islands.

As Native Hawaiian scholar Noenoe Silva notes in her article "The Importance of Using Hawaiian Language Sources for Understanding the Hawaiian Past," to not use the voices or sources that are produced from the islands in the Pacific, in whatever form they may take, can help reproduce that marginalization of the peoples in the Pacific.¹¹³ In her article, Silva chronicles the ways in which the ignoring of a wealth of archival sources made by Native Hawaiians and written in the Hawaiian language, helped make easier their erasure in academic texts, but also aided in a general resistance to their rights and authenticity in seeking sovereignty and decolonization.¹¹⁴

To accept this sort of implicit framework of American Studies runs counter to my intent for this dissertation, i.e. that I produce something which is rooted in Guam's sovereignty, as something which will assist in its decolonization.¹¹⁵ My aim is to analyze that same space between the U.S. and its territories and colonies in the Pacific, that Kaplan and others are also working on, but to not have my focus return to the United

¹¹³ Noenoe Silva, "The Importance of Hawaiian Language Sources for Understanding the Hawaiian Past," *English Studies in Canada*, (30:2), June 2004, 4-12.

¹¹⁴ Haunani Kay-Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 60.

¹¹⁵ As will be discussed in Chapter 4 in a more thorough manner, this leads to the particular way in which I approach the establishing of evidence and argument in this dissertation. By taking seriously the argument that my work should be "island-centered," I therefore work to find the evidence for my arguments as best as I can "in Guam" or attached to it, or something caught in that space between it and the United States. Building off of Silva's point, the assumed lack of any evidence in Guam, is part of its erasure or part of the obstacles which cut it off from being relevant to the concept of sovereignty.

States, or to privilege the stories that it tells about itself, the fictions it produces to prop itself up and extend its grasp. This, in my opinion, would be the case if I were to take the same route as Kaplan and analyze Guam primarily through a U.S. legal history or literary analysis. It is possible perhaps that if these sources and voice were to be centralized, one might end up at the same exact point. Yet, without placing them within the view of critique, the emptiness of the Pacific becomes reinforced; it remains that idea which waits to be filled by the United States.

15. *Disrupting the American-Pacific Fantasy*

I have referred to the way in which the United States engages with the Pacific as a fantasy. This term is commonly used amongst American Studies scholars engaging with the Pacific in order to invoke the discourses that imagine the Pacific as empty, or as belonging to the United States or as a site for realizing exotic primitive wishes.¹¹⁶ To call something a fantasy is to say it is a mis-representation of reality, one which can be very productive and animate those who gazes sustain it, but ultimately an illusion. As already explain in this chapter, the New Americanist trend is interested in showing the structure of that fantasy, where it comes from and how it exists; but, in the psychoanalytic sense of the term, it is not interested in tampering with the fantasy, *or resolving it*. *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* is a good example of this, since it focuses on the ways in which certain texts or certain organizations produced knowledges which eventually became formalized as pieces of evidence proving various imperialist fantasies of the Pacific. In one such passage, Eperjesi connects clearly the

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Wilson, 33-34.

relationship between the fantasy and what it enables: "...from a critical perspective [the American Pacific exists as a] space of projection and fantasy, a utopic region of time and space compression that leads to smooth flows and big profits."¹¹⁷

I agree with this assessment and with much of how this idea of the Pacific as a fantasy space is used by American Studies. What I do take issue with is what happens next after a fantasy is named? How then do we take the next step towards the resolution or dismantling of said fantasy? It is this next step that I see American Studies having difficulty with. In order to explain this, I rely upon the insights of Slavoj Zizek and his readings of how a fantasy is maintained or dissolved.

In his book *Looking Awry*, Zizek discusses the structure of fantasy through a short story by Patricia Highsmith titled "The Stuff of Madness."¹¹⁸ In the story, an elderly woman, Penelope, lives with her husband Christopher, and has a peculiar hobby of stuffing the bodies of her deceased pets and then displaying them in a garden in the backyard. The curious and strange nature of this display results in journalists coming to the house, seeking to take pictures and interview Penelope. The husband and wife fight over whether or not to allow the interview, and the husband at last relents but secretly schemes of a way to get back at his wife. When the journalists and Penelope arrive in the garden, to their surprise, something new has been introduced. As soon as Penelope sees it, she immediately collapses with a heart attack. The husband had produced a life-size wax replica of his old love Louise, and placed it in the middle of the garden. After Penelope is taken to the hospital, Christopher crawls into the lap of the statue and dies

¹¹⁷ Eperjesi, 15.

¹¹⁸ Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 154-155.

during the night. On the surface, the fantasy here appears to be Christopher's. After years of being married to Penelope, he still clings to the empty figure of Louise, and thus never truly loved his wife, only the illusion of his old flame. Žižek, however, disagrees and argues that story is actually about Penelope's fantasy and not Christopher's.

The garden, with its dead, stuffed pets standing like quiet sentinels was the fantasy space for Penelope, it was a place through which she could blunt or minimize the trauma of her failed marriage, or the fact that her husband was still in love with someone long gone. Since a fantasy is all based on the construction of a coherent and consistent self that can endure and persist in the face of a trauma that cannot be confronted, it is tough by its very nature. In the case of Penelope's and Christopher's marriage, the evidence of the fantasy's falsity was always right before her eyes. But, as a fantasy is built precisely to dodge that recognition, to name the fantasy, or to produce evidence of something being a fantasy, does not necessarily resolve it or dissolve it. Žižek notes that the actions of Christopher in the story are cruel precisely because he takes on the act which *can* dissolve a fantasy:

The inconsiderate cruelty of Christopher's action consists in including in this fantasy space the very object that must be excluded, that is, the object, whose presence disintegrates the fantasy: the figure of the Other Woman who embodies the miscarriage of the sexual relationship between Chris and Penelope. The effect of Christopher's act is, of course, that Penelope breaks down: the whole economy of her desire is disturbed, the very support that gave consistency to her personality, the frame of coordinates enabling her to live her life as "meaningful" is taken from her.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹

Ibid., 154.

Zizek's ultimate theoretical point is that any fantasy is always built around a constitutive exclusion, and that the fantasy will remain firm and durable so long as that excluded content remains far away, or appears far away, from the fantasy space.

With regards to the Pacific, then, the removal of Pacific Islanders from its writing or imagining – both in the sense of emptying the land of them, but also removing from them their ability to be sovereign or particular, exist independent of the West, the U.S., and its anthropological gaze – is what makes the fantasy of the smooth, pure and empty space of the Pacific possible. In order for the fantasy to be dissolved, the sovereignty of the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islanders must be placed at the center of the analysis - their political sovereignty, their resistance, their voices, the ways in which they do not comfortably fit within the United States or the way it writes itself, the ways in which they remain beyond the ability to be incorporated or reduced to the strategic chess pieces or laboratory vessels. In the writing of American imperialism and colonialism, therefore, that inconsistency, that which sticks out, must be attended to, must not be ignored but rather given the force which animates it, namely that it persists beyond the scope of the United States and that to exclude this from analysis perpetuates certain American fantasies.

This chapter has been about the imperative of a productive refusal to laying a specific groundwork, for how sovereignty will be used in this dissertation. In the next chapter, the discussion will move more specifically into how this dissertation can be considered to be a decolonial intervention, through an engagement primarily with Pacific Studies scholarship.

CHAPTER 3: GUAM! Island in Need of Reversing the Colonial Gaze

On some maps, Guam doesn't exist; I point to an empty in the Pacific and say, "I'm from here." On some maps, Guam is a small unnamed island; I say, "I'm from this unnamed place." On some maps, Guam is named "Guam U.S.A." I say; "I'm from a territory of the United States." On some maps, Guam is named, simply "Guam"; I say, "I am from Guam."

Craig Santos Perez, *From Unincorporated Territory [hacha]*¹

1. *Tinituhun*²

Having spent the last chapter discussing sovereignty, I turn now to a discussion of decolonization. In this chapter, I will elaborate on how this dissertation will represent a decolonial intervention. I will start by further situating Guam through my previous research on Guam's colonization, dependency and decolonization. I then build upon this by engaging with the works of Pacific Islander and Ethnic Studies scholars, most prominently Epeli Hau'ofa and Laura Briggs, who provide answers for how to decolonize and reclaim the meaning of certain spaces. As this dissertation is about a re-making of the space between Guam and the United States, this chapter lays-out the basic gestures through which this will be accomplished, most notably by challenging the ways in which Guam and its relationships to the world become commonly signified, and next, by reversing those commonsensical tendencies of power. That is, as has already been mentioned, my intent is to demonstrate how a place such as Guam, which tends to be described as being devoid of power, plays a constitutive role in producing the power of

¹ Craig Santos Perez, *From Unincorporated Territory [hacha]*, (Honolulu: Tinfish Press, 2006), 1.
² Tinituhun is the Chamorro word for "beginning."

the United States, and furthermore can even be considered “the most important place in the world.”³

2. Weaponization

Guam’s relationship to ideas of its own perceived powerlessness or lack of self-determination and control is, to put it nicely, a curious one. By this, I mean that the powerlessness of the island is not only accepted as the way things are and should be, but also as that which might be something to celebrate or defend. One way this is evident is in Guam’s response to its “weaponization,” i.e. the idea of crass military interests dominating it, and its meaning as a community.⁴ In particular since 9/11, Guam has been referred to by U.S. military commanders and personnel as “the tip of the spear,” meaning that the island’s strategic location on the edge of Asia operates as a real weapon in terms of projection American power into Asia.⁵ This name for the island – this crude and disrespectful objectification – is just one among a long legacy of diminutive and dismissive labels that Guam has been given by the United States and its military. Others

³ This notion will be explained more in the section later in this chapter dealing with Laura Briggs and her text *Reproducing Empire*.

⁴ Militarism as I understand it is meant to refer to the ways in which a society deals with security and conflict, by prioritizing whatever means are identified with the military (war, open conflict, military ideology, discipline, etc) as being the source of how the society can achieve peace, order and resolve conflicts. It is something not only manifested in outright violence or open war, but also in ideology, culture, the environment and the economy. As Chalmers Johnson notes in his text *The Sorrows of Empire*, the United States has become a militaristic nation, and you can see this on the doctrines of pre-emptive warfare, the increasing secrecy of the government, and also the way in which the government creates its budget and who gets the largest piece of the pie. I use weaponization in this passage to refer to the way in which the militaristic principles of another society are both imposed and accepted by another, and as a result that other society becomes reduced to a mere weapon, and may even celebrate the form of their objectification. Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Secrecy, Militarism and the End of the Republic*, (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2004). Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

⁵ Christian Caryl, “America’s Unsinkable Fleet: Why the US Military is Pouring Forces into a Remote West Pacific Island,” *Newsweek International*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17202830/site/newsweek/> 26 February 2007. Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

include, trailer park of the Pacific, Sleepy Hollow, USS Guam, Fortress Guam, and unsinkable aircraft carrier.⁶

All these labels de-emphasize and, in many ways, completely strip away any semblance of the island as anything but an object through which the United States brandishes its military prowess and accomplishes much of its geopolitical grandstanding. Yet, this idea of Guam as the tip of the spear, is something that people on the island have taken up, not as a marker of disrespect, but rather as one of usefulness, of recognition; of something that, no matter how pathetic, nonetheless connects the island to the United States, thereby conferring value upon it. As a *Washington Post* article about Guam, bizarrely titled “Guam Braces for Peaceful Military Incursion,” noted, “[p]eople on this faraway island – a U.S. territory 7,824 miles west of Los Angeles – delight in calling Guam the “tip of the spear” for its role defending U.S. interests in the Far East.”⁷ The reason such a clear and brutal objectification of Guam can be endorsed is because this weaponization is, at its core, an *American* weaponization, a form of American recognition, a chance for Guam to assert itself clearly as a part of America.

This enthusiastic acceptance of objectification is epitomized during Liberation Day celebrations. This celebration, which takes place each July 21st, commemorates the 1944 reoccupation of Guam by the United States, when the island was taken back from

⁶ Todd Crowell, “Fortress Guam Gets More Crowded,” *Asia Sentinel*, Link: http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1267&Itemid=222, 16 June 2008. Site Accessed 3 October 2008. Richard Marquand, “U.S. More Cautious than Wary as China’s Reach Grows,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Link: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1118/p01s04-woap.html>, 18 November 2005. Site Accessed 28 September 2008. James Brooke, “Looking for Friendly Overseas Base, Pentagon Finds It Already Has One,” *The New York Times*, 7 April 2004. Kristen Scharnberg, “Bracing for the Next Wave,” *Chicago Tribune*, 18 June 2007. Robert Rogers, *Destiny’s Landfall: A History of Guam*, (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1995), 126.

⁷ Blaine Harden, “Guam Braces for Peaceful Military Incursion,” *The Washington Post*, 25 January 2008.

the Japanese who had invaded and occupied the island since 1941. It is a massive spectacle that span weeks, with events such as carnivals, beauty pageants, parades, and parties. It is an event that ultimately reinforces and reaffirms the dependent, subordinate link between Chamorros and the United States, through teary-eyed stories about Chamorros being liberated from the brutal oppression of the Japanese by beautiful Marines and Army men, who brought to thousands of starving and suffering Chamorros, Spam, chocolate, powdered milk and Freedom.⁸ Although this event is something for which Chamorro do feel genuine gratitude for being saved from Japanese occupation, the impact goes much deeper than this.⁹ The American re-taking of Guam becomes what I've

⁸ For the academic literature on Liberation Day, see the following: Cecilia Taitano Perez, "Liberation Day: A Re-Telling," from *Kinalamten Pulitikat: Sinenten I Chamorro: Issues in Guam's Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective*, (Agana, Guam: Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1996). Robert Underwood, "Red, Whitewash and Blue: Painting over the Chamorro Experience," *Pacific Daily News*, 17 July 1977, 6-8. Laura Torres Souder, "Psyche Under Siege: Uncle Sam, Look What You've Done to Us." *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?* (Suva, Fiji. Marama Publications, 1994). Vicente M. Diaz, "Deliberating 'Liberation Day': Identity, History, Memory and War in Guam," *Perilous Memories: The Asia Pacific War(s)*. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama Eds., (Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2001). Keith Lujan Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory and History in the Mariana Islands*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2006). Jeff Evans, "Liberation...The New Generation Many Meanings to Many People." *TV GUAM*. Special Advertising Section, 21 July 1996.

⁹ During my thesis defense for my master's degree in Micronesian Studies, one of the people present was former Guam Congressman Robert Underwood, who in the 1970's and 1980's helped lay the progressive and critical foundation for much of Chamorro studies and Chamorro intellectual thought. After I defended my thesis, the floor was opened for any questions from those present and Underwood took the opportunity to ask if in my thesis on the Americanization of Chamorro war memories, I wasn't depriving them of any agency? One the many infamous arguments of Underwood's, which will be discussed more in Chapter 4, was that in celebrations such as Liberation Day, when it appears that Chamorros are being patriotic beyond belief, they are in truth merely working the system to their advantage, and actually celebrating their own experiences of surviving the horrors of World War II. The ensuing dialogue and my response to Underwood was a watershed moment in my own development as a scholar. I told him that I agreed with him that Chamorros are not merely dupes and are not mere victims without agency, but that there is also a danger in simply celebrating the proof of agency. When we are speaking critically about something, everything is contextual, and this is the same in terms of how we understand Chamorro participation in Liberation Day, but also how it experiences and acts upon its general relationship to the United States. What is key in this equation is what the United States wants and does it get it from you? So if the issue here was whether or not Chamorros truly love the United States as much as they appear to, I would say no. The United States does not get 100% devotion and love from Chamorros on Liberation Day, despite the appearance. But is this truly what the colonial relationship, the desire that drives it from the United States' perspective, is this what it is rooted in? I argued that it wasn't, that the United States

elsewhere called a “scene of liberation,” a point to which Chamorros and Guam must constantly return in order to articulate a consistent, patriotic relationship to the United States.¹⁰ It is a scene that provides the basis for Guam’s Americanness – Chamorros, suffering, loyal, waiting to be liberated.¹¹

Given the already listed collection of pragmatic qualifiers that give Guam a place in the world, a minute existence, it seems, is all that can be expected. Given that Guam is too small, too far away, too corrupt even to achieve any progress, the link to America is all that appears to matter. Indeed, it is this link that brings the military with their

military’s primary mission for Guam is not to gain the hearts and minds of Chamorros, but rather to control and make use of its land and strategic location. This was my ultimate point, is that any discussion about Chamorro agency or resistance in Guam should start with this point, and not anywhere else. Underwood, “Red, Whitewash and Blue...”

¹⁰ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *The Scene of Liberation*, Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Asian Pacific American Student Conference, Oberlin, Ohio, 17 February 2006.

¹¹ To explain more about what I mean by scenes or a scene of liberation I quote from my paper, *The Scene of Liberation*:

What this paper will be is a refocusing of this meeting between liberators and liberated, from a meeting of two subjects, into conceiving of it as a *fundamental scene*, or a historical moment through which the field of political possibilities for Chamorros is understood today. To reiterate, the scene itself is one of Chamorros, starving and dying after being herded by the thousands into concentration camps around Guam, are rescued by invading American servicemen, who provide them with food, water as well as freedom. After the war ends, this image becomes the fundamental scene in Guam upon which political articulations either find consistency and meaning or flounder in rancid unreadability. What this means is that all identities and identifications in Guam will be resisted, accepted, achieve political vitality and sovereignty, in other words *made to mean* based on where they fit within this image. The different positions within the image itself, thus have material effects on how Chamorros understand themselves and the potential relationships they have to themselves and to the United States.

It is my opinion that the discourses on Chamorro/Guam dependency upon the United States for economic sustainability, for improvement, for life itself all derive from the reinforcing of the subject positions within this scene. Questions of who has agency, who is the victim, who has sovereignty, who has power, who is alive, who is dead are all answered through the visual cues provided in this image.

pocketful of money, as well as tourists, to Guam.¹² Not only this, it is seemingly the basis for modern life on Guam – from electricity to education, democracy, freedom, stability, security and prosperity. Without America, without that tokenizing, infantilizing, exploitative tie, Guam, many fear, would collapse. Therefore that link, wherever it might appear and whatever it might appear as, *must be defended*. To do otherwise would be to risk a falling apart; it would mean to devolve, to travel back in time, to regress, and perhaps even to disappear. Thus, any attempts at even discussing how the United States appears in and relates to Guam – namely discussions about the island’s political status – must, above all, be rejected! To even consider altering or lessening the influence of the United States in Guam would be to tempt the primitive and corrupting horrors of life on Guam that omnipotent America is able to keep at bay.¹³

In my master’s thesis in Ethnic Studies, titled, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, I sought to analyze this general resistance among Chamorros to even the mention of decolonization.¹⁴ While the colonial pragmatics of size, distance, primitivity, all provide the obvious and expected answers, I hoped to discern some less obvious answers as to why one of the last official colonies in the world,

¹² Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “*Decolonization is Like Giving Ourselves a Lobotomy!*” *Discourse of the Chattaotao Chamorro of Guam*, Paper presented at the 33rd Annual National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference, Chicago Illinois, 25 March 2005.

¹³ This sort of fear is not solely limited to Guam. Although my research on such apprehension and resistance towards decolonization deals solely with Guam and Chamorro responses, from my interactions and readings of other colonial contexts, there is always a similar general fear and loathing, regardless of how oppressive the colonizer might have been. Most recently, at the 2008 UCSD Ethnic Studies-organized conference *Postcolonial Futures in a Not Yet Postcolonial World*, I spoke to other scholars from Palestine, different Native American communities and also those doing research on communities seeking decolonization in Latin America and Africa. They all noted that the ways in which Chamorros often sometimes irrationally resist the idea of decolonization, was something their communities underwent as well.

¹⁴ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, (M.A. Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2007).

which is objectified primarily as a powerful military weapon, would have so much trouble, or fear, in even uttering the word “decolonization.” In my thesis, I referred to this overall fear and resistance to decolonization as “the decolonial deadlock.” Through an analysis of interviews, letters to the editor, emails, blogs and other types formal and informal media, I wrote of two fundamental principles that hold this deadlock together and maintain its hegemonic status: first, that the Chamorro is impossible – that the Chamorro does not, or cannot, exist as such, for the Chamorro died out long ago, so that what remains now is a carrier of purely negative cultural characteristics, its existence a source of angry nativist sentiments.¹⁵ Thus, the Chamorro is a threat to the multicultural paradise of Guam.¹⁶ This non-existence of Chamorros produces the impossibility of the

¹⁵ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “Impossible Cultures: Missed Representations, Chamorros and the Decolonization of Guam.” paper presented at the 3rd Annual Graduate Student Conference of Ethnic Studies in California, University of California, Berkeley, 4 March 2005.

¹⁶ This issue will be discussed more in Chapter 8. This footnote, however, provides more background on the idea of Guam as a multi-cultural paradise. In 1944, in response to burgeoning American desires for global and military dominance, Guam, once a sleepy Naval base, was to be made into a hi-tech, modern nodal point in the New American Empire. To build this base, tens of thousands of Filipino laborers were brought into Guam and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the island was appropriated for defense purposes. When Guam was granted a local government and limited autonomy in 1950, the majority of these laborers as well as Chamorros were given US citizenship, and Guam was opened up as a point of entry for those wishing to immigrate to the United States. The influx of peoples from Asia and other islands in Micronesia, as well as an increasing diaspora of Chamorros in Hawaii and the western United States, led to a huge shift in Guam’s demographics. By the 1980’s Chamorros were no longer the majority group in Guam’s population. According to the 2000 Census, Chamorros while being the largest group in Guam, are only 37% of the population, with Filipinos the second largest group at 26%, followed by other Micronesian islanders (Chuukese, Palauans, Phonpeians) with 7%, 6% white and 6% Japanese, Korean or Chinese, and then 13% mixed amongst these categories. Given this diverse ethnic make-up, Guam is often self-discussed as a melting pot of minorities, a multi-cultural haven, and a miniature UN. But the term “minority” is in this instance a slippery one and can easily end up engulfing nearby political categories, thus making the Chamorro impossible. The multi-cultural pretenses that exist in the United States, which give the impression of equality, tolerance and respect for all cultures, drip from the hegemonic bubble created by the U.S. around Guam and become entangled in everyday conversations and understandings, in particular, around the way the Chamorro should be viewed and can be articulated. Therefore, in the melting point of minorities that make up Guam today, the easiest shift is the one that moves the status of Chamorros from being a numerical minority, to being *just another ethnic minority*. The Chamorro becomes impossible because its status as the indigenous of Guam must be dissolved for this multi-cultural representation to exist. In 2003, I participated in organizing the first Human Rights Watch Film Festival in Guam. Each night, a discussion would be held following the films and people would usually make local connections to the issues from the films. One night, an apparent theme was racism and ethnic unrest, and, in a touching

Chamorro to exist in the present, of being authentic, of providing stability, continuity, and prosperity; to be able to carry the weight of governing Guam. Second, the Chamorro and, by default, Guam, are only possible, through the United States, and most properly as a patriotic appendage, or a jubilant spear tip.

For Chamorros who accept this premise, the United States is needed for everything since, like in all perfect colonial worlds, it provides the means for all positive aspects of life, i.e. security, order, happiness, prosperity, education, visibility; while the Chamorro is the bearer of all that is negative – the social ills, the political corruption, the impure invented culture, the racism and anti-American hatred, the primitive backwards culture – everything that America must limit and weaken in Guam in order to create a stable and secure society.¹⁷ Although, in my research, this dependency was often openly stated and admitted to in numerous contexts, it came out most strongly when the topic of decolonization was broached. At the mere mention of the links between Guam and the United States being broken, being changed, or being weakened even marginally, the pragmatic need for Guam to be attached to the United States was gone and replaced with

“why can’t we all just get along” moment, a Chamorro stood before the audience and pleaded for ethnic unity on Guam. He made reference to how we cannot treat any ethnicity on Guam differently, mentioning specifically the racism that indigeneity in Chamorros has bred towards non-Chamorros on Guam. He ended his impassioned plea, demanding that other Chamorros understand that “we are all minorities on this tiny island now.” Naturally, this flattening of the ethnic field of Guam is so innocently benevolent, how could anyone be against it? In fact, very few people were against it, as the audience of several hundred responded with enthusiastic applause. Another Chamorro, former Guam Senator Hope Alvarez Cristobal, spoke next, and despite the haze of ethnic comity and unity that had just fallen upon the University of Guam auditorium, she forcefully, yet politely, reminded all present that Chamorro are not just another ethnicity or minority on Guam. Chamorros, according to Cristobal, are the only group that has a special and unique connection to the land. While all others may call Guam “home,” only Chamorros have this link. Her comments were not taken as well by the audience, and only a few, including myself, applauded. U.S. Census Bureau. *Census 2000*. Released July 2003. Leland Bettis, “Colonial Immigration in Guam,” *Hale’-ta: Kinalamten pulitikâ: Siñenten Chamorro, Issues in Guam’s political development: The Chamorro perspective*, (Agana, Guam: Political Status Education and Coordinating Commission, 1996). 102-124.

¹⁷ Dave Davis, “Stop whining, exercise responsible citizenship,” *Pacific Daily News*, 30 April 2002, 19. Albert K. Gibbs, “Improving island starts with family,” *Pacific Daily News*, 6 September 2001, 17.

a paranoid schizophrenia, and often times a fog of ridiculous apocalyptic nightmares, about what Guam would be like “the day after decolonization.”¹⁸ These are fantasies meant to protect, reify and strengthen not just the existing link between the United States and Guam, but also the existing, naturalized assumptions of power relations.

In order to protect that colonial tie, Chamorros would reach out into the world and, in an almost comic way, infuse the United States into whatever precious objects they could find. Decolonization, then, becomes a signifier of life without electricity, indoor plumbing, air conditioning, education, internet, television. On the other end of this spectrum, in a less comic, more dangerous way, decolonization becomes a nightmare; it becomes symbolic of a world where the order America brings to the island and the world has vanished, and the Chamorro, a subject brimming with evil, base and immoral identities and pathologies, runs rampant around the island, making its particular evils the universals and norms of the island. Fantasies that Chamorros spoke to me of, in very convinced yet almost maddened tones, were of the island all being addicted to drugs, certain Chamorro politicians becoming tyrants, and of China, Russia, the Philippines, and Japan invading the island.¹⁹ The drive behind all these fantasies is, of course, to prevent a “day after decolonization” from ever occurring, and to do so by attempting to re-colonize

¹⁸ Some examples are named in the next paragraph. Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know...*, 107-109.

¹⁹ All of these fantasies of decolonization are derived from interviews conducted for my master’s thesis. A former Governor of Guam Carl Gutierrez, played a key role in weaving these fantasies together and giving them an increased potency. Gutierrez was governor of Guam for eight years from 1994-2002, and was dogged, in particular towards the end of his term by widespread informal accusations of corruption. A few of these accusations became formal indictments and court cases, but Gutierrez was never convicted of any crime. After his term ended he became a sinthome for Chamorro corruption on the island, a signifier of all the evil that it meant and what effect the politicizing of Chamorros and their culture could have on the island and its governance. Hence, when asked about decolonization, Gutierrez often represented the outcome of decolonizing a Chamorro, its freeing from the rational limits and universal order that America brings to Guam, and thus leaving the island to wallow in the particularity of Chamorro culture.

Guam through American influence, snatch up all that is positive or “progressive” and stamp it with “*iyon Amerika*,” and then claim that decolonization would be the tragic magical spell that would make all of those things vanish.²⁰

Returning, then, to the issue of sovereignty, and to subjects with or without power, Guam again distinguishes itself in this regard. For, as Robert Underwood once noted, Guam is sadly unique in that it is the only, or at least one of very few, political communities in the world whose members seem to actively advocate, at almost every level, for less local control and more control by outsiders.²¹

3. The Impossible Chamorro

In both, my activist and my scholarly work, I have long been dedicated to the decolonization of Chamorro lands and lives. As colonization extends into the bedrock and the deepest tissues of a people, decolonization must also be a process that is just as diverse and far reaching.²² In my academic work, I see it as providing a lens to decipher the structure of colonial ideas about dependency, smallness, and powerlessness, and hopefully, to suggest a means to reverse or transgress them. In my master’s thesis, for instance, beyond the naming of the decolonial deadlock, my contribution was also to provide a theory of decolonization for breaking it.

²⁰ Iyon Amerika: Belongs to America.

²¹ Robert Underwood, *Interview with author*, Sovereignty Matters Conference, Columbia University, New York, New York, 16 April 2005.

²² Other activities that I participate in are projects dedicated to the revitalizing of Chamorro language, websites for disseminating critical information about Guam, its relationship to the United States, the military presence on island, and the possibilities for a different political status for the island. I also participate in local Guam and Federal Government lobbying efforts and the organizing of youth consciousness building conferences.

Since all conversations of Chamorro impossibility ultimately invoke metaphors of death or desolation, and since “decolonization is suicide” was a persistent and frustrating refrain throughout my research, I attempted to develop a theory of decolonization that did not retreat from the idea, but instead endorsed, and passed through, it. By using theories from theorists of psychoanalysis Slavoj Zizek, Jacques Lacan and Franz Fanon, I asserted that, indeed, *decolonization is suicide!* In that it represents the breaking of a particular desire for the colonizer, and thus the undoing of one’s dependency upon his recognition for the sustenance of one’s identity.²³ Thus, decolonization is, in reality, very much a suicidal act. It is the killing of that subject who, although they may loathe the latter, needs him to constitute their selves.²⁴

My intent for this dissertation is similar – to provide a theoretical intervention into the possibilities for decolonization on Guam, that can make clear the structure of this

²³ See Chapter 3 of Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam...*

²⁴ In explaining this, the article “Decolonization Movement...A Suicide” is an appropriate place to start. Written by Fred Garcia, a Chamorro, for the website of Guam’s largest television station, *KUAM*, it piously describes the dangers and delusions of those pushing for Guam’s decolonization. In this article, three basic ways of describing decolonization are all weakly entertained and then rejected as being unrealistic, wishful and, of course, suicidal. First, decolonization as the birth of a newly independent and sovereign Guam nation is shown to be ridiculous based on the second definition of what decolonization is, which according to Garcia, is an attempt to turn back the clock of history, by wearing loin cloths and tying our hair as the ancients once did. In an interesting performative twist, Garcia both accuses decolonization of seeking a particular object (that infamous native), as well as effectively attaches both, the notion of decolonization and the Chamorro herself, to that very object. All of these disparate threads come together when Garcia asks a series of serious questions which question seriously what decolonization will accomplish, “[...]referring to the governance of Guam] how can we succeed with the influence of longhaired, shirtless men with ancient ideas running our culture? It may have been feasible before the 16th century, but it is impossible today. Are we wanting to progress or are we looking to regress?” The way these two definitions (i.e. decolonization as national sovereignty and decolonization as time travel) are combined is what “logically” leads to the third definition of decolonization, that it is suicide. In phrasing which was almost too appropriate for my thesis, Garcia implicitly made it clear that decolonization is dangerous, not because of what it means for Guam or the Chamorro, but more so for what it means for *America in Guam*. According to him, “the idea of weakening America’s input and influence in the lives of Chamorros in Guam, in my opinion is suicide.” Fred Garcia, “Decolonization Movement...A Suicide,” *KUAM Community Commentary*, <http://www.kuam.com/interact/communitycommentary/articles/fredgarfanhasunet-12200301.asp>, 20 December 2003. Site Accessed 2 June 2009.

intense dependency of Guam upon the United States and highlight the associated experience of powerlessness. But, most importantly, I also provide a means for what Chamorro Studies scholar Vicente Diaz once referred to as the greatest task for Chamorros and other Guam-based scholars, i.e. to reverse “the colonial gaze.”

French philosopher Giles Deleuze argued that if you are trapped in the dream of another, then you are lost.²⁵ *Kontat ki chenglong hao gi i guinifen un otro, dimalas hao.*²⁶ We see this clearly in the case of Guam and Chamorros – the decolonial deadlock is a colonial fantasy, it is a world governed by the most base assumptions of colonialism, i.e. the dependency and inadequacy of the natives, the isolation and primitiveness of their territories, and the need for America, or some other European nation, to govern these ungovernable.²⁷ These ideas, although often taken as a fact in Guam, can be traced to European assumptions about islands, about the Pacific, and more recently, to American colonial and military discourses about Guam and Micronesia.²⁸ Ideas about Chamorro depravity, death, corruption, immorality, and incompleteness may appear natural, both in Guam and elsewhere, but reflect a radical skewing of the world rather than a “faithful” representation of it. They are in fact the effect of discursive regimes of knowledge that have been built up over centuries to the point where Chamorros have themselves

²⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “Caught in Another’s Dream in Bosnia,” *Why Bosnia?: writings on the Balkan war*, Rabia Ali & Lawrence Lifschultz (eds), (Stony Creek, Connecticut: Pamphleteers Press, 1993), 237.

²⁶ The translation in Chamorro is: As long as you are stuck in the dream of another, you’re screwed. As I type this dissertation it is on the banner to my main blog *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*.

²⁷ Kayoko Kushima, *Historiographies of Guam and Discourses of Isolation: Canonical and Alternative Historical Narratives*. (M.A. Thesis, University of Guam, 2001). Matt K. Matsuda, “AHR Forum: The Pacific,” *The American Historical Review*, <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/111.3/matsuda.html>, (111:3), June 2006. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

²⁸ Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 29-30.

interpolated themselves into it, and drawn from them, both positively and negatively, their identities. In this way, Guam represents the pinnacle of success in a project of colonization. Here, colonialism achieves not the total and utter control of land and resources, but instead the occupation and radical altering of the consciousness of the colonized, to the point where they understand themselves (and sometimes celebrate themselves) as an effect of the colonizer's power and benevolence.

Decolonization, as I see it, and have tried to actualize in my activism, is a multi-faceted and diverse process which should never be assumed as universal in any form, but as always strategic.²⁹ I do not provide a lengthy literature review of decolonization in this chapter, not because of any dearth of it, but rather to remain true to the idea that while most theories of decolonization share a similar set of principles, any articulation of it must be dependent upon the particular context into which an intervention is being made. In this dissertation, when I speak of decolonization as reversing the colonial gaze, the emphasis is not on the actual, material eviction of American ideas, technologies or persons from Guam. That is, my intervention towards decolonization is not a structural

²⁹ For example, much of the literature on decolonization deals with the issue of political status change. While I am very much in favor of a change in Guam's political status, that is not the lens through which I am conceiving of decolonization in this dissertation. My focus on this chapter on Laura Briggs and Epeli Hau'ofa as the ground for this dissertation as a decolonial intervention, is not meant to detract from the other important that is being done or has been done, but instead to focus my definition of the term decolonization in the way which best complements what I am attempting to do. As a larger process and academic conversation, my understanding of decolonization comes from (amongst others) the following texts: Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999). *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellowbird (eds.), (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2005). Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington trans. (Grove Press, New York, 1965). Dietmar Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization*, (New York: Routledge, 2006). Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 1996). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (New York: Zed Books, 1999).

project that is concerned with existing hegemonic definitions of the “meaning” or “significance” of American in Guam. That is, in my opinion, the dullest and least productive articulation of decolonization possible.³⁰ Rather, I am interested in intervening into that very colonial cartography that is spread across the island, and across the Pacific, linking the United States to its colony, through which the island, and all its objects and ideas, are divided into those very categories of American and non-American, that create the natural and earnest need to be colonized in order to survive.

As we observe in Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, decolonization is not only a violent process of confrontation or colonial eviction.³¹ The tangible or material violence of decolonization is that which makes possible the moments where a second symbolic decolonization takes place, one that occurs at the level of ideas, consciousness and the meanings that tie the colonized and the colonizer together, that establish rules of power, of dependency and sovereignty. In the colonial world that Fanon describes, prior to decolonization, objects in the world around the colonized, continually signify the need for, or a dependency on, the colonizer to sustain those objects, to make them function properly. When decolonization takes place, however, we see the rules of signification attached to those objects become destabilized, which opens up the possibility for them to signify something otherwise. We see a potential break from the desire that they

³⁰ I make this point in order to distinguish my ideas of decolonization from a more generic understanding of it, which comes from a need to resist and delegitimize the idea, and also because of the way the concept has been promoted through international bodies such as the United Nations. As already discussed, in the decolonial deadlock, decolonization is reduced to a series of impossible and sometimes stupid tasks, like a checklist which is meant to remove things from the island that can’t be removed. In challenging the United States it implies the possibility of kicking out the United States, and without any intervention into the colonial order of things, it produces fearful fantasies that if the United States left, all the things I attribute to it, all the things I say it has brought into the colony or helped build in the colony will vanish as quickly as they do.

³¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington trans. (Grove Press, New York, 1965).

stimulated in the colonized for the colonizer. What violence enables, then, is moments wherein the discursive chains to those objects can be transformed, so that their meanings and the desires associated with them, are altered, or ruptured even.³²

This is the purpose of national culture according to Fanon – to gather together practices, figures, objects, ideas, historical events, and create a force that can push the colonized forward, to this violent conflagration. It is a force that propels the colonized to become, as Fanon concludes in his passionate work, the true heir to the new global space that Europe has created but has been unable to be truly universal in its governance of.

4. The Productivity of the Colonial Difference and the Decolonial Deadlock

The decolonial deadlock, the colonial fantasy of Guam today, is not some neutral hegemonic force, but is of course self-serving; it is something that feeds into the United States, fulfilling both fundamental and specific colonial desires. In the fundamental sense, we see that the distance, dependency, powerlessness, smallness and isolation are all colonial tropes that become infused with a naturalness, an insurmountable gap, which postcolonial scholar Partha Chatterjee calls “the colonial difference.”³³ This gap exists to determine the tendencies of power by virtue of whichever side of the gap one inhabits. That is, depending on whether one is in the colonies or in the metropolis, that gap, that difference, provides a force for establishing commonsense answers to questions of who should have power and who shouldn’t, who can handle it and who can’t.³⁴ By being on

³² See Chapter 3 of Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know...*

³³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993).

³⁴ One way in which Chatterjee explains this is through the rhetoric of progress and the sometimes explicit other times implicit limits that are placed on the colonized within the colonies. On the one hand,

one side or the other of this difference, the most mundane ideas gain the force of absolute truth. In fact, as we saw in the 2008 Democratic Primary, the lack of any actual knowledge about Guam makes the colonial difference even easier to assert and to use in order to derive feelings of superiority. This is the fundamental way in which Guam's deadlocked decolonial status produce superior identities for the United States. Whether one actually knows about Guam and its citizens' needs and longings to be American, or whether one just assumes that given its status as a territory and a military base, Guam belongs to them – in both of these gestures, the colonial relationship between Guam and the United States produces sovereign American identities. In a more specific way, the decolonial deadlock feeds into the strategic desires of the United States military that the island remain a colony, since the combination of its being a “territory” and being geographically situated on the edge of Asia, makes it an ideal point for the consolidation and projection of American power in the Asia-Pacific region. As Chamorro activists at the U.S. World Social Forum in 2007 made clear, the strategic military importance of the island makes it “America's Best Kept Secret” since, despite its status as being one of the six most important U.S. bases in the world, it remains an invisible and banal colony of

there is the rhetoric of imperial progress and benevolence is always present in the colonies. There is this idea that new ideas and systems of education, health care, economy are being introduced and should be enjoyed by the natives. In colonial reports, these systems are never fully understood or appreciated by the natives, they never seem to completely get the benefits and gifts they are being offered. Yet, at the same time, should a colonized person, completely enjoy these gifts; should they go to these schools, go to these hospitals, participate in this economy, they may enjoy some upward movement some mobility, but they will ultimately reach a point, where the soaring rhetoric ends and the colonial difference begins. Chatterjee discusses this through civil service jobs and the racial limits that were in place. As natives were educated and became more properly cultured, they would advance through the colonial bureaucracy, but would always reach a certain point where they could no longer be promoted, where entrance into the next level of power had nothing to do with merit or with intelligence, but was all based on race and which race could be trusted with this power. This was something that could not rightfully be accounted for within the civilizing rhetoric, except as the basis for the entire imperial project. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*...

the United States, a status hardly contested anywhere on or off Guam.³⁵ We can trace this reduction of the island to a dependent piece of real estate from the first Supreme Court cases over Guam's ambiguous political status, *The Insular Cases*, and Guam's positioning as a battlefield between the U.S. and Japan in World War II, through to today's philosophical waxing over the island's status as "the tip of the spear."³⁶ I discuss this further in Chapter 5.

This importance of Guam with respect to the decolonial deadlock can be expressed in a number of ways. For instance, according to former U.S. Pacific Command Leader Admiral William Fallon, this can be accomplished by simply looking at a map.³⁷ In terms of targets in Asia, which is where the Pentagon sees most of its future threats, Guam provides a secure base for land, naval and air forces, and is much closer than the continental U.S. or Hawai'i.³⁸ We can also see this strategic importance, one which Guam shares with places such as Diego Garcia Island and Guantanamo Bay, through its political ambiguity, i.e. the fact that Guam is neither a U.S. state nor a foreign country. Referencing Admiral Fallon again, the advantage of having bases in Guam is that it is an "American territory" and that "(t)he island does not have the political restrictions, such as those in South Korea, that could impede U.S. military moves in an emergency."³⁹ In other

³⁵ Erica Benton, *Personal Communication*, Barista Blends, Hagåtña, Guam, 28 August 2009.

³⁶ Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*, (Lawrence, University of Kansas, 2006).

³⁷ Richard Halloran, "Guam seen as pivotal U.S. base," *The Washington Times*, 11 March 2006.

³⁸ Ulysses Zalamea, the deputy director of the Joint Guam Program Office (JGPO), a civilian agency created in 2006 in order to facilitate the transfer of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, has translated this into a simple issue of time and distance: "It would take a ship from San Diego traveling at 16kn [knots], 16 days to get to Taiwan, from Hawaii, 12 days, But from Guam, only four days...It would take a C-17 aircraft 13 hours to fly from the west coast to Taiwan, from Hawaii, almost eight hours, but from Guam, three hours and 20 minutes. The strategic location of Guam is very important." Jude Lizama, "No Secrets" *Marianas Variety*, 22 May 2009.

³⁹ Halloran, "Guam seen as pivotal U.S. base."

words, the U.S. military can do things on Guam they might not be able to do elsewhere, for those who call it home have no say in what the military may or may not do.⁴⁰

Moreover, bringing the discussion to the island itself, the decolonial deadlock there, especially from the perspective of the Department of Defense, makes it an ideal example of a patriotic militarized society. Despite the fact that 30% of the island's 210 square miles is covered by Naval and Air Force bases, and that the entire island has been greatly contaminated by military use and dumping, and that Federal policies have kept the island economically dependent on it to keep it from seeking independence, popular sentiment on Guam does not consider the U.S. to be a malevolent, militaristic colonizer, but rather a benevolent liberator.⁴¹ As already mentioned, the most common reason for this is the role of the American military in expelling the Japanese who brutally occupied the island for 32 months during World War II. To the Pentagon, then, Guam appears as an oasis in a world where the tide of anti-U.S.-base sentiment is rising. In contrast to populations in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Iraq, who have issued sometimes very visible protests to U.S. presence on their lands, a place such as Guam appears to understand, and celebrate, the role of the U.S. military in the world today.⁴² Hence, rather

⁴⁰ According to one member of *Nasion Chamoru*, a Chamorro grassroots activist group, “*Ya un tungo’ sa’hafa* we are important to them? It is because they can do things here that they can’t at home and they can’t do in other countries. We don’t really have a say in what happens, if they want to do something.” David Herrera, *Interview With Author*, Seventh Day Adventist Clinic, Tamuning, Guam. 21 May 2004.

⁴¹ Surina Khan, *Colonies in Question: Supporting Indigenous Movements in US Jurisdictions*, A Funding Exchange Report, October 2003. Dirk Ballendorf and Howard Willens, *The Secret Guam Study: How President Ford’s 1975 Approval of Commonwealth was Blocked by Federal Officials*, (Micronesian Area Research Center, Mangilao, Guam, 2005).

⁴² This is not to say that the entirety of these countries are united against the United States military presence within their borders. One can debate the size or power of these movements which tend to be grassroots in nature, but sometimes have government support. What is at issue here is that for an American soldier stationed in one of those countries, there is a massive gap between the fantasy that they may have as to why America is there (justice, liberty, peace, security, liberation), and the way the people outside of their fences may perceive the bases and their influence. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

than resist the militarization of their lives, or challenge the role of Guam as “the tip of the spear” of the American war machine, the island seems to enthusiastically welcome military presence and to actively participate in it.

Thus, while, during much of the United States’ most recent adventure in the Middle East, military recruiters in the U.S. have had difficulty in convincing people to join America’s “War on Terror,” they find no such problem in Guam. The feelings of obligation to the United States combined with the poor economy of Guam, has made the island, in the words of numerous military officials, a “recruiter’s paradise.”⁴³ In 2005 for example, 4 of the Army’s 12 highest “producers” could be found in Guam.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Guam (as well as the islands around it in the Marianas and Micronesia) together forms one of the communities of the United States with the highest per capita killed in action rates in America’s War on Terror. At the start of 2010, 39 soldiers and private contractors from the Micronesian region have died.⁴⁵

This mixture of location, colonial status and the apparent patriotism of the island’s residents, makes Guam a literal dream come true for the DOD, one which they are not hesitant to capitalize upon. In October 2005, the DOD first announced its intention to relocate 7,000 marines from Okinawa to Guam.⁴⁶ The following year, this number increased to 8,000, plus as many as 9,000 of their dependents, who would also be joined by an Army Missile Ballistic Defense Task Force and a berth for regular nuclear

⁴³ Mar-Vic Cagurangan, “Guam: Military Recruiter’s Paradise,” *The Marianas Variety*, 4 October 2007.

⁴⁴ James Brooke, “On Farthest U.S. Shores, Iraq is a way to a Dream,” *New York Times*, 31 July 2005.

⁴⁵ The U.S. Department of Interior, “Fallen Heroes in the War on Terror from the OIA’s Insular Areas,” http://www.doi.gov/oia/Firstpginfo/islanders_in_the_military/heroes.html. Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁴⁶ Gene Park, “7,000 Marines, Pentagon announces shift to Guam,” *The Pacific Daily News*, 30 October 2005.

carrier visits.⁴⁷ These increases, which should be complete by 2014, will crowd their way onto an island which already hosts 4,000 military personnel and substantial military equipment.⁴⁸

The perpetuation of Guam's colonial status and the decolonial deadlock help to keep fulfilled this militaristic desire, by nurturing Guam and Chamorro feelings of powerlessness, expressions of patriotism, and feelings of dependency.⁴⁹ The hegemonic nature of these ideas means that the decolonial deadlock is one where the Chamorro is entangled in a colonial gaze, trapped and forced to defend itself from, and define itself through, racist and patronizing ideas that sustain colonial difference. Thus, Chamorros find themselves produced through the most diminutive and infantilizing perceptions of themselves.

5. *We Are the Ocean*

This dissertation – the reversing, re-imagining intervention that it is meant to be – is built substantially upon the call for the reimagining of the Pacific that Tongan scholar and creative writer Epeli Hau'ofa outlined in his seminal essay “Our Sea of Islands,” first

⁴⁷ Gina Hotta, “Guam: Indigenous Rights in the Crosshairs,” *APEX Express*, 7 January 2007. “Guam: Territory May Gain from Korean Downsizing,” *The Marianas Variety*, 2 August 2006. Patrick Walters, “Guam: Permanent Aircraft Carrier,” *The Australian*, 14 June 2008.

⁴⁸ The We Are Guahan Coalition, “Buildup Basics,” *We Are Guahan*, <http://www.weareguahan.com/about-the-eis/build-up-basics>. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

⁴⁹ In response to its losing battle in Vietnam and the possibility that the world might no longer fear United States military prowess, Guam was seen as an absolutely vital site in continuing to secure American interests in Asia and the Pacific. To this end, in the mid-1970's, the Federal Government, through the State Department and the Defense Department, developed a series of studies to see how the current relationship between Guam and the United States could be maintained. The study by the State Department recommended that the best way to ensure continued American control over Guam was to push and promote an American identity for the island and its people; to encourage those on Guam to feel American. Thus, through appeals to identity (through speeches, memorials which hint at inclusion) one could control Guam's material aspects, its land, etc., and thereby secure its status as a military colony. Ballendorf and Willens, *The Secret Guam Study*....

delivered as a lecture in Hilo, Hawai'i in 1993. The words of Hau'ofa, since his first article in 1975, "Anthropology and Pacific Islanders," have had a profound effect on the young but always-growing body of academic literature known as Pacific Island(er) Studies.⁵⁰ In this essay in particular, Hau'ofa engages a broad critique of the dominant ways in which the Pacific and Pacific Islands have long been represented.⁵¹ Much of the negative marginalizing characteristics that Guam is associated with also extend to the ways in which all Pacific Islanders are perceived.

According to this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific, that is, all of Polynesia and Micronesia are too small, too poorly endowed with resources and too isolated from the center of economic

⁵⁰ Based on a landmark speech of his in 1955 that supposedly laid the epistemological groundwork for Pacific history as a discipline to exist, J.W. Davidson, a historian from Australian National University inaugurated the first issue of *The Journal of Pacific History* with an article titled "Problems of Pacific History." In this article he creates both the means and the need for a new type of modern history, this one focusing on the Pacific.

At this point in time, there were no Pacific historians yet, but people were nonetheless describing the region and its history, and Davidson's criticism was that they were doing this in a very narrow way. Being an extension of modern European history, the historiography of the Pacific was dominated by, as he referred to it "the concept of empire." Therefore, what is produced on the region tends to focus on the metropolitan areas, the Occident and only discuss the Pacific in relation to that, giving us mostly stories of settler movement, assertions of political sovereignty and imperial commerce. Davidson's article is a call to see beyond empire and to begin to localize the writing of Pacific histories, to move it from the world of the colonizer, to the islands themselves.

...is the concept of empire a useful one?...Where does it prevent a full understanding of the phenomena of European expansion? [in the Pacific] Policy is implemented in the face of local circumstances in the colonies; and these circumstances are dependent not primarily upon the existence of the political link with the metropolitan country, but upon the colony's internal social structure.

Beyond this, Davidson was also an advocate for using indigenous forms of data, such as oral history and primary documents in local "vernaculars" in the production of Pacific histories. As more and more academics and academic disciplines have begun to focus on the Pacific, and as more indigenous people from the Pacific have entered the academic realm, a marked shift has taken place, from simply Pacific History or Pacific Studies, to Pacific Island Studies and Pacific Islander Studies. J.W. Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," *The Journal of Pacific History*, (1:1), 1966, 6-7.

⁵¹ Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 3-4. Cluny Macpherson, "Changing Patterns of Commitment to Island Homelands: A Case Study of Western Samoa," *Pacific Viewpoint*, 17, 1994, 83-116. Mac Marshall, *Namoluk Beyond The Reef: The Transformation of Micronesian Society*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 2008).

growth for their inhabitants to ever be able to rise about their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations.⁵²

Hau'ofa laments his own complicity, early on in his academic career, in the reproduction of these ideas. Despite the "objective" way in which he taught these colonialist tropes or recounted them to his students at the University of the South Pacific, who came from all of the islands that he was describing, he re-infused them with life. He was remaking, he admits, that same colonial geography, reinforcing that colonial gaze and passing on the paralysis it engineers to the next generation of potential Pacific Island leaders.

...two years ago I began noticing the reactions of my students when I explained our situation of dependence. Their faces crumbled visibly, they asked for solutions, I could offer none. I was so bound to the notion of smallness that even if we improved our approaches to production, for example, the absolute size of our islands would still impose such limitations that we would be defeated in the end.

But the faces of my students continued to haunt me mercilessly. I began asking questions of myself. What kind of teaching is it to stand in front of young people from your own region, people you claim as your own, who have come to university with high hopes for the future, and you tell them that our countries are hopeless? Is this not what neocolonialism is all about? To make people believe they have no choice but to depend?⁵³

These ideas are so hegemonic that even an objective teaching of them, i.e. the reinforcing of them with the authority of white European academic knowledge neutralizes the students he is teaching. He is not simply teaching these students as if they were blank slates for this knowledge, but rather these tropes are already a part them; ones they already know and feel, and bring with them into the classroom. The spectacle of a Pacific

⁵² Hau'ofa, "Sea of Islands," 29.

⁵³ Ibid, 29-30.

Islander professor reaffirming them might feel like a cruel final nail being hammered into their collective coffin.

Hau'ofa therefore calls for a radical shift in, a rejection of, this way of looking at the Pacific, of the ways in which Pacific Islanders *live* the Pacific as place and space. His plea touches on a number of different visions of the Pacific; firstly, there is a call to reinvigorate a way of imagining the Pacific that has persisted for millennia but has now been supplanted by dominant European understandings of sustainability, geography and development.⁵⁴ This call is animated when Hau'ofa quotes one of the most stirring lines of poetry from Banaban poet Theresa Teaiwa, "*We sweat and cry salt water, so we know/that the ocean is really in our blood.*"⁵⁵ That is, he asks us to (re)imagine the Pacific as a part of us, not something that divides us or inhibits us, but unites us and sustains us. Secondly, Hau'ofa calls for us to recognize that, although academically and at other levels of representation, the notion of the Pacific as a region might be laughable, yet islanders, in the ways they move across and traverse this grand region, still embody that principle. Thus, Hau'ofa asserts this idea as that which should take us forward – not necessarily a return to a distant authentic past, but rather a shifting of our vision and imagination, to take into account the ways in which the peoples of the Pacific survive and thrive through the Ocean in us – and that those of us in academia have an important responsibility to help with tying together this sea of islands.

Hau'ofa calls for a decolonization of the Pacific, by challenging and contesting the remnants of colonialism that have seeped and settled into the most intimate ways in

⁵⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁵⁵ Theresa Teiawa quoted in Vicente M. Diaz and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Native Pacific Islander Cultural Studies on the Edge," *The Contemporary Pacific*, (13:2), Fall 2001, 315-341.

which Pacific Islanders conceive of themselves. But, since Hau'ofa's essay deals with a re-imagination of what space and ideas signify, his call for decolonization is in fact a call for reclamation. In Hau'ofa's essay, what the space of the Pacific signifies is always open for contestation and it is there that he intervenes. For his essay represents an explicit attempt to intervene in the process through which the Pacific is signified, and to provide a theoretical and academic force to aid in the process of shifting and reversing the discursive ties between islands, all in an effort to change what the Pacific signifies for Pacific Islanders. This re-imagining does not originate from the essay, but is possible because it already exists in the world – all of the elements that constitute this re-imagination are already existent in indigenous productions of the Pacific and the lives that navigate it. Thus, Hau'ofa merely reminds one to constantly re-think and contest, like all hegemonic formations, the colonial version/vision of the Pacific and its islands.⁵⁶

According to that colonial/Western epistemological cartography, the ocean is a source of weakness that limits and isolates people in the Pacific. Here, the Pacific is a vast wasteland that the peoples inhabiting it have no hope of navigating or conquering, thus being condemned to always dependent existences. Re-imagining the Pacific, then, requires a refusal of this colonial gaze, so that the ocean is a source of strength, something that binds together our islands and, rather than stripping us of possibility and sustainability, in fact generously offers it to us. In another essay titled “The Ocean in Us,” Hau'ofa models precisely that, by re-thinking the ocean as a metaphor for Pacific Islander sovereignty and

⁵⁶ Christopher Connery notes in his article “Ideologies of Land and Sea” that the meaning of the Pacific has constantly changed, even for European and American thinkers. It moves from being a dead empty space, to a void through which sovereignty and progress and evolution of the mind take place, to a transit space, to a buffer zone. Christopher Connery, “Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements,” *boundary 2*, (28:2), Summer 2001, 173-201.

sustainability, a force through which Islanders can be animated into that act of reclaiming, thereby producing a route that can move them forward towards sustainability and self-determination.⁵⁷

This is an essential component of decolonization – recognizing the structure around you, and then, in acting to change it, to re-articulate the meanings that once pinned you down and stripped you of power. But, although Hau'ofa's work is most explicitly directed towards re-imagining islands in relation to each other, and recognizing them as part of the whole, united by the Pacific Ocean, he is also implicitly calling on Pacific Islander scholars to contend with the world outside of the Pacific, most specifically, the places from which colonial tropes originate.⁵⁸ Although this remains largely implicit or dormant in his essay, it is made clear in the final sentences of the essay, in the final inspirational call to intellectual action:

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we

⁵⁷ Hau'ofa, "The Ocean in Us," *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 58. As part of his argument about the globalness or the expansion of Pacific Islanders, Hau'ofa cites the rising levels of the oceans as a way in which Pacific Islanders can and must become global.

⁵⁸ This call was most notably taken on in a 2001 special issue of *The Contemporary Pacific* titled "Native Pacific Islander Cultural Studies on the Edge." Comprised of papers which had been presented at a conference of the same name the year before at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the intent of both the volume and the symposium was to:

The symposium sought to explore notions of Pacific indigeneity as they circulate through geographical, cultural, political, and historical flows of people(s), things, knowledge, power—between islands and continents. We asked participants to discuss alternative grounds on which to stake native Pacific cultural studies for the twenty-first century. Our guiding question was What happens when the grounds of indigeneity (of Pacific Islanderness) get too fixed or move too far? What we wanted to feature most of all was what we wish to call native productions of indigeneity. We wanted to feature the edges of what is normally taken to be traditional native territory; in the face of diaspora and globalization, but without relinquishing the groundedness of indigenous identity, politics, theory, method, and aesthetics.

Diaz and Kauanui, "Native Pacific Islander Cultural Studies on the Edge," 315-316.

must wake up this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim to ultimately confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.⁵⁹

In the case of Guam, this means, first, making perceptible the discursive structures through which Guam and the United States become bound together, and the tendencies of power and powerlessness that those ties intimate. Second, it necessitates working to reclaim and decolonize those ties, to challenge the commonsensical notions that they signify, and try to reverse or re-articulate them. The end result, thus, should not merely be that the structures of Guam's dependency be revealed, but also that the structure of power and subjection, and the subject from which they emanate, be made clear as well. This represents the reversal of the colonial gaze, so that the space which once signified an obvious and pathetic dependency or limitedness becomes arbiter of the meaning and power of the United States.

6. Two of the Most Important Places in the World

Thus far, I have discussed the sites through which decolonization on Guam, in particular, and the Pacific, in general, can be imagined. Moreover, I have demonstrated the imperative of reversing the colonial gaze as decolonial praxis. In this section, I use the text *Reproducing Empire: finish title* by Laura Briggs in order to explicate what the mechanics of such a decolonial intervention might look like.⁶⁰ Although not explicitly a book about decolonization, its intent in shifting and reworking the place in which Puerto

⁵⁹ Hau'ofa, "Sea of Islands," 39.

⁶⁰ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Rico is perceived in relation to the United States, and the contemporary world, is similar to my intent in this dissertation. Briggs infuses a previously unthinkable importance into the island, which everything from pragmatic-everyday-thought to medical, sociological and political academic literature, assumed did not, and could not, exist. And because of this, in the concluding chapter of her text she argues that “Puerto Rico be considered the most important place in the world.”⁶¹

At the level of content, the book is a history of the medical relations between United States and Puerto Rican over the past century, with an emphasis on the role that women’s bodies played in the colonization of Puerto Rico and the production of the colonialist narratives through which the island would be known into the present. Yet, when outlining the aim of her project, Briggs notes that it lies far beyond the writing of just any history, but rather is one designed to amend the naturalized assumptions that tie together Puerto Rico and the United States, and Puerto Rico and the world, and to shift the flow of power by which Puerto Rico is either a constitutive presence, or a mere effect, an echo.⁶²

Briggs argues first that Puerto Rico and its colonization by the United States has played a significant role in “creating” the United States, its airs of medical superiority and progress, and furthermore has played a significant role in the development of the neo-liberal global health apparatus of today.⁶³ But by claiming that Puerto Rico is “the most important place in the world,” Briggs isn’t simply attempting to solicit a momentary glance at Puerto Rico so that one can then turn back to what is “really” important. As an

⁶¹ Ibid., 194.

⁶² Ibid., 197.

⁶³ Ibid., 9.

island, a colony, a place left out of History, her intervention isn't a plea to forget about the pragmatic rules that govern what's important and what's not; it is not a token of momentary exception, but rather a challenge to those very rules.⁶⁴ It is a reminder that arguments which suggest that Puerto Rico is *not* the most important place in the world, are not only heavily laden with a colonial/colonizing common sense, but are also precisely those that tacitly produce the greatness of the U.S. Similarly, one could argue very convincingly that much of Guam's powerlessness is commonsensical, that the weight of the arguments positing it as such is drawn from "how the world is." But the dimension that I am interested in drawing out in this dissertation is that the weight of those arguments could be derived from sources far less given and much more vested in the defense of particular powers or power relations. That much of these commonsensical arguments are in fact be legitimations of the naturalness of different structures of violence or exploitation.

It is within these discursive ties – those that invoke objects and ideas as innocuous as distance, size, location, population, dependency, etc. – that we find the remnants of colonialism that are most difficult to destroy or even to perceive. Thus, following Briggs, my intervention is tied to the discursive regimes that create Guam as a place that, *despite* its colonial history and present, could never embody that sovereign site of being "the most important place in the world."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Michel-Rolph Truillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

⁶⁵ I choose Laura Briggs' text in order to situate my project, because of the similarity in political status and ideas of smallness between Guam and Puerto Rico. Her work is not unique however, and is part of a larger critical trend in Ethnic Studies scholarship. Ethnic Studies began as a discipline in the 1960's, as a challenge to the traditional academic canons of the United States made on behalf of certain ethnic groups. While a radical gesture, which contained some counter-national, anti-colonial and anti-national elements, it

7. *The Delicacies of Studying Guam through a Comparative Framework*

The claim that any place in the world, especially one as small as Guam, is “the most important place in the world” almost automatically assumes that such a place might also be the most unique in the world. This is not the case, although it might appear so at times because of the ways in which I chose to write about Guam, to infuse it with an importance or a centrality which may appear inappropriate or inaccurate given Guam’s smallness. But this is another way in which I am strategically invoking concepts in order to conduct the work of this dissertation. In the previous chapter I discussed the great pains that I am taking in writing of a small, non-sovereign, local space, in relation to dominant, broad, all-pervasive, and nearly universal concepts such as sovereignty or the United States. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodological assumptions

was still a movement centered around the issues of inclusion and a recognition, or a desire to have the stories, histories and cultures of non-white Americans included in the American story and recognized as having value or having contributed to making the United States. In the time since, Ethnic Studies as a discipline has developed a critical response to this, which this dissertation draws upon. The work of this critical trend is focuses refusing the lure of inclusion and refusing the bind of recognition. It does not write from the position that any “racialized group” exists in and of itself, and therefore can never be written of in such a way, regardless of any desire to represent the experience of said group. Instead, race and those who are racialized must be written of as subjects which are constituted and in fact co-constitute others. This is manifested in any number of ways, what Laura Brigg’s discusses in terms of women in Puerto Rico, Nayan Shah discusses in terms of Asian immigrants in San Francisco, or Natalia Molina discusses through discourses on various immigrant groups in early 20th century Los Angeles, or Yen Espiritu discusses through Vietnamese in the United States who are used as potent almost magic objects which can transform an American loss in Vietnam into a moral victory. This critical trend’s ultimate goal is the implication of that gaze, the one which is infused with power and authority and tends to remain unmarked or unnoticed and simply accepted as the conditions of possibility. It is built upon the idea that acts of violence and systems of racism do not take place in isolation, but as they mark some as violent, deviant or non-normative, mark others and their ideas and identities as being normal, superior, essential and progressive. Yen Le Espiritu, “The ‘We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose’ Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the ‘Fall of Saigon’,” *American Quarterly*, (58:2), June 2006, 329-352. Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

about the way I am using Guam and the traces of its sovereignty that comprise much of the evidence of this dissertation.

But before moving on to these issues, the suggestion that Guam is such a unique place requires a bit more interrogation. Thus, in the last part of this chapter, I'd like to provide more background on Guam, in relation to different concepts or communities in order to help make clear why the treatment of Guam as a "unique" site is productive. Yet, in doing so, I will demonstrate that this deployment of a comparative framework, i.e. pursuing the type of analysis that Ethnic Studies at University of California, San Diego is built upon, presents both solutions and challenges to these delicate problems.⁶⁶ That is, using a comparative framework – one that sees Guam as an object, or as a space, that has to be grounded beside other similar communities in order to be effectively situated – might allow an analysis through which the intricacies of its political status and ambiguity are drawn out, but it may also result in one wherein these intricacies are subsumed and made imperceptible again.⁶⁷ As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler notes in her introduction to the anthology *Haunted by Empire*, "Incomparability compels forgetting, just as comparison prescribes some lessons and effortlessly disavows others."⁶⁸

It is my contention that, for an insignificant and dependent site such as Guam, with very little academic knowledge produced about it, the situating of Guam in a

⁶⁶ Ramon Gutierrez, "Ethnic Studies: Its Evolution in American Colleges and Universities," in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Reader* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1995), pp. 157-167. Yen Le Espiritu, "Disciplines Unbound: Notes on Sociology and Ethnic Studies." *Contemporary Sociology* 28:5, (1999), pp. 510-514.

⁶⁷ Robert Warrior, "A Room of One's Own at the ASA: An Indigenous Provocation," *American Quarterly*, (55:4), December 2003, 683.

⁶⁸ Ann Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire: Predicaments of the Tactile and Unseen," *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Ann Stoler (ed), (Durham, North California, Duke University Press, 2006), 6.

comparative matrix in order to establish its identity or viability as an object of inquiry could help re-subsume Guam in the very frameworks I am seeking to extricate it from.⁶⁹ While, pragmatically, I recognize the impulse that demands that a relatively unknown site should be grounded through more visible and more well-known locales, I resist that impulse to the extent possible since it may short-circuit my efforts in this project.⁷⁰ While locating Guam in a comparative framework might challenge the invisibility of Guam by enhancing its visibility through associations with larger sites, it does little to address the *banality of Guam*. Here, banality refers to the ways in which Guam's identity, in a myriad of forms, is prone to emptiness, and in fact seems to exist only so that it may be commonsensically emptied of any critical content once it is associated with.⁷¹ This productive veneer over Guam is not something to be accepted but rather interrogated and tied to, not other sites through which it might become more visible, but to the United States, or the body that draws sovereignty from it. To reiterate a point from the previous

⁶⁹ Ironically, Kayoko Kushima's thesis about discourses on isolation and Guam in different bodies of literature, is riddled with the discourse on Guam being isolated from academic knowledge. Kushima, *Historiographies of Guam and Discourses of Isolation...*

⁷⁰ Amongst Pacific Islander scholars in the United States, this sort of tension is regularly discussed in terms of where Pacific Islanders should be situated in terms of existing academic programs. The discussions can often become contentious and difficult because of a similar desire to not simply be subsumed within something larger or incorporated as a formality and nothing more. The tension can at times be healthy however, as it can ensure that certain histories or historical relationships are not erased in the process of incorporation. For instance, the integrating of Pacific Islanders into Asian American organizations should not come with the cost of then erasing the role that Asian Americans have played in helping the process of settle colonialism in certain Pacific Islands. J Kehaulani Kauanui, "Asian American Studies and 'the Pacific Question'," *Asian American Studies After Critical Mass*, Kent A. Ono (ed), (Oxford, Blackwell, 2005). Vicente Diaz, "TO 'P' OR NOT TO 'P'?: Marking the Territory Between Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, (7:3), October 2004. *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*, Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (eds), (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

⁷¹ Kushima's master's thesis is very important since it represents the first instance in which a common critique amongst Guam historians or Chamorro scholars was put into academic action. The idea of Guam as being isolated and powerless is trope which is commonly referred to (including in this dissertation), and certain textual instances can be pointed to, but for which only Kushima's thesis represents a serious and lengthy engagement with the idea.

section, there is nothing intrinsically problematic with the inclination to enhance Guam as a site of investigation and analysis; but a discourse which permeates a classroom or a meeting of antiwar activists and asserts a casual “*ti ninahong-ña*” or “inadequateness” to Guam, can feed into larger discursive formations, and reinforce the gazes that make Guam a curious paradox of powerlessness and power. I discuss this in more in detail in chapter 5.

A more negative comparative framework, one that is not obsessed with the insignificance of Guam but rather assumes that Guam can occupy a particular identity, or can embody a critique of the United States or sovereignty, can however be very helpful. Such a framework can help capture the structure of Guam’s particularity by tracing, to different bodies of knowledge or communities, the ideas that produce them as similar or dissimilar. This gesture can help overcome the instinct that a small, tiny place should be seen through its larger relatives, and instead focus on the ways on which a site does not fit, how it openly rejects inclusion, or how it is commonsensically disassociated from, certain concepts or communities. That is, in the case of a colony such as Guam, it is necessary to perceive the excesses of one’s site, the ways in which it is ill-fitting or it sticks out, since it is here that the potential for critique always lies.

I adopt an aggressive stance in situating this particularity of Guam, not because it is the most unique place in the world, and certainly not because situating it positively through similar sites is pointless. But rather, since this dissertation is about Guam and examining the structure of U.S. sovereignty through the particularity of Guam, I try to be as explicit as possible in articulating this focus and also in explaining why I see it as necessary. I wish to take great care in how I map the space that connects Guam to the

United States, the world, and the structures of power/knowledge that constitute them. It is for this reason that, in the following section, when I place Guam in a comparative framework, I am more prone to seeing the island as distinct, thereby working to extract the differences that emerge, rather than work to solidify similarities.

8. The Ghost of Guam Strikes Back

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the relationship between Guam and the concept of sovereignty is hardly a secure or well-researched one. The primary reason for this is that, on both sides of the “foreign in a domestic sense” equation, Guam’s particular context and the political chimera that it potentially represents are not considered to be essential to the way either side is constituted. That is, to both, the international system of nation-states and to the 50 states of the United States, Guam, and other non-self-governing territories, colonies or unincorporated territories are considered first, to be exceptions and second, footnotes.⁷² They are all exceptional mistakes in both, a world where colonialism is supposed to be long gone and where the United States of America reigns as a beacon of freedom, democracy and anti-colonial spirit. The inconsistencies they represent can be explained away in footnotes; they do not represent sites of contradiction that would require analysis. They do not influence the larger structures of the United States or the world, and although they are products of that world, they don’t

⁷² Arnold Leibowitz, *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States – Territorial Relations*, (Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, 1989). Neil C. Weare, "Our Non-Federalism: Amending the Constitution to Embrace Citizens in the District of Columbia and the Territories as Full and Equal Members of “We the People”" *ExpressO*, Available at: http://works.bepress.com/neil_weare/1. Site Accessed 14 November 2009.

appear to say anything substantive of it. They are, as Guam is often referred to, the “bastard” step-children of the world.⁷³

If we shift gears and change our view to Guam and its fellow colonies of the United States, also known as the Insular and Interior Empires of the United States, we can further examine the particularity of Guam. This massive, sprawling, generally unimagined community reaches from the Western edge of the Pacific, across all 50 American states, and finally into the islands of the Caribbean. It is comprised of several hundred federally recognized and un-recognized Native American tribes, Native Hawaiians, and the peoples of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and American Samoa. The interior elements of this empire are distinguished from their insular counterparts precisely by the term sovereignty. Because of the particular discursive specificities of Guam, however, in terms of how people there talk about its political status, sovereignty is not a word in common use. When I say discursive specificities I am referring to the discursive objects – legal cases, laws, historical events, famous quotes – that would be drawn in, or cited in, an effort to describe, or actively shape, Guam’s political status. Chamorros, because of their different trajectory in relation to the United States compared to Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, do not have a legal or political history of striving for, conserving and losing “sovereignty.”

⁷³ References to Guam being an abnormal or non-normative member of America’s family are common, in particular amongst Guam’s elected officials who are trying to make clear an intimacy between the US and Guam or a gap and a cruel distance. The US was in previous times the Mother Country or a paternal master, and then soon becomes Uncle Sam, and Guam and other territories become bastards or stepchildren. Emmanuel T. Erediano, “Call for ‘decolonization’ highlights Chamorro conference,” *Marianas Variety*, 29 September 2008. Anne Perez Hattori, “Righting Civil Wrongs: Guam Congress Walkout of 1949,” *Kinlamten Pulitikat: Sinenten I Chamorro, Issues in Guam’s Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective*, (Agana, Guam, Political Status Education and Coordinating Commission, 1996), 60. Senator Benjamin J. Cruz, *Interview with Author*, His Office, Aniguak, Guam, 20 August 2007.

The 1993 Apology Resolution to Native Hawaiians, that was passed by the United States Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton, refers to the “sovereignty” and the “sovereign” status of the Hawaiian kingdom numerous times.⁷⁴ Prior to the overthrow of its government in 1893, Hawai’i was an independent modern kingdom. Much of Native Hawaiian sovereignty activism is about conserving what little sovereignty Native Hawaiians retain in the islands, or rebuilding their sovereign authority. In more recent years, Native Hawaiian legal theorist David Keanu Sai has come to argue that the issue isn’t about losing or gaining sovereignty, since such an analysis is situated in the framework of American domestic legal theory, but rather needs to be located in international relations theory.⁷⁵ In his dissertation, he uses the examples of other occupied nations and territories, and how their sovereignty is never extinguished regardless of how many laws the occupier passes to establish itself. His argument is that sovereignty has never been lost, but merely waits to be recognized.⁷⁶

In his article, *History of Sovereignty in the U.S.*, Anthony Pico, the chair of the Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians, notes that sovereignty is such a foundational

⁷⁴ 103rd United States Congress, First Session, *To acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the January 17, 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii and to offer an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii*, PL 103-150, 23 November 1993.

⁷⁵ David Keanu Sai, *The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom: Beginning the Transition from Occupied to Restored State*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawai’i, Manoa, 2008).

⁷⁶ One interesting difference that we find between Native Hawaiian movements for decolonization and Chamorro ones, is that the potential modernness of their claims. When most Chamorros first encounter the idea of decolonization and what their island or their culture would look like if it were “decolonized” the reservoir from which they draw their materials tends to be very old, from the era before the Spanish colonized the island (17th century). Native Hawaiians however, are given a very different choice. First they can claim that decolonization lies in reaching back to the time prior to any “Western” influences, but they also have the Kingdom period upon which they can rely. Prior to the American overthrow and takeover in the late 19th century, Hawaiian already had a functioning modern government. Native Hawaiian movements for sovereignty take on a far more complex dimension because of this diversity of historical material, the same unfortunately cannot be said for Chamorros, who have no recognizable modern claim to “sovereignty” save for the right as recognized by the United Nations. These issues will be dealt with more in Chapters 6 and 8.

concept in Native American life and governance because it is the basic legal concept through which Native Americans have a place from where they can negotiate with the United States. Sovereignty, the ways in which it has been argued or shaped over the years, is the determining force in what rights Native Americans do or do not have, can or can't have. In his article, Pico lays out the clear and convoluted ways in which sovereignty provides this foundation.

The historic foundational principles of Indian law were known as the Chief Justice Marshall Trilogy. Stated simply the three precepts are: 1) Tribes are sovereigns. 2) Tribes became subject to legislative power of the United States and lost external sovereignty, but retained internal sovereign jurisdiction over tribal territory. 3) Retained tribal powers can only be qualified by congressional legislation or treaties.

The Marshall Trilogy recognizes that Congress has the authority to limit or even abolish powers of tribal governance, making tribes limited or dependent domestic sovereignties. But the courts have long abided by the doctrine that absent congressional action, a tribe retains its inherent right of self-government, and no state may impose its laws on the reservation.⁷⁷

In their relationship to the United States, Chamorros on Guam and other peoples from the Insular Areas, however, have never been considered to be pre-sovereign groups, or those that were legally/politically constituted as such prior to the American takeover in 1898. The legal trajectory of Guam in relation to the United States is much different than that of Hawai'i or Native American tribes, for whom the colonization or integration into the United States meant contending with sovereign or semi-sovereign entities. In the case of Guam, its acquisition was an exchange between empires. A lazy Spanish outpost taken over by the United States in 1898, then purchased as an afterthought along with other larger territories. Thus, in contrast to Native Hawaiians and Native Americans, with

⁷⁷ Anthony Pico, "History of Sovereignty in the U.S." *Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians*, http://viejas.com/vbki/html/ts_tribegovt.htm, Site Accessed 2 June 2009.

whom the United States must constantly negotiate, or seek to extinguish, the sovereign claims they represent, Chamorros are always awaiting their creation through recognition; always waiting for American law or culture to find a place for them, to define who they are.⁷⁸

Guam, like the other territories, enters the grasp of the United States differently, in such a way that “sovereignty” is not part of the legal history or the literature that produces and describes this relationship. The territories are all bound together through *The Insular Cases*, which has created a legal dead-end for all in terms of decolonization, since the cases have, for over a century, affirmed that the territories have no rights save for those that the United States government provides them.⁷⁹ The territories are united in

⁷⁸ In 2008, a movement appeared on Guam to formally seek Federal recognition for Chamorros as a Native American tribe. Members of this small grassroots movement, created a Youtube account and began to upload videos of their tribal meetings and calling for tribal recognition as the only way Chamorros can survive as a people. They approached members of the Guam Legislature and were able to convince members to write Bill 191 which would request that the US Congress start procedures to have Chamorros become a Native American tribe. The Bill received much attention around Guam, because it was based on the idea that since Guam can never become independent again and since Chamorros are already US Citizens, Chamorros should leave their ambiguous unincorporated status and seek shelter within the existing legal/political framework for indigenous people of the United States. Decolonization activists strongly opposed to bill since it would ensure that the predatory legal hedge-maze that Native Americans are forced to constantly contend with would soon become the new home of Chamorros, by giving up the inherent internationally recognized right to self-determination that Chamorros possess. Ultimately, the Bill was shelved, but not because of any scathing argument made against it on its merits, but rather because the Catholic Church quietly requested that it be put aside since it might just be an excuse to bring casino gambling to Guam. Julian Aguon, *Letter written to the Speaker of the Guam Legislature Regarding Reservations to Bill 191*, 29 September 2008.

⁷⁹ Although primarily meant to determine the status of the largest of America’s territories, Puerto Rico, the *Insular Cases* were a series of Supreme Court cases which ended up establishing the framework for US Federal-Territorial relations. The initial crops of cases dealt with whether or not Puerto Rico which had been acquired in the Spanish-American War a few years earlier could be considered to be foreign or domestic in terms of taxation and import duties. Would a businessman importing oranges from Puerto Rico be required to pay foreign import duties on said oranges since Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States? Rather than make a clear path for American territories, meaning crafting a decision which would pave the way for them to escape that intermediate status, the *Insular Cases* ended up creating a new ambiguous category for territories, and created a legal argument for their being eternally condemned to that status. When asked the question of whether or not the US Constitution follows the flag, or more broadly whether the United States has any legal or moral obligation to the territories it obtains, the *Insular Cases*, using primarily racism as the evidence, argued that no, the United States had no such obligations. The application of US laws or principles is solely up to the United States government. Should the government

political status and political rights as well – they are administered officially by the Department of the Interior and all, by virtue of their status, receive a single non-voting delegate to the United States House of Representatives. Each of these territories is considered to be militarily important to the United States because of the high levels of recruitment to the armed forces that they all share.⁸⁰ Guam is distinct, however, not only in its long-standing strategic military importance as America's spear-tip towards Asia, but also because it is the only site which is increasing in its military value.⁸¹

Although Puerto Rico hosts 41 bases, its strategic military value has been declining in recent decades, this decrease marked most visibly by the closing of the bombing range in Vieques Island in 2003, partially in response to widespread public protests.⁸² This decline in military importance is also due to the shifting of American military focus and vision to the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa.⁸³ This change in priorities has only increased Guam's value as a forward operating point. The closing of Vieques was celebrated by many Chamorro activists critical of America's military presence on Guam, albeit in measured tones.⁸⁴ The reason being that a decrease in the

wish to apply the Constitution in whole or in part to the territories that is their right, but the territories themselves, because there are backwards and uncivilized races, have no inherent rights other than that which is given them by the United States and the arms of its government. Kal Raustiala, *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag? The Evolution of Territoriality in American Law*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution*, Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (eds), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁸⁰ Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, *Fallen Insular Heroes*, http://www.doi.gov/oia/Firstpginfo/islanders_in_the_military/heroes.html. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

⁸¹ Carlyle Corbin, *Personal Communication*, CLASS Lecture Hall, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 7 November 2009.

⁸² Katherine T. McCaffrey, "Environmental Struggle After the Cold War: New Forms of Resistance to the U.S. Military in Vieques, Puerto Rico," *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*, Catherine Lutz ed., (New York, NYU Press, 2009).

⁸³ Michael T. Klare, "Imperial Reach," *The Nation Magazine*, 25 April 2005.

⁸⁴ Edward Pocaigue, *Interview with Author*, Colonized Chamoru Coalition Meeting, I gima'-ña Si Ed Benavente, Mangilao, Guam, 24 July 2003.

Caribbean most likely means an increase in the Pacific. As one activist noted, “They are pulling out of Vieques and *laña*’ probably be sending them all here.”⁸⁵ This strategic and geographic importance of Guam binds it together with all the other islands in Micronesia – the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Following World War II, all of the islands of Micronesia, including Guam were placed on the United Nation’s list of non-self-governing territories, or places for which the United Nations and all its charter members had a mandate to decolonize. The United States’ interests in controlling these islands stemmed from their desire to transform the northern Pacific into a buffer zone, meant to stand between the mainland United States and future Russian and Asian threats. All the islands in Micronesia, save for Guam, were corralled into a massive Trust Territory, which the United States needed to control the destiny of in order to protect its own national interests.⁸⁶ Ultimately, for several decades, a process of negotiated decolonization took place, which resulted in the world welcoming three more semi-sovereign/sovereign nation-states into its fold, and the United States acquiring one more territory. Guam, as the largest island, the most modern, the one that already possessed the most military infrastructure, and therefore the most strategically important, was not even allowed the pretense of taking part in decolonization; it was simply bypassed and thus remains on that list of non-self-governing territories into the

⁸⁵ Lana’: An expletive similar to “gosh” or “shit.”

⁸⁶ David Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia: Discourse Over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*. (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1998). *Micronesia as Strategic Colony: The Impact of U. S. Policy on Micronesian Health and Culture* Catherine Lutz (ed.). Cambridge: Cultural Survival Occasional Papers, 1984. Ched Myers and Robert Aloridpe, *Resisting the Serpent: Palau’s Struggle for Self-Determination*, (Baltimore, MD, Fortkamp Pub Co, 1990).

present.⁸⁷ The mechanics and significance of this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

The other concept that places Guam within a comparative framework is that of indigeneity. Although I assert in this dissertation that Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam, it is only relatively recently that this assertion is considered to be relevant, within Guam and without. For centuries after Guam's colonization by the Spanish, Chamorros were considered to no longer exist. Death from wars and disease, inter-marriage and the dilution of bloodlines, and finally the influence of colonizers and their culture – all these factors led to a very oppressive narrative of Chamorro extinction and cultural death. The common narrative was that Chamorros died out long ago, and that their descendants are impure fakes who have lost any shred of their original form. The tragic reality for Chamorros is that, even as they live today, they are the walking dead, and cannot help but signify the triumphs of colonizers and other cultures in stripping them of themselves.⁸⁸ In fact, Chamorros themselves did not consider themselves an indigenous group, or tied to a larger framework of colonized, ethnic identification, until after World War II.

Yet, as the category has become globalized, Chamorros have found ways of taking up the rhetoric of indigenous decolonization and nationalism in how they articulate

⁸⁷ The Marshall Islands is an interesting exception to this, as it holds a contemporary strategic military value akin to Guam, while the other islands in Micronesia hold the strategic potential. The Marshall Islands were taken from the Japanese during World War II, and were used in the 1950's and 1960's for nuclear bomb testing at Bikini and Enewetak. In total 67 nuclear bombs were dropped on the islands. Today 11 of the Marshall Island's 97 islands are being leased by the United States military and comprise what is known as "The Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Site," which serves as a testing ground for missiles and is also home to one of five grounding sites that make possible the Global Positioning System (GPS).

⁸⁸ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Things to Do in Guam When You're Dead," *Third Space*, (23:4) August 2005.

themselves locally, nationally and internationally. The group, Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R), started in the 1970s in Guam, helped lay the foundation for the incorporation of Guam into the Fourth World struggle, and through the work of other groups such as *Nasion Chamoru* in the decades since, this has eventually become embedded in how Chamorros see themselves today.⁸⁹

It is this recently emerged indigenous consciousness, combined with Guam's lack of sovereignty that sets Guam and Chamorros apart in the Pacific, and has made them perpetual exceptions when the region is articulated through different identities. As the first island in the Pacific to be colonized by European powers, and one of the last places/peoples awaiting decolonization, Guam and Chamorros represent forms of historical and contemporary violence that even their neighbors seem determined to forget. When the Pacific is brought together through pan-ethnic tropes of culture, creativity and political status, Guam's compromised colonial history and present require that it be excluded.⁹⁰ The island's long association with colonizers and the subsequent destruction of their culture seems to imply that they don't have a "Pacific Islander" culture.⁹¹ Furthermore,

⁸⁹ Hope Alvarez Cristobal, "The Organization of People for Indigenous Rights: A Commitment Towards Self-Determination," *Hinasso: Tinige' Put Chamorro, Insights: The Chamorro Identity*, (Agana, Guam, Political Status Education Coordinating Committee, 1993), 137-153. Mike Phillips, "Land," from, Political Status Education and Coordination Commission, *Kinlamten Pulitikat: Sinenten I Chamorro: Issues in Guam's Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective*, (Agana, Guam, Political Status Education Coordinating Committee, 1996). Michael P. Perez, "Contested Sites: Pacific Resistance in Guam to U.S. Empire," *Amerasia Journal*, (27:1), 2001, 97-115.

⁹⁰ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Shattered Cultures: The Role of History, Literature and Myth in Chamorro Decolonization*, Paper Presented at the conference: "Discursive Practices: Towards a Transnational Indigenous Poetics," University of California, Davis, 12 May 2008.

⁹¹ According to attorney Andrew Gayle who was hired by the Government of Guam in the early 1970's to conduct a study on the possibility of political status change for Guam, part of the resistance that people (Chamorros and non-Chamorros) felt towards the idea, was simply that no Chamorro existed anymore to decolonize or become self-determined. Gayle summarized this position in her report as follows: "...there is no such thing as Chamorro, that they were all killed by the Spanish or had died of disease by the end of the 17th century and that those now claiming to be Chamorros are merely a mongrel, mestizo population of Filipinos, Mexicans, Chinese, etc. with no more than a smidgen of ancient Chamorro blood, that the so-

their lack of sovereignty means that they not only have an ambiguous relationship to the United States, but also to the other sovereign states around the Pacific. As Pacific History professor Anne Perez Hattori notes, the island's colonial history essentially places it both above and outside of the Pacific. It is geographically a part of the Pacific, but its place there is always tenuous. Because of its political status, it isn't a sovereign island nation and thus, when the Pacific is represented in various political ways, Guam is disinvited or barred from participating. But, at the same time, its colonial history means that it is not by any means a "stereotypical" or "authentic" island culture, so that when various regions of the Pacific are represented culturally, Guam is left out once again.

Taling Taitano, a National Committeewoman for the Guam Democratic Party has often represented Guam and Chamorros at various conferences or forums around the Pacific, and attests to the "unique" ways in which Guam is often understood by other Pacific Islanders who have been fortunate enough to have experienced less colonialism, or possess a greater degree of sovereignty over their territories. Once, when recounting to me her experience at a forum in Fiji, she spoke, as an extreme instance, of something she often felt when representing Guam around the Pacific.

A man from Western Samoa, (who was already a little drunk) approached me and told me that I didn't belong there; basically that Guam didn't belong there. He said that we had no culture left and that we had sold out and given up our lives and all that for America. This was always something that followed us at these meetings. Either we had sold our souls or we had no souls.⁹²

called Chamorro population of Guam is thus no more native to the island than any other present population element..." Andrew Gayle, *An Analysis of Social, Cultural and Historical Factors Bearing on the Political Status of Guam*, Political Status Commission, 1974, 28.

⁹² Taling Taitano, *Personal Communication*, Guam Humanities Council, Hagåtña, Guam, 16 April 2009.

Just as Chamorros and Guam seem to signify the cultural successes of their colonizers, they signify the fulfillment of political power as well. This is epitomized *par excellence* when a meeting of Pacific Islander states or nations is called for, in the case of Guam, the question then arises, should the Governor of Guam be invited or should the President of the United States?⁹³

All of this puts Guam in a precarious place in the Pacific, something that sticks out like a sore thumb, an obtrusive presence, an echo of so many different frameworks of violence that have plagued the Pacific throughout its relationship to the outside world. In these moments of representing the Pacific, then, Guam is rejected as an inappropriate site, resigned again to its exceptional and inconsistent status.

The place of Guam in the Pacific, and in much of the world, is closely tied to Guam's relationship with ideas of contemporary colonialism and neo-colonialism. Although Guam was colonized by Spain during the early years of Western exploration and expansion, and thus endured colonialism in its most violent forms, its presence as a colony today classifies it as a misfit in world history. Guam and other present-day formal colonies can hardly claim that label since they are entangled in colonial relationships that count little when compared with the brutality enacted when the Spanish conquered the Americas or with which Europe carved up Africa.⁹⁴ The use of the word "dependency" nowadays, to refer to places such as Guam, Gibraltar, and New Caledonia, is crucial in understanding how, although the naked violence of colonialism may no longer be permissible, the rhetoric that justified colonization across the globe for centuries is still in

⁹³ One way in which this is overcome is through the military importance of Guam. If a conference or a forum is held in which issues of military importance are central, then Guam is always there.

⁹⁴ Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *The Last Colonies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4.

effect – that the West/Europe/the United States took on the rest of the world not out some selfish interests, but rather as a burden that they, the white race, had to civilize the world.⁹⁵

Joe Murphy, a longtime journalist and former publisher of Guam’s largest newspaper *The Pacific Daily News*, provided a local version of this colonial rhetoric, noting in a column that to call Guam a colony was disingenuous or misleading. According to Murphy, traditional colonialism, or real colonialism, is defined through extraction, in that the colonizer mainly takes from the colonies and exploits them. The relationship between Guam and the United States could hardly be called that since, if anything, the United States is constantly paying money into the colonies, and never “extracting” any real return. According to Murphy, “What kind of colonial master would put \$200 million, and probably a lot more, in the economy of an island [and] expect nothing in return, except location?”⁹⁶

If we were to redefine colonialism to match the nature of a colony such as Guam today, we would quickly abandon discussions marked by terms such as oppression and subjugation and instead trot out terms such as patriotism, liberation, dependency, banality, ambiguity and strategic military necessity. This is the paradox of Guam’s colonial status of today, that although one cannot argue against the idea that it is in the most formal of senses a colony, it still isn’t *much* of a colony; it doesn’t really seem to exude or signify any of the evils that we commonly associate with colonialism as a system of organized violent oppression.

⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

⁹⁶ Joseph Murphy, “Pipe Dreams,” *The Pacific Daily News*, 21 July 1999.

Given the failures of the recently decolonized world to live up to the promise of the Third World or the Non-Alignment Movement to rid themselves of the yoke of European exploitation, Guam appears almost *suette* or lucky to have missed the decolonial boat. Unlike so many of the world's fledgling nation-states, Guam is shielded from being forced to fend for itself; nor does it have to endure the dangers of a world full of ravenous world powers seeking to gobble up the defenseless recently-decolonized. It is here that the political exceptions that colonies such as Guam represent, might no longer signify places left behind by the world, but might actually appear as waiting at the apex of the world's spear in terms of political progress and evolution.⁹⁷ After the failures of decolonization and the disarray of the world's developing countries, what is now needed more than ever is *colonialism*,⁹⁸ that state sovereignty should no longer stop the world's major powers from intervening directly into the economies and politics of developing states. This, then, naturally leads us from a discussion of colonialism to one of neo-colonialism. As the world moves into a different stage of international relations, the new imperialistic hydra that has replaced colonialism is neo-colonialism.

Ghanaian scholar Kwame Nkrumah in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* defines this concept as follows:

Neo-colonialism is... the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. In the colony those who served the ruling

⁹⁷ Ronald Stade, *Pacific Passages, World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, (Stockholm, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1998), 47.

⁹⁸ Robert Cooper, "The post-modern state," *The Observer*, 7 April 2002. Daniel Vernet, "Postmodern Imperialism" *Le Monde*, 24 April 2003.

imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case.⁹⁹

This conception is meant to capture the ways in which, despite the expulsion of the colonizer from the territories he once claimed as his own, he can still claim their wealth and their destiny by forcing them into subordinate relationships over issues of debt, development and defense. The emergence of neo-colonialism as a framework is tied to the same impulse as colonialism, a concept meant to describe the appropriation of that which does not belong to you, or the exploitation of another's land, labor and life. What is key in marking a practice or strategy of power as neo-colonial is the transgression of someone else's sovereignty, the lack of respect for the sovereign boundaries of nation-states, and the systematic treatment of them as if they were a colony.

And thus we come full circle, for Guam is once again excluded from a potential framework because of the issue of sovereignty. As neo-colonialism is a concept meant to shed structural light upon the transgression of one's sovereignty, a site such as Guam, already denied the shield of sovereignty and once again slips through the cracks.¹⁰⁰ If neo-colonialism is, ultimately, meant to call attention to acts of appropriation by powerful

⁹⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), xi.

¹⁰⁰ When I first read the book *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq* by Stephen Kinzer, I thought that once again I had found an example of this. While Guam is mentioned in the book several times, the way in which it is mentioned (and who it is mentioned along with) is very interesting. It is mentioned repeatedly as a base from which other sites are attacked and even as the name of a ship which helped invade the Caribbean island of Grenada. It is also mentioned in a curious sentence as something simply taken by the United States along with two other uninhabited islands and what would become American Samoa in order to help project American power. In the initial forms of this dissertation I thought I would include a section in Chapter 5 on Kinzer's book, but later decided not to when I realized that although Guam played the same empty role in his book that it usually does in the writing and making of America, Kinzer wrote an article for *The World Policy Journal*, solely about Guam and the "cruel realities" of its colonial fate under the United States. Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2007). Stephen Kinzer, "Cruel Realities: The American Conquest of Guam," *World Policy Journal*, Summer 2006.

nation-states, how does this relate to Guam, when the common sense assumption is that it belongs to the United States?¹⁰¹

Earlier, I mentioned in passing the ghostliness of Guam in relationship to both, the United States and the concept of sovereignty. The discussion of Guam within a comparative framework, as demonstrated in this section, further illustrates this ghostliness in relation to different communities and different bodies of knowledge. The ghost of Guam is not simply excluded from these groups, but rather hovers around them, tracing their limits. In those formal and informal contexts, wherein Guam is explicitly disassociated, the island cannot but symbolize, or embody, that central essence which structures and constitutes the object, the space, or the moment, from which it is being disassociated. Rather than merely reflect upon this quality, this dissertation is built upon deploying it. The term “ghost” is not intended solely as a descriptive one, but rather as a critical one, invoked in line with Avery Gordon’s fashioning of it in her text *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*.¹⁰² A ghost is so because it has no home, no place to rest. Indeed, as Jacques Lacan notes, the dead come back to life

¹⁰¹ We can find an interesting example of this in the volume *Farms, Firms and Runways: Perspectives on U.S. Military Bases in the Western Pacific*. This volume provides an overview of US bases in the Asia-Pacific region, their history and their present state as of the publishing of the book. It also, interestingly enough grapples with the question of whether bases should be closed down or reduced in capacity, or whether some should in fact be increased? The perspective are diverse, some saying close them down, others saying keep them. There were two main essays which took up the issue of closing bases, with one taking the more liberal position of closing foreign bases, while the other opposing this view. But in the midst of the debate over what to do about US bases in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, both essays were in agreement that Guam belongs to the United States and should be enhanced in order to draw out its strategic importance. I should note however that the more liberal essay did, while discussing how to keep Guam as a strategic base, did argue the need for better treatment for the indigenous people there. *Farms, Firms and Runways: Perspectives on U.S. Military Bases in the Western Pacific*, L. Eve Armentrout Ma (ed), (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 2001).

¹⁰² Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

because they were improperly buried.¹⁰³ Thus, the ghost wanderlusts, touching and leaving its marks on that which seems familiar, that which is claimed, and held close, by those that are still living. This is the structure of the ghost's desire. Explaining this dynamic of ghosts and haunting, Gordon writes:

If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. ... The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course.¹⁰⁴

This section, thus, is written to demonstrate how Guam is constantly knocked back and forth between different discursive bodies, never truly fitting in anywhere. It is a gesture meant to establish that, while Guam is the focus of this dissertation, it is even in this dissertation an uneven, ghostly, vaporous form, one taken in attempt to represent the US, or the different groups and collectives, I have noted thus far. In this dissertation, then, we will follow this “ghost of Guam” as it moves in and out of different conceptions of sovereignty, and collect the traces that it leaves behind.

¹⁰³ Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 23.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon, 8.

CHAPTER 4: GUAM! A Trace of American Sovereignty

“If this work seems so threatening, this is because it isn't simply eccentric or strange, but competent, rigorously argued, and carrying conviction.”

Jacques Derrida¹

1. Painting over the Chamorro Experience

The 1977 publishing of Robert Underwood's article “Red, Whitewash and Blue: Painting Over the Chamorro Experience” represented a watershed intellectual moment for Chamorros working towards various forms of Chamorro empowerment and decolonization.² Published in the *Pacific Daily News*, on the eve of the 33rd anniversary of Guam's “liberation” from Japanese occupation by United States military forces during World War II, it represented one of the first public, and published efforts by Chamorros to reverse the lens of Guam's history. This reversing amounted to a re-telling and a re-interpretation of Liberation Day, in such a way as to re-work the historical bodies and symbols involved. Or in another way it sought to change the distribution of power, and to infuse historical agency into Chamorros who were “liberated” by the United States in 1944, and thus ultimately to affect what lessons of history contemporary Chamorros should glean from that event and the memorializations it has been enshrined with.³ The subtitle “Painting over the Chamorro experience” referred to the dominant ways in which Liberation Day is recounted, and against which the article is written.

¹ Jacques Derrida as quoted in “Jacques Derrida: Interviews,” *The Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts*, <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/derrida/interviews.html>. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

² Robert Underwood, “Red, Whitewash and Blue: Painting over the Chamorro Experience,” *Pacific Daily News*, 17 July 1977, 6-8.

³ There is an incredibly long footnote about this (a genealogy of Chamorro Studies) in Chapter 1.

As already noted in a previous chapter, Liberation Day, and the notion of American liberation of Guam and Chamorros, are incredibly potent and powerful sites through which existence in Guam is negotiated.⁴ They are the key sites in which the United States is elevated to a deity—moving from a disinterested colonizer to a cherished Uncle or benevolent father. The spectacle of Liberation Day – the ocean of American flags, of signs thanking Marines, soldiers, sailors and Americans in general, of parades full of military, and thousands of eagerly-grateful waving natives – seems to show how Liberation Day represents a sort of exuberance over the gravestone of the Chamorro, a marker of the successfulness of its colonization. A red, white and blue marker of the ways in which the Chamorro has been painted over, or painted out, of its own history. Moreover, it evidences how the most traumatic and important moment in recent Chamorro history is ultimately an American moment; a moment in which the greatness of the United States, and the dependencies of Chamorros and Guam, are recounted and celebrated. It highlights how the struggles of Chamorros to endure Japanese occupation, the personal and collective stories/strategies of how they survived work camps, sex slavery and numerous massacres, have all been co-opted, and worked to supplement and elevate the United States and their militaristic re-occupation of Guam.

Underwood's intervention is a simple one, but in the historical context of Guam, it is considered to be a *tahdong* or “profound” one. He recounts a particular memorial that

⁴ Keith Lujan Camacho's dissertation *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory and History in the Mariana Islands*, is an interesting more contemporary attempt at considering the impacts of Liberation Day on Chamorros, their imaginations and culture. It is also an important intervention because it is the first one which looks at the entire Mariana Island chain, which were divided by empires in World War II and therefore, despite their sharing the same culture and language, were pitted against each other. Both however have come to remember the American invasion of the Mariana Islands in 1944 as a “liberation.” Keith Lujan Camacho's dissertation *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory and History in the Mariana Islands*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, Manoa, 2005).

Chamorros erected in the southern village of Malesso, which was the site of two brutal massacres by drunken Japanese soldiers just weeks before the Americans' reinvasion.⁵ The monument is titled *Tayuyute' Ham*, a common phrase in Chamorro taken from Catholic prayers, that in English means "pray for us." The monument is inscribed in Chamorro and lists the names of those who died in the massacres at Tinta and Faha caves in the village.⁶ This monument, "is the only monument on island which is not only dedicated to Chamorros, but uses the Chamorro language exclusively in the inscription," and possesses none of the blaring patriotic overtones that mark most other war memorials or Liberation Day memorials.⁷ This much quieter, and more local, memorial was intended to represent a different interpretation of Liberation Day.⁸ It celebrated the deceased Chamorros and by default the survivors of the war in a vastly different way, one in which the Chamorro experience survival is key, is the object of memorialization and the lesson of history.⁹ However, when, in the narrative of the article, Underwood visits

⁵ Malesso is the Chamorro name for the village, other accounts will use the English version Merizo.

⁶ On July 15th and 16th 1944, 30 groups of Chamorros from Malesso were gathered on each day by Japanese soldiers. These groups of 30 represented the strongest and most influential members of the village and also those who had shown the most patriotism towards the United States (including one woman who refused to bow to Japanese soldiers which was required by law). On both days these groups were told that they were being taken to a work camp, but were instead taken to caves near the village where they were herded inside and then hand grenades thrown in after them. Afterwards, soldiers entered the caves and bayoneted the bodies to ensure all were dead. At Tinta cave on the 15th 16 Chamorros survived. At Faha cave on the 16th there were no survivors. Mayor Ignacio Cruz, *Interview with Author*, Faha Memorial Site, Malesso, Guam, 22 October 2002.

⁷ Other monuments made by and for Chamorros now exist, but what continues to distinguish the Martyrs Memorial is its exclusive use of the Chamorro language. Most monuments made today are trilingual, meaning any text is written in English, Chamorro and Japanese.

⁸ The village of Malesso distinguishes itself during the Japanese occupation by being the only village in which Chamorros rose up against the Japanese and overpowered them. This took place following the massacres at Tinta and Faha, when most Chamorros were convinced that the entire village would be killed as well. After the villagers had all been rounded up and marched inland, a group of young men attacked their guards killing most of them and driving away the rest. Tony Palomo, *Island in Agony*, (Self-published, Hagatna, Guam, 2004).

⁹ As Underwood notes: "To Chamorros, as a group, the war experience is one of the few things in which they can all take pride. They were placed in a predicament of their own making, but they met the challenge. They survived the ordeal, and became stronger for it. Within the confines of that pride as a

the site again in 1977, it is very different than its original design or intent. It now is “outlined in bicentennial red, white and blue with stars all around the border of the monument.”¹⁰ Despite the overall patriotic nature of Liberation Day and monuments or gestures meant to memorialize the war, Underwood ruminates that this sort of patriotic painting over the monument is inappropriate. The reason being is that this site represents an interpretation of Liberation Day which persisted in 1944 and continues to persist up until today. Beneath the red, white and blue hues of American celebration, the *Tayuyute’ Ham* monument is for Chamorros’ marker of *their self-celebration*: “On Liberation Day, when the Chamorros wave the flag and thank the Marines (and appear to be patriotic beyond belief) they are in reality celebrating their own experiences.”¹¹

Underwood’s reinterpretation of Liberation Day is dependent upon a crucial scene in which he explains why, if this alternative interpretation exists, it is not more prominent? Or in another way, if Liberation Day is supposed to be a self-celebration by Chamorros, why does it take such a militaristic and patriotic American tone, why is it not more “indigenous” in nature? The scene itself is small and minute and quickly swallowed up, but it is a central pivot point without which his analysis would not make sense.

As a group, the Chamorros were heroic during the Japanese occupation and, if they express it through Reoccupation (excuse me, Liberation) Day, it is because these are the symbols which are made available to them. To substantiate this claim, all that is necessary is to review Liberation Day messages for the past 30 years. After dutifully expressing gratitude to the U.S. for extricating Guam’s people from an atrocious situation, these messages recount the hardships endured by Chamorros. In essence the content of the message (the Chamorro experience) must be expressed in

people, there is not mention of the war as a struggle between two great powers trying to exert their dominance over the Pacific and its peoples.” Underwood, “Red, Whitewash and Blue,” 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

the symbols made available and easily understood (the Marines and the States and Stripes)¹²

Underwood builds off this point to make a “thinking-native” argument about Chamorros and their agency in skillfully wielding the available symbols in order to obtain political rights and federal funds.¹³ The argument about Chamorro agency rather than engulfment by these symbols is a welcome one, but there is a weakness to the route he takes to get there.

Underwood’s argument hinges on the notion that Chamorros had access only to these (American) symbols since that is all they appear to have used, for instance, in their Liberation Day messages. Thus, his reference to the use of “readily available symbols” alludes to a historical lack signified by other unknown or not readily available symbols. In seeking to provide a historical narrative for their experience, and to articulate their joy at having survived, Chamorros were at loss in terms of discursive objects that could support the task of self-celebration. In 1944 there was no independent political identity for Chamorros; an explicit anti-colonial movement or decolonization effort was still more than a generation away.¹⁴ While they may have perceived themselves as being different

¹² Ibid., 8.

¹³ “Thinking-native” is meant to refer to the debate between Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere as to how indigenous people think and what the relationship is to “modern knowledge.” I often use this term to describe the debate as to whether or not Chamorros in their patriotism to the United States are “dupes” or not. Robert Underwood’s article provides the basis for those seeking to articulate that Chamorros are not dupes at all, but rather working the symbols to their own advantage, and that the economic progress that Guam has achieved in such a short time (since World War II) is a sign of their success. By contrast, I generally fall on the other side of this debate in that Chamorros are indeed dupes, since the definition of whether or not you are being taken advantage of has less to do with what you get as part of the relationship, but what is wanted from the other. Since in the relationship with the United States, what they fundamentally desire is the control of Guam’s land, so long as Chamorros and others on Guam are not contesting this desire, they are being duped. Marshall Sahlins, *How Natives Think, About Captain Cook for Example*, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1995). Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Myth-Making in the Pacific*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Hope Alvarez Cristobal, “The Organization of People for Indigenous Rights: A Commitment Towards Self-Determination,” *Hinasso: Tinige’ Put Chamorro, Insights: The Chamorro Identity*, (Agana,

from the United States and Americans, and even resisted the efforts by the United States to colonize them prior to the war, when searching for universal ideas after the war which could be used to explain all that had been encountered, the most visible amongst the wreckage of their shattered island were the colonial narratives that obtrusively mark Liberation Day until today.¹⁵ Unable to find any consistent symbols or identities to say otherwise, they relied upon old colonial narratives that all bolstered America's return, each building upon the other to deify the American and the United States in the minds of Chamorros. The American symbols of progress, their commitment to freedom and justice, their military might and power, all of these things though available were oppressive in the consistency in which they found in the eventual results of the war.¹⁶ These symbols represented to war weary Chamorros, the forces which had defeated evil empires (such as Japan and Germany) and saved Chamorros in the process.

There were alternatives to this, but as Underwood notes, they were not readily available, easily understood and they were not attached to such fervent contemporary significance. These alternative ways of imagining Liberation Day – the centering of Chamorro experiences and the Chamorro spirit and survival – were present in the minds of all Chamorros, but they could never have had the same force as those that propped up the United States. The personal and the private in post-war Guam may have provided sanctuary to various traumas inflicted by both American and Japanese colonialism; over

Guam, Political Status Education Coordinating Committee, 1993), 137-153. Michael P. Perez, "Contested Sites: Pacific Resistance in Guam to U.S. Empire," *Amerasia Journal*, (27:1), 2001, 97-115. Joe T. San Agustin, "The Quest for Commonwealth: A New Chapter in Guam's History," *Kinlamten Pulitikat: Sinenten I Chamorro: Issues in Guam's Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective*, (Agana, Guam, Political Status Education Coordinating Committee, 1996), 119-124.

¹⁵ In my master's thesis in Micronesian Studies, I outline primarily through education how this shift took place. See Chapter 2, Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *These May or May Not Be Americans: The Patriotic Myth and Hijacking of Chamorro History on Guam*, (M.A. Thesis, University of Guam, 2004).

¹⁶ See Chapter 4, Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *These May or May Not Be Americans...*

lives and land lost first, due to being caught in the crosshair of the two empires, and then through rapid militarization in the post-war years which led massive land-grabs for bases. But the public provided no such sanctuary for feelings or ideas of resistance to the United States.

In addition to leaving jungles burnt to the ground, homes bombed out, dead bodies, tanks, planes, and rapidly erected military fences, the war re-colonized public life on the island.¹⁷ Marks of American power were everywhere, and they dominated public life on Guam, making only those memorializations of Liberation Day which supported the elevation of America consistent or worthy of recognition.¹⁸ Those who clung to their own personal, local memorializations and thus in passive or active ways refused to join the Liberation Day parade, were thought to be shameful, ungrateful, and unpatriotic. It was not that these memories or ideas held no importance for understanding Guam, but that within this historical context of “liberation” and colonization, they were too personal, informal, local, backwards, were not considered enough to support a public existence, and could not survive the heat of the public gaze which was overwhelmingly patriotic.¹⁹

I return to this moment that Underwood writes of to draw out my own position in the writing of this dissertation, and how I have found myself caught between different

¹⁷ 80 % of all structures on Guam were destroyed during the two week bombing of the island prior to the reinvasion by the United States.

¹⁸ Ibid, 183-185. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, (M.A. Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2007), 86-88.

¹⁹ In her article “Liberation Day: A Chamorro Re-Telling” Chamorro poet Cecelia Taitano Perez quotes a Chamorro, Dr. Jeff Barcinas, a prominent Chamorro academic, who sums up very well the sort of eternal dependency that the Chamorro has inherited from Liberation Day, “if not for America ‘we [the Chamorro people] could have been completely wiped out and we could have been nobody in terms of identity of a people who are seeking right now self-determination.” That even as Chamorros seek decolonization, there is this eternal dependency, this condition that without America they would not exist (historically) which easily becomes translated into the idea that without America we Chamorros would not exist (today). Quoted in Perez, “A Chamorro Re-Telling...”, 76.

bodies of potential knowledge, feeling different pressures to engage with one or the other, while not reproducing the marginality of Guam that marks much theoretical and historical works. This is most clearly felt in terms of determining the methodology for this dissertation and what evidence I can use to support my arguments.

2. Between Two Bodies Of Evidence

As I discussed in my second chapter, in working to articulate a project dealing with a concept such as sovereignty, I am confronted with a plethora of conversations, academic texts, and established figures to engage. There is no shortage of texts dealing with sovereignty in disciplines from philosophy, to political science, to international relations, to literature, to religion, and so forth.²⁰ But as the site and the focus of this dissertation is Guam, its political status and its decolonization, I am hesitant or cautious in my engagement with this massive body of knowledge, since the overwhelming majority has nothing to do with Guam. In suggesting so, I mean both that Guam is not their explicit object of study, as in they are not meant to refer to Guam, but also that Guam is not their implicit object of study.²¹

This always growing body of knowledge appears to me in the ways in which American symbols appeared to the Chamorros of Underwood's analysis. Overpowering

²⁰ A list of canonical texts on sovereignty can be found in footnotes throughout Chapter 2 and also near the start of each chapter.

²¹ As is displayed throughout this dissertation in a number of ways, Guam is constantly articulated as "exceptional" in relation to certain overarching legal, political and even imagined structures. For instance, when the United States is invoked as a legal, political or imagined thing, Guam is generally not explicitly included, nor is it implicitly included. What is always required is an extra gesture, a court case, an addendum to a law, something exceptional in order to incorporate (in an unincorporated way) the island and others like it, to whatever thing is being represented. As will be shown for instance in Chapter 6, the dominant definition of sovereignty which comes from political science or the United Nations is not one which can sufficiently describe, represent or capture Guam in any way, and is, in truth, written against or through Guam.

in its potential claims to universality (or being able to refer to all scenario and sites), disarming in its size and scope, yet at the same time, strange and distant, for despite this power and influence, Guam the territory and the colony, is hardly present within this body of work. Guam cannot be the “sovereign” in this body of sovereignty knowledge, but rather is always already a ghost; Academic conventions demand that I turn to this body of literature to ground my project since it is bound together by various types of academic authority, and possesses the aura of noted and notorious names. That Guam is not central to any of these projects is not, perhaps, a sufficient reason to turn me completely away from this mass, however it does sound me a note of caution. As discussed in the previous chapter, the temptation to ground Guam through a similar politically positioned community and its literature, or to use the critical lens provided by other non-Chamorro indigenous scholars, or political philosophers, offers little solace in the attempt to bring the fading ghost of Guam’s sovereignty into a critical focus.

In this dissertation, I do in fact deploy all of this literature but only to illuminate the tenuous relationship between Guam and sovereignty. I critique a number of mainstream political science texts, and incorporate a number of critical ideas on sovereignty from postmodern and indigenous scholars such as Giorgio Agamben and Taiaiake Alfred, respectively.²² But despite these forms of engagement, there is a struggle not to repeat the gesture that Underwood points to—to not accept that a superficial lack,

²² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998). Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, Trans. Kevin Attell, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005). Taiaiake Alfred “Sovereignty,” *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed.), (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005).

or that an appearance of nothing, implies, in fact, that there is nothing there.²³ As this swarming mass stands before me, barely audible are the voices and sources which do exist despite Guam's lack of sovereignty. Despite a handful of rare exceptions, these are not academic texts; they are not necessarily written with an eye to durability or universality, but rather may appear to be more superficial, ephemeral and narrow in their usefulness. They are texts which circle around the link, or lack thereof, between Guam and the concept of sovereignty. They come from a wide range of Chamorros, seeking sovereignty for their island, or actively seeking less. They come from US politicians, military commanders, Chamorros seeking a closer relationship to the United States, and those wishing to move further away, whether politically or culturally. Moreover, there is no one single way in which these statements emerge; they are found all throughout the discursive formation that is Guam. As I conducted my research, I literally found them everywhere, in stories, e-mails, letters to the editors of newspapers, blog posts, newspaper articles, documentaries, activist literature, off-hand remarks, and statements by politicians and members of the United States military.

This chapter situates my methodology for this dissertation and the ways in which I am attempting to blend together these two bodies of knowledge - i.e. the formal and the informal. In other words, I describe a methodology that enables me to explore the body of official academic knowledge in relation to Guam, without sacrificing or marginalizing those traces of sovereignty that I find in everyday discourses around Guam. As I stand

²³ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996). This will be discussed in more detail through the concept of banality in the next chapter.

between these two potential sites of evidence, the following questions and issues guide my engagement and methodology.

As noted in the previous chapter, the particularity that I am attributing to Guam does not imply uniqueness; but it nonetheless demands that particular care and deliberation be brought to bear when establishing a methodology to critically analyze it. After all, how does one write of colonialism, or seek evidence to support an engagement with sovereignty in relation to a contemporary colony, in a world built around the idea that such things are long gone?²⁴ How does one intervene into the pragmatics of what matters and what does not without reifying such categories, and not accede to existing rules that might attribute nothingness to your intervention? How does one collect evidence in order to engage critically with Guam that does not automatically reproduce its insignificance or reproduce the sovereign power of the United States, but can somehow challenge it?

Finally, if I may channel the spirit of Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: The Haunting of the Sociological Imagination* again for a moment; How does one write critically of that which is never in focus?²⁵ Or something which rarely can be the focus, but is always assumed to be something haunting the edges? How do we capture, methodologically, an absent presence, or something which is never really supposed to be there, and thus is never secure, but whose trace is always dictated by some obscene, exceptional, and often violent gesture? In the remaining sections of this chapter I will build off the theoretical foundation I have laid so far in terms of sovereignty and

²⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge and History*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2005).

²⁵ See Chapter 1, Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters...*

decolonization, and provide answers to these questions in the outlining of my dissertation's methodology.

3. *Traces of Sovereignty*

In this dissertation I will refer to the fragments of everyday evidence that I use as *traces of Guam's sovereignty*, or more generally as *traces of sovereignty*. The idea of the trace here is inspired by the work of a French philosopher Jacques Derrida, but is not meant to convey any orthodox usage.²⁶ In line with his deconstructionist philosophy, which prioritizes the indeterminacy of language and meaning, Derrida never, in his large body of work, explicitly defines what the term trace refers to.²⁷ It is a marker of an “absence of a presence” or an “always already absent presence.” It is a deconstructive force in Derrida's writing which always changes names, but always leads his critique. It

²⁶ In both this section on Derrida and in the following section on Slavoj Žižek, my refusal to engage with their theories in an orthodox way, meaning a way which is explicitly or intentionally in line with their stated theoretical intentions can be traced (no pun intended) to two principles. First, as an indigenous academic writing about a colony or the leftover residue from various grand modern projects, I see no problem bending theories to fit my needs. This is especially important since the subject of my interventions is generally in the case of European philosophers, the other of theirs. Secondly, to cite Slavoj Žižek, such abuses and misuses are not only inevitable, but tend to be necessarily productive in any philosophical or critical tradition/debate. As Žižek notes in *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*: “...all great “dialogues” in the history of philosophy were so many cases of misunderstanding: Aristotle misunderstood Plato, Thomas Aquinas misunderstood Aristotle, Hegel misunderstood Kant and Schelling, Marx misunderstood Hegel, Nietzsche misunderstood Christ, Heidegger misunderstood Hegel...Precisely when one philosopher exerted a key influence upon another, this influence was without exception grounded in a productive misreading...” Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, (Routledge, New York, 2004), ix.

²⁷ The dilemma that always haunted Derrida was the (a)political substance of his writings and theories. In that as he explored different concepts such as ethics, politics, justice and friendship, he would move in and out of their foundations and appear to take the political content out of them, or leave no room for authentic political action once his deconstruction or destruction was complete. The uncertain (a)political quality of the work stems from his regular argument that all of these concepts and so many others that quilt together the meanings of the world are all experiences of the impossible. Each is caught between binary opposites which cannot do justice to the things they describe, and thus we experience these things only based on their (im)possibility. In an effort to make clear his political and critical commitments Derrida's mantra in his later work were theoretical statements which followed this formula “one can only give that which cannot be given” or “one can only forgive something that is unforgiveable.” Friendship is only possible based on the undecidability between life and death, just as politics (as Derrida seems to hint) is based on the undecidability between friend and enemy.

is a fragment of the continuum of existence. It is a form of ghostly matter which contains the violent and inevitable end of the subject and its fragile, absent origin. The trace takes on different names based on the metaphysical assumptions he is interrogating, but it is something of a guiding impossibility, which leads the deconstructionist through supposedly coherent and stable idea or discursive formation, and sets off balance whatever it brushes up against.²⁸ The trace can guide a deconstruction because it holds for those organism pieces of its quiet birth and screams of its tumultuous end.²⁹

As Postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes in her translator's preface to *Of Grammatology*, the French word that Derrida uses for trace contains allusions to it being a footprint or a track, but not as a static remnant for something which is now gone, or a key piece which can illuminate the whole truth of that which shed it.³⁰ Rather the trace is, like all meaning, something which is constantly deferred and pushed elsewhere. The trace of something does not reveal anything in and of itself, but is rather something you follow in an effort to find the truth or the stability of the concept in question. The security and coherency of the concept is never arrived at, but is always moving along

²⁸ In his work, Derrida gives the trace different names in different contexts, some more arcane and creative than others. In the early years of his academic career he would often create new names, such as *pharmakon* or *arche-writing* to refer to the impossible substance he was referring to. As his work became more explicit and less on creating a new language for theory, but rather the interrogating of particular concepts, the trace then is simply terms such as forgiveness, friendship, cosmopolitanism.

²⁹ The trace is something which is always left behind in every moment, and hidden in that moment, and is something suppressed by "metaphysics of presence" which is the ontological framework that the world has inherited from the Greeks. It is not just another past or another future, and is not mediated through the present/presence, but also our own death. In Derrida's own work he symbolizes the trace as a concept through references to Sigmund Freud's mystic writing pad. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1980), 224. A much more recent representation that I found interesting was in William Gibson's 2005 novel *Pattern Recognition*, where the trace was a literally trace of shrapnel from a mine which had long been embedded in a girl's brain. William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition*, (Berkeley: Berkeley, 2005).

³⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," *Of Grammatology*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1997), xv – xvi.

ahead of the trace nonetheless.³¹ What is revealed instead is the structure of the concept, the weaknesses, the dependencies, the silences, and the ghosts.³²

In the case of a concept such as sovereignty, which is in multiple ways a crucial concept, a necessary and essential idea in the functioning of the world today, as well as an organizing principle for indigenous and non-state groups, its traces can lead us in and out of the many variations the concept takes—illuminating its structure. The evidence that which I call traces of sovereignty appears, however, as mere fragments in contrast to the vastness or the formalism of sovereignty as a concept that sutures the globe. It represents the ephemeral gestures, short gasps, which flicker and fade like the statues of Ozymandias surrounded by the eternal sands of sovereignty.³³ They appear to be incapable of being arranged into a coherent whole, they are, by virtue of their constitution in relation to broad and hegemonic concepts such as sovereignty, incomplete, fragments, unable to support even the statements that they themselves are making. Although as traces they trouble the concept of sovereignty, as mere statements/evidence they are not meant to be able to address it, to speak truth to it, to shape it, or to comprehend it.³⁴

³¹ Paola Maratti, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004).

³² Christopher Norris, *Derrida*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987).

³³ The imagery of this sentence is meant to refer to the sonnet “Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley. In the poem the statues of the great Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses, with all their hyperbolic praise, such as “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!” lie toppled over, covered in the indifferent sands of the desert. There is a tragic irony at his attempts to assert his permanence and timelessness. This sort of mocking wasteland of the security of meaning and identity is an ideal metaphor for Deconstruction.

³⁴ Amongst indigenous people, a similar sort of roadblock has long persisted with regards to oral history and its place in academic research. As many indigenous people transmitted history and knowledge orally and did not write books, their knowledge is treated as supplementary, as too flexible and too ephemeral and cannot be used as the basis for any real claims to universality or veracity. Therefore, the histories of indigenous people, would always be an effect of the anthropologist or historian who had the methods of remaking their stories into accurate and appropriate academic objects.

This was something which Jacques Derrida critiqued in *Of Grammatology*, where he revealed that while writing and speech each appear to have different claims to authenticity, they both ultimately divorced

But as anthropologist Catherine Lutz points out through the concept of *details of Empire* (discussed later in this chapter), traces of sovereignty are productive for they can be used in the task of critiquing sovereignty.³⁵ All of these fragments build off each other draw out an element of this structure. They are all tied together through a common reference, an affirmational or an antagonistic relationship to sovereignty, or to Guam. They reveal a piece of the structure of Guam in American sovereignty, whether as an effort to capture this place, obscure it, or break away from it. They all, themselves, possess a trace of the structure which produces them, an element of its reproduction and unraveling.³⁶

The way in which I use these everyday fragments, *or* traces of sovereignty, may at times appear to be arbitrary. In certain chapters, statements and anecdotes are strung together and meant to carry the weight of the argument or contest a much more formal discourse or concept. While there may appear to be no method to this process, I am

and separated from whatever meaning they are thought to be a vessel for. Each appears to be closer to the correct and true meaning of something, writing can claim to be written down and etched into something and therefore can never change, which while speech can claim to be the authentic natural form of human communication and therefore always closer to what we really mean than anything we actually write down. While they can each be articulated as being closer to the truth, they are governed by the same rules of indeterminate and undecidable meaning. With this being said, indigenous people themselves have come up with their own responses to the importance of doing oral history work in their own communities and elsewhere. Although they have been somewhat successful in establishing the oral as a legitimate source of truth and scholarship, obstacles remain. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*... Linda Thuwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, (London: Zed Books, 1999), 28-29. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

³⁵ Catherine Lutz, "Empire is in the Details," *American Ethnologist*, (33:4), 2006.

³⁶ Such is the theoretical lesson of *The Matrix Trilogy*. The prophecy and the productivity of The One, or the character Neo played by Keanu Reeves. The Subject position of The One represents both the potential unraveling or the world of the Matrix, but also a way in which it can be reinforced and reproduced. The Matrix is the illusionary, sensory world that human beings are plugged into by machines, to keep them docile and ignorant of the fact that they have been transformed into living endless batteries that provide power to the machines. The system is not flawless, at a certain level each human rejects the programming as unreal and attempts in some way to escape. The machines thus create a way in which mathematically they can collect the probability or the traces of resistance in each human, into a single subject, The One. *Matrix Reloaded*, dirs. The Wachowski Brothers duration 138 minutes, 2003.

attempting to make use of these traces of sovereignty effectively in tandem with academic texts and ideas. Thus my approach in answering the ghostly questions from the previous section is to move between these bodies of knowledge and evidence. The shifting between evidence is meant to reflect the ghostly place that Guam persists in, trapped between the foreign and the domestic, between the formal and the obscene, the national and the international; or the way the Guam's ambiguous political status is reproduced in terms of its relationship to dominant concepts or institutions. Given that Guam's relationship to the United States is a flexible, labile one, the discourses which emerge from this relationship are hardly formal, but almost always informal or obscene in nature. They appear not as solid, as secure, as that which is meant to be official or universal, but always stricken with a particular looseness, an ephemeral quality that implies it is always an exceptional sort of intervention, an off-hand remark, something not central, but peripheral, supplementary.

Guam is tied to very real institutions – the United States nation-state, the Federal Government, the United States military – all these claim Guam, and their claims are meant to be iron-clad, secure, beyond contest. But as an unincorporated territory, a footnote, the discourse this relationship creates is rarely official, but instead has the same obscene and disavowed quality as the structure and power relation it is meant to describe or obscure. This brings up 3 issues that I will contend with in the remaining sections of this chapter. 1st: Obscenity or informality of the evidence and my approach. 2nd: The personal or self-referential nature of most of the anecdotes used. 3rd: Relevance, or whether or not these forms of local discourse, these traces can illuminate the larger structures and concepts of not just sovereignty, but also of colonialism and imperialism.

4. Zizek and the Supplement

My methodology, as described above, is hardly radical, but might appear as such because of the sites involved in this dissertation (Guam, sovereignty) and the weight I give to the everyday, apparently superficial traces of sovereignty in terms of grounding my arguments. This method is most notoriously associated with the work of Lacanian theorist Slavoj Žižek and his always expanding body of philosophical and psychoanalytical work. Žižek's texts can be characterized as dense yet superficial. The mixture of argument and evidence he employs can at times seem chaotic.³⁷ For example, established philosophical texts or theorists are invoked in narrow ways, complex academic debates are reduced to short and curt paragraphs, the truth of dense theories are illuminated through a cavalcade of movies, novels, anecdotes and jokes. Evidence is constantly coughed up for the reader to consume, but it is rarely situated or contextualized, or links made to why a particular text follows the one before or precedes the next link in the chain. It is a style of argument that often leaves wanting those looking for more serious academic engagements.³⁸ In my case, the examples and evidence used

³⁷ A case in point is Edward R. O'Neill's review of the Žižek edited volume *The Cogito and the Unconscious*. Here is an excerpt. "Example after example is supplied, but the principle that makes them examples is not itself given. Appeals are implicitly made to Lacan's authority, but the source of that authority is never mentioned. The truth of Lacan's theories is urged by showing how other people's theories support that truth but without explaining why those theories have the same object. One concept is defined in terms of another, which is then described the same way, *ad infinitum*. What's being explained is mixed with what's doing the explaining in a circular fashion so striking that it may well count as both a novelty and a technical innovation in the history of interpretation." Edward R. O'Neill, "The Last Analysis of Slavoj Žižek," *Film-Philosophy*, (5:17), June 2001, 7.

³⁸ Another incisive review of the style of Žižek, in this instance from Marxist Fredric Jameson from *The London Review of Books*. "As every schoolchild knows by now, a new book by Žižek is supposed to include, in no special order, discussions of Hegel, Marx and Kant; various pre- and post-socialist anecdotes and reflections; notes on Kafka as well as on mass-cultural writers like Stephen King or Patricia Highsmith; references to opera (Wagner, Mozart); jokes from the Marx Brothers; outbursts of obscenity, scatological as well as sexual; interventions in the history of philosophy, from Spinoza and Kierkegaard to Kripke and

are nowhere near as far-reaching as your typical Zizek text, but I nonetheless I draw productively from his method in order to capture the ambiguity of Guam's political status and its relationship to the concept of sovereignty.

Although as an avowed, strict Lacanian, Zizek would no doubt reject this characterization, I believe his methodology embodies the epistemological lessons of Jacques Derrida, most notably that of *the supplement*, a concept that describes how in any binary relationship, one side of the spectrum is infused with power, authority and universality while the other languishes in limitedness, it is local, narrow and trapped.³⁹ As two categories which are tied together in a very intimate way, one might assume that they are complementary, that they are equal and cannot exist apart from each other, but the *metaphysics of presence* that Derrida critiques as being central to Western thought always infers a hierarchal relationship, that one is dependent upon the other, that one cannot survive without the other. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida critiques this logic, in a number of ways, but most prominently through a deconstruction of Jean Jacques Rousseau's text *Confessions*. In his book Rousseau repeatedly laments about both writing and masturbation as frustrating fakes of life, substitutes, and corrupted versions of real

Dennett; analyses of Hitchcock films and other Hollywood products; references to current events; disquisitions on obscure points of Lacanian doctrine; polemics with various contemporary theorists (Derrida, Deleuze); comparative theology; and, most recently, reports on cognitive philosophy and neuroscientific 'advances'. These are lined up in what Eisenstein liked to call 'a montage of attractions', a kind of theoretical variety show, in which a series of 'numbers' succeed each other and hold the audience in rapt fascination. It is a wonderful show; the only drawback is that at the end the reader is perplexed as to the ideas that have been presented, or at least as to the major ones to be retained." Fredric Jameson, "First Impressions: The Parallax View by Slavoj Zizek," *The London Review of Books*, 7 September 2006.

³⁹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "The Decision and Human Instrumentality: Lacan Avec Evangelion Or Why Immanuel Kant Never Dated," *Paper Presented at the Conference The National and the Natural: Reckoning with the Gaps and Breaks*, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, 4 March 2006. For a more Lacanian interpretation see Chapter 1 of Rex Butler, *Slavoj Zizek: Live Theory*, (London, Continuum, 2005). To put it in Lacanian terms, Zizek's method is about reasserting the symbolic over the imaginary in order to assert the theoretical importance of the Real.

authentic acts, sexual intercourse and speech. They are mere supplements to that which can truly express our meanings or feelings or truly fulfill our desires.⁴⁰ As Derrida shows however in his deconstruction, Rousseau's argument contains numerous contradictions, most obviously the fact that these things he labels as "supplements" are in truth the forces which drives his very narrative. He goes on to illustrate how the presence in which Rousseau ascribes to speech and sex, are always haunted by the same absence that they ascribes to masturbation and writing.⁴¹ That the things which we argue are real, or more present, only appear so through the supplement.⁴²

The deconstructive conclusion is therefore that, the thing which is explicitly written of as merely a supplement, a stand in for the truth, for the real, is hardly so. That that which is articulated as supplementary is found throughout the norm, or the center. The supplement is the origin of that norm, of that center it is the source of that fullness or feeling of authenticity. The real thing is riddled with dependencies on that supplement; the supplement is everywhere, haunting that thing, haunted by its inability to mean the realness without the supplement.⁴³

So in the work of Žižek, with his apparently "chaotic" method, he is invoking the specter of Derrida's supplement, and attempting to not reinvigorate the metaphysical predisposition that Derrida critiques. His apparently random and arbitrary style is meant

⁴⁰ Rousseau goes so far as to call masturbation a "dangerous supplement." Derrida in this section take a very similar position to that of Lacan in one of his more famous (and generally depression inducing) one-liners, "there is no such thing as a sexual relationship). Derrida, *Of Grammatology*..., 150, 155.

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 154-156.

⁴² The trace and the supplement bear a number of similarities. As Spivak notes in her translator's preface to *Of Grammatology*, "The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent. This other is of course never to be found in its full being. As even such empirical events as answering a child's question or consulting the dictionary proclaim, one sign leads to another and so on indefinitely." Spivak, "Translator's Preface," xvii.

⁴³ Norris, 118.

to momentarily stave off the usual methodological assumption/gaze that the relationship between different types of registers of evidence is supplementary; that official academic discourse can exist without the superficial and it is therefore closer to the truth, and not vice versa. The cause of ire then for many who read Zizek critically is his heavy reliance on evidence that shouldn't count as evidence, and the use of such non-academic texts to overpower or interpret more nuanced academic texts. In other words, should you strip away all the movies, jokes, stories, and pop culture references from a typical Zizek book or article, you might end up with a solid academic argument. But, as with all Zizek's texts and as is the case of the methodology of this dissertation, the answer or the lesson to be learned is not one of a simple reversal. Indeed, Zizek does not privilege the superficial and the pop cultural over the dense academic texts he invokes. He instead forces them to engage in unpredictable and contentious ways, moving back and forth between registers and evidence.

Thus Zizek's methodology attempts to learn the lesson of the aporia that Derrida notes ends all deconstructive efforts – i.e. that the inversion of a violent or dominant binary does not solve it.⁴⁴ Should a binary privilege one end over the other, to reverse them does not get rid of the relationship of violence, nor does it automatically result in justice, harmony or balance.⁴⁵ Deconstruction after all is not meant to be a solution, but only a way of looking at things.⁴⁶ Although he does not admit to this element in his work, Zizek nonetheless embodies it in the exuberant and often quick fire willingness to invoke

⁴⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, (Cambridge, Harvard, 1999). *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, (London, Routledge, 2001).

⁴⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 280.

⁴⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Sarah Harasym (ed.), (New York, Routledge, 1990), 133.

both ends of the evidentiary spectrum, moving back and forth between high and low, surface and depth, to use the most minute pop culture reference to interpret a dense academic passage. Žižek's methodology, then, is a dialectical movement that is not arbitrary, but always follows the thread of some social/political structure or metaphor, of which pieces can be found in all manner of evidence. Thus, in this dissertation, the movement I attempt to draw out is between formal and informal forms of evidence, or between the official and obscene.

5. The Details of Empire

Another theoretical impetus for my methodology comes from anthropologist Catherine Lutz's 2006 article "Empire is in the Details."⁴⁷ This article represents a continuation of the work she did with Jane Collins in *Reading National Geographic* and her ethnography of military communities in *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century*.⁴⁸ The intent of her article is to convince fellow

⁴⁷ One other reason for bringing in Catherine Lutz and her work is that she helped create one of the first critical academic interventions written about Micronesia and its relationship to the United States. Her edited volume *Micronesia as a Strategic Colony: The Impact of US Policy on Micronesian Health and Culture*, represented a clear academic critique of American policy in the Micronesian region, and the first references to it as a form of colonialism. Up until that point, American academic engagement with the islands had been anthropological only and thus sometimes lamented how the cultures of the people in the island may be lost by their interaction with the United States, but it never made the connection to the strategic importance of the island and what the United States was gaining through this colonial relationship. Catherine Lutz, *Micronesia as a Strategic Colony: The Impact of US Policy on Micronesian Health and Culture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Cultural Survival Occasional Paper No. 12., 1984).

⁴⁸ During an April 2009 trip to Guam, Catherine Lutz gave several presentations around the island, to scholarly, community and political audiences, as to what Guam might learn from her research on the impacts of militarization on communities around military bases in the United States. Her presentations were particularly important in light of the huge military increases which will be brought to Guam by the United States by 2014. Her research revealed the less than positive aspects of increased militarization, damage to local economies, environments, but also discussed one facet which is often missed, even in the discourse of those such as myself, who might be critical of increased militarization, namely the damage that is done to local political vitality. According to Lutz, communities around bases carry the risk of increased political apathy and an assimilation of military values as their own. The potent image of the United States military

anthropologists and ethnographers as to the importance of inserting their particular methodological foci into the writing and reading of “empire,” in the hopes of disrupting the hold of more abstract, formal and massive macroscopic political interpretations that have dominated the idea in both conservative and progressive circles:

In this article, I argue the necessity for ethnographies of empire in the same terms used to valorize anthropological approaches to any human practice: The discipline’s standard tropes of person-centered, contextualized understanding remain as important as ever in a world in which thought continues to be deformed by reification, individualization, and commodification. Such ethnographies can rescue the understanding of empire from the celebratory, sensational, and antisociological approaches of popular culture and provide nuance and correction for the world-systemic abstractions or elite political particularities that make up much recent theorizing on U.S. imperialism. Ethnographic work, like the social history that has already been prolifically focused on past imperialisms, can also help to question the singular thingness that the term empire suggests by identifying the many fissures, contradictions, historical particularities, and shifts in imperial processes.⁴⁹

Her methodological argument, which she then reinforces through preliminary research on United States imperial/military projects underway in the Philippines and Pacific islands such as Guam, is that *the details of Empire* are not just a supplement to that elite-emphasized, top down approach to viewing Empire, but rather a necessary part of both seeing a clear picture of its scope and impact, and more importantly of preparing the ground for critiques and resistance.

What we can trace, as ethnographers, is how people and groups come to grips with empire and how ideological change might happen.

as a liberating and democracy defending force, which also happens to be rich and sow riches wherever it sets up camp, intersects with the values that the military instills in those in its ranks, most notably unquestioning respect for authority. Similarly, heavy militarization in community tends to actually depress their economies, rather than stimulate them. The reason Lutz argues is because local governments, rather than seek their own economic plans and sustainability, tend to place a higher and more secure value on money which is deemed to come from the military. Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ Lutz, “Details of Empire,”

Anthropologists have long known a great deal about how empire changes the lives of those who are directly subjected to imperial power. But how does empire change the practice of everyday life within the empire? How do people make sense of this empire and how do they move from one view of the meaning and impact of war, empire, and militarization to another view, including from one ambivalence to another? How does the imperial relationship change with mobilization of popular forces?⁵⁰

This sort of methodological approach is not just about bringing attention to Empire's "vicissitudes on the ground, where people live—and die—for empire's sake," but also an issue of revealing the fragility of Empire, the roles that these details, which encompass individuals, movements, moments, events and ideas, play in resisting and countering Empire's influence or merely revealing its instability or inconsistency.⁵¹ To suggest that my methodology will take seriously the idea that "Empire is in the details," means that I will attempt to push against discursive tendencies that seek to subsume, swallow up and neutralize, ill-fitting and excessive fragments of the universal, such as Guam. In her article Lutz, appeals to other scholars for whom ethnography is their method of choice, to theorize the small, local, personal details that they encounter across Asia and the Pacific, not as supplementary, exceptional pieces which float on the fringes of Empire, but rather as elements that play central roles in both *its constitution and contestation*. But obviously this sort of call is not limited to ethnographers, but for any who are interested in productive critiques of militarization and empire in the Pacific.⁵² For ultimately what this sort of intervention can help accomplish is making "the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 607.

⁵¹ Ibid., 594.

⁵² Melanie McAlister's text *Epic Encounters* represents a similar intervention that inspired my methodology for this dissertation. In her book, she discusses different types of relationships between popular culture in the United States and American foreign policy in the 20th century in relation to the Middle East. She shows very well how certain cultural forms end up influencing and enabling national policies and determining a nation's relationship to the rest of the world. She does not establish a casual

human and material face and frailties of imperialism more visible, and in doing so to make challenges to it more likely.”⁵³ As a result the many “dilemmas, contradictions and vulnerability of empire” become visible, what was once invincible looking, “looks less invincible” now.⁵⁴

6. “State-Like Treatment”

I had the honor of attending the 2008 Democratic National Convention as the blogger from Guam.⁵⁵ As a member of the press, with full access to Democratic politicians and delegates, I decided that my angle for reporting on the convention would be to talk about United States Federal-Territorial relations, from the perspective of those who had traveled from Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa as delegates and those who had been elected to represent these territories as non-voting delegates to the US Congress. I will return to these experiences in more detail in my conclusion to this dissertation, but for now I’d like to talk about a particular facet of my research there, which deals with the distinction of obscenity and formality in terms of a place like Guam.

My questions to the territorial delegates at the Democratic National Convention revolved around what their experiences were like, coming to nominate a candidate that

relationship between institutions, actors, governments and so on, but rather shows how in certain moments the cultural and the political converge and influence each other. I’m not undertaking the same project, but invoking a similar methodological project, namely that things which are considered to be mundane, insignificant or “merely” something, both effect the more formal structure of the world, or can help us make sense of them. But whereas McAlister uses those forms to talk about how they influence national policies, I am using the evidence to reveal the structure or make clear the political relationship between the United States and Guam. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2005).

⁵³ Lutz, 594.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 607.

⁵⁵ “Guam Blogger Joins Democrat Convention,” *Marianas Variety*, 25 August 2008.

they cannot vote for; how did they interpret the “colonial” treatment that they receive from the United States; and lastly, for the members of Congress, what was it like being a non-voting member of a voting legislative body? These interviews, when combined with others that I have done with former non-voting delegates from Congress and their staff members, together create an interesting portrait of what the relationships between non-voting delegates and their voting comrades are, as well as the relationship between the United States and Guam.

I was fortunate enough to be able to interview the four Democratic non-voting delegates – Congresswoman Donna Christensen from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton from Washington D.C, Congressman Eni Faleomavaega from American Samoa, and Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo from Guam.⁵⁶ I asked the three from America’s insular empire, or off-shore territories, what was it like having to represent “territories,” what kind of frustrations this brought to their lives?⁵⁷ Did they often find themselves on the losing end of issues because of their lack of power? In talking to both them and their delegates/constituents, I used the image of the

⁵⁶ Although Puerto Rico boasted a much larger delegation than all the other territories combined, their non-voting delegate as of 2008 (or Resident Commissioner) was Luis Fortuño, a Republican.

⁵⁷ Although each of the territories are similar in some ways, Puerto Rico and Washington D.C. are distinct from all the rest due to their size, their perceived political power which all signify them in some way as being much closer to the United States. In the case of Washington D.C. this is particularly so since it is a territory which hosts the geographic and metaphorical center of American political power and is also the only territory which currently pays Federal income taxes. Although all people from the territories made similar inferences to their situation being colonial, or them being outside of the proper circle of American belonging, these differences in attitudes based on whether they are close to the source of American power, whether in terms of geography, the payment of Federal income taxes, or a large enough population to provide the aura of voting power, thus resulted in their narratives being different. Those who came from these close sites asserted that they belonged there, and in the case of Washington D.C. that they had damn well better be heard, in the words of their delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton. Those who came from “far away” tended to frame their experiences from in terms of their being grateful to be there, to be allowed to participate in some way.

American flag, with its 50 stars representing 50 states.⁵⁸ What was it like to be a part of that flag, but have no star? No clear indication of where you are in this nation?

All three refused to admit to any real difficulty in their jobs. Congresswoman Christensen noted that sometimes things can be frustrating, but usually their jobs aren't too tough.⁵⁹ That people infuse a lot more difficulty and trauma into their lives than there really is. There was one phrase in particular that she used to articulate her place in the Federal Government, and to also provide a sort of emotional metaphor to those she represents, *state-like treatment* – that despite the colonial status, you might as well be a state, it doesn't prevent you from being treated just like anyone else.⁶⁰ As the chair of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Congresswoman Christensen traveled to Guam in 2007, during which she held public hearings on the impact that the transfer of 8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa would have on the island.⁶¹ In response to questions and criticism about the Department of Defense not being more transparent about its intentions, or in responding to the issue that the Federal Government had not “included” Guam in the process of negotiations over this transfer, the Congresswoman had invoked this idea of “state-like treatment” then as well. The idea being that although

⁵⁸ For instance, since the excitement of most present was the possibility of helping get Senator Barack Obama elected as the first African American President of the United States, I often used a passage from his book *The Audacity of Hope* in order to establish that metaphorical flag. In the passage Obama is recalling his trip from his home in Washington D.C. to his office in the US Senate. Along the way he passes the flags of each of the 50 states of America's great union. There is no mention as to whether or not he passes by the flags of the territories as well. Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, (New York, Random House, 2006).

⁵⁹ Representative Donna Christensen, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver Colorado, 27 August 2008.

⁶⁰ Therese Hart, “U.S. Senators asked to help insular areas,” *The Marianas Variety*, 25 November 2008.

⁶¹ Sabrina Salas Matanane, “Townhall meeting featured high emotions,” *KUAM News*, 17 August 2007. Gaynor Dumat-ol Daleno, “Residents speak on buildup: Townhall meeting presents local views to U.S. Congress,” *The Pacific Daily News*, 17 August 2007.

this buildup might feel like mistreatment or exploitation, there is very little difference between you and any other states that might undergo a similar buildup.⁶² You have a delegate, you have a voice in Congress, and so you will receive “state-like treatment” from the Federal Government and the military.⁶³ As Congressman Faleomavaega put it, “You’re just like everyone else, except for that vote.”⁶⁴

“State-like treatment” activates a sort of shield, a hegemonic quilting point, a conservative sinthome in the same vein as “foreign in a domestic sense” or “unincorporated territory” do.⁶⁵ But unlike the latter two which are meant to be more descriptive, state-like treatment is a cover that emerges with a much more neutralizing intent. It is meant to cover over the colonial difference, meant to strip that difference of its “coloniality,” to take out the sting, the trauma, the possibility for resistance or discontent.⁶⁶ It is also meant to colonize the entirety of the relationship and fill in the gaps and holes, with warm cordial feelings, or feelings of almost Americanness. The intended result is that the place of Guam in relation to America be perceived as safe,

⁶² *Maga’haga*, Youtube Documentary, dir. Victoria Leon Guerrero, duration 16 mins, 2008. Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW5aFuW5MDM>. Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3e1jM0fKrE>. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

⁶³ Christensen, *Interview with Author*.

⁶⁴ Representative Eni Faleomavaega, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver Colorado, 27 August 2008.

⁶⁵ *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion and the Constitution*, Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (eds.), (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2001).

⁶⁶ In my article “, ‘The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier: Tracing the Militarization of Desire in Guam, USA’” I discuss how the exceptionality of Chamorros, the way they are excluded from the United States, can be transformed into a form of celebration of the exceptional quality of the Americanness that Chamorros embody. Or to put it in another way, how by being less than American and enthusiastically accepting that liminal space, they actually end up being *more American*, than the real Americans. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier: Tracing the Militarization of Desire in Guam, USA,” *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Lujan Camacho (eds.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

secure, equal, and respected, even when it is not a full member, even when it doesn't have that mark on the flag to dictate a secure site for its belonging.⁶⁷

Within the context of Federal-Territorial relations, and those in Congress who represent the powers that shape and guard them, if we look at the formal side of things, then this version of reality seems very consistent. Guam is included in America in so many ways. Its status as American territory receives recognition not only as “the tip of the spear” but also in less violent ways, through stamps, quarters, political primaries and its inclusion in Federal programs such as welfare, food stamps. Although there is no formal appearance of the term “state-like treatment” anywhere – i.e. it was not brought into existence through a Congressional resolution or Executive mandate - it nonetheless interacts with more formal laws and governmental inclusion to provide a less- or non-colonial metaphor for what ties Guam and the United States together, and for what that relationship signifies. But, if we take the analysis to what lies at the edges of the speech of these non-voting delegates, and move into the minute details that sometimes feel as if they are obscene, almost laughable moments, we get a very different image.

During my interview with Guam's Congresswoman Bordallo, she seemed the least inclined to voice any sort of frustration with her position in the United States Congress. Instead, she immediately asserted herself as an optimist who had a fantastic job!⁶⁸ During the interview she spoke mainly of her legislative accomplishments, the

⁶⁷ Vivian Dames, *Rethinking the Circle of Belonging: American Citizenship and the Chamorros of Guam*. Ph.D. Dissertation. (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000.)

⁶⁸ Representative Madeleine Bordallo, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver Colorado, 27 August 2008.

different monies or programs she had been able to secure for Guam.⁶⁹ Curiously, of all her achievements in Congress, the one she centralized or highlighted most of all was not her most lucrative or high-profile victory, but rather one which, as she herself admitted, was all about defining Guam as a part of America. The centerpiece of her accomplishments was her working to get Guam (along with other territories) included into the State-quarter and State-stamp programs, whereby each state has been able to design and have manufactured a stamp and a quarter to represent themselves, which are then put into full nation-wide circulation.⁷⁰

Going alone is not going to get us anywhere. But sticking together (territorial delegates) gets things done. Sometimes we get bogged down, but we're not unique. They are cutting things down everywhere. There are some members who are very strong on no more pork, and so even they are losing pet projects. Somebody's bridge, somebody's road. I don't think they are being unfair to the territories...A case in point is the stamp and

⁶⁹ After speaking to several people who work on "the Hill," about what Guam means at the US Congress, or what it is perceived as, most if not all, admitted to knowing Guam primarily through "parties." Congresswoman Bordallo hosts yearly Liberation Day parties at the Congress, which are heavily attended by Senators, Congresspeople and their employees. As one former intern for Congresswoman Bordallo told me, each year's party is highly anticipated because of the good food and cultural flavor of the event.

⁷⁰ The State Quarter program was enacted in 1997 by the US Congress, with the first round of quarters minted in 1999. The quarters were minted in chronological order based on the state's admission to the union, with designs from each state, displaying icons or slogans of their regional pride. In 2007, after attempts were made in the five previous sessions of Congress failed, a bill including six territories of the United States in the State Quarter program passed through both house of Congress and was signed by the President. In contrast to the state quarters, these territorial or non-state quarters did not include the dates of their "attachment" to the United States. Sabrina Salas Mantanane, "New Guam Quarter Premieres on June 4," *KUAM News*, 27 May 2009. Lindsay Wertenberger and Meredith Ponder, "'State Quarters' to Cover D.C., 5 U.S. Territories," *The Georgetown Independent*, 30 January 2008. The state stamp reference deals with the inclusion of Guam in Federal stamp programs. On October 5, 2001, the United States Postal Service announced that a series of stamps titled "Greetings from America" would be made public starting April of the following year. These stamps were made to showcase the 50 states of America and help boost the economy after attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. a month earlier. Guam and the other territories were left out of both programs. Congressman Robert Underwood responded that this omission was "a direct slap in the face at a time when we are trying to show national unity." In a *Pacific Daily News* article on the exclusion, a resident of Guam was quoted decrying that "Guam is a part of the U.S....We can't let them just forget us." In the time since, under Congresswoman Bordallo Guam received a 90 cent prestige stamp in 2007 that featured a beautiful photograph of Hagatña Bay near sunset. Guam and other territories were also included in 2008 in a series titled "Flags of our Nation." Connor Murphy, "Insular areas left out of new stamp series," *The Pacific Daily News*, 5 October 2001. William B. Martin, "USPS unveils Guam Flags of our Nation Stamp," *The Pacific Daily News*, 3 September 2008.

quarters program. We worked for years on getting Guam included and with the help of my predecessor and the other territorial delegates we were able to succeed and my aren't those stamps beautiful. The quarter will be coming soon and all of that hard work is worth it when we see what it looks like and when we see our quarter along with everyone else's.⁷¹

On the surface this might seem like nothing; just a representative doing her job, boasting of the job she's done for her constituents in getting laws passed. But if we look closely and draw out what she is actually saying, where she positions herself within the system, and how she articulates herself in relation to Congress, a much more different image is revealed.

Part of the argument made by Congresswoman Bordallo is that she and her constituents are part of America and that this quarter is an important emblem of that belonging, of that recognition. But the secureness and clarity of that link is belied first and most basically *in the simple need for that link to be recognized*.⁷² In other words, if the Americanness of Guam and her constituents were that secure, the quarter would be mundane, a point of regional pride, but certainly not something to be brandished as proof of proper Americanness.⁷³ Second, the security of that link is belied by the amount of work that was required to secure it. The fact that it took two non-voting delegates, close to a decade to ensure Guam's inclusion in a "state-quarter program" could be attributed to simple shambling bureaucracy, but it also speaks to a clearer, more realistic assessment

⁷¹ Bordallo, *Interview with Author*...

⁷² Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁷³ It would not be considered something worth celebrating as proving Americanness or belonging, it would not be considered to be exceptional in that sense, but merely part of your existence as a state. Or in another way, the stamps or the quarters would not be used to differentiate you as something inside or outside of the sovereign borders of the nation, but rather different or unique within the nation in contrast to other states. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Todu Dipende gi Hafa Ta Hahasso: Chamorros on Guam and 9/11," *Galaide*, Guam Communications Network, (2:1), 2003.

of the relationship between Guam and the United States.⁷⁴ An image wherein Guam's position/relationship is not one of being placed in a loving circle of "sort of belonging" within the United States so that all manner of inclusion is easy to obtain. But rather a relationship where the position is much more ambiguous, where inclusion and exclusion constantly take place, so that a change in Guam's positionality, one way or the other, can be incredibly difficult to obtain.

The lives of those who frequent the halls of American power are full of moments that cry out in such uncomfortable, excessive detail, with some taking a more potent and visceral form than others. The form of these moments however is rarely formal; it does not come from "official" sources, and is not articulated in such a way as to capture the "true" nature of things, but emerges as an aside, an accident, a mistake, a joke, a laugh. But in contrast to the formal, which is meant to reproduce hegemonic mantras such as "state-like treatment," these obscene remarks, reveal the limits, the frailties and the hypocrisies of both the formal and the slogans that through which it is constituted. "State-like treatment" is meant to leave no gaps, no holes in the relationship between Guam and the United States; it attempts to create an aura of equality and inclusion.⁷⁵ If we direct our attention to the obscene dimension however, and the traces that we find there, we can rid ourselves of the need to assert an equality or just exchange between these two entities and

⁷⁴ The vagueness in the qualifier of how much time it took to get Guam included is derived from the various points at which one can identify inclusion or exclusion. Does this issue start in 1997 when the program is announced, or in 1999 when the first quarters are minted. And furthermore does it end in 2007 when the bill mandating that territorial quarters be made is passed or rather in 2009 when the quarters are actually minted?

⁷⁵ "State-like treatment" functions in a similar way to concepts like inclusion or multiculturalism., it is meant to act as a cover through which a spectacle of a grand change can be admired and referenced to, without any fundamental change in power relations taking place. Thus, the centrality or unmarked aura of a particular group within that whole can always be reinvigorated as the power which showed the benevolence and allowed the inclusion to take place. Andrea Smith, "Beyond the Politics of Inclusion: Violence Against Women of Colors and Human Rights," *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, (4:2), 2004, 120-124.

instead assume an unequal, yet possibly productive, relationship. For example, what does it mean if you are not part of the whole, that your presence or absence can never be taken for granted, but always has to be asserted? And that in each instance, whether you are included or excluded, the gesture is always constituted as an act of benevolence or of violence?⁷⁶

Such is the case in a story recounted to me by a staffer to former Guam Congressman Robert Underwood. In one exchange with a voting member of Congress, this staffer was asking for support on a bill which would affect Guam, but over which the delegate from Guam had no ability to vote. The voting representative upon hearing this request responded quizzically, “Didn’t we give you guys your independence?”⁷⁷ As this frustrated staffer told me, comments of this nature are commonplace at the Federal level.⁷⁸ Remarks such as this aren’t supposed to be formal or official. They aren’t meant to represent the way Guam exists in relation to the United States, *the stamps and the quarters are supposed to do that*. Yet these sorts of obscene remarks make clear, what the official cannot. They bring out an aspect of the structure that the existence of the formal denies or obscures. But when dealing with exceptional sites, one must rely upon these sorts of obscene evidence, in order to avoid simply reproducing the same liminality or banality associated with the exceptional.

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁷⁷ Fulanu. *Interview with author*. Padrino’s. I Sengsong Chamorro, Hagatna, Guam. 11 August 2004.

⁷⁸ Exchanges such as this are frustratingly common. In fact according to one longtime Democratic Party member from Guam, at every single convention he attends at least one person (but usually more) will ask him if Guam is part of Hawai’i. His assessment was correct again in 2008, when at the Democratic National Convention the Guam delegation was constantly asked if they were, or assumed to be, part of Hawai’i.

7. *The Personal Evidence from This Dissertation*

In 1994, during a press conference organized by the Christian Science Monitor News Service to cover an upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, two of Bill Clinton's advisors were asked a simple question about Guam.⁷⁹ As APEC was designed to be not a cooperative of nations but of economies, a reporter from Gannet, which owns *The Pacific Daily News* on Guam, asked whether or not it was possible for Guam to join this organization. As Ronald Stade notes in his book *Pacific Passages: World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, "the response to the question was a round of laughter."⁸⁰ The reporter attempted to reformat and explain his question, noting that other "colonies" such as Hong Kong were allowed to join, and Guam's economy and its population either exceeds or is equal to a number of APEC's existing members. This question was met by Anthony Lake, assistant to the president for national security affairs, and Robert Rubin, assistant to the president for economic policy, with more laughter,

⁷⁹ As of January 2009, the mission and influence of APEC was as follows from the cooperation's website:

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, is the premier forum for facilitating economic growth, cooperation, trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region. APEC is the only inter governmental grouping in the world operating on the basis of non-binding commitments, open dialogue and equal respect for the views of all participants. Unlike the WTO or other multilateral trade bodies, APEC has no treaty obligations required of its participants. Decisions made within APEC are reached by consensus and commitments are undertaken on a voluntary basis. APEC has 21 members - referred to as "Member Economies" - which account for approximately 40.5% of the world's population, approximately 54.2% of world GDP and about 43.7%² of world trade." APEC, *About APEC*, http://www.apec.org/apec/about_apec.html Site accessed 27 May 2009.

⁸⁰ Ronald Stade, *Pacific Passages, World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, (Stockholm, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1998), 48-49.

giggles and smiles, and the final formal answer: “I guess I could say that the negotiations have not gotten to that point.”⁸¹

In this moment, the patriotic, colonial and wishful fictions that bind Guam and the United States together through touching metaphors of willing partners, patriotic brothers, uncles to nephews, father to son, etc. all fall away. There are a number of formal answers which could have covered over this obscenity, substituted this revelation: Guam is too small, Guam is part of the United States, Guam is not mature enough, Guam is not economically developed enough, etc. Instead, the prospect of Guam being recognized as a partner among sovereign nations produces for those who represent its colonizer, *laughter*. As then-Governor of Guam, Joseph Ada, wrote in his letter of outrage to Bill Clinton, “The response was not an explanation, not a U.S. position, but laughter.”⁸² Protests were later organized outside the gates to military facilities on Guam, one of which indicated “Guam We’re No Joke!” and “Chamorros We’re No Joke!”⁸³

What can we learn from this “joke?” Namely, that when America is invoked it might or might not include Guam and other ambiguous sites. This is the lesson of *The Insular Cases*, that the relationship between America and its territories is never an automatic one, but always an exceptional one. That everyway in which Guam is included or excluded is not part of a prescribed, existing system, but is a field in which everyday, the most mundane choices, at multiple levels and at multiple moments, create the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Quoted from Stadel, Joseph Ada, *Letter to The President of the United States of America Bill Clinton*, 14 November 1994.

⁸³ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “The Rubin Lake Incident,” *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2007/03/rubin-lake-incident.html>, 13 March 2007. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

political effects that determine where Guam is located.⁸⁴ For instance, in the universe of that APEC press conference, it could literally be said that Guam had no place or a non-place until it was mentioned. There were large geographic or imagined bodies which were being invoked and tossed around in cavalier fashion, all of whom Guam is regularly associated with or attached to, but even those that represented these bodies were ultimately at a loss in articulating Guam's position.

Firstly, this relationship and this example may help explain why so much of the evidence in this dissertation could be considered "personal," subjective or informal, built primarily on day-to-day exchanges or interactions, emails, and conversations. Since Guam is not formally a part of the United States in so many ways, one can never truly be certain if it is being discussed or invoked, *unless it is mentioned*. An extra gesture is always required not only to simply include Guam, but even to inquire whether it is being included in the first place. When I attend conferences organized around the disciplinary assumptions of American Studies, Ethnic Studies, or Pacific Studies, I am usually "Guam" at those meetings. This does not imply that I embody all of Guam, but rather I am the force which provides a check as to whether or not Guam is an existing part of the conversation, or something which has to be added on or included.⁸⁵ Given the exceptional

⁸⁴ This is a key point in understanding Guam's relationship to the United States, which will be drawn out in different ways in the remaining chapters. It is not a matter of inclusion or exclusion, inside or outside, but rather where is Guam positioned at a given moment and what does it produce in that positioning?

⁸⁵ I manage, either on my own or as part of a collective more than a dozen websites or blogs on the internet as of 2009. It is through these portals that I often operate as a magnet for traces of Guam's sovereignty. This is particularly so because of the lack of content on the internet which addresses specifically Guam and American colonialism and Chamorro/Guam decolonization. Because of this, internet searches on these topics invariably lead to one of my websites. As a result I often receive inquiries from people who are interested in these issues (decolonization, political status, sovereignty), are supportive of them and are interested in learning more. On the other hand, I also receive regular "hate mail" from

status of Guam, the combination of its invisibility and banality, it would perhaps be fair to say that, without my presence, Guam would not be present either.⁸⁶ The position of the non-voting delegate in the United States Congress, then, is not so much different than my own in this dissertation.⁸⁷ The non-voting delegate's fundamental purpose is to remind the United States, and the machinery of its government, that Guam is a part of the United States, and that it (the United States) controls its destiny.⁸⁸ Similarly, as an academic and an activist, I often work in circles where knowledge of Guam is marginal, and thus I embody Guam as being a reminder of it, and also by being a sort of magnet for the only evidence that can truly be said to be of Guam. While the formal network of knowledge that charges me with those positions may have little, if anything, to do with Guam, the obscene and ordinary interactions which take place have everything to do with Guam, and communicate far more about its status or non-status than anything formal.⁸⁹

Chamorros, non-Chamorros who see my discussions on these issues as being anti-American, stupid and pointless.

⁸⁶ For instance, when I attend talks or panel presentations given by people I know or who know I am present, and they are articulating things such as US imperialism, US empire, US militarism, my presence there generally leads them to mention Guam in ways they would not have otherwise. This is not at all something unique to Guam, but something that I often speak of with people from other territories or less visible sites. If we had not been at that meeting, there would have likely been no chance that the site we are researching or know to come from would have been included in the conversation.

⁸⁷ More on this in Chapter 8.

⁸⁸ During my interview with Congresswoman Christensen she laughed as she told me of one attempt by her then colleague Congressman Robert Underwood, in order to at least overcome the colonial gap between the territories, at least in terms of knowledge and policy, by passing a bill with what she referred to as a "long and silly title." "[Robert Underwood] had a bill that he introduced saying "Don't Forget About the Territories Whenever You're Doing Anything,"...it was some name like that. A lot of it is reminding them that the territories exist. But also to tell them about the unique challenges that we have, so legislation isn't just automatically applied to us if it can be hurtful, or that it be automatically applied to us if it can be helpful." Christensen, *Interview With Author*.

⁸⁹ It could be said that without that reporter's question at the APEC then we still wouldn't know today whether or not Guam is included in that consortium. The volumes of discourse created on it would be useless. But since it was asked, the response itself, the laughter can help us analyze all the rest of the discourse created or centered around this. As of January 2009, despite the continuing qualifier that APEC is indeed made up of "member economies" and not "member states," Guam's presence in the cooperative is still unclear. Although the United States is named explicitly as a member, there is no place on the website

Furthermore, the formal mentions of Guam lead us always to the margins. To analyze Guam based on its place in those dominant texts of what makes America, or even what constitutes “American evils,” is to reproduce colonial cartographies and reduce Guam to something small, even you are attempting to centralize it in your analysis.⁹⁰

Secondly, the question of whether or not Guam is included or excluded doesn’t address the political relationship in question; it misses the point of what an instance like the Rubin-Lake Affairs reveals. A statement suggesting that Guam is part of APEC, or that it isn’t/cannot be, naturalizes the exceptional relations between Guam and the United States (and also between Guam and the Pacific and Asia), as one of friendly inclusion or icy exclusion. The laughter however is a completely different story, so long as it is not dismissed as a minute detail, a mistake, or an incidental act. I’m sure someone in the Clinton Administration had the answer as to where Guam’s official place in APEC is, but what is more revealing in terms of Guam’s relationship to the United States, the official response from APEC or the unofficial response from Lake and Rubin? The joke paints the field in a very different way. It reveals an existing, albeit previously imperceptible, (banal) situation as teeming with power and sovereignty. For the joke makes clear the

which makes clear this issue. Even an email inquiry sent by me to info@apcc.org produced no response or clarification.

⁹⁰ A question was posed to me during the writing of this dissertation, “Could someone else do this project?” The impetus for this question came from the fact that so much of the evidence is of a personal nature, and so much of it only makes sense when it is articulated by someone can authentically make sense of it. So for instance, could only a Chamorro activist like myself do this project, and attempt this sort of methodology, or could someone else as well? If not, then this dissertation is limited or problematic because its rooted in me as an authentic knower and speaker of Guam and determiner of its discourse, not anything that could be considered objective. I didn’t agree with this assessment, although I can understand how this dissertation can be viewed that way. In the way I articulate my methodology and my points, I have done things the hard way, by seeking to centralize Guam, rather than existing academic conversations. So instead of writing five pages about my methodology which cites five important people upon who this is built, I instead seek to demonstrate what I am talking about, which ends up taking far more time and seems to rely more on an interpretation of the anecdotes I provide. This combined with my writing style, gives the appearance that it is me who is holding this dissertation together, and nothing else. As I said, I don’t agree with this assessment, but I understand how one can come to that judgment.

right/power of the speaker to determine what Guam is and, from that position, determine the significance or insignificance of Guam.

What this emphasis on the details helps reveal is a far more realistic portrait of the formal, the universal, the official as always penetrated with an obscene enjoyment or dimension that is brought out through exceptional figures, and is only enjoyed through the gaze of an outsider who does not fully comprehend what is happening. The obscenity is thus displaced onto the object, becoming associated with that particular exception, and the result is that the universal, the norm, the formal, remain untainted, unchallenged.⁹¹ In reality however – and this is the hope behind a methodology focused on the details of Empire, colonialism and other systems of oppression that inundate Guam – it is imperative that this commonsense interpretation be reversed, so that the exceptional figure is marked not by obscenity but rather as a figure that reveals the inconsistency, the cracks, always already present in the universal.

⁹¹ In Franz Kafka's text *The Trial* for instance when K. is surrounded by the obscene laughter and insanity of the court around him, we are lead to believe and assume that the obscenity of the court, or that which represents the law and the formal has emerged because of K's presence, because of his entrance into the scene. Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, (London: Continuum, 2006), 367.

CHAPTER 5: GUAM!

Island of Invisibility and Banality

“One stone tossed into an empty space, scarcely warrants a second thought.”

Edward Said¹

1. If Not Puerto Rico, Then Why Guam?

In the spring of 2007, plans were being made by *Famoksaiyan*, a Chamorro activist group dedicated to decolonization, and of which I am a part, to organize a panel on the militarization and decolonization Guam, for the first ever United States Social Forum, which was to take place that summer in Atlanta, Georgia.² One of the main organizers for the event was Michael Leon Guerrero, a Chamorro and a longtime social justice activist in the United States. Leon Guerrero was making a concerted effort to ensure that the Pacific and Pacific Islands be taken seriously as sites which needed attention and intervention by American antiwar, peace and social justice activists.³ *Famoksaiyan* was invited, and agreed to participate, forming a workshop titled “The Fire This Time: Life Under US Occupation.”⁴ Cognizant of the limited knowledge about

¹ Nadia W. Awad, “Target Practice in Gaza,” *The Palestinian Initiative for Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy*, <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=18207&CategoryId=3>, 19 November 2008. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

² I am a co-founder of the organization *Famoksaiyan*, whose name translates into “the place or time of nurturing” or “the time to paddle forward and move ahead.” The organization began first as a conference which took place on April 14-15, 2006 in San Diego, California and was titled *Famoksaiyan: Decolonizing Chamorro Histories, Identities and Futures*. Since that time, *Famoksaiyan* has organized or helped in organizing in numerous conferences and forums in the United States and in Guam, and organized numerous trips to the United Nations where Chamorros testified before the Fourth Committee on the status of Guam. As of the writing of this sentence *Famoksaiyan* is a loose network of like-minded Chamorros who work together on various projects and disseminate information dealing with militarism and decolonization in Guam. The organization’s blog can be found at <http://famoksaiyan.blogspot.com>, Site Accessed 20 November 2009.

³ Michael Leon Guerrero, *Email to Author*, 10 November 2006.

⁴ I did not help in the organizing of this session, this trip or the writing of their proposal.

Guam, and its invisibility to most of the United States and world and determined to address this head on, *Famoksaiyan* made the following explicit in its session proposal:

The Fire This Time event is the first of its kind to showcase Chamorros and the impacts of U.S. colonization on the island of Guam and how it ripples throughout the Chamorro diaspora nationally and internationally. Often times, Guam, the Micronesian region and its people are invisible to the public discourse about colonization. Our event adds a much needed dimension, voice and perspective from a current U.S colony to the development of strategies for the national and international struggle against colonization.⁵

The title of the session was drawn from the book *The Fire This Time: Life Under U.S. Occupation* by Julian Aguon that had been published the year before, and dealt with the current struggles of Chamorros against the militarization of their island.⁶ The work of both, Michael Leon Guerrero and Julian Aguon, will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Knowing that this lack of knowledge could be a serious obstacle just in terms of getting people to attend their session, the main organizer for the session, a Chamorro and longtime LGBT activist in San Francisco, California, made an effort to reach out to other sessions dealing with similar issues.⁷ Despite the hopeful Pacific emphasis, there were few other sessions dealing with militarization or decolonization in the Pacific. There were, however, more than half a dozen sessions that took on expanded notions of colonialism or decolonization, such as “Energy Colonialisms” by the Indigenous Environmental Network or “DECOLONIZATION/SELF-DETERMINATION FOR

⁵ The full session description and group information can be found on the United States Social Forum website at: <http://www.ussf2007.org/en/node/4144>. Site Accessed 13 May 2009.

⁶ Julian Aguon, *The Fire This Time: Life Under US Occupation*, (Tokyo, blue ocean press, 2005).

⁷ LGBT strands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

PUERTO RICO” organized by the Puerto Rican Alliance of Los Angeles.⁸ One session in particular, proposed by an organization called The Green Institute and titled “Colonialism in the United States,” intrigued this organizer, who contacted the organization to inquire if they might be interested in working together with *Famoksaiyan*. According to its website, the Green Institute was founded in 1993 by community activists in order to provide a “positive vision and solutions-orientated response to a proposed garbage transfer station in South Minneapolis.”⁹ In the years since, it has grown to become “one of the state’s leading non-profit innovators developing tangible solutions that improve the environment and communities.”¹⁰ The intent of the session was to create in those who participated “a deeper understanding of the many forms that colonialism takes within the United States” and in general “raising additional awareness of in-country colonialism in the U.S.”¹¹

Glancing over the list of proposed speakers, it appeared that the organization was taking the concept of colonialism both literally, in a very formal sense, but also in a much more metaphorical sense, as a concept that addressed unequal power relations. The session consisted of a panel of speakers each of whom brought with them “experience with a form of colonialism.” The speakers ranged from Elaine Brown, former chair of the Black Panther Party, to John Gloster, a former mayoral candidate to Washington D.C., and Audrey Thayer, a social justice activist with the Bemidji Tribe in Northern

⁸ The session descriptions for these panels can be found at: Energy Colonialisms: <http://www.ussf2007.org/en/node/970>. DE/COLONIZATION/SELF-DETERMINATION: <http://www.ussf2007.org/en/node/1695>. Sites Accessed 11 May 2009.

⁹ The Green Institute, *The Green Institute Main Page*, <http://www.greeninstitute.org/index.htm>, Site Accessed 11 May 2009.

¹⁰ The Green Institute, *History: Implementing Practical Solutions since 1993: A Brief History of the Green Institute*, <http://www.greeninstitute.org/about/history.htm>, Site Accessed 11 May 2009.

¹¹ The full session and organization description can be found at <http://www.ussf2007.org/en/node/677>. Site Accessed, 13 May 2009.

Minnesota.¹² The panel was moderated by a board member for the Green Institute, Anita Rios, whose background included experience as a labor organizer in migrant farm worker communities. Taking note of this diversity of colonialisms, the organizer for the *Famoksaiyan* panel suggested that they work together somehow, and that perhaps a member of *Famoksaiyan* might join Green Institute's discussion, to address not merely colonialism in Guam, but also militarization as a form of colonialism. This suggestion, however, was rebuffed in a peculiar way; rejected through the specter of another, larger site of colonialism. The response the *Famoksaiyan* organizer received was "Look, Puerto Rico is a colony, and we haven't asked Puerto Ricans to be a part of this. Why should we ask Guam?"¹³

I begin with this interaction because it demonstrates, most clearly, how the smallness, the political banality, and, most likely, the physical distance and foreignness of Guam, all congeal together to shroud the island in invisibility, so that the situation described above, which would be laughable if it were not so common, and is in fact tragic. A U.S. colony is rejected "recognition" by, or "inclusion" into, a discussion on U.S. colonialism, not on the basis of some nuanced intellectual objections, but rather because its exclusion is justifiable through the exclusion of a larger space that presumably bears more theoretical weight in discussions of U.S. colonialism.¹⁴ For those from small, marginal territories, such as Guam, that are devoid of power or authenticity,

¹² The full description of John Gloster's contribution to the panel was as follows: "John Gloster was an African-American Mayoral candidate in Washington, DC in 1998 for the Statehood Party, will speak about the colonial status of Washington, DC, and why limited voting rights in Congress do not address this colonial status." Having Guam on the panel could have been very productive in terms of helping bring into the discussion that colonialism is not an issue of representation or recognition and is not something that can be solved through a vote alone. This issue however is not simply for those who are territorial colonies, but even those who are trapped in structural inequitable and naturalized relations.

¹³ Fulana, *Telephone Communication*, 12 May 2007.

¹⁴ Trace moments such as this can often be excused as not meaning anything or simply being an ephemeral instance where someone said what they didn't mean and so on.

the issue of exclusion, or the demand for self-explanation/articulation, extends beyond a mere lack of knowledge. The question of “Why Guam?” operates, instead, as an oppressive gatekeeper, the rules for entrance or acceptance for which are predicated on its very exclusion.¹⁵ Often times, this leaves little room, little recourse, to maneuver or articulate the specificities of one’s intervention.

The issue of relevance, then, is an excellent point through which I can build off the discussion so far and start the work of this dissertation and start to rework the discursive space between Guam and the United States and sovereignty. Or in other words, to start examining the productive aspects of Guam’s political status in relationship to America’s sovereignty. In this chapter I intend to explore the status of Guam as a colony, and as a key military base for the United States, to demonstrate that Guam is not just exceptional in some neutral political sense but, as the response from the social justice activist heading to the US Social Forum alludes to, there is some other, excess banality here as well.

2. *Guam as a Secret*

The flyer that *Famoksaiyan* produced to publicize its session at the U.S. Social Forum, implored people to attend the session in order to “learn about one of the United States’ well-kept secrets.”¹⁶ The flyer and the proposal for the *Famoksaiyan* panel imply

¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989), 181.

¹⁶ Excerpts from the flyer’s text are as follows: “The Indigenous Chamorros from Guam (Guahân) discuss the continued colonization of their island as the US cements its military presence in the Pacific region with plans to base a majority of its troops, bombers, nuclear submarines and other weapons of mass destruction in Guam.” Beneath this sentence is a quote from Vice President Dick Cheney’s visit to Guam in 2007, “By positioning forces on Guam, the United States can move quickly and effectively to protect our friends, to defend our interests, to bring relief in times of emergency, and to keep the sea lanes open to commerce and closed to terrorists...This island may be small, but it has tremendous importance to the

that Guam is generically secret, that it is invisible to the world and to the United States. Speaking, then, not just America or to the world in general, but more specifically to the social justice activists gathered at the US Social Forum, the positioning of Guam as a secret appears to be an appeal to ignorance. Like most sessions at the forum, the panel aimed to reach out to the audience, to inform them about something of which they had little or no knowledge, but should know about and act upon.¹⁷ Yet, in reality, Guam is hardly a secret; it is hardly something that the United States refuses to admit to “owning” or militarizing.¹⁸ It may be geographically distant from the United States, but that in no way implies that it is a secret base or some disavowed territory. The United States has no qualms about claiming Guam, and there is no secret that it is a key military base.

The secret that the flyer refers to, then, is a bit more complex; it is more than a reference to simply that which is not known. As one member of *Famoksaiyan*, in speaking about the difficulty in working with other social justice and peace movements, confided to me, “Our enemy isn’t ignorance; it’s that people just don’t care. It’s not that they don’t know, they don’t care even when they do know.”¹⁹ The articulation of Guam as a secret at the U.S. Social Forum, amongst thousands of already engaged, already

peace and security in the world.” In the background of the flyer is a set of four fighter planes flying off the coast of Guam.

¹⁷ One scholar activist who attended the US Social Forum articulated the space as being distinct then most “consciousness raising” events, since there is an assumption that everyone there is already part of a community, they don’t have to convince each other to be critical, but simply have to help fill in the holes in other people’s frameworks or thinking. This is of course a very optimistic assessment of the space, as being one in which people can come together and hone their existing tools.

¹⁸ The most explicit example of this comes from Ronald Stade’s text *Pacific Passages*, where he quotes an Air Force Commander who states the following, “People on Guam seem to forget that they are a possession, and not an equal partner...If California says that they want to do this, it is like my wife saying that she wants to move here or there: I’ll have to respect her wish and at least discuss it with her. If Guam says they want to do this or that, it is as if this cup here [he pointed at his coffee mug] expresses a wish: the answer will be, you belong to me and I can do with you as best I please.” Ronald Stade, *Pacific Passages, World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, (Stockholm, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1998), 192-194.

¹⁹ Martha Duenas Baum, *Telephone Communication*, 22 April 2008.

conscious activists, exceeds the idea that Guam is a place that has been kept secret from and moves instead into the idea that *Guam is a secret you keep from yourself*.²⁰ I have already discussed in the previous chapter how the “secret” nature of Guam in relationship to academia – meaning the lack of literature specific to Guam – will be overcome in this dissertation methodologically.²¹ But how does one respond productively when the object of one’s inquiry is a “secret” that the conversations you are engaged with refuse to confront?²²

It is through this particularity of the “secret” that I would like to answer the two main questions that I believe this dissertation must attend to; “Why Guam?” and “Why sovereignty?” Given that my dissertation deals with what sorts of power producing, and/or veiling, relationships exist between a tiny colony and its hulking superpower master, the more specific forms that these nagging questions take throughout this dissertation are: “Isn’t Guam too small for this analysis? And “Why Guam alone? Wouldn’t it be better to bring in some other larger sites?” The evidence through which I answer these questions, and also connect Guam to sovereignty in this chapter, are the traces of Guam’s sovereignty that I have collected through my interactions with antiwar,

²⁰ I am reminded of an infamous quote from G.W.F. Hegel, which is regularly cited by Slavoj Žižek, “the secrets of the Egyptians were also secret for the Egyptians themselves.” Slavoj Žižek, “Da Capo Senza Fine,” Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, (London, Verso, 2000), 254.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials,” translated by Ken Frieden, in *Languages of the Unsayable*, eds., Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

²² The dissertation being worked on by Ma Vang has provided an important parallel project as I’ve been writing and theorizing my own dissertation. Her work is on Hmong soldiers who fought for the United States and the Central Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War and their relationship to the United States through congressional legislation and proceedings. She has encountered similar problems in terms of the obscenity or the ghostliness of her topic and her evidence. Since most of what binds these Hmong soldiers to the United States is secret or disavowed, how does one then do a project which the formal side of things refuses to admit happened? Ma Vang, “Reconceptualizing the Refugee Figure Through the Intersection of Statelessness and Indigeneity,” *Paper presented at the conference “Postcolonial” Futures in a Not Yet Postcolonial World: Locating the Intersections of Ethnic, Indigenous and Postcolonial Studies*, University of California, La Jolla, California, 7 March 2008.

peace and progressive activists, and a collection of texts on U.S. imperialism and militarism.

The texts and the voices I cite are not meant to reflect the best of these bodies of knowledge or intellectual domains, nor are they meant to cover all the full scope of the conversations. In fact, as I've already noted, any gesture that attempts to engage the vast scope of these conversations would make the task of revealing Guam's ghostliness, in relation to the United States and sovereignty, far too easy.²³ As I outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation, the evidence of sovereignty in each chapter is chosen based on the idea of giving Guam an advantage, or picking sites or texts, where Guam can't simply be dismissed as absent or not included. For, given Guam's minute and insignificant trace, it would be easy to formulate a critique based merely on an enumeration of examples of Guam's exclusion, or minimal presence, in these conversations. That, however, is not my intent. For, as this chapter will demonstrate, the issue is not one of a lack of knowledge or of manifestations of Guam's invisibility. The traces and texts used in this chapter instead represent voices and sources that are *supposed to know*. Indeed, my analysis refers specifically to those who articulate themselves, their knowledge, in such a way – whether through the use of a particular framework, variable or term – that they always already touch upon something that Guam potentially represents.

²³ Furthermore I should qualify that when I invoke imperialism, militarism and colonialism, I am not using them in any precise sense, but rather evoking the same general potential variables that come into the picture when it is being articulating or disarticulating in relation to a possible site of their manifestation. I am not defining them ahead of time and then working into that definition different sources of traces of discourse. Instead I'm leaving the definitions open, to provide more room for possible articulation of meaning or relevance, in the hopes that I won't simply reinforce the ghostliness, but rather touch the structure of that ghostliness, why it is such, why the discursive ties produce this sort of banality for Guam.

Thus, for instance, the particularity of Guam as “secret” is made especially evident through an analysis of the framework provided by American foreign policy critic and East Asian affairs expert Chalmers Johnson, who argues that progressive foreign policy critiques of American militarism and imperialism, should re-focus on the military base as the unit of American imperialism, or war making ability, rather than focusing on the spectacle of a war, or the individual soldier.²⁴ This intervention represents an important step in shifting the gaze of American progressive and antiwar movements towards Guam; to allow them to actually engage it, rather than glaze over it. As one of the United States’ most important overseas bases, Guam holds a crucial position in the growing network of American bases around the world – which Johnson refers to as a form of colonialism – and thus it should be a key space/unit that guides progressive critiques or protests. As Johnson noted in an interview with the progressive website *Tomdispatch* in response to a question on how to conceptualize the contemporary empire of the United States,

Empires are defined so often as holders of colonies, but analytically, by empire we simply mean the projection of hegemony outward, over other people, using them to serve our interests, regardless of how their interests may be affected. So what kind of empire is ours? The unit is not the colony, it's the military base. This is not quite as unusual as defenders of the concept of empire often assume. That is to say, we can easily calculate the main military bases of the Roman Empire in the Middle East, and it turns out to be about the same number it takes to garrison the region today. You need about 38 major bases. You can plot them out in Roman times and you can plot them out today. An empire of bases -- that's the concept

²⁴

Although I would argue that focusing on an individual soldier can be productive, especially in the case of those soldiers who fight at the frontlines of the American War Machine, but come from the margins of its empire. Examples of this are non-citizens who are recruited or join with the intent of receiving US Citizenship, members of the United States insular areas and territories, and even those who are joining in record numbers from the various freely associated states in Micronesia, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier: Tracing the Militarization of Desire in Guam, USA,” *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Lujan Camacho (eds.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

that best explains the logic of the 700 or more military bases around the world acknowledged by the Department of Defense.²⁵

This, however, is something that sadly the vast majority of antiwar and peace organizations in the United States as one of the United States most important overseas bases lack, for, as a coordinator for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) admitted to me, "... if there aren't Americans dying or American bombs falling, then they can't connect the dots to how it [military bases] leads to more wars and violence and that's what they should be trying to decrease."²⁶

Yet, as my brief critique (this will be explained) of Johnson's text *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*, as well as a personal experience I had with antiwar activists following a screening of a documentary of the same name, will reveal, even when the discussion is explicitly on the intersections of American colonialism, imperialism and militarism in the Asia Pacific region, there is still something peculiar about Guam which makes it uncapturable by such conversations. My intent is not to focus the analysis simply at this point of invisibility and emptiness of Guam, but to push it further and investigate the productive aspects of this inability of Guam – as one of America's official colonies and its most strategically important military base – to be considered an appropriate site for the illustration of American militarism or colonialism. Indeed, the ultimate goal of this chapter will be to show how this emptiness of Guam constitutes American sovereignty.

²⁵ Chalmers Johnson and Tom Engelhardt "Chalmers Johnson on Our Military Empire," *Tomdispatch*, http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/70243/tomdispatch_interview_chalmers_johnson_on_our_military_empire, 21 May 2006. Site Accessed 3 April 2009.

²⁶ Fulana, *Personal Communication*, AFSC San Diego: A Forum on the Widening War Tour, San Diego, California, 17 September 2007. The subject initially agreed to the interview, but after contacting her in order to seek permission to use this quote, she requested that I keep her name private.

3. *Why Guam?*

Since I first proposed this idea of reversing the relationship between Guam and the United States, other scholars, both those tied to Guam and otherwise, as well as community activists, and Chamorros themselves, rightfully quizzed me on whether what I'm proposing is even *possible*. These questions arise in a diverse number of ways, such as: Is Guam enough? Is Guam unique – big or violent – enough to handle this type of analysis? What makes it so special? That is, all these questions circle around the relationship between Guam and the ambiguous/nefarious concept of “adequateness;” they question whether Guam can sustain this sort of association, whether it can be evidence enough to make the violence of American power and militarization tangible to others.²⁷ And it is the very network of knowledge that cradles Guam – that makes it knowable, able to be spoken of – that makes these sorts of assumptions natural, easy. Through the research and writing of this dissertation I have slowly developed a response to these arguments, a counter-argument, in fact, that is central to this chapter. This counter-argument represents an attempt to link these basic, almost natural, assumptions of Guam as “not being enough,” to the very structures of power I am interested in contesting. Thus, my dissertation is anchored firmly to the act of decolonizing the network of knowledge that naturalizes the incompleteness or inadequacy that produces Guam, and that extends not just to the ways in which Guam is informally spoken, or not spoken, of, but also the ways in which the United States government, military and nation interacts with Guam. Moreover, I demonstrate how commonsensical *ti ninahong-ña*, or “not adequateness of Guam,” can operate as a veil of its own, obscuring the presence of its own power, of its

²⁷ “Tangible” here operates as a euphemism for “universal.” The question is, whether someplace as small as Guam, which due to its size is most likely very limited in its existence can be something which could be the basis for making claims about other places.

own sovereignty; how this given, and easily accepted, nothingness or incompleteness of Guam carries its own potency, especially in terms of masking and thus producing American power and might.

Although I've invoked the scene of contrast between Guam and the United States a few times already, albeit each time just briefly, it might be helpful to return there once again. So again let us take stock of these two entities tied together by more than a century of colonialism – Guam and the United States. As a 2002 *Los Angeles Times* article put it, Guam is a tiny footnote to America; it is literally a dot on the map, lucky to get any attention.²⁸ It is that which, when mentioned by the media or others in the United States, often has to be qualified with an incredulity that Guam is being mentioned at all. On the other hand, the United States is *everything* in comparison; massive in population, size, economy, power, influence.²⁹ The litany of hyperbolic titles and images it has been

²⁸ Tom Perry, "Dot on the Map Retains Large Strategic Stature," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 2002.

²⁹ How many millions of possible sources could I cite to reference this? In the universe of discourse of Guam alone, you can find traces of this hegemonic assertions everywhere. The most interesting exchange that comes to mind involving Guam and the idea of America as the greatest bestest place nation in the world, actually has nothing to do with Guam. On the website *Scientific Blogging*, a blogger David Houle published on August 14, 2007 a post titled "Time to Wake Up America!" The short post was written around the fact that according to a recent Census Report, the United States ranked 42nd in terms of life expectancy. The blogger asserted this fact in such a way that this ranking of 42nd behind so many obviously less powerful or poorer countries meant that America needed to wake up! "I grew up thinking that America was the greatest country in the world. In many ways it is. However, a recent report from the Census bureau shows that we are not even in the top 15% of countries when it comes to life expectancy. We are now 42nd in the world with a life expectancy of 77.9 for someone born ini [sic] 2004. Compare that to the number one country, Andorra at 83.5, Japan at 82.0 or Australia, Sweden and Switzerland at 80.3 Even a middle eastern (nows [sic] there is a safe part of the world!)." After a commenter questioned the methodology that was used by the Census study, the blogger responded that it did seem odd that Jordan and even Guam were among the countries that have higher life expectancies than the United States. This questioning of America's greatness by these statistics elicited a further angry comment, which tied together so much of the narratives of American greatness and exceptionalism, I'll paste the comment in its entirety: "While you're questioning our country, David, why don't you wonder where we stand on education? How about infant mortality rate? There are many problems in this nation, problems that go largely unattended as we try to swing our might throughout the world. Look, America is the greatest country in the world, just not for the reasons that you think. It has nothing to do with numbers, it has to do with people and the freedoms that our people have. Lincoln called America "the best hope for mankind," and he wasn't just whistling Dixie, for it is our destiny to lead humanity to our next step in evolution. We cannot fool ourselves, we have problems almost beyond reckoning, but it's no comparisons to the ultimate problems

knighted with is extensive, and thus, on the surface, renders my project of reversing the gaze, seem laughable. Against the shining city on the hill, the only remaining superpower, Guam is insignificant. Indeed, as a 2000 *Lonely Planet* review of Guam noted, the only claim that Guam can make to the world, to being of any significance in the world, is that it hosts the world's largest K-Mart.³⁰ On the surface this is perhaps true. As the famous Chamorro singer KC Leon Guerrero's song goes "Guam is Good/Guam is hot/Guam is just a little spot."³¹ It is small, it is isolated; distant from the given corridors of American power, whether they be America's sovereign geographic borders, its continental territory or its 50 states, or its political center in Washington D.C.³² It has no natural resources, save for its geopolitically strategic location.³³ And save for tiny spikes

facing all of humanity. Riddle me this, David, what is the next step? How do we create the shift that is so necessary to our survival?" After reading this exchange, it almost seemed too sublime, touching too closely on the ideological underpinnings of American exceptionalism, it had to be contrived. David Houle, "Time to Wake Up America!" *Scientific Blogging*, http://www.scientificblogging.com/a_future_look_at_today/blog/time_to_wake_up_america, 14 August 2007. Site Accessed 2 May 2009.

³⁰ Tony Palomo, *Interview With Author*, Guam Museum, Tiyan, Guam, 6 November 2002.

³¹ The song "Guam U.S.A." by KC Leon Guerrero is interesting in the way it reflects the hybridity and complexity of colonial and decolonial desire in Guam. The chorus is as follows: *I'm from Guam USA/ And I'm proud that it is true/ When I was born in a land and lived in the world of the Chamorro/ Guam is good/ Guam is hot/ Guam is just such a little spot/ It's a beautiful island that you've never seen/ Where America's day begins...* Although we all desire recognition in some way or other, we have our own defenses in order to sustain ourselves, when recognition is clearly withheld, and usually, these defenses proliferate their own forms of enjoyment. Throughout this song, Leon Guerrero, while traveling in the states, continually meets people who have no idea where he is from and what Guam is. He asks each of them "*Kao guaha un keketungo?*" "Have you ever tried knowing about it?" While it's clear that the stated desire of the song is to bring together the "Guam" and the USA, the singer is not dejected when this doesn't actually happen. In fact, given the celebratory tone after each rejection it's clear that the singer takes great enjoyment in being from an America that no one has ever seen. We find a similar dynamic with the lover who speaks endlessly of the pain of his lost love, lost happiness, but when confronted with attempts to reconcile the loss, to stop the soul wrenching, rejects them because of the happiness he now gleans from the mere discussion of his loss.

³² Washington D.C. and Guam are 7,933 miles apart.

³³ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

in its political power, such as during the 2008 Democratic primary, it generally has no effect on the course of the United States or its policies.³⁴

Thus, the pragmatics of size, influence, and power would seem to assert that if anyone in this relationship is being constituted the other, it is Guam that is being produced by America. As one Chamorro noted to me during an email conversation on decolonization, in the course of which we discussed what “contributions” Chamorros had made to the world:

The United States has built the strongest, greatest economy in the world, what have Chamorros done in the same history? We made canoes and built latte stones...I think it's obvious where our future lies, who's in charge of things.³⁵

Similarly, in response to a press release posted on the blog for the organization *Famoksaiyan*, one anonymous visitor left a short but very direct comment. The press release was titled *UN Report Back: Chamorro Delegation to the United Nations* and described a recent trip made by Chamorros to the United Nations to testify on the state of affairs on Guam, and to petition the body's Fourth Committee to put pressure on the United States to decolonize the island. The release mentioned the content of the

³⁴ After giving a presentation at a public forum on the transfer of the US Marines from Okinawa to Guam at the University of Guam in 2008, I received an email from a Chamorro who had heard my statements. There were traces of this dissertation in that presentation, albeit translated into more “practical” language. I argued that Guam should be a partner in whatever military increases are brought to the island by the United States, it should have the ability to say no, or to stall it if we are not ready, and it is precisely because Guam does not have this power, or is not supposed to have this power, that the militarization happens in the first place. Speaking to what I felt was a more neutral audience and not necessarily in agreement with most of my thinking on the issue, I emphasized ideas respect, fairness, equality and thus that Guam and the United States should be equal in this, and not one side announcing that its going to drastically alter the landscape of the island and then the other has to figure out how to pay for it. The email I received from this Chamorro made clear that he vehemently disagreed with my arguments. The basis for his rejection was that the idea of Guam being “equal” or being “partners” with the United States was “laughable.” Fulanu, *Email Communication*, 30 November 2008.

³⁵ John Salas, *Email Communication*, 27 April 2005. Latte stones: These are huge basalt megaliths that Chamorros built prior to Spanish colonization to mark territory, mark burial grounds, as well as put houses on top of. They will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 8, as a marker of the permanence and identity of Chamorros.

delegates' testimonies, which were highly critical of the contemporary and historical impacts of American colonialism in Guam:

The delegates discussed the cumulative adverse impacts of US colonization and the current military build-up, highlighting such issues as environmental contamination, Chamorro displacement, alarming cancer rates, and the infrastructural strains expected from the island's unprecedented population boom - which will make the Chamorro people a minority group in our homeland.³⁶

This visitor who commented anonymously on the press release alluded to the point that I am making by stating, "You don't matter. Scream and shout [sic] all you want you still don't [sic] matter."³⁷ Even as Guam is being used to critique the United States and its existence, the response is not a refutation or a rebuke, but rather a simple dismissal. *It's not that you're wrong, but just that you don't matter.*

Given this admission of the limited/diminished existence of Guam, we are led to the next logical objection. If my intent is to discuss critically instances of, and more importantly the mechanics of, US colonialism, imperialism and militarism, wouldn't it bolster my effort, if I were to include a few, larger, more well-known sites in my analysis? Guam is by no means the only site, or even the best possible site, from which an analysis of these 3 American oppressions/violences could be started.³⁸ Even if one were to look past Guam to its immediate surroundings, i.e. the Asia-Pacific region, a

³⁶ Famoksaiyan, *UN Report Back: Chamorro Delegation to the United Nations*, Press Release, 10 October 2008.

³⁷ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "UN Report Back: Chamorro Delegation to the United Nations," *Famoksaiyan Blog*, <http://famoksaiyan.blogspot.com/2008/10/un-report-back-chamorro-delegation-to.html>, 10 October 2008. Site Accessed 29 May 2009. The following comment was left a month later in response: "Try to spell correctly next time, eh primo? Obviously, they matter enough for you to post...."

³⁸ I cannot help but be reminded here of the late Francisco Baza Leon Guerrero's testimony before the United States Congress after World War II, where in response to questions about the identity and loyalties of Chamorros, he infamously responded that, "the only ism on Guam is Americanism." The implication of course being that there is no "communism" on Guam. The statement though is ironic in terms of the way it could also imply that Guam does have a unique ability to deflect any other potential "negative" isms from being associated with, or found on Guam. Robert Underwood, *Interview with Author*, National Pacific Island Education Network, California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, California, 15 November 2003.

plethora of other similarly situated sites becomes available – from, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea, to the Philippines, the Marshall Islands and Palau, to name just a few. Each of these sites would contribute to enhancing this proposed project. Indeed, as historian Hal Friedman notes, American control over the Pacific makes it unique, in that after World War II, it was the only nation which emerged *with more territories, more possessions*.³⁹

But the tying together of these islands and nations does not imply unified experiences or suffering (or violence). American wars in the Asian continent have resulted in the deaths of millions; for instance, the relationship of the United States with the Philippines – which was acquired by the United States in 1898, the same year as Guam – was christened with a brutal war to snuff out its independence movement.⁴⁰ In the Pacific, American nuclear colonialism, such as nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, has resulted in the displacement of people, and has caused incredible damage to their bodies and overall health.⁴¹ Compared to just these two examples, Guam's experiences with American colonization and domination have been far less violent and visceral. During the Vietnam War, for example, Guam was just a stepping stone to Asia, a base from which bombing missions were launched, and troops and refugees were transferred.⁴²

³⁹ Hal M. Friedman, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in The Pacific Basin, 1945-1947*. (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, 2001).

⁴⁰ *Resistance in Paradise: Rethinking 100 Years of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and the Pacific*, Deborah Wei and Baltazar Pinguel (eds.), (American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1998). Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds. *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*. (New York: New York University Press, 2002). Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Jack Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind: A History of the People of Bikini and Their Islands*, (Micronitor/Bravo Publishers, 2001). Zohl De Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific*, (Australia: Spinifex Press, 1994). Julian Aguon, *What We Bury At Night: Disposable Humanity*, (Tokyo: blue ocean press, 2008).

⁴² At the 2006 Crossing Borders conference (which is a graduate student conference organized each year by a different Ethnic Studies Graduate program in California), I experienced an interesting exchange with a Vietnamese graduate over her belief as to whether or not I had a right to complain about militarism, colonialism or imperialism. Had she been given the opportunity to write formally her critique of me, it might have sounded differently, but as she was simply responding to my statements following the question

It was a conduit for the violence of American power, but the Asian continent itself was the victim of all that horrific power. If it my intent was merely to critique American colonialism, imperialism and militarism, then it might appear evident that Guam simply isn't enough. Its reality is too limited, in size, in scope, in level of violence. What Guam appears to offer isn't depraved enough to reveal the wicked heart of American colonialism, and as such it just isn't enough to care about.

Following a presentation I gave at an Association of Asian American Studies Conference, which included a discussion of American colonization of Guam during the first half of the 20th century, I was approached by a Filipino-American scholar. As with most territories taken by the United States in 1898, there are plenty of similarities, and many shared experiences.⁴³ Thus, this scholar asked me several more questions about the violence of American colonization and its impact on Chamorros, in order to grasp the

answer period for a session where I had presented a paper, it came off as both very casual and very revealing. In my paper which was a Lacanian analysis of the Japanese anime television series *Evangelion: Neon Genesis* titled "The Decision and Human Instrumentality: Lacan Avec Evangelion...Or Why Immanuel Kant Never Dated." During the reading of my paper, I made a number of off hand remarks about where I come from, what my positionality is, as an indigenous person from Guam who lives in an American military colony and is seeking decolonization in various forms. After the session was over, I was approached by a graduate student who identified herself as Vietnamese (born and raised in the United States), and that she found what I was saying offense. Not sure, as to what was offensive about my paper (other than the fact that I had completely misused Lacan's theories), I asked her what was going on and started to have a discussion with her. Apparently, what had angered her, had nothing to do with my paper, but was directed at my comments about where I come from and what Guam is. She proceeded to give me a history lesson (which I already knew) about Guam's role in Vietnam, as the transit point through which so much death was brought to Southeast Asia. She insisted that I had no right to complain about what my island was going through, when it was the source and cause of so much suffering elsewhere. The "bombs all come from Guam!" was a phrase she repeated several times. *Evangelion: Neon Genesis*, dir. Hideaki Anno, Television Series, 1995-1996.

⁴³ In October of 2009, Dr. Carlyle Corbin, an internationally recognized expert on the world's non-self-governing territories visited Guam for two weeks in order to meet with government officials and decolonization activists on the island as well as conduct research. Corbin has worked both in Washington D.C. and at the United Nations, and comes from the US Virgin Islands, and so his knowledge of territories and decolonization is not only academic, but also personal as well, having been involved in these struggles for decades. I had a chance to not only talk at great length with Dr. Corbin, but also help him update and "spruce up" one of his blogs. During our discussions, it was remarkable at how often each of us felt that we knew exactly what the other was talking about, how things were exactly the same in the Virgin Islands as they are in Guam. This sort of mirroring experience is common though for people from various American territories, and also those who formerly under a different colonizer, such as Spain.

similarities and differences in the treatment/experiences of Chamorros and Filipinos during the period at hand.⁴⁴ At the end of our exchange, this scholar noted, “Now I see the difference, in the Philippines, they didn’t try to civilize us. They just killed us. Now that’s real colonization.”⁴⁵

This point is further asserted in an email I received from a former Peace Corps volunteer who had lived for many years in Micronesia. Although no longer living in the region, he continues to follow US policies there, in particular with reference to the survivors of the nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. In response to a blog post, in which I was discussing the intent and goal of my dissertation,⁴⁶ he sent me an email that seemed to politely argue that Guam would not be a good choice for what I was intending:

For a better model or example I think other Micronesian islands would be better suited. Bikini Atoll, Palau’s nuclear constitution fight, these are real

⁴⁴ The issue of pragmatics of size is crucial in understanding how these sorts of equivalent sites gain and lose meaning. Puerto Rico is much larger than Guam, is much closer in many ways to their shared colonizers the United States and Spain. As such, even without any substantive knowledge about Guam or about Chamorros and their history, the contrast in size and also the distance of Guam generally leads to pragmatic assumptions that Puerto Rico is somehow always more than Guam. The similarities are what draw the two regions together, but in my interactions a hierarchy is generally established between both Chamorros and Puerto Ricans, in which power tends to flow from the larger to the smaller. So for instance, when exchanging information about Chamorro and Puerto Rican last names, Puerto Ricans often exclaim that we on Guam have “their last names.” Or in terms of Spanish influence, that although Spain colonized both islands, their use of Spanish means that they can take credit for the Spanish that is present in modern Chamorro language. The pragmatics of size of course work both ways, and I have never ever heard any Chamorro (myself included) attempt to assert that Puerto Ricans have Chamorro last names or that the Spanish which is in the language that Puerto Ricans speak can be attributed to Chamorros. The most almost-unbelievable exchange that I had of this nature, was at the 2005 Crossing Borders Conference at UC Berkeley, a conference where graduate students from different California Ethnic Studies departments gather together, every two years, to share papers. After giving a presentation on Chamorros and their resistance to decolonization, I was approached by a Puerto Rican student. We exchanged the usual US territorial pleasantries about how similar our situations are to each other, how much Puerto Rican feels like Guam and vice versa. The conversation came to an abrupt end however after out of nowhere the student stated that we on Guam are fortunate in that “you have not experienced oppression the way the people of Puerto Rico have.” After pressing him to clarify what exactly this meant, it was clear that what had prompted this comment was just Guam’s size, in that it had experienced less oppression simply by it being smaller than Puerto Rico.

⁴⁵ Fulanu, *Personal Communication*, Association of Asian American Studies Conference, New York, New York, 8 April 2007.

⁴⁶ The post on my blog *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro* which prompted the email was titled “Why My Research is Guam,” and was posted on November 13, 2007 and can be found at this link: <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2007/11/why-my-research-is-guam.html>.

examples, better for teaching the other side of American intervention [sic] in the Pacific...As someone who has been talking about this since the seventies...Guam isn't what I would choose.⁴⁷

Comments such as these are common; they are the norm when discussing Guam in the context of other larger examples of the exportation of American violence. As one Chamorro activist and community leader, Debbie Quinata, who plays a significant role in building alliances with other peoples struggling against American militarization in the Asia-Pacific region, explains as to why we get these sorts of "Guam, not really" responses:

What we experience here does reach that level, that's why it's hard sometimes to capture the imagination of people around the world. With wars, natural disasters, genocide. From that perspective Guam looks pretty *suette*. People in Okinawa, in the Marshalls, those guys have real problems...that isn't to say that we don't have problems of our own. *Meggai iyo-ta problems*.⁴⁸

I accept these explanations as somewhat true, but I do not think them sufficient. For the above quotes are driven by the same pragmatic assumption mentioned earlier – that whatever Guam is, in relation to what I am trying to prove/propose it is just not enough, *ti nahong ha*.⁴⁹ It does not meet some obvious threshold for evidence, illustration and exemplification. In these instances we find a more conservative and more a critical resistance to my project. On the one hand, we see Guam paled into insignificance by the grandness of the United States. On the other, my attempt to link Guam with certain ideas or concepts that have come to be associated with certain spectacles of violence and oppression is also rejected. The size of Guam, of course, is implicitly in play, but what

⁴⁷ Fulanu, *Email Communication*, 24 February 2008.

⁴⁸ Debbie Quinata, *Interview with Author*, Her Home, Malesso, Guam, 4 January 2006. Suette: Lucky, fortunate. Meggai iyo-ta problems: We have lots of problems.

⁴⁹ Translation: "It's just not enough."

really makes Guam “not enough,” here, is the banality of the sorts of variables that are used to name it as a site of American imperialism, colonialism and militarism.

There is a heavy commonsensical weight to this banality, to this “not-enoughness” of Guam. But as Slavoj Žižek notes, common sense is the point where all of the things that create our identities, our meanings, over which we have little control, they all vanish.⁵⁰ Common sense is less about a shared feeling of a secure and stable idea, but more so about the vanishing of the structure of discourse that makes that idea possible; the vanishing of power, of any sense of symbolic/social coercion.⁵¹ Common sense is meant to be the space where at last ideology holds no sway, a certain point, or a set of points, in which at last truly meaning or communication can be enjoyed. Yet it is precisely because of this naturalness, this appearance of an absence of ideology, that it represents ideology in its most potent and effective form. As such, the embrace of common sense in place of an argument is when the subject of speech has the most illusion of power over knowledge and is, at the same time, in the worst position to perceive its structure or ideology.⁵² This is precisely my point in focusing on Guam, to reveal the sort of structure that goes into the production of this *ti ninahong-ña* of Guam. Rather than accept this incompleteness, I’d like to attempt to follow its course, to reveal

⁵⁰ Michele Barrett, “Ideology, Politics, Hegemony: From Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe,” *Mapping Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek (ed.), (London: Verso 1994), 237.

⁵¹ The cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall’s work on common sense is also instructive here: “What passes for common sense in our society – the residue of absolutely basic and commonly-agreed, consensual wisdoms, helps us to classify the world in simple but meaningful terms. Precisely common sense does not require reasoning, argument, logic, thought: it is spontaneously available thoroughly recognizable, widely shared. It *feels* indeed, as if it has always been there, the sedimented, bedrock wisdom of “the race,” a form of “natural” wisdom, the content of which has hardly changed at all with time. However common sense does have a *content*, and a history.” Stuart Hall, “Culture, the Media and the “Ideological Effect,” *Mass Communication and Society*, Michael Gurevitch & Janet Woollacott (Eds.), (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 325.

⁵² Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London, Verso, 2000), 258.

how this banal existence of Guam, which seems to signify little else other than powerlessness, is in actuality a site for the production of American power.

It is for this reason that I see a critical value in centralizing Guam so as to get a better sense of the productive structures that relies upon its emptying and expulsion. What does it mean when a 110 year-old colony of the United States, and a key site for the projection of its dominance and authority across the globe, can continually be passed over and dismissed as having no impact? That even when it is brought forth, and its status articulated, it can still be disregarded as too small, not violent enough, etc., written off as something which is not enough to engage a critical lens?⁵³ As already stated, the means through which I attempt to reveal this structure is by theorizing Guam's place in the producing of the United States, most specifically its sovereignty. My method for this approach is anchored to the assertion that the difference between linking Guam to the United States by articulating them as two distinct sites bound together by the -isms of violence, and articulating one as a constitutive aspect of the other, something which is already present and productive of the other, is the difference between writing of *the invisibility of Guam* versus writing of *the banality of Guam*. To help make clear this distinction, I'll begin with an anecdote.

⁵³ One of the most intriguing ways in which progressive or liberal minded Americans seem to write off any need for engagement with the colonial status of Guam, is to argue that colonialism or colonization nowadays is simply just a state of mind, and all that is needed is for those of you who call yourself colonies to just "declare your independence!" In July 2007 on the liberal blog *The Daily Kos*, a blogger named "hope for guahan" posted a short article on the irony of celebrating America's "independence day" when it still has numerous colonies, such as Guam. Despite an obvious lack of knowledge about Guam and the other colonies of the United States, several readers provided comments. A handful of these comments dismissed the content of the post (since it was critical of the United States for its colonial possessions) and attempted to redirect the source of colonialism today, or the real parties responsible for it, as those in the colonies who are too dependent, or just haven't asked for it yet. Thankfully there were several other responses which rebutted this assertion, as they were more willing to admit to the heart of America being hardly sinless, and absolutely capable of being colonial, whereas the "declare independence" commenters refused to admit that the United States could ever stand in the way of someone seeking freedom. Hope for Guahan, "July 4th: The Irony of America's "Independence" Day," *The Daily Kos*, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2007/7/4/0263/83570/>, 3 July 2007. Site Accessed 30 May 2009.

4. *The Sorrows of Empire, The Absence of Guam*

In the fall of 2003, a few months after moving to San Diego from Guam in anticipation of attending graduate school in the United States the following year, I attended a small screening of a mini-documentary about Chalmers Johnson and his upcoming book *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*.⁵⁴ Johnson has risen to great prominence over recent years amongst the American Left because of his salient and detailed descriptions of the political economy of the United States military. Through his “American Empire” trilogy featuring, *Blowback*, *The Sorrows of Empire*, and *Nemesis*, Johnson provides clear portraits of the secret and blatant military machinations of the United States across the world – first in the name of the Cold War; later, and presently, in the name of fighting terrorism – which have resulted in the creation of a “sea of American military bases” constitutive of a new empire.⁵⁵ One of his most important contributions has been the inclusion of economic pressures, coercions and profits in his analysis of these bases, revealing the intertwining of corporate, political, and military interests, which congeal into producing a new form of colonialism.

This mini-documentary, also titled *The Sorrows of Empire*, was a very informative half-hour discussion with Johnson at his home in Oceanside, California.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Secrecy, Militarism and the End of the Republic*, (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2004).

⁵⁵ Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, (New York, Henry Holt, 2000). Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2007).

⁵⁶ The organization known as CPAC, no longer exists. It was started through grants that would help fund small community documentary projects. As Chalmers Johnson lived in Oceanside, California and the group was based in San Diego, California, interviewing Johnson was an ideal opportunity to create a compelling, but convenient and affordable documentary.

During the post-film discussion, it became clear to me that the majority of those attending were antiwar or peace activists. Speakers took turns sharing with each other small tidbits of knowledge, things for each other to consider in order to enhance resistance to the new network of military colonialisms that Johnson was proposing. Some gave personal insight into places such as Okinawa or South Korea, others shared books they had read about United States military adventures in Asia and Africa. No one really contested Johnson's framework, but simply sought to fill it with new content by offering slightly more up-to-date information about a foreign base no one had heard of, or to provide a slightly more colorful personal anecdote.

Despite the discussion of the Pacific region around Guam, and a discussion of issues that define Guam, I was appalled at the lack of any mention about Guam or about anything actually in the Pacific. It frustrated me, after watching the film, reading sections of the book that had appeared as articles prior to its publication, and listening to the discussion that, in a discussion of "emerging" United States colonialism, there was little to no dialogue about *existing American colonialism*, especially for those territories such as Guam, which have crucial strategic military importance.⁵⁷ Although nervous about interjecting myself into the conversation, I eventually built up the courage to bring up my particular angle on the discussion, and mention Guam. Things didn't turn out quite as I had hoped, but the discussion and how I was treated following my comment, helped push me to perceive more clearly the structure through which Guam is made banal in relation to the United States. In fact, it was through engagements such as this – speaking before,

⁵⁷ One such article is Chalmers Johnson, "The Scourge of Militarism," <http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=938>, *Tomdispatch*, 9 September 2003. Site Accessed 24 November 2009.

or working with, various peace and antiwar groups in the United States – that the first inklings of this dissertation appeared.

That meeting represented my initial attempt at articulating what has become a regular mantra for me. I wasn't very articulate and stumbled a bit in order to get across my point that Guam should be a part of this analysis, first, because of its actual, tangible presence, as a part of the sea of bases right in the Asia-Pacific region that Johnson and others present were discussing; but secondly, *because of its absent presence, because of its status as not really being there*; in that it somehow eluded the analysis; that despite being clearly present on any map of American militarism, it nonetheless fell through the discursive cracks associated with this subject. In order to explain myself, I proposed a self-serving exercise. I made clear that I wasn't attacking or denouncing Johnson or his framework for daring to forget Guam! I admitted that his ideas are accurate and very true, and since I am from Guam, I know they are very real.⁵⁸ I have felt this military colonialism in my own life and in the lives of my family. So, rather than focus on invisibility, I asked those present to do what Laura Briggs suggests in her text *Reproducing Empire* – that we imagine that Guam is the most important place in the world.⁵⁹ I suggested that we forget for a moment the content of Johnson's framework, forget the bases he names, the wars he discusses, and instead focus on either a single, or a set of, particular, peculiar sites, such as Guam, Guantanamo and Diego Garcia. By doing this we can help perceive the limits of Johnson's framework, find the holes in it, and

⁵⁸ This is a very theoretically imprecise statement, which I wouldn't normally make as it appears to assume a natural link between things such as experience, geography and consciousness. But, when you are stammering to find words to represent yourself, its one of the easiest ways to pull it off.

⁵⁹ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

make known the sites of continuing violence, oppression, and military colonialism that thrive in those holes.⁶⁰

The response was a friendly mixture of supportive dismissiveness and curiosity.⁶¹ My point was never really “shut down,” but always dismissed in a very supportive way. The particularity of my island could never really enter the discussion, it was too much of a stretch, it strained too many of their ideas about what constitutes sites of violence, what potential targets in anti-war or peace work are, or even what makes a site worthy of being considered in the way I was proposing. I ended up talking with most everyone in some way or another that evening, but Guam was always sidetracked in the conversation, re-directed away from becoming the focus of the conversation, from occupying any space near the central point of signification that had brought everyone together, namely identifying instances of American imperialism and military aggression.

For some, the particularity of my island was transformed into something cute and small, and used to engage with me as an exotic indigenous person, whose knowledge was quaint but limited, hardly universal. The tone was always polite, but stilted in such a way that my knowledge and my entreaties were legible only as small and local, incapable of accommodating “big picture” thoughts or conversations. Indeed, phrases such as “looking at” or “considering the big picture,” always found their way into these conversations. The other response I received, which was far less dismissive but still seemed to miss my

⁶⁰ To his credit, Johnson provides both a contemporary (as of the publishing of his book) and a historical portrait of both Guantanamo Bay and Diego Garcia Island. For Diego Garcia: Johnson, *Sorrows...*, 221-222. For Guantanamo Bay: Johnson, *Sorrows...*, 41-42.

⁶¹ This anecdote helps illustrate the necessity of the “personal” nature of this dissertation. It might have seemed more appropriate or formal to simply focus on the documentary itself and do a discourse analysis, or do an ethnography of the discussion afterwards, to take these two potential sources of evidence and formalize them, and then make one of the focus and the other a supplement. But in terms of Guam, and finding what the position of Guam is in the universe of that moment, given both the documentary and those present, you have to consider them together, as parts of the same whole, where an offhand remark can be the trace through which can lead you to some constructive analysis.

point, was to treat my statements as complaints about the “invisibility” of Guam; my comments was reduced to a complaint, that I, my island, had been left out from a discussion about American bases around the world, from nearly every continent; that Guam was something unknown, another site amongst a plethora of overseas bases which needed to be included, need to be recognized and made visible for all present.

But, as I constantly find myself explaining, for a place such as Guam, it is imperative to not settle for the level of geography or political economy. Guam is not just another site of American imperialism or militarism, for although it is small, its relationship to the United States requires something more, a little bit extra, in terms of analysis. It is this distinction that I refer to as the difference between invisibility and banality.

5. The Rumsfeld Doctrine

The sea of American bases that Johnson mentions are not all uniform in their power, size, visibility or history, and when interacting with that network, when trying to contest it or shrink it, it is important to consider the ways in which the bases that constitute it are known or unknown. This is of particular importance in the period following September 11th 2001, because of the emergence of what has become known as the Rumsfeld Doctrine.⁶² Rumsfeld’s revolution in military affairs extends to many aspects (such as upgrading military technology, privatization and the development of the next generation of nuclear weapons), but what is of interest here is the emphasis he

⁶² “Digital War: The Rumsfeld Doctrine,” *Business Week Online*, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03_14/b3827114_mz029.htm, 7 April 2003. Site Accessed 28 May 2009. Richard Walker, “Rumsfeld Doctrine: Failed Legacy,” *American Free Press*, (Issue #43), 23 October 2006.

placed on moving away from large, fat, existing American bases overseas and moving instead towards the creation of a new generation of smaller, less visible ones. These bases would be scattered around the globe, be cheaper and easier to maintain, and better strategically located so that the United States could strike quicker and easier anywhere across the globe.⁶³ In short, Rumsfeld's dream was that the United States could bomb and destroy any point in the world within two hours.⁶⁴

The import of the Rumsfeld Doctrine is evident in a 2006 *Foreign Affairs* article that listed the six most important United States military bases in the world: Camp Anaconda in Iraq, Bezmer Air base in Bulgaria, Manas Air Base in Kyrgistan, Guantanamo Bay, Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean, and lastly Guam.⁶⁵ Anaconda is the one most visibly associated with the doctrine due to its being born from the shock and awe invasion of Iraq in 2003. The need to establish new American bases in the Middle East was part of a shifting of vision by the United States to being to anticipate potential threats from Asia, and so Iraq and Afghanistan were ripe for both, "regime change" and "permanent bases."⁶⁶ In the case of Bezmer and Manas, the Rumsfeld doctrine in full effect through the creation of a leaner, meaner, more hi-tech, and crucially, a *less visible* military. These sites encompass, first, "forward operating sites" – which have all the weaponry and technology of a base, including missiles, airstrips,

⁶³ Phar Kim Ben, "The Pentagon's paradigm shift in Asia," *Asia Times Online*, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/EF10Dg01.html>, 10 June 2003. Site Accessed 29 May 2009. Esther Schrader, "U.S. to Realign Troops in Asia," *The Los Angeles Times*, 29 May 2003. "Pentagon to close 35 percent of overseas bases," *The Associated Press*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6078936/from/ET>, 23 September 2004. Site Accessed 29 May 2009.

⁶⁴ Michael T. Klare, "Imperial Reach," *The Nation*, 25 April 2005.

⁶⁵ Daniel Widome, "The List: The Six Most Important U.S. Military Bases," *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3460, May 2006. Site Accessed 28 May 2009.

⁶⁶ Tom Engelhardt, "Can you Say Permanent Bases? The American Press Can't," *Tomdispatch*, http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/59774/a_permanent_basis_for_withdrawal_, 14 February 2006. Site Accessed 8 March 2009.

telecommunications equipment and support staff but no large military presence – and, second, “cooperative security locations” – which are “bare bones” facilities which US military personnel will only use in case of emergencies, and all other times be operated by local host country contractors.⁶⁷ These sites are designed to elide the older rules of military engagement, and instead project a force that metaphorically duplicates the thrust of a missile – quick, surgical, loaded with shock and awe. According to the Pentagon, these new bases are not to be referred to as such; they merely make up a new network of invisible sites throughout the world, which Americans can’t even pronounce, and won’t hear of, until a “pre-emptive strike” is launched from one of them.⁶⁸

From these smaller and lesser known bases, we move to those that are ambiguous politically, kind of invisible, *banal*, and therefore haunt, in various ways, the prevailing global progressive and conservative frameworks. These sites are not necessarily small, and not necessarily unknown, but rather exist in such a way that they escape the imagination of the world; their smallness or invisibility becomes the pragmatic excuse for their exceptionality. Sites such as Guam, Diego Garcia Island and, despite its notoriety, in some ways Guantanamo Bay, which are today military colonies of the United States, tend to fall off of any map of the family of global sovereign nations.⁶⁹ Other than their geographic locations, it is precisely this ambiguity and this banality which is so valuable to the United States military and its ability to project its power and authority in an increasingly interlocked and globalized world.⁷⁰ These sites are ambiguous political

⁶⁷ Klare, *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Or as Jon Stewart, the host of the comedy show *The Daily Show* once said, “Oh, war. It’s just God’s way of teaching Americans geography.”

⁶⁹ Andy Worthington, “Guantanamo’s Ghosts and the Shame of Diego Garcia,” *Indymedia*, <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/10/384112.html>, 20 October 2007. Site Accessed 3 March 2009.

⁷⁰ Guantanamo Bay, and the scandal over the holding and interrogating of “enemy combatants” there provides a very intriguing example of this. Although much of the United States and the world is

postmodern holes in the formal rules, which therefore fall between the eyes of those looking to end war, or to stop United States imperialism and colonialism.⁷¹

In short, a critique of this sort is necessary because the invisibility and banality of their bases is something that the Department of Defense has explicitly begun to take into account when planning for the realignment and redistribution of forces. The intent is to shroud America's incursion into the rest of the world, and to keep as intangible as possible these forms of military colonialism. In order to examine this further, I propose a distinction between frameworks of invisibility and banality by engaging below the important work that two other Chamorro activists are currently undertaking.

6. *The Limits of Invisibility*

At the 2008 conference, *'Postcolonial' Futures in a Not Yet Postcolonial World: Locating the Intersections of Ethnic, Indigenous and Postcolonial Studies*, hosted by the department of Ethnic Studies at UCSD, I organized a roundtable with other Chamorro

unified in the idea of "closing Guantanamo" and putting an end to the lawlessness of the United States, this global movement is aimed at the closing of the post 9-11 version of Guantanamo Bay, not the Guantanamo Bay that has been an American military base in Cuba for decades. So even though we can claim that Guantanamo Bay is vastly different from Guam because it has become a household word, this is only partially true, since even if the enemy combatants held there were released and the detainee area was closed, the base itself would most likely remain untouched and unmentioned.

⁷¹ Continuing off the previous footnote: In a 2005 talk at the University of California San Diego, titled "Where is Guantanamo?" American Studies scholar Caren Kaplan provided a genealogy of American empire and concluded it by arguing that there should be an international movement to shut down Guantanamo Bay or do something about its indistinct political and juridical status. I completely agreed with her point about shutting down GTMO, but as I listened to her speak, I could not but rearticulate the title of her speech into a more selfish form, namely "Where is Guam?" While an international movement to shut down GTMO seems to be possible, could an international movement to decolonize Guam (or any other banal colony) ever exist? Probably not, precisely because of Guam's own spectrally indistinct status. It is not so much that the task is small, or because the stakes aren't high enough, but more because Guam will always be thought of as being too small a task or not providing high enough stakes. At present, it seems that the epistemological hierarchies which inform movements or projects such as these will always leave out a site like Guam. Caren Kaplan, *Where is Guantanamo?* Talk presented at University of California, San Diego, San Diego, California, 28 April 2005.

scholars and activists around issues I hoped to explore in my dissertation.⁷² Titled, “The Ghost of Guam in the Machinery of American Sovereignty,” it was tailored to theoretically match my frame of analysis for this dissertation. The participants, however, were free to take any approach they wished to answer the questions such as “What role does Guam play in producing the United States?” or “In what ways is the United States dependent upon Guam?” and “In terms of making America appear as a sovereign, benevolent entity, where can we locate Guam in that constitution?”

Michael Leon Guerrero, who has been a long time grassroots activist in the Western and Southwestern United States (and was introduced earlier in this chapter), was on the panel, and took a material and very concrete approach to answering my questions. He used facts and statistics dealing with the military, economic and technological importance of the island, very effectively, to fill the gaps in the discursive ties that

⁷² As is noted in the title of the conference, its intention was to bring together those doing work that straddles these academic disciplines, and to try and get them into conversation with each other. The Ethnic Studies Department at UCSD at the time was trying to augment its departmental vision in order to engage more effectively with Postcolonial and Indigenous Studies and so the conference was organized in order to help facilitate that discussion. An excerpt from the call for papers for the conference is as follows: “In September 2007, after twenty years of debate, the United Nations finally passed the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – a huge symbolic victory for indigenous peoples around the world who struggle under predatory and exploitative relationships with(in) existing nation-states. At the same moment, the UN was lumbering along in the 18th year of its impossible attempts to eradicate colonialism, with groups from around the world flocking to it to petition for the decolonization of their territories or to demand that their situations at least be recognized as “colonial.” Across all continents, indigenous and stateless peoples are struggling for and demanding various forms of sovereignty, as the recently decolonized world is sobering up from the learning of its limits and pratfalls. Postcolonial societies that were born of sometimes radical anti-colonial spirits, now appear to be taking on the role of the colonizer, often against the indigenous peoples that reside within their borders. In places such as Central and Latin America, a resurgence of Third World Leftist politics is being accompanied by a resurgence of indigenous populism. Meanwhile the recent arrests of sovereignty/environmental activists in New Zealand represents another instance where those from the 3rd and 4th worlds who dare to challenge the current make up of today’s “postcolonial world” are branded as terrorists. As scholars involved in critical ethnic studies engage with these ever more complex worlds, they are increasingly resorting to the lenses provided by postcolonial and indigenous studies. This engagement however is not without its limits or problems. As ethnic studies scholars seek to make their vision and scholarship more transnational and global, this push is nonetheless accompanied by gestures that, at the expense of indigenous and postcolonial frameworks, re-center the United States and reaffirm the solvency of its nation-state. In addition, despite their various commonalities, indigenous and postcolonial studies represent intellectual bodies of knowledge that are fundamentally divided over issues such as hybridity, sovereignty, nation, citizenship and subjectivity.”

usually bind Guam and the United States together in crass, colonial and dependent ways.⁷³ The result was that Guam was transformed from an island of coconuts and not much else, into something that the United States clearly needs in terms of securing its economic and technological interests in Asia, as well as its overall military interests. That is, Leon Guerrero's presentation posited Guam as a hub, crucial in making commerce and communication between Asia and the United States convenient.⁷⁴

Similarly, a 2008 text titled *What We Bury at Night*, by Chamorro activist Julian Aguon, also represents an attempt to reveal the importance of Guam and the other islands in Micronesia, not specifically in terms of what they contribute (although that is discussed usually in terms of military service and strategic location), but more so in terms of why Americans should care about Micronesia, why they should turn their vision there.⁷⁵ That is, Aguon's book asserts *why these islands matter*. In his text, Aguon works to cram the experiences of these islands and islanders into the prevailing metrics of violence and oppression. He moves from island to island to show how communities deal with the serious effects on their bodies, their environments, and their dreams, brought about by American militarization and nuclear colonialism.⁷⁶ His goal is not so different than mine was at the film screening – to make people in America, especially those who already have progressive or liberal leanings, care about Guam; to show the violence and

⁷³ I was the panel moderator, which in addition to Michael Leon Guerrero, also included Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel, an independent scholar whose research is on Chamorro/Native Feminisms, and Michael Pangelinan Perez, a Chamorro sociologist whose work was on diaspora, colonialism and identity.

⁷⁴ "The Ghost of Guam in the Machinery of American Sovereignty," A Roundtable Discussion with Michael Lujan Bevacqua, Antoinette Charfauros McDaniel, Michael Pangelinan Perez and Michael Leon Guerrero, 'Postcolonial' Futures in a Not Yet Postcolonial World: Locating the Intersections of Ethnic, Indigenous and Postcolonial Studies, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California, 7 March 2008.

⁷⁵ Aguon, *What We Bury At Night*....

⁷⁶ Nic Maclellan, "The Nuclear Age in the Pacific Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific*, (17:2), Fall 2005, 363-372. Richard Salvador, "The Nuclear History of Micronesia, and the Pacific," *Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*, http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/1999/08/00_salvador_micronesia.htm. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

the indignity that people in Micronesia suffer, to try and stir up the conscience of Americans, to make them *see* a region of the world which former U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger (in 1971 in his capacity as National Security Advisor), once said of the people of Micronesia, “There are only 90,000 of them. Who gives a damn?”⁷⁷

There are obvious merits to these interventions and I do not, in any way, mean to imply that this sort of work is “wrong” or bad. They are productive to the extent that, in the United States and around the world, Guam is relatively unknown, especially with regards to its colonial history and present.⁷⁸ Yet, interventions such as these, and like those I was expected to make at the film screening – i.e. proving that Guam is something one should know and care about – is framed by the prevailing metrics of what constitutes violence, oppression, un-American and immoral activities, or even more generically, what constitutes an object, a space as that which is “obviously” important or not.⁷⁹ As one peace activist at the film screening noted, “But people are dying in Iraq...so I don’t understand how you can say that Guam is what really matters here.”⁸⁰ Thus, interventions such as Leon Guerrero’s and Aguon’s sift through the different ways of integrating Guam into a particular fixed system of values, in order to produce the island as a site capable of

⁷⁷ It should be noted that the 90,000 estimate of Kissinger was not meant to include Chamorros from Guam, but only those people who resided in the Trust Territories of Micronesia. Walter Hickel, *Who Owns America?* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971), 208.

⁷⁸ Aguon notes in his introduction that these islands perhaps hold the key to dissolving the American Empire, but never seriously returns to this point. According to Aguon, “As the international community still fails to comprehend – an oversight no doubt enjoying its last days – Micronesia may literally mean ‘the tiny islands’ but nothing is small about our vital importance to the accelerating needs of the U.S. war project, and by consequence, our potential to seriously interrupt it.” Aguon, *What We Bury at Night...*, 12.

⁷⁹ See the concluding chapter to, *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, Maryann Cusimano Love (ed.), (Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007).

⁸⁰ Even on Guam itself, it is common to find its own problems and struggles for change (such as decolonization) as being too abstract and not real enough. Not real problems that really deserve much attention or effort. The fact that Guam is a lucky first-world-colony or a place where decolonization is not a physically violent process, means somehow that it is not real, and that the fights which really matter are somewhere else.

signifying that which is already recognized as important or unjust. Given that my dissertation focuses on what the lack of knowledge about Guam hides and produces, the luminal status of the island is something that must be interrogated, not in terms of proving errors or correcting assumptions, but rather as an apparently natural or common sense gesture which is nonetheless incredibly productive. Although the United States may be infected with an incredible amount of inaccurate information, or ignorance, about Guam, my intent here is to argue not that appearances are deceiving, but that they are in fact productive.

Although both Aguon and Leon Guerrero provide certain, important details about the American Empire, they do not capture (at least not in any way beyond material means) how those details, and the associated role of Guam, help in producing that empire. In each of these interventions, Guam's newly revealed presence, and its contributions, remains minute, still marginal. One example of this is the number of Chamorro soldiers or soldiers from Micronesia or soldiers from the entire Insular Empire of the United States that have been killed in America's War on Terror. As of November 2009, almost 70 soldiers from America's territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and their freely or forcibly associated nations in Micronesia have been killed fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf.⁸¹ Amongst them, 25 were Chamorros from Guam and the CNMI.⁸² Per capita these statistics are appalling and represent the highest in the United States, but on the basis of material numbers alone they

⁸¹ The US Department of Interior Home Page, "Fallen Heroes in the War on Terror from the OIA's Insular Areas," http://www.doi.gov/oia/Firstpginfo/islanders_in_the_military/heroes.html. Site Accessed 28 April 2008. As of May 2009 the page had been remodeled and was no longer about the heroes fallen in the War on Terror, but had been expanded to include soldiers from the insular areas who had also died in the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i and also an ambiguous listing of heroes who had died "prior to the War on Terror."

⁸² Brett Kelman, "Guam Honors War Dead," *The Pacific Daily News*, May 27, 2008. Blaine Harden, "Guam's Young, Steeped in History, Line Up to Enlist," *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2008.

pale in comparison to the numbers killed from larger states. An approach based on invisibility would assume that people don't know about these deaths and reveal them to show how much people in the colonies of America are sacrificing for a country which isn't really theirs.⁸³

But to reveal the violence in the colonies, does not necessarily move them any closer to the colonizer or make their violence any less distant or empty.⁸⁴ Indeed, these interventions simply work to find a place for Guam and its particular history and present within the existing hierarchy of violences. The result is that although the sins of American colonialism and militarism in the Pacific may be revealed, they merely transform Guam from a small, tiny, insignificant part of the United States, into a small, tiny, insignificant part of the United States Empire. The framework of invisibility allows the existing network of ideas to dictate a continued meaninglessness for the island. In their efforts to fill the emptiness of Guam with meanings based on the existing network of ideas, they do not address what that fundamental emptiness signifies. As they work to *sohmok* or cram Guam into those ideas, they miss the crucial fact *that Guam is already there*.

⁸³ For instance, amongst all of the Chamorro death, the family of only one, Jonathan Pangelinan Santos made any sort of public statement that there was some sort of injustice attached to the death of their family member. A short documentary was even created telling his story through interviews with his mother, a fellow soldier and fragments of his journal that he kept before he was killed. But despite this rare instance of vocal anger of the treatment of one of the US's colonial citizens, much of the public outrage focused on the fact that he had served and died as an American and thus deserved to be treated like one. The issues of why his death held a particular character of injustice were set aside, namely the colonial difference between the United States and Guam were set aside, and his death became another story of the life and death of an exceptional American, someone who is not really American, but nonetheless serves far beyond their position. Because of this, the potential critique of the United States that his death might have possessed was lost, as the injustice was that he was not properly recognized or included as an American. Brett Kelman, "Fallen Soldier's Dairy," *The Pacific Daily News*, 6 December 2008.

⁸⁴ Although I am not explicitly invoking it, much of this chapter is influenced by Anne McClintock and her theory of *anachronistic space*. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 40.

Thus, for this dissertation I'd like to take a different path. My choice based on the metaphor of banality would be to not just count these deaths, or to mark amongst the 5,000 plus soldiers who have died fighting for the United States those that have colonial roots, but to ask what their exceptional deaths, indeed their exceptional lives, enable in terms of producing the empire they are fighting for. Beyond their mere participation, what sort of discursive regimes are sustained by the forms of presence and absence that they embody?⁸⁵ What does their service do in terms of obscuring or wiping away the colonial histories that mark the islands they come from? How can we analyze them through the assumption that regardless of whether or not Americans know of them, they are already tied to them, that they produce American identities irrespective of the general ignorance of their colonize?⁸⁶ I mention these questions not because I will address them specifically in this dissertation, but they reflect a similar critical intent, a similar way of addressing the relationship between Guam and the United States.

By accepting a sort of peripheral existence for Guam, the lack of knowledge about Guam can be lamented but nonetheless understood. The United States can still be charged with colonization, with crimes, with the eradication of cultures and languages, the destruction of environments, the use of people as guinea pigs – but these crimes *remain in the colonies*, both in terms of location and in terms of impact and meaning.⁸⁷ They

⁸⁵ Jason Dangel, "Paths to U.S. citizenship differ for Soldiers from 4th BCT," *Multi-National Force Iraq*, 12 July 2006. AP, "Group shuns Filipino mother of slain soldiers," *MSNBC*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8014030/> 28 May 2005, Site Accessed 4 November 2009.

⁸⁶ An earlier version of this dissertation included a chapter which was based on a paper I wrote which explored the productive aspects of "marginal" Chamorro soldiers achieving the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and what was the productive aspects for the United States in terms of consuming their exceptional deaths? Bevacqua, "The Exceptional Life(s) and Death(s) of a Chamorro Soldier....", Madelsar Tmetuchl Ngiraingas, *Pacific Subjectivities: "Routes and Roots" of Indigeneity and Militarism*, (Dissertation Prospectus, University of California, San Diego, 2007).

⁸⁷ The recent debate in the United States over torture and its use in terms of interrogating "terrorists," can help us understand this point. The practice is condemned in a number of ways, the most

remain in what is outside of America, in the peripheral, isolated, distant areas that don't touch or pierce the core of America, that are exceptional, distant moments of power's abuse. Thus, the invisibility approach further enables a sort of American *innocence*, in that the lack of knowledge about Guam or about America's empire is understandable or is expected, not as a matter that actually structures American subjectivity, American existence, by merely as an effect of reality.

7. *Banality Makes Rumsfeld High*

The concept, or framework, of banality assumes that subjects and objects are always already linked together, but that this relationship is always elided and the object in the relationship appears *as if it means nothing*. The result is that the subject is produced, and is made sovereign through this veneer of nothingness, with any potential ties blocked from view, save for the hand of the sovereign invoking ownership and use. Banality assumes that the emptiness of something does not represent a lack of power but rather an overabundance of it.⁸⁸ This framework, instead of that of invisibility, is necessary to capture the strange, sometime obscene way that Guam is represented in relation to the

widely used is the idea that our sinking to this level, our practicing these inhuman or immoral tactics for some shred of intel, is not worth the huge loss that the United States has to shoulder in terms of losing its moral authority and credibility around the world. While this way of articulating the impact or the effects of torture has a way of including all in this act (those who condemn it and support it alike, and even those who don't even know about it), but the actual stain is always carefully negotiated and minimized. The moral stain, those who have culpability or responsibility is always limited, isolated to particular regions (GTMO or secret prisons) or signifiers (rendition) or bodies (the bad apples).

⁸⁸ There is no intended relationship between the way I am invoking banality in this dissertation and the way that the term is commonly used in theoretical conversations, namely in the spirit of Hannah Arendt's thesis on the *banality of evil*. Their might be some points of commonality, since both the way I use it and Arendt's used it, were meant to refer to something as being without taste, without note, simple or boring, something which would generally pass beneath your gaze without a second thought. Arendt invokes this in order to argue that evil exists not just in the "obviously" evil or that which sticks out from a society as rabid or crazy, but rather in the everyday sort of ways in which people live and carry out the rules of their lives. For me however, I invoke banality in order to contrast it with the idea of nothing being there, namely the notion of invisibility. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

United States. Take for instance a strangely titled 2004 article from *The New York Times*. This article, which addresses rumors of Guam being considered for some very serious military development, is titled “Looking for friendly base overseas, Pentagon finds it already has one.”⁸⁹ This phrase never appears in the article itself, but nonetheless it references, in very direct way, the strange relationship between Guam and the United States. Here, Guam is positioned as an island that is wholly forgettable and useless, something barely American, which Air Force personnel commonly refers to as “the world’s largest gas station.”⁹⁰ Yet, at the same time, it is so crucial, for here we find thousands of American military personnel and billions of dollars worth of military hardware with, as this article noted, plenty more on the way.

The countenance, rhetoric, and desires of then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld plays a crucial role in providing the narrative frame for the article, for they operate as the force that brings the gaze of the United States to Guam, instilling it with value, transforming it from the trailer park of the Pacific into a “power projection hub.”⁹¹ This voice is not one marked by cold, calculated, rational planning, but one infused with excitement. According to an American diplomat in Japan, “Rumsfeld keeps saying, ‘What about Guam? Let’s build up Guam,’ ” And according to a local businessman on Guam, “Rumsfeld is high on Guam; he was heard asking, ‘How are we going to do Guam?’”⁹²

⁸⁹ James Brooke, “Looking for Friendly Overseas Base, Pentagon Finds It Already Has One,” *The New York Times*, 7 April 2004.

⁹⁰ It is also common for Guam to be referred to by the United States Military as the “world largest supermarket,” because of its role as a critical supply depot for American forces during and immediately after World War II.

⁹¹ Julie Dawson, “Small Island, Big Military Presence,” *Military Money*, <http://www.militarymoney.com/home/1093615147>, Fall 2004. Site Accessed 11 April 2009.

⁹² Brooke, “Looking for Friendly...”

I use banality in order to comprehend this dynamic where a site so crucial to American interests, which is spoken of which such strategically important affection and interest, can somehow also be the place which the Pentagon forgets it already has. In fact, it is precisely this horridly asymmetrical relationship of emptiness and powerlessness on one side of the equation, with full, invigorated, sovereign excitement on the other that defines banality. For, scanning through the representations in the article, it becomes brutally evident that Guam has nothing save for that which is derived from the military planners, Admirals, diplomats to infuse into, transfer to, or build upon it.⁹³ What we see here is the colonial difference, Guam's exceptional status, and the general lack of knowledge, all operating as a barrier of innocence, through which interventions into Guam are cleansed of any prior stain so that the *island may be (re)discovered in sovereign excitement and enjoyment*.⁹⁴ This dynamic that the title of the article alludes to, creates the situation where the rhetorical dreams and wishes of military men for distant island outposts, carry the weight of being policy, of dictating reality. The title of the article reifies that doctrine of sovereign discovery, by naturalizing the ability of the

⁹³ In most articles of this nature, covering the possibility of a military increase being transferred to Guam, some aspect of "local sentiment" is included or at least hinted at. This story is interesting in how, in discussing the incredible excitement of the military, it completely ignores the fact that although the military may speak of Guam as if the entire island is theirs to do with as they please, there are still more than 160,000 other people (Chamorro and non-Chamorro) who also live there and have a stake in the militarization of their island. This article is therefore sublime in the way even the text and way it is written is riddled with the same exciting desires of sovereign ownership as the speech of the military officials being interviewed. In other articles local elements are most commonly articulated through the trope of "economic blues will be chased away by military money," and thus is rarely every attributed to any critical or skeptical intent, but just a civilian residue that cannot help but be economically invigorated by more military coming to Guam.

⁹⁴ According to Chris Connery, part of this relationship that the United States has with Guam, the production of this sovereignty power, is derived from the ontology of the ocean and its relationship to empires of land. Connery quotes a number of different historians and theorists who all place a domination of the ocean as the key to surpassing oneself. As the ocean represents a vast nothingness, it is through that mastery that you can enjoy an untold level of sovereignty. Christopher Connery, "Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements," *boundary 2*, (28:2), 2001, 173-201.

United States and its military to determine Guam, to act as if there is no pre-existing binding link that defines, or guides, their gaze or intervention; no existing relationship that could restrict or inhibit the enjoyment of this space. It is after all, as Slavoj Zizek notes, within the holes, the blind spots of the symbolic network, where there seems to be an emptiness in signification, that the subject is allowed enjoyment.⁹⁵ The key here is that the banality of Guam, enables Rumsfeld, the United States military, and the United States in general, to produce something, to discover something, to take control and possess something, *that already exists, which they already have*. Banality recognizes that Guam is already present and that gestures directed towards it take place to make it mean nothing, to make it appear as nothing. Invisibility requires no such gestures.

8. Implicating Empires

Texts covering American imperialism and militarism, always mention Guam, but always in a peculiar manner, as if it carries little potential meaning beyond this mentioning. A case in point is Chalmers Johnson's *The Sorrows of Empire*. In his text, which is a treatise on the birth, development and maintenance of the growing network of American military colonialism, we do find Guam mentioned, three times, yet never in any substantive way, and instead as emptied of all its potential contents. What this means is that the island is not written out of the book, *but written around*.

Despite the fact that Guam plays a significant role in securing and balancing American military interests in the East Asian region – which Johnson spends much of the book discussing, and is also a noted expert on – Guam is never mentioned in this

⁹⁵ Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (London: Verso, 2008), 2.

context.⁹⁶ The three mentions of Guam all relate directly to it being one of the territories captured by the United States during the Spanish American War. And in each of these instances it is *only mentioned*, never attributed any specific historical or contemporary descriptive information or force, and instead is merely named alongside other larger sites of American imperial acquisition, i.e. Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines.⁹⁷ It is through the historical and contemporary struggles of these latter nations/peoples that concepts such as American colonialism, imperialism and militarism are illustrated.

This sort of treatment is not unique to Johnson's work, but is common in these types of progressive texts on American imperialism. We find a similar example in Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.⁹⁸ This text is considered one of the key canonical texts that presents a progressive interpretation and builds a critical consciousness of American history and its interventions around the world. Here too Guam is mentioned several times, but each mention, like in Johnson's text, is as empty as

⁹⁶ Since 2005, with the announcement that at least 8,000 US Marines and their dependents currently stationed in Okinawa will be transferred to Guam, Johnson has come to more regularly refer to Guam in a contemporary sense. Despite the new relevance that Guam has suddenly been infused into Johnson's framework, I have yet to find a single article where you does anything other than mention Guam. His work, while making Guam "visible" in his framework, nonetheless has an interesting way of reproducing its emptiness and banality, much in the same way that the United States military treats the island. For instance, when the agreement to transfer Marines from Okinawa to Guam was first signed (the agreement includes a number of other changes, transfers and closures as well), Guam was treated with a similar emptiness, mentioned as a potential site, but never included in the conversation and not given a set at that table with the United States and Japan. Chalmers Johnson, "Baseless Expenditures," *Asia times Online*, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KG09Df02.html, 9 July 2009, Site Accessed 2 December 2009.

⁹⁷ Here are the Guam mentions from *The Sorrows of Empire*: P. 2: "Then, at the edge of the twentieth century, a group of self-conscious imperialists in the government – much like a similar group of conservatives who a century later would seek to implement their own expansive agendas under the cover of the 'war on terrorism' – used the Spanish-American War to seed military bases in Central America, various islands in the Caribbean, Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines." P. 42: "The Paris Treaty also transferred the Spanish territories of Puerto Rico and Guam to American sovereignty, where they remain to this day." P. 189: "Some of the bases we acquired at that time – Guantanamo Bay, Pearl Harbor, Guam – are still overseas military outposts or are on territories that we later directly annexed." P. 192: "As a result of victory in that war, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines were made colonies, Hawaii and the Panama Canal Zone (in which numerous military bases were located) were annexed, and a military base was established in Cuba."

⁹⁸ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 – present*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

the next. It is invoked primarily alongside Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines as a site for the building of American imperial consciousness and empire, but nothing more.⁹⁹

Each of the other locales are ascribed a particular history, chock full of American racist and imperialist interventions, but no such treatment is extended to Guam, save for its mere mentioning.¹⁰⁰

This is the most common sort of banal citation of Guam with reference to its historical relationship to the United States. Yet even contemporary mentions of Guam as a current colony of the United States can take on the same curiously empty character. A case in point is the anthology *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century World Order*, which brings together the voices of activists and academics, all of which chronicle past and current struggles against globalization, and make recommendations for future struggles.¹⁰¹ In this text, Guam is introduced in the book's first chapter, in a list that frames Guam as a perfunctory or given part of America's Empire, something to be named initially if only to be moved past, so that our attention can be shifted to more interesting or lurid imperial sites or activities. In attempting to

⁹⁹ Again, just for fun, here are the Guam mentions from *A People's History of the United States*: P. 312: "And Guam, the Spanish possession in the Pacific, almost all the way to the Philippines was taken. In December 1898, the peace treaty was signed with Spain, officially turning over to the United States Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, for a payment of \$20 million." P. 408: "It had seized Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico, and fought a brutal war to subjugate the Filipinos." P. 424: "Martin Sherwin says that among the Nagasaki dead were probably American prisoners of war. He notes a message of July 31 from Headquarters, U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces, Guam, to the War Department..."

¹⁰⁰ I should note however that, there is one very subversive Guam mention in the book, which fits very well within my methodology and intent for this dissertation, and is most likely my personal Guam mentions of all plethora that I've sifted through for this project. In Zinn's chapter which sets the stage for critique of World War II as a good war, or in his words "a people's war," he opens it with a Guam mention, which strings together a very critical chain of equivalences. A 1939 skit performed by the Communist Party of the United States opens with this ironic declaration: "We, the governments of Great Britain and the United States, in the name of India, Burma, Malaya, Australia, British East Africa, British Guiana, Hongkong, Siam, Singapore, Egypt, Palestine, Canada, New Zealand, Northern Island, Scotland, Wales, as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska and the Virgin Islands, hereby declare most emphatically, that this is not an imperialist war." Zinn, 407.

¹⁰¹ *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century World Order*, Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney (eds.), (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

situate the United States as an imperial power, and also explain why the public of the United States has so effectively resisted seeing itself as one, the editors Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney write: “The reason was fairly plain [as to why decolonization movements didn’t shake the American consciousness]: Despite the dependent status of Puerto Rico, Guam, and a scattering of islands, colonization was never the American imperial style...”¹⁰² This statement makes Guam seem like an “ordinary” easy part of empire or their imperial equation. That the banality of Guam, its exceptionalism, is here not referred to through colonialism, but rather through its “dependent status,” helps to animate a more important and critical analysis.

What we can glean from this is that Guam is far from absent in these texts, but always seems to appear in a generic, empty way. The sort of banal key to understanding Guam’s position might be that it is never too small to mention, but always too small to mean something. Guam’s inclusion or visibility in critical American studies or liberal texts is predicated on the idea/assumption that it be relegated to a minute link in a chain of equivalences.¹⁰³ There is no single chain that has the monopoly on mentioning Guam,

¹⁰² Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney, “The Debate About Globalization: An Introduction,” *Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century World Order*, Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney (eds.), (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xi.

¹⁰³ In his first English text *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Marxist Lacanian Slavoj Žižek, sets up his theoretical project in a way which is very reminiscent of the way I have just described the place or non-place of Guam. The first sentence of the first page:

In that book of [Jurgen] Habermas’s which specifically addresses the issue of so-called ‘post-structuralism’, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, there is a curious detail concerning [Jacques] Lacan’s name: it is mentioned only five times and each time in conjunction with other names.

Žižek moves then to cite in hilarious fashion each one of these instances five in the original German (von Freud oder C.G. Jung, von Lacan oder Levi-Strauss), to draw attention to the almost curious presence that Lacan receives in Habermas’s text. According to Žižek, “Lacanian theory is not, then, perceived as a specific entity; it is...always articulated in a series of equivalences.” The method of articulation is crucial here, because of the way it implies both the recognition of something, and yet a clear repression or “theoretical amnesia” surrounding it. By giving life or meaning to something only within a

but most all of them can be tied in some way to those three pesky -isms of American violence. Guam is one of those infamous territories seized in 1898, or a site occupied, attacked and later reinvaded and reoccupied during World War II, or it is one of America's military bases today, or one of America's official colonies, or one of its unincorporated territories. When Guam is brought into these chains it becomes a clear link in a chain of signification of some possible malfeasance or injustice, but it is rarely written of as something which has an essence or existence of its own.

This is the curious paradox of Guam, which it is a site constituted through a very stark package of American colonialism, imperialism and militarism, but apparently it cannot signify any of them. By theorizing Guam through the notion of banality, this emptiness becomes very *potent*. There is, in fact, something powerful about Guam, one of America's key military, appearing as an empty or zero point.

9. *Owning Colonialism...*

This leads me to the question of why use sovereignty as the central concept of this dissertation to critically conceive of this relationship between Guam and the United States. What does this almost natural emptiness of Guam, this banality that it is immersed in, even in critical or liberal conversations, perform? What role if any, does it play in making America sovereign? In creating American power, solvency, rights, authority?

series of other somethings, I deny it any other existence, confining it to this chain and allowing it only a surface, but depriving it of sovereignty. If the history of the United States formed a narrative text similar to Habermas's, the place of Guam would no doubt be similar in this empty sense. Throughout the history of the United States, Guam makes a number of cameo appearances, working different sets of signifiers to form chains of equivalences, most notably during US wars. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London, Verso, 1989), 1.

What role does the emptiness of Guam play in producing the fullness and consistency of America?

To start this discussion, let us build off the previously stated paradox that Guam is both, a very clear site of certain American -isms, and nonetheless is assumed to be incapable of signifying of them. In the October 29, 1971 issue of Guam's largest newspaper *The Pacific Daily News*, we find an editorial published under the fascinating title "U.S. Colonialism."¹⁰⁴ For those familiar with the media in Guam, this open admission of the possible intersection of the United States and colonialism might come as a shock. From Guam to Washington D.C. there are a plethora of mechanisms which are readily available in order to cover up or deny this fact. Why would the *Pacific Daily News*, the self-aggrandized Voice of Americanization in Guam dare reveal this troubling truth?¹⁰⁵ The answer lies in the dazzling dance of disappearances that take place.

Upon reading this article, we find the editor weakly decrying the effects of American colonialism in the Micronesian islands that surround Guam, which were at the time held in trust by the United States through the mandate of the United Nations.¹⁰⁶ The possibility that Guam might in some way be a victim, or a representative, of U.S. colonialism never enters the column's several hundred words. In fact that sole instance in which the concept of colonialism and the existence of Guam are even closely linked, is when Guam is invoked in simple geographic/size terms, in order to provide a reference

¹⁰⁴ "U.S. Colonialism," *The Pacific Daily News*, 29 October 1971.

¹⁰⁵ Francis Dalisay, "Social Control in an American Pacific Island," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, (33:3), 2009, 239-257. Ronald Stade, *Pacific Passages, World Culture and Local Politics in Guam*, (Stockholm, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1998). Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Impossible Cultures: Missed Representations, Chamorros and the Decolonization of Guam," Paper presented at the 3rd Annual Crossing Borders conference, *Ethnic Studies and Decolonization in the 21st Century*, University of California, Berkeley, 4 March 2005.

¹⁰⁶ David Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia: Discourse Over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*. (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1998).

for the approximate size of *British colonies* in the Pacific. For the editor, the ambiguous political status of Guam was apparently not tangible or intelligible enough to support even its mere mention as a United States colony. Instead this crucial fact simply faded into the background, becoming the banal and natural ground beneath this articulation of U.S. colonialism.

Turning to a second instance, we have Guam once again appearing and disappearing in oddly productive ways around issues of United States imperialism. During a 2004 interview on the progressive radio show, *Democracy Now!* Gore Vidal, in recounting his illustrious career as a novelist, playwright and critic of self-serving American adventures in other people's backyards, made a reference to Guam:

I remember years ago, Time magazine, in one of its numerous attacks on me, on my first book of essays, which was heaven knows when, 30, 40 years ago, I refer to the American empire and things that we were doing that were not very good across the world, and I referred to the empire. And Time magazine dismissed me. It was an awful review. He's the sort of person that says that the United States has an empire. Well, we've got Guam, that's true. That's all we have got. I pointed out that we had troops and so on in over 1,000 other places around the world. That seems imperial to me, but there we are.¹⁰⁷

The *Time* reviewer attempts to diffuse Vidal's assertion of American Empire by asserting its existence in a particular way, through the use of an example that has the uncanny ability to simultaneously take the meaning or vitality out of the *very thing it proves to exist*. Guam is the exception that lies at the banal edge of American benevolence and international morality, which straddles the boundaries of empire, but does not, cannot, embody the violence and exploitation that might lie beyond this exceptional outpost, in the realm of empire proper. Guam is a site which is invoked to stop the critical eye from

¹⁰⁷ *Democracy Now*, http://www.democracynow.org/2004/6/4/imperial_america_gore_vidal_reflects_on, 4 June 2004. Site Accessed 5 December 2009.

wandering into American machinations around the world; it provides a point where the construction of America as an imperial power is *consistent*, true, but also emanates as meaningless, empty, nothing.

Vidal's response however is just as intriguing. He of course rejects the reviewer's attempted deactivation of his effort to write into existence the empire of America. He refuses Guam as the imperial limit of the United States, making clear its empire stretches to touch "over 1,000 other places around the world." The curious aspect here is the way that Vidal makes a similar gesture to that of his reviewer. For Vidal as well, Guam, while able to be included in a larger chain of equivalences which measure and attest to the breadth and scope of American empire and military networks, apparently *cannot embody this notion on its own*. It must first be emptied of its contents, and placed alongside a 1,000 other points, in order for it to count. On its own, despite its colonial status and incredible military importance, it is insufficient or unable to represent U.S. imperialism.¹⁰⁸

In both these examples, we see Guam as a site through which the power, authority and exceptionalist stance of the United States is reproduced. Colonialism, militarism, imperialism all pass over and through Guam and do not emerge as smelling dubious, inequitable or even interesting, but rather either smell fresh and welcoming, or, more commonly, *like nothing* – nothing to be upset about, nothing to critique, nothing to inquire further into, nothing to see here. What conceptual framework, then, given this naturalization of relations and disappearance of power, would help us reveal the structures of American power and dependency? In order to introduce you to my chosen

¹⁰⁸ This is the ultimate point of all the different texts I have cited in the past two sections of this chapter. What is the power for the United States in having a colony which no one considers to be a colony?

domain of inquiry – i.e. sovereignty – let me bring in one more text. In June 2006, the United States Air Force and Navy held “Operation Valiant Shield” off the coast of Guam. Referred to as a “massive armada” by press in the United States, this exercise – designed to encourage cooperation between branches of the United States military, and to encourage more transparency from China – consisted of more than 22,000 military personnel, 300 aircraft and 28 ships.¹⁰⁹ Most media reports covering this event, mentioned Guam simply as the site where this gargantuan operation was taking place, referring to it as an “American territory” or an “American island.”¹¹⁰ In particular, an MSNBC article covering this exercise referred to Guam in an in incredibly curious, tragic, yet productive way – it referred to Guam simply as a “U.S. owned island.”¹¹¹ All of the labels which commonly capture or hold Guam, emphasize, in different ways, the island’s existence as a footnote, a shade or partial refraction of the United States. This is so whether the intent is legal/political, patriotic, strategic, or multicultural – *Guam, U.S.A; Guam: Where America’s Day Begins; Guam: America in Asia; protectorate, possession, dependency...* Even though typical references to Guam in articles such this, might lightly or subtly evoke imperialistic fantasies of empty land, terrain to be defended or real estate to be bought and sold, this article made no attempt to occlude such possible connections, for Guam, quite simply and clearly stated, is American owned.

We have reached an intriguing point of purity here. One of the largest peacetime exercises in the history of the world, takes place around on of the world’s last colonies,

¹⁰⁹ Allison Batdorf, “Massive Armada Taking Part in Carrier Exercise Near Guam,” *Stars and Stripes*, 21 June 2006.

¹¹⁰ Valiant Shield 2 took place the following year and there are plans on making it a semi-annual event.

¹¹¹ Derek Levine, “China to Observe Huge U.S. Military Exercises,” *MSNBC*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13420741> 16 June 2006. Site Accessed 4 December 2009.

yet produces a single mention of it, namely that it belongs to those who are militarizing it. The colonial relationship, the network of legal cases and symbolic talking points, which most heavily make possible the construction of empty land and ownership, is transformed and replaced with the force and commonsense weight of rights and authority. The forms of violence, power and unpleasant -isms, historical or happening at this moment, are transformed into waves of natural force or effects. What appears to remain, if noticed at all, is a pure point of force, or right, *of sovereignty*.

10. First Guam, Then Diego Garcia, Then the World...

To say that Guam produces American sovereignty in this chapter is to draw attention to what this accepted emptiness, the banality of Guam's violent relationship to the United States produces for the United States, most importantly its military. The intersections of Guam's political status, military importance, historical context, and geographical distance all combine to create this curious emptiness. And what this emptiness produces is not just ownership, but an ownership that almost persists beneath its mentioning. It is a type of ownership that through its lack of signification, through its lack of meaning, it ends up producing a potent site, a source of stability and security. The emptiness of Guam is an assurance of America's sovereignty, and infers that no other force will interfere or contest it. That it is, returning to Rumsfeld's buzz with regards to Guam, a site which you own and you use, even if you don't know you own it.

A site of numerous violent contradictions which appears signifies none or very few of them. It is boldly and unabashedly used to increase the power of the United States,

to secure its interests across half of the globe, with no apparent side effects.¹¹² If Guam is a ghost here, it is a ghost which doesn't appear to haunt. The banality of Guam and its relationship to American sovereignty is best expressed through this passage from the 2009 book, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base at Diego Garcia* by David Vine. In the book Vine discusses the violent history of ethnic cleansing and conspiring between British and American governments in order to create a military base in the center of Africa and Asia, which is almost completely unknown. Guam is mentioned in the text several times, the most revealing one being the following:

It's the single most important military facility [Diego Garcia Island] we've got," respected Washington-area military expert John Pike told me. Pike, who runs the website GlobalSecurity.org, explained, "It's the base from which we control half of Africa and the southern side of Asia, the southern side of Eurasia." It's "the facility that at the end of the day gives us some say-so in the Persian Gulf region. If it didn't exist, it would have to be invented." The base is critical to controlling not just the oil-rich Gulf but the world, said Pike: "Even if the entire Eastern Hemisphere has drop-kicked us" from every other base on their territory, he explained, the military's goal is to be able "to run the planet from Guam and Diego Garcia by 2015."¹¹³

On the margins of all the examples or anecdotes that I have cited so far, haunting the edge of each has been the issue of sovereignty. We can find it as the potential for recognizing American dependencies evaporates, and in its place we find an elevated plane of mystical American exceptionalism, independence and self-determination. It exists as the exercise of American power and violence, whether it be colonial, military, or imperial, but becomes nullified and banal, appearing as natural, or as nothing. Lastly, in this final passage we see these two places, Diego Garcia Island and Guam, as not just

¹¹² Or in the words of Ethnic Studies scholar Denise Da Silva, no apparent ethical cost. Denise Da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹¹³ David Vine, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia*, (Princeton :Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

strategic or necessary, but in the way the future of America's global defense and war-making capability hinges on them, they are only two sites which are needed in order to allow the United States to transcend its national borders and become a global power. It is in this final passage, that we can see the broader implications of this chapter, or its importance beyond just talking about Guam. The island is not alone in possessing this contradictory or ghostly status, but is simply one of many, which signify both that emptiness and that powerfulness. That ability to mean nothing, and yet at the same time, a site from which, combined with one or two others, a nation can rule the world. This chapter has thus attempted, to talk about through the particular status of Guam, the structure of that contradiction, that relationship between emptiness and fullness, from which sovereignty for some is produced.

CHAPTER 6: GUAM!

Sovereignty and its Discontents at the United Nations

"The UN is not just a product of do-gooders. It is harshly real. The day will come when men will see the U.N. and what it means clearly. Everything will be all right -- you know when? When people, just people, stop thinking of the United Nations as a weird Picasso abstraction, and see it as a drawing they made themselves."

Dag Hammarskjold, Former Secretary General of the United Nations¹

1. Guam (Not) at the United Nations

In October 2007, I had the honor of representing Guam at the United Nations in New York City. Guam, along with other colonies of the United States, is given the space to come to the United Nations twice each year in order to have their cases heard. I joined two other individuals Rima Miles, a Refalawausch, or indigenous islander from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and Marie Ada Auyong, a diasporic Chamorro attending graduate school at Columbia University.² The three of us came on behalf of different grassroots organizations to testify before the Fourth Committee on the state of affairs in Guam, and to call for the support of the United Nations in pushing the United States to decolonize their colonies, including Guam.³

Having heard stories from elder Chamorro activists about their visits there since the 1980's, the site was imbued with a sort of sacred energy for me. Prior to my testimony, I had the chance to tour the facilities – the art and human rights exhibit, the bookstore, and most prominently the gift shop. An employee there commented that, in

¹ "United Nations: World on Trial," *Time Magazine*, 27 June 1955.

² Refalawasch is the term used for Carolinians from Saipan. They settled there during the mid 1800's when all the Chamorros had been relocated to Guam by the Spanish missionaries. Since the 19th century when Chamorro families returned to the island, they have shared the status of indigenous people of the CNMI.

³ The testimonies were collected into a special edition of the online Chamorro zine *Minagahet*. "Guiñifen i Mañainã-ta," *Minagahet Zine*, (6:1), January 22, 2008.

her view, the majority of people who come to visit the United Nations come to take photos and visit the gift store. When I asked if this was to purchase exotic things, stuff from other countries, and/or to take advantage of the “international” flavor of the United Nations, she responded instead that visitors were usually interested in seeing how their country, or the nation/s to which they traced their roots, were represented there – what sorts of flags, stamps, coins, t-shirts, souvenirs, books and other artifacts they could find that bore the name or symbols of their nations. Interestingly, or ironically, then, the United Nations, a site that is meant to stimulate feelings of internationalism, actually ends up stimulating feelings of nationalism.⁴

I scoured the gift shop, digging through a mountain of national flags, desperately hoping that Guam’s would be present, or that there would be, somewhere in the shop, a section for the flags of the 16 remaining official colonies in the world. At the end of my search I realized I had to settle for the flags of Guam’s recently decolonized neighbors in Micronesia, i.e. Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Admittedly, while peering around the shop that featured items from other small nations and islands, and eventually purchasing those flags, I felt the pull of even just the shell of sovereignty. Observing people from other nations purchasing “local” handicrafts or souvenirs that formed a part of different regional exhibits, I longed for even that base form of recognition, that spot in a gift shop, and perhaps a chair at the table. Guam’s place in that august international body which, for better or for worst, is meant to signify (the possibility for) so many hopes and dreams for a better world, is

⁴ Justin Raimondo, “It’s All About Independence: Nationalism, Imperialism and the Fourth of July,” *Antiwar.com*, <http://original.antiwar.com/justin/2009/07/02/its-all-about-independence/>, 3 July 2009. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

ephemeral at best, weak and ridiculous at its worst, and a diminutive position that was highlighted in the course of my giving testimony.

The Fourth Committee is formally known as the “The Special Political and Decolonization Committee” and if that title isn’t awkward enough, its description according to the United Nations website is just as strange, in an almost excessive and pointless sense. According to UN website, the Fourth Committee “deals with a variety of political subjects not dealt with by the First Committee, as well as with decolonization.”⁵ The Fourth Committee convenes in a massive room; although not the famous General Assembly Room, it is nonetheless huge, with sprawling tables with seats for representatives from every country, and some international organizations or unions of nations. For those who come to testify, however, there is no such table or chair with their country’s name on it. The area for those testifying is in the back of the room, off to the left *and behind* all of those who symbolically hold power over whether or not you get to join them. There is no sign before your seat that names or recognizes the colony you represent; instead all those without “sovereignty” share the same seat with the word “PETITIONERS” marking it.⁶ It is a truly surreal experience, representing your colony thus, yelling into a microphone, hoping someone will listen, as the delegates of various sovereign states chat with each other, talk on their cell phones and, in some instances, surf the internet or play games on their laptops.⁷ Your presence as “petitioner,” your place in relation to “sovereignty” in that dominant sense, as the substance that creates this

⁵ The United Nations, *Main Committee Page for the United Nations Website*, <http://www.un.org/ga/maincommittees.shtml>. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

⁶ Or in some cases, the placard may say “RESERVED” or “IAEA,” the later of which I presume refers to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

⁷ The fact that the majority of delegates are also sitting with large plastic earphones through which they are listening to translations of your talk, makes it an even more unnerving experience. The lack of response to your statements, whether they be bold accusations, creative turns of phrase or silly jokes, may simply be due to the delays for translations, or the fact that you may have been lost in translation.

fraternity, is so weak, short and marginal that, as in the case of Guam, it boils down to the two moments a year when you can appear before the United Nations and testify before the Fourth Committee and the Committee of 24.⁸ From this perspective, the lure of sovereignty, in its simplest sense, is very strong.

Although much of my work as an activist and an academic is about securing “sovereignty” for Guam, I am wary of the “magical” promise of this form of sovereignty, especially for a “small” and militarily strategically important site such as Guam. The “giving” or “receiving” of sovereignty means nothing in terms of addressing the colonial character of a relationship and can actually provide the means through which a fundamentally unequal and exploitative relationship can continue, albeit as a legitimized way of being.⁹ If we look, for instance, at the nations that have decolonized over the past

⁸ The Committee of 24 is also known as the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. It was created in 1961 to oversee the implementation of the United Nations mandate to assist in the decolonization of remaining territories in the world. For the past two decades, as the number of officially recognized colonies or non-self-governing territories has dwindled, the committee has also become marginalized and continues to exist merely for show, rather than to carry out its mandate. *Website for the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization*,

http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/special_committee_main.htm. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

⁹ For instance, the current political status that Guam has no, that of an organized unincorporated territory, comes from a desire of the United States, to hold onto the island and ensure that it would not be wrested free from its grip. In terms of maintaining one’s colonies, often times, moving your colony closer to you, can be the best way of making certain it never leaves you. By creating a façade of Americanness for Guam in 1950, with the passing of an Organic Act and providing Chamorros US citizenship, the United States actually provided the means through which Guam’s colonial status could be continued and actually seen as acceptable. With this act of the U.S. Congress the daily governance of Guam was transferred from the United States Navy to a newly formed civilian government in Guam. Sovereignty and plenary power remained with the United States, but control over local issues and laws was given to a governor who, up until 1970, was appointed, and a unicameral legislature elected at large. While a huge shift does take place with the Organic Act, it is important not to be dazzled by this formal integration. The position of the Chamorro in relation to the United States does change drastically, paving the way for a banal sea of inclusions and exclusions. The Chamorro on Guam will become eligible for welfare, but will not be able to vote for President. The Chamorro on Guam will be able to join the military as an American and travel freely with a US passport, but will not have a representative in Congress who can vote. This shift must be thought of in relation to the larger geopolitical/strategic military interests, as well as how this act enables the United States to continue to militarize Guam without any international, national or local interference. The late Governor of Guam Ricardo J Bordallo’s comments on the Organic Act are instructive here. Speaking in the midst of his corruption trial brought forth by the Federal Government in 1986, Bordallo said, “It was sad for the people of Guam when the Organic Act was signed...The Organic Act is not designed to enhance the dignity of the indigenous people. It was designed to enhance the colonial authority

40 years, they are, with a few exceptions, hardly equal with their former colonizers. The world, which awaited their freshly forged national souls and cultures, was one defined by the systemic trappings of the same structurally inequitable relationship, although now with less of the odor from colonialism.¹⁰ Sovereignty provides an order to a world, but it is unclear whether or not that world belongs to the recently decolonized.

The site in question for this chapter is the United Nations and what role it plays in defending and challenging dominant versions of sovereignty. I will incorporate into the discussion, a number of academic texts on sovereignty which address the concept's productive contradictions from a philosophical and indigenous studies perspective. The traces of sovereignty that this chapter will feature are the stories and experiences primarily of Chamorros who have gone to the United Nations on behalf of Guam seeking the island's decolonization.

Through an analysis of their place at the United Nations, I demonstrate the ways in which a place such as Guam haunts the contemporary world, sitting paradoxically outside of and in the trembling midst of the sovereignty that makes this world possible. Before proceeding with an analysis of the UN, however, I provide a discussion first about the types of sovereignty I interrogate in this chapter, i.e. its primary facets and what I am interested in unpacking with regards to the status of indigenous and colonized people.

2. Sovereignty as per Senator John McCain

of the United States." Bart Stinson, "Civilian government was born from the Organic Act in 1950," *The Pacific Daily News*, 9 October 1986, 4. Dirk Anthony Ballendorf, "Guam: Civilians, the U.S. Military, and Chamorros after the Organic Act of 1950," *Farms, Firms and Runways: Perspectives on U.S. Military Bases in the Western Pacific*, Ed. L. Eve Armentrout Ma, (Imprint Publications, Chicago, 2001), 203-214.

¹⁰ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, (New York: The New Press, 2007).

Early in his 2008 campaign bid for President of the United States, Republican contender Senator John McCain was asked a question during a town hall meeting in New Hampshire about the possibility of American troops remaining in Iraq for as long as “50 years.” In response to this question, John McCain made a series of statements which would haunt him for the rest of the campaign and become a source of much confusion and derision. While his remarks never explicitly used the term “sovereignty,” the public response that ensued had everything to do with the concept.

On January 3rd 2008, late one evening before a crowd of about two hundred in the town of Derry, New Hampshire, a man named Dave Tiffany, a “politically independent activist working for peace...” asked McCain how long he was willing to keep American troops in Iraq.¹¹ He prefaced his question with the fact that McCain’s website didn’t mention how long the candidate was willing to keep American troops there, and that then President George W. Bush had recently stated that he believed that American troops might be in the country for the next 50 years. McCain interrupted Tiffany after the mention of Bush and the following exchange ensued.

Q: President Bush has talked about our staying in Iraq for 50 years — (cut off by McCain)

McCain: Make it a hundred.

Q: Is that ... (cut off)

McCain: We’ve been in South Korea ... we’ve been in Japan for 60 years. We’ve been in South Korea 50 years or so. That would be fine with me. As long as Americans ...

Q: [tries to say something]

McCain: As long as Americans are not being injured or harmed or wounded or killed. That’s fine with me, I hope that would be fine with you, if we maintain a presence in a very volatile part of the world where

¹¹ Dave Tiffany, “McCain Told Me 100 Years,” *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-tiffany/mccain-told-me-100-years_b_95522.html, 7 April 2008. Site Accessed 30 June 2009.

Al Queada [sic] is training and equipping and recruiting and motivating people every single day.¹²

Later that evening a journalist for the progressive magazine *Mother Jones* asked McCain about this comment and the Senator reaffirmed his response,

... excitedly declaring that U.S. troops could be in Iraq for "a thousand years" or "a million years," as far as he was concerned. The key matter, he explained, was whether they were being killed or not: "It's not American presence; it's American casualties." U.S. troops, he continued, are stationed in South Korea, Japan, Europe, Bosnia, and elsewhere as part of a "generally accepted policy of America's multilateralism." There's nothing wrong with Iraq being part of that policy, providing the government in Baghdad does not object.¹³

Here we find Senator McCain providing some telling insight into his view of the role of the American military in the world both, historically and in terms of what the future might hold under a McCain administration.

The point of introducing this quote is not so much about McCain's actual statement, which is hardly controversial considering America's vast military holdings around the world, but rather about the response. In the months following this statement, McCain was regularly pummeled by Democrats, progressives, anti-war activists, and even independent voters, for these remarks because of their imperial and colonial implications. The Democrats seized on these comments, repeating them in their TV, radio and internet ads, trying to position John McCain as militaristic, a war-mongered, and very similar to Bush.¹⁴ Even viral videos, meant to mock McCain because of these comments, appeared on YouTube, attempting to show both, the hilarity and the horror of his

¹² David Corn, "McCain in NH: Would Be 'Fine' to Keep Troops in Iraq for 'A Hundred Years,'" *Mother Jones Blog*, <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2008/01/mccain-nh-would-be-fine-keep-troops-iraq-hundred-years>, 3 January 2008. Site Accessed 2 July 2009.

¹³ Matt Corley, "McCain Flip Flops Again: 100 Years in Iraq 'Would be Fine With Me,' Even 'A Million Years,'" *Think Progress*, <http://thinkprogress.org/2008/01/04/mccain-100-years/>, 4 January 2008. Site Accessed 2 July 2009.

¹⁴ The Democratic Party of the United States, *100*, Youtube Campaign Video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6ul9iMgmOw>, 25 April 2008. Site Accessed 28 June 2009.

remarks. At the center of these critiques and attacks was the fact that time durations like 100 or 1,000 years supposedly run counter to the heart and soul of the United States, and make it appear as an imperial occupier.¹⁵ These critiques are all driven by a very basic view of American power in the world, and a very naïve view of war and intervention.

This naïve view of war boils down to this: wars are battles between or amongst peoples which, when complete, facilitate the return of the fighting parties to where they come from. What stimulates and maintains this image of how wars work, or how the American military functions, is a belief in American sinlessness or benevolence, but more importantly, is a very generic idea of sovereignty that dictate who belongs within, and without, certain borders.¹⁶ Just as sovereignty can provide a framework for the interactions between nations, around their borders and affairs, it also provides somewhat logical yet over-simplistic image of how they wage war, which bears very little resemblance to its actual functioning. In this instance, the concept, or magical aura, of sovereignty holds far more power over those articulating a description of the world than one might imagine. Sovereignty, as a concept that protects, insulates, creates and maintains borders, has a deep impact on how national borders are imagined, on how one understands the ways in which the nation-state intervenes or asserts itself internationally, and what it means when it sets up bases in other people's backyards. For instance, the American fantasy of World War II as its "good war," is sustained by the belief in

¹⁵ The Public Service Administration, *john.he.is*, Youtube Satire Video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gwqEneBKUs>, 11 February 2008. Site Accessed 28 June 2009.

¹⁶ Gary Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*, (New York: Penguin, 1987), 452.

sovereign borders, or that Americans crossed over another's borders to fight and then return home; that there were no imperial or colonial intentions driving the act.¹⁷

Of course, given that the United States is the only country to emerge from World War II with more territory, as well as a new network of client states, dependencies and new military outposts, this imagining is blatantly untrue.¹⁸ Guam is just one of those sites where the United States military clearly did not remain within its "sovereign-" or otherwise-imagined borders, but sought to occupy another's land in order to create a new world order, with narrow national interests at its center. The United States military, made clear through Chalmers Johnson in the previous chapter, is a massive organism with more than 700 bases around the world, in other peoples' backyards.¹⁹ "Sovereignty," as an imagined concept that creates clear, distinct borders, obviously means little when

¹⁷ In the film *Fahrenheit 911*, the term sovereign is used once, when the narrator and film director Michael Moore, recounts the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003. In using the term Moore attempts to use the notion of sovereignty in relation to Iraq in an attempt to jack up the stakes, to instill a sense of moral outrage amongst the viewer. The explicit attempt of Moore's film was to push upon the American movie-going public an overt and aggressive critique of President George W. Bush and his war in Iraq. The usage of "sovereign nation" as opposed to simply, "Iraq" or just "a nation," is meant to use the base concept of sovereignty as something to create a moral border in addition to a political one. Iraq is a sovereign nation meaning it exists as recognized by the world and has borders. But the intent is of course a moral one, to make clear that the invasion of Iraq by the United States was *wrong*. That sovereignty makes a border which there are consequences or it is wrong to cross. *Fahrenheit 911*, dir. Michael Moore, duration 122 mins, 2004.

¹⁸ Studs Turkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II*, (New York, The New Press, 1997). Hal M. Friedman, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in The Pacific Basin, 1945-1947*. (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, 2001). There is no secret that American troops are still found throughout the world in places such as Germany and Japan which were conquered in World War II by the United States and the Allied forces. But nonetheless, the status of World War II as a "good war" in the American imaginary is sustained by the idea that all those troops came home, and had lots of children and started the baby boom and built a strong American middle class. Comedian Bill Maher during an 2009 interview on *The Jay Leno Show*, had this to say about American bases in the context of President Obama's plan to escalate the US involvement in Afghanistan: "But it should not be a surprise, because America, when you think about it, never leaves anywhere. Once we invade your country, we love you long time. I don't know how many people know this, but we have still 60,000 troops in Germany. Germany. Hitler. Ladies and gentlemen, I think we got him. You know, we just don't leave. That's the thing about America that you have to understand, we do not have or want an exit strategy. We're like herpes, cellulite and Irish relatives. Once we come, we do not go. Bill Maher, *The Jay Leno Show*, National Broadcasting Channel, 30 November 2009.

¹⁹ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Secrecy, Militarism and the End of the Republic*, (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2004).

matched up against this reality of American intervention and militarization. But, even within the segment of American political discourse that appears to be the most critical of American “wars,” the magic of sovereignty, in the face of such an obvious truth, continues to hold sway. When McCain invokes the presence of American troops around the world where, in some instances, they have been stationed for more than half a century or, in the case of Guam, more than a century, he is absolutely correct in his characterization of American foreign/basing policy.²⁰ However, the anti-war and Democratic/liberal imagination, that finds this idea revolting or inaccurate, is stimulated by the concept of sovereignty which allows for an orderly, normal, respectful, lawful and border-abiding American core to persist so that an exceptional, most likely Bush/neo-conservative inspired tilt, may be blamed for all those bases being permanently established in the Middle East.

What John McCain’s comments make clear is that the transgression of borders, the contradicting of “sovereignty,” meaning the stationing of troops abroad, is a perfectly acceptable state of being. It has been so for decades and not really caused the United States any real discomfort, or caused them to bleed from their eye-sockets because of the rank hypocrisy. What causes discomfort is when the transgression finds signification in ways which pierce the nation and its comfort, its imagination, and when the borders that sovereignty is supposed to guarantee are revealed to not be the limits of American presence. As McCain makes clear, the bodies of soldiers returning home in large numbers in body bags, is instead a huge signifier of the breakdown or limits of sovereignty.²¹

²⁰ *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*, Catherine Lutz ed., (New York, NYU Press, 2009).

²¹ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, (London, Oxford Press, 1985), 68.

This version of sovereignty is the one that plays the most significant role in producing and sustaining Guam's banality, in producing its powerlessness, and thus maintaining America's control over it and building of its sovereignty through it. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the island appears on so few lists as a site of American imperialism or dispossession precisely because it isn't includable, or legible, in this definition of sovereignty. Since there was no regime that was toppled when it was taken in 1898, and again after it was shattered by Japanese occupation and American re-invasion during World War II, there were no questions to be asked, no sovereign borders to be crossed. An unsovereign land merely had to be (re)taken.

In this chapter, I interrogate this version of sovereignty, invoked by John McCain in his articulation of American military policy, through the political status of present-day Guam. This version of sovereignty is hardly critical, but more than any other in this dissertation; it is one that could be considered mainstream. It is the type that politicians are most likely to refer to, and the definition that we are most likely to find embedded in mainstream journalism when the term is invoked. It is also, despite any claims to the ferocious and threatening internationalism of the United Nations, one which it itself is based upon. It is a definition which the United Nation's is both predicated upon, meaning one it enables and support, but also one which it is constantly limited and constrained by.

I develop this version of sovereignty by citing a number of mainstream texts on sovereignty from the disciplines of political science and international relations. I refer to these texts as mainstream because of the avowed way in which they position themselves as texts that reflect sovereignty and provide a clear version of it. They are written and advertised with the clear intent to provide a comprehensive historical and contemporary

view of sovereignty, its place in the world, and perhaps, most importantly, its necessity in making this world and keeping it safe and secure. Therefore these texts are not critical interventions designed to challenge sovereignty, but rather they are texts used to teach, to inform, to take the object of sovereignty and convert it into knowledge to pass on to the reader.²²

The broadness of these definitions are meant to encompass the universal fraternity of existing nation-states, but this in no way means that these texts take seriously the margins of this interlocking contemporary world. In relation to a site such as Guam, this version of sovereignty is limited, and offers little explicit relevance or explanation. Guam is not the subject of this form of sovereignty; it is not a subject enabled through this definition, but is rather a site that sovereignty is defined against or defined *through*. This situation isn't pertinent solely to Guam, but is a facet of the existence of most marginalized groups that find themselves in a similar relation to this so very essential concept that structures the world today. So, in this chapter, in order to create a more nuanced analysis of the structure of sovereignty, I extend my analysis beyond Guam to also include other indigenous or colonized peoples today, such as those others who make up the details of America's insular and interior empire.²³

In relation to these groups, the seemingly comprehensive and expansive definition of sovereignty, which is meant to encapsulate so much of recent world history and all of

²² As I've qualified in other chapters, this approach to my dissertation is not the most efficient or orthodox way of tackling my intended goal. It would be far easier to simply provide an assortment of critical literature to make so many of my points, but my task as I state in Chapter 4 when discussing the methodology of the trace, is to drag Guam through these conversations and to see what that gleans us.

²³ I am not intending here to speak for all these groups, or to their whole experiences, contexts or aspirations as what I am focusing primarily on for this chapter is the position that they inhabit in relation to the nation's and states that claim their lands or their lives. If this chapter doesn't seem to do justice to the statuses of these communities, it is intentional, as I am more interested in what their positions can tell us about the concept of sovereignty and its role in their continuing colonization.

world governance and order, is in fact very narrow and limiting. Yet, how would this definition help or hinder us in perceiving or investigating those peoples who have either yet to exercise their rights to self-determination or who must, for the integrity of the nation, be deprived of such rights? How does this definition enhance the invisibility and the banality of those sites which fall between the “rational” exchanges of recognition of nations, and instead flicker across borders as disembodied shapes or infantile ghosts?

3. *Defining Sovereignty*

Let me begin by considering two very basic definitions of sovereignty, and address what they entail, what they take as their areas of knowledge, or, in general, what the mechanics and subjects for each are. As already noted, these definitions both come from texts that propose themselves as thorough and authoritative, meaning they are meant to describe the breadth of literature on the concept and suggest a comprehensive and all encompassing definition on the subject.

The first definition comes from Maryann Cusimano Love, from an anthology she edited, titled *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*,

Sovereignty is the form of political organization that has dominated the international system since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Sovereign states have exclusive and final jurisdiction over territory, as well as the resources and politicians that lie within that territory. A system based on sovereignty is one that acknowledges only one political authority over a particular territory, and looks to that authority as final arbiter to solve problems that occur within its borders. In theory, the sovereign state has a monopoly on the use of force within that territory. Outside a state's territory, states may voluntarily band together in treaties or alliances to try to solve particular problems, but only state actors are accorded international legal recognition and standing in a system based on sovereignty.²⁴

²⁴ Maryann Cusimano, *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, (Belmont, California, Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), 4.

The second definition is taken from Robert Jackson's text *Sovereignty*, which is part of Polity Press' *Keywords* series.

Sovereignty is a distinctive configuration of state authority. By 'state' I refer to the conventional meaning: a defined and delimited territory with a permanent population, under the authority of a government. A 'state' could be a colonial state in an empire or a 'state' of the United States. Neither of those states, however are 'sovereign' states. Governmental supremacy and independence is that distinctive configuration of state authority that we refer to as 'sovereignty.' It is vested in highest offices and institutions of states as defined by constitutional law: kings, president, parliaments, supreme courts, etc. It is also vested in the independence of states: their political and legal insulation from foreign governments as acknowledged by international law. When the government of a state is said to be sovereign, it holds supreme authority domestically and independently internationally, at one and the same time.²⁵

These definitions are indeed very broad and fairly comprehensive, for they reflect a globalizing or internationalizing of knowledge, or the creation of a universal concept that reflects and governs the entire world, or (at least) the family of nation-states that make up the world today. They deal with the rights of states within their borders, and the rights of nation-states in relation to each other; they address the governing and defending of territories, and the different ways in which sovereignty is impinged upon. These definitions attempt to encompass different forms of power and authority that sovereignty takes nationally and internationally, the rules that govern the engagement and recognition of countries.

Each of these is based on a particular history of European political evolution and development – a story of Europe's retreat from an older world of violence and chaos, and the forging of a respectful and effective framework for guiding the behavior of nation-states in an international/global world. Moreover, both of these definitions are heavily

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Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty*, (London: Polity Press, 2007), 4-5.

invested in the nation-state/state as the site of sovereign authority, and thus the nation-state operates as the central pillar in these particular texts and the body of academic knowledge they are meant to represent. The concrete and pragmatic (and performative) nature of these definitions of sovereignty is hard to miss. They refer to the world around us, helping imbue authority into the certain institutions and ideas that appear to make our world function. For indigenous peoples and colonies however, this sovereignty is either the force that animates the paternalist or predatory relationships they have with their colonizing nation-states, or is the hopeful end result of a process of decolonization. In this chapter I will follow the traces of sovereignty that emerge from such formalism, by analyzing the role of the United Nations, as guarantor and protector of sovereign status, in order to show the frailties and dependencies of this concept.

4. *The UN*

As one lands on the home page of the United Nations website, one is given the option of choosing between the following languages to start a journey into the United Nations: Farsi, Mandarin, English, French, Russian and Spanish. As the cursor traces over these different options, a succinct and simple answer to the question “What is the UN?” emerges as the words, “*United Nations –It’s Your World!*” flash on-screen in each language. The United Nations posits itself as an organization that offers hope for a better world, but it is full of the complexity and contradictions of the existing world.²⁶ The United Nations website describes its different operations which are intended to reach “every corner of the globe,” thus:

²⁶ According to American politician Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., the United Nations is not “created to take you to Heaven. It is created to prevent you from going to hell.”

Although best known for peacekeeping, peacebuilding [sic], conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance, there are many other ways the United Nations and its System (specialized agencies, funds and programmes) affect our lives and make the world a better place. The Organization works on a broad range of fundamental issues, from sustainable development, environment and refugees protection, disaster relief, counter terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, to promoting democracy, human rights, governance, economic and social development and international health, clearing landmines, expanding food production, and more, in order to achieve its goals and coordinate efforts for a safer world for this and future generations.²⁷

I am not interested in focusing on these particular functions of the United Nations, but rather in engaging its meanings as a site that regulates the concept of sovereignty, specifically in relation to a political site such as Guam. While the United Nations is meant to represent everything from the hope for a world of peace and progress for all, the success of law and democracy, a massive bureaucratic gesture towards universal rights and reason, it is also is a key site in which that world is potentially torn apart, for the United Nations and its universal mandates can, and do, transgress the particular borders of nation-states, challenging their sovereignty in the name of improving the plight of particular communities or guaranteeing that their rights.²⁸

The choice to utilize the United Nations as the key site for this chapter and to use stories of Guam's presence there as a means for critiquing texts on sovereignty, is not an arbitrary choice, but rather one meant to draw out the complex and paradoxical task of the United Nations in relation to sovereignty. In terms of sovereignty, the United Nations exists on a very slippery slope, as it is tasked simultaneously with committing to sovereignty in both a conservative and a progressive sense. In the opening pages of *An*

²⁷ United Nations, *The United Nations Website – The UN at a Glance*, <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml>. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

²⁸ Benedict Kingsley and Adam Roberts, "The UN's Role in International Society since 1945," *United Nations. Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations*, Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsley (eds), (New York: Oxford, 1993), 2.

Insider's Guide to the UN, Linda Fasulo sums up very well the purpose of the United Nations and also hints at its failings:

As the preamble declares, the world's peoples, acting through their representatives, seek to create a just and prosperous world through common action. It could hardly be simpler, and yet during more than half a century of trying we still live amid global insecurity and, in many place, injustice and suffering.²⁹

The mechanics of creating “a just and prosperous world through common action” can be summed up by the four basic principles that are enshrined in the United Nation's charter.

First, the UN was to safeguard peace and security in order “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” Second, it was “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights.” Third, the UN was to uphold respect for international law. And fourth, the new organization pledged “to promote social progress and better standards of life.”³⁰

In the abstract, none of these principles are radical or controversial. But since the inception of the United Nations in 1945, these principles regularly contradict and paralyze the United Nations. At the center of these conflicts and contradictions is the concept of sovereignty, in particular national sovereignty.

The conservative dimension of sovereignty at the United Nation's is its defense of the rights of existing nations. As part of its mandate to uphold international law and to prevent further global wars, the United Nations is tasked with defending nation-states from invasion, from the encroachment of their sovereignty or their sovereign territory. It is supposed to govern the conduct of nations, mediate their conflicts, and protect the weak from the strong. Essential to these tasks is the upholding of their rights as nation-states, and their rights within their internationally recognized domains. The principle of state sovereignty was the central tenet of international law for the century prior to the

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Linda Fasulo, *An Insider's Guide to the UN*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009), 4.

³⁰

Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *United Nations: A Very Short Introduction*, (New York: Oxford, 2008), 1.

founding of the United Nations, and since the United Nations draws its power from its member states, this principle has had to be enshrined in the organization itself.³¹ And while the United Nations exists to protect these rights, it also theoretically holds them in check.

This leads me to the transgressive relationship that the United Nations has in relation to sovereignty – i.e. the ways in which the UN represents an effort to reduce the sovereignty of nation-states in the name of international or global human rights interventions. This is often discussed most prominently in terms of humanitarian intervention wherein the sovereign and absolute control of nation-states over their borders and territories is infringed upon in order to prevent a human crisis. As is discussed in the anthology *The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics*, it can also be found in the ways that international laws or conventions, such as those dealing with environmental protections, are often resisted by nation-states as they usurp the right of nation-states to manage their borders, and the bodies and resources found within them.³²

Kofi Annan, who served as the Secretary General of the United Nations from 1997-2006, became famous for pushing this issue front and center in terms of the role and commitment of the United Nations in relationship to the violence of the modern world. Annan, at least rhetorically, argued that the rights of individuals and people in crisis should outweigh the sovereign rights of nation-states.

If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to

³¹ Vesselin Popovski, "Sovereignty as Duty to Protect Human Rights," *UN Chronicle Online*, <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2004/issue4/0404p16.html>. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

³² *The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics*, Karen Litfin (ed), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998).

gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?³³

The United Nation's is thus, paradoxically, the ultimate defender of nation-state sovereignty, and its biggest threat. Nowhere is this contradiction more clear than in the case of colonized and indigenous people today. I don't wish to go too far into the malfunctioning of the United Nations, or to engage with the vast literature on human rights and national sovereignty.³⁴ Instead, I wish to interrogate the definition of sovereignty that is enshrined at the United Nations through the position of colonized and indigenous people today. The relative "lightness" of my treatment of the United Nations and the usual debates that surround its existence is meant to underscore that my critique of sovereignty does not posit colonized and indigenous communities as bearers of rights but, rather, in a more ghastly or ghostly sense, as a troubling excess to the modern world order.

In the next two sections, the United Nations will be discussed in both the conservative and progressive senses mentioned. First, as a sentinel that stands over the culmination of a grand historical project of the modern world – the creation of the contemporary international system – of which sovereignty is the key structuring concept. Rather than defining the sovereignty that is housed at the United Nations, this section will discuss the place that sovereignty is afforded as a necessary concept that ties the world

³³ Fasulo, 27. As Annan stated: "Once and for all, we must make clear that the rights for which we fight are not the rights of states or factions, but the rights of the individual human being to live in dignity and freedom."

³⁴ Some texts which I consulted in gaining my understanding of the United Nations: James S. Sutterlin, *The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Security: A Challenge to be Met*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003). John Allphine Moore Jr. and Jerry Pubantz, *The New United Nations: International Organization in the 21st Century*, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005). Julie A. Mertus, *The United Nations and Human Rights: A Guide for a New Era*, (New York: Routledge, 2005). Thomas G. Weiss, *What's Wrong with the United Nations (and How to Fix it)*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2008).

together and gives it order. In this sense, the United Nations is a defender of the world order, a defender of the status quo. Second, the United Nations and the hope it offers for indigenous and colonized people represents a threat or a challenge to existing nation-states, to their sovereignty. With its emphasis on decolonization and on providing a process of self-determination for colonized people, the UN is a potential lever for changing the world order.

5. *The Grand Journey of Progress*

Sovereignty in Europe begins as a concept developed in religious or philosophical terms, but with intentional political effects.³⁵ It is a theory of rights and relations between those who govern and those who are governed.³⁶ The issue of determining where sovereignty is located, and the elevation of that site as sovereign, was primarily an internal issue of a political community, one of its secure and natural organizations, and the principle of its governance. The rise of the modern nation-state caused a shift not just in the topography of Europe and thus, via imperialism, of the rest of the world, but also engendered a transformation in the writing and capturing of sovereignty academically.³⁷

Native American/Lenape scholar, Joanne Barker in her article “For Whom Sovereignty Matters,” from the anthology *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation*

³⁵ Joanne Barker, “For Whom Sovereignty Matters,” *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed), (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005), 1-3. Vine Deloria Jr., “Self-Determination and the Concept of Sovereignty,” *Economic Development in American Indian Reservations*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (ed). (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 22. Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Six Books of the Commonwealth*, (Oxford: Alden Press, 1955).

³⁶ The added dimension is the performative those who *should* govern and those who *should be* governed.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Rosi Braidotti and Colin Gordon (trans), Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

in Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination, ascribes this shift, which amounts to the externalizing of questions of sovereignty, as being a result of the codification of two discursive objects that were essential to the identity and stability of a nation-state in a suddenly much larger world, i.e. that of the national constitution and the treaty:

Out of political and theological debates about what constitution the nation, debates deeply embedded within the ideologies and activities of colonialism, modern international law as defined as such. The two primary vehicles that served for the articulation of international legal precepts about nationhood, and so of the sovereignty with which such a character was defined, were the national constitution and the treaty.³⁸

Sovereignty moves from being a persistent issue of internal political organization, and becomes largely abbreviated within a nation's borders, and its questions, along with any critical conflicts, are all things to be discussed at the nation's limits or territorial edges.³⁹ These two discursive objects ground sovereignty in the world of today, making them the foundations of nations and the frameworks of international recognition that create and stabilize them.

The national constitution provides a firm metaphorical and mythological foundation upon which a nation-state's sovereign existence can be proclaimed – upon which the nation itself can be set upon its glorious historical path forward, and the state can be legitimized as rightly sovereignty, rightly embodying and determining the spirit of

³⁸ Barker, 4.

³⁹ Christina Duffy Burnett, "The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: The American Guano Islands," *American Quarterly*, (57:3), September 2005, 779-803. Or as we can see in this article by Christina Duffy Burnett, along with her other work on the political exceptionalism of Puerto Rico, that the discussion of sovereignty only takes place around the edges or the distant corners of the nation and its holdings. In another way, one of the regular discursive objects which has drawn conversations explicitly about sovereignty is the question of who "owns" the North Pole? Michael Blanchefield and Randy Boswell, "Bush Takes Final Swing at Arctic Sovereignty," *The National Post*, 12 January 2009. Scott Borgerson, "An Ice Cold War," *The New York Times*, 8 August 2007.

that forward motion.⁴⁰ The treaty provides the means through which sovereignty ultimately becomes an issue of recognition amongst nation-states. A question given or reduced within each nation-state, but ultimately one whose presence is only felt, and becomes an appropriate object of inquiry at the borders of nations and how they interact with each other. It is a further means of legitimizing a nation-state that, particularly in the case of settler colonial societies, is desperate for any legitimization of their claims to land and existence.

Because of this duality through which it is constituted and secured, sovereignty, both academically and in “real world” terms, is not simply a concept but a *sinthomatic* metaphor in which we see reflected the “spirit” of Europe and the fate of the world. The potency of sovereignty, as a mixture of concrete pragmatic governance and the magic and mysticism that was introduced at the start of this chapter, can now be made clearer. For we find always imprinted into the concept not just the rational, i.e. that which emerges most prominently when the concept is defined, but also the *necessary*, i.e. wherein sovereignty represents a force which blocks the world’s return to a previous violent historical era, and a key rite of passage into the modern world. Sovereignty is a marker of the ways in which Europe was able to first break away from its violent, parochial past, and later, in order to create a more peaceable rational world, it made to spread this framework globally. We find this in nearly all texts that provide a history of sovereignty that pivots around the signifier of “Westphalia.”

⁴⁰ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” *The Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha (ed). (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

Take for instance Robert Jackson's text *Sovereignty*, where he traces the emergence of sovereignty through various regional or international pacts and treaties, which eventually paved the way for the modern world:

...[M]ost scholars see the seventeenth century and particularly the peace treaties of Westphalia (1648), which settled the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), as the best historical reference for symbolizing that momentous turn in European history. That episode effectively removed or led to the removal of the last vestiges of papal authority over international affairs and acknowledged the states of Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, as independent entities. The transformation was completed and confirmed by the Peace of Utrecht (1713), which settled the War of Spanish Succession and confirmed that the balance of power and national interests would prevail over dynastic rights in international affairs order of today.⁴¹

In his book, *The Sovereignty Revolution*, former California Senator Alan Cranston develops a similar trajectory for sovereignty but does not focus on the international or legal agreements of sovereignty; rather it emphasizes the changes in the human condition and the course of human progress and evolution that sovereignty helps stimulate.

The origins of the modern system of sovereign nation-states are generally traced back to 1648 and the Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years War. The treaty embodied an agreement that the royal rulers or Europe's 300 kingdoms, principalities, and baronies would recognize the absolute sovereignty of each in his own realm. Each anointed leader would have the right to handle affairs in his own territory in his own unfettered way without outside interference. The sovereign equality of each ruler and his state with each of the others was to be accepted, regardless of discrepancies in the actual size and strength of their domains.

Professor Stephen Krasner describes the Westphalian system as "Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy" in his recent book bearing that title. For in fact the treaty by no means put an end to meddling by rulers in each other's affairs and did not end the incessant wars between them as the strong conquered the weak and swallowed their land and subjects...

It was not long, as time goes, before abuses of power by those who had acquired so much of it led to unrest among the people, to the French Revolution and to a new concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty came to be

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Jackson 50-51.

seen as belonging not to individual rulers and their dynasties, but rather to nations...

This new sense of national sovereignty and the spirit of democracy and the hunger for human rights and freedom that it sprang from slowly spread from country to country...Progress was interrupted from time to time by coups d'état, counterrevolutions, and the seizing of power by little and large Napoleons, Lenins and Hitlers, but nation-states slowly became the chosen instrument for the assertion and establishment of human rights, as well as the governing of territories and people...

Today we live in a world that prides itself on the progress of democracy.⁴²

These two examples – i.e. Jackson and Cranston – represent a general trend in mainstream academic texts, in the recounting of sovereignty's history as a concept and the ways in which it came to be a key structuring concept of the world's current order. The magic which persists here is a result of the ways in which the recounting of the events that lead to the contemporary moment is infused with a positivism, a necessity, as if there were more at play in Europe's history than wars, negotiations, and religious and political conflicts, and rather that the continent was on the verge of a massive break, that its turning to the "god" of sovereignty to save them from destruction was part of some destined evolution.⁴³ To make this point clearer, Jackson continues in his text:

The peacemakers were trying to reshape the political order of Europe to avoid another disastrous war. They knew they could not return to the world of 1618, even if some of them wanted to. But they knew nothing of the world that would emerge in the decades and centuries after 1648, the world they were entering and to some extent creating.⁴⁴

Although the intent of this passage is to paint the drama of the 17th century, and the incredible task that these political leaders, rulers, theorists, philosophers and so on, held in terms of preventing more brutal wars from breaking out amongst European nations,

⁴² Alan Cranston, *The Sovereignty Revolution*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 29-30.

⁴³ Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1995), 86.

⁴⁴ Jackson, 51.

this characterization hardly paints them as subjects full of agency, but rather people who are caught up in a force or a flow of time and progress that, *even if they wanted to move against it*, they couldn't.

Cranston's text is infused with a similar positive and progressive momentum. Despite the hypocrisy of sovereignty, and the appearance of "Napoleons, Lenins and Hitlers" that might appear to derail the sovereignty train, he ends his narrative in another familiar place.⁴⁵

As recently as 1900, there was not a single country where the most fundamental standards of democracy were fully met. In no country then were the people able to choose their governments in free elections in which every adult was allowed to vote and more than one party could participate. The U.S., England, and France and a handful of other countries were certainly democracies, but even they fell short of these basic standards. Now, a century later, however the people of 120 of the world's 192 countries meet them, while the people of a good many more have attained democracy in more limited forms.⁴⁶

The intent and result of this narrative is that sovereignty becomes an academic and political concept that, according to Karen Litfin's article "The Greening of Sovereignty" has, until recently, been "essentially uncontested," and its mechanics and constitution more often "assumed than elucidated."⁴⁷ In his text, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Jen Bartelsen outlines numerous political science and international relations texts where "sovereignty is stripped of its historical origin and reinstated historically as an organizing principle."⁴⁸

The outline of sovereignty thus far provided, offers an insight into the ways in which sovereignty has been embedded into the general writing and reading of the world

⁴⁵ Cranston, 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷ Karen Litfin, "The Greening of Sovereignty: An Introduction," *The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics*, Karen Litfin (ed), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), 3.

⁴⁸ Bartelsen, 23-24

today. Outside of the walls of academic texts, and more specifically texts meant explicitly to address the origins or meanings of sovereignty, the historical details may be fuzzier but the necessity of the concept is hardly in question. We see embedded in the nation-state form, this definition of sovereignty. It is that from which the current world order emerged and it determines the rules which all countries are supposed to play by.

The United Nations stands as a defender of this narrative and this conception of sovereignty. As a body that can further the legitimization of the nation-state form and the sovereignty that governs it, it represents the ultimate victory of sovereignty. Yet the frustrating failures of the United Nations, its role as a signifier of the hopes and dreams for a better world, constantly return us to the positivistic dimension of sovereignty. When you ask the obvious question, if man was not dragged along a progressive, evolutionary path towards this concept, what else is there? What waits for us on the other side of sovereignty? The United Nations? Hardly! The question for this chapter however is slightly different, not so much what sits on the other side of sovereignty, but rather what waits *on the inside of it*.

6. Seeking and Contesting Sovereignty

The book *Voice of Indigenous Peoples: Native People Address the United Nations*, gathers together the testimonies of twenty indigenous leaders who visited the United Nations in 1992 to help inaugurate the following year as “International Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.”⁴⁹ Coming from every corner of the globe, these leaders

⁴⁹ According to the UN: “The 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly "to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous communities in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health". The Year was requested by indigenous organizations and is the result

each addressed the United Nations and the world community about the status of their particular community and the plight of indigenous people in general. Despite the fact that the United Nations exists as a showcase for nation-state sovereignty and is meant to protect existing states and their rights, these testimonies nonetheless demonstrate the ways in which indigenous people make use of the space to challenge the existing world order and the sovereignty/authority of nation-states who claim the lands, bodies and beings of contemporary indigenous people.

As peoples trapped in either explicit or implicit colonial relationships within existing nation-states, the United Nations offers a potential site for the recognition of indigenous peoples, their rights, their struggles, their conflicts. It is also a place through which they can seek solidarity with other groups for their struggles and enhance the political strength of the category 'indigenous.'⁵⁰ The United Nations, because of its mandate to improve human life and protect human rights, is an important site for calling on nation-states to improve the lot of marginalized and indigenous groups. Its identity as an international or global site, through which the entire world can be reached and called to attention, makes it important for those who find themselves boxed in by national borders and trapped in limited legal and political frameworks that often prop up the sovereignty of the nation-state around them. Noeli Pocaterra Uliani, who came as a representative of several indigenous women's and sovereignty groups from Latin America, made this clear in her presentation when she warned that: "The International

of their efforts to secure their cultural integrity and status into the twenty-first century. It aims above all to encourage a new relationship between States and indigenous peoples, and between the international community and indigenous peoples -- a new partnership based on mutual respect and understanding." United Nations Department of Public Information, *Press Release Regarding 1993 as the Year of the World's Indigenous People*, 24 November 1992.

⁵⁰ Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3-5.

Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples will only be meaningful if the United Nations will also be an expression of the voice and heart of the Indian nations and not only of its member states.”⁵¹

For those communities who have serious, and sometimes violent, conflicts with nations-states over land, resources, culture and language, the United Nations and its identity as an international space means that for those who are often forced beneath the shade of a particular nation's sovereignty can try to reveal their struggle to the light of the world. It is a place through which the category of indigenous – which Ronald Niezen, in his book *The Origins of Indigeneity*, describes as a global organizing principle for various peoples – can be invigorated, can be infused with more political strength and weight.⁵² In the testimonies in the *Voice of Indigenous Peoples* text, speaker after speaker seeks to articulate indigenous people as a global force, transcending the borders of sovereign nations. The United Nations also provides a space through which those who are not recognized as indigenous by their nations can claim a spot in that international collective. Amongst the testimonies, Giichi Nomura of the Ainu, an indigenous people of Japan, and Moringe L. Parkipuny, representing “all the indigenous minority people of Africa” through the Korongo Peoples Oriented to Conservation (KIPOC), made explicit that integral to their struggle is the lack of, and demand for, their regional or international recognition as indigenous people. While Nomura admonished the Japanese government for refusing to admit to the existence of Japan's indigenous people,⁵³ Parkipuny called

⁵¹ *Voices of Indigenous People: Native People Address the United Nations*, Alexander Ewan and Chief Oren Lyons (eds), (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Books, 1993), 82.

⁵² Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism...*, 48.

⁵³ *Voice of Indigenous Peoples...*, 69.

upon the United Nations to “abandon the policy that the issues of indigenous people do not apply to Africa.”⁵⁴

Although much of the rhetoric of these indigenous leaders is directed at claiming access to the United Nations, its mandate and its potential to achieve change based on their rights as a particular type of people, or due to the recognition of their rights as humans, there is a more potent claim that persists within their statements. The United Nations is a slow and often inept bureaucracy in which change is often talked about but rarely ever sees the light of day, and thus, in the case of indigenous people, those who represent The Fourth World, their chances of achieving anything, other than a global stage from which to be heard, is small.⁵⁵ Yet, given its history, the UN bears not just an obligation to the respond to the needs and pleas of the Fourth World, but also a historically proven ability to do so. Indeed, much of the lure of the United Nation, as a site for indigenous people to be heard or as a possible site for a change in their existence, is grounded in the rich history of the United Nations in terms of decolonization.

William Means, a Lakota representing the International Indian Treaty Council, specified why they come to the United Nations and why it represented a site for the articulation of their voices and their aspirations: “Just as the international community has recognized the right of self-determination for people in former colonies, the right of self-determination for indigenous peoples should now be recognized by the same international community.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Lars Johansen – who represented the collective Inuit communities of Russia, Canada and the United States, and the Homerule Government of

⁵⁴ *Voice of Indigenous Peoples...*, 78.

⁵⁵ George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The fourth world: An Indian reality*, (Don Mills, Ontario: Collier-Macmillan, 1974).

⁵⁶ *Voice of Indigenous Peoples*, 59.

Greenland – continued that, “The United Nations is more than any other forum, the place where liberation from colonization was made possible for many peoples whom today are called the Third World. Through the United Nations’ decolonization program, political freedom, justice, and equality have been established for those people the world over.”⁵⁷ Although the tone of Johansen’s characterization of the United Nations may be a bit hyperbolic it is somewhat true.⁵⁸

One of the most “successful” missions of the United Nations has been its mandate to decolonization. My use of the term success does not refer to, in any way, the actual events or histories of decolonial struggles and postcolonial, but rather is meant to signify the ways in which that legacy is reduced to quantifiers of global, democratic, modern progress. The first General Assembly meeting, or meeting of the member states, comprised of 51 nations. Today, when the United Nations assembles, 192 member states gather together. The majority of these nations joined the United Nations following World War II and was part of either an orderly or a violent process of decolonization. Thus, the United Nations becomes posited as a potential route, a very formal, very imposing, although sometimes slow and frustrating, route to self-determination. The United Nations, then, is not just a safe house for the sovereignty of existing nations, but is also a showcase for sovereignty, a salesman of it for those who are still colonized. It is a smiling guide that takes one through the process of becoming a nation-state, of gaining access to the sovereignty stored there.

In contrast to the helping arm that the United Nation often extends to indigenous peoples, one that is often explicitly cultural and intended to help them preserve their way

⁵⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁸ Prashad, 27-28. Vrushali Patil, *Negotiating Decolonization in the United Nations: Politics of Space, Identity and International Community*, (London: Routledge, 2007).

of life, their practices and languages, and to assist in retaining their autonomy, what the United Nations offers Guam and other places recognized as colonies, is explicitly political.⁵⁹ It is a very real gesture towards some sort of political reordering. While not necessarily radical in the sum of history (i.e. a colony becoming a nation-state), from the context of a non-self-governing territory, it can be revolutionary. It implies not simply the carving out of a place in Guam for Chamorros, but also offering them a chance at establishing their own place, ensuring their rights as a people and their possible sovereignty. Although most of Guam's representation to the world is determined by its ties to the United States, the United Nations holds its own claim to Guam through its mandate to see through the decolonization the island, which makes it crucial for decolonization or anti-colonial activists on Guam.

It is for this reason that Chamorros and their allies now make regular trips to the United Nations, to make use of the framework of decolonization that the international body provides and to inform the world of their continuing colonization. Petitioners from the various colonies and territories usually come at their own expense, and the size of their delegations can range from a single person to a group of a 100. Petitioners need not come directly from the colonies, but can come from anywhere in the world as long as they can demonstrate expertise or primary knowledge about the state of affairs in the territories in question. Guam has been on the list of non-self-governing territories since 1946, but Chamorros have only made use of this body since 1982.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ For example, in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the strongest support it provides (which works with other UN agencies and mandates) is to support indigenous people in the promotion and protection of their cultures. General Assembly United Nations, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, GA Resolution 61/295, Adopted 13 September 2007.

⁶⁰ Hope Alvarez Cristobal, *Personal Communication*, University of Guam, 15 October 2008.

Questions regarding Guam's political status were almost unthinkable in public and political discourse prior to the 1970's and 1980s, when various Chamorro consciousness movements began to spring up in linguistic, cultural and political realms. Prior to this period, the United Nations and its relationship to Guam was either something completely unknown (Chamorros did not know they were on any UN list) or it was something hated and loathed on behalf of the colonizer. The speech of Chamorro leaders regarding the United Nations prior to the 1980's could have been copied from any rightist, exceptionalist, isolationist polemic in the United States.⁶¹ But in this case, rather than Guam's sovereignty being defended from UN interference, American sovereignty and control over Guam was defended against UN interference. When a UN delegation on their way to visit the island territories around Guam in Micronesia, visited Guam in 1971 and inquired as to the state of affairs there, the response from Guam's non-voting delegate Tony Won Pat, and Guam's largest newspaper at the time, *The Guam Daily News*, was a combined "Go Away!"⁶²

As discussions of Guam's political status have become more pervasive and publicly acceptable, various generations of activists have made a commitment to using the United Nations in their work towards Guam's decolonization. Like with the indigenous people who visited the United Nations in 1992, this engagement varies, from

⁶¹ As I have helped organized several trips to the United Nations and report back events to accompany them, I have gotten a very good sense of what Guam thinks about the United Nations. The interpretation of the UN in Guam tends to be split into two narratives, the first harmlessly positive and the second rabidly negative. In the first, we find the elementary school image of the UN, as a place of multiculturalism and global peace and harmony. In the second, we see the UN as a threat to the world, a slow bureaucratic beast which serves no real purpose. What is always surprising to me, is that in the abstract I can understand any Chamorro resistance to the UN, since it appears weakly challenge the authority of the United States over Guam. But I am always surprised by the form that their challenges take. On occasion, Chamorros will cite certain notions about the UN which sounds as if spouted from the mouth of a Fox News Channel Commentator or a conservative media pundit. They will invoke arcane sorts of scandals, and I am always left wondering how they ended up obtaining that particular stain in their vocabulary of resisting the UN.

⁶² "Go Away, United Nations" *The Guam Daily News*, 11 November 1971.

faith in the rational process of decolonization that the United Nations espouses, to simply using the body as an international soap box to gain visibility or build alliances with other nations or communities critical of American imperialism and militarism.

This “successful” history of decolonization means that perhaps the best approach that the United Nations can take towards Guam is to push it along the same path, to move it forward based on the proposition that, although Guam might currently appear as a footnote in relationship to the world system, it won’t always be, but can eventually gain access to sovereignty through a rational process of decolonization. Guam’s place in the realm of sovereignty is thus one that has simply yet to be integrated. Given the ambiguity of Guam’s current incongruent position, the United States and Chamorros just need to find a way to make it congruent, to make it fit somewhere; that is, to integrate the island into realm of sovereign states, to make it an independent country. The rationale for this argument is obvious: Guam’s marginal status in the world today can be attributed just as much to its banal political status as it can to its smallness. It is far better to have a seat at the table, to be the weakest state or the weakest nation-state, than to languish off to the side into meaninglessness, completely at the mercy of those at the table.⁶³

7. The Palauan Example

In his article, “Self-Determination in Oceania,” Terrence Wesley-Smith provides a brief analysis of the state of recently decolonized nations in the Pacific. He sets up his

⁶³ A political cartoon from the 1960’s on Guam published in the *Guam Times Weekly*, recreated the American political family in terms of a large party or banquet, and thus put into images a commonly used metaphor for inclusion and exclusion, the notion of a table and whether or not one has a seat there. At the main table, sits the states of the United States. The table is large, rectangular, sprawling, covered with food. Towards the corner of the drawing is a smaller circular table, with just a handful of very visibly much smaller figures drawn there, all of which are portrayed in some sort of ethnic dress. For instance the “Taotao Guam” or “person from Guam” is naked with long black hair, save for a loincloth. This table is for the territories of the United States. The title of the cartoon was “A Separate Table for the Kids.”

frame of reference as a scathing critique of the decolonial spirit that David Robie's book *Blood on their Banner: Nationalist Struggles in the South Pacific* is imbued with:⁶⁴

For Robie, these events reflected the inevitable confrontation between colonialism and the liberation movements it provoked, 'a quest for national sovereignty that takes into account the legacy of more than two centuries of colonialism'. Here Pacific peoples are portrayed as latecomers in a global grand narrative of anti-colonial struggle, complete with references to Che Guevara, blood sacrifice and nationalist banners symbolizing 'the dawn of hope and a new future'.⁶⁵

Wesley- Smith provides a sobering analysis of life after decolonization in the Pacific, which is teeming with numerous problems that the panacea of sovereignty, this grand master-concept, has no solutions for. According to Smith, "David Robie's enviable faith in the liberating nature of national sovereignty for the colonized in Oceania seems to have been misplaced."⁶⁶ This misplacement is derived from an assumed progressiveness, a moral evolution towards sovereignty as it waits at the end of a national liberation/decolonial struggle. These assumptions are belied by the difficulty in concocting sovereign nation-states in heterogeneous locations, such as, in Wesley-Smith's case, Papua New Guinea, that existed for centuries as a diverse collection of hundreds of different, autonomous people who today continue to resist in various ways the attempts to create a sovereign, authoritative power over their territory.⁶⁷ It is also belied by the fact that "sovereignty" and "nation-building" has been applied selectively by the former colonizers and is always conditioned by limits determined by strategic military or economic importance.

⁶⁴ David Robie, *Blood on their Banner: Nationalist Struggles in the South Pacific*, (London: Zed Books, 1989).

⁶⁵ Terrence Wesley-Smith, "Self-Determination in Oceania," *Race & Class*, (48:3), 2007, 30.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

We need look no further than the recent histories of those nations whose flags I purchased at the United Nations, and the flag of the one island I could not find there (Guam). The other recently decolonized islands are now nations who can now enjoy that formal shell of sovereignty, a seat at the United Nations, the ability to enter into treaties or cooperatives with other nations, the ability to make stamps and to have their own currency. These forms of autonomy however continue to be overshadowed in Micronesia by U.S. strategic interests that have over-determined how “sovereign” these new nations can be. The interference and machinations of the United States in Palau’s quest for decolonization is particularly instructive as regards the potential meaninglessness of the formal shell of sovereignty for newly decolonized or small, developing nation-states.⁶⁸ Palau’s quest for political status improvement is a grim reminder for anyone in the Micronesian region looking to improve their status of the ways in which their interests and desires might run counter to those of the U.S.

In the decades following World War II, the Trust Territory – a collection of hundreds of islands in Micronesia that would eventually become the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau – was administered by the United States but fell under the mandate of the United Nations. The United States allowed a slow process of decolonization to take place, in which different island groups came together to form the political entities they are today. According to anthropologist Catherine Lutz, this process of decolonization was hardly a fair process but rather one in which United States interests

⁶⁸ Stephen Schmitt and M. Odette Pono, “We are the Neocolonists of Micronesia,” Paper presented at *The Pacific Education Conference*, Koror, Palau 1-4 August 1995. David Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia: Discourse Over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*. (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1998).

dominated from the very start. In her article, “The Compacts of Free Association: Micronesian Non-Independence and U.S. Policy,” she notes that in the decolonization process the peoples of Micronesia were like

...boat passengers who have been taken far from their shore by a pilot whose interest and itinerary are not their own and who are then given the choice of remaining on the boat or swimming the 200 miles back to shore.⁶⁹

As a result of these negotiation, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, which is ethnically Chamorro and Refalauwash, made the decision early on to seek a status as close to the United States as possible, even negotiating that all their residents be granted United States citizenship.⁷⁰ For the rest of the islands, their autonomy and distance from the United States was something they argued and fought for. According to Glen Peterson, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Micronesia and an activist who often writes about Micronesia, this desire to move away from the United States was driven by the hope of preventing the indigenous islands of Micronesia from ending up in the same precarious and miserable positions that other indigenous s attached to the United States had been forced into. They saw unappetizing examples in Hawai’i, in the United States itself, and of course, in the heavily militarized and heavily colonized neighboring island of Guam.⁷¹

Palau, in particular, made the boldest gesture of protecting themselves from American domination. After seeing the destruction that the United States military had

⁶⁹ Catherine Lutz, “The Compact of Free Association, Micronesian Non-Independence, and U. S. Policy,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 1986, 18 (2), 26.

⁷⁰ Don A. Farrell, *History of the Northern Marianas Islands*, (Saipan, CNMI: Public School System CNMI, 1991).

⁷¹ Glenn Petersen, *From the War West to the Western Pacific: Socio-Political Continuities in the American Occupation of Micronesia*, Paper Presented at the Pacific Worlds and the American West Conference, University of Utah, Salt Lake City Utah, 9 February 2008.

wrought through their nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, both, in making islands uninhabitable as well as in physically ravaging the islanders due to radiation poisoning, during their negotiations for independence, the majority of Palauans wished to have a Nuclear Free clause in their newly drafted Constitution.⁷² Although this clause was approved by the Palauan people, it directly contradicted the long-term, strategic military interests of the United States for the island, i.e. the possibility for Palau to function as a port for submarines or other nuclear powered vessels. From 1981 – 1991 the United States forced the Palauan people to undergo a series of plebiscites to change its Constitution to reflect U.S. needs. In the meantime, they held in check a Compact of Free Association which would provide funds for building a sustainable economy in the islands and made it clear that Palau would not receive any funds or the trusteeship of American control would not be terminated until the clause was removed.

Although the U.S. met initial resistance, as Palauans refused to amend their Constitution, the Constitution was eventually changed through trickery on behalf of the United States. The Constitutional change required a super majority in order to take effect but the United States declared that a simple majority would be sufficient. Those that supported the passage of the compact seized on this declaration in order to force the constitutional change.⁷³ Islands such as Palau have formal sovereignty, but if we look closely at the history of their negotiations with the United States, and even the way their government and economy is situated today, the political existence of Palau demands that

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Isabella Sumang, “The World’s First Nuclear Free Constitution,” and Cita Morei, “Planting the Mustard Seed of World Peace,” from Zohl de Ishtar, *Pacific Women Speak Out: For Independence and Denuclearisation*, (The Raven Press, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1998).

we redefine sovereignty so that it can mean something, since if the formal sovereignty that Palau has is supposed to be sovereignty, then *sovereignty means little*.

In the early 1960's the Kennedy administration commissioned *The Solomon Report*, a document meant to situate the current status of, and outline a desirable future for, relations between the islands of Trust Territory of Micronesia and the United States.⁷⁴ The prescriptive aspects of the report were all built around the assertion that "Despite a lack of serious concern for the area until quite recently, Micronesia is said to be essential to the U.S. for security reasons. We cannot give the area up..."⁷⁵ The report, which recommended various levels of coercion, bribing, and even the rigging of elections, was basically an outline for ensuring that the islands that would become the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, would retain an intimate and dependent relationship with the United States, regardless of what path to sovereignty they chose.⁷⁶ The report was, at its core, a roadmap for neo-colonialism.⁷⁷ The giving or receiving of sovereignty by these islands did not tamper with the desires of the United States or with its ability to control their futures.⁷⁸ We still find at various levels, even among those who chose to move further away from the United States, and the military and political interests of their former colonizer, not forces which push against the fortress

⁷⁴ Anthony M. Solomon, *The Solomon Report*, United States Government Survey Mission to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 1963.

⁷⁵ Donald McHenry, *Micronesia, Trust Betrayed: Altruism vs. Self-Interest in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1975), 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁷ Richard Salvador, "The Nuclear History of Micronesia, and the Pacific," *Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*, http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/1999/08/00_salvador_micronesia.htm. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

⁷⁸ This point can be debated of course. The resistance that different Micronesian islands did in some ways challenge the plans of the United States, but it did not alter them in any fundamental way. The islands sought some independence, but have not affiliated themselves militarily with any other nation, and because of the way the compacts tie them very intimately to the United States economically, the independence of the islands is always in question.

of these islands' theoretical sovereignty, but rather a determining need which is formalized *at the center of their political existences*.

Whether through invasive oversight for compact monies, options for military land, enactments of forced Federalization, or other coercive acts (such as those which took place when Palau attempted to pass a Constitution whose tenets conflicted with United States military interests), we see how the acceptance of the shell of sovereignty actually formalizes American control of these islands.⁷⁹ It creates a spectacle through which the United States can be released from the potential stigma of being a colonial power in Micronesia, by allowing the relationship to be reframed not as an unjust bullying between the colonizer and the colonized, but as a friendly militaristic “exchange” between the United States and its island allies. The bestowal of the shell of sovereignty upon these island nations allowed the basic relationship between these two entities to remain intact, and provided a smooth transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism.⁸⁰

As this definition of sovereignty, espoused by the United Nations process of decolonization, simply accepts a particular framework as given, ideal, as the necessary and best possible configuration, there is little room to maneuver, other than to simply transition from colonial to neo-colonial and then enjoy what little “sovereignty” has been

⁷⁹ Carlyle Corbin, *Personal Communication*, CLASS Lecture Hall, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 7 November 2009.

⁸⁰ On Guam, most radical activists are interested in decolonization in terms of moving away from the United States and establishing their own nation and way of life. For these activists, the various ways in which Guam has been included in the United States are just spectacles, all of which are meant to keep Guam a possession or keep it American, while placating the population. In Puerto Rico however there is a small movement which seeks “radical statehood” or incorporation, but not in the sense of assimilating or becoming subservient to the United States, but rather in assuming the power that statehood might provide you and using it to your own advantage. *Puerto Rico Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism*, Frances Negron-Muntaner and Ramon Grosfugel (eds). (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

obtained. In order to reach some sort of relevant point in the universe of possible definitions/articulations of sovereignty, we have to move into its constitution. And, in the case of a site like Guam, we must probe deeper into the dynamics of why the constitution of sovereignty as related to this site is so difficult or unlikely?

8. *The Progressive Myth*

In a comment on the Guam current events website *Guamology*, Peter J. Santos, a Chamorro well-known on the internet through his website *Chamoruboy.com* as being an expert on Chamorro language, articulated the place of Guam and its colonial status in a larger view of global history and democraticization, one which reflected the arguments in the texts discussed earlier in this chapter.⁸¹ Responding to other commentators who placed the United States and its military interests as the biggest obstacle to Guam being decolonized, Santos took the United States and its obstructionism out of the equation by reframing the issue as one of eventual human progress and liberation:

Afterwards mankind began to elevate himself as the center and we began to recognize individual [sic] rights. We embraced the idea of freedom, but freedom was not available to all. We separated the church and state and gave more importance to the state. If you were fortunate to have a particular status in society (a free person) you were free to believe what you liked but were still obligated to the state and bound by the state. We saw that ideology move towards applying equally to all human beings and we abandoned the system of having different classes of citizens to a large degree, at least in principle. The progression seems to be moving towards more and more individual autonomy as well as group autonomy. From this perspective, it seems possible and even probable that Guam, the NMI [Northern Marianas Islands] and other “colonies” will some day truly be

⁸¹ The comment came attached to an article I had written for the website titled “Guam and Gaza.” The article tried to connect Guam and Gaza to each other through their shared strategic interests that the US has their regions, and the way they are linked together through the rhetoric of both being “unsinkable aircraft carriers.” The term is used for a site which is assumed cannot be lost, but from which you can always launch attacks from. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “Guam and Gaza,” *Guamology*, <http://www.guamology.com/2009/01/guam-and-gaza/>, 20 January 2009. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

free. This progression I described took place over thousands of years. It may take at least some more hundreds of years to get to the point of true autonomy, but I'm sure it will happen.⁸²

The inclination of this argument is important to note since, at first glance, Guam and other colonies of the world today appear to be mistakes within the glorious history of world progress, or at least the ones forgotten by the wayside, as the rest of the world marches boldly forward with the progress of human history as their mandate and their awesome baggage.

We have already discussed how sovereignty's effectiveness and essentialness as a concept is dependent upon this positivism that pervades the present and its view of history which it deems as having unfolded to reveal the most perfect possible moment, the best possible configuration, which is hinged upon that definition of sovereignty housed at the United Nations. For those that aren't obviously and securely included in this definition but are the exceptions of the world, there is a way that they can be incorporated or brought into the narrative, and have their potential critique or ghostliness neutralized. As we can observe in Santos' comment, there is a moral goodness in this world, and to that grand story of sovereignty. While people might appear to have been forgotten in the unfolding of history, this system is ultimately just and acceptable, one that will eventually get it right. If this myth is accurate, then exceptions such as Guam or indigenous peoples trapped in colonial relationships within settler societies, will eventually have their cases heard, and eventually be decolonized. That some day, even if it should be hundreds or thousands of years onwards, they will eventually find some sort

⁸² Peter J. Santos a.k.a. Chamoruboy, "Comment Left on the post "Guam and Gaza," *Guamology*, <http://www.guamology.com/2009/01/guam-and-gaza/#comment-319>, 23 January 2009. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

of justice, perhaps acquire a nation-state of their own, and be allowed into the glorious global fraternity of modern nation-states.

Such is the position of political scientist Robert Statham who is considered to be one of the foremost political scientists with expertise on Micronesia and Guam, and the author of *Colonial Constitutionalism: The Tyranny of United States' Offshore Territorial Policies and Relations*.⁸³ During a class lecture in 2002, as he discussed his book and the future of colonies such as Guam in relation to the United States, he remarked:

Guam is in a weird place, but it won't always be there. As imperfect as America is its still Guam's best hope, its still the place where Guam can hope for the best...What's needed is to find a way in which we can make Guam's political status consistent with the principles the Founding Father's outlined in that most perfect document. Right now these territories have to go! They aren't right. They are mistakes; they are against the principles that make this country truly mighty. They are a travesty and it's just a matter of time before they do.⁸⁴

Statham's claim builds off Santos' by bringing the issue of Guam and sovereignty, or rather, in this case, of Guam being shed of its ghostliness in the world, explicitly into the purview of its colonizer. But if we take the case of Guam and its relationship to its colonizer, who hoards control over whether or not Guam gets to be swept up in that story of the world's progress towards sovereignty, we see this is hardly the case. Although Statham claims that the colonial status of Guam will be resolved in "a matter of time," the current state of affairs, and the current relationship between the United States and its

⁸³ E. Robert Statham Jr., *Colonial Constitutionalism: The Tyranny of United States Offshore Territorial Policy and Relations*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002). E. Robert Statham Jr., "U.S. Territorial Expansion: Extended Republicanism versus Hyperextended Expansion," *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution*, Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (eds), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁸⁴ Robert Statham Jr., *Lecture in Class on Political Development in the American Pacific*, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 30 September 2002.

territories, makes the prospect for the latter's decolonization non-existent.⁸⁵ This is not something the United States alone embodies; indeed, around the world, colonialism seems to be something old and gone, and even if it actually exists today, it is looked upon as something banal and empty.

If we look at the most "official," and least contestable, instances of colonialism in the world today, i.e. Guam and the other 15 non-self-governing territories that the United Nations has a mandate to decolonize, this is obviously not the case.⁸⁶ As I write this dissertation, the world, with the United Nations somewhere close to its helm, is lumbering towards the end of its Second International Decade of the Eradication of Colonialism.⁸⁷ Less than halfway through this Second Decade of attempting to eradicate colonialism, the UN Representative from Iran called on the United Nations and the world community to act so as to make unnecessary a "third decade to complete the task of decolonization."⁸⁸ Yet, there will more than likely be a Third Decade, and possibly a Fourth and a Fifth, since there is little to no global movement or momentum behind this "global" effort. Chiefly amongst those nations who still continue to possess these official

⁸⁵ The ultimate point for both Santos' and Statham's argument is that this promise for eventual resolution, that things will be taken care of or be made right at some point, functions as an excuse for the system. It is meant to not describe the system in the future, but protect the system now and argue that it shouldn't be changed in any way since it already holds the promise for fixing whatever injustice you are thinking of. Statham's actual proposal for "decolonizing" Guam or resolving the hypocrisy of its status makes this point well. All he calls for is that the United States Congress should pass a Constitutional amendment which will legalize Guam's current political status.

⁸⁶ As of 2002 the United Nations lists 16 entities which are still colonies or non-self-governing territories: Western Sahara, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Montserrat, St. Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands, Gibraltar, American Samoa, New Caledonia, Pitcarin, Tokelau and Guam. The United Nations Fourth Committee, *Non-Self-Governing Territories Listed by the General Assembly*, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/trust3.htm>, Site Accessed 2 December 2009.

⁸⁷ The United Nations, *Press Release Reference Paper No. 44*, 2 July 2005.

⁸⁸ The United Nations Fourth Committee, *Delegates Urge Eradication of Colonialism during Second Decades, As Fourth Committee Urges Debate*, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/gaspd284.doc.htm>, 4 October 2004. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

colonies, there is, first, little acknowledgement of their continuing identity as colonizers, and, second, an almost absolute apathy in the United Nations' attempts to decolonize their "possessions."

Colonialism proper, in this very clear, obvious form, is not a consistent discourse, not something that gains much traction, as we saw in the particular case of Guam in the previous chapter. Colonialism itself is still something that can be invoked and holds political power, but not as that which "actually exists" but rather as a metaphor for control and violence that takes colonialism's end as its point of departure. Indeed, generations of Chamorro activists at the United Nations have found it difficult to receive any press attention at all, even from progressive or critical media outlets, for their efforts towards highlighting Guam's colonial status.⁸⁹

The position of the United States on this UN mandate is unsurprisingly ambivalent and hypocritical. During the testimonies provided for the Fourth Committee in October 2006, a member of the Guam delegation, Victoria Leon Guerrero, noted that the representative of the United States who was present in the room while they testified, never looked at them, did not even acknowledge their presence.⁹⁰ "From where we were sitting, the U.S. representative had to turn his head in order to look at us... He never turned, never looked at us. That's how the United States government relates to the people of Guam."⁹¹ According to another regular petitioner at the United Nations on behalf of Guam, Chamorro rights activist and *Maga'haga'* of *I Nasion Chamoru*, Debbie Quinata, it has apparently become unofficial policy for the United States at the UN, to not sit in

⁸⁹ "Guiñifen i Mañainã-ta," *Minagahet Zine*, (6:1), January 22, 2008.

⁹⁰ Despite the fact that half a dozen people spent more than an hour talking about the US, and saying very unflattering things about it.

⁹¹ Aaron Glantz, "Natives of Guam Decry US Expansion Plan," *Antiwar.com*, <http://www.antiwar.com/glantz/?articleid=10156>, 13 December 2006. Site Accessed 1 December 2009.

their chair when testimony from Guam is being given.⁹² Here, the official position of the United States appears to be this unofficial one, namely the refusal to even acknowledge the issue, or to recognize any mandate of the United Nations or the right of Chamorros to self-determination.

Occasionally, however, an “official” response is produced but it tends to be obscenely hysterically in its defiance of the very terms it invokes and the reality it attempts to shape or deny. As former director for Guam’s Commission on Decolonization, Leland Bettis, noted in his testimony before the United Nations,

Is it not ironic...that at the very time that the people of Guam have called for a process to end colonialism [in Guam], the administering power has both ignored the calls for the end of colonialism, and two said that colonialism is effectively over. The natives of the North American continent call this, “speaking with a forked tongue.”⁹³

The progressive myth of eventual decolonization is further tarnished and reduced to tragedy by the experiences of Chamorro activists who have been pushing for the island’s decolonization, locally, nationally and internationally for decades. Former Guam Senator, Hope Cristobal, who has testified at the United Nations and who has been involved in various grassroots groups pushing for Guam’s decolonization, made clear the limits and the hypocrisy of “decolonization” from America’s perspective, or what including Guam in that story of sovereignty would entail:

If we ever are allowed to decolonize, what would it be? It wouldn’t be decolonization because it would be America determined [sic] what we we’ll get, and letting us chose what they want. I have heard them call our self-determination a domestic issue. This is their excuse; this is how the game will be played with us the losers... Decolonization is about our people’s self-determination, this is a farce! What if the Chamorro people

⁹² Debbie Quinata, *Personal Communication*, National Social Work Association Guam Conference, Tumon, Guam, 25 March 2009.

⁹³ *Let Freedom Ring: The Chamorro Search for Sovereignty*. The Cabazon Band of Mission Indians. 1997, 60 min.

can to be freely associated or want independence [sic]? How can that be domestic?⁹⁴

We can extend this point further, however, directly into the force-field like resistance that Guam encounters when approaching the concept of sovereignty, by looking more broadly at the status of colonized and indigenous people around the world today, and the ways in which their “concerns” about issues of decolonization and self-determination are reduced to “domestic issues.”

For instance, if we look at those that constitute the legal empire of the United States today, we do not see a collection of peoples who are being pushed along that progressive mythical path into modern self-governance and sovereignty. Instead, we see millions of people, forced *off* any road to sovereignty, and forcefully directed into legal and theoretical dead-ends. In the United States, this waiting room of history is populated by Chamorros, Samoans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and others, all colonial citizens, the governing of whom falls under the jurisdiction of the same Federal Agency that is in charge of maintaining the fish, wildlife and forests of the United States.⁹⁵ The logic here is that all of these “species” can neither survive on their own, nor be integrated fully into the American political community. This logic seems to be propped up by an inversion of the common anti-colonial slogan during the age of decolonization, “good government is no substitute for self-government.”⁹⁶ Here, the truth seems to be “self-government is no substitute for good government.” The fact that the lives of these peoples are all governed by the Department of the Interior is a clue as to how they have

⁹⁴ Hope Alvarez Cristobal, *Personal Communication*, University of Guam, 15 October 2008.

⁹⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, Princeton, 2004).

⁹⁶ J.W. Davidson “Political Development in Western Samoa,” *Pacific Affairs*, (21:2), June 1948, 136.

been insulated within the United States through the creation of an army of discursive regimes meant to trap them within its legal, political, geographic borders.

9. *The Native Nail That Sticks Up...*

In my testimony to the United Nations in 2007 on the question of Guam, I drew a direct link to the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People which had, just months before, after 20 years of deadlock and debate, been passed by the United Nations General Assembly.⁹⁷ The intended impact of this declaration was to provide international muscle, albeit symbolic muscle, to help enhance the political lives of indigenous people in the world today. According to the Associated Press article, titled “UN General Assembly backs indigenous peoples’ rights,” which covered the initial passage of the declaration, it:

...recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and sets global human rights standards for them...It states that native peoples have the right "to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties" concluded with states or their successors...Indigenous peoples say their lands and territories are endangered by such threats as mineral extraction, logging, environmental contamination, privatization and development projects, classification of lands as protected areas or game reserves and use of genetically modified seeds and technology."⁹⁸

Although the majority of the world’s states voted to pass the declaration, there were thirteen abstentions and four very visible rejections. The United States, along with three other white-settler colonial nations, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, all made a symbolic protest by being the only nations to vote against the declaration’s passage. The

⁹⁷ According to the Secretary General of the UN in his statement supporting the resolution in 2004: “For far too long the hopes and aspirations of indigenous peoples have been ignored; their lands have been taken; their cultures denigrated or directly attacked; their languages and customs suppressed; their wisdom and traditional knowledge overlooked; and their sustainable ways of developing natural resources dismissed. Some have even faced the threat of extinction.... The answer to these grave threats must be to confront them without delay.” United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, <http://www.amnesty.org.ru/library/Index/ENGIOR400172004?open&of=ENG-399>, 12 May 2004. Site Accessed 5 December 2009.

⁹⁸ “UN General Assembly backs indigenous peoples’ right,” *AFP*, September 13, 2007

stated reasons, the potential negative impacts of the declaration as articulated in the responses of these nations, were just as numerous as the possible positives:

They said they could not support it because of their concerns over provisions on self-determination, land and resources rights and giving indigenous peoples a right of veto over national legislation and state management of resources...Among contentious issues was one article saying "states shall give legal recognition and protection" to lands, territories and resources traditionally "owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired" by indigenous peoples...Another bone of contention was an article upholding native peoples' right to "redress by means that can include restitution or when not possible just, fair and equitable compensation, for their lands and resources "which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior ad informed consent".⁹⁹

In their rejections and resistance to this declaration we see very clearly the relationship between “ambiguous” political sites or peoples, such as Guam, Chamorros or other indigenous people, and the established world order and the concept of sovereignty that gave birth to it. Although neither side explicitly used the term “sovereignty” in their support or rejection of the declaration, what appears to be at issue here are all the mechanics or details involved in what sovereignty is supposed to be, i.e. passage of laws, control of resources, managing populations, determining borders, etc. It is this structure to sovereignty, that determines the political status, or forms of existence, that many indigenous people persist in, and also seek to change or secure in some way for themselves. It is also something which existing nation-states seek to maintain, and protect, and they are aided in this quest by the dominant definition of sovereignty. In his excellent article “Sovereignty,” Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred writes:

Sovereignty. The word, so commonly used, refers to supreme political authority, independent and unlimited by any other power. Discussion of

⁹⁹ “Australia Opposes UN Rights Declaration,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/14/2032491.htm>, 14 September 2007. Site Accessed 15 January 2010.

the term *sovereignty* in relation to indigenous peoples, however, must be framed differently, within an intellectual framework of internal colonization.¹⁰⁰

For those who, today, form nations and political communities that are not nation-states, that are nations within nations, colonies and territories, the dominant definition of sovereignty places them in a precarious position. Sovereignty, as Cusimano defines it, recognizes only one true authority within any given territory, and these communities are clearly not the bearers of that power.¹⁰¹

There are two basic points of resistance, or theoretical/political bones of contention, here, both of which deal with the “magic” of sovereignty being threatened. The concept itself, and that which it is *supposed* to guarantee or provide, is viewed as being under fire, in danger of being tainted or complicated, challenged. The concerns of these white-settler nations are no doubt shared by many, if not all, others that have significant, if not politically active, “indigenous” populations. This declaration provides a huge international, visible, and very formal sounding force for the political agendas or movements of indigenous people around the world. And by explicitly, although somewhat ambiguously, supporting their efforts for “self-determination” and “redress,” it leads them straight into the heart of how “sovereign” nation-states exist today, and the story of how most of them came into being.

For the first point of resistance, the *internal* aspect of Alfred’s quote is the key. The declaration provides support for indigenous people, as a potentially sovereign political community, to enter into the internal government and maintenance of nation-

¹⁰⁰ Taiaiake Alfred “Sovereignty,” *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Ed. Joanne Barker, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005), 33.

¹⁰¹ Cusimano, 2.

states. It asserts that they have the right to be informed, negotiate over, and possibly block legislation or governmental actions that negatively affect them or encroach upon their way of life. But, by infusing a shred of sovereignty into the lives of indigenous people, the declaration threatens to encroach upon the existing sovereignty of nation-states.¹⁰² Thus, the declaration represents a challenge not just to existing nation-states, but also to the magic that sovereignty is supposed to provide each of them, the protection it is supposed to guarantee them from these sorts of challenges to their rights. This is, after all, what sovereignty is about – from the formal definition, it is about legitimacy, power, control and authority. The uncontested nature or the “secureness” of the concept is meant to make all of these claims of indigenous people for independence, sovereignty or decolonization which, by definition, extend beyond the reach of a particular nation-state, nonetheless appear to be *internal concerns* or, as the United States State Department claims, *domestic concerns*.¹⁰³ To return to Cusimano’s definition, if each territory only has one recognizable sovereign, then that means that all other claims within that territory will necessarily appear as supplemental, as mere discontented details to that sovereign authority.

That these cries for decolonization, for self-determination, be dismissed as “domestic” or ‘internal’ issues is the precisely the limit of the mainstream definition of

¹⁰² Interestingly enough, the declaration was able to get past its final deadlock, a group of African nations who were resisting the ambiguity of the language and were afraid that this might represent a threat to their territorial rights, precisely by adding in language which made clear that single territorial sovereign definition was still in effect. In other words this potential challenge to existing nation-state sovereignty in the name of indigenous people was able to get through by adding in language which made it clear that it could not represent a threat to existing nation-state sovereignty. According to an Australian Broadcasting Corporation article on it, “African countries were won over after co-sponsors amended an article to read that “nothing in the declaration may be ...construed as authorising or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states.” “Australia Opposes UN Rights Declaration...”

¹⁰³ United States Office of Press and Public Diplomacy, *Explanation of vote by Robert Hagen, U.S. Advisor, on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to the UN General Assembly*, 13 September 2007.

sovereignty. It is one that treats the condition of indigenous and colonized people today as imperceptible, as banal. We see here the claims of sovereignty, from Chamorros in Guam to Native Americans in the United States, rush into and are dashed against a massive, oppressive wall created by the very definition of sovereignty that has been driving the critique of this chapter. In my testimony to the United Nation's Fourth Committee, I drew out this limit and commented upon it in relation to the United States' response to the declaration:

For the US, the goal of the declaration was not to give indigenous peoples the rights that are owed them or affirm the rights they already have as humans and peoples, but rather to create a new sub-sovereign category of "self-government within the nation-state," where indigenous people exist much like they do now in the United States, as wards of the state, whose culture may be celebrated as the colorful pre-modern progenitors of a modern strong nation, but whose political rights and sovereignty must always been seen to stem from the power, maturity and benevolence of the United States.¹⁰⁴

The hope of the United States, and most likely all other nation-states, was that the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People be itself a document which could be internalized, or interiorized, within the dominant definition of sovereignty. It would be an international guarantee of the "domesticity" of all of these potential decolonial claims. That it would be something through which, borrowing and augmenting common and regularly abused Japanese saying, all the *native-nails* that stick up could quickly be hammered down.¹⁰⁵ And that any claims to power would be simply submerged within the

¹⁰⁴ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "From the Waiting Room of History," *Minagahet*. "Guiñifen i Mañainâ-ta," *Minagahet Zine*, (6:1), January 22, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ I have heard two versions of what the phrase "the nail that sticks up (gets hammered down)" means. The first implies that those who stand up or speak out, will of course (for better or worse) get smacked down. The second meaning is that one shouldn't emphasize their individualness, but instead work towards group harmony.

existing desert of American legal fictions meant to obscure any possible sovereignty for the indigenous people of the United States.

10. Sovereignty is as Sovereignty Does

Before continuing, there is one more point that should be made here about the limitations of mainstream definitions of sovereignty. With reference to the “self-government within the nation-state” there is already tied to that political relationship a plethora of literature and academic work, in particular amongst Native American scholars. But the issue at stake is that its articulation, or practice, or intent, doesn’t see sovereignty as a concept that transgresses or shines through the sovereignty of the colonial nation-state/settler society, but sees it rather as an effect or an offshoot of the same. “Domestic dependent nations,” a term that is meant to metaphorically capture that relationship, is much like the previously introduced term for treatment of the American insular empire, “state-like treatment.”¹⁰⁶

As just mentioned, this is precisely the type of sovereignty that “fits” within formal definitions that nation-states like the United States have, over centuries, created through mountains of laws and legal precedents that make the relationship appear natural and necessary. This type of sovereignty has a mocking, obscene quality to it, in the way in which it alludes to sovereignty in the most autonomous and eternal sense, yet is always already tainted by a contingent living origin, a sovereign from whom one’s sovereignty stems, who is not some abstract, absent deity but a hulking form which continues to draw breath, hovering over you. Take for instance the statement of George W. Bush on the

¹⁰⁶ Chapter 2 of Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *Nations Within: The Past and the Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1998), 16-27.

quality of Native American sovereignty. While speaking at the 2004 Journalists of Color convention in Washington D.C., Bush was asked the following question: “What do you think tribal sovereignty means in the 21st century, and how do we resolve conflicts between tribes and the federal and the state governments?”¹⁰⁷ Bush’s unintentionally revealing response was as follows:

Tribal sovereignty means that; it's sovereign. You're a -- you've been given sovereignty, and you're viewed as a sovereign entity. And, therefore, the relationship between the federal government and tribes is one between sovereign entities.¹⁰⁸

A small scandal erupted after this statement because of the way Bush seemed to be breaking the theoretical promise of sovereignty for Native Americans and all others nations, indigenous or otherwise. Formal sovereignty is *NEVER* given, or at least it’s not supposed to be. It exists always in and of itself, immanent in its contents and accountability, unfettered and untouchable by those beyond itself. While the consensus might be that this is theoretically true, in a practical, real world way, we know that this is hardly so. A number of factors mitigate the authority of states, but do not necessarily trample upon the theoretical, legal rights of states. For nations within nations however, this is hardly the case. The reason that Bush’s statement is so shocking is that it reveals the obscenity that haunts the form of sovereignty that Native Americans and other colonial citizens of the United States are allowed to have. This form of sovereignty is neither theoretically or pragmatically absolute, but is instead constantly diminished by the

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Kamb, “Bush’s comment on tribal sovereignty creates a buzz,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 13 August 2004.

¹⁰⁸ “Bush tells journalists tribes given sovereignty,” *Indianz.com*, <http://www.indianz.com/News/2004/003755.asp>, 9 August 2004, Site Accessed 10 June 2009.

strategic, economic and colonial interests of those who have “real” sovereignty over the territory.¹⁰⁹

Captured in the casual use of the word “given,” Bush is almost mindlessly invoking the violence of centuries of United States colonial and imperial relations.¹¹⁰ For those who populate the American territories, sovereignty is something that must be given to them, doled out in small pieces, occasionally taken away, *but always deferred in the absolute*. From *The Marshall Trilogy* to *The Insular Cases*, this relationship is one structured on a series of legal decisions that drip with discourses of infantilization and paternalism.¹¹¹ For certain peoples are not yet ready for sovereignty, and thus sovereignty must be kept from them until they are deemed ready. In the case of the UN, then, there is a similar danger of reproducing this same logic, and seeing indigenous sovereignty, or the decolonization which can be implied in it, as something that is not merely incongruent or inconsistent, but that which is subordinate and nonetheless consistent. Something which is not oppositional, antagonistic, but merely supplemental; a sovereignty that sees itself as an appendage, or a footnote, to the ultimate sovereignty of the nation-state to which it is bound. I will deal with this again in Chapter 8, albeit from a more indigenous conception of sovereignty. Moving on, I return to the hostile world of that formal definition of sovereignty and perceive the ghostly sort of non-place that Guam is “given” there.

¹⁰⁹ This is one of the central points which create a distinction between those whose are “nations within nations” and those who are what Robert Jackson refers to as “quasi-states.” Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and The Third World*, (Cambridge, Cambridge, 1990).

¹¹⁰ Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, (Boston, South End Press, 2005). Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present*, (San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1998).

¹¹¹ Barker, 21-23. Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*, (Lawrence, University of Kansas, 2006). S. James Anaya, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

11. *A Ghostly Non-Place*

Outside of the literature specifically written for the in-between status of Native Americans, they, like Guam, and Chamorros and other indigenous peoples, take on a haunting, supposedly empty, yet lingering quality. They are written of in certain ways, evoking ghostly feelings, as if they possess a secret that is dangerous, carry something that is threatening to the corporeal world. They are thus things to be forgotten in order to reach the clarity of the present moment. Or perhaps the feeling is one of smallness, powerlessness, pointlessness, as if they represent details of a previous era, unimportant, not really meaning or signifying much today, especially in relation to the governance of the world, the writing of its rules, and the constituting or maintenance of its order. We see this in the curious fact that when a diverse group of people, spread out across the world in hundreds of different nation-states and amounting to 300 million, mean little in terms of the “sovereignty” of the world, and simply flicker and fade even as they attempt to launch critical assaults on this concept.

According to international relations scholar, Maivan Clech Lam, who specializes on indigenous issues and the law, even the most critical work on sovereignty, that mean to expose the weakness and holes in its constitution today, treats the position of indigenous people with an almost casual banality. Usually we find their place subsumed within the context of “minority” rights or claims.¹¹² They are thus ascribed a generic anti-government claim, a minority nationalism, or a weak multi-cultural claim for cultural rights. They are shorn of their claims to land, which usually pre-date those of the nation-states that control their destinies, and they are also denied redress or a political identity

¹¹² Maivan Clech Lam, *Personal Communication*, Sovereignty Matters Conference, Columbia University, New York, 15 April 2005.

based on the violence, genocide, dislocation or dispossession that has led to their “inclusion” in the nation-state. For instance, in Jackson’s text, *Sovereignty*, the particularity that indigenous groups might represent, is never accorded any specific character, existence or critique, but is nestled alongside all other charlatans or idealists who might challenge the authority of the state that has sovereignty over their lands,

Sovereignty has always been jealously possessed by states and persistently pursued by political actors who are not sovereign, but desire to hold and exercise sovereignty: revolutionists, nationalists, populists, secessionists, irredentists among others.¹¹³

In her paper “Indigenous Global Politics: A Proposed Research Program in International Relations,” Ojibwe scholar Sheryl Lightfoot makes a similar point in terms of International Relations theory and the discipline’s relationship to indigenous existences, movements and political demands.¹¹⁴ Her argument for the need of a new domain of international relations to examine or analyze indigenous global politics and movements is based on her assessment that traditional methods in the discipline are unable to perceive indigenous movements, and often resort to “social movement theory” in order to explain them. The placing of the aspirations, movements and political organizing of indigenous people in this framework might make some sense for social movement theory is about “collective organizing” and is the most “active” way of looking at the interplay of global politics.¹¹⁵ But in relation to the discipline itself, this

¹¹³ Jackson, *Sovereignty*, 9-10.

¹¹⁴ I first saw Lightfoot present her ideas through a paper given at the conference *What’s Next for Native American and Indigenous Studies?* at University of Oklahoma in 2007. After the conference I contacted her via email to see if she had a longer version of her paper. She said that it was based upon her prospectus for her dissertation in American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, and sent me a copy of it. Sheryl Lightfoot, “*Indigenous International Relations?*” Paper presented at the conference *What’s Next for Native American and Indigenous Studies?* University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 4 May 2007.

¹¹⁵ Anaya, 59. Duane Champagne, *Indigenous Peoples and the Modern State*, (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005), 6.

localization is part of a larger inability to change the rules of the game, to accommodate the realities and demands of indigenous peoples. It represents a refusal to take into account their existence today and to imagine a world that can accommodate the political trajectory of these peoples. It is a resistance to change the unit of analysis, to treat what indigenous people are and what they are fighting for, as ephemeral, but always insurgent, emergent, errant interventions that can never signifying the permanence of being an actual, existing player in the world. This tendency threatens to once again reduce indigenous peoples and their claims to the domestic realm of the nation-states to which they are attached.

In this version of sovereignty, Guam, like all other “non-sovereign” sites or peoples, occupies a non-place. It is a part of the landscape of the world, but persists in empty, dependent, supplementary ways that are maintained by the fullness of the concept of sovereignty that stands regularly impervious to any potential critique from this very site.¹¹⁶ This lack of coherency is perhaps a reinvention of the long-standing assumption that indigenous people are always already on the verge of vanishing or that, in this instance, that their precarious in-between status means they can’t sustain an analysis.¹¹⁷

The second reason for this imperviousness can be found in the resistance of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada to the possibility that the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People might create momentum for the redress and restitution

¹¹⁶ For instance, the easiest way to identify those who “count” or those who “matter” on the global stage is to look at those who have seats at the United Nations, and who have reached the base minimum for global recognition as an independent political community. But as I’ve commonly heard indigenous people lament when thinking about their prospects for sovereignty, “There is no seat for us [Indigenous people] at the United Nations.” There is a permanent forum which is meant for to hear the issues of indigenous people, but as with anything from the United Nations, it is member states who sit on those panels, and therefore have the ability to determine whether or not those speaking should be given a place or can have a place at the table.

¹¹⁷ Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

for indigenous peoples in the context of claims to land and resources “which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.”¹¹⁸ Thus, just as the concept of sovereignty evokes a banishing of the violent ghosts of the past for European nations – i.e. it represents an evolution from their pre-Westphalian barbaric forms to their sophisticated humanitarian visages of today – it also creates a magical dismissal or a formula for the banishing of indigenous peoples’ claims. In his text, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Stephan Krasner articulates contemporary sovereignty through the difference between theory and practice or, as he puts it, the difference between “authority” and “control” as being two different levels of sovereign ability. That is, one may have the authority to manage or govern a territory and its borders, as legitimated with different discursive objects, but controlling it is entirely another matter.¹¹⁹

But in the case of indigenous people, authority is equal to control. If formal definitions of sovereignty are accepted and assumed as legitimate, then the claims of indigenous people, by definition, are reduced to the pathetic forms they take in the fantasies of settler-colonial nations. “Self-determination within the nation-state” or “domestic concerns” are all meant to neutralize angry natives who want to turn back time. They do not represent any potential ruptures or inconsistencies within the nation-state but are justly relegated to their legal hedge-mazes and infantilizing legal precedents.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples...*

¹¹⁹ Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 10.

¹²⁰ An earlier mention of the perpetual debate between the rights of states and the rights of individuals should be brought in here specifically in relation to indigenous people. Although under Kofi Annan’s term, the United Nations has made great strides in terms of rhetorically supporting the rights of

The character of contemporary texts on sovereignty appears to be one of reflection rather than shaping; that is, they write of and reflect on the existence of sovereignty, but do not seek to shape or re-imagine it. But in the case of indigenous contestations within existing nation-states, this gesture of reflection does in fact shape reality. But to assume or perform a givenness and an intactness of sovereignty and, by default, of those nations who are recognized as having it, is to absolutely shape reality, to constrain it in certain ways, most prominently in terms of cutting off political possibilities for indigenous people.

Sovereignty provides some very formal reinforcement in terms of the obscuring of the violent origins of most modern nations, especially those that are settler colonial but have trouble admitting to it. Earlier I quoted Joanne Barker and her argument that sovereignty achieves the modern, hegemonic form that it occupies today through the essentialization of two discursive objects with regards to the identity of a nation-state, namely national constitutions and treaties.¹²¹ On the surface representation of these forms they appear to be focused on pragmatic consolidations, both internally and externally, as a society organizes itself at home and also formalize relationships with its fellow nation-states. In truth both of these forms play crucial roles in creating that sense of sovereign interiority as well, the one invested in banishing the ghosts of that nation-state's violent legacy of displacement and genocide. This can also be used later as providing the aura of

indigenous people to live with dignity and have access to basic aspects of modern life which for various reasons the states that claims them tend to deprive them of. But this extending of the principles of universal rights to indigenous people doesn't not necessarily mean self-determination or sovereignty. The United Nations seeks to transgress the boundaries of nations in order to support and guarantee the rights of indigenous people to universal improvement, to having access to water, education, political processes, protection of culture, etc. This is not the case in political terms, as the United Nation's has a very bad track record in the previous two decades of helping push self-determination for indigenous people, against the wishes of the states that claim them.

¹²¹ Barker, 4.

legitimacy that provides the haze through which the origin of the nation, the nation-state, shall not be tread upon or questioned, challenged or opened up.

The national constitution is meant to be the foundation, the formalization and legalization for what, in most instances, are a series of racist and violent acts of displacing indigenous peoples.¹²² It is meant to provide some further formal justification for various rhetorical, geographic and political gestures that are constitutive of settler-colonialism, such as the formalization of the doctrine of discovery or the elevation of the fantasy of *terra nullius* into a guiding principle of law and rule.¹²³ National constitutions use the potent aura of popular sovereignty, the fragrance of some populist democracy, the infusion of the spirit of a people or a nation, to create a massive, inspiring, ordered, just spectacle that can stand in for a generally violent, chaotic, unjust and uncontrollable multitude of moments of the nation's origin.¹²⁴ It is an imposing document that is meant to block the view of the bloodstained bodies, the blood-soaked, stolen land. It is meant to persist as signifying the origin of a nation, a people, and most prominently, a society of *order and stability*, even when the figures of those who were displaced to make way for that origin continue to roam the nation, and not simply by their movements but by their

¹²² Although I say in this sentence "indigenous peoples," I am not ignorant of the potential nuances in this claim. I am aware of the fact that the category of indigenous often does not exist prior to the establishment of the modern nation, and those who are considered to be its excesses or those who are displaced by its origin, are not always "natives" in the sense of an indigenous people who was there first. Sometimes they are the "folks" the communities of people who are too rooted in their world or ways, too undifferentiated in their imagination to join or fully appreciate the nation which has been born. Charles and Martina Briggs, *Stories in the Time of Cholera: Racial Profiling in a Medical Nightmare*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003). Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 197. Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy than as Farce*, (London: Verso, 2009), 2.

¹²³ Mark Harris, "Lost between memorialising and forgetting: a reflection upon the recent trend towards apologies made by modern settler States to Indigenous peoples," Paper presented at the Indigenous Studies Engages Ethnic Studies Symposium, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, San Diego, 8 May 2009. Sven Lindqvist, *Terra Nulius: A Journey Through No Man's Land*, (New York: The New Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*, (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1988).

very existence, transgress and challenge its multiple “sovereign” political, historical and imagined borders. It is meant to neutralize peoples/communities whose claims to sovereignty cut directly through to the heart of where the nation, and thus the nation-state, have emerged.

The national constitution thus embodies the inconsistency and the Derridean secret of its origins, the falsity of the idea that there was nothing “substantive” or “sovereign” before us.¹²⁵ Sandy Grande in her book *Red Pedagogy* provides a succinct description of what this “secret” that makes America sovereign might entail.

The United States is a nation defined by its original sin: the genocide of American Indians...American Indian tribes are viewed as an inherent threat to the nation, poised to expose the great lies of U.S. democracy: that we are a nation of laws and not random power; that we are guided by reason and not faith; that we are governed by representation and not executive order; and finally, that we stand as a self-determined citizenry and not a kingdom of blood or aristocracy...From the perspective of American Indians, “democracy” has been wielded with impunity as the first and most virulent weapon of mass destruction.¹²⁶

Treaties operate in much the same way, providing more formal, concrete and pragmatic evidence to support the superiority of the existing nation-state and the legitimacy of its rule over its indigenous populations. Although some would argue (quite correctly) that the treaty relationship between the United States and Native Americans actually makes the case that Native American tribes were “organized” political bodies and communities, since the United States and other nations often interacted with them as they would other “modern” nations or nation-state forms.¹²⁷ This representation of the

¹²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 78.

¹²⁶ Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Political and Social Thought*, (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishing, 2004), 31-32.

¹²⁷ On the topic of Native American decolonization and their sovereignty, one of the most intriguing versions that I’ve heard is that rather than the United States go through some process of decolonization and self-determination for Native American tribes, the United States should simply follow its own laws and

relationship, this potential meaning of these treaties, the significance of these legal, formal documents meant to provide a framework for mutual recognition and managed interaction, was famously turned on their head in what is now known as *The Marshall Trilogy*.

Discovery is the foundation of title, in European nations, and this overlooks all proprietary rights in the natives. The sovereignty and eminent domain thus acquired, necessarily precludes the idea of any other sovereignty existing within the same limits. The subjects of the discovering nation must necessarily be bound by the declared sense of their own government, as to the extent of this sovereignty, and the domain acquired with it. Even if it should be admitted that the Indian were originally an independent people, they have ceased to be so. A nation that has passed under the dominion of another is no longer a sovereign state. The same treaties and negotiations, before referred to, show their dependent condition.¹²⁸

Here, the formal evidence which once may have indicated an equality between the two parties, which admits to a base civility in these savages, has now been invoked as a sort of “first taint of civilization.”¹²⁹ It argues that, far from the treaties signifying the sovereign independence of the indigenous – that they exist unto themselves in their own indigenous, pragmatic organizations – they instead make clear how far they have fallen, how they have become entangled in the settler’s way of life; that they have been tainted, and there is no turning back. They have become dependent, they have become part of the “interior” of the United States nation and nation-state and, as such, are no longer something to be treated as an equal force or partner, which ideas of sovereignty and

ratify all existing treaties. That, the foundation for sovereignty is already there, and has been there for centuries, but the United States has never followed it. It recognized that Native Americans were equals with the United States and provided some protections for them and for their sovereignty, but this surface of the law was never followed through and as it was subverted so were Native Americans. Should those treaties suddenly be recognized as the legal and political documents that they are and not merely a tragic footnote in how a people were colonized, it would certainly be a radical unsettling of the United States.

¹²⁸ *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 US 543 (1823).

¹²⁹ Francis X. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days 1521-1885*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), xii.

recognition are meant to govern, but instead they have become one of those details that sovereignty is supposed to dismiss, or subsume, within the regular course of governing populations and managing, defending borders.

In the case of Guam and other territories, they are the document by which they are casually reduced to possessions. So long as both signatories to the treaty recognize each other, than those for whom the treaty holds their rights, their land, their destiny, is supplemental or incidental. For instance the Treaty of Paris, which made formal American control over Guam in 1898, weighs down the already marginalized prospects for the island's sovereignty in a similar way, albeit not as a sovereign partner who has been twisted into a dependent infantile ward, but instead as a piece of territory, bought and sold, and thus belonging to those with the biggest guns or biggest bank accounts. Treaties, especially for territories, are generally stand-ins for more violent or crass exchanges, for they provide the basis for your history, your present and your destiny – the sum of your existence can be spoken of very casually and matter-of-factly as something that is owned by another. Owned in the most casual and obvious way, as if it simply happened; various treaties, laws, agreements, events attest to it and there is little to do done about it.

12. Solvency and Irrelevance

What have be gleaned from this chapter so far? Foremost, that despite the givenness or the necessity which is infused into the dominant definition of sovereignty, and the piles of books, articles, legal cases, constitutions, treaties which assert a similar point, these claims are never very secure. Sovereignty, even at its most basic levels is

always being contested by the ghosts and non-place of those who remain colonized in the most of banal ways today, and those who remain in History's waiting rooms. Because these troubling presences represent numerous potential challenges, they must be treated as the complete opposite – that is, they are reduced to a part of the landscape, a place must be made for them in the order of things. They must be cradled in the formal language of governance and sovereignty, studied, incorporated into different bodies of knowledge.¹³⁰ These sites therefore become quaint, often “fortunate” footnotes, not states of terrifying exception, but states of interesting, curious, but ultimately meaningless exception.¹³¹ These are modernity's hybrid mistakes, which in some ways harkens the essential norms of the future but also, because of the way they appear to be perpetually lost in legal hedge-mazes, national security anxieties and discourses on infantilization,

¹³⁰ Arnold Leibowitz, *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States – Territorial Relations*, (Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, 1989).

¹³¹ It is rare that texts engage with the political statuses of Guam in any which other than to provide a simple historical, legal or analytical snapshot. Those written from the United States perspective which go beyond this however, have an intriguing character to them, in which their prescriptive or critical character operates on the same supplementary, unilateral principles I outlined earlier. Let's take for instance an article about the sowing of American democracy to the “Americans” in the nation's colonies, and a book which seeks to fix the mistakes that the United States has made over the past century because of its “colonial constitutionalism.” From the 2005 *San Francisco Chronicle* article “After Iraq, Let's Bring Democracy to Millions of Americans” we have an interesting critique of the Bush Administration's claims to spread/force democracy to the Middle East, by making clear that democracy could be spread to millions of Americans without the loss of a single US soldier. For the book we have Robert Statham's unbalanced text *Colonial Constitutionalism: The Tyranny of United States Offshore Territorial Policy and Relations*, which admits that the exceptional and colonial statuses of Guam and the other current territories of the United States are wrong, and a perversion of greatness of intentions of the United States Constitution. These two critiques, make recommendations for how to engage productively and progressively with the colonial existences of places such as Guam, and do so even from different sides of the political spectrum, Colin Jones' article coming from a “liberal” perspective, while Statham's coming from a “conservative” one. Despite this “difference” we find them ultimately making the same interest central to their prescriptions for justice, the democratic character and promise of the United States. In the case of spreading of democracy, the interests of those in the colonies is never entertained, meaning whether or not American democracy is something they want sown upon them. It is assumed to be their next political evolutionary step because they and their lands have already been marked as American. In the case of colonial constitutionalism, the solutions which Statham provides to the exceptional/problematic/exploitative existences of the colonies, never address the interests or desires of those who live those existences, but are rather solely designed to make their existences conform with the beloved lost promise that Statham seeks to defend and revive from the original character of American Constitutionalism.

must merely be gotten used to.¹³² Guam therefore becomes a small, minute exception that, against the grand horizon of historical progress, either your eyes will soon become accustomed to as that which should be overlooked, or will simply become lost in the dazzling glory that lies ahead.

The ultimate critique of this type of sovereignty, from the perspective of this dissertation, is this effect, this gesture of emptying Guam once again, and the subsequent banalizing, erasing and exorcising of the types of claims to sovereignty that Guam represents. Not only is a place such as Guam irrelevant to it, given a non-, almost useless place in its universe, but the consistency and solvency of the concept itself is dependent upon the powerlessness and emptiness of Guam. This sort of sovereignty makes explicit the absence of any relationship between the fullness of sovereignty and the emptiness of Guam. It creates an aura of irrelevance or a feeling of supplementarity. Instead, what I am seeking is a concept of sovereignty that takes seriously this relationship.

What is needed is a conception of sovereignty that can perceive these “domestic details” and can be used to write of, not write off, and that which falls between the smooth running, mechanical parts of this well groomed beast called “sovereignty.” A version which does not reproduce this ghostly quality of a place such as Guam, as empty, a faint trace of something which will soon disappear completely; but rather recognizes Guam as a ghost, a presence that haunts in a critical way, as a seething, constitutive presence. A presence that while desired to be gotten rid of, but can never truly disappear.

There is a clear relationship here - the appearance of something as powerful, as ordered, as robust, as sovereign, is intricately and inextricably tied to that which, in the

¹³² Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “*The Materiality and Fantasy of Empire: The Case of Guam*,” Paper presented at the 2006 National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference, San Francisco, California, 1 April 2006.

same context, appears to be floating at the margins, in a sort of interstice, appears to be powerless or empty. Indeed, as Jen Bartelsen notes, as far apart in representation as concepts such as “anarchy” and “hierarchy” might appear to be, sovereignty is created through the link, or more aptly the lack of a link, between these two ideas.¹³³ Thus, sovereignty, the nation-state form, and, by default, the United States itself, are all infused with power, enhanced, made to appear more complete, more universal, more necessary and ideal through the siphoning off of any potential power, meaning or sovereignty from a place such as Guam. The appearances are related, they constitute each other.

13. Testing, One Two Three, Testing

It is for this reason that, as we near the end of the chapter, it is important to note the ways in which the United Nations, its missions and its mandates, are almost nowhere in sight. This chapter began with the UN as our key site, bolstered by the decolonizing potential that it might represent. And yet at the chapter’s close, the discussion has taken us out of the purview of the United Nations, out of its grasp or its gaze, and enveloped us almost complete within the nation-state and its sovereignty.

This situation is similar to the long trek made by Chamorros who travel to the United Nations to testify each year. They leave the shadows and margins of Guam, and follow to New York City, the minute traces of the Third World’s liberation and decolonization, leftover from more radical or tumultuous times. These traces are made more potent and inviting through the both, the promises of what sovereignty may have to offer and the promises of sovereignty being restrained or chained. They testify in rooms that are imposing in so many ways, with their collections of nation-states, their many

¹³³

Bartelsen, 17.

national and international symbols. You learn very quickly that, irrespective on the territory you represent, it doesn't really matter what you say.

In my experience, the booming voice of the Honorable Chairperson acknowledges your presence and asks for your testimony. After you finish, regardless of what you said, what you asked for, who you called names or what horrible secrets you revealed, the reply is always the same "Thank you for the information." And then the United Nations politely moves on to the next speaker or the next territory. With no direct recognition or response to anything you said, with the backs of hundreds of the very people to whom you are supposed to be speaking, facing you, it's easy to wonder if you ever spoke at all; or if you were even there.

When I testified, for instance, we were told that we would have only seven minutes at the microphone, and that if we went over time, we would be in danger of being cut off. As soon as it was my turn to testify, I began to speak rapidly, literally yelling into the microphone to ensure I was heard. As I spoke, my eyes darted around the massive room, to gauge the reactions of the hundreds of representatives of UN member states who were present. No one seemed to be paying attention. I wondered if it was a translation issue, as nearly all wore translation earpieces. I wondered if it was an ignorance issue, that maybe they simply didn't know anything about Guam. More than a minute into my testimony, a United Nations employee approached me and told me that I had to switch seats. The microphone at the petitioner's seat that I was at was not working, and as a result no one could hear me.

Embarrassed, I quickly changed seats hoping that this farce wouldn't be taken out of my seven minute time allotment. With a now working microphone I rushed into my

testimony once again. Now my voice at least *could* be heard. However the scene did not change. Now that the microphone was working, the audience, the world it represented, remained the same - the member states continued with their conversations, working on their laptops, their reading of newspapers. After all testimonies for the day were concluded, there was no acknowledgement save for the perfunctory thank you from the Chairman. It made me wonder what possibilities for decolonization, signified by this UN room, actually exist.

Guam is a ghost that comes to this room seeking life, a chance at sovereignty, at what those chairs held by member states represent. This desire is hardly in question. But as Guam approaches this room with the request that the sovereignty of its colonizer be diminished even just a little bit, in the name of self-determination, in the name of justice, in the name of equality, we have to wonder whether that entire spectacle is merely a conclave of decolonial ghosts, deprived of any meaning due to the power of sovereignty itself. Sovereignty, after all, creates that room and provides the force behind a rational, reasonable display of the powerful witnessing the pleas of the powerless. But for those who seek decolonization, they are offered literally nothing other than hope. The United Nations, as that vehicle for the self-determination of colonized or indigenous people today, appears, in its own way, ghostly, a hopeless aberration, cursed it seems without the ability to even haunt the world – a remnant perhaps of a time in which its echoes never existed, or a beacon for one that is still waiting to be born.

The most glaring but productive contradiction of the concept of sovereignty is this ownership of not only that which is articulated to be inside or included in the nation-state, but even those that are excluded. In terms of the United Nations and its mandate, this

means that even the claim to decolonization is argued to belong to the nation-state who is the colonizer. A visiting mission cannot even be sent into the territories unless the colonizer requests it, and no process of decolonization can even be hinted at unless it is initiated by the colonizer. The United Nations process itself accedes to this principle. This is the intended effect of sovereignty, in its most global sense, upon a colony in the world of today. It brings about this slow, banal closing off, this sealing off of possibility and its siphoning away into legal and discursive circuits meant to reinforce the power of the nation-state over the territories it still colonizes. Thus, even those who stick out of the nation-state, who signify an outside that cannot be included, their political possibility are foreclosed. There is nothing more to do at the United Nations, then, save gather up our notes and leave, head back into the colonies, like so many delegation before you and most likely many after, having learned another lesson of the meaning of sovereignty.¹³⁴

¹³⁴

The following year, another delegation will make the trip and no doubt have a similar experience. An obvious question is then, “Why is it important to (still) go to the United Nations?” Since it is a grossly paradoxical entity, entrusted with the task of decolonizing the world, but completely unable to push against the durability of nation-state sovereignty, why is it necessary? If it can’t do what it’s supposed to do, then why bother, what’s the point? When dealing with an overwhelming and debilitating emptiness, it is crucial to resist that in anyway you can. Although the United States doesn’t care very much about the UN and its mission to eradicate colonialism from the world, it still makes weak efforts each year to get Guam delisted and take it off the UN’s agenda. Keeping Guam on that list and continuing to make use of that minute space for Guam at the UN is important, because it is one of very few international sites that recognize Guam and its territoriality as not belonging exclusively to the United States. Chamorro activist and writer Julian Aguon describes this process (inspired by a Sherman Alexie poem) as “learning to love the maps your hands cannot hold.”

CHAPTER 7: GUAM!

Laboratory of Liberation and Non-Voting Delegates

BORDALLO: ...we are a US territory.

COLBERT: But you're not part of the United States.

BORDALLO: We are part of the United States.

COLBERT: You...I do not believe you are.

BORDALLO: Well, uh let me say that our people of Guam wouldn't care for that kind -

COLBERT: I think Guam is probably lovely, but it's not a state.

BORDALLO: But we're still US.

COLBERT: Do you live in the United States?

BORDALLO: Yes, I live in a US territory.

COLBERT: Where?

BORDALLO: Guam.

COLBERT: (holds up a map of the continental United States, upside down) Could you please show me Guam on this map?

BORDALLO: Well that's upside down.

COLBERT: (flips map right side up) Now find it

BORDALLO: If you show me a world map I will.

COLBERT: Okay, but I said, are you part of the United States?

BORDALLO: That's correct.

COLBERT: That's correct, so, that's correct that you are incorrect.

BORDALLO: No.

COLBERT: Okay. I accept your apology.

Guam Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo being interview
by Stephen Colbert during the segment "Better Know a
Protectorate" from the show *The Colbert Report*¹

1. A Fire-Breathing Guam Mention

In his autobiography (co-written by David Fisher) titled *Fire-Breathing Liberal: How I Learned to Survive (and Thrive) in the Contact Sport of Congress*, Florida Congressman Robert Wexler, chronicles his decade long career and the fiery political conflagrations he's been in, ranging from the contested election of 2000, the impeachment of President Bill Clinton and the controversy over the *bare life* of Terri Schiavo. He has a particularly humorous anecdote from his experience on the Comedy

¹ "Better Know a Protectorate: Guam" *The Colbert Report*, 26 April 2007.

Central show *The Colbert Report*, where he was tricked by the show's host in 2006, into saying "I enjoy cocaine because it's a fun thing to do," since he was running for re-election unopposed in his district and so he could not possibly lose no matter what he said.²

There is amidst all the stories of partisan warfare and calls to redeem the much-maligned moniker "liberal," a single Guam mention. It appears on page 128 and reads as follows:

The belief that you can learn these things from a book or a report is ludicrous. For example, when Madeleine Bordallo entered Congress as the nonvoting representative from Guam in 2003, she was surprised when a Republican member told her he thought Guam was part of Hawaii.³

It is easy to focus on the mistake of identity or political geography that this mention is built upon. The small partisan jab that Wexler is taking, mocking, ever so slightly, the ignorance of his political adversaries and by default asserting that Democrats and Liberals would hardly make such a mistake. His implication is that Democrats and Liberals know where Guam is...or maybe where Guam is not at... or maybe not really know where it is. But they certainly know that Guam is part of the US, as a territory, which is why it has a non-voting delegate!

But this particular "mistake" of this passage is nowhere near as intriguing or revealing as compared to where the anecdote appears. It appears towards the beginning of a long chapter titled "Have Passport, Will Travel: Foreign Policy in Action." In this chapter Wexler recounts the experiences of members of Congress (including his own) when they travel abroad as part of their work in Congress, and the educational

² Robert Wexler, *Fire-Breathing Liberal: How I Learned to Survive (and Thrive) in the Contact Sport of Congress*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 105.

³ *Ibid.*, 128.

importance of really seeing the world out there. The central argument is that refutation of the idea that Congress people take travel junkets to waste taxpayer money and just go on nice vacations, but in reality the increasing of their knowledge of the world is important in making them better at their jobs, especially those who serve on committees like Wexler who was then in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House.

Guam's mention, thus takes on a curious significance, as it is placed right on the edge of an edge. As the United States, Americans and the world are laid out, Guam represents a piece of the outside inside or the inside outside, an exceptional zone, which can conceivably used to represent the exteriority of the interiority of the United States.

The fact that the Republican Congressman misrecognizes Guam, does not attach it in the appropriate way to the United States, is an example of the insularity of Americans, and how they often live comfortably with a glaring lack of engagement or knowledge about the world outside their borders. But using Guam in this way is different than talking about Syria, Israel, Ukraine, Malaysia, and Afghanistan, which are other sites Wexler remarks upon during the travels his chapter takes.

The misrecognition of Madeleine Bordallo and Guam by the Republican Congressman is a key narrative point, an example which is meant to animate the whole rest of the chapter. It is meant to provide a foundation through which the travels that Wexler and other Congresspeople take around the world are justified. That the important work they do meeting foreign leaders, or reporting on a humanitarian crisis or bring aid or assistance to those in need is in the national interest of your average American.

Guam is therefore like a distant outpost, not really part of the foreign or the domestic.⁴ It is too simplistic to say that it straddles these two ways of mapping the world or a particular nation. It is instead something, as the small mention that Wexler gives it, something *that can be pulled back and forth across that line*. In this particular instance Guam is used as a gateway to the rest of the world, an American example which leads us to the need for knowledge about the world of foreign countries and foreign affairs. But, Guam could have just as easily been cited as something which exemplifies the need for Americans to know more about themselves. It could have been brought into another chapter on the scope of the American “interior” and how Guam is this lovely distant corner that needs to be recognized.⁵

Buried in that crucial place within the pages of examples about how Americans, because of their place in the world, the good that they can do and are obligated to do,

⁴ In thinking about the in-between place of Guam and how to illustrate it, I am reminded of the poem “Waiting for the Barbarians,” by Constantine Cavafy. In that poem, a city is bustling with activity and inactivity as it anticipates some anonymous barbarian force just about to arrive. While the label of barbarians conjures in the minds of most a savage or violent people, in the poem the residents of the embattled city hardly seem to respond in ways that would make sense if they were about to be pillaged or overrun. The leaders prepare to greet these barbarians as if they are greeting a celebrity and appear to actually be relieved at the arrival of the barbarians. Towards the end of the poem it becomes clear that the barbarians are not coming and people become confused and all head home deep in thought. The poem ends with the omnimous phrase that the barbarians are “some sort of solution.” The idea of the barbarians as not something which is solely destructive, but rather something which is productive as well and something which people need or depend upon (in the poem, politicians and leaders stop working or doing their jobs because soon the barbarians will arrive and either make their jobs moot or do their jobs for them). This begs a number of obvious questions in the context of the poem, such as do the barbarians even exist and where are they located? While on the surface of the poem we can easily assume that the barbarians are beyond the city’s borders, far far away, but when we see perceive their productivty, we have to wonder if the barbarians, or what they represent aren’t always already in the city? This interpretation of the poem shares a number of themes with this dissertation. Constantine Cavafy, “Waiting for the Barbarians,” *The Civically-Engaged Reader*, (Chicago: The Great Books Foundation, 2006).

⁵ In the next chapter, I’ll discuss briefly the work of my grandfather Joquain Flores Lujan, and how he is recognized both nationally and locally as a Master Chamorro artisan. In 1996 he was flown to Washington D.C. in order to receive a National Heritage Fellowship, a rare honor which is given by the National Endowment for the Arts to cultural artists from every corner of America. Speaking to the foreignness of Guam’s domestic status, the recognition that grandpa has sometimes received over the years sometimes takes on the same curious character as Wexler’s reference to Guam. He is prefaced by having come the farthest (literally and figuratively), he is articulated as being from a unique part of America, a remote part, an isolated and exotic part. Of course, this sort of representation is not unique to grandpa, but is part of the psychoanalytic pleasure of having colonies.

because they are the only ones who can, must become more involved and knowledgeable about world affairs, is the curious example of Guam. And through that ambiguous place, the banal exceptionalism of the island, in a simple and quiet way, becomes a transition point, a conduit through which this American global reach is animated. But the way that this takes place, is in a negative way, a silent, liberal shaming of Americans for the ways in which they fall short of this greatness, but not even knowing about the world which is theirs. That the insularity of Americans extends even to their own territories, not just to the world way out there, but the world which kind of exists in here. We don't even know about the things we own, how then can we extend our reach, as we must as the world's superpower, the rest of the world?

2. What This Chapter Includes

The dominant concept of sovereignty interrogated in the previous chapter is one which exists primarily in order to reinforce the existence of particular existing states, and therefore affords a banal sort of non-place for those who aren't existing recognized modern nation-states. This definition is thoroughly positive and positivistic, focused on protecting the interests and providing discursive reinforcement to those who are considered to be the subjects or sovereigns of existing nation-states. It does not speak productively or constructively for those whose existence in relation to sovereignty is defined negatively, as an absence, a clear lack of sovereignty or as something which is propped up through a curious sort of simultaneous gesture of inclusion/exclusion.

Returning to the case of Guam, its relationship to America and to American power and authority is not a simple link or lack there of, it is neither a full part of the

United States, nor is it completely outside of its formalized, sovereign power or borders. Its role, its location, the non-space of its presence, as evidenced even in the apparent shallowness of the Wexler quote is much more complicated. It is not that Guam is completely subsumed within or without American sovereign power, but rather that it persists directly within it, at the unspoken and uncomfortable borders and indeterminacies within the supposedly sovereign whole.⁶ Or perhaps a better way of putting this is that Guam represents a point that intersects where two domains never should. Not simply a border, meaning an edge, but an in-between space, which harbors a potent trace, which has the ability to stain all inside or outside with an element of its opposite.⁷

In this chapter I will be discussing this exceptionalism of Guam and articulate a framework through which we can see its role in producing American sovereignty. In order to do this I will follow the traces of Guam's sovereignty through two sites, first the place of the non-voting delegate from Guam in relation to the United States Congress, and second the role of Guam as what I call a "laboratory of American liberation." In the first site I will look at Guam and its non-voting delegate, and explore the mechanics of their exceptionality and how they can operate as an everyday source for producing the sovereignty of America and different American communities. In this instance, as an object which Republicans and Democrats use can articulate their claims to embodying the true spirit of America, whether as a force for spreading democracy and practicing the art of American benevolent inclusion, or as the a force for excluding those who don't really

⁶ Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 26.

⁷ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

belong and reinvigorating those who are really truly Americans.⁸ After this, I will then conclude this chapter by interrogating the ways in which Guam's exceptional political existence then contributes to the (re)production of larger American narratives, most notably the claim of the United States to being a global avatar of liberation.⁹

Before all of this however, I will draw upon the work of Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben, in order to first make clear the productivity of an exceptional position. The turn to Agamben in grounding this chapter is important, as in the wealth political theoretical writings, his stands at as one of the more thorough at revealing the obscene dimensions of how a community is formed. Amongst political theorists or philosophers of the political Agamben's work such as *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* and *The State of Exception* provide an important, necessary and logical counter to the dominant articulations of politics, the political and sovereignty.¹⁰ His work provides a bridge from the abstract, more formal definitions of sovereignty to help delve into the everyday sort of mechanics about the relationship between violence, power, community, and of course, sovereignty.¹¹

⁸ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *The (Un)exceptional Life of a Non-Voting Delegate: Chamorros, Guam and the Production of American Sovereignty*, Paper presented at the 5th Annual Crossing Borders Conference at University of California, San Diego, 4 March 2007.

⁹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "The Materiality and Fantasy of Empire: The Case of Guam," Paper presented at the 2006 National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference, San Francisco, California, 1 April 2006.

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998). Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, Trans. Kevin Attell, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹¹ For instance, as will be made clear in subsequent sections, most mainstream definitions of sovereignty take place above and in isolation from the everyday and from the people of the sovereign state in question., deriving their power and authority from worlds of the law and legal discourse. Although this often co-exists with clichés about sovereignty being popular and derived from the people of a particular territory or nation, the magic by which that happens, how that authority is engineered is usually assumed and not elucidated. What Agamben helps us perceive is the relationship between the elevation of something to be "sovereign" and what happens at the everyday level. He does this thankfully without any clear investment in conserving the nation-state form or any particular version of political science sovereignty, which as I've explained in other chapters is often the assumption that leads to a implicit placing of sovereignty beyond one's ability to critique.

3. *Why Agamben Rules*

Though we may find different tones in the works of people such as Carl Schmitt, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, they all share the same basic feature of being *positive* articulations of a political community or order.¹² This positive transcendent feature which binds the political together can either be articulated prior to the formation of said political community (and is therefore right because it allows the unfolding or manifesting of a shared feature of ethnicity, rationality, locality, etc.) or articulated only after the elevating of a sovereign whose existence determines the ordering and nature of “belonging” to said political community.¹³ To put this more simply, what this means is that fundamentally, the existence of any community is accompanied by the fantasy that these things *belong together*, or to paraphrase the noted philosopher of nationalism Ernest Renan, these people *want to be together*.¹⁴

In political science texts we find this acceptance of the positive nature of community and sovereignty through the hegemonic status of the circular “state=sovereignty” equation, or that have a nation-state means to also have sovereignty.¹⁵ The mechanics of sovereignty or its origins and its means of production, outside of a simple historical tracing of the development of the nation-state form or the genesis of a particular nation-state, is never an issue. The reason for this is that what we

¹² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (New York, Penguin Classics, 1982). Jean Jacques Rosseau, *The Social Contract*, Trans. Maurice Cranston, (New York, Penguin Classics, 1968). Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2006). John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, (New York, Penguin Classics, 2005).

¹³ Ernesto Laclau, *Empancipation(s)*, (London: Verso, 1996).

¹⁴ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” *The Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha (ed). (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22.

¹⁵ Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge, Cambridge, 1995). Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 100-103.

might call the primordial unit of political science work is the state, and not just any state, but a state that is presumed to possess sovereignty by virtue of its existence.

Agamben's crucial intervention is an obvious and simple one, but within the coordinates of intelligibility for most discussions of sovereignty it is almost completely absent. The progressive quality of the nation that post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha discusses in *The Location of Culture*, absolutely spills over to the state itself, imbibing it with the same forward movement, momentum and retroactively redefining and naturalizing functions.¹⁶ The nation comes into being for a reason, because of the way it embodies a Spirit, an identity, a history, a belonging. The state exists with the same necessary, positive logic, usually buttressed by the threat of some latent or emerging crisis.¹⁷

This logic is of course what covers up or works to make merely exceptional the negative aspects of political formation that Agamben argues as *fundamental to the founding of any political community*.¹⁸ There is no forming of a political order or community without a necessary *exclusion*, which is never simply an expulsion, but is rather translated or returns in the form of *the ban*, the producing of a form of life which is a sort of pure life, half life, barely life, when it appears/returns to the political community that was formed through its expulsion. The feelings of positivity, the aura of inclusion,

¹⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London, Routledge, 2004).

¹⁷ Schmitt, *Political Theology...* Thor Hvidbak, *Taming the State and its State of Exception: Emergency Powers, Raison d'Etat and the Legal Theodicy of Exceptions*, (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2009). Theofanis Verinakis, *Barbaric Sovereignty: States of Emergency and their Colonial Legacies*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2008).

¹⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer...*, 181. It should be noted that although I infer a sort of universality with regards to Agamben's theories, he is speaking from a Western epistemological and political perspective. As I noted in a footnote in an earlier chapter, despite the fact that I believe Agamben is correct in terms of his analysis, we should not forget the impact on his analysis given the fact that all his ideas and evidence are taken from European and Western history.

stability, order, and belonging are only possible through this exclusion, this negative act.¹⁹

Agamben's innovative analysis is dependent upon a number of important and radical claims about the mechanics of modernity. First, he begins the trajectory for his analysis of sovereignty at a far different point, much earlier point than most, especially those writing within the discipline of political science. As already discussed, the dominant version of sovereignty is always argued to have emerged out of a pragmatic, rational awakening of consciousness amongst European kings, political leaders, thinkers during the 17th century, that led to the nation-state system of mutual recognition we know today.²⁰ This assertion of this particular genesis for the concept is incredibly self-serving, as it imputes into the Subject and subjects of Europe an assumed and now manifest destiny, of progress, improvement, and universality. It reinforces the fantasy that the world has unfolded into its best possible moment because of a European ability to put aside the savagery that still runs rampant around the world, through their creation of "sovereignty." This has become an idea so potent that it has colonized the rest of the world and become the basis for international law and relations.²¹

Agamben bypassed the lure of this European progressivity and evolution, by starting this genealogy for analyzing the existence and constitution of sovereignty far earlier, namely during the Greek and Roman eras. In doing so, Agamben is able to disentangle much of his analysis from the familiarity of the world today, and thus work to

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Joanne Barker "For Whom Sovereignty Matters," *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed). (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2005).

²¹ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 77. Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

prevent the reader from associating the sovereignty of his discussion with the sovereignty that is the lynchpin for the world today (and which must not be questioned). By analyzing law, power, and violence in these ancient times, Agamben takes some of the foundational concepts or terms of sovereignty today and reveals a dimension of them that still persists, but has been shorn away by the ages and is often undetected in analyses of the concept. In doing this, he is able to trace for us the outlines of those ghosts which haunted the writing and exercising of “sovereign” power thousands of years ago, as well as today.

Most notable are his claims about the fundamental biopolitical dimension of Western politics: the metaphor of modern life is no longer the city, but *the camp*; and lastly the infamous *homo sacer*, a “sacred man” or “bare life” from Roman times, who in the way that he could be killed but not murdered, was only included into society through exclusion, and provides a means for the narrativization of the production of sovereign power.²²

For Agamben there is no sovereignty, no coherent community without this negative gesture and exception, since it is constitutive of any positive forming/feeling of community. Agamben is thus elaborating upon the infamous definition of sovereignty provided by Carl Schmitt at the beginning of his text *Political Theology*.²³ While Agamben’s theoretical version of the concept deals primarily with governments, kings, and sovereigns in the most “proper” sense, by shifting the focus from the divine or reactionary sources of sovereignty, he nonetheless helps lay the groundwork for the definition of the term I am working towards in this dissertation. Sovereignty for

²² Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 62-63. Andrew Norris, “Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Dead,” *Politics, Metaphysics and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben’s Homo Sacer*, Andrew Norris, (ed). (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

²³ Schmitt, *Political Theology*..., 13.

Agamben is not about some sort of ethereal, divine or structural source, it is not something which is beamed down to earth or from another dimension, leaving it immanent or pure. It is instead something that often appears with such power, but is always tied to very violent gestures or acts, which results in the production of exceptional bodies. These figures appear as politically empty and are potent ghosts who straddle the line between the powerful and the powerless. Consequently, the ghosts that haunt the political and the exceptions that stain it, are not exceptional in the sense of spectrally particular, supplementary, and irrelevant, but rather constitutive elements, and to paraphrase a common axiom on sovereignty, they are the exceptions *which make the rule, and the ruler(s)*.²⁴

I add of “ruler(s)” in order to draw a clearer link between Agamben’s theories and mine. Although sovereignty throughout *Homo Sacer* is continually casually linked to the figure of “the sovereign,” the constitutive exclusions which Agamben refers to, those that haunt the political upon their return and form community, do not create a single sovereign, a king, a tyrant, or a Leviathan. Rather, in the shambling figures such as the *homo sacer*, that which can by a society be killed but not murdered, the community itself performs its sovereignty, and can reproduce itself through these shades. These ghosts make possible the “sovereign” distinction that Jen Bartelsen in his text *The Genealogy of Sovereignty* mentions, between hierarchy and anarchy.²⁵

4. Making a Sovereign Community

²⁴

Ibid.

²⁵

Bartelsen, 17.

Sovereignty, as I am using it here, is therefore not simply violence, might, or the system of mutual recognition amongst states. It is something neither theoretically nor practically absolute, and should not solely be identified with the state, or with those in power. Its reproduction is not simply the purview of those who have the material ability to exclude things or expel things. It is instead something much more tenuous, delicate and pervasive.

Sovereignty, here is the successful binding together of a collection of bodies, identities and interests into a political community.²⁶ A community, which itself is always changing, but nonetheless exists as an object of discussion or political action, a coherent thing which can be defended and maintained at all levels of political agents.²⁷ Its production and reproduction is dependent upon two gestures. First the negative act of an exclusion, which draws a line, attempting to mark an inside and an outside. The second act is a sort of negation, a neutralization of the first act, a taming of the ghosts which the nation/community struggle to forget but cannot. The primordial violence and excisions that formed this community, return in different differential figures and forms which, through their haunting, provide the means for the maintaining, rationalizing and unraveling of the political formation to which they are tethered. They exist both as zones of terrifying indistinction, and as states and mechanisms of exceptionality, through which the community itself can produce its everyday sovereignty and authority. If we translate their theoretical ambiguity into imagery, they are people who walk around as if inside out, who can either force a horror at seeing the guts of a community and therefore induce political vomiting, or can reproduce subjectivities through the thankful recognition that I

²⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer...*

²⁷ Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2006), 6.

am not them, and because I am not them, *I am the real political agent, the real American, the real citizen.*²⁸

To make this point in a different manner, sovereignty is authority or power derived from the violence of exclusion or the drawing of a border to form a political community, accompanied by the ability to both *exorcise and exercise* the ghosts which return to mark the site of that exclusion. Sovereignty is not simply dependent upon a brutal, primordial exclusion, but is dependent upon the ways in which the ghosts of that exclusion appear as they return to haunt the constitution of the political. The treatment of these ghosts, their ability to be tamed, to be reduced to shades or figures of limited meaning and limited momentum, is what gives all political communities the character of being progressive organisms which possess inherent abilities to determine themselves.²⁹ - This is after all Zizek notes the core of the formation of any community, or feeling of belonging, the ability to keep shared secrets.³⁰ Which in the case of these figures means transforming the saga of their expulsion and return, the structure which ties their presence to my authenticity/power into a tragedy of banal emptiness?³¹

In the ways in which Guam flickers, fades, appears to suddenly invade, is quickly expelled, is articulated within or without, or written around or as absent within the

²⁸ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *The (Un)exceptional Life of a Non-Voting Delegate: Chamorros, Guam and the Production of American Sovereignty*, Paper presented at the 5th Annual Crossing Borders Conference at University of California, San Diego, 4 March 2007.

²⁹ Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000).

³⁰ Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (London: Verso, 2002), lix.

³¹ Or in other words, it transforms them into something which does not affect the sovereign subject. They are not completely isolated, but the virtue of being sovereign means that how you are embedded in that community appears to work almost exclusively in your favor. As Patchen Markell argues in *Bound by Recognition*, they remain within that same productive structure, but what is most prominently present is *their gaze*, and their ability to perceive, understand, feel or recognize. Markell, *Bound by Recognition*...30. Sherene Razack, *Dark Threats, White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the New Imperialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004).

imaginary of the United States, I see it potentially as one of these ghosts. A point which provides both a dangerous and threatening figure which embodies the obscene mechanics and dependencies of a political order, but which also functions as the means through which is created the aura of its power, its sovereignty and sovereign ability.

5. *Qualifying Agamben*

The direction I am moving towards in defining sovereignty in this chapter, draws inspiration from Agamben's work, but does not necessarily seek to engage with the specifics of his project, or the legal and juridical conversations and critical frameworks that he is drawing from or situated within. While the metaphors that Agamben employs are productive, powerful and compelling, I am in agreement with theorist Michael Hardt they also have a tendency to either make imperceptible and exceptional in their own right many forms of everyday violence.³²

As Agamben makes fundamental the ban, the exclusion, and the return — in its most violent incarnation — as the marking/making of an object awaiting obliteration, the value of his analysis in helping produce subsequent work becomes difficult.³³ By placing the production of sovereign power not at the simple spatial legal/political fringes or edges, but at the threshold of violent power, the figure of *homo sacer* for instance quickly becomes reduced to another positive object ideal for usage in Oppression Olympics, or a

³² Michael Hardt & Thomas Dumm "The Theory and Event Interview: Sovereignty, Multitudes, Absolute Democracy: A Discussion between Michael Hardt and Thomas Dumm About Hardt and Negri's Empire" *Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri*, Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean (eds). (New York: Routledge, 2004), 166-167.

³³ Andreas Kalyvas, "The Sovereign Weaver," *Politics, Metaphysics and Deaht: Essays on Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer*, Andrew Norris, (ed). (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), 107.

negative weapon against which claims of racial injustice or violence can be dismissed because they cannot touch the violence of this metaphoric constitutive limit.³⁴

A common gesture here is therefore to explain what *homo sacer* refers to, and then claim that my community, in this case that of Chamorros from Guam, are *homo sacer*.³⁵ I am not interested in this sort of deployment for the limitations and logic traps I have already mentioned. Nonetheless Agamben is crucial in the way he provides a sort of faded map, a ghostly outline of the structure of sovereignty. In the remainder of this chapter I intend to use that outline to illustrate how Guam's banal and almost imperceptible status, nonetheless plays a role in producing American sovereignty. In order to do this I will analyze the positionality of a figure which I have mentioned in passing thus far, but will now make central to my analysis of the constitution of American sovereignty and political solvency, namely *the non-voting delegate*. After analyzing the structure of that non-voting delegate's exceptional position, we will then expand our vision to look at the similarly exceptional location of Guam, and how through that location it can provide the means through which a claim to the globality and greatness of America in the world can be achieved.

6. *The Fake Vote Issue*

At present the United States Congress has six official non-voting delegates, from Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, The Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, as well as the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, which received its delegate

³⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, (London: Verso, 2002), 97-98. Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons and Torture*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 38.

³⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313.

position in 2009.³⁶ With no vote, no formal power, although they can serve on committees, they are often jokingly and seriously referred to as elected lobbyists, except with no money.³⁷ This position means that although they have a formal position within the dealings of the Congress, their place is nonetheless always informal because they cannot be counted amongst the real representatives, but in essence exists to be *counted by those who are counted as real*.

Each territory received this symbolic form of representation at different points in their relationship with the United States. Some territories such as California were eagerly accepted into the union, but nearly all others had to work to become states.³⁸ Many had delegates who were elected and attempted to “crash” the United States Congress for decades prior to being formally recognized and given a non-voting delegate position.³⁹ Guam first sent an unofficial delegate to the United States Congress in the mid 1960’s, but was not officially given one until 1972. For territories which later became states, the delegate recognition process is a crucial one, part of the transition from being an object to becoming a subject of America. This is not so for the remaining territories. Despite the fact that the status of these delegates, their seats, and their powers have regularly changed over the past 110 years, these changes can be characterized as great steps forward that don’t seem to go anywhere. The ambiguity of the political relationship has persisted over

³⁶ The geography, size and political status of each of these territories differ, despite their being lumped together as a non-voting bloc by their inability to vote. Their populations range from Puerto Rico (3,927,776), District of Columbia, (581,530), Guam (154,805), US Virgin Islands (108,612) and American Samoa (57,291). Two are located in the Pacific, two in the Caribbean and one wedged between Virginia and Maryland. The District of Columbia stands out amongst the rest however, as being the only district whose residents pay Federal taxes and yet do not receive voting representation in Congress. This district further stands out as the only district where the residents are allowed to vote for President. Republican Study Committee, *Legislative Bulletin*, 24 January 2007.

³⁷ John Griffin, “Guam’s Role in Pacific Still Uncertain,” *Guam Daily News*, 24 November 1969.

³⁸ Ron Mcninch, “Backwaters,” *The Marianas Variety*, 24 December 2009.

³⁹ This has become known to some as “The Tennessee Plan,” where a territory will elect its own Congressional representatives and unofficially send them to Congress, without prior sanction by the United States Federal Government.

the past century, from the relationship between the territories and their colonial master, to the identities and power of the delegates they send to Washington D.C.

To say that people on Guam do not have a vote in the United States Congress may be in essence correct, but it does not do justice to the ambiguity or peculiarity of the Congressional vote that they do not have. In January of 2007, the newly christened, recently elected Democratic majority in the House of Representatives voted to change the House rules in order to allow its five non-voting delegates the “right” to vote “symbolically” when “the committee sits as a whole.”⁴⁰

In Guam, the local media response was guarded, as it seems was public opinion. While the formerly non-voting delegate, now voting non-voting delegate from the island Madeleine Bordallo, assured everyone that this was “a step forward” and that she was looking forward to using her voting card as soon as possible, few other people seemed to share her enthusiasm.⁴¹ In fact save for a handful of media pieces, no one seemed to notice or care that the aspirations of so many Chamorros and others on Guam to be American and participate fully in American democracy had finally been fulfilled through the granting of these voting rights!

When speaking on the floor of the Congress in support of this bill, Bordallo connected the need for this “symbolic vote,” and the just inclusion it would secure, to the patriotism and devotion Chamorros have exhibited towards the United States, in particular during World War II:

⁴⁰ H.R. 78, [110th Congress] *Amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to permit Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to the Congress to cast votes in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union*, Sponsor: Steny Hoyer, 19 January 2007.

⁴¹ Clynt Ridgell, “Bordallo will tell Guam’s story on Capitol Hill” *KUAM News*, 26 January 2007. Clynt Ridgell, “Bordallo looks forward to new voting authority,” *KUAM News*, 25 January 2007.

Democracy is founded on voting and participation...You have not heard their stories of loyalty to our nation, you have not learned of their confinement in concentration camps, of them being beaten and beheaded. You have not seen or felt their patriotism. Our ability to participate in the Committee of the Whole would make these sacrifices all the more meaningful for us Americans.⁴²

She later contended that this vote would also allow her to better express the “voices of our constituents.”⁴³

This ignorance or reticence of Bordallo’s constituents seems well founded however if we take into account what the symbolic nature of this vote implies. If one moved beyond the rhetoric of progress and baby steps-to-eventual uncontestable American belonging, we see that the symbolism of this vote either called in into question (in a very ordinary and obvious way) the “greatness” of the democracy that people on Guam were being “symbolically” drawn into, or perhaps made more tangible and perceptible the waiting room of History that Bordallo’s constituents were being “symbolically” confined to once again.⁴⁴ According to a *KUAM News* story,

The delegate calls it a symbolic vote because the five delegates from the territories will only be allowed to vote on floor amendments and not on the final approval of bills. Also if their vote influences the outcome of an amendment a new vote will be taken without their participation. In the case of a close vote the delegates from the territories will be removed from the committee and the committee will vote again without the territories votes.⁴⁵

It was most likely this spectacle that led to the muted response. That the inclusion in American democracy meant shouldering a massive asterisk, which blared for all to hear that: “Your vote only matters so long as it doesn’t matter.”

⁴² Ridgell, “Bordallo will tell Guam’s story..”

⁴³ Ridgell, “Bordallo looks forward to new voting...”

⁴⁴ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “How Much Chamorro Suffering is Worth a Fake Vote?” *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com>, 29 January 2007. Site Accessed 28 December 2009.

⁴⁵ Ridgell, “Bordallo looks forward to new voting...”

7. Spreading Democracy or Defending the Real Americans

The vote that approved this House rule change passed, strictly along party lines, with Democrats supporting the measure and Republicans railing against it.⁴⁶ For Democrats what was at stake in this issue was the soul of American Democracy, its inclusiveness and its willingness to recognize those who are already Americans, or those who have sacrificed greatly for the greatness of America.⁴⁷ According to one of the rule change's most ardent supporters, Alcee Hastings a Democrat from Florida, "This minute change in the House rules represents a major step forward for nearly 5 million Americans whose voices are not represented on the floor of the House."⁴⁸ For Mike Honda, a Democrat from California and chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), the inclusion of the delegates in this way, "improves the legislative process and increases the degree to which the House of Representatives accurately reflects the 300 million Americans who are subject to the laws it passes."⁴⁹ In his press release in support of this measure, he added that "Every American benefits from a truer democracy."⁵⁰ Among all the Congresspeople who made statements, Honda's remark passed the closest to referencing contemporary American colonialism, albeit in an effort to show how it is being transcended by small gestures of ever greater inclusion and representation.

⁴⁶ Edward Epstein, "GOP in House call Dems heavy-handed" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 January 2007.

⁴⁷ Megan Poiniski, "Delegates to Congress get power to vote in U.S. House Committee of the Whole," *The Virgin Islands Daily News*, 25 January 2007.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Congressman Mike Honda, *Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Urges Support for Delegate Voting Resolution*, 23 January 2007.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

In an interesting but obvious variant of support for this measure, Jose Serrano, a Puerto Rico-born Democratic Congressman from New York, connected the granting of these voting rights to the mission to spread democracy that the United States was embarking upon intensely at that point, all around the world. According to Serrano, “What are we really giving them? A chance to participate in democracy...How can we be willing to spread democracy around the world when we can't spread it here?”⁵¹

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer from Maryland, who introduced the bill, was regularly quoted in the media about the necessary symbolism of this vote that “It is not enough what we do today, “but“...it would be tragic if we do not do this basic step.”⁵² According to Hoyer,

I have felt very strongly for a long period of time that Guam and the other territories as well as the D.C. [District of Columbia] whose delegates and resident commissioner serve along side the rest of us, have the same offices, the same staff, who also ought to have a vote.⁵³

Congresswoman Bordallo used this aura of inclusiveness, political fraternity, and openness to assert the Americaness of Chamorros and the people of Guam. Speaking in a *KUAM News* interview, she stated that this “minute” change would allow at last the recognition of the people of Guam “for who we are, members of the American family.”⁵⁴

From the Republican side, it was precisely the Americaness of these delegates that they rallied their opposition around. Their attacks took a number of forms, but all returned to the notion that this move was simply “politics” and a Democratic power grab, since it would inflate the number of “voting” Democrats in the House (since 4 of the 5 delegates are Democrats) and that it was an insult to the Americans from voting districts

⁵¹ Elizabeth Brotherton, “GOP may sue over Delegates’ votes,” *Roll Call*, January 25, 2007.
⁵² Denis Camire, “Delegates Win Partial Voting Rights,” *Pacific Daily News*, 26 January 2007.
⁵³ Ridgell, “Bordallo will tell Guam’s story...”
⁵⁴ Camire, “Delegates Win Partial Voting Rights,”

that they represented. Whereas Democrats had tried to assert the Americaness of the delegates in question, through their willingness to sacrifice (most importantly militarily, but also in terms of accepting a semi-American status) for the greater good of the United States, Republicans placed the conditions for being a real American on less ideal or inspiring things. Republicans staked out the realm of practicality by judging these delegates as not sufficiently American, because of first, the fact that four out of five of their districts in question do not pay taxes, and second because three out of the five districts are not large enough to be comparable in population to the existing average population for voting congressional districts.

For John Boehner, Republican Minority Leader from Ohio, this move merited outrage because of the way it would potentially make tax-paying-Americans subject to the “voting” and mandates of non-tax paying populations and their representatives. In an interview with the congressional paper *Roll Call* Boehner explained,

For example, under the bill, Delegates could vote with their Democrat leadership to raise federal income taxes on the American people, even though the territories they represent are exempt from those same taxes. Similarly, the Delegate from American Samoa could vote for labor laws, such as a minimum-wage hike, that exempt his constituents but apply to all other Americans.⁵⁵

The other pragmatic salvo aimed at the fact that “the Delegates’ constituent bases are not proportionate to those of full voting Members”⁵⁶ The population of the districts in question range from close to 57,000 for American Samoa and nearly four million for Puerto Rico. Republicans were quick to point out that the average number of constituents in an existing Congressional district is 650,000. According to House Minority Whip Roy

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Brotherton and Susan Davis, “GOP Will Fight Delegates’ Voting Rights,” *Roll Call* 7 February 2007.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Blunt, also apparently an expert at democratic math, the prospect of incorporating the American territories, "It's certainly counter to any principle that would reflect the democracy of the House."⁵⁷

These two criticisms came together in a sort of sublime way, as Republicans became indignant at the way Democrats, through this rule change were creating the conditions for a stupid and undemocratic inversion of that old anti-colonial American mantra, "No taxation without representation." For now, those lucky enough to be in these territories, the new slogan was "representation without taxation."⁵⁸ The use of this perversion of the American origins is crucial for the Republican resistance, since by touching the genesis of the United States, its revolution and its Constitution, they make clear that they are speaking for those who are *truly American*. Nowhere was made more explicit than in a statement created by the Republicans of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation, which is curiously titled *Pennsylvania Republicans Decry Representation Without Taxation: Express Opposition to Democrat Plan to Make Taxes Easier to Raise:*

The American Flag has a field of fifty stars for a reason; they represent the number of constitutionally recognized states in our Union. Only those states can be fully represented in the United States House of Representatives under law. The Members of the Republican Congressional Delegation of Pennsylvania agree that this move by the Democratic Majority amounts to nothing more than "representation without taxation."⁵⁹

The more polite version of this rebuke was expressed by David Drier, a Republican Congressman from California. In an interesting moment that displayed the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Congressman Patrick Henry, *Democrats' Delegate Vote: Implementing 'Representation Without Taxation,'* 24 January 2007.

⁵⁹ Republican Members of the Pennsylvanian Congressional Delegation, *Pennsylvania Republicans Decry Representation Without Taxation: Express Opposition to Democrat Plan to Make Taxes Easier to Raise*, http://www.house.gov/list/press/pa03_english/delegate0107.html, 24 January 2007. 29 Site Accessed 29 May 2009.

sovereign ability of this Representative to dictate and capture, at his pleasure, the existences of the districts of these delegates, without recognizing, in any way, the historical and political deadlocks that the United States has trapped them in, Drier stated: "If they want to vote in this body, Mr. Speaker, they should pursue statehood, plain and simple."⁶⁰ This, in the case of Guam, completely ignores the fact that the United States Government has been on record that it is under no obligation to support or encourage any political status change for the island, not to mention the fact that the United States military prizes the ambiguous/colonial status of Guam.⁶¹

8. America's Constitutional Crisis on the Edge of Asia...

In order to make clear the role that these voting, non-voting figures play in the reproduction of American sovereignty, I must first introduce a distinction between levels of political action and constitution: *politics* and *the political*. I have used both of these terms earlier, but will draw out more clearly the difference before continuing.

The political is the foundation, the ground which is formed through those fundamental exclusions mentioned earlier. For this particular example, one can conceive

⁶⁰ A telling quote which always echoes in my mind when I hear this argument comes from Robert Underwood's speech *The Status of Having No Status*: "When John Garamendi presented the Clinton Administration's position on Chamorro self-determination in a Congressional hearing in October 1997, I was appalled by the lack of coherence. He stated that the administration opposed ethnic qualifications for any ballot failing to accept and appreciate the ethnic dimensions of the Treaty of Paris or the Organic Act. I asked him that if we ran a political status election according to his definitions, would the federal government abide by the results. He said no and further indicated that such elections cannot be binding on the federal government. Imagine that. The federal government wanted to set the ground rules for an election in which the results didn't matter for them. It seems ridiculous to be concerned about the conduct of an election you already decided you don't need to abide by." Robert Underwood, *The Status of Having No Status*. Speech presented at the annual College of Arts and Sciences Research Conference. University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 26 April 1999.

⁶¹ Brotherton, "GOP may sue..." Sabina Perez "The Poisons of Powerlessness" *Hita Guahan: Chamorro Testimonies at the United Nations*, (San Francisco, Guahan Indigenous Collective and Famoksaiyan, 2006). Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "*The Materiality and Fantasy of Empire: The Case of Guam*," Paper presented at the 2006 National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference, San Francisco, California, 1 April 2006.

of the Constitution, the bedrock document or site as the political, and political acts or statements are those which have the ability to touch, reach, or change this level.⁶² Politics is the game which takes place above this foundation, the materials and equipment for its enjoyment and its performance are the specters of the exclusions which constitute the political. Politics is therefore a game whose intent and goal is always the *reproduction of the political*.⁶³ The political ultimately contains the site or the terrain through which the rules for the political, both those explicit and implicit, those formal and obscene are found. The ability to change those rules, to the change the trajectory or spectrum of what is thought to be possible in a routine, everyday sense, is found in the political, not in politics.⁶⁴

It is in this manner, that the figure of the non-voting delegate is a productive pawn in a way of playing politics. It serves like an object jabbed and passed back and forth, and whose political power and existence seems regulated by a sovereignty producing light switch, of which all parties may make use. As an object within this theater of politics, the delegate-pawn is governed by a simple rule; all sides may use these figures, but this “right to use” is solvent, intact, so long as the knife that these delegates represent, in jabbing, stabbing and defending, never touches and *never cuts to the political*. This game is to be played out completely above the political, in the realm of politics, as if contact between these figures and the political would be akin to the mixing of two elements which would result in a catastrophic explosion.

⁶² Jenny Edkins, *The Trauma of the Memory of Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, (London: Verso, 2006).

⁶³ Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality*, (Verso, London, 2000).

⁶⁴ When people speak of something being “politics as usual” and that it being worthless, pointless or a waste of time, they are touching upon this point. Politics as usual is the furthest thing from the political, as it is like treading water but swimming nowhere, an exercise, even an exciting spectacle which keeps you in the same place and keeps everything around you intact.

The change that allows non-voting delegates a conditional vote takes place both above the political and in fear of brushing up against it. To make this point, it is important to note a number of things. First, this change takes place not at the level of the Constitution, where political scientists such as Robert Statham claim that it must take place, but rather at the level of House rules which exist at the whim of whomever controls the majority.⁶⁵ As the delegates are used by both parties — in one instance to prove the inclusiveness and democracy loving nature of the American soul, and in the other to reaffirm, inflate, and reinvigorate those and only those who are truly American — both invoke the encounter of the political existence of these delegates and the United States Constitution, as being terrifying, the stuff that will incite a crisis.

Second, these colonial voting rights have reared their symbolic head before. This sacred vote has been bestowed before, and has been taken away before. In 1993, possibly in anticipation of the Republican takeover the following year, the Democrats made a rule change in the House which for the first time allowed the non-voting delegates these symbolic rights. In 1995, after the new Congress-people of the Republican revolution were sworn in, the rules were promptly changed to take these rights away. When the Democrats regained the House in 2007 and were therefore able to dictate the procedural rules, they returned those rights to the delegates.⁶⁶ What we are left with then is a horribly contingent ephemeral change that is articulated both negatively and positively as being comprised of much stronger and much more *political stuff*. The reversion, the rescinding

⁶⁵ Robert Statham, *Colonial Constitutionalism: The Tyranny of United States Offshore Territorial Policy and Relations*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

⁶⁶ In the case of Washington D.C. this drama has taken place before. From 1871-1874 the district was allowed a non-voting delegate, but was taken away for a century and reinstated in 1970.

of these rights is already present; it already exists within this change. *It is not some implied, obscene dimension that all refuse to admit to, but it is part of the rules.*

In the 1990's as well as today, these changes, the movement of the rights of these delegates and bodies back and forth across an exceptional space, inside and outside of the political, take place in persistent fear of their contact with the Constitution of the United States. The Democrats make this change at the level of House rules, and seek only a "symbolic" vote for the delegates, because it prevents the vote from becoming entangled in a Constitutional morass. They give this form of right precisely because it keeps the figures, rights, and potential existence of these delegates out of the proximity of the Constitution, and allows them to avoid the potential trauma of what the Constitution would appear to require, imply, limit or call for.

The Republicans on the other hand, both in 1993 and 2007, threaten very clearly and openly that the granting of these rights to those who clearly do not deserve them will spark a Constitutional crisis or showdown.⁶⁷ Republicans protested the heavy-handed tactics of the Democrats in pushing this rule change through without any input or debate, and therefore warn, in words of Representative Tom Price from Georgia, that "the only option we have is through the courts."⁶⁸ In 1993, Republicans protesting the initial bestowal of these rights, filed a court case with the U.S. District Court challenging the constitutionality of having those who don't pay taxes and aren't from states vote in Congressional sessions. The United States Court of Appeals however upheld this rule change, since the voting of the delegates does not ultimately affect the overall outcome of

⁶⁷ Gerardo R. Partido, "Guam, U.S. Territories Get Limited Voting Rights," *The Marianas Variety*, 26 January 2007.

⁶⁸ Brotherton, "GOP may sue..."

any vote.⁶⁹ A *Washington Post* article covering the case was less euphemistic, stating that the case was thrown out because the votes were “symbolic” and therefore “meaningless”.⁷⁰

9. Where America’s Sovereignty is Reproduced...

The (re)production of the sovereignty of the United States takes place, as I have referenced so far, through its usage in the conjuring of different auras of American power and authenticity. I will conclude this section of the chapter now by showing how the reproduction of this sovereignty is also dependent upon the creation of a circle of protection and authority around the non-voting delegates that serves to insulate those constituted as “Americans” in Congress from complicity with, or the effect of, any potential crisis these figures might represent.

The exclusion of these delegates is obvious, if banal and sort of boring. As one decolonization activist commented to me, to be a non-voting delegate in the US Congress is like being a Youth Congressperson sitting in the real Congress.⁷¹ You are like a junior member, never taken seriously, treated respectfully to your face, but most likely mocked the moment your back is turned.

However, the “symbolic” ways in which the delegate is brought back into the Halls of Congress are peculiar and intriguing. During a speech on the House floor in 2003, Madeleine Bordallo began her statement in which she begged her colleagues to sign a discharge petition that she could not because of her status, with the telling paradox,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Mary Beth Sheridan, “Delegates Gain Limited Voting Rights,” *Washington Post*, 25 January 2007.

⁷¹ Victoria Leon Guerrero, *Personal Communication*, Leyesleturan Guaham, The Guam Legislature, Hagåtña, Guam, 13 February 2009.

“I am a member of Congress, but not one of its members.”⁷² The speech of these delegates, everything they say, because of this position, embodies in broad daylight, a political exception, a piece of the outside inside, and the inside outside. *When the delegates speak, it cannot ever not be there.*

This banal, but nonetheless very real and very productive colonial difference, rears its head in the way the delegates speak of “their people,” the way they pronounce the names of their people and their islands, the subordinate position from which they speak, and the pleas for recognition that are always implicit regardless of what they are asking for or seeking. They therefore represent a wound, an opening in the political. In the debate over the rule change to allow the delegates their silly vote, we find a weak version of this crack in the armor of the American political from Guam’s delegate:

If you would deny your fellow Americans, the people of Guam, this small bit of symbolic participation, the greater loss is our nation's loss of its promise to the world of democracy that is inclusive and that values all of its citizens.⁷³

This relationship, this plea to have access to the political, to change the foundation of this political community is persistently rejected. In the debates, Democrats heralded this change as small but meaningful, symbolic, but important. Republicans denounced it as politics as usual, political chicanery, and setting the country on a dangerous collision course with the constitutionality of giving these colonies anything.⁷⁴ Republicans claimed that this is an “obscene” and “ridiculous” power grab.⁷⁵ Democrats chimed back that the Constitutional doomspeak of their opponents was code for ‘We don’t want to have four

⁷² Congresswoman Bordallo speaks out for Guam’s disabled veterans, <http://www.house.gov/bordallo/videoFiles.html>, 1 October 2003. Site Accessed 10 January 2009.

⁷³ Camire, “Delegates Win Partial Voting Rights,”

⁷⁴ George Will, “Voting Rights Chicanery,” *Washington Post*, 28 January 2007.

⁷⁵ Republican Members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation, *Pennsylvania Republicans Decry Representation Without Taxation...*

Democratic Delegates,” or simple the groaning of a former Majority adjusting to being the current minority.⁷⁶

Ultimately what gets lost in this saber rattling and sword locking is not simply the delegates and their interests or their positions, but ultimately their ability to signify a particular type of crisis or breakdown.⁷⁷ The exceptions they represent, the injustices they might embody and carry with them, the basic problems that they indicate about the greatness of the United States, *evaporate* or dissipate before returning to either Democrats or Republicans. What is made impossible here is the possibility for one of these delegates to signify a failure which is not simply theirs alone, but which extends into the political world of their colonizer.⁷⁸

To make this point clear let me end with an anecdote from 2003, during the savage era of a Republican controlled Legislative branch, where Delegates were not allowed the incredible privileges they gained in 2007. During the aforementioned speech, Madeleine Bordallo appealed on behalf of the veterans of her district, to the full members of the United States Congress, to sign a discharge petition which would benefit the veterans of not just Guam, but around the country. The rhetorical device and strategy she chose could not help but bump up against the banal, exploitative and colonial treatment of Chamorros. Whether she intended it or not, her speech was *political*:

⁷⁶ Brotherton, “GOP may sue...”

⁷⁷ Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xxx-xxxi.

⁷⁸ We find this in a small way in the statements by Congressman from American Samoa Eni Faleomavaega, in response to the political firestorm that his newly re-acquired voting rights has caused. “I must say that I have never seen such a more divisive issue before the House for consideration...And I feel really bad...all we wanted was the symbolic vote.” It is interesting, because of all the media pieces and statements which I have collected for this paper, this statement is unique because of how the Delegate is in a way seems forced to embody the battle, to take responsibility for the debate and barbs thrown from both sides of the aisle. Elizabeth Brotherton, “GOP may sue over Delegates’ votes,” *Roll Call*, January 25, 2007. Ultimately, what we can glean from this solitary statement is that if there is any “feeling of bad” or “bad” here, it belongs not to those who are dueling for democracy and Americanness here, but to those exceptions that are being tossed back and forth.

I am a member of Congress, but not one of its members. I read those words today Madame Speaker because I had them reinforced to me when I tried to sign the discharge petition here in Congress to give the veterans concurrent receipt that they deserve. We have veterans on Guam; 15,000 of them in fact. But I was told as a delegate I can't put my name on that discharge petition. More soldiers from Guam have died per capita in foreign wars than any other state in the nation. But Madame Speaker I can't put my name on that discharge petition. Pacific Islander veterans suffer disproportionately from post traumatic stress disorder. But I can't put my name on that discharge petition. I am a co-sponsor of HR 303. But I can't put my name on that discharge petition.⁷⁹

After finishing her statement and in the midst of yielding back her time, a curious incident took place. A Democrat, Bob Filner from California, asked the President of the House, a Republican, if a vote could be taken which would allow Bordallo the privilege of signing the discharge petition upon which she had repeatedly stated that she was not allowed to put her name.⁸⁰ During his request, as well as while the Republicans consulted over his request, *laughter* was heard throughout the chamber. Echoing the curious obscenity of the Rubin Lake Affair, the most obvious source of this laughter is from Filner himself, who could barely contain himself and smiled repeatedly while discussing the political fate of Bordallo and the voices of her constituents.

After 33 seconds, the President of the House responds that Filner's request was not in order and that the privileges of the delegates are controlled through Rules, or in other words, by whomever controls the majority of the House. Before yielding, Filner made a final statement, one more jab at the Republicans with the non-voting delegate of Guam:

⁷⁹ Madeleine Bordallo as quoted in *Congresswoman Bordallo speaks out for Guam's disabled veterans*, <http://www.house.gov/bordallo/videoFiles.html>, 1 October 2003. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

⁸⁰ Filner is a somewhat well-known politician amongst stateside Chamorros because his congressional district in San Diego has one of the largest Chamorro populations outside of the Marianas Islands. I have met him and his aides at numerous Chamorro events in Southern California.

Well I thank the gentlelady for bringing this up, because this an insult to your constituents, this is an insult to you and I will say that if the Democrats get control of the House the right to vote and sign discharge petitions we hope will get back to the delegates.⁸¹

The key to this statement is that the ambiguity, the degradation, the hypocrisy, and the inconsistency of the position of the non-voting delegates in the United States Congress is an insult, but speaking as a voting American, it is *an insult to you and to your constituents, not to me*. There is no crisis here; there is no insult here to the rest of us. Your position is as a tool, a piece in a game of politics, which is played above the bones of your exclusion. You are dependent upon me, for justice, for politics, for everything; I am not dependent upon you, and your injustice, your hurt, does not implicate me, it does not wound me. The structure of this relationship disappears, your place in terms of making me is gone, the way I am dependent upon you is gone, replaced with the banalities of *your need for me*. The result is that any injustice is yours alone, and through this relationship my sovereignty is reproduced.

10. Exceptional Imperialism

Bartholomew Sparrow's book *The Insular Cases: The Emergence of American Empire* is one of the most informative texts available on the creation and legal maintenance of the territories of the United States in the 20th century. Unlike other texts which seem to skip over Guam and other small territories, the text actually delves into the

⁸¹ Bob Filner as quoted in *Congresswoman Bordallo speaks out for Guam's disabled veterans*, <http://www.house.gov/bordallo/videoFiles.html>, 1 October 2003. Site Accessed 14 January 2010.

particularities of each territory, and what justifications of American imperialism the Insular Cases enabled.⁸²

In this regard, the text is exceptional. However, in terms of a larger understanding of the constitution of American imperialism as an ideological force, it is fairly basic and takes a common mainstream position; that the sort of extra-territorial exercise of imperial sovereignty, American imperialism, the show of dominance and the ability to crassly determine the fate of others, is an “exceptional” thing and something that is always rooted in a historical incident, an intervention, like a wrong step, a mistake, an invasion. Sparrow’s text, despite the increased attention to the details of this American empire, remains in this trajectory. It cites the acquisition of the 1898 territories and the formalization of their colonial existences through *The Insular Cases*, as a site for the emergence of this sort of sovereign, extra-territorial exercise of power. Something tied to a particular moment can therefore be dismissed as minute in comparison to the whole of American history, which is far grander and democracy loving, which is presupposed to be invested in justice and progress.⁸³ As conservative American writer William F. Buckley noted in his 1969 debate with linguist Noam Chomsky, “[in terms of imperial interventions] America’s record is rather good. We went through an imperialist phase [the Spanish American War], but we pulled out of it faster than any country in the history of civilization.”⁸⁴

⁸² Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*, (Lawrence, University of Kansas, 2006).

⁸³ Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*, (University of Oklahoma Press, Norma, Oklahoma, 1997). Frank Dorrel, *Addicted to War: Why the U.S. Can’t Kick Militarism*, (AK Press, Oakland, California, 2002), 3-5. Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*, (Perennial Classics, New York, 1999), 297-298.

⁸⁴ Noam Chomsky vs. William F. Buckley. *Firing Line*, Yale University Library, 1969.

What we can perceive from Agamben and the figure of the non-voting delegate is that the exercise of power in relation to Guam should not be seen as tied to particular historical moment, it is not something which comes into being in 1898, and then again in 1944 and then again in 2009. It is something which is intrinsic in the relationship. It is something, by virtue of the colonial, marginal, and exceptional status of Guam that is always present. It is not something which sits there inactive, but something that is regularly called upon to produce and to enhance the United States. We see this in play at the macro-level of political control and military capitalization, but we can also perceive it at other levels as well. As noted earlier, a sovereign, whole community is produced and made coherent through those exceptional figures, those figures who are excluded and included, and who leave a residue in which the magic of sovereignty, its ability to produce that aura or prowess and power, is found.

11. Transitioning Towards Liberation

Throughout this chapter, in the discourse of the delegates and their fellow real members of the US Congress, we see two main ways in which America is produced through these exceptional figures. The first is found in the rhetoric of the Republicans. That these delegates and their exceptional status allow for the reinvigoration and the recognition of those who are truly American. They make their case on behalf of all that is “real” and all those who are made real through the political. Through the use of the exceptional figures of the non-voting delegates and the millions they represent, they can re-draw the boundaries of America, reinforce them, and make claims as to who is truly within and who is stuck without.

The second and more interesting way is the Democratic choice of rhetoric, namely that America's progressive heart and soul, the true spirit of America is found in the expansion of its vision, its dreams, the sharing of its principles and its democratic gifts. It is not just part of the way in which the Democrats are supposed to be the part of white guilt, or that they are the bigger tent party, but this is a strong powerful narrative that connects directly to the ways in which America imagines itself as a force which marks and covers the world. While the Republican may evoke a defense of the auspicious origins of America, it is the Democrats who are meant to represent its evolution and its actualization. These small sites of American exceptionalism and the production of America's benevolence within these walls are no different than the powerful feelings of national moral greatness, political and historical strength that thus pushes Americans at every level to feel justified in their own sovereign global exceptionalism.

Let us return for a moment to Congressman Serrano's statement admonishing the United States for daring to spread democracy abroad to other nations while millions of Americans don't get to enjoy it in their islands or communities. Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, are thus tied in with at least two other recent sites of American democracy spreading, Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸⁵ This is a crucial link, as here the territories — with their exceptional status, as places which can still be pulled closer or pushed further away from the United States, and always the recipients of gestures of inclusion and exclusion without their status changing in any fundamental way — can function truly as the outside waiting to get inside. They can stand in for the rest of the world, be perpetually treated and produced as those outside of America, clamoring to

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Brotherton, "GOP may sue..."

get in, clamoring to prove the greatness and desirability of America, the ones who will always be willing to have American democracy spread to them, those who are always eager and waiting for American liberation.⁸⁶

12. Laboratory of Liberation

In Chapter 1, I mentioned the plan first announced by the Pentagon in 2005 to transfer 8,000 US Marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. In concluding this chapter I'll return to this prospect in order to discuss the production of American sovereignty, through the notion of Guam as a laboratory of liberation. This move was announced without any consultation with the Government of Guam, but was the result of a negotiation between Japan and the United States over force realignment.⁸⁷ The move threatens to overwhelm Guam's utilities and infrastructure, and conservative estimates place the population increase over the next five years at 50,000. Guam's current population is 170,000. According to one *Pacific Daily News* article, this buildup will result in 20 years of growth, in five.⁸⁸

At a time when the United States military and the United States itself is incredibly unpopular around the world, Guam often times appears like an oasis in a rising desert of global anti-US base and military sentiment. A March 2007 conference that took place in Ecuador, brought together 400 activists from 40 different countries and high-lighted this mood. Those who gathered formed what American activist Medea Benjamin called a

⁸⁶ Colin Jones, "After Iraq, Let's Bring Democracy to Millions of Americans," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 October 2005.

⁸⁷ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Negotiating Our Future," *Guamology*, <http://www.guamology.com/2009/05/negotiating-our-future/>, 3 May 2009. Site Accessed 10 January 2010.

⁸⁸ Gaynor Dumat-ol Daleno, "20 Years of Growth in 5," *The Pacific Daily News*, 14 September 2008. Michelle Catahay, "Projected Population Boom Concerns Guthertz," *KUAM News*, 22 November 2009.

“Network to Abolish Foreign Military Bases.”⁸⁹ All those present were brought together by shared concerns that foreign bases in the world today, of which those operated by America represent 95%, lead to widespread “destruction of the environment, the confiscation of farmlands, the abuse of women, the repression of local struggles, the control of resources” and should be abolished because of broader concerns about “military and economic domination.”⁹⁰

South American nations such as Ecuador join a host of other nations which have been resisting or protesting the American military presences in their nations, sometimes for decades.⁹¹ Guam had a single representative at this event who focused his discussion on the contamination of Chamorro lands and lives by military toxins, and the threat that the military represents in terms of eternally deferring Guam’s decolonization. Neither his critique (and by default his image of Guam), nor the critique that this conference offered (through people protesting the American military presence in their lives), is representative of the Guam that is most present in its imagined military or political relationship to the United States.

While I have already argued in Chapter 5 that the place of Guam in relation to the United States is a diffuse and labile one, there are certain images that are held onto and are invoked precisely because of what role they can play in producing American benevolence. One image in particular, of Guam as a super-patriotic, military loving, semi-American community, is one the Pentagon most likely keeps close to its heart. After all, in contrast to populations in Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Iraq, who have

⁸⁹ Medea Benjamin, “A New Network Forms to Close U.S. Overseas Bases,” *Common Dreams*, <http://www.commondreams.org/views07/0312-32.htm>, 12 March 2007. Site Accessed 10 January 2010.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Hugh O’Shaughnessy, “US Builds Up its Bases in Oil-Rich South America,” *The Independent/UK*, 22 November 2009.

protested U.S. presence on their lands, in various ways, Guam appears to understand the role of the U.S. military in the world today, and appears to appreciate the liberating roles it plays in the world today. As Italian women in the village of Vicenza sing and protest against the construction of a US base in their community, and Okinawan and Japanese activists drive boats into Henoko Bay to prevent the expansion of an US Air Force Base there, in Guam, America is treated to a sea of yellow ribbon car magnets, parades, and a seemingly endless flow of eager young recruits.⁹² The superpower fantasies of the United States, as the universal sovereign, as the source of the world's order and stability, as the force that pushes it towards ever expanding freedoms and progress, the pervasive feelings of global exceptionalism are all satisfied and all helped find consistency through small, patriotic, exceptional sites such as Guam.

We can see this point much more clearly, if we consider one of the most quoted and most criticized comments to be made by the Bush Administration during its eight year reign, namely Vice President Dick Cheney's assertion that "we [Americans] will, in fact, be greeted as liberators" when America invades and occupies Iraq.⁹³ This sort of statement taps into those feelings of global exceptionalism and sovereignty. It plays to the feelings of universalizing, moral goodness that America feels and is compelled to forcibly share. It plays to the idea that all that America enacts is liberation, because of the role History has given it, and whatever we do, it will always come with that mandate of progress, liberating, and civilizing.⁹⁴ With such a mandate, the list of sites where America

⁹² Julian Aguon "The Pearl of Henoko," *The Fire This Time: Essays on Life Under U.S. Occupation*, (toyko: blue ocean press, 2006), 77-80. Desiree Fairouz, "Resisting US Bases in Italy: No a la base si a la pace!" *Common Dreams*, <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/07/06-1>, 6 July 2009. Site Accessed 10 January 2010. Mar-Vic Cagurangan, "Guam: Military Recruiter's Paradise," *The Marianas Variety*, 4 October 2007.

⁹³ Quoted in Lewis H. Lapham, "The Case for Impeachment," *Harpers Magazine*, March 2006, 32

⁹⁴ Naomi Klein, "Never Before! Our Amnesia Torture Debate," *The Nation*, 9 November 2005.

has liberated and prevailed against evil must be massive. It starts with self-liberation of America from the British, and moves into the liberating of slaves, the liberating of Europe and other grand sites of American accomplishment. However, this list is filled with names crossed out and some marked with an asterisk. It is filled with sites which were supposed to be sites of American liberation, exercises of greatness, but ended up being sites of anti-American sentiment, hatred and protest. Iraq has become only the most recent, but joins other sites in Central America, Vietnam, Somalia, where the white knight of America clashed against the local dark knights of its intervention, and its attempt at liberation failed.⁹⁵ In contrast, Guam appears as a gift, a miracle for the embattled American military commander, soldier, politician, or even just a generic person, who wants to believe in that mandate to *Empire*, who anchors their identity to that universal grasp and moral touch.⁹⁶

Guam's relationship to the United States is one constantly structured through the idea of liberation. During the celebration of "Liberation Day," the idea of America as liberator is given incredible concrete life and power. Elders who lived through the Japanese occupation and were rescued by American servicemen recount their experiences of being saved and, according to Chamorro literature scholar Evelyn Flores, recall their feelings that in that moment the Americans were akin to Gods.⁹⁷ All aspects of Chamorro and Guam life today are tied into feelings of obligation and debt for this liberation. It is invoked to explain a love of America. It is invoked to explain why we can't live without

⁹⁵ Razack in her text *Dark Threats and White Knights*, exemplifies this very well in the case of Canada and how its peacekeeping efforts, regardless of whether they were successes or failures, help to reproduce the whiteness and the masculinity of the Canadian nation.

⁹⁶ *Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri*, Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean (eds). (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁹⁷ Evelyn Flores, *Personal Communication*, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 11 October 2002.

America. It is cited to explain why so many Chamorros join in and support the American military in Guam and around the world. It goes right to the core of Chamorro identities and what makes them consistent, what makes them visible or worthy of recognition. The scene of the Chamorro being liberated in World War II by the United States, establishes a new relationship between the colonizer and colonized, now recast as liberated and liberator. In other work I've referred to this as the *scene of liberation*, which far from being a simple historical moment, becomes a hegemonic narrative point which contains the rules for postwar Guam, and provides clear answers to those questions which I began this dissertation with. Who has power in this relationship? Who is powerless? Who is dependent? Who is sovereign?⁹⁸

Robert Underwood explains this phenomenon through the metaphor of songs; since World War II, the Chamorro and its relationship to the United States has always been structured through the same song, *Sam Sam, My Dear Uncle Sam, Won't You Please Come Back to Guam*.⁹⁹ This song, which was created during World War II, helped to provide a source of resistance and hope for Chamorros enduring Japanese occupation.¹⁰⁰ In the Guam of today, it becomes the song we found our identities upon, and we exist to be helped and recognized by Uncle Sam and his representatives. It for this reason that

⁹⁸ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *The Scene of Liberation*, 14th Biennial Asian Pacific American Student Conference, Oberlin, Ohio, 17 February 2006.

⁹⁹ Joseph Santo Tomas. "Song of hope, Song of Faith." *Liberation: Guam Remembers*. 1994, 26.

¹⁰⁰ During the Japanese occupation of Guam, Chamorros created numerous songs in Chamorro to help them endure that traumatic period. These songs primarily mocked fun at the Japanese and any Chamorros who collaborated with them or also spoke of the hardships of being under their new colonizer. A handful of songs however were musical love letters to the United States, and expressed a longing and a pining for them to return to Guam and save the Chamorros. After the war in the process of memorializing the event, publicly and privately, nearly all of the songs of the war were forgotten or repressed whereas the one which most explicitly placed the Chamorro as a subordinate, desperate object needing to be saved and liberated became the song through which each Liberation Day is most prominently commemorated. That song is *Sam, Sam, My Dear Uncle Sam, Won't You Please Come Back to Guam*. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *These May or May Not Be Americans: The Patriotic Myth and Hijacking of Chamorro History on Guam*, (M.A. Thesis, University of Guam, 2004), 171-176.

Underwood notes that when Government of Guam officials or Chamorros go to the Federal Government or the United States Congress to get help or get support on an issue, the scene of liberation is always present and always invoked in some implicit or explicit form. It is for this reason that Underwood called for Guam to come up with a new song — one not based on this dependency and craving for recognition — after the Governor of Guam in 2003 gave testimony before the United States Congress requesting debt relief for Guam, prefacing his remarks with a description of the suffering, starving bodies of Chamorros in need of liberation during World War II.¹⁰¹

13. Embracing Your Empire

I began this section with the mention of the Marines which will be transferred from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. I did so, because this is another instance in which Guam as a perpetual site for proving America's prowess at liberating the world is given credence and force. Articles detailing new troop shifts or new hardware or personnel transfers to Guam are written all the time, but the initial news articles which covered this particular massive increase were particularly intriguing. Take for instance one of the first articles describing this transfer "7,000 Marines, Pentagon announces shift to Guam" from the *Pacific Daily News*.¹⁰² In this article, the usual bureaucratic figures and statements about Guam's strategic importance are trotted out, but the historical particularity of the troops which will soon be transferred to Guam, makes it possible to perceive the deeper

¹⁰¹ Robert Underwood, *Uncle Sam, Sam My Dear Old Uncle Sam, Won't you Please Be Kind to Guam*, Thinking Out Loud Lecture Series. University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam. 20 August 2003.

¹⁰² Gene Park, "7,000 Marines, Pentagon announces shift to Guam," *The Pacific Daily News*, 30 October 2005.

structure of American liberation in Guam. What makes this troop shift intriguing is the particular troops that will be brought to Guam.

These Marines belong to the infamous 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, the original and very legendary liberators of Guam. Guam's non-delegate to the United States Congress, Madeleine Bordallo sums up the kismet well with her remark that "We will now celebrate many Liberation Days in the future beside the men and women that carry on the tradition of those that freed our people. It will be a wonderful reunion."¹⁰³ The article further makes clear that Guam will be liberated from poverty by this increase in troops and the material necessary for their support, and that the increase of America's presence will mean vast improvements to the island, more money, more tourists, and more of everything. Other than the possibility of more military in an island already inundated with militarization, what makes this article particular frightening is the fact that the rhetoric used to describe this new increase is hardly new. Although it took more than 60 years for this particular battalion, Guam's initial liberators to return, the rhetoric used to describe their glorious arrival has been used over and over throughout the years, to describe, explain and justify any number of military increases and expansions in Guam.

At least one reason why such an uncritical relationship exists between Chamorros on Guam and the United States military can be traced to the place of liberation as a concept that animates their relationship to the United States and that defines both them and America. The result is that potentially all military, whether they are new or old, can stand in for those original liberators. Whether a new aircraft carrier, new surveillance drones or a new squadron of Stealth Fighters, every new arrival can be made to fit the silhouettes of those liberators and therefore be made to feel necessary in a similar way.

¹⁰³ "7,000 Marines..." *ibid.*

The contrast between Guam and its neighbors in the region, its fellow sites of American military presence or previous intervention, is a crucial and clear one. The local populations in Okinawa don't understand the United States military and its presence the region and in the world, and manifest this lack of understanding through their protests.¹⁰⁴ Whereas, South Korea represents, as Senator Hillary Clinton put it, a nation with "historical amnesia" which has lost its "understanding of the importance of our [America's] position there and what we have done over so many decades to provide them the freedom that they have enjoyed,"¹⁰⁵ Guam clearly understands and supports America. Guam knows the true heart of America; it represents the best of what America can offer the world through its military and through its ideals.

To understand this point, we have the statements of Naval Commanders such as Rear Admiral Charles Leideg who, in a 2006 article regarding the transfer of Marines, contrasted Okinawans with the people of Guam, Chamorro and otherwise, as being "tremendously patriotic" and that they "have a true appreciation of the word 'freedom.'"¹⁰⁶ This is not some colonial misrecognition, but rather something that Guam itself works hard to make consistent and visible. Guam's political and economic leaders are not shy about making clear their desire and willingness to celebrate and embody the

¹⁰⁴ Eric Talmadge, "Standoff Over US Base Closure Sours US Japan Ties," *Stars and Stripes*, 29 December 2008. David Neil, "US Troops in Okinawa Under Curfew After Protests," *The Independent (UK)*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/us-troops-under-curfew-in-okinawa-after-protests-785617.html>, 22 February 2008. Site Accessed 9 January 2010. Chalmers Johnson, "The Rape of Okinawa," *Asia Times*, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/JC05Dh01.html>, 3 July 2008. Site Accessed 9 January 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Matt, "Senator Hillary Clinton: South Korea Suffering from Historical Amnesia," *Occidentalism*, <http://www.occidentalism.org/?p=93>, 27 October 2005. Site Accessed 9 January 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Department of Defense, "Pace Visits Guam to Assess Infrastructure Growth Plans," *Newsblaze*, <http://newsblaze.com/story/20060603085722tsop.nb/topstory.html>, 3 June 2006. Site Accessed 9 January 2010.

role of the “tip of America’s spear.”¹⁰⁷ Guam’s current Governor, Felix Camacho, is notorious for speaking of the military and its coming to Guam through the voice of a romance novel protagonist who, after spurning a lover, has at last learned to love again.¹⁰⁸ In 2004, when asked about Guam base closures in the 1990’s and the possibility of more military coming to Guam as part of the Rumsfeld realignment proposals, Camacho said: “We all now recognize the value and economic stability of greater military presence on Guam...We really want them here.”¹⁰⁹ In 2005, he along with Guam’s non-voting delegate Madeleine Bordallo and the then Speaker of the Guam Legislature Mark Forbes, signed a joint statement on behalf of the people of Guam encouraging the United States military to “use” Guam more for its military missions:

The People of Guam have been consistent and steadfast in our support for America’s military mission in Asia and the Pacific. Our geo-strategic location close to potential flashpoints of conflict provides Presence with a Purpose for our Nation’s military forces. We welcome the use of Guam as a power projection hub and Guam’s assets for additional military and homeland defense missions including combatant vessels, combat aircraft, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms and associated personnel and their families to our island. We expect that military transformation initiatives affecting Guam will add value to our country’s

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The sarcastic tone is derived from the fact that the leaders of Guam in their calls for increases in the American military presence on Guam, have often couched their cries in terms of a realization of how they’ve learned how important and necessary the military is for life on Guam. This sort of discursive frame is meant to reference a period of economic health and prosperity in the 1980’s for Guam, whereby demands were made that the US military close certain bases on island in order to return excess lands which had been illegally taken from Chamorro families following World War II. The most radical phase of Chamorro activism in the 20th century emerged during this period around the issue of land. One base in particular Naval Air Station in the island’s center was closed. When the Asian economic market declined in the 1990’s and Guam’s economy faltered as well, it seemed to many that Guam had made a horrible mistake by “kicking out” the military. Prior to the announcement of the plan to transfer the Marines from Okinawa to Guam, the discussions about the military presence on Guam often took this sort of delicate tone, where Guam’s leaders dared not say a cross word to the military, for fear that they might leave us again. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “How the Activists Hurt Guam (...and America), *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2007/09/how-activists-hurt-guam-and-america.html>, 9 September 2007. Site Accessed 9 January 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Pae, “Guam Put Out Welcome Mat for U.S. Military,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 August 2004.

ability to deter aggression, defend freedom and promote stability in the Asia Pacific region - a role we gladly embrace.¹¹⁰

This statement is frequently used by the Guam Chamber of Commerce as a basis for their advertising Guam as that Department of Defense paradise. In a Power Point presentation created by the Chamber of Commerce, this statement is backed up by a slide titled “The Community Overwhelmingly Supports More Military Presence.” The page is organized with images on the left and bullet points on the right. The bullet points invoke a public opinion poll conducted by the Chamber of Commerce that states that more than “80% of the island’s registered voters support having more forward deployed assets” and that “some 75% support the use of Guam as a training location for the military.” The icing on this seductive cake is the bullet point that Guam’s enlistment rates in the US military are the highest of any jurisdiction. The images on the make this already fairly blunt point even clearer. The first is an image of a large banner strung between streetlights on Guam that pleads, “Uncle Sam Come Back to Guam.” The image beneath it is a photo of the title of an *Associated Press* news article. The title is “Governor of Okinawa: US Marines Should Leave.”¹¹¹

Guam, as a colony, an exceptional, semi-American site, can continue to perpetually produce this narrative. Even as other sites devolve into anti-American populist protests, Guam, as a ghost who straddles the inside and outside of America, can always provide the narrative, the historical fodder to produce that identity of America at

¹¹⁰ Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Governor Felix P. Camacho, Speaker Mark Forbes, *Guam Can Host Additional Military and Homeland Defense Missions*, A Joint Statement from the Guam’s Congresswomen, Governor and Speaker of the Legislature to the United States Department of Defense. April 2005.

¹¹¹ Associated Press, “Governor of Okinawa: US Marines Should Leave,” *Pacific Daily News*, March 17, 2005, 1.

its liberating best. It can always remain that subordinated site, which constantly must be liberated and must look to America to do what it always does.

14. *Finakpo'*

When American troops are moved into Guam, by virtue of not just its geographic location, but its political status as well, something exceptional happens. In Chapter 5 I discussed the ways in which a curious aura of nothing surrounds Guam as it is militarized and rather as it is weaponized by the United States. The ambiguity of Guam has an impact; it amplifies the power of Guam in a military sense because of the way the location of this militarization comes with its own natural defenses, invisibility or a banality which eludes most all gazes.

In this chapter we can perceive a similar amplification. As a result of that exceptional place of Guam whether it be in the Halls of Congress or the edge of Asia, as something which is never completely incorporated and never completely let loose, we find an island which is always primed for liberation. Here, as in other chapters, the lack of Guam's sovereignty is the basis for producing different forms of America's sovereignty. As a possession of the United States, not a state, not a foreign ally, but something which can illustrate the foreign in the domestic and the domestic in the foreign, Guam has the ability to provide the appearance of some benevolent movement taking place, of Guam's status changing substantially, *while remaining in the same place*.

Because of this ability, Guam always already holds the potential to illustrate the power and the consistency of American liberation. The undefined and labile place of Guam, the way in which it can appear to be conjured up merely through its mentioning or

the way 110 years of American legal decisions have given the United States the clear right to determine what Guam is, these things all combine to create this in-between space for Guam. In within this space, every tokenistic right it is given, every soldier that is transferred there, all present a chance to (re)-tell the story of how Guam was and is being liberated.

In order to close out this chapter, I should note that naturally the discussion of exceptionalism and the constitutive productivity of exceptional bodies are not unique to Guam. As I articulated in the Agamben section, it is a dynamic which any community large or small contends with as a potential trace of their dissolution and uses as a weapon to secure their reproduction. I find that this sort of analysis is important in particular for those sites which are small and largely considered to be insignificant. I feel that this sort of framework can help make clear some of the ways in which that insignificance is manufactured or how the benevolence that is drawn from that site's liberation is produced.

CHAPTER 8: GUAM!

Through Sovereignty Towards Decolonization

“Our quest should not be a revival of our past cultures, but for the creation of new cultures, which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts.”

Albert Wendt from “Towards a New Oceania.”¹

1. Tinituhun²

Thus far we have looked at different versions of sovereignty, the place of Guam in relation to them, and how that relationship – the ghostliness, the banality of it – produces the United States. This chapter, then, might appear to represent a dramatic shift, as the definition of sovereignty to be interrogated here is not one built upon the absence of Guam or its ghostliness, but instead one which is meant to secure a place in the world for Guam and Chamorros. But as will be discussed, this version of sovereignty, which in contrast to others is meant to be an indigenous one, one which Chamorros and other indigenous peoples often take to heart and carry with them everyday, still finds a way of reproducing both the ghostliness of Guam and the authority of the United States. Furthermore, in this chapter, the issue of decolonization in Guam, the theoretical approach to it and its praxis, will be explicitly addressed.

2. A Grandfatherly Detour

My grandfather, *Tun* Jack Lujan, is considered by many on Guam to be a Chamorro cultural master and, as such, continually straddles the line between

¹ Albert Wendt, “Towards a New Oceania,” *Writers in East-West Encounter: New Cultural Bearings*, Guy Amirthanayagam (ed.), (London: Macmillan, 1982), 202-215.

² Tinituhun is the Chamorro word for “the beginning” or “the start.” It is also commonly used today to mean “introduction.”

representing a potential source of Chamorro sovereignty and signifying the decay and demise of Chamorros.³ For although his trade is a means through which the vitality, preservation and continuity of Chamorro culture and people-hood can be identified, this trade of which he is a master, i.e. Chamorro blacksmithing, is identified as something “not really Chamorro;” therefore, signifies the triumph of European colonialism in Guam and the loss of an authentic Chamorro essence. His title of Chamorro Master Blacksmith comes from local, national and international forms of governmental recognition. For instance, the prize artifacts of his collection have received a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Heritage Award and he has received a letter from then President Bill Clinton congratulating him.⁴

My grandfather is a third-generation blacksmith, having been taught by his father, who was in turn taught by his uncle. As of today, my grandfather has taught sixteen apprentices in an effort to keep alive the art of producing the traditional Chamorro tools that he has made for more than 80 years. Although, as Chamorro life has become less agriculturally based, these tools have been transformed from being necessary for everyday survival, to souvenirs or relics of the life of Chamorros before air conditioning and grocery stores. As I write this dissertation, he is in his 89th year, attempting to train

³ In Chamorro, Tun is a term used for elder men in order to show respect. Tan is the equivalent for women.

⁴ Both the award and the letter from President Clinton can be found framed in my grandfather's store in a cultural marketplace on Guam called The Chamorro Village. In his shop he has collected numerous posters, news articles and letters of appreciation from his years of teaching and informing about Chamorro blacksmithing traditions. The majority of media that you find in the shop is local or regional (from Micronesia or the Asia-Pacific region) and so the two items from Washington D.C. are of course the pride of his collection.

me, my brother and several of our nephews, with the hope of keeping alive the tradition for a fourth and fifth generation.⁵

For older Chamorros, particularly those who lived before *I Tiempon Chapones*, or World War II, my grandfather's tools are artifacts to be respected and treasured.⁶ They echo a different Guam, where Chamorros were self-reliant, were not afraid to work the land, and were not afraid to provide for themselves. They are echoes of a time that is all but gone today, with Chamorros now being viewed as lazy and dependent upon Federal assistance programs for everything.⁷ For these *manâmkô*' or elderly, these Chamorro tools are sites for the building Chamorro identity, history, and culture. They of course are not the most "authentic" articulations of Chamorro-ness; yet, since so much has been lost over the centuries, they represent much of what we have left. Amongst younger generations, though, there is ambivalence. As the particularities of how Chamorros lived prior to Spanish colonization has become more and more embedded in the public mind of Guam, rather than accept the "all we have left," they seek to use and consume material culture and ideas that are *really actually* Chamorro in order to produce their identities. While the handmade, traditional aura around grandpa's tools enchants many, the use of *lulok*, or metal, that was clearly a Spanish introduction makes some skeptical about the level of Chamorro-ness to be found in these tools.

In the past decade, the making of jewelry and artifacts from *to'lang* (bone), *cheggai* (shell) or *hâyu* (wood) has risen in prominence, as these are all materials that were found on Guam prior to colonization. This has led to the creation of a class of

⁵ Prior to beginning training us, he had trained sixteen other apprentices, but none of whom were as he calls from "the root" or his close blood relations.

⁶ *I Tiempon Chapones*, translates to "The Japanese Time."

⁷ Greg Ambrose, "Guam's good old days are gone but not forgotten," *The Pacific Daily News*, 14 July 1980, 18-19.

artisans who create these traditional *ancient* Chamorro items, often times leaving grandpa caught in battles over authenticity.⁸ My grandfather often laments about how a *sinahi* shell necklace made out of *hima* or giant clam shell, can sometimes cost between five hundred and a thousand dollars, which Chamorros seem eager to pay so as to be able to wear something traditional and authentic.⁹ Yet, the relationship of these Chamorros to his tools is often drastically different. Since they are tools that appear to belong to the world of today, there is an expectation that they should be cheap, comparable to the prices of cheap mass-produced tools that come from the Philippines or China.¹⁰

This difference in how Chamorros respond to certain artifacts over others speaks to the construction of Chamorro sovereignty and its place in the world. An incident involving my grandfather that took place at one Guam arts festival underscored this in the ways in which it revealed the trace of Chamorro sovereignty, drawing me to the glaring weakness in its foundation. In the space of an art festival such as this that was meant to be a large showcase of different contemporary, traditional and ancient arts, such traces are more the norm than the exception. Because of the way an art festival is meant to share the breadth of Chamorro culture, including dancing, painting, and demonstrations of different traditional arts such as weaving or carving, all of which invoke different images

⁸ Donovan Brooks, "Local Artist: Blacksmith, Jack Lujan," *Island Time*, January 2009.

⁹ The *sinahi* necklace, was an item worn by Ancient Chamorro men prior to Spanish colonization of the Mariana Islands. *Sinahi* in Chamorro means "new moon" and the shape of the piece is meant to represent the new moon phase of the lunar month. Like most forms of body adornment, these necklaces were prohibited by the Spanish and thus lost from Chamorro cultural memory. In the 1980's, this tradition was revived however when certain individuals began to wear intact artifact pieces that they had found in Guam's jungles and beaches. Today, there is an *sinahi* industry on Guam, with dozens of artists producing these necklaces and others from the pre-Spanish era.

¹⁰ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Blacksmithing," *Guampedia*, <http://guampedia.com/blacksmithing-3/>, Site Accessed 20 December 2009.

of Chamorro culture, Chamorro history and make different claims as to how their art is truly Chamorro or not really Chamorro.¹¹

My grandfather was talking to a group of “indigenous” artists near one of their booths that displayed bone, shell and wooden carvings. My grandfather, who was then in his mid-80's, would often have difficulty getting from place to place and thus used a cane whenever he walked. At some point during the conversation, he became tired of standing around and looked for a place to sit, and saw a wooden *latte* carving. *Lattes* are lime-stone megaliths which were built by Chamorros centuries ago to mark territory, mark gravesites and also upon which high caste families built their homes.¹² They are still found throughout the island and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, they figure prominently in the ways in which Chamorros position themselves with respect to this symbolic foundation for their sovereignty. At that moment, however, my grandfather thought the *latte* might make a good foundation for his *dåggan* (butt), and sat on it to rest himself. Immediately one of the artists, who was more than forty years younger than grandpa, yelled at him, telling him he couldn't sit there, that he should get off. The artist argued not that grandpa was defiling his artistic work or bringing down its value, but rather that, as a symbol, as an artifact, it was not meant for him. My grandfather was asked to get off because the *latte* is meant for our ancestors, *i manmofo'na*, ancient Chamorros.¹³ The artist was implying that the carving was meant to show respect and

¹¹ Judy Flores, *Art and Identity in the Mariana Islands: Issues of Reconstructing an Ancient Past*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1999).

¹² Scott Russell, *Tiempon I Manmofo'na: Ancient Chamorro Culture and History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, (Saipan, CNMI: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Historic Preservation, 1998).

¹³ The term “mo'na” is a very key word in the Chamorro language, for understanding the Chamorro world view. It has a plethora of meanings all of which are tied to something being in front, or ahead, the first, in either time or space. It is most prominently used in the term “taotaomo'na” or “manmofo'na” which

honor to our ancient ancestors, that it was in essence their seat, and that grandpa had defiled the spirits of those ancient Chamorros with his *dåggan*.

My grandfather was initially perplexed, first, at being spoken to in such a way by someone so much younger than him. But second, because the battle for authenticity and Chamorro-ness that often took place between the movement of Chamorros and other customers between his table and that of another artist, had followed him into this conversation. He had once again lost a battle for authenticity. He had been dismissed, despite of his age and his work in preserving what was once an integral part of Chamorro culture, as something subordinate to an amorphous, spiritual, absent, sovereign essence. Having been stripped of the many different identities that he regularly took for granted, and recognizing that he had somehow been excluded from the normal logics that afforded him respect as a master artisan, as an elderly Chamorro, as a carrier of Chamorro culture, he decided to retaliate.

In response to being told that this stone carving was a conduit for, somehow a source of, Chamorro sovereignty, my grandfather angrily informed the artists present that “I am your ancestor!” His scathing retort was meant to wrench free the pipeline of authenticity that had been plugged into the carving because of its signification of that which was ancient, pure, and to attach it to himself, to assert his presence as something to be respected, something upon which they could and should build their identities and notions of culture as well.

are meant to refer to the “ones who came before.” As Chamorro scholar Anne Perez Hattori argues these two terms both imply not just the ancestors of Chamorros coming before, but also lying ahead. As a result, she feels that the cosmology of Chamorros is a circular one and not a linear one. Anne Perez Hattori, *Commencement Address at the Academy of our Lady of Guam*, 12 May 2002.

3. From Powerlessness to Inauthenticity

Until now, this dissertation has embodied a theory of decolonization that challenges certain formulations of sovereignty, by deploying the political status of Guam and showing the ways in which Guam produces those definitions or produces the subject that lies at the end of those definitions, i.e. the United States. But, as noted in the first chapter, this dissertation has always been fundamentally about Guam and its decolonization. To reach this point, we have traveled through a number of ways of exploring Guam's colonization, that is, the position that Guam has been forced into today in relation to certain idea; ideas or notions that are naturalized as the authentic or appropriate or natural place from which Guam can exist and can be known or spoken of; Guam in relation to sovereignty, in relation to power or dependency, in relation to the United States and the rest of the world.

The versions of sovereignty discussed in previous chapters had a frustratingly tenuous relationship to decolonization as both, a potential goal for it (nation-state sovereignty) and also a clear obstacle to ever achieving it, especially for an ambiguous political site such as Guam. In those versions of sovereignty, Chamorros and Guam existed as if ghosts, without presence, but always tempted, as if sovereignty itself could somehow provide them that elusive presence. In those chapters, I worked to reveal either the structure of that ghostliness or the ways in which the sovereign system around that ghostly place was dependent upon some exceptionality which in essence marked the site as one of both power and powerlessness. In the discussion thus far certain concepts or principles have risen to the surface and become keys in understanding this colonial place or non-place of Guam – *ghostly, banal, distance, location, and power vs. powerlessness*.

The version of sovereignty to be interrogated in this chapter is radically different in that it exists precisely to provide indigenous people, or Chamorros, with sovereignty. It is a version of sovereignty which exists to take indigenous people out of the ghostly half-lives through which they exist in today's modern world. So, instead of browsing the pages of political science and international relations texts, or walking through the halls of Congress, I'll investigate the traces of sovereignty found in everyday discussions of Guam, and the ways Chamorros there struggle for identity and for that elusive self-determining quality of sovereignty.¹⁴ Sovereignty in this chapter, albeit very different, still exhibits tenuousness and ghostliness.¹⁵ It is something that holds the potential for animating and liberating Chamorros from their colonial present, but something that could potentially restrict them as well.

The task at hand here still remains one of revealing, challenging and reversing the relationship between the United States and Guam. Thus, the same ideas of ghostliness, distance, location, power and powerlessness, will be key in the writing of this chapter. But as we start to examine sovereignty in this everyday Chamorro way, and how it relates to the possibility of decolonization, there is a need to reorient the terminology of the discussion towards "culture," so that the ideas of power and powerlessness become translated into "authenticity" and "inauthenticity."¹⁶

¹⁴ Juana Rodriguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*, (New York City, New York: New York University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Rather than situate this in the existing academic conversation on authenticity and inauthenticity in the Pacific, I instead choose to take the more circuitous route of bringing out the principles of such a struggle within a Chamorro/Guam context, by referring to different texts. This is not because I feel that my chapter is completely different or distinct from those conversations, but merely another effort in order to bolster the Chamorro contribution to such a conversation. For more information on that debate see: Margaret Jolly, "Specters of Inauthenticity," *The Contemporary Pacific*, (4:1), Spring 1992, 49-72. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle," *The Contemporary Pacific*,

4. *Bush on Sovereignty, Part Two*¹⁷

In order to get this discussion started, let us return to Bush's infamous quote on sovereignty, which I introduced in chapter 4. This quote from America's most prominent theorist of sovereignty has much relevance to Guam:

Tribal sovereignty means that; it's sovereign. You're a -- you've been given sovereignty, and you're viewed as a sovereign entity. And, therefore, the relationship between the federal government and tribes is one between sovereign entities.¹⁸

While I have already spent some time discussing the quote itself and the implications of the term "given" and the small scandal that ensued, I spent no time discussing that scandal itself. How did Native American tribes, the ones to whom Bush was referring to as the people who are being given sovereignty by him, respond? Was there an uproar or outrage or even agreement over this characterizing of what their sovereignty is?

The scandal that arose as a result of these statements was somewhat minute.¹⁹ The source of the scandal was an interesting one, and on the surface, one that is not necessarily in line with the critiques of this dissertation. For example, there was no outcry over the fact that Bush had inadvertently revealed, through the use of the word "given,"

(3:1), Spring 1991, 159-167. Jocelyn Linnekin, "Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity," *American Anthropologist*, (93:2), June 1991, 44-49. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). Jeffrey Tobin, "Cultural Construction and Native Nationalism: A Report from the Hawaiian Front," *Asia/Pacific as a space of cultural production*, Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik (eds.), (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995), 147-169.

¹⁷ Part One can be found in Chapter 6.

¹⁸ "Bush tells journalists tribes given sovereignty," *Indianz.com*, <http://www.indianz.com/News/2004/003755.asp>, 9 August 2004. Site Accessed 29 May 2009.

¹⁹ Since this was an election year, the campaign of John Kerry, the Democratic challenger released a number of statements seizing on the apparent mis-characterization of Native American sovereignty by Bush, and made clear its support for the true mainstream meaning of sovereignty, namely that the US doesn't give it or create it, but that it is merely recognized by us. As already stated, this tiny scandal had very little effect on the overall election, mainly due to the smallness of Native Americans as a demographic. A much larger scandal most likely would have ensued had Bush or Kerry gone so far as to claim that the freedom of African Americans had been given to them by the United States government.

the fact that Native American sovereignty is relatively meaningless and that Native Americans continue to be colonized by the United States government. Instead, the outcry focused on how the word “given” was a simple mistake or misrecognition of the real source or the real character of Native American tribal sovereignty. The reporter who asked the question, Mark Trahant, an editor for *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Nation of Idaho, noted in an editorial that America’s “giving” of sovereignty to Native American tribes “... would have been hard to accomplish since tribes were sovereign long before there was a gift-bearing United States.”²⁰ South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson, who is not Native American, but serves on behalf of a state with a large Native American population, criticized Bush’s misrecognition of sovereignty as well. Johnson, who had barely won re-election in 2002 and has publicly acknowledged that it was support from South Dakota’s tribes which pushed him to victory, corrected that “Tribal sovereignty isn’t something that is given to tribes, it simply exists, and requires our recognition.”²¹ An article from *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*, titled “Bush’s comment on tribal sovereignty creates a buzz” summed up well the overall response:

Sovereignty is "the nearest and dearest, No. 1 issue in Indian Country," said Jacqueline Johnson, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Congress of American Indians. "It's not something that was given to us. As tribes, we see sovereignty as something we've always had."²²

Thus the uproar was a result of Bush “dislocating” Native American sovereignty, or misplacing its origin as deriving from the United States. In truth, Native American

²⁰ Mark Trahant, “Politicians reminded of diversity of people and interests in the U.S.,” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, 4 August 2004.

²¹ “Bush tells journalists...”

²² Lewis Kamb, “Bush’s comment on tribal sovereignty creates a buzz” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, http://www.seattlepi.com/local/186171_bushtribes13.html, 13 August 2004. Site Accessed 29 May 2009.

sovereignty is not given, but has always been and is always already ours, since time immemorial. It is something inherent and timeless. In this articulation, which can be considered a basic definition held, often times passionately, by indigenous people at the grassroots and academic levels, we see sovereignty as being a cultural, eternal and autonomous force, something that is meant to provide the foundation for an indigenous people's existence, their claim to life today, claim to history, and lastly their claim to authenticity. There is the form in which Jacqueline Johnson invokes it, as something that exists prior to all else, a long-standing force that is the foundation for Native American existence. Or it can be invoked as Anthony Pico, the chairman of the Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians, notes in his article *History of Sovereignty in the U.S.*:

Sovereignty is not a word the average American uses everyday. Nor is it a word most people get terribly excited about. Sovereignty, however, is a word Indians take seriously and get very excited about... Indians adopted the word "sovereign," even though it's an English word, and hold it sacred based on the United States Constitution and related Supreme Court cases that protect our right to exist as distinct cultures and self-governing people.²³

For Pico, sovereignty might possess some of the same eternal characteristics as others have invoked, but it is still the same foundational force. However, the foundation it provides is not in the generic history of the universe, but in terms of the story of Native American colonization by the United States. It is the basis from which they can make claims and negotiate with the United States, and preserve and fight for their own rights for self-governance and autonomy.

5. The Delicacies of Sovereignty

²³ Anthony Pico, "History of Sovereignty in the U.S." *Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians*, http://viejas.com/vbki/html/ts_tribegovt.htm, Site Accessed 2 June 2009.

For Chamorros on Guam, due to their particular history, the term “sovereignty” itself is rarely considered or invoked as something that has any relevance to shaping or reflecting the life of Chamorros. But the idea of sovereignty as a force, a foundation, as a claim that ties you to the world and cannot be contested or tainted but only needs to be recognized, is something that grounds the everyday ways in which Chamorros articulate themselves as well. Although this might appear to be contradictory, the lack of visibility or traction of sovereignty as a public object, stems from the fact that its presence in Guam is most strongly felt as something which does not exist. Whenever Guam or Chamorros or spoken of, the idea of Chamorro sovereignty is always automatically assumed in some way, although its assumption may be negative and it may be invoked simply to argue that it does not or cannot exist.²⁴ But in addition to this the idea of Chamorro is also taken up in smaller ways as something which does continue to exist, albeit in small traces or it is, for cultural and political decolonization activists, something which should exist.

In this framework, this sovereign force can find its way into any number of objects to give sovereignty some concrete life. It can be attached to potentially anything in the world in an attempt to make a foundation or create an aura of authenticity. It can be a history, a founding event or moment, a certain type of cultural practice or set of practices. Or it can simply be the word “culture,” even a claim to having created “modern” things, long before modern people created them. These are the things meant to create everyday pillars of authenticity for a sense of people hood. Ultimately what

²⁴ Although I don’t explicitly deal with it, I’ve come to realize that in my master’s thesis in Ethnic Studies, which outlines some reasons as to why Chamorros might intensely resist the idea of decolonization, I am implicitly talking about the possibility of Chamorros being sovereign. And it is that prospect which so many Chamorros resist and see as impossible or worse yet, dangerous. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, (M.A. Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2007).

underlies this definition of sovereignty is a particular autonomy²⁵ that it is something that has not been touched by any other, and thus exists in and of itself. In the case of Guam, or any such similar colonial situations, it is that which remains untouched by the colonizer. It is what can potentially define you in opposition to or independent of the oppressor.

Two things can be gleaned here from this from of sovereignty. First, that it has little to do with actually existing things, but rather is determined by an essence. Second, that by definition, it is a *fragile and delicate thing*. I am in agreement here with Taiaiake Alfred's article "Sovereignty" regarding the paradoxical condition of sovereignty in the lives of indigenous people, which it is often times both the goal and the most obtrusive obstacle.²⁶ It is in the terrain of sovereignty that indigenous people seek authenticity and self-determination that they crave. Yet too often the very definitions and objects used to create those feelings are fleeting or end up betraying those who invoke them.

According to Alfred, sovereignty as a concept must be disconnected from its origins and transformed. In a previous chapter, I made one such intervention by attempting to dislodge sovereignty from its intimacy in relation to modern states as a protective insulating force, and instead tried to reveal the productive structure of its violence and inconsistencies. But as the concept has emerged and evolved, it has formed indigenous origins as well.²⁷ Definitions like the one I have discussed thus far in this

²⁵ Tom Holm, J Diane Pearson and Ben Chavis, "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Spring 2003, 7-24.

²⁶ Taiaiake Alfred "Sovereignty," *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed), (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005).

²⁷ Andrea Smith, "American Studies Without America." *American Quarterly*, (60.2), June 2008, 309-315. Audra Simpson, *To the Reserve and Back Again: Kahnawake Mohawk Narratives of Self, Home and Nation*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, McGill University, 2003). Lakota Harden and Sammy Toineeta, as quoted in Andrea Smith *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, (Boston: South End Press, 2005). *Native American Sovereignty*, John R. Wunder (ed), (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999). Kilipaka Kawaihonu Nahili Pae Ontai, "A Spiritual Definition of Sovereignty from a Kanaka Maoli

chapter are sometimes believed in very passionately and held as if universal, unquestionable truths amongst indigenous peoples; as if they are not merely ideas, but the fabric of reality.

This chapter is meant to explore this dimension of “sovereignty,” where the concept is meant to be helpful or necessary in terms of decolonization, but can in reality function as yet another road-block. So, to build off of Alfred’s point, sovereignty in this chapter will be disconnected from some “indigenous origins” as well.

6. The Lack of a Location of Chamorro Culture

In all the conceptions of sovereignty that I have discussed so far, the central tenet, the point which ultimately defines each of them, is the question of *location*. Where is the possibility for sovereignty located? From where do its conditions of possibility emerge? In the case of dominant definitions of sovereignty its location is clear and is meant to be self-aggrandizing for Europe or “modern nations,” protective of existing nation states. It can be found in a certain European trajectory or progressive history, or it is found in the result of that history, i.e. in the nation-state form itself. The result for Chamorros and other indigenous peoples is that they are left out in the cold, dislocated from this security of sovereignty.

In this chapter’s definition, autonomy is what appears to define sovereignty but, in reality, this image is misleading. Translated into everyday speech and action, sovereignty is actually judged by a metaphor which we’ve already encountered, that of *distance*. So, in the case of Guam as a colonial space, sovereignty is located or conceived of only as

Perspective,” *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed), (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005), 153-168.

that which is independent from the colonizer, pure from it, and, if this should be seen as impossible, that which is located far from it. As a result, the Chamorro is sovereign, or rather more sovereign, depending upon how far away or independent it is from things that are modern, Spanish or America. Guam is put in this position because of the prevailing frameworks and ideas which dictate and govern the agency, vitality and sovereignty of indigenous peoples, and the ways in which they themselves are inundated with ideas and assumptions of “distance” as being the source and marker of culture and existence. The most basic and “natural” way through which indigenous people are defined and determined to exist, even amongst themselves, is through distance from the colonizer. Due to lengthy contact with Spanish, American and Japanese colonialisms, however, this distance is something that escapes the Chamorro for they have become consistently and continually signified through their former and current colonizers.

Guam holds that dubious distinction of being the first European colony in the Pacific and, since it continues to be a colony of the United States, one of the last places there which (if ever) will be formally decolonized. This historical and contemporary status leads to the very powerful perception that the island and its indigenous people, “have no culture,” or that they do not exist, or are impossible. A notorious *Lonely Planet* article from 2000 summed up very well the discursive place that Guam has in terms of culture and authenticity in the Pacific.

Think palm trees, white beaches, coral reefs - and the world's biggest K-Mart. Guam doesn't fit the stereotype of tribal villages and ancient cultures untouched by the modern world. This highly developed strategic US territory is no postcard 'Tropical Paradise.'²⁸

²⁸ The original article can no longer be found on the *Lonely Planet* website, however excerpts of it such as this one remain on numerous travel websites. “Guam: Overview,” *Ultratravel*, <http://www.ultra.travel/destinations/guam/> Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

The article then proceeds to speak with a fair amount of disdain as to the lack of authenticity or “real culture” on Guam, portraying the island as a dirty-weekend getaway “on steroids” for thousands of military personnel.²⁹ For an island which struggles to promote itself as an ideal tourist destination for peoples from Asia, to be called a place in the Pacific with “no culture” is like a marketing *coup de grace*, and a scandal and uproar on Guam ensued.

The updated 2009 *Lonely Planet Guide* article on Guam is much more balanced. It still notes a lack of culture and a clear lack of the things that make tropical islands exotic, rich paradises, but now, in a single line, notes why there is no culture or nothing of authentic interest in Guam. Yet, the article notes, “There may come a day soon when Chamorro culture (long subsumed by various invasions and occupations) is promoted above all else.”³⁰ In these representations, Guam and Chamorros are present, but in such a way that they don’t actually exist. They always appear as a people trapped, not in some larger conflict that is overtaking or stripping them of their identity or culture, but by something that has already long been pierced; not a culture that is being influenced, but one that has been so tainted in cannot be considered an “authentic” culture today. Guam and Chamorros are viewed through larger regional and ethnic frameworks and are always

²⁹ Tony Palomo, *Interview With Author*, Guam Museum, Tiyan, Guam, 6 November 2002.

³⁰ The Lonely Planet Guide, “Guam,” *The Lonely Planet*, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/guam>, Last Updated 22 July 2009. Site Accessed 12 January 2010. Here’s the text of the full quote from the most recent *Lonely Planet* review: “As Micronesia’s most populous island, Guam is about as ‘cosmopolitan’ as it gets, so it cops a lot of attitude from Pacific snobs who reckon it lacks ‘real island culture’. Sure, American accents are everywhere (it’s an unincorporated US territory and many Guamanian homes fly the US flag) and the Chamorro language isn’t really spoken any more. And if you never stray from Tumon Bay - the island’s glitzy duty-free shopping and accommodation hub - then undeniably you’ll be over- (or under-)whelmed. But the island is currently in the throes of retooling itself. The tourism authorities talk of how ‘Product Guam’ (there’s that American influence) needs a complete overhaul from its current status as a Pacific theme park for Japanese tourists. There may come a day soon when Chamorro culture (long subsumed by various invasions and occupations) is promoted above all else, with an increased focus on local food and the fascinating stories underlying many of the villages.”

tentatively included or excluded, based on being long “subsumed by various invasions and occupations.”³¹ These mechanics of identity and culture are not just outsider perceptions but often times are ways in which Chamorros themselves unravel their own contemporary claims to existence.

7. Dancing Around Inauthenticity

This relationship of Chamorros to culture and sovereignty is evident in the comments attached to a YouTube video, titled “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,” which I analyze here in detail.³² This video was posted by a Chamorro who attended a dance festival at a cultural center known as *Gefpa’go*, located in the southern part of Guam.³³ At this festival, different groups performed and competed against each other in three categories, ancient, Spanish and modern. These three categories represent the timeline of Chamorro authenticity and in-authenticity, the progression by which they moved from being more real to less real across their history. The central point of contestation is that the dances Chamorros used at the time of Spanish colonization were prohibited and lost. Chamorros, in particular since the early 1980’s, have made attempts to start a new tradition of “ancient dance” primarily by borrowing and mimicking the styles of other

³¹ Ibid.

³² Kuraku3, “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,” *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jo6xDyvb67o>, Uploaded 12 February 2007. Video Accessed 12 January 2010.

³³ *Gefpa’go* is a cultural village/center, which is meant to provide visitors to it a chance to step back in time, to the Guam of a century ago, or at least before World War II. Regular dance contests are held there, but the village’s main attraction is the artisans and demonstrations of different antiquated skills which were necessary for Chamorros a century ago, but have now all been replaced by items that are easily imported. For instance, one can visit *Gefpa’go* and witness how to make rope from the fibers of a *pago* (wild Hibiscus tree) or how to make salt from sea water.

islanders in Micronesia and Polynesia.³⁴ Although for two decades this practice was condemned and laughed at by others in the Pacific, and by Chamorros themselves, enough dance groups and dance styles now exist that a cultural renaissance has taken place and that explicitly Chamorro dances, those meant to represent Chamorro history, identity and culture, have taken a hegemonic place in Guam. This remaking of Chamorro dance, and its evolution from a joke to an established (albeit still regularly lambasted) art, is one of the most public ways in which Chamorros see the possibility of decolonization in their lives.³⁵ They view this as a successful example of how to combat the effects of colonization.³⁶

The owner of the video, Kuraku3, wrote and re-wrote an extensive introduction to the video, primarily in response to the 91 comments and numerous, sometimes angry, debates that became attached to this video since it was first posted in February 2007.³⁷ The use of the term “pre-Hispanic” in the titled implied that this dance was performed in

³⁴ Frank Rabon, *Pa'a Taotao Tano': A Way of Life, People of the Land: Chamorro Chants and Dances*, (Hagåtña, Guam: Irensia Publishing, 2001).

³⁵ Selina Onedera Salas, “Chamorro Culture Thriving,” *The Pacific Daily News*, 26 April 2009.

³⁶ I often use the example of Chamorro dancing to discuss how revolutions in meaning and commonsense often take place right before people's eyes. When the first Chamorro dance groups (in the vein they are known today) emerged (in the 1980's), they were mocked and laughed at by nearly all on Guam. They were degraded as either people who were just copying other “authentic” cultures, or people who were worse just “making things up” and calling them Chamorro. At that time, Americanization had been in full effect and so the notions of what a Chamorro could authentically dance were dances that had been incorporated into the culture the Spanish time, and dances such as the jitterbug or the cha cha which had come to Guam after World War II. Over time, these dance groups have colonized the consciousness of Guam, and while there are still plenty of people who criticize them for not really being Chamorro, they are dozens of dance groups, with thousands of dancers on Guam right now, which attest to a new permanence a revolution in meaning around the possibility of Chamorros seizing the ability to determine their own culture. These dancers are so pervasive nowadays that nearly all large public functions, government or private feature at least one dance group which will open or close the festivities. So many of the people who once loathed the dancers of the 1980's now eagerly watch their grandchildren dance today.

³⁷ In May of 2009, the author of the video disabled comments, preventing any further comments be added to the 91. In November of 2009 he re-enabled comments and as I am writing this in January 2010, there are 116 comments for the video.

the ancient dance category.³⁸ Here, performers wear skirts made from woven coconut leaves, sometimes decorated with flowers. The boys go topless, brandishing sticks as they dance, women wear bikini-bra tops. They thus do not dance naked the way Chamorros might have prior to the Spanish arrival. They sing and chant in Chamorro but use modern Chamorro that has influences of Spanish and English. In the background, the teachers of the group use a guitar and coconut gourd drums. The video's owner takes great pains to qualify all of these "inconsistencies" in referring to the dance as "pre-Hispanic" when it so "obviously" appears to be otherwise:

Dances performed by middle schoolers [sic] at the 2007 Chamorro dance festival. Shot in Guam's southern village of Inarajan. This particular dance was performed as part of the "Ancient or Pre-Hispanic" segment of program.

Although very little is known about the pre-Hispanic dances, a recent revival of native dance styles has resulted in a variety of interpretations of native Chamorro dance.

Critics debate over the authenticity of such dances. And would suggest that use of guitars, words of Spanish origin, Spanish 'paloteos' (stick) dancing, and textile fabrics used in the costumes make these recreated 'ancient' dance styles less authentic.

Some consider these to be 'contemporary' versions inspired by what the ancient styles may have looked like.

These dances are the interpretations of this particular dance group and their choreographer.³⁹

³⁸

Many of the comments attached to this video have nothing to do with the video itself but are primarily from Chamorros drawn to this video while searching around Youtube, so that most comments exhibit some form of ethnic pride. "Kalani92," for example, in the midst of comments on authenticity and the blending of different influences in dance, makes sure that everyone knew that she was "half chamorro and half haolie."[□] In the same vein, there is a scattering of comments from military who were once stationed on Guam, who made known how much they missed the island, and also people from Latin America who were intrigued to know that their last name was the name of a people in the Pacific.

³⁹ Kuraku3, "Video Description for Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance," *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jo6xDyvb67o>, Uploaded 12 February 2007. Video Accessed 12 January 2010.

One commenter, named “Islanchamoru,” establishes a broad view of Chamorro culture hoping to provide a way for all to appreciate the importance of this dance and to navigate through the obvious historical lack (“there are no more Chamorro dances left”), to get to the contemporary moment where there is a strong desire that Chamorros have dances or other similar markers of indigeneity.⁴⁰ He does so by moving away from the purity, or authenticity vs. in-authenticity, arguments into one of continuity.

...I liked this festival because the kids were able to perform 3 styles of dancing: Ancient, Spanish, & modern. All of which incorporating Chamorro flavor in all categories. We have adapted and changed over the many years. And will continue to. Celebrate what has been preserved. And preserve what we are able to. Let's not be bitter about what our ancestors were not able to preserve. We have more power now to preserve and promote than they ever did. The biggest obstacle is ourselves.⁴¹

The video owner responded positively, further asserting that what it all comes down to, in terms of indigeneity and culture, is that some shred of their original form, some essence, survive the colonization or influences of outsiders.

Thanks for the comment. I posted this video. I like how Gef Pago culture [sic] village celebrates all stages of Chamorro history. Many forget that the Chamorros have been exposed to outside influence more than any other island people in the pacific. Yet we still have maintained some of our original culture. I think we should be proud of that.⁴²

This articulation of Chamorro culture represents the attempts by contemporary

Chamorros to find a way to exist in the world today, or to stake some claim to the

⁴⁰ A strong part of this desire to have these sorts of markers, is to allow Chamorros today to more comfortably claim to be indigenous or to be from the Pacific, when their history is very different and much more complicated than they perceive the history (and therefore culture) of other islanders' to be. While very few would prevent Chamorros from claiming to be a Hispanic people, due to the presence of Spanish in the Chamorro language and a few customs which have been incorporated into Chamorro culture, this is not the case for Chamorro claims to be an ambiguous “indigenous” group or a Pacific Islander indigenous group.

⁴¹ Islanchamoru, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁴² Kuraku3, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

strange, colonial, colonized, indigenous and inauthentic place that the course of history has accorded in – which amounts to the notion that, “We may not have much, but we have something and we simply have to preserve or protect that something.”

This articulation of Chamorro culture and sovereignty, however, is not without its tensions and oppositions. In response to the video and the above comments, for example, two types of debates emerge that challenge the video as a representation of Chamorro culture; one from a position explicitly outside of Chamorro culture, the other an articulation from within it. The first comes from a commenter named “NANWELO” who asserts himself as an islander from another island in Micronesia and represents himself as a true Pacific Islander. He uses the intimacy that Guam has with its colonizers, and the changes in its culture, to argue that “you guys [Chamorros] have no island heritage. Guamanians/Chammorus [sic] are Asians [sic] who migrated to this Micronesian [sic] island called Guam [sic]. We [sic] are the true pacific islands. Micronesians [sic] and Polynesians [sic]. You are Asians [sic].”⁴³ NANWELO continues this argument over the course of six more comments, in which he identifies a number of “Pacific Islander” markers of culture – traditional clothes, traditional chiefs, the drink *kava*, and even “the features of an islander” which Chamorros do not possess.⁴⁴ Each of these markers is meant to be a horizontal link to other Pacific Islander cultures which Micronesians and Polynesians share, making them uniquely Pacific Islander. But they are also vertical

⁴³ NANWELO, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁴⁴ Kava is a mildly intoxicating drink which indigenous islanders across Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. The commenter is using it to unite the real parts of Pacific (i.e. Hawai’i, Pohnpei, Fiji and Samoa) as opposed to the fake parts which a place like Guam might represent.

markers through history and across generations, things that link the contemporary Pacific Islander, stuck in a modern and hardly traditional world, to an authentic Islander source.

Due to the perceived absence of these markers, NANWELO assumes a common anthropological position in relation to Guam – that they are Asians not Pacific Islanders – and reinforces this point by referring to a Chamorro commenter, with whom he is engaged in an argument, as “slanted [sic] eyes,” and Chamorros in general as “Filipinos and what have you.”⁴⁵ This position arises either because the blending of whatever Chamorro culture was with Spanish and different Asian cultures doesn’t leave much for Chamorros to be able to still claim being Pacific Islanders or, because Chamorros lack the Pacific Islander markers that make them a distinct ethnic region from Asia, the notion that all peoples in the Pacific most likely came from Asia sticks to them most of all, taking the place of the Pacific or local origin claim that other Islanders make. The term that is contested in this argument is Pacific Islander but this simply stands in for whether or not a Chamorro can truly be, and where it appears to be located in the world. Can it embody or claim authentically things such as indigeneity or Pacific Islander-ness? According to NANWELO, “Your [sic] a disgrace to your [sic] own identity by trying to be somebody else.”⁴⁶ His answer and the answer of many Chamorros is an obvious no.

The next debate comes from a Chamorro who challenges the idea that these dances can “truly” be called Chamorro. This commentator does not explicitly challenge the framework that Kuraku3 and Islanchamoru outline at the beginning – that we should

⁴⁵ NANWELO, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁴⁶ NANWELO, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

stop complaining about what has been lost and just be thankful for and celebrate what we have left – but rather rejects these dances as those which can be accounted for in that framework. The commenter, called “pacificrules,” argues that the mere continuous link to the past is not enough for us to reimage that past but that, in terms of what we can call Chamorro, what we can claim as a people as ours, is not just influenced by our colonization but restricted in it. In other words, what is lost is lost; there is no way around it.

This is NOT the original dance...They've incorporated Polynesian and Micronesian dances into a non-indigenous Chamorro dance. The Spaniards eradicated the original dance circa 1500s and introduced Spanish influences(existing over 500yrs)which [sic] incorporated [sic] into the Chamorro traditions and custom way of life. To Mr. Rabon and Mr. Iriarte [leaders of the Chamorro dance movements], its [sic] either hot or cold, AUTHENTICITY vs. FORGERY. Hafa?⁴⁷

It could be argued that pacificrules is referring to the fact that this dance cannot be called the original dance, as in the exact dance that Chamorros performed 500 years ago. But his comments go beyond that simple debate for, when the issue of “interpretation” comes up – the makers of the dances never ever claim that these are the original dances but just creative interpretations of what they might have been or performances meant to celebrate the ancestors – he rejects both those acts and explanations as being “foolish” and “misinterpretations [sic].”⁴⁸ He asks all who are reading to “see the truth of Guam thru

⁴⁷ pacificrules, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁴⁸ pacificrules, *Comment Made to Video “Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,”* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

[sic] History. Look it up (internet, books, elders, etc.) and I guarantee you won't [sic] find this "so called dance" in history. It's [sic] all a MADE UP!!"⁴⁹

On the surface, it might appear that pacificrules is contesting the view of Chamorro culture espoused at the start of the comments, since they find this video inspirational while he finds them repulsive. But in truth, he is reinforcing their argument, albeit in a negative way. His argument is simply that these aren't part of that continuous essence, or sovereign force, that survived colonization; that some parts of Chamorro culture did make it through, others did not, and that this is a mockery of that unknown, original Chamorro ancient dance; that Chamorros should embody and celebrate as their culture that which not only is truly theirs, but that which they truly, actually know is theirs, that which they can trust is theirs.

A number of other debates take place in the remaining comments, about globalization and culture, Filipinos and Chamorros, and Chamorros as Hispanic instead of Pacific Islander or Asian. One exchange towards the end however provides an interesting sort of lens through which the entire conversation may be read. "Tarokirl," a Samoan commenter interjects towards the end of the comment list, "Your culture was taken away from you? Culture is one of those things that no one [sic] can take away from you but yourselves."⁵⁰ A Chamorro named "haanenbonita671" responds, first with the argument that one's culture can indeed be taken away, as exemplified in the way the

⁴⁹ pacificrules, *Comment Made to Video "Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,"* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

⁵⁰ taokirl, *Comment Made to Video "Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,"* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

United States Navy prohibited Chamorros from speaking their language in schools.⁵¹ She follows this up immediately with the following comment:

I am proud of who I am. And I wouldn't laugh at another man or woman's culture and where they come from. You make it sound [sic] like my island is fake and we have nothing to claim for ourselves.⁵²

In any cultural discussion such as this, the object of inquiry always appears to be something from the past or an issue of the past. What is truly real, what was truly there? What is the original way things were? This conversational gaze is very misleading, because the source of the tension is rarely about the past. Instead the object of these arguments is always the present, or more precisely a debate over *what can we do today?* These debates over authenticity and in-authenticity are fought through the questions of: What is our culture today, what can or cannot be claimed? And if, as in the case of Chamorros, there is a glaring absence or loss, is there anything that can be authentically done about it, other than accept it? Or are we always to be cursed like this, trapped beneath the violent gaze of another and forced to remain there since there is no authentic means of challenging an absence?

This comment by Haanenbonita671 connects of the entire discussion which took place over two years, and which by that point comprised 80 comments, and reframes it as an attack on whether or not Chamorros have anything to claim for themselves. This is not just an abstract, intellectual debate about what Chamorro culture really is or really was, but it all connects to whether or not this particular Chamorro, i.e. the Chamorro that lives today, can claim anything or not. It is not merely an issue of whether they can lay claim

⁵¹ See Chapter 2 of Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *These May or May Not Be Americans: The Patriotic Myth and Hijacking of Chamorro History on Guam*, (M.A. Thesis, University of Guam, 2005).

⁵² haanenbonita671, *Comment Made to Video "Pre-Hispanic Chamorro Dance,"* http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=Jo6xDyvb67o&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DJJo6xDyvb67o, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

to something as theirs, but also gets to whether they have the ability, or the right, to assert something as Chamorro. It is as if, since Guam has no culture, it does not exist, it has no sovereignty. It is a fake place with nothing to show of itself, nothing unique to offer the world. If we have this colonial history, if we are constantly pushed back and forth across these identity debates, is there anything that we can have or do which we can call Chamorro?

This is the interesting way in which the comments of pacificrules connect to the notion of decolonization, since the re-invention and re-creation of Chamorro dances represents precisely one of those means of asserting a Chamorro in the present, or making a claim that the Chamorro people can triumph over the violence of their history. The comments of pacificrules represent a clear rejection of the idea of new sovereignty for Chamorros through decolonization, and instead privilege the old sovereignty that comes from the root, an originary source, the one which we know is not made up. This is the tension between decolonization and sovereignty that I will follow over the next few sections as I explore what impact this idea of sovereignty, as a pure, continuous, essence that should be the foundation for Chamorros today, means in terms of limiting the prospects for decolonization.

8. Filling the Colonial Void

Decolonization, as alluded to in the previous section, is a gesture by the colonized towards sovereignty. Within this framework it becomes less about the current moment or issues of power, but rather about the search for that elusive Chamorro possibility, located generally in the past or at the margins. Decolonization is about contending with the

ghostly ways in which the Chamorro appears, or the ghostly forms that it takes today, and trying to give it some more substance, something more concrete, something sovereign. It is, in response to all the claims that there is no Chamorro culture anymore, the search for the places in which Chamorros *are* possible, where they can and do exist. Decolonization is the act meant to secure that site and the luxurious sovereignty it is assumed to hold.

In a grassroots sort of everyday sense this is translated as a process of reconciling the impacts of colonialism on Chamorros. Colonialism pushes the colonized out of the driver's seat in their own homeland, in their own history, in their own minds.⁵³ It reduces them to supplementary pieces, effects of the colonizer, footnotes to their own homelands or histories. Decolonization, then, is a process of filling in this gap, re-colonizing it in a sense. The whole United Nations decolonization process for instance is predicated on a political status plebiscite providing the political act through which the colonized can transcend and reverse the ways that they have been kept from power within their own territories.⁵⁴ There is of course a multitude of other ways in which this colonization is felt, and decolonization is sought or enacted. We see this in terms of the way Guam's history itself has been written. For example, the canonical text of Guam history is *Destiny's Landfall* by Robert Rogers, a former Marine who later became a professor at the University of Guam.⁵⁵ His text is the most comprehensive and detailed Guam history book to date, providing, at times, a gripping narrative of the past five centuries of Guam's sometimes mundane, sometimes turbulent history. But as Guam scholars Anne Perez Hattori and Vicente Diaz both criticized in their reviews of the book, Rogers may have

⁵³ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Hope Alvarez Cristobal, "Chamorro Self-Determination Pa'go!" *Testimony Given to the United Nation's Special Political and Decolonization Committee*, 4 October 2006.

⁵⁵ Rogers, Robert. *Destiny's Landfall A History of Guam*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

produced a far more comprehensive text than previous attempts but his framework, historiographically, relies upon very old, colonial assumptions about who makes history in the Pacific and who makes history in Guam.⁵⁶

For several hundreds pages, it is the colonizers, Europeans, westerners, modern subjects who make history in Guam. This emphasis is justified early on through a recounting of “the parable of the tribes” which notes that those communities that are violent and actively expand themselves adapt and survive, whereas as those that are peaceful and passive, end up being conquered.⁵⁷ In other words, history is the domain of the powerful, the victors, and the powerless remain chained to that sovereignty.⁵⁸ The implicit lesson of Rogers’ book is that those who are outside of Guam have made the island, and those who can trace their identities and their histories to the island are stuck, victims to those landfalls of historical destiny.

In Chamorro activist discourse this absence is regularly reiterated in every possible domain of life. Take for instance this statement by the late Chamorro activist Angel Santos from the text *Daughters of the Pacific*, in which he recounts the erasing effects of American colonial education on Chamorros and their place on their island and in the world:

We have been taught that we are not Chamoru. That there are no Chamorus anymore – they’re all dead – and that we are Americans. In 1922, naval Governor Dorn imposed the California school system; he wanted to make Guam a loyal possession of the US. I can see how they set out to do that. At the age of five or six, when we entered school, we were immediately taught to memorize the pledge of allegiance to the US; we

⁵⁶ Anne Perez Hattori, “Destiny’s Landfall: A History of Guam,” *The Contemporary Pacific*, (9:1), Spring 1997, 275. Vicente M. Diaz, “A Review of Destiny’s Landfall,” *Isla: A Journal of Micronesian Studies*, (4:1), Rainy Season 1996, 179-199.

⁵⁷ Rogers, 34-35.

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, “These on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 253-264.

were taught to identify the four seasons (which we don't have on Guam); we were taught American history. The US methodically set out to destroy our culture, our language, our identity.⁵⁹

Thus the engines of Chamorro history and life are thought to run on the colonizer's largesse, his benevolence, his intelligence and power. But thinking in a decolonial context, that supremacist presence of the colonizer is interpreted as a massive, traumatic, sweltering hole, a gap which is meant to belong to the colonized, which is meant to be the seat of Chamorro sovereign power, their primal link to the world, that which assures them a place in the world. It is about rectifying the unjust silence or marginalized status that Chamorros have been reduced to. It is about filling that void with Chamorro culture, instead of the colonizer's culture. In historiographical terms, it is about telling the Chamorro side of things, or about writing an islander-centered history of Guam, about asserting the importance of the Chamorro way of doing things, preserving and protecting the once demonized Chamorro spirit. It is about recovering culture, about rediscovering and revitalizing it.

I can not truly take issue with this because I too subscribe to this conception of decolonization as being a necessary part of contesting hegemonic societal notions and reshaping consciousness. But what I would like to interrogate further is the "how;" that is, how is the decision about what is "authentic" made, that which will fill this traumatic gap? Although this void could be filled with anything, there must always be logic to what one should or shouldn't, can or can't, assert as the missing piece of the Chamorro sovereignty puzzle, or what element can at last make the Chamorro sovereign.⁶⁰ Far more

⁵⁹ Angel Santos quoted in, Zohl De Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific*, (Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1994), 81

⁶⁰ In response to a post on my blog *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro* which dealt with the issue of authenticity of contemporary Chamorro dances, one self-identified young Chamorro living in

important than what you actually fill this void with, is where you find it. Where is the source of authenticity? Where does what you know direct you to locate it? And how do you perceive something as being viable? It is here that the metaphor of distance dominates and rules. Where the objects, ideas and artifacts that can be used to decolonize are all thought to be those that remain untouched by colonialism, which contain some form of pure continuity, which predate the arrival of modern civilization. What are the things on Guam that contain no “trace” of colonialism? Which were here prior to the arrival of the Spanish? What are the things that have survived colonization and continue to reflect and signify a proper Chamorro essence, and not bastardization or corruption of the pre-colonial Chamorro?

Ultimately this becomes a question of what is the Chamorro, what are the pieces that constitute it as sovereign? What can be used in their long, tragic history to produce something authentic? But this is problematic and paradoxical, especially for those seeking to infuse a strength or a self-determined power into contemporary Chamorros, as the search for any authentic Chamorro essence or source of sovereignty always results in a delicate and fragile articulation, one which can be proven to exist, but is always by its very nature something which can vanish as soon as it is touched.

9. Wall Street Spam and Chamoru Dreams

the states had an interesting, but somewhat radical insight. Although most people might feel that having “lost” most of your culture through colonization, such as the Chamorros did under the Spanish might then limit or inhibit them, by leaving them only a few shreds which can be authentically claimed to be Chamorro, this young Chamorro said that it’s actually “freedom.” With no authentic traditions or forms you are supposed to follow, this Chamorro claimed that we are therefore free to “make up some whack shit.” Or in other words, with no real traditions to mire us down, we are free to start our own traditions. Fulanu, *Email to Author*, 26 September 2006.

In order to discuss this issue further I'll introduce two texts, each dealing in their own ways with issues of Chamorro authenticity. The first is a *Wall Street Journal* article from 2000 titled, "Guam's Roots Are So Deep in Spam, They're Hard to Find: The Mall is a Place to Look For Chamorro T-Shirts; The Layers of Assimilation," which sarcastically reports on prospects for Chamorro self-determination. The second is a 1995 documentary titled *Chamoru Dreams* which chronicles a young Chamorro's search for his roots. While the tenor of both of these texts is radically different, both are nonetheless about a Chamorro search for "sovereignty."

"Guam's Roots Are So Deep in Spam, They're Hard to Find," written by reporter Robert Frank, covers a political status plebiscite, that was to take place that year, which would supposedly decide the future status of Guam.⁶¹ The tone of the article is derisive, and the author writes of Chamorros through a sort of comedic anthropological lens, mocking them and their struggles for existence. *Chamoru Dreams*, on the other hand, was created by Eric Tydingco and chronicles his return to Guam after living in the States for many years, and his search for his culture and what is really "Chamorro."⁶² The tone for one is scornful, the other more spiritual and earnest. One seems determined that the idea of a viable political Chamorro subject be vigorously dismissed, the other makes some of the same assumptions and accepts similar arguments but eventually finds a limited form of Chamorro existence. Both search around Guam picking up and analyzing what they are told is Chamorro culture, looking in places where people tell them they might find it and, more often than not, what they find is not Chamorro, barely Chamorro, or leads them to someone else's sovereignty. In both of these texts we see the effects of this

⁶¹ Robert Frank, "Guam's Roots Are so Deep in Spam, They're Hard to Find," *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 March 2000.

⁶² *Chamoru Dreams*, Eric Tydingco dir. Pacific Islanders in Communication, 1996. 26 mins.

version of sovereignty, the pitfalls and the limits which in actuality defer and deny the possibilities for decolonization by valorizing a limiting or too fragile subjectivity for Chamorros today.

10. Reburying the Chamorro

This article is written from what could be called a colonial framework and from one in which the political questions for indigenous people are dealt with in crude, overly simplistic, *cultural* ways.⁶³ As the indigenous person is always an echo of some previous lost time, then its political questions are always ones of cultural authenticity, a search for what is really Chamorro. If there is this claim that they are owed something, if this community wants to be given something, wants to make a political argument and receive something, first we must determine whether or not they even exist. This is the usual sort of trial that indigenous and colonized people face, as discussed by James Clifford in the final chapter of his text *The Predicament of Culture*.⁶⁴ You have brought a case before the court, you have a claim, and you have evidence of all sorts to support your claim. But the court of your colonizer, the court of the colonizer's world and ideas, never allows your claim to be heard. There is never any judgment on the facts of your claim, never any rebuttal that what you claim is impossible or that justice is not due to you. Instead the energy of the court is channeled into an obsessive conversation over your constitution, over your authenticity. The political nature of your presence in court is deferred to an

⁶³ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, (London: Routledge, 1994). *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, David Theo Goldberg (ed). (London: Blackwell, 1994).

⁶⁴ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*...

entirely different universe, as only culture is allowed to remain both, as your only source of recognition/visibility and your theoretical kryptonite.⁶⁵

The author of the *Wall Street Journal* article makes no effort to even hide that narrative structure to his article, as is evident from the first sentences. Guam is introduced as “a small island containing a world of cultures.”⁶⁶ In the first paragraph Guam is crowded with a plethora of different national and consumeristic, hopelessly “modern” images:

...Japanese noodle shops thrive amid Dairy Queens, cha-cha clubs, Spanish-style Catholic churches and American strip clubs. There's even a Wild West-style shooting gallery that doubles as a wedding chapel for visiting South Koreans.⁶⁷

For those who had been hoping for an article on Chamorros and their struggle for decolonization, and might now be asking themselves why haven't we seen any mention of Chamorros yet, the author has anticipated this query, and through a non-Chamorro native informant, answers it:

And what about the native culture of Guam? "Oh, gee. I'm not sure where to even look," says a Japanese concierge at the Guam Hyatt Regency. "Maybe the mall?"⁶⁸

This sort of dynamic – the incredulity or rejection of any sort of present authentic Chamorro fragment or existence, followed by a suggestion as to where it might or might not be found – snakes through the entire article.

⁶⁵ The reference to kryptonite, the lethal weakness of the comic book superhero Superman is meant to imply the double-edged nature of this visibility and presence. Kryptonite are green meteorites scattered throughout the universe, which are in truth pieces of Superman's home planet of Krypton. That the cultural provides a place for you (much in the same way that kryptonite gives Superman an origin or a trace of his past), but once it is touched or even mentioned it cuts you and weakens you (as is the case when Superman comes into contact with pieces of his origin).

⁶⁶ Frank, “Guam's Roots Are So Deep...”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

After already stacking the deck against Chamorros, painting Guam as a place populated with everyone else's culture, whose own culture "might" be found at the mall, Chamorros are at last given a voice several paragraphs into the piece, through quotes from a leader of a Chamorro sovereignty group, the "Chamorro Nation."⁶⁹ Frank characterizes this group as comprised of "tattooed youths and tribal activists" whose tactics include "the occasional sit-in" and "beach tours and fauna lessons."⁷⁰ He quotes their leader, Ed Benavente, as saying that, after centuries of "tough times" at the hands of their colonizers, "...now its time to take control of our country and our culture."⁷¹ The article's response to Benavente's political claim is a cruel double strike – first with "what culture exists to take control of?" and then, "what Chamorro exists to take control of a culture?"⁷²

Frank's take on Benavente's assertion is "Trouble is, after all those invasions, no one is quite sure what Chamorro culture is."⁷³ He follows up this statement with a search around contemporary Guam for anything that is actually Chamorro. An area on Guam called "Chamorro Village," built in the 1990's to showcase Chamorro arts and crafts, is to him like a ghost town, with the few open stores selling mostly "kimonos and T-shirts" and full of Mexican, Jamaican and Asian restaurants. Frank finds a Chamorro vendor who sells "genuine Chamorro artifacts" but whose largest selling item is a baseball cap with his shop's logo on it.⁷⁴ As if to rub salt in the ever growing wound of Chamorro non-existence, the author quotes a Cantonese vendor who claims that if you want to see

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Chamorro stuff at the Chamorro Village you have to come on Wednesday night, for “Wednesday night is Chamorro night.”⁷⁵

As the article invokes the low-class-specter of the food Spam in its title, it eventually turns to food in order to authenticate or dismiss any contemporary Chamorro existence. As one might imagine, there isn’t much hope for Chamorro advocates on this front either for, as Frank notes, “Guam’s culinary past, buried under Spanish rice, Philippine noodles and American burgers, has been difficult to uncover.”⁷⁶ The remainder of the article collects more potential signifiers of Chamorro existence, specifically surrounding food, but once again only to show a clear Chamorro lack, that their claim to contemporary existence still has no validity.

Frank ends the article with another question to a non-Chamorro on Guam about where he can find the real Chamorro. This provides the final nail in the coffin of on the prospect for Guam’s decolonization, as this article, which was represented as a report on decolonization, ultimately became a sarcastic funeral dirge for any would-be Chamorros. “Who’s a Chamorro, and who’s not?” responds 18-year-old Menchie Canlas, a Filipino ticket-taker at a mall cinema, to Frank’s query. “I don’t think anybody knows anymore.”⁷⁷ This *Wall Street Journal* article could easily be dismissed as a racist or ignorant “outsider” portrayal of Chamorros. It does contain, in fact, several fallacies that would be expected from someone who might have first heard of Guam only days before writing

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. As a note, despite the claims of many historians, rice was on Guam prior to Spanish colonization and was used in many different rituals as a ceremonial food. After the arrival of the Spanish, *achote*’ seeds were brought into Guam, which amongst other things are used to color rice to give it a red or an orange color. Traditional Chamorro rice today is *hineksa’ agaga*’ or “red rice.” Craig Santos Perez, *From Unincorporated Territory [hacha]*, (Honolulu: Tinfish Press, 2006).

⁷⁷ Frank, “Guam’s Roots Are So Deep...”

this piece. But the logic that this piece uses isn't something only limited to those outside of the culture, but extends to those who we might consider "inside" as well.

We can see hints of this in the discourse of Chamorros in the article itself. The Chamorros who are quoted all make statements against the narrative intent of the piece, namely that Chamorros don't exist, but don't necessarily contest the logic that supports that conclusion. They instead choose to operate within it and accept the idea that theirs is a shattered culture, one you have to sift through carefully to find that which is really you and that which really isn't. Although one could argue that the reporter selected quotes to support his narrative intent for the piece, it nonetheless hints at the ways in which this logic is in many ways accepted by Chamorros.

When this article was posted online on the blog *Decolonize Guam*, which collects news articles on issues of "Peace and Justice in the Pacific," one anonymous commenter, who represented him or herself as Chamorro, lamented that, even if his "tone" was inappropriate, the author of the article was correct in his pronouncements that there isn't much to Chamorro culture anymore.⁷⁸

I don't appreciate this guys [sic] tone. But I can't say he's not wrong. If I had to name something that was distinctly Chamoru I don't think I could either. There simply isn't that much we can call our own anymore.⁷⁹

The implication in both, this comment and in the article itself is that authenticity is found not just in that which is pure but, by default, in that which no one else shares, that which is "distinctly," autonomously Chamorro. And thus, just looking around contemporary Guam, all the things that could be Chamorro around us are nothing but fake, impure,

⁷⁸ Although the article was published in 2000, it was posted online on the *Decolonize Guam* blog on January 29, 2009.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *Comment Made on Post "Guam Struggles to Find Roots Beneath Piles of Spam,"* <http://decolonizeguam.blogspot.com/2009/01/guam-struggles-to-find-its-roots-from.html>, Comment Made 27 February 2009. Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

borrowed culture, forced upon us by the colonizers, adapted because of a desire for assimilation. The real Chamorro lies buried beneath all of the Spam and strip clubs, and are something that has to be hunted for. This logic lies buried in even the most honest and earnest of Chamorro soul-searching journeys. It is the gaze that guides them; it determines the conditions by which that which they see are authentically Chamorro or not. The film *Chamoru Dreams* is an inspiring, yet tragic example of this.

11. Guinifen Chamoru⁸⁰

The subject of the film, its director and narrator, is marked at the film's beginning as an empty vessel, lost, not really knowing who or what he is. According to the film's promotional materials, he returns home "only to discover that he is a visitor in his own homeland" and is searching for a "sense of place,"⁸¹ knowing that he is Chamorro, but unsure as to what exactly that signifier means or what in him, if anything, it refers to. Having grown up, in his own estimation, as pretty modern or westernized, not speaking any Chamorro, not really knowing anything about what Chamorro history or culture is, he is certain that whatever he represents is not what he should be. The documentary follows his travel from the States to Guam and the interactions he has with family members and friends as he sifts through the island's signifiers looking for something that he can truly call Chamorro. He has ambiguous dreams as he undertakes this journey, there is something reaching out to him, something ancient or eternal that he can't really perceive or understand and that he can't seem to find in his life or the world around him.

⁸⁰ *Guinifen Chamoru* is Chamorro for "Chamorro Dreams."

⁸¹ Guam Humanities Council, *Resource Center and Library: Description of Video and Multimedia*, <http://www.guam.net/pub/guamhumanities/ResourceLibrary.html>, Site Accessed 12 January 2010.

The tenor of this documentary is in stark contrast with the *Wall Street Journal* article, this being a far more spiritual and poetic journey than the latter, which wandered around contemporary Guam loaded with nothing but derision and doubt. Yet, much of *Chamoru Dreams* follows the same path as the Frank piece – Guam has changed so much since Tydingco, the narrator, left. It has become so much more modern and Western. Even the beach at which the director swam as a child is now overshadowed by huge concrete structures. As in Frank’s article, Tydingco finds himself regularly betrayed by the signifiers of Chamorro-ness he comes across. Everything seems to contain some small dimension of Chamorro-ness; on the surface, some things appear to be Chamorro – people who call themselves Chamorro, foods that Chamorro make and eat, traditional healers and artists who refer to themselves and what they do as “Chamorro.” But each time something else hidden beneath the surface reveals the truth, the lack, of these attempts/objects. Tydingco’s investigations are far from deep tissue. All that is required is a hint of non-Chamorro-ness that is associated with, or revealed in, the object of inquiry, and the film politely rejects it.

Chamorro foods come from other places or were brought in by other people. The traditional healer’s title *suruhānu* is actually a Spanish word.⁸² Everyone who calls themselves Chamorro has the last name, the blood, the look of something else. Even

⁸² Prior to the Spanish colonization of Guam, Chamorros had shamans or spiritual leaders called *makahna*, which were considered to be conduits or mediators between the world of the living and the spirits of Chamorro ancestors who could be called upon for good fortune and protection. Chamorros also had a skilled group of healers, who developed traditional remedies for ailments, but the name of this group was lost in history. As the colonization by the Spanish was primarily a religious one, the *makahna* represented a very clear threat and source of competition for the minds of Chamorros. They were discredited, outlawed and eventually hunted down and killed by Spanish missionaries. As a result of this crackdown, the work done by the *makahana* and the healers were melded together and became one, under the name *suruhānu* and *suruhāna* (which comes from the Spanish word for “surgeon”). Today, there are still a number of *suruhānu* practicing in Guam, and they can provide traditional treatment for you, or spiritual as well, as they are still considered to be media through which the living can communicate with the spirits of one’s ancestors, especially at times when you feel you have angered them or that they are punishing you.

Tydingco's most trusted and authentic guide, Leonard, betrays the aura of authenticity he is associated with. Although he values the Chamorro language and is having his child learn it, he himself doesn't speak Chamorro. Leonard, in fact, was referenced earlier in the comment by pacificrules, as one of those people who today is making up dances as, since the filming for *Chamoru Dreams*, he has become a cultural icon on Guam. Until this day, although he has become a champion of Chamorro language chants and dances with the help of family and friends, creating two groups that have had an indelible mark on Guam's cultural landscape, namely, *Guma' Pålu Li'e* and *I Fanlailai'an*, he still doesn't speak Chamorro.⁸³ His own reason is that there is too much Spanish in the language and all the chants for his groups use only pre-contact words.⁸⁴ But ultimately it is Leonard through whom Tydingco finds most of his answers. Leonard is committed to living a more traditional lifestyle, he makes sure his children speak Chamorro, he goes fishing, and plants and harvests *sun*i behind his house.⁸⁵

Tydingco and Leonard go on a fishing trip together, and afterwards come ashore in an area where the former finds the force that has been calling to him in his dreams. It is a set of *latte*, lime-stone megaliths. Built by Chamorros centuries ago, some *latte* were close to 20 feet tall, but the ones in the film measure at around four or five feet. Like many "ancient" wonders of the world, these stones attest to a Chamorro technological prowess that they, as non-moderns, as non-Europeans, were not supposed to possess. The

⁸³ *Dances of Life*, Catherine Tatge dir., Pacific Islanders in Communication, 2005, 60 mins.

⁸⁴ Leonard Irriarte, *Personal Communication*, The Chamorro Village, Hagåtña, Guam, 19 April 2003.

Irriarte's groups stand out amongst the dancing landscape of Guam in that although they do perform dances, they are in reality meant to be a "chanting group." The histories of Chamorro culture prior to Spanish domination all attest to the importance of singing and chanting in Chamorro life, with a number of chants and songs recorded by Spanish missionaries and explorers. There is however no historical recording of what the dances of the period looked like, although there are many mentions of them.

⁸⁵ *Sun*i is the Chamorro word for taro root.

latte is thus a central figure in the representation of Guam's identity today, an icon constantly used in advertising, logo making, or in creative representation of the island, its peoples and cultures.⁸⁶ It is also specifically a Chamorro icon of strength, durability and survival, used by activists and those attempting to not simply represent Guam, but to assert a Guam or a Chamorro with a long and glorious history who, thanks to technologies such as the *latte*, defies the argument that indigenous and non-modern peoples offer nothing to the history of this world. The *latte* is then, in a sense, a metaphor for the Chamorro foundation of today, something in which they can, in a multitude of ways, anchor themselves to the present. These stone sentinels at last satisfy Tydingco's search. They represent the root, something that is pure, and something that belongs only to Chamorros. They are centuries old, still standing, waiting, and emanating a mystical power from their dense jungle home.

12. The Predicament of Sovereignty

Both the above texts end with uncertainty, but with possibilities for Chamorros leaning in different directions. In the *Wall Street Journal* article, the uncertainty leads towards impossibility – the Chamorro does not exist, evidence was put forth to try and prove that it was a coherent contemporary political subject, but it failed that test miserably. The other leads towards an ambiguous possibility – a foundation is found, but its unclear at the film's end what exactly the finding of these ancient stones means for today. Two points must be noted here before moving on:

⁸⁶ Fred Rodriquez, "Latte's Significance," *Guampedia*, <http://guampedia.com/category/118-7-symbolism/entry/389>, Site Accessed 1 April 2009. Scott Russell, *Tiempon I Manmo'fo'na: Ancient Chamorro Culture and History of the Northern Mariana Islands*, (CNMI Division of Historic Preservation, Saipan, 1998).

First, in both texts, the logic of sovereignty – the relationship between the cultural purity of Chamorros and their dreams of authenticity and political subjectivity – is never even mentioned, it is simply accepted. It lies beneath the searches for the “real Chamorro,” dictating the terms of those searches, but is always carefully hidden.⁸⁷ Even as Tydingco searches for answers, he never even considers for a moment the form of his questions. Even as he is repeatedly rebuffed by what he finds, he never really considers that the cultural purity, or the autonomous, unique form of sovereignty, he is seeking might be the problem with his question. In neither of these texts are the conditions of possibility for Chamorro existence ever mentioned, set forth, discussed or cited, but simply accepted. Or in other words, although neither say a word about autonomy or purity, their texts are created in such a way that only those which can rightfully claim this being, can be considered to be considered to be authentic or possess a political existence today. But with these conditions in place uncritiqued, we see that sovereignty/decolonization for Chamorros is at best delicate and pointless, and at worst impossible.

Secondly, since there appears to be no awareness of this requirement as a contingent point, *authenticity becomes its own reward*. Since this framework for understanding and conceiving the existence of a Chamorro is never even mentioned, we can assume that in the minds of both Frank and Tydingco that this point is not a contingent one, but a universal one. There isn’t even room in their texts for the question of whether authenticity should be pursued and is the basis for whether or not a Chamorro exists today, it instead operates as a neutral, universal truth and one that changes the

⁸⁷ Denise Ferreira Da Silva, “Towards a Critique of the Socio-Logos of Justice: The *Analytics of Racality* and the Production of Universality,” *Social Identities*, (7:3), 2001, 421-454.

dynamic of cultural questioning from one of “what” to “if.” That is, although at the everyday level the discussions of Chamorro culture will on the surface take the form of “What is Chamorro?” or “What is really Chamorro?” with this version of sovereignty in place, the true foundation here is not what a Chamorro is or what it exists as, *but rather if it can exist at all*. Since the issue for both is fundamentally one of yes or no, that artifacts and people, fragments of culture are either Chamorro or not, or really Chamorro or not, there is no room here for any obvious forms of hybridity. It is not what a Chamorro is, but rather *whether a Chamorro can be*. That rebalancing, that return to the full, authentic and harmonious place on the other side of this “if” – far away from the questions of what, and of the traces of colonizers and outsiders that cause those questions to grow like ravenous weeds – is its own reward.

The impetus for this form of sovereignty is a return to the proper state of being, in other words harmony. In the discourse of some Chamorro activists, the pre-colonial period is always one of balance, where each member of the community was brimming with knowledge, knew their place in the order of things, knew how to survive, knew how to conserve and properly use resources.⁸⁸ By some definitions, this is the true nature of sovereignty, this fullness, this completeness.⁸⁹ This is the safety of sovereignty that is

⁸⁸ The discussion about indigenous fishing rights later in this chapter is partially built upon this point, that assumption that Chamorros have something inherent in them that will give them the knowledge and the means to restore that balance and practice sustainability better than anything modernity has to offer.

⁸⁹ The 1671 speech made by a Chamorro *Maga'låhi* or male leader named Hurao provides some insight into how this narrative has been formed in Chamorro activism. The speech of Hurao which was made to call forth 2,000 Chamorro warriors to attack and expel the Spanish was reportedly written down by a Spanish priest who overheard the large gathering. In the speech Hurao starts off by arguing that prior to the Spanish arriving to colonize the islands, the Chamorros had everything they needed and desired nothing. Only because of the Spanish now are they unhappy and filled with desires for things they cannot or should not have.

In terms of the physical torments that Chamorros now had to endure because of the Spanish presence Hurao was very explicit in what their negative impacts were:

sought, a place where only the Chamorro exists and no other influence treads or even draws breath. The search for sovereignty in this way is an impossible one, but is one that all communities or nations feel the pull of. This desire can be articulated in one of two ways. In the first, it is a struggle to erase or expel the subjects and their gazes who were present at the community's birth.⁹⁰ For those who witness it being born – helpless, vulnerable and pathetic – can always claim a power, however minute over that community. They can claim: I have seen your truth I have heard the first beats of your heart, have seen your first breaths, your yawning mouth. Therefore, I have a claim, an earlier claim, to this world than you can ever articulate.⁹¹ Another tactic is to reverse positions. The newly born nation is by virtue of chronology alone, dependent, weak, inferior or reliant upon those who came before. It emerges as an effect of the gazes that

Before they arrived on the island, we did not know insects. Did we know rats, flies, mosquitoes, and all the other little animals which constantly torment us? These are the beautiful presents they have made us. And what have their floating machines brought us? Formerly, we do not have rheumatism and inflammations. If we had sickness, we had remedies for them. But they have brought us their diseases and do not teach us the remedies. Is it necessary that our desires make us want iron and other trifles which only render us unhappy?

In seeking to critique the contemporary impact that the United States and its policies have had on Guam or are having on Guam, Chamorro activists often resort to this same rhetorical strategy of Hurao, prior to being touched by the colonizer, we were happy, we were satisfied, we lived in a completeness. Whatever we would want was here, whatever we needed to survive was here, but the Spanish have now opened a Pandora's box which leaves us troubled, full of desires and horribly incomplete. One of the interesting aspects of this speech is that while no historians doubt that this was the sentiment of Chamorros at the time, many doubt that this is what Hurao actually said and that this text was most likely made up by the priest to represent (in his mind) what were the thoughts that were driving the resistance of Chamorros to fighting against the Spanish and their Catholic mission. It is one of those curious coincidences of ideology, where the fantasy of Guam "before the fall" that the Spanish enacted, is the same from the perspective of a 17th century Spanish priest and a young Chamorro in 2009. Charles Le Gobien, *Histoires des Isles Marianes*, (Paris, 1700). Manuscript translated into English and is available at the University of Guam, Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Center.

⁹⁰ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" *The Nation and Narration*, (London, Routledge, 1990). Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, (Cambridge, Cambridge, 2003).

⁹¹ In decolonial discourse for instance on Guam, it is very common to make reference to Chamorro culture has being 4,000 years old, and use that as part of the foundation for your political argument. It serves as a critique of Western and modern claims to universality or absolute knowledge, by casting the origin of such things as being too recent or too young to be taken seriously. But it also serves as a way of infusing one's claims with an aura of longevity, and that Chamorro claims in this world have a type of aged wisdom or durability.

greeted it and the language and social fabric they have wrapped the child in prior to its even being born. The nation thus struggles to reverse this dynamic, to take its revenge and rearticulate these relations so that those who know this vulnerability are soon reduced to effects of the nation.⁹² Here the claim is that your origin will not be absent, but it will belong to someone else.⁹³

In the context of either of these articulations, the Chamorro is a fragmented mess, full of signifiers that lead us everywhere except Guam. For, if Tydginco's film is meant to symbolize the ways in which "average" Chamorros conceive of themselves in the world and their relationship to their own origins, their own history and culture, then we don't see much of this contending with their origins. Rather than seeking to change their own set of meanings and historical circumstances or traumas, they accept them through a resigned sigh that indeed, "colonialism has hit Chamorros hard."⁹⁴

13. Another Sovereignty Dead-end

For both of these texts, sovereignty, and therefore decolonization, are truly about the past, finding that which is left over, or still alive, after the trauma, destruction or assimilation. It is a search for survivors or for some surviving culture. The logic is that in order to move forward you have to not just know where you came from, but need to have

⁹² As Noam Chomsky notes, the United States regularly attempts such a reversal in terms of its relationship to France. During the American Revolutionary War, France played a key role in providing economic, military and naval support to the fledgling American forces, without which, the revolutionaries most likely would not have prevailed. This debt for aiding in creating a "sovereign" newborn American nation itches at the American national psyche, and is something which ways constantly have to be found so it can be forgotten or transformed. The American "saving" of France from the Nazis during World War II, becomes an ideal way of forgetting about one's origin, and infusing oneself with sovereignty at the same time. Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, (New York: The New Press, 2002).

⁹³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁹⁴ Frank, "Guam's Roots So Deep..."

some authentic piece or shred of your former pure self that can be used as the basis for your claims, something through which you can assert a real claim to the present which ensures you are not simply an echo or a ghost or your dead ancestors. Without it, you are the tragically cursed Chamorros of the *Wall Street Journal* piece, suffocating underneath mountains of Spam, or you are Eric Tydingco, lost, wandering around Guam with a video camera.

The logic of distance establishes a hierarchy for judging what can and cannot be a source for Chamorro sovereignty. The present after all is full of marks of the colonizer, of his victories, his successes, and his power. Therefore, sovereignty is always to be found in the purest and most distant “Chamorro” past. The remarks of Vince Manibusan – a Chamorro musician who has been working for several years to try and create a distinct Chamorro sound, incorporating certain modern elements such as Reggae into ancient sounds, instruments and tunes – help draw out the workings of this logic. In explaining to me the path through which Chamorros can move forward as a people, he invoked the idea of this contemporary world as being foreign and antagonistic to Chamorros, and thus the need to return to the times which were “meant for us.”

I think it sounds strange too but we gotta [sic] move forward and backward at the same time. That’s the real indigenous way of doing things. This is Uncle Sam’s world – America’s world. Forward, forward all the time. It’s their time, their rules, it all for them. We live in this world we live for them. Everything from the, from capitalism to technology exists for them. We have to go back and find the root. We have to find what’s for us. What is meant for us? That’s the only way we’ll move ahead.⁹⁵

Although the intent of Manibusan’s comments are for finding a means of moving forward into the future and not “living in the past,” it is important to consider some of the larger

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Vince Manibusan, *Interview with Author*, I.P. Coffee, Mangilao, Guam, 25 September 2008.

ramifications behind this sort of distancing or rejection. What are the consequences of this forsaking of the present for the past, or asserting that the present in truth belongs to someone else? And what does it mean in terms of the Chamorro or the sovereign Chamorro that we enable or disable? Does this logic mean missing or rejecting other potential sites of sovereignty that might literally sit right before your eyes?

We see the effects of such a limited perception at work throughout *Chamoru Dreams*. In one scene, Eric Tydingco sits at the feet of his grandmother, Julia De Leon Tydingco, who was a prominent and well-respected Chamorro woman on Guam. She was a longtime educator, a famous singer on Guam who traveled around the world and was even broadcast to the world from the island during a radio show in the 1930's.⁹⁶ For many she represents the toughness and strength of Chamorro women, a trait that is romanticized as stretching back centuries, and a trait that many invoke to prove that something Chamorro still exists, that a Chamorro strength or spirit still survives. In the narrative that is commonly used, most prominently in the text *Daughters of Our Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers*, the men may all have been killed by the Spanish, the women may all have married Filipinos or Mexicans, but the women have nonetheless kept the culture alive.⁹⁷ They passed on the language and traditional practices; they were the means by which the attempted obliteration of Chamorros was stymied.

But for Tydingco this doesn't count. He misses this, or rather, he dismisses her and those she leads him to. Rather than look at all that she might represent, or look at her

⁹⁶ I am well acquainted with the exploits of Tydingco's grandmother as she is my great-grandmother's younger sister. As I was growing up, my grandmother would often tell me stories about her mother's family, and her Auntie Julia was one she had plenty of stories about.

⁹⁷ Laura Torres Souder, *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers*, (Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 1987).

through a different lens of sovereignty or existence, he uses the same one as the *Wall Street Journal* piece. For instance, he haggles with the last names of his family, eventually casting them away. De Leon is Spanish. Tydingco is Chinese. In his quest for last names, Tydingco ultimately finds an authentically Chamorro name within his family lineage which, in an ironically poetic way, comments on the character of his search. Buried beneath the Spanish and the Chinese he finds “Ma’â’ñaio,” which is the name that he can claim from his Grandmother Julia’s late husband’s family. When he asks what it means, his grandmother’s eyes light up as she translates, “scared.” Tydingco uses this haunting image to transition to the next scene, no doubt intending to provide an emotional punch to his search, as if he should be wary of what he might find on his journey.

“We can never go back to the way it was” is the mantra that always accompanies this logic. It is the basis through which one can either reject the whole idea of decolonization or find a way to grudgingly, or minutely, accept it. It is, in the first instance, a mantra that marks decolonization as being foolish and stupid, an impossible idea that would require time travel or a rejection of the course history has taken and the modernization that the colonized has been gifted with. In the second, it can be a foundation for contemporary action in the “spirit” of decolonization. But regardless of what happens next, what this foundation helps enable, this mantra will always haunt your articulations, all your attempts. It will taint all that you do as being not really decolonization, just as all of us aren’t really Chamorros because there aren’t any real Chamorros left.⁹⁸ But there is a weakness in this version of sovereignty in that it leads to

⁹⁸ Guam will be an island version of the film *The Sixth Sense*, full of people who don’t know they are dead. Don’t know that the rules establishing who is alive or authenticate and who isn’t have rules

that blindness or inability to perceive what is around you, or to dismiss it for something, anything, else that can be traced to an earlier and more pure, more Chamorro epoch. The relationship to the present is always delicate and full of dread. It is the present in which you exist, the moment in which you will act, but it is always also a gloomy and futile moment, a curse, creating an immortal barrier between you and any real form of sovereignty or decolonization.

14. Trapped Within the Latte

So how does the possibility of Chamorro sovereignty appear to us in the present? The two texts discussed here have very apt metaphors for the relationship of Chamorros today with any possible sovereignty, ones that evoke confinement, its being sealed off, off-limits, impossible. The first is spiritual, ephemeral and dreamy. The second is tragically comical (which will be discussed in another section).

Before dealing with the dreaminess of these texts, we first have to ask, in the case of *Chamoru Dreams*, after finding an apparent source of Chamorro sovereignty, an authentic piece, what comes next? What has this discovery granted him? What was the purpose of this search? What did it garner him? He has still dismissed all other parts of himself as being fake; he doesn't magically speak Chamorro now, nor is he an expert on Chamorro issues, and he did not suddenly become a political activist. Having at last found the source or root of Chamorro sovereignty and existence what actually changed?⁹⁹

against them and so they are functionally dead as Chamorros. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "Resisting Democracy in Guam," *Salty Zine*, (1:1), 2005.

⁹⁹ This is the core gap in the assumption of authenticity being its own reward, or that sovereignty lies in being authentic. If you find that elusive access to the source of yourself, so what? Upon finding that link does anything about you magically or automatically change? Probably not. The key point here is that sovereignty in this sense is a solution to the problems of indigenous people, that if only we were sovereign, in the sense of finding access to that previous moment, so much would be easier or resolved. In truth,

The narrative of the film is meant to convince us that the source has been found but, in reality, the *latte* seems only to mark a boundary. On the other side of it is sovereignty; we, however, are stuck on this side. He has after all found not the source but the *limit of Chamorro sovereignty, the point where it begins and paradoxically ends*. It is only in dreams that these icons possess the magic of sovereignty. It is only then that they speak to him. They are the true fragments of a culture that he can only seem to embody in his dreams. At the film's end we are unsure whether he is dreaming or whether he is in the real world. It is most likely meant to enhance the spirituality of the moment, the strong tie to nature and the ethereal world of ancestral spirits, but it also speaks to this tension between source and limit, this latent and simmering impossibility.

This idea could be taken a number of different ways. First, that we can never really touch that sovereign source, know it or drink it, but that in our dreams we can commune with it, become enlightened and animated through that engagement, and nonetheless move forward. It could also mean that "sovereignty" is a fantasy for Chamorros, the stuff of dreams, something unattainable, inaccessible to them. A placebo, an endless series of empty meals that convince you that you are full, even as your body is rotting away.¹⁰⁰ The *Wall Street Journal* article is more direct with this point. For the

sovereignty here is more like a foundation upon which you have more power and flexibility to find your own solutions to your problems.

¹⁰⁰ It could also mean that impossible is simply impossible, in any way or form, for everyone. Which is something which you can always create a convincing argument for or against, regardless of which definition you are using. When considering the impossibility of sovereignty, I often reflect back on this passage. "This double bind, this aporia—the heterogeneity and indissociability of unconditional and conditional sovereignty—cannot be relieved; it cannot be absolved. Rather, it is constitutive of sovereignty and thus what defines sovereignty as *impossible*. Hence, the impossibility of sovereignty is not an accident that befalls sovereignty, nor does it mean that sovereignty does not happen, that sovereign decisions are not made. On the contrary, impossibility marks sovereignty's only possibility; indeed, that sovereignty is impossible is necessary in order that there be the possibility of "the sovereignty that touches a *unique* place in the world—today, here now." Sovereignty is only ever the promise of sovereignty. *As if* it were possible." : David E. Jones, "As *If* The Time Were Now: Deconstructing Agamben," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, (106:2), Spring 2007, 287.

entire article appears to be a scornful message to Chamorro activists, “Sovereignty? In your dreams!”

The argument of the *latte* as the basis for Chamorro identity is a common one, made by nearly everyone. Chamorro activists, news reporters, historians, anthropologists, all invoke it, and so it is one of those shared everyday icons, imposing in their presence, from which all sorts of arguments about Chamorro existence or non-existence can be made. The stone megaliths represent not just any type of durable icon, not just one which has weathered centuries of generic time, but one which has weathered traumatic colonial time. They represent a piece of culture that survived and endured, even as so much else was cast aside or destroyed. As a 2007 *Al Jazeera English* report, titled “Guam Confronts Americanization,” notes:

The Spanish took control of Guam in the 16th century and this ruined hacienda is all that is left of that era. But there’s even less remaining of the Chamorros, just these stones called lattes. The limestone base for their long-gone traditional house.¹⁰¹

At the same time, however, since the people who made these stones are all gone, the Chamorros of today have almost no ties to those ancestors except through these stones.¹⁰²

So, we find both gazes, a positive and a negative one, agreeing that this particular object is one in which a real authentic Chamorro presence can be represented. But what happens when this point is transgressed, when we move beyond it, and build upon it? Do

¹⁰¹ Al Jazeera English, “Guam Confronts Americanization,” *Youtube*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym6yDJcb_v8, Video uploaded 7 July 2007. Site Accessed 13 January 2010.

¹⁰² Former Congressman Robert Underwood shared with me his insight on the issue of Chamorro continuity to their ancient ancestors, doubted by so many Chamorros and non-Chamorros who cite blood quantum changes or cultural shifts, such as Christianity. To an individual who questioned present Chamorros’ relationship to the ancient Chamorro chiefs such as Kephua or Mata’pang, Underwood responded that he has the same relationship with them that Mick Jagger has with William Shakespeare, but why is it that no one seems to doubt their relationship?

these stones then represent the foundation for Chamorro political identity today, as they once represented the foundation for Chamorro homes? Or do they instead lock in and confine this foundation? Rather than be the source, are they instead the limit, upon which we can dream of the sovereignty on the other side/within, but never truly touch or grasp?

15. Terrorists and Time Traveling

In an editorial for the *Pacific Daily News*, just a few weeks after the September 11th attacks in the United States, columnist for the newspaper and former publisher, Joe Murphy, made a curious a connection to this limit.¹⁰³ In his editorial, written as America was beginning to gear up for its War on Terror, he argued that the Chamorro (through the figure of “Chamorro activists”) was better confined to another, older world. In discussing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Murphy claims that they are stuck in the past, living off of nostalgia from decades ago, refusing to accept that the world has changed, and refusing to join the rest of the rational free world. He then moves on to connect the refusal of these “terrorists” to live in the now, to the present moment with regards Chamorro decolonization and sovereignty activists.

¹⁰³ In addition to being an editors and publisher of *The Pacific Daily News*, until passing away in 2009, Murphy was also one of its longest-standing columnists and one of its most ardent defenders of American policy and control of Guam. Although his tone changed over the years, moving from being sometimes openly racist against Chamorros, in the early years of his time on Guam, to more even-handed and willing to discuss critiques of the United States. Throughout the years, he was the most aggressive, open presence in the paper for ensuring that the military presence in Guam be questioned as little as possible. His pieces were written in straight-forward prose, always professing to get straight to the point, and would then proceed to pragmatically lecture about how Guam needs the United States, whether in the form of military bases or as some ideal to emulate in order to survive. In 2004 I wrote a letter to the editor of the *Pacific Daily News* which discussed similarities of “sovereignty” between Iraq and Guam (namely lack of). Murphy responded a few days in a letter making it clear that Guam cannot survive without the United States. This is the skill of a seasoned ideologue, not just the ability, but also the desire to always return to the basic antagonism, regardless of the context. In Murphy’s case, that being that Guam is intrinsically dependent upon the United States. I say this, with full awareness of my own obsessive ideological returns, both in my work and in this particular dissertation.

Sometimes I think that the Chamorro activists yearn for those days of continuous fishing, sailing and fiestas. When everyone spoke the same language. That was before terrorists and airplanes and computers and television and shopping at Kmart and Gov Guam Layoffs.¹⁰⁴

The activism of these Chamorros belongs in the world of those *latte* stones, belongs to the times when those stones weren't just relics of a previous era, but pumped blood into the foundation of the people who made and used them. Today's world, and today's Guam, is full of non-Chamorro things, global things, American things, modern things. The sovereignty that Chamorros seek is better left in those stones; it should not and cannot be brought into this world. This "suggestion" is amplified through the association of Chamorro activists with the Taliban and also the discussion of regional terrorists, such as the Abu Sayaff in the Philippines. To bring the sovereignty out of the stones would mean to court all of this danger; it would put everything at risk!

As mentioned earlier, in my master's thesis in Ethnic Studies, I referred to the overall resistance of Chamorros to even discussing the possibility of Guam's decolonization, as the decolonial deadlock.¹⁰⁵ In my interviews with Chamorros, decolonization was considered inherently and in its most foundational dimension a critical thing, something which sought to transgress or challenge the place of the United

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Murphy, "Pipe Dreams," *Pacific Daily News*, 6 November 2001.

¹⁰⁵ To recap, the decolonial deadlock is propped up, or that the structure of Chamorro resistance in the deadlock is tied to two hegemonic assumptions. One is that the Chamorro needs the United States to survive, it cannot exist, is not possible without a seemingly infinite number of ways in which it must depend upon the United States. This can be broken down in so many different historical and contemporary ways, but all tie into the Chamorro not being enough to survive on its own and needing the technology, the money, the help, the recognition of the United States in order to keep existing. The other point is that this dependency stems from the fact that the Chamorro is, for a variety of reasons impossible and cannot be enough on its own to exist or to thrive. Central in naturalizing this assumption is the logic of sovereignty as something autonomous, pure or inherent as we've discussed thus far in this chapter. Chamorros no longer exist, Chamorros have no more culture. They are nothing today. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Guam But Were Afraid to Ask Zizek*, (M.A. Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2007).

States in Guam or in the lives and histories of Chamorros.¹⁰⁶ Although I didn't advocate any particular projects or platforms, my approach nonetheless made clear that decolonization was that activity of filling in the void that colonization has left. It was a process of rebuilding the Chamorro, or asserting its sovereignty, or giving it self-determination, or bringing back its language, of changing the island's political status, of seeking more sustainable means for living in the island. All of these things implicitly challenged America, and called for recognition of a contemporary Chamorro political subjectivity. All of these things required that the *latte* limit be surpassed and that we expand the meaning of Chamorro today. Nearly all the subjects I interviewed responded to my queries through the framework of sovereignty that I have been critical of so far – that the Chamorro is a shattered culture, with minute fragments left behind; it is something sealed and walled off to us, it only exists in certain historical periods, in certain limited ways. And as I sought to transform the Chamorro into a contemporary political subject, each interviewee colored that blank subject with whatever particular form of authenticity or Chamorroness they thought it might be capable of.

This resulted in strange and ludicrous discussions about what a “decolonized Guam” or what a “decolonized Chamorro” would look like. In the minds of those I

¹⁰⁶ This is tied to the discussion from the 3rd chapter, about the strategic nature of decolonization and that it does not in anyway consist of a set of “timeless” or “universal” acts which are always decolonization, but that the definition is tied to the context into which you are intervening. So for instance, while in the minds of many decolonization activists on Guam, the idea of Guam becoming a state cannot count as a form of decolonization because it means that the colonizer's control over Guam is formalized, made official and the independence that was once stripped away from the colonized will now be gone forever. I understand this point, but also insist that any discussion of decolonization pay attention to the context, and in this case the *desire* of the colonizer for the colonized, that place which is made for the colonized by the gaze of the colonizer. In the case of Guam for instance, that gaze creates a empty, small, militarized dependency that shouldn't be changed to any other status than its current one. In this context, the desire of the colonizer for the colonized, is that it remain a colony, pure and simple, that it not become anything other than what it is, and therefore, Guam becoming a state could amount to a form of decolonization, since it is very much tied to a challenged and an upsetting of the colonizer's gaze. A clear rejection of what they want, in favor of asserting a particular destiny of the colonized.

interviewed decolonization and a sovereign contemporary Chamorro presence implied undertaking some form of ungodly time travel experiment that would result in a silly, useless union of eras that, evoking the tenor of Murphy's column, would put the island at risk. For most, the decolonization of Guam would result in people somehow being forced to return to a previous era of Guam's history, in terms of their lifestyle, dress, their behavior, their infrastructure. Numerous Chamorros resisted any talk of decolonization on the basis that it would mean "using outhouses and loincloths" or that it would mean giving up air conditioning, modern utilities, television, video games and other activities or technologies for "ancient" replacements.¹⁰⁷ Guam's economy would thus be reduced to "coconuts" and "weaving," and the governing of Guam would be reduced to "barbequing."¹⁰⁸

All of these make clear that whatever contributions a Chamorro could make to the world of today, aren't worth it, are basically wrong, out of place and worthless. One Chamorro made clear to me the irrelevance and non-existence of the Chamorro today, arguing that bringing the Chamorro into today would be pointless since America has already carved out the path ahead, and we would just follow its perfect example anyway:

If we did get rid of America what would change? They are the greatest nation in the world. They set the standard for everyone, not just us. What would be the point in decolonizing since everything would probably just stay the same.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The references to loincloths and outhouses is taken from a statements made by a candidate running for a slot in Guam's Legislature in 2002. The candidate, an older Chamorro man noted that he was all against any decolonization since in his mind, it would throw us back into the days of huts and loincloths. For him the base reason for his resistance was not wanting his children to have to use "out-houses," thus very hygienically equating the United States with comfortable bowel movements, and decolonization and a Chamorro in conflict with the United States as the bearer of dirty and uncomfortable shits. Manny Cruz, *Speech Given at the Chamoru Language Senatorial Forum*, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 1 October 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Fulanu, *Interview with Author*, Inarajan Fiesta, Inarajan, Guam, 6 May 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Fulanu, *Interview with Author*, Mangilao Community Center, Mangilao, Guam, 12 October 2002.

So the idea of a sovereign Chamorro today is treated as a farce, and sometimes a dangerous one. Moreover, when Chamorros seek to articulate an inability to protect themselves, they invoke a wide variety of “authentic” artifacts and actions associated with Chamorros, ranging from ancient to contemporary. A Guam military, per one young Chamorro, meant becoming proficient in the deadly defensive arts of slingstones and spears.¹¹⁰ Another Chamorro made a familiar argument about the place of Chamorros being long ago not suited for today:

We were a proud people who understood the land and the sea. *Lao umbree ga'chong*, how are you gonna fight terrorists? With *fisga*? Or with a *fosiños*? We can't do it on our own.¹¹¹

Living on the edge of America “enemies,” in North Korea, China and Muslim terrorists groups throughout the Philippines and Indonesia, means that often times this Chamorro rejection reflects the inability of the Chamorro to deal properly with terrorists; that, in fact, the dimwitted decolonized Chamorro would be utterly ineffective, probably even welcoming of them.¹¹² Such was the assertion of one elderly Chamorro who sarcastically demanded to know what Chamorro activists, who had successfully decolonized Guam, would do when the Chinese arrived, “When the Chinese are coming in are you gonna dance for them? Give them necklaces or pugua’?”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ David Cicocette, *Personal Communication*, Humanities and Social Sciences Building, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 17 November 2008.

¹¹¹ Fulanu, *Interview with Author*, Cup & Saucer, Hagatna, Guam, 9 June 2004. *Fisga'* and *Fosiños* are both traditional Chamorro tools, which are no longer in regular or widespread use amongst Chamorros today. The *fisga'* is a spear using for night time, low tide fishing while walking the reef. *Fosiños* is a multi-purpose gardening tool, a large hoe attached to a long wooden pole that can be used for digging holes, breaking dirt clods, cutting grass or weeds, or picking fruit high up in trees.

¹¹² Adolf P. Sgambelluri, “Guam Has a Need for More Military,” *The Pacific Daily News*, 27 December 2009.

¹¹³ *Pugua'* is the Chamorro word for beetle nut. John Gerber, *Personal Communication*, Mermaid's Tavern, Hagåtña, Guam, 20 February 2009.

16. *Chasing Cars*¹¹⁴

The result of rooting Chamorro sovereignty in a pure, authentic, inherent and untouched essence means that it can, by definition, never actually be coherent or self-determined.¹¹⁵ By accepting this framework, the result is that whatever is found *fails miserably*. If a sovereign Chamorro were to exist today, it would be a shade, a dull, clueless shade, of its once glory. Even if decolonization were achieved, the Chamorro would not even have the facilities to comprehend what it had done.

In a letter to the editor of the *Marianas Variety*, a white American living on Guam, Dave Davis, provides yet another sarcastic and scornful example of this. Davis is notorious on Guam through his letters to the editor and a column he writes weekly for that same newspaper, which are ferociously critical about any “Chamorro-only” programs that the Government of Guam creates, charging that they are racist, violations of the United States Constitution, and un-American.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ This is not a reference to the *i mas ya-hu na kantan* Snow Patrol.

¹¹⁵ In order to make clear to me the uselessness of trying to articulate a life without the United States as my foundation, one Chamorro, close to my age and attending classes at the University of Guam, informed me that “You can’t get electricity from a latte stone. No matter how hard you try, you’re not gonna get anything from it.” His point of course is that the latte stone is just a simple symbol, something special or unique, but not the thing which is capable of providing the means for living, or more appropriately, the means for living in a comfortable, modern way.

¹¹⁶ Davis and those who share his anti-Chamorro and anti-Chamorro program rhetoric were emboldened greatly in 2000 with the US Supreme Court decision *Rice v. Cayetano*, which was a landmark case in determining programs for indigenous people within the United States and its colonies as being “unconstitutional,” or as providing another way of reducing the particular claims to sovereignty or self-determination of America’s indigenous people as mere domestic matters, as things which can and must be accounted for completely within an “American framework.” In *Rice V. Cayetano*, a white settler in Hawai’i contested the fact that he was not allowed to vote in Hawaiian-only elections for Office of Hawaiian Affairs officials. He won his case, and as a result Davis makes regular threats to file a case in Guam on the same basis. Associated Press, “Hawaiian Programs Challenged,” *Pacific Daily News*, 6 March 2002, 13. Yasmin Anwar, “OHA Case Draws Talk of Blood Quantum,” *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 2 November 1999. Helen Altonn and Christine Donnelly, “Top Court Backs Rice in OHA vote Challenge,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*,

In this particular letter he targets specifically the idea of a political status plebiscite. Whereas the *Wall Street Journal* article argued that there simply was nothing left of the Chamorro, there weren't any Chamorros around anymore who could act politically, who could authentically take on their own decolonization and be sovereign, Davis' piece reflects on what a sovereign Chamorro today would be or would do. The metaphor he uses in order to make his point is that a Chamorro who became sovereign would be like a dog who chases a car, but "if he somehow managed to catch it, what would he do with it?"¹¹⁷ Davis then continues into a long winding tirade about how if a Chamorro did decolonize today it would revert the island to its status 500 years ago:

As with dogs that chase cars — if he somehow managed to catch it, what would he do with it? Revert, perhaps, to the raw fish and grass hut societal mode? That's what the Spaniards found in Guam 500 years ago: a Stone Age society distinguished mostly by several thousand years of no significant change or progress. In other words, a stagnant and unremarkable Neolithic culture, indistinguishable in most respects from the multitude of similar tribes throughout the Pacific and other tropical climes.¹¹⁸

Davis finishes off this point by stating that "modern Chamorros" reject these things as well and therefore reject decolonization. They prefer instead the American Guam of today, which is full of "government jobs, flush toilets, SUVs and nice housing."¹¹⁹ They implicitly know that they have nothing to offer and so give up on these fantasies of being sovereign or even really being Chamorro.

23 February 2000. J.K. Kauanui, "The Politics of Blood and Sovereignty in Rice V. Cayetano," *PoLAR*, (25:1), 2002, 110-128.

¹¹⁷ Dave Davis, "A 'Free and Sovereign' NMI?" *The Marianas Variety*, 16 January 2007.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

The schizophrenia in Davis' letter should be familiar by now. He has invoked two different types of Chamorros – the sovereign kind who existed in the past and would destroy the present by making everyone eat raw fish and live in grass huts, and the modern kind who accept the present, accept what they've got, what they've received, how much they've improved since their primitive days, and therefore seek no change in their relationship to the United States, or don't seek any sort of "sovereignty." This dynamic has been at play this entire time – Chamorros, arguing that they don't exist, Chamorros looking for real Chamorros. A people slashing themselves to bits, hoping to eventually carve out something from their flesh that they can claim is real. In all of these discussions, the focus has always been on "cultural questions." What is really our culture and what is borrowed? This persistent and often frustrating cultural talk has in a way obscured the fact that, what is truly at stake in all these articulations, what truly compels Chamorros to reject their own existence, is actually something *political*. It is always around political questions – around assertions of Chamorro rights, Chamorro challenges to American greatness, to American colonialism, Chamorro pushes for decolonization, Chamorros rejecting the course of history –, that this sort of antagonism emerges most clearly. It is always around these sorts of political issues that Chamorro impossibility emerges, that the Chamorro, who had until then some sort of coherent contemporary being, is shattered and tossed to the winds of the distant past.

It is for this reason that we can refer to the Chamorro in the present as a delicate sort of subject. One which does in fact exist in some form, but is always on the verge of breaking, always on the verge of reverting to a pile of ash, when it approaches some sort of political possibility. Take for instance this exchange I had with a middle aged

Chamorro man. We were discussing the state of Chamorros and what our future will be like, what sorts of lessons we can glean from our past to help move us forward. At one point in our conversation, he asserted a clear strength and durability in our people, a history of survival and struggle stretching back millennia:

We are a strong people; we've survived for thousands of years. We were around before Europe was! Typhoons, earthquakes, wars. We should be proud of our heritage of survival, and continue to protect our language, our culture, and our people.¹²⁰

But, when I began to ask him about decolonization and the possibility of changing Guam's political status, that proud, inspiring image of Chamorro strength, was twisted into a pathetic mess of weakness and dependency:

We are not strong enough to survive on our own... We need to be strong Americans now to survive now, it's a different world out there, not the one my parents or your grandparents lived in... But even as Americans we can protect and maintain our cultural heritage.¹²¹

Another way in which we can see this disappearance, or the fragility, of the Chamorro is through the potential legislating of the Chamorro, most notably in the legislating of its rights and privileges on Guam, based on their history as the island's indigenous people. When the Chamorro becomes a subject of the present – not just a blank subject with generic rights (a multicultural American subject) but one whose political subjectivities or proclivities make claims to the world, make demands upon the colonizer, the course of history, the ownership over Guam and its resources – that limiting definition of sovereignty rears its ugly head and we see its weakness in terms of providing a basis for a contemporary Chamorro existence. Take for example the case of

¹²⁰ Tom Lujan, *Interview with Author*, Janice Waller's house, San Diego, California. 10 November 2003.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Taotaomona Native Rights group, which is a Chamorro activist group formed in 2008.¹²²

The group is comprised of political activists of different generations along with those who make their livelihood off fishing. Most prominent on their agenda is the need for the Government of Guam to legislate “native fishing rights” for Chamorros.

In recent years, much of the island’s waters have been declared nature preserves by the local Department of Agriculture and, thus, fishing in them is severely limited.¹²³ The rationale behind these preserves is to protect the fish and reef from over-fishing. The health of Guam’s reefs is important in terms of protecting the island from typhoons which regularly hit Guam, and the fish are of course a necessary local food source, but they also add color and life to the island’s water, making them more attractive to tourists. The counter argument that the native fishing rights proponents make is, first, that these restrictions are colonial, that they continue long-standing colonial policies, dating back to the Spanish, which have deprived Chamorros of free access to the resources of their own island. And second, that Chamorros have their own sense of preservation and conservation, and that they do not need any fancy environmentalists or biologists telling them how to take care of their natural resources.¹²⁴

The following is a statement made by a member of the group, Danny Jackson, during a protest “fish in” which took place in July of 2008. Earlier in the year, in a much publicized act, Jackson and another activist, Howard Hemsing, were arrested for fishing

¹²² As mentioned at the chapter’s start, “Taotaomo’na” is the word used by Chamorros to refer to their ancient ancestors. It literally means “the people before” or “the people in front.”

¹²³ The Pacific News Center, “Marines Preserves Threatened by Bill 327,” *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZhcAQOI3wA>, Video Uploaded 8 August 2008. Site Accessed 13 January 2010.

¹²⁴ Trini Torres, *Personal Communication*, King’s Restaurant, Tamuning, Guam, 13 November 2008.

in the waters of Tumon, the main tourist center of Guam which is also a preserve.¹²⁵

During the “fish in,” dozens of members and supporters of the group, under the watchful eyes of assembled police, symbolically cast nets into the ocean.¹²⁶

We have been deprived to fish freely or to hunt freely. If we are caught, we are cited as committing an 'offense.' We are arrested, charged fines, and even face the threat of jail. These injustices imposed against us are totally wrong! From the time of our ancestors thousands of years ago to the present time, we know how to 'receive' from the sea and from the land only what we need for ourselves and our families. For these reasons, today's demonstration is an act of sovereignty to protect our cultural, indigenous rights to live and to survive in our own homeland.¹²⁷

The rhetoric of this group is often a blunt blending of the cultural with the political –we know how to take care of our resources, we have a long history, a long strain of continuity that gives us the power and the knowledge to take care of these resources. The asserted fullness of this knowledge, this link, this source of sovereignty, is meant to bolster an argument for contemporary Chamorro sovereignty, around which some sort of decolonization can take place. Hence, the need for a law to be passed to protect this sovereignty that has at last been proven to exist today. This could be interpreted as a fairly conservative or limited act of decolonization. The simple passing of a law isn't very transformative, and is hardly radical. The decolonial character of this, however, isn't in how radical the event is but rather is in how this relates to that desire to fill in the colonial gaps, the colonial wounds that the colonizer has left in you, to fill them with something Chamorro, something that is yours. Thus seizing what is yours, what belongs to you.

¹²⁵ Mar-Vic Cagurangan, “Activists Protest Fishing Restrictions,” *The Marianas Variety*, 4 January 2008.

¹²⁶ Therese Hart, “Activists Protest ‘Violations’ of Fishing Rights,” *The Marianas Variety*, 4 July 2008.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

By the end of 2008, enough pressure had been exercised so that two Guam Senators took up the cause of this group, writing Bill 327 to create a Native Fishing Rights Council, which would work with the Department of Agriculture, to develop programs, rules and regulations that would make special provisions for indigenous fishing practices.¹²⁸ Although the Bill was passed unanimously by the Guam Legislature, it was vetoed by the Governor Guam who claimed that this was a potentially discriminatory legislation and could jeopardize Federal funding.¹²⁹ The Legislature promptly overrode the veto making the Bill law.¹³⁰

During the November 19, 2008 television interview, Joe Torres, the acting director of Guam's Department of Agriculture, said that he was hopeful something could be worked out with this bill to make it a success. However he opened his remarks with a curious, but by now familiar caveat. "What is indigenous? That's a big question right now."¹³¹ He then went on to clarify his remarks by saying that there are some people on Guam who aren't Chamorro but whose families have been here since the 19th century, are they considered to be indigenous as well?¹³² Joe Torres is a Chamorro himself, and on a daily basis represents himself as Chamorro without any qualification or clarification of whether or not he really exists or whether or not he is an indigenous person of Guam. He may, like others, make certain caveats about colonization or cultural change and the distance that modern Chamorros live in from their ancient ancestors. But nonetheless, he lives with an understanding that the Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam and

¹²⁸ Pacific News Center, "Legislature Passes Indigenous Fishing Rights Measure," *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrTXEgaPP7Q>, Video Uploaded 19 November 2008.

¹²⁹ Governor of Guam Felix Camacho, "*Statement on Fishing Legislation Vetoed*," Press Release from the Office of the Governor, 26 November 2008.

¹³⁰ Brant McCreadie, "Senators pass Guthertz's fishing rights bill," *KUAM News*, 23 December 2008.

¹³¹ Pacific News Center, "Legislature Passes..."

¹³² Ibid.

that he is one of them. But, once a political dimension appears, and a political claim is made by Chamorros on behalf of Chamorros, to change or reform the structure of life on Guam – power, rights, laws, etc. – suddenly, all of that givenness, that accepted existence, comes into question.¹³³

This is a common occurrence in the governing of Guam, especially when these sorts of political issues or demands emerge. Another instance is the Chamorro Land Trust Act, which was passed by the Guam Legislature in 1974. It was modeled after the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and was intended to provide land to landless Chamorros.¹³⁴ The law was not implemented however until 1992, after years of activism by different grassroots groups pushing for the return of their lands taken by the United States military following World War II. What kept this law in limbo was decades of debate and hand wringing over what legally constitutes a Chamorro, how would, or how could, you define what a Chamorro is, and the fear that the Federal Government would crack down on Guam for passing discriminatory legislation.¹³⁵

This sort of tension still persists whenever the Chamorro and any form of explicitly political and potentially decolonial power are brought together. And it is usually Chamorros themselves, those who carry with them everyday identities as Chamorros that are their own strongest opponents, who take on the task of denying their own existence.¹³⁶

¹³³ One member of the Taotaomo'na Native Fishing Rights group, an elderly retired Chamorro woman, articulated this point about Torres and the political limits of the Chamorro through the metaphor of "taking a stand." According to her, Torres is a Chamorro everyday of the week, but suddenly forgets this fact the moment it is up to him to take a stand on something for that fact. Or, as she rephrased her point, he's Chamorro at every moment, except for when it counts.

¹³⁴ Rogers, 246.

¹³⁵ Ed Benavente, *Interview with Author*. His Home, Mangilao, Guam, 28 May 2004.

¹³⁶ One of the aspects of Guam's decolonization struggle that regularly gets forgotten about, is the Chamorro registry, or a list of all voters who would be eligible to vote in a political status plebiscite for

17. What Do a Fruit Bat and a Turtle Have to Do With...?

Within this definition of sovereignty, the trajectory of possibility is becoming more and more clear. The culture makes the political possible. The culture is the foundation – if you cannot prove yourself culturally, you cannot have access to the political, your place in this world is in question, in jeopardy, and you may not even exist anymore. You will be barred from the political. This creates a constant tension, an opposition across a spectrum, where at the two extremes we find authenticity and in-authenticity, and in between we find the Chamorros laid out, pulled in both directions, back and forth. And just as it pushed across between the past to the present, it trapped between these pressures of the cultural and the political, caught between what these represent, what they signify – the life of the Chamorro, its sovereignty, its hope, its death, its curse, its ghostly refusal to know of its own passing.

The political is very much like the present. It is where the gaze of the colonizer, the gaze which casts doubt on the Chamorro, is at its strongest. It is where the Chamorro exists as the least authentic, least powerful, and least capable of decolonization. This logic of sovereignty claims that the safe haven, the source of Chamorro strength lies in the cultural realm, which is defined by that which is the furthest away from the

choosing Guam's next political status. In order to be on the registry, one must go down to the Decolonization Commission office and provide some sort of identification and then fill out a form. Although the requirement for registering is that you have an ancestor who was made a US Citizen via the passing of the Organic Act of 1950, no background checks are done at the time, other than a brief listing on the form, of the names of your parents and grandparents. Guam law states that in order for a plebiscite to take place, 2/3 of all eligible votes must be properly registered. Without reaching that threshold the plebiscite cannot happen. As of the end of 2009, less than a 1,000 people had registered as Chamorros. This was approximately 29,000 less than the approximate number that the office estimated would need to be registered in order to go forward with any legal political status vote. The very obvious apathy that Chamorros feel towards this registry, which has been in existence for more than 15 years, is (amongst other things) tied to the difficulty that Chamorros have in perceiving the "political" nature of the Chamorro.

oppressive gaze of the present, which is riddled with dubious questions about Chamorro in-authenticity. This logic implies the need to head down the cultural end, to conduct a search for the authentic fragments. The logic of distance constantly leads us away from the present moment, from the colonizer and his influences. Thus, although we perceive the current world as a terrifying, unjust, unfair one which is not our own, the securing of this sovereignty is felt through a moving away, a sidestepping, a withdrawing, an escaping, or to misuse a common concept in this context, a pre-dating. All of these activities are meant to bring the Chamorro into the superiority, sanctity and safety of their culture. Our task is to find that which is truly ours and to live it, to live within it. To do otherwise is blinding ourselves, not being true to our roots, or giving the colonizer too much power over our lives.¹³⁷

In order to both further illustrate and critique this point, I'll recount another anecdote. In January of 2007, I helped the organization *Famoksaiyan* organize a forum called "Decolonizing Our Lives" at the University of Guam. At this event, representatives of different grassroots and non-profit groups that are doing work around Guam's political status came together to present updates on the state of Guam's decolonization movement; what they see happening and what needs to happen.¹³⁸ The event was attended by several hundred people, packed into the University's lecture hall. During the question and answer period, one of Guam's most "notorious" independence advocates, Howard Hemsing (referred to earlier) spoke for several minutes. I use the word "notorious" as Hemsing is considered to be one of the most radical voices in Guam's current decolonization

¹³⁷ This argument is often propped up by indigenous cultural and political advocates, by the idea that the crazy modern world of today cannot sustain itself and will soon collapse, and so the need for us to embrace and strengthen our culture is not solely about authenticity, but about the necessity of survival.

¹³⁸ *Decolonizing Our Lives: A Progress Report on the Status of Human Rights on Guam*, Event sponsored by Famoksaiyan at the University of Guam Lecture Hall, Mangilao, Guam, 4 January 2007.

movement.¹³⁹ Hemsing, often sports a loincloth and attends nearly all public events regarding political status, the military buildup or cultural issues and brings with him hand drawn, faded and dirty signs with slogans like “Yankee Go Home!” and “Yankee Gives Us Our Land Back, and Then Go Home!”¹⁴⁰

In his statement Hemsing illustrated perfectly this tension between the cultural and the political, certain first that one possessed the salvation of the Chamorro people, and then switching to the other after realizing that there was no sanctuary there. He began his statements by noting that we, Chamorros, don’t need anyone’s permission to be “independent,” that we don’t need anyone else’s permission to decolonize, and we don’t need anything from the UN or from the United States to become decolonized and independent. “This is our island; we don’t need the permission of any other. It’s up to us!”¹⁴¹ According to him, what gave us this power, this independence, was our ability to practice our culture, speak our language, and enjoy our cultural rights. He thus grounded the sovereignty of the Chamorro in that cultural ability. Somewhere in the middle of his statements, Hemsing must have realized that the purely cultural realm that he was talking about as the site for decolonization, as the source for our sovereignty, was actually insufficient; that there were the limits to that freedom, or how far that sort of freedom

¹³⁹ Kelly G. Marsh, “Maga Aniti,” *GU Magazine*, March/April 2007, 48-49.

¹⁴⁰ Hemsing’s approach is far more blunt than most self-described Chamorro decolonization activists. He has no problem saying things such as “Yankee Go Home” or that America should leave the island, or that the military should get out of Guam. Whereas most such as myself constantly have to watch what we say in order to not appear too anti-American or anti-military, Hemsing willingly takes on that radical role. Hemsing also has no qualms about calling Chamorros he disagrees with “sell-outs” or “salt-water niggers.” Although he is completely non-violent, his vocalness and bluntness is often too much for American military stationed on Guam, who are much more accustomed to the “shiny happy natives” who celebrate the military on Liberation Day. In March of 2008, the United States Air Force on Guam distributed a memo to its personnel warning them about possible harassment from Hemsing, who sometimes holds one man protests outside of the their gates. Mar-Vic Cagurangan, “Airmen warned against possible harassment,” *The Marianas Variety*, 11 March 2008.

¹⁴¹ Howard Hemsing, *Statement Made During Q & A Session at the Forum Decolonizing Our Lives: A Progress Report on the Status of Human Rights on Guam*, Event sponsored by Famoksaiyan at the University of Guam Lecture Hall, Mangilao, Guam, 4 January 2007.

actually reached in terms of the governing of Guam, its political content and the place of Chamorros in it.

I say that he must have realized this because, halfway through his comments, the tone changed completely. After starting with such strong statements about how independence and sovereignty are already ours, suddenly he painted the Guam of today as being one where sovereignty is not ours, where the sovereignty of Guam belongs to someone else. By the end, the content of his statement was explicitly political. It claimed that Chamorros are not independent in their own land, not free at all, that they are restricted, limited, that they are truly not free to practice their culture. Others decide their limits, impose laws on them, and decide their fates and the fate of their land. At the end, the cultural end of the spectrum was not enough. In order to secure the sovereignty of their culture, an intervention would have to be made at the political end. There has to be a political dimension to our fight.¹⁴²

The *Wall Street Journal* article, for all its limits and failings, already held a grain of this argument. I've already discussed the way the *latte* in *Chamoru Dreams* functions as a container, and therefore a limit, to sovereignty. But this article too has its own metaphor. In the search for a culinary taste which Chamorros can claim as authentically

¹⁴² The point that Hemsing straddles in his statement is a delicate one, or rather one which it is very easy to become lost on one side of the spectrum or the other. It is very easy to accept the idea that "independence" is a state of mind and something which simply must be believed in and fought for and that it is not something which anyone else should have any say about. From this perspective, America's control over Guam is potentially *irrelevant* since what matters most is what is in the hearts and the heads of Chamorros. So long as their minds are free, they will be free, no matter what flag flies over their lands claiming them. But this argument is sorely incomplete, as evidenced by the transformation in Hemsing's remarks. Once you move out of the idea that decolonization is either a mental thing or something which each individual does in their minds, and think of it as something more public, more collective and therefore tied to not just what people in a community feel about themselves, it becomes clear that what the United States does in Guam, or the formal or informal power it has, absolutely does matter. In terms of decolonizing and changing a society, what people can do, matters just as much as what people think. If Guam is entangled in the authority of the United States and accepts the principles of its rule in Guam and its control over resources, then it matters little what goes on in each person's head and how independent they feel, it doesn't automatically reflect the life that they live or that they can live.

their own, which did not come from somewhere else, which no one else can claim as originally theirs, the reporter and his native informant arrive at two options, both of which aren't accessible to, and are sealed off from, contemporary Chamorros.

"I've got one!" says Tony Lamorena, a local senator. "Barbecued fruit bat. My grandmother used to make it." The local fruit bat, however, is a threatened species and can't be eaten. The same is true of Mr. Lamorena's other suggestion, sea turtle. "I guess we'll stick to Spam," he says with a sigh.¹⁴³

Having at last found something "Chamorro," we bump up again against a clear limit.¹⁴⁴ This time, the source is located, with two animals that have been in Guam long before the Spanish came, and in the case of the *haggan* or sea turtle, was most likely here before any Chamorros came to Guam. But their confinement is not part of the fabric of reality, but rather simply an issue of being a threatened, protected species. In other words, in this metaphoric representation of how Chamorros cannot and do not have access to the political, to their sovereignty, and do not have the ability to make these claims, the impossibility is inadvertently revealed to be *contingent*. Although the narrative of the article is maintained through Senator Lamorena's suggestion that Chamorros should just stick to Spam, or just continue living and eating their in-authenticity, the contingency is still there. Whereas in other places the impossibility is enshrined in larger, universal, unquestionable and unchallengeable statements on time, loss, tragedy, colonization, here the access to sovereignty can be achieved/found through the unpacking of that protection, unraveling of the means in which that sovereign source is placed off-limits.

¹⁴³ Frank, "Guam's Roots So Deep..."

¹⁴⁴ This limit is very different than the previous ones which all appeared as blank, neutral and therefore incontestable limits. In the other articulations in this chapter, the limits of the Chamorro all indicated that it cannot have access to a source of sovereignty because of the finality of a culture being dead and never able to be revived again, or because of the movement of time, and because authentic continuity had not been kept, the potential sovereignty of Chamorros had been lost in the times they are no longer connected to.

In other words, the source of the sovereignty does not itself belong to someone else, but rather the impossibility, the governing structure that prevents you from reaching or touching power is owned by another. In this case various local and national regulatory agencies, such as Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Resource Management. The impossibility can be traced somewhere else, traced to another who is drawing power from the acceptance of this limit. The powerless and delicate position that this sovereignty creates for the Chamorro, infuses strength into another. The lack of sovereignty here produces sovereignty somewhere else.¹⁴⁵ The challenge to that power, to that production, rests in not accepting the logic of distance, but in moving towards the political and confronting the (by default) laughing sovereign that awaits there.

18. Colonialism and Multiculturalism

Colonization is often seen as an economy of imposed binaries. The landscape and bodies of the colonized become transformed into simple binary choices, good/bad, black/white, civilized/uncivilized, social/political and lastly cultural/political.¹⁴⁶ In this terrain, the colonizer is usually distinguished through their ability to traverse these divisions and move back and forth across them. The colonized remains stuck, unable to move, unable to progress, while the colonizer possesses all the means of advancement and improvement.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power: Issues in Political Theory*, (New York: Palgrave, Macmillian, 1991).

¹⁴⁶ Bill Ashcroft, *On Post-Colonial Futures*, (London: Continuum, 2001).

¹⁴⁷ Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

In today's world of multiculturalism, this dynamic has shifted slightly. The colonized are still very stuck, stagnant, dependent, at the limited end of the spectrum, but now they can also be celebrated as bearers of rich, beautiful and exotic cultures. They are, by the rules of this game, still inferior and still treated as if they are unable to inhabit or claim the political end of the framework.¹⁴⁸ In Guam, this hegemony can be seen in the ways America's claims to having created certain things, or being responsible for the production of certain objects, ideas or instances of progress, go uncontested and are, in fact, readily celebrated.¹⁴⁹ The primordial myth of colonization is that there was nothing substantive there prior to our arrival, and all that happened afterwards is *because we came, we saw and we developed it*. This is the bedrock of the colonial claim – which the colonized exists only through the colonizer and his gifts. The colonized can only survive, can only live and cheat the extinction that awaits its marginal and flickering existence, if it accepts not just what the colonizer offers *but, more importantly, the idea that the colonizer represents the limits of its existence*.

In the case of Guam, there is a multitude of ways in which the idea that Guam cannot live without the United States becomes the hegemonic principle that structures life on the island. The other side of this colonial elevation however is the denigration and stripping of nearly all forms of possibility from the Chamorro and from Guam. The Chamorro becomes the thing that takes away life, which corrupts it. On Guam, Chamorros ruin democracy by hiring or voting for their relatives. They ruin society by not getting married, having too many kids, not paying child support, being addicted to

¹⁴⁸ *Mapping Multi-culturalism*, Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (eds). (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ This also extends, as I have discussed earlier to the idea of the United States as being the source of certain progressive and desirable things, such as prosperity, progress, security, order, morality and so on.

welfare and all sorts of drugs. They even ruin American multiculturalism and ethnic harmony by insisting that their language be taught in schools or that there be programs designed to protect and promote the culture of the island's indigenous people.¹⁵⁰ The solutions to these problems of Chamorro corruption have always been more of America, through civilizing, whitening, education and of course militarization.

The Chamorro, however, is not absent or not valueless, but provides the color or the flavor to this world dominated by the United States. Although Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam, and in some ways the most dominant ethnic group, they are still reduced to a culture group in the island, not a political one. According to the mantra of multiculturalism today, each culture is supposedly equal and deserving of respect and recognition. Each of these ethnic groups and their practices, rituals and histories can have important public value, but always a culture value, not a political one. It is common for both white and non-white people to "have no culture." In the multicultural framework of the United States today, those racialized as white do not have "a culture," they have THE culture, the *political* culture, which is central, and all else is subordinate. It is this culture that dictates the terms of a multicultural world, the limits, where the beginnings and ends of each culture is located, and often functions as a gatekeeper, barring them from access to the political, to changing the structure of power.¹⁵¹

The thing which is supposed to truly make the United States unique is not its wealth, its military might or its cultural influence, but rather its success in "perfecting" democracy and then spreading it to the rest of the world and helping "end History."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Bevacqua, *Everything You Wanted to Know...* 2007.

¹⁵¹ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment of Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

¹⁵² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 1992).

Whiteness in the United States signifies this privilege to assert oneself as the just and destined heir to that grand and exceptional origin. That privilege is the one which might exempt you from the fun particularistic games of "culture," but it gives you the ability to determine what the limits of the cultural are, and where their rights to make political statements based on their histories and contemporary experiences of oppression, colonization, slavery, genocide, imperialism and mercantilism, begin and end.¹⁵³

Multiculturalism offers the promise of cultural sovereignty masked as political sovereignty.¹⁵⁴ That one's political dreams or hopes may be fulfilled through the ability to practice one's culture, or have their culture be recognized, as opposed to being able to determine your own future. To put this bluntly, under the prevailing multicultural framework for Chamorros on Guam, the house *still* does not belong to you, but you now may choose what will go on your walls. We find this dynamic expressed through one of the more prominent theorists of the Bush Administration, Karl Rove with his statement to Democrats, that "You are entitled to your math, as long as I get The Math."¹⁵⁵

When we consider the Chamorro emphasis on culture in this light, the acceptance of this logic of sovereignty becomes clearer. The opposition between the cultural and the

¹⁵³ Multiculturalism is a framework that says that anyone can sit at the table so long as they accept certain political and cultural divisions which ultimately work to make impossible your ability to change the basic structure of meaning in society, or which seek to extract any political potential from the things you say, the things you embody and the things you want. You can have holidays, but not your language. You can have a month of the year for your race, but no justice. You can have welfare, but not sovereignty. You can practice your culture up until the point where it makes people uncomfortable, or makes things inefficient.

¹⁵⁴ Wallace Coffey and Rebecca A. Tsosie, "Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine: Cultural Sovereignty and the Collective Future of Indian Nations," *Stanford Law and Policy Review*, (12), 2001. Robert J. Miller, "Tribal Cultural Self-Determination and the Makah Whaling Culture," *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, Joanne Barker (ed), (Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 2005), 123-152. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Decolonization and Diaspora: The Resistance and Insistence of Decolonization Amongst Chamorros in California*, Unpublished Paper, 2008.

¹⁵⁵ "KARL ROVE ON WHY HE BELIEVES THE REPUBLICANS WILL KEEP THE HOUSE AND SENATE DESPITE POLLS TO THE CONTRARY," *All Things Considered*, http://www.npr.org/about/press/061024_rove.html, 26 October 2006. Site Accessed 17 November 2009.

political, provides a space for Chamorros, provides a space for the recognition of their culture, and a space through which they can be sovereign in their culture. However, this leads to Chamorros being often excitedly entangled in some of the worst multicultural fantasies. The role of the Chamorro in this framework is to embody exuberantly its culture, maybe even a little bit of its language, and most definitely its food, and leave the structure of society to others; leave it, as American race relations writer Gary Younge points out, to those who the national myths tell us freed the slaves, saved the world in World War II, redressed the trauma of Japanese internment and created democracy.¹⁵⁶

19. The Cultural and the Political

This logic of sovereignty enables the combining of colonialism and multiculturalism in the case of Guam.¹⁵⁷ It is the one which helps Chamorros, whether they are conscious of it or not, fit snugly within their colonial world, but still find or search for sovereignty. But this sovereignty, whatever they find or make, is always meant to keep them away from any possibility of affecting their present political life. It is a sovereignty meant to keep them away from the colonizer, keep them from challenging his power or authority.

A perfect example of this can be found in a 2006 KUAM News article on *I Fine'nina na Konfrensian Chamorro*, or the first ever Chamorro conference which brought together hundreds of Chamorros from throughout the United States, the Marianas

¹⁵⁶ Gary Younge, "White History 101," *The Nation*, 5 March 2007.

¹⁵⁷ The structure of life, the ability to determine the limits and order of society belong to those who can claim to be descended from white wigged white men, or be the defenders of the whiteness and therefore uniqueness of the nation that they birthed. Food, socialness, these are the contributions of racialized groups to the course of History. The souvenirs from roadside shacks and stands, but never the stuff that makes History possible.

Islands and Guam to talk about the state of the Chamorros as a people, their language, their culture, their health and well-being.¹⁵⁸ Like most small minorities or indigenous people, the outlook was very grim. Although the language was very vibrant during the discussions at the conference, much of the discussion was focused on how dead the language is outside of the walls of the hotel. Furthermore, close to a dozen Chamorros had been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, Chamorro health statistics were appalling with some cancer rates for Chamorros being 3,000 times as high as the American national average, the state of Guam's economy was steadily worsening since the 1990's and Chamorros were leaving the Pacific in growing numbers, moving primarily to the Western United States. Amidst all these worrisome issues, lay America, its influence, and its presence in Guam as being a cause or a catalyst of these problems, whether it be its military presence, its colonization of the Chamorro mind, or the impact of English and American media on the minds of younger generations.

Despite, all the gloom, doom and dire straits confronting Chamorros today, the organizers went out of their way to make clear that they were not "political activists," and that they are not looking to make "political statements."¹⁵⁹ It is natural, then, to ask, what the organizers were hoping for, what was the purpose of the conference and the discussion of these issues if they weren't planning to become "political?" In almost caricature fashion, one organizer's response transformed all of the dire political issues that this conference was meant to cover – colonization, death of language, health

¹⁵⁸ Samantha Lynott, "Chamorro conference exhibits cultural pride, not political activism," *KUAM News*, 30 March 2006.

¹⁵⁹ An older Chamorro man, a longtime political activist who was on a panel at the conference summed up the contradictions of having a conference which is all about cultural pride and nothing more, when he stated to me that "What is the point of meeting if you aren't trying to change anything?" Vicente Garrido *Personal Communication, Leyesleturan Guahan, Hagåtña, Guam*, 11 July 2006.

problems – into “the celebration of our culture.”¹⁶⁰ The 2006 *KUAM TV News* story about this event, titled “Chamorro conference exhibits cultural pride, not political activism,” featured statements by two of the conference’s main organizers Johnny Sablan and Flora Baza Quan:

Both Sablan and Quan have stood up for the Chamorro culture by in more than one way. "Some people call us 'activists' but we're not," the latter maintained. "Activist is a negative term..."¹⁶¹

The article continued on, with quotes from other organizers and participants, all stating in different ways that the culture of the Chamorro people is alive and well, and that, although we may have different opinions on it, we are gathered together today to protect and preserve it.

It is possible that by “political activists” the organizers meant simply that they did not want to associate their conference or the intent of their conference, with the work of people like myself or Howard Hemsing or any other “activists” or “radicals” mentioned in this dissertation. But if we look at the positioning of the Chamorro that these organizers are attempting, and what sort of “decolonization” this conference was promoting or practicing, there are two basic principles that we can draw out. First, it would be solely or primarily “cultural,” and second, it would be non-confrontational. That is, this form of positioning and decolonization would be focused on cultural issues, preserving Chamorro culture, identity and language. It prescribes a primarily cultural decolonial salve to the contemporary colonial wounds of Chamorros. The cultural emphasis makes decolonization a self-contained form of itself in which, despite the fact that colonialism was, and is, a game with victors and vanquished, winners and losers,

¹⁶⁰ Lynott, “Chamorro conference exhibits cultural pride...”

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

decolonization here need not challenge anyone. That is, it is a magical form of sovereign achievement in which one need not challenge any sovereign in order to gain sovereignty.

In this version of decolonization, we need simply identify what is leftover after colonization, what fragments or bits and pieces we can still find and work on. We remain in this autonomous sovereign space and work on only that which is truly ours. As already noted in this chapter, the version of sovereignty I am critiquing is different than previous chapters in that the Chamorro has a clear place here. It is not a ghostly presence, set adrift in a world run by sovereignty that is built up its absence or irrelevance. The tendencies for power and powerlessness, or authenticity and in-authenticity in this definition are clear. The sovereignty of the Chamorro is increased; its power over itself, its ability to decolonize and persevere is stronger, the further away it moves away from the present, from the colonizer. From this distance, it can find ways of retreating into and embodying the true elements of itself.

Although the road has been long in arriving at this point, the circuitous route that we've taken has been in order to establish a number of things about the version of sovereignty this chapter deals with. In contrast to most ways in which sovereignty is articulated, in this chapter amongst Chamorros, when speaking of themselves and their position today, it is primarily a cultural issue and one which is defined primarily by particular relationships to the past and not to the present. In the final sections of this chapter, I intend to now provide not only a critique of this definition of sovereignty, but also a counter argument to it, or an alternative way of envisioning sovereignty, which draws from the world of Frantz Fanon, and in particular his text *The Wretched of the Earth*.

20. Finally Fanon

This text written by Fanon, literally in the last months of his life as he was dying from leukemia represents a blueprint for both the colonial and decolonial world. It builds off his other text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he sought to detail the structure of psychological dependency for black subjects in white worlds, the feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that they are stricken with and the ways in which they overcome or compensate for it.¹⁶²

As *The Wretched of the Earth* takes place explicitly in the colonial world, and was written at a time when violent struggles for independence and decolonization were taking place around the world, much of his analysis remains the same, however is pushed to a much more violent extreme.¹⁶³ Gone is the loathing and dread from *White Skin, Black Masks*, and in its place is the maddening despair and violent fantasies of the colonial world. In a world built explicitly upon its caging or subordinating, the colonized is either driven to despair, dependency and self-destruction or to decolonization.¹⁶⁴ As a blueprint for the colonial and decolonial world, Fanon strives to reveal the points through which the colonial world is reproduced and maintained, and also the ways in which it is challenged and dismantled and a decolonial future emerges.

The colonized craves the position of the colonizer, but also hates it.¹⁶⁵ He simultaneously wants to control the colonial world, replace the colonizer, and also wants

¹⁶² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, Constance Farrington trans. (Grove Press, New York, 1991).

¹⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington trans. (Grove Press, New York, 1965).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 39.

to raze it, to tear apart this violent world. Native intelligentsia who do not represent the true will of the colonized people, but become their representatives by virtue of their proximity to the colonizer and his culture, are key in reproducing the colonial world.¹⁶⁶ That which is deemed to “belong” to the colonizer and its role in running the colonial world, or making it function is also vital. The language, technology and culture of the colonizer, whatever these things may be asserted to be, often act as the lynch pin in terms of creating an everyday common sense assumption that the colonizer must remain in his place or else all will fall apart.

But Fanon also outlines the path towards decolonization. He articulates violence as the means through which the colonized can “cleanse” itself of any feelings of inferiority and dependency, and through challenging and attacking the colonizer it can be reborn.¹⁶⁷ His framework for this process of decolonization is explicitly nationalistic and focused on expelling the colonizer and his sovereignty and enshrining the sovereignty of the colonized in a new nation-state.¹⁶⁸

21. Fanon’s National Idiosyncrasies

One potential critique of Fanon is that he sees, an explicitly modern form, the nation state as the goal and the central site of decolonization. From an indigenous studies standpoint Fanon’s almost sycophantic and uncritical reliance on “nationalism” and the “nation-state” as the means through which the decolonial world is born is particularly

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 119-120.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 94.

¹⁶⁸ Charles F. Peterson, *Dubois, Fanon, Cabral: The Margins of Elite Anti-Colonial Leadership*, (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2007), 94-95.

salient.¹⁶⁹ Although the center of Fanon's theory of decolonization is that confrontation with the colonizer, the conflagration between the colonizer and the colonized, this emphasis is easily overshadowed by the obtrusiveness of the "a nation-state" as the goal of this process. In other words it is easy to dismiss Fanon's theories as merely more modern games of sovereignty which reproduce the ghostliness of colonized people. Something more in line with the traditions of indigenous or colonized people would be more appropriate.¹⁷⁰

As I noted these are appropriate critiques, but the emphasis of Fanon on this "modern" forms is not blind, and it is important to consider why he would take such a theoretical route in terms of articulating the decolonization of colonized people. Firstly, as he notes in *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon was very wary of becoming too invested (fetishizing) in the cultural games that he saw others such as Aime Cesaire become enamored with.¹⁷¹ Fanon's emphasis on the nation-state can be explained first as an effort to unite a diverse and heterogeneous group of peoples, colonized peoples. But he is not so much focused on what it is, or where it is from, but what it can do.

By retreating into the past Fanon risks writing of simply that group which he delves into the past of, becoming stuck in their specificities. Although Fanon on the one hand criticizes cultural movements that unite peoples such as the Pan African movement,

¹⁶⁹ Andrea Smith, "Indigenous Feminism Without Apology," *The New Socialist*, <http://www.newsocialist.org/newsite/index.php?id=1013>, Site Accessed 13 January 2010. Alfred, "Sovereignty."

¹⁷⁰ Fanon challenges the power of Europe in general and their exceptional and civilized claims, but he implicitly accepts the decisions that they made in demarcating Africa into different "nations" or colonies, and assume those borders in his calls for decolonization. One of the problems of course with these sorts of calls to decolonize populations is that they may not see themselves as a single people or even as people who should become self-determined together. Terrence Wesley-Smith, "Self-Determination in Oceania," *Race & Class*, (48:3), 2007, 30.

¹⁷¹ For example, Fanon was critical of the moment when "the sari becomes sacred" or the points when culture moves away from the center of the decolonial struggle, or the struggle for empowerment, and becomes a mere folklore. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*...221, 233.

he is attempting to articulate his own pan-anti-colonial movement, with explicitly modern objects and a shared contemporary reality and oppression as the binding agent. The past leads the oppressed down different paths of false autonomy or difference, each to their own fantasy of a pre-colonial sovereignty past. The present can unite them and provide them a path forward.¹⁷² He does not seek a previous, authentic form in order to channel sovereignty, as all the elements needed are already there in every colonial context.

This critique is also appropriate in the context of Fanon's unwillingness to engage in "cultural" decolonization discussions, or decolonization as a process of recovery of that which has been disturbed or destroyed by colonization. Fanon rejects these discussions and these movements. By virtue of the temptation that they represent in terms of leading the discussion of where decolonization is most crucial or most important away from the current moment or current problems, and instead into the long distant past. As Fanon derisively notes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "The past existence of an Aztec civilization does not change very much the diet of the Mexican peasant of today."¹⁷³

The past is an illusion for Fanon. It contains artifacts necessary to create a national culture, it creates a historical list of injustices and forms of oppression, but the answers are not there. Fanon chooses the nation-state in order to make clear that decolonization for him is not an issue of the past, the pre-colonial practices or structures of the natives, but rather the dismantling and reshaping of the contemporary world, it is about the present, and all that leads you away from this point is deceiving you.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Denise Ferreira Da Silva, "Bahia, Pelo, Negro: Can the Subaltern (Subject of Raciality) Speak?," *Ethnicities*, (5:3), 2005.

¹⁷³ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*..., 209.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

22. *The Importance of National Culture*

This cultural assumption in terms of sovereignty and decolonize is a victory of colonization. It implies a success in misleading the colonized away from the structure of the world, and instead compels them to seek their authenticity and sovereignty in whatever fragments or pieces can be found in the wilderness of their own lands. But this does not mean that there is no place for culture in Fanon's theories, on the contrary, culture is a driving force for decolonization, but not culture in terms of that which is pre-existing or pre-contact. In his chapter on National Culture Fanon argues that:

We must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm...A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature...A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on.¹⁷⁵

What Fanon describes in violent terms in his text is the creation of a new national culture, which shifts this locus of possibility for the native. It breaks the logic of the native who believes its sovereignty lies in moving away from the colonizer, retreating into whatever spaces, artifacts or practices are free from the colonizer or his touch. Fanon instead argues for the shifting of this locus in the opposite direction, towards the colonizer, arguing that decolonization is this confrontation and that sovereignty is found in the midst of the colonizer and his power and authority.

The multitude small everyday acts of rejection and confrontation all help build a decolonial movement, which holds the potential to represent a radical epistemological

¹⁷⁵

Ibid., 233.

break with the colonizer.¹⁷⁶ This break can be traced to this rejection of the division between the cultural and the political. This is no single break, but an potentially infinite number of possible breaks, all of which take aim at a particular binary equation, such as black v. white, or cultural v. political, and shake it up, invert it, and replace its variables. The division of the cultural and the political, which creates a seemingly safe sovereign space for the colonized, so long as they do not challenge the colonial order, is something which must be challenged.

Although much of the explicit emphasis of Fanon's text is on the physical expulsion of the colonizer and what he represents, decolonization is fundamentally a process through which the colonized pushes to have access to the space where those meanings are formed and disseminated. It is a gesture to have access and control of the political which determines the meanings of the colonial world and the identities of the colonized. Fanon rejects the nativization or indigenization of language or his ideas, most likely in order to resist the temptation for purity or autonomy.¹⁷⁷

23. The Most Dangerous Class

Issues of distance and location take center stage, and drive the blueprint that Fanon creates. He goes into great detail to discuss certain classes of people, and the potential that they represent in either unraveling or re-weaving the colonial world. Each different group is tied to the existing order of things in certain ways, and either fight to retain that identity, fight to protect the colonial world and therefore the colonizer in some way to protect that link, or a point of critical mass or revolutionary consciousness is

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "Foreword," *Wretched of the Earth*, Richard Philcox, trans, (New York: Grove Press, 2005).

reached and the link no longer signifies a necessity of dependency, but of eradication. Certain segments of society are already argued to be too close or too intimate to the colonizer and his influence. This does not simply mean that they are too “modern” but more that their identities and their power is too entangled in the presence and hegemony of the colonizer, that they cannot be trusted to do what is necessary to destroy the colonial world. The colonial elites, whether they are political, economic or educational are all the voices which call the mitigating or muffling of decolonization, and instead of joining the masses in a ferocious cry of “revolution!” they instead meekly offer “reform” “compromise” and “non-violence.”¹⁷⁸

The peasants are a fearsome force, but are often too far away from the modern world and the ideas of nationalism and nation-building that Fanon is articulating, and are often too complacent in their superstitions to be mobilized.¹⁷⁹ The lumpenproletariat, which Fanon notes comprise of “the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals” is one of the most crucial masses to be mobilized. As former peasants who came to the city, criminals who know well the clubs of the colonizer police, and those who survive by underground economies, they are the excesses of both halves of the colonial world. They are what Fanon describes as the “urban spearhead” and in an ironic dig at orthodox Marxism; Fanon describes their role in the decolonization struggle as being “stout workers.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 61.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Karl Marx invoked the term *lumpenproletariat* in several books to refer to the segments of a population which could never achieve any class consciousness and therefore had no productive place in terms of fomenting a communist revolution. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Road Map to History's Most Important Political Document*, Phil Gasper (ed.), (Chicago: Haymaker Books, 2005), 55-56.

Ultimately, there are no guarantees in this blueprint. Fanon takes great pains to describe the colonial world in detail, and at times seems his frustration leaks through the page in the ways he paints those which might be obstacles towards a national decolonization movement. The educated colonized can be a serious obstacle to the formation of a mass struggle, but also the way he fills the absences in the identity, history and culture of the colonized can be crucial in helping people overcome their paralyzing feelings of inferiority or dependency. The lumpenproletariat, which is so crucial and Fanon terms “the urban spearhead” literally has nothing to lose should the entire colonial world fall apart, and has no real loyalties either way. They can easily be bought, bribed and directed against the natives, thus transformed into the colonial state’s war machine.¹⁸¹

Although Fanon works hard to situate each group and identify which are more likely to join or lead a decolonization movement, each segment of society, regardless of where he places them, is unified in the fact that sovereignty and decolonization exist only in one form, through that confrontation with the colonizer, the movement towards him and the gesture to displace him. As Fanon alludes to, the most nefarious enemies of decolonization in the colonial world is not the colonizer and his troops, but these segments of the colonized who cannot overcome their dependencies and thus act as obstacles.¹⁸² They sabotage decolonization and that rush towards the colonizer, by either remaining in their current place, or arguing that we should be moving in the other direction. Their arguments are housed in either the aura of authenticity or weakness and inferiority. They argue that the colonized must remain rooted in their place, and must accept the way things are, because that is the authentic position or that is the way things

¹⁸¹ Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, (Paris: Semiotext(e), 1986).

¹⁸² Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 61, 187.

must be because they cannot survive any other way. The same goes for those who argue that decolonization and sovereignty lay away from the colonizer and his power, and that we find authenticity there, or we find the cures for our weakness there.

The detail to which Fanon describes the world of his contemporary moment reinforces his argument that all the ingredients for decolonization are already present. The violence, the oppression, the traces of sovereignty that we find in each and every segment of the colonized, that which instills bitterness, hatred, anger a desire for some shred of authority over their lot in life, all of these things can bind a decolonial movement together. There is no need to return to a past, there is no need to argue that we deserve or can handle this because of an ancient heritage, the ability to come to this awareness and to see through the mythology of the colonial world, the fictions that prop up the colonizer and pin down to the colonized, is its own answer.¹⁸³ The unequal relationship, the structures of violence that permeate the colonial world and breed inferiority, dependency and self-destruction should be overthrown because of what they mean in our lives and enact upon us today; there is no need to look elsewhere.

This is where the *haggan* of Tony Lamorena is again instructive.¹⁸⁴ Sovereignty does not lie at some timeless, eternal source. It does not exist in a place outside of the complexities of the world in which we live, but sovereignty is always something rooted in this world. It is something which must come from this world or else always be condemned to the endless games of delicacy and impossibility that this chapter has been

¹⁸³ For Fanon the utter and obvious violence, the naturalized forms of oppression provide some very compelling reasons for why the colonizers should not be in charge. Fanon however adds to this point by arguing that the violence of the colonial world gives us some very clear evidence of the falsity of the claims to progress and enlightenment that Europe clings to in order to justify the colonizing of the world. Ibid., 61, 315-316.

¹⁸⁴ Frank, "Guam's Roots So Deep..."

built upon. It must be found in the present, built in the present, and in the case of the colonized world it has to *be taken from someone*.

This is the sovereignty of which Fanon writes. It is that process of shaking the colonial world to pieces, by shaking the colonized from its place and propelling it towards the seat of the colonizer. The issue at stake is not so much killing to colonizer, but knocking him aside. The colonizer after all, gains his power by sitting atop the political, by filling the colonial world with illusionary frameworks meant to set the colonized against each other, to lead them into their past, or to compel them to kneel at the colonizer's feet for meaning and for life. The world of Fanon had its own numerous pratfalls and obstacles, the structure through which the colonial world is defended, and we find a similar matrix of everyday reproduction today in Guam. Ideas of multiculturalism, authenticity, culture, dependency, inferiority all of these act as gatekeepers, which infer, sometimes very forcefully and very intimately that the Chamorro should not be allowed access to the political, not be allowed to go near the concept of sovereignty and grasp the ability to define itself. It cannot be trusted with such or it cannot authentically use it.

The theoretical violence of decolonization is meant to clear those obstacles, to re-signify to re-imagine them not as obstacles but as proponents, not meant to hinder, but rather sources of violence or oppression meant to propel you forward. It is meant to create a sense of necessity and destiny, that not only can you have the political, but you should have it. As the colonized moves ahead towards that conflict, slowly gathering momentum and power, it destroys along the way, all of the discursive markers and limits, which tied it down, tied it in place. No longer does the colonized see itself as powerless,

or out of control, as dependent and helpless. No longer does it see itself as distant from power, an exception or an excess in the sense that it means nothing. Thus, the colonized leaves behind the ideas that it only inhabits the fringes of the colonial world, and begins to see itself in its center, or rather see itself as moving towards or sitting at the center. What this means however, challenging the sovereign who sits at that center, who gains prowess and potency with every breath you take in his name. What draws you there is the knowledge of what role you play in his place there. The games which you play that keep him there, the acts you must take to remove him.

Decolonization is not about achieving a harmonious distance, but about a radical, uncomfortable and unsettling intimacy. It is about challenging the structure of meanings in the colonial world; it is literally a rocking or shocking of that world, a turning of it upside down.¹⁸⁵ To accomplish this though, the colonized must move towards the colonizer, must bite that hand which claims to feed, to provide, to rule. This is the sovereignty for the colonized; this is their path to decolonization, this shifting of the world, this finding of themselves not in the fragments of an old world, but in the means that the current world is constituted. As a constituent piece of that world, as something which by design build that world with their blood, sweat and tears, and most importantly with their compliance, with their acceptance.

Decolonization and sovereignty, at this theoretical level are achieving the means of accessing the political, of changing the rules of the game. Fanon articulates this point in a number of ways, through notions of self-respect, balance, not being intimidated or frozen by the colonizer's gaze anymore.

¹⁸⁵ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 86.

There is nothing written ahead of time in decolonization, there is no certainty, there is no guarantee that things will be better or worse, but all that is certain is that decolonization is an act which *can* “shake the world.”¹⁸⁶ Sovereignty thus, comes not as a freedom in any sense which is meant to convey a sense of comfort or stability. It instead arrives in Slavoj Žižek’s use, not a preserving force or a harmonious moment of rebalance. It is instead a radical imbalance, a moment of brutal undecidability, where something in the world gives way, where a piece of the structure which once seemed natural and infallible and beyond critique or contestation, gives way, and something else might be possible.¹⁸⁷

For Fanon what this amounts to is the ability then, for the colonized to change and throw away the network of ideas that press the colonized down and force him to carry this weakened identity as the colonized. To change the meanings of their world, from one’s which intimate to supplementarity, dependency and inferiority, to legitimize themselves, their history, their culture, their place.¹⁸⁸

In Fanon’s conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth*, he outlines what for him, the colonized world must do with these moments of freedom that they create. He criticizes the attempted universality of Europe, the ways in which they assert themselves as the avatars of human history and progress, how they possess the means of controlling and civilizing the world, how they have distilled into knowledge and culture, the best of what could be termed “Man” or “the human.” Coming from the violent world of Europe’s colonies, Fanon sarcastically notes that “When I search for Man in the technique and the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁷ Slavoj Žižek, “Jews, Christians and other Monsters,” *Lacanian Ink* 23, Spring 2004, 97.

¹⁸⁸ Glen Coulthard, “Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition,” *New Socialist*, <http://newsocialist.org/newsite/index.php?id=1011>, Site Accessed 13 January 2010.

style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of Man, and an avalanche of murders.”¹⁸⁹

Fanon does not reject the humanistic project, or ideas of universal rights and justice, but only argues that the colonized world, which was in his era, caught in a violent process of becoming and emerging, not repeat the failures or the lies of Europe. He calls on the decolonizing world not to imitate Europe, but rather to “commit our muscles and our brains to a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to a triumphant birth.”¹⁹⁰ These aspirations are huge and represent an effort to change what could be termed the political of the global. To push aside Europe and its claims to universality, and let those who have been the ghosts and the enemies of those claims take up the mantle instead.

24. *Finakpo*

This chapter was written explicitly with Guam in mind, as an intervention into the daily webs of discourse and ideas that greet me everyday, tangling up around me as I take on the concept of sovereignty in Guam, as both an activist and an intellectual. It is meant to intervene into the endless circular discussion which exists to maintain a particular colonizing hegemony in Guam. Chamorros exist through the cultural, not the political. Chamorros actively reject the politicizing, in the literal sense, the writing, living and embodying of their culture as a force which changes and defines their world, rather than something which is inherited and reflected. This discussion has much relevance to other indigenous and colonized groups, who struggle under similar frameworks which dictate

¹⁸⁹ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*..., 315.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.

their everyday possibility and possibility. The cultural and political aspects of sovereignty that I have drawn out can be translated and transferred into other contexts, and given my heavy debt to Frantz Fanon for this chapter, it is essential that they do.¹⁹¹

For those who exist today as political or even cultural ghosts, the cultural sovereignty argument is attractive because it exudes the fragrance of pre-colonial purity. The possibility of a pure moment, where identities aren't contested, and we don't chafe beneath the way culture never seems to snugly fit. It implies, in the case of Guam, that there is a source for who we are, which can stand all the tests which Spanish, Japanese and American colonialism can hurl at it, and still remain contestation, still remain what it always has been and will be.¹⁹²

But as I have hopefully shown in this chapter, this sort of framework is not only impossible, but it weakens Chamorros today, it helps them continue the work of anthropologists and explorers started long ago, the drawing and quartering of a people into the pure and impure pieces, and ultimately leaving it without a place in the world, or an argument through which it can empower itself against the approaching horizon of its disappearance. The prospects for any meaningful sovereignty, meaning a way in which Chamorros could take control of the political or the ability to define themselves are sabotaged from the start since this framework is meant to keep you away from that power.

¹⁹¹ Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition,'" *Contemporary Political Theory*, (6:4), 2007, 437-460.

¹⁹² One of the usually unwanted side-effects of this articulation of culture is that it leads to a sometimes very celebratory form of cultural apathy. Because this durability, this essence has been found or recognized, it can sometimes create the impression that I don't have any real role then in the transmission of language or culture, since all of that is a natural byproduct of the existence of this substance. With this sovereign source of culture now identified, it becomes the subject of the culture not me. It becomes the active agent, the responsibility for practicing the culture, for teaching the language is no longer mine, but something which will be taken care of by the spiritual force of this culture.

CHAPTER 9: GUAM!

A Case of Conventional Amnesia

David Letterman: Have you ever been to Guam?

Paul Shafer: No.

David Letterman: I know nothing about Guam. I know that the residents of the island are referred to as Guamanians, and that's all I know.

Paul Shafer: I see. They're not Guamaniacs?

David Letterman: Perhaps. So tonight, here is a segment called "Getting to Know Guam."

[Segment begins showing random images of Guam scenery]

Narrator: Guam is located in, uh, in; it's considered part of the United States, because, uh, uh, this has been getting to know Guam.

“Getting to Know Guam” from the *Late Show with David Letterman*¹

1. Almost Free From Sovereignty

As I began this dissertation with the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary race and Guam's participation in it, it seems only fit then to end this dissertation with the resolution of that primary battle, and therefore Guam's place at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado. After having spoken explicitly for several chapters about sovereignty, this conclusion will spare the reader much more discussing of the concept. Instead, the principles and dynamics which have been drawn out through the different interrogations of sovereignty will now be discussed through the experiences of Guam and other territories at the Democratic National Convention.

2. A Ghost With A Notebook

As part of the Democratic Party's efforts to court America's "netroots" or grassroots internet activists, who can often help set the mood in different regions for or against candidates or causes, the party created for the 2008 Convention a "State Blogger

¹ TalkGuam, "David Letterman skit on Guam," *Youtube*, 19 September 2009. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

Corps.” All in all 120 blogs received full press credentials in Denver, but 56 of these slots were set aside to be given to small, grassroots blogs, one from each of 56 primaries that the Democrats contest each election year. Therefore despite the name “State Blogger Corps” the breakdown of blogs included not just the 50 states, but also five blogs from America’s territories and one blog representing the Democrats abroad caucus. I applied to join the Corps in November of 2007 and was accepted in May of 2008.² I received a number of forms that I filled out listing who I would like to speak to, what Obama campaign surrogates would I want to interview, and what issues did I want the campaign to address. Accompanying these forms were press releases and letters assuring me that the amount of access I was to be given was “unprecedented.”³ After all, in the 2004 Convention only 30 blogs were admitted as press, this convention represented a 400% increase.⁴

After submitting all my requests and being assured that media people for the Convention would handle the arrangements for access, interviews and notifying me about “press avails,” I wrote up a press release detailing my trip to the Convention and what I hope to accomplish. Or in other words, who I would be talking to, who I would be representing and about what issues would I be reporting. I divided up my tasks into the

² I was actually made aware of the State Blogger Corps and the possibility that I could join it, by progressive blogger from Colorado named Aaron Silverstein. In order to ensure that the spot designated for Guam would indeed be taken by someone from Guam he started a blog titled “Guam Loves Jason Rosenberg.” Jason Rosenberg was at one time the Internet Communications Director for the 2008 Democratic National Convention, and so the blog was made with the intent of finding someone to be the blogger from Guam and put them in contact with Jason Rosenberg. After receiving an email from Silverstein about the chance of me attending the DNC, I immediately contacted him and started the application process. Aaron Silverstein, “Mining Minagahet,” *Guam Loves Jason Rosenberg*, <http://guamlovesjasonrosenberg.blogspot.com/2007/11/mining-minagahet.html>, 18 November 2007. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

³ Democratic National Convention Committee, *Press Release Regarding Blogger Credentialing at the 2008 Democratic National Convention*, November 2007.

⁴ Democratic National Convention Committee, *Press Release on how Bloggers will receive Unprecedented Access, Connect Diverse Communities to Historic Event*, 29 May 2008.

following categories: 1. Chamorro, 2. Pacific Islander, 3. Indigenous. Therefore my list of potential interview subjects and topics was all about what issues are affecting the indigenous and colonial citizens of the United States and identifying who are the people in government who are in charge of those issues.

During the convention, Bevacqua is scheduled to interview Congresswoman Donna Christensen (D-Virgin Islands), Congressman Eni Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa), Congressman Ike Skelton (D-Missouri), Senator Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota), Congressman Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii) as well as former Congressman Norman Mineta (D-California). The interviews will focus on issues important to Guam and Chamorros, such as the environment, voting rights, war reparations, the imminent military buildup, Federal-Territorial relations, and the decolonization of Guam. He is also slated to speak to Obama surrogates who can speak to the Senator's positions on foreign/military policy in the Asia-Pacific region, national service programs, and Native American and Native Hawaiian affairs.⁵

As the dates of the Convention approached, I contacted these offices and individuals myself in order to arrange for meetings or check their availability. Although I didn't receive any confirmation prior to the Convention, I went to Colorado with hopes that the narrative of unprecedented access wasn't just for show. And that despite me coming from such a small territory who couldn't even vote in the national election in November, I would still be able to talk to all of those, whether as Obama surrogates, as Chairpeople for Congressional Committees, or as political leaders for Asian American Pacific Islanders, are the ones upon whom the fates, of the communities I was representing, rested.

This ended up being an instance where I had forgotten my own general methodology for understanding and perceiving the place of the territories. Amid my own excitement at attending and participating in the convention I had mistakenly believed that

⁵ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, *Press Release: Guam Blogger Headed to the 2008 Democratic National Convention*, 20 August 2008.

the fullness and welcoming nature of the formal would somehow now apply to Guam. As I got to the convention and began to test out my unprecedented access, I soon learned yet another lesson about the obscenity of territorial belonging, the cheap façade, which cannot help but vanish as soon as it is tested.

The access which I was provided was primarily a physical one. I could literally go anywhere I wanted to in the convention areas, with the exception of the stage. But this in no way meant that anyone would speak to me or know anything about what I was asking.

I would constantly be surrounded by the people I had wanted to interview, I would be able to walk alongside them, be in line for hot dogs with them, and occasionally be forced aside by their Secret Service teams.⁶ The access to actually speak to them, to be given access to them, to have their staff respond to my calls or my emails, or even the desirability for them to answer my questions when I did eventually catch up to them, was all subject to a hierarchy in which I was at the lowest rung. None of my interview requests were ever granted or confirmed, and spontaneous interviews requests made to members of the Congressional committees or subcommittees about issues pertaining to Guam, the territories or Pacific Islands, would often result in blank stares, mumbled “I don’t know,” or obviously fake promises that someone who does know something about Guam would at some unforeseen point get back to me. The initial shock of the convention turned out to be another lesson in banal colonialism, as those who are in charge of the militarization of Guam, those who vote on the funding for it, those who ask questions of the Department of the Defense about it, seemed to know nothing about Guam and were at a loss at how to answer when someone was actually asking about it.

⁶ I had the honor of being pushed aside by the secret service teams of then House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, the family of then Vice-Presidential Candidate Joe Biden and last but not least, the former President of the United States Bill Clinton.

I was literally a useless ghost in Colorado. A shade which carried around a notebook full of appointments no one kept and questions no one felt compelled to answer.

3. A Place on the Floor

As I attempted to navigate an oppressive symbolic network characterized more by disengagement or a lack of communication, this meaning a world of unreturned phone calls, rebuffed attempts at interviews, walls of ignorance or postponement, the words of one Congressional staffer in particular stayed with me. After making numerous calls to his office in hopes of speaking to his boss or anyone working for the particular committee on which he is the Chairman, this staffer decided to forgo the usual game of polite deferment and speak bluntly. He said that there was no real reason for him or anyone in the office to speak to me. In the grand scheme of things the place I was representing didn't matter and therefore the questions I was asking didn't matter either.

The most obvious way in which Guam didn't matter in "the grand scheme of things" was of course in terms of voting. The fact that Guam could participate in the primary contests but not the general election was something which haunted the island earlier in the year, and was also something that ensured it was kept ghostly or imperceptible at the convention as well. Every information or organizing session that I attended over the course of four days in Denver, dealt with in one way or another *GOTV*, getting out the vote. How can Democrats get out more votes than Republicans? How can they register more new voters? How can they turn red states blue or at least purple? How can we turn swing states into safe states?

For minority groups with small numbers, who might not appear to have much strength in terms of affecting votes or elections, the multitude of elections and contests which are taking place every two years at so many different levels, mean that even the smallest group which has the vote, can find a space at the Convention from which they can articulate their power and necessity in being there. Native American leaders lauded how their efforts at getting out the vote in states such as Montana, South and North Dakota have led to close Democratic victories in usually Republican dominated areas.⁷ The same theme was reiterated in sessions and meetings for African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Latino-Americans. For instance, Tammy Duckworth, a former Democratic Congressional candidate in Illinois, during an Asian Pacific Islander Congressional Caucus meeting, hit upon a recurrent theme for the Convention from the perspective of small minority or community groups, their ability to use their votes to be that deciding minute percentage that decides an election.

We need to organize and make the difference. In the 6th district of Illinois, Asian American Pacific Islanders and Latinos make up 8 percent of the vote. I lost by 1.2 % of the vote. Think if we were able to get more people registered to vote, if we were able to get more people turned out to the polls.⁸

As California Congressman Mike Honda, one of the key Asian Pacific Islander political leaders in the United States added in another session titled “The APA Power Hour,” “The last election was decided by a fraction of a percentage. We are that percentage.”⁹

⁷ Perry Groten, “Native American Vote Could be Important in Primary,” *Keloland* <http://www.keloland.com/news/NewsDetail6375.cfm?Id=0,69470>, 14 May 2008. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

⁸ Tammy Duckworth, *Speech Made During the Asian American Pacific Islander Caucus Meeting at the 2008 Democratic National Convention*, 25 August 2008.

⁹ Congressman Mike Honda, *Speech Made During the APA Power Hour at the 2008 Democratic National Convention*, 25 August 2008.

Without any pretense to voting power, without any Electoral College votes up for grabs, Guam and other territories were left at the convention without any compelling reason to be spoken or listened to. That the convention is all about appearing to be a massive big tent in which there is room for everyone and everyone is equal, a perfect portrait of a positive democracy, but naturally beneath this, there is a very rigid and necessary hierarchy which is in place to ensure that the political aspirations you represent have a shot at governing the entire country. The hierarchies are there in order to make sure the party can get the votes necessary to win. So much of this is commonsensical, if you're from a big media outlet, you are more important than a grassroots blog. If you are from a big state you are more important than a small state. If you are from a swing state you are more important than a safe state. If you are from a growing minority group that needs to be registered or courted than you are more important than one already perceived to belong to the party. And finally, if you represent those who have the ability to vote, then you are more important than those who do not.¹⁰

All of this ties however to the way the ambiguity of Guam's position follows it to the Convention. The relationship between the Democratic National Convention and the US territories is much like the link between the non-voting delegates and the United States Congress, ambiguous, curious. Just as non-voting delegates to the United States Congress get interesting sort of half or partial votes, so do the delegates from the

¹⁰ This was pieced together through a number of different conversations. While leaving the first night of the convention I spoke with other bloggers from the State Blogger Corps to see if they were having as much trouble as I was in terms of getting access to the people I wanted to interview. Those who I spoke to from states such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, Florida, Michigan and others who were known as "swing states" or states which could easily swing one way or the other in terms of the election and the electoral map, admitted to having no real difficulties. Interviews that they had requested with members of Congress, the Governors of their states and even (if applicable) the Senators from their states, were set up for them by the Democratic National Convention Committee. Over the course of the convention this became tragically frustrating. I had submitted a long list of potential politicians to interviews to the DNCC, but none of them, not even the request to interview the non-voting delegate from Guam was made on my behalf.

territories at the Convention. Although territories get “state-like treatment” at the Convention, and can sit amongst all the other state delegations, their delegate votes are half votes.

But in the same way that the exceptional status of non-voting delegates is meant to provide a sort of solution of politics and not a political solution, it is the same with the half votes which territories get. The presence of the territories in the big tent of the convention is not about their actual participation in the election of an American president, but rather a gesture of benevolence, a decision which was made at the level of Democratic Party leadership. But this exceptional presence means that a different set of rules apply for Guam and this was something obvious from the very beginning of the convention. The participation of Guam can be something interesting or exciting, but whenever a moment emerges where Guam begins to leave the position of that curious oddity and become something more, that different set of rules become tangible.

The convention floor was abuzz on the first day, when the state delegations learned that one of the territories, namely Guam had been snuck onto the floor of the Convention. According to legend, when Howard Dean had visited Guam in 2007, local party members had complained about historically being placed in the nosebleed areas of the convention, duplicating in the convention map, their geographic (and imagined political) distance from the United States. They asked if they could be moved closer this time around, and much to their surprise Howard Dean agreed.¹¹

When this fact was made known to delegates, you could literally witness in their faces, the transformation of Guam from recipient of “state-like treatment” to Guam,

¹¹ Aaron Silverstein, “Gov. Howard Dean in Guam,” *Guam Loves Jason Rosenberg*, <http://guamlovesjasonrosenberg.blogspot.com/2007/12/gov-howard-dean-in-guam.html>, 8 December 2007. 16 January 2010.

uppity territory. In the early hours of each convention day, when the floor and hall were only partially full, onlookers who came to check out the choice seats on the floor often left the Guam section disgusted. More than a dozen delegates from states that I spoke to complained of being pushed into the bleachers away from the floor on behalf of a territory, on behalf of people who don't pay taxes or have a star on America's flag.¹² One delegate standing behind the Guam delegation seats, not realizing my loyalties fumed over their territory being placed ahead of his, "they're not even America! They can't even vote!"

The character of these complaints was fundamentally different than those which could be leveled at Alaska or any other state on the floor. The inclusion or the elevation of an exceptional member of America's family, was a dig, was an insult to all real members of that family. If one state was chosen over another, you could complain and be upset at the pandering going on whereby certain battleground state got chosen over the reliably solid blue Democratic states. But when a territory was elevated and promoted, it was complained of as if all other states had been robbed of something. As if their basic, fundamental even unspoken rights or privileges had been taken from them, or trampled upon.

I was disheartened for a short period at being rebuffed in so many ways at the Convention. But after it became clear that the only people who would give me the metaphorical time of day were those not in charge of the territories, but rather tied to them or intimately identified with them, namely those coming from the territories, I

¹² This mirrors the comments cited in the second chapter, that during the primary, the participation of territories is fine, so long as no space for a state, or a true member of the union is forced to take a back seat to an exceptional member, or a territory. Kos, "Puerto Rico turnout," *The Daily Kos*, Link: <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2008/6/2/10551/71896>, 2 June 2008. Site Accessed 16 January 2010.

changed my focus. The only “politicians” I was able to interview during the entire convention were the four Democratic non-voting delegates which were in attendance. The only delegations which were more than willing to engage with my questions were those who felt a kinship with me, either as also identifying as being from an island, being an indigenous person or even just not really being an American like everyone else at the party.¹³ The banality of my presence and then the shared presence that the territories are entangled in, ended up being the perfect frame through which to interview and interrogate the convention. This was especially true considering the topic of my dissertation.

After being freed from the lure of the formal and its promise of unprecedented inclusion, I could also give up the expectation that I was there to be recognized or made visible by the benevolent hand of Uncle Sam. I could then focus on that banal wall that surrounded Guam and the territories there. I could interrogate the presences and absences of Guam and other territories at the Democratic National Convention, the ways they were included and excluded and the productive and unproductive aspects that resulted for both those there to celebrate their real Americaness or their semi-Americaness. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, in order to do this, I interviewed those who came representing the territories of the United States, in particular Guam, to see how they shouldered this exceptional responsibility.

Would I find the same sorts of power dynamics at the DNC that I’ve described in this dissertation thus far? Guam was once again ghostly, but what would it produce in this instance? Would the discursive ties that plague and curse the colonies follow the territorial delegations to Colorado? Would the half-vote dilemma, the territorial and ambiguous status translate into a similar relationship at the Convention as we’ve seen it

¹³ This was discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

embody elsewhere? Finally, would the insights from the previous chapter, about decolonization about distance and power still bear some weight outside of the colonies proper?

4. Conventional Amnesia

But first a note on what sort of responsibility, attending or travelling to this convention might entail. Whereas all delegations from all corners of the United States most likely came with agendas, or a list of demands particular to their state, their region, or even their town or city, it would be hard to argue that any other delegations came with more unique demands than those from the territories. But just as a collective forgetting is required to form a vibrant nation, so to is forgetting a key to a successful political convention.¹⁴

To the world outside of the convention the purpose of this massive complicated event is to be a show of force, an articulation of their purpose and destiny to lead the country. Inside the convention, on the one hand, the purpose might seem to be about excitement and “revving up the base.” The convention is where the party gets “fired up and ready to go.”¹⁵

But during my time in Denver, talking to Hillary Clinton supporters, and also interacting with the Guam delegation, the other purpose of the convention, on the other hand appears to be the creation of a mass outbreak of amnesia. The media coverage leading up to Clinton’s speech was obsessed with whether or not the party could “heal,” whether or not the factions could come together for the good of their party. This coverage

¹⁴ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” *The Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha (ed). (London: Routledge, 1990), 11.

¹⁵ Robert Underwood, *Interview with Author*, I ofisina-na. Hagåtña, Guam. 5 December 2002.

was naturally irritating because it always seemed to overstate party divisions and also simplify the majority of American women to become beings who will follow only women.¹⁶ But as ridiculous as it was, it nonetheless made clear an idea that haunted me the entire time I was at the DNC, especially when interacting with those from Guam in Denver or from the other territories. And that was the role of amnesia in the making of a successful convention.

The convention is all about the subsuming of the individual interests of different delegates and states, to become a temporary political movement or coalition. Although all may be Democrats, they come from states or territories with different stakes in the future, the direction of the country. Some want ethanol, some want offshore drilling, and some want decolonization. Just as the excitement of the week washed away much resistance from Hillary supporters, who were caught up in the excitement and fervor, this is supposed to be the experience of all delegates and states.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the case of those with the most “unique” interests, who became the least self-interested of all present. Those I spoke to from Guam, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa were all, by far, the most excited to be there, who shouted the loudest and held their American flags the highest. The reason given was always that we are the smallest, come from the furthest away, we are the most fortunate and luckiest to be here. But these unique factors make them the most

¹⁶ Katha Pollitt, “Lipstick on a Wingnut,” *The Nation*, 10 September 2008. This narrative was a cornerstone of the battle which the media framed in the country and the Democratic Party during the 2008 primary. Whereas African American (male and female) votes were certain to belong to Obama, the vote of white American women, while generally assumed to belong to Senator Hillary Clinton, were never as secure. The convention and the regular, constant themes of party unity, did some to dispel the nagging suspicions that white women who had looked so forward to shattering that glass ceiling in the White House, would not follow anyone else but Clinton. Within a few days, when the Republican Party announced that their Vice-Presidential candidate would be a white women, then Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin, it again revived in the media echo chamber the essentialist feminine narrative again.

susceptible to this collective amnesia, even if, it could be argued it they should make them the most resistant.

5. Getting No Respect

So how then did the delegates from Guam and the other territories take on this responsibility? How did they in a midst of an outbreak of collective amnesia, struggle to remind the United States about their demands, which were arguably the most unique and particular to any political community there. Guam was making an appearance in a convention which was literally advertising itself as the heart of America, and seemed to have a great opportunity to overcome the discursive banality of Federal Territorial relations, which is dominated with imagery of Guam as a backward colony, which as Robert Underwood sarcastically once noted, means it is like comedian Rodney Dangerfield, since “it gets no respect.”¹⁷

The uniqueness of the demands from the territories stems from the fact that they are of a different register in both obvious and subtle ways. The rhetoric that the territories use at the convention may sound very similar to the rhetoric of any other state, more money, more help, improving everything. But just in the same way that the presence of the territories at the convention signifies a piece of the outside sitting on the inside, their potential demands carry the same threatening and productive force. They all represent the margins, the edges of American belonging, lonely and distant outposts you use to recognize and produce your own position. And in that sense, each delegate carries with them a piece of America’s dissolution, a trace of its demise. Their demands represented a

¹⁷ Robert Underwood, “Afterword” *Campaign for Political Rights on the Island of Guam*. (CNMI Division of Historic Preservation, Saipan, 2001), 201.

mixture of an acceptance and a celebration of the greatness of America and also a sobering recognition of its limit and the idea that someone might want something other than it, or want to move past it.

For American Samoa this came in the form of their arguing for more economic help from the United States, a closer relationship, more money, but at the same time, the protection of their autonomy and the ability to control their own economy. As Congressman Eni Faleomavaega from American Samoa put it, we do have our own unique challenges and we need to the freedom and the exemption from American laws to sustain ourselves.¹⁸ For Guam, this surpassing or transgressing of the United States was far more explicit, as one of their stated demands from the convention was “self-determination,” or “decolonization.”¹⁹ In this demand the argument is not just that Guam has a set of exceptional circumstances and needs to be exempt or treated a little differently, but rather that America has an obligation which goes beyond itself, its limits,

¹⁸ Representative Eni Faleomavaega, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver Colorado, 27 August 2008.

¹⁹ During the floor vote session in which each state and territorial delegations announce to the whole convention how many delegates they have and how many are pledged for each possible candidate, Guam made a bit of a spectacle of itself, in both a political and farcical way. Prior to reporting their votes, each delegation takes a moment to introduce their state and talk about its wonderful natural or cultural wonders, or make some sort of statement about what their state is demanding from the party at the convention. When it was Guam's turn, the Committee Chairwoman from Guam Pilar C. Lujan started by

...invoking that they were the delegation from Guam, "Where America's Day Begins" which was met by applause. She followed up this statement with a reminder that the Guam delegation seeks self-determination and war reparations from the United States. She again repeated a moment later, the reminder about self-determination for Guam.

When it came time to report the votes from the delegation, for different reasons, not all members had made clear their choices and so although Guam had 9 votes, the Chairwoman only reported 7, four for Senator Obama and 3 for Senator Clinton. Naturally, the miscount received far more attention than the demand for war reparations or self-determination. Comedian Stephan Colbert in his show *The Colbert Report* explained away the mistake by clapping his hands, shrugging his shoulders and saying, “They were close enough...It's Guam.” Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “DNC Day 3 – War Reparations and Self-Determination are on the Table,” *No Rest for the Awake – Minagahet Chamorro*, <http://minagahet.blogspot.com/2008/08/dnc-day-3-war-reparations-and-self.html>, 28 August 2008. Site Accessed 17 January 2010.

its interests and its desires. Or in other words, the delegation from Guam, and in all the territories as well should they seek decolonization, come with the same ghastly and uncomfortable request, namely that we want something that you cannot resolve with more money, more rights, more recognition or to speak more plainly *more America*. As we exist both inside and outside, we come with demands that can only be met by America stepping aside.

6. The logic of the cultural

But this is the sort of base theoretical arrangement when the colonies or territories visit the admitted-to “centers” of power of their Mother Country. These sorts of issues are always there, but they may not be the concrete ways in which representing of the territories and their interests emerges. The avowed strategies, those which do surface in the day to day interactions at the convention are naturally very different. The main questions I asked those from the territorial delegations all dealt with what sort of strategies they did resort to at the convention. So if you’re small, invisible, different, ambiguous politically, possessing an Americaness which is always somehow in question, what can you do to make your unique demands know, to have yourself heard?

An older member of the Guam delegation, a veteran of numerous Democratic National Conventions and Guam politics, made clear with exasperation, that there isn’t anyway of doing it. “I’ve been coming to conventions for decades and Guam never gets anywhere at these things. We’re too small. No votes, no power.”²⁰ He later added that it

²⁰ Guam Senator Benjamin Cruz, *Interview With Author*, Celebrating Diversity Reception, Democratic National Convention, Denver, Colorado, 25 August 2008.

would be much better to come to Denver to party and have a good time, instead of hoping to get anywhere with Guam's agenda.²¹

The pessimistic view of this Guam delegate however was not shared by the others from Guam, and nor did this view dominate the other territorial groups. The smallness and the lack of power was still something that all admitted to, but it was not something that could not be overcome. In fact, nearly all delegates offered up the same strategy for carving out a space for themselves at the convention, a cultural strategy.

One young Chamorro delegate, attending his first convention, and an eager, excited young scion of Guam's Democratic Party said that this is all about education. The lack of power, the invisibility all stem from a lack of knowledge and what is needed is to educate people. "Before we can tell them our agenda we need to make sure they know who we are. Where is Guam, what is Guam. You know that most people here think we're Hawaiian?"²²

But education wasn't a strategy, or if it was it was a very broad one. When pushed to answer what sort of specific actions or activities people had in mind, aside from one or two meetings with Obama campaign surrogates, the educational outreach of the Guam delegation was constantly articulated as a cultural awareness program, one which would disseminate Chamorro cultural information to the other delegates. The leader of the delegation, former Guam Senator Pilar Lujan, set the tone for this strategy when I spoke to her.

We are happy to be Democrats, we are happy to be here. We are happy to come from a very far ways [sic] away to be here. All we can do is come here and share information about who we are and where we come from. We can share with America the beauty of our culture, the beauty of

²¹ Ibid.

²² Derek Muña Quinata, *Interview with Author*, Invesco Field, Denver Colorado, 28 August 2008.

Chamorro culture. We can even share a little bit of the language. As we walk around we all say “Hafa Adai,” to the other states. It’s important that they know who we are. It is our responsibility to tell them.²³

In fact, when speaking to the delegation from American Samoa as well, there was a lot of similar emphasis on culture. That although they do have their own concerns and own unique problems, the best thing that they can do at a gathering such as this is to share who they are with people. As one young Samoan, attending a political convention for the first time, the candidate they were all about to nominate has a unique story, and so do the Samoan people. During the convention, Barack Obama tells us all and the American people his story. For this young Samoan, he argued that the most effective way to get their voices heard was to do the same.

When I asked Lujan, others in both Guam’s and American Samoa’s delegations as well as this young Samoan, what this sharing of their culture as the basis for their educational outreach amounted to, there weren’t a lot of particulars. A few specifics that were mentioned were the use of their languages in greetings, the use of Pacific Islander icons in their dress (such as flower leis or Hawaiian print shirts), and practiced speeches about where Guam is, where Samoa is and what you would or would not find there. What was generally unclear, however, was how these sorts of strategies related to the political interests of those using them. As the eager young Chamorro delegate articulated earlier, they were all invoked not with the furthering of any particular agenda item or demand in mind, but rather a securing of their position itself, a building of it up.

At the edges of this cultural speak, these representations of who these delegates from the territories were, and how they would articulate themselves, there was a constant return to their position as one of being empty and needing to be filled with knowledge,

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Pilar C. Lujan, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver Colorado, 26 August 2008.

with culture. There was a position for these people from far flung or closely flung islands, but it was an empty one, filled with ignorance, misrecognition, characterized by a lack of interest and knowledge. It was the type of position which you could never stray far from, but always had to hover near or around, since although it guaranteed you a spot at the convention, it was a blank spot, a spot which didn't seem to signify much other than an empty label, such as Guam, which never seemed to connect to you or where you came from, but was seemed to produce misrecognition and puzzled looks.

The surface of this strategy seems to be a pragmatic one; you cannot do anything if there is no knowledge, no friendly-neighborhood-symbolic-network around to work to your advantage. You have to build it; you have to fill it with the color and the qualities that you bring to the world. But there is a trap to this thinking and one which could eternally bind you to this position. The question of what you are here to argue for at this convention always seemed to be deferred, eternally deferred, as if waiting for an unknown limit of knowledge to be reached. As soon as enough people know about Guam, as soon as enough people care about Guam, then we'll start talking, then we'll start communicating what we need and what we want, but until then, we will have to settle for reiterating who and what we are. There is a place for the colonies at the convention, but it is as usual a strange one, one which seems too tightly bound to the gaze of recognition that brought them there. This position is very reminiscent of the distinction from the previous chapter or the political vs. the cultural. That colonial divide in which the colonized is kept from the keys to his discursive kingdom, and is structured to feel that it is necessary that it must not have that power, is very much present, even as they frequent the Center of their colonizer's power.

In articulating their presence at the convention, their limits, the strategies they will employ, they draw out and circle around that position offered to them. When confronted with the soft fleshy innards of the United States, they quickly retreated into the cultural end, the harmless, soft, colorful multicultural side. They sheared themselves of their political aspects, those things which would have made them stick out, those things which would have made them politically confrontational or demanding, and became caricatures of culture.

The translating of the political needs and dimensions of these territories into “sharing culture” is part of nervousness over not wanting to upset that binary balance, of not wanting to lose that shred of power they have been given through their admission into the convention. The colonial logic of the cultural implies that despite Guam’s colonial status and their own precarious place at the DNC, they found that their position at the DNC was only guaranteed so long as they maintained or performed within the a narrow multicultural position. To exceed these limits would mean to attempt to occupy and embody that blank, empty subject position. It would mean forgoing the waiting for full and final recognition by the United States, and instead acting upon the inconsistencies and contradictions that you shoulder on behalf of the United States, it would mean wading through their colonial ignorance or indifference seeking another shore, rather than waiting for some unknown force to appear from above and rescue them.

One of the elders’ members of the Guam delegation, a senior official in the Guam Democratic Party expressed best, the way the cultural position at the convention is reinvested or reproduced, or how it is defended. As a party leader on Guam I asked her about one of the political problems of Guam’s presence at the Democratic National

Convention, namely the half-vote issue, how did this half-life sort of status emerge, is the Guam Democratic Party upset by it, do people at the convention treat you differently because of it? In her response, she found an interesting and surprisingly way of transforming this political problem into a cultural victory, not a stain of subordination, but rather a stain of something harmless and rather colorful, something that represents the Chamorro spirit.

She for one said that the half-vote issue is not a problem with her. In fact, it is something very much in line with Chamorro culture. If Guam didn't receive half-votes, then it would only get to send four people to the convention from Guam, but since Guam receives half-votes it can send eight people. She argued that this reflected Chamorro generosity and the cultural desire to share and spread the fun around. "I don't know where it comes from exactly, but having these half-votes is something we want," she said. Attending a convention is a big opportunity, especially for those so far away, and so it's important that it be shared with as many people as possible.²⁴

7. Multiculturalism and Tokenism

But despite, this sort of emphasis on the cultural content of their presence, their position was hardly apolitical, but was always unintentionally bursting with political meaning. The nature of this meaning was always in contention, always part of a battle between whether these delegates and their territories are ghosts and do indeed carry with them a critical, errant discursive quality which contradicts and mocks so much, or whether they simply signify various forms of American greatness and benevolence.

²⁴ Taling Taitano, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado, 26 August 2008.

The presence of Guam and other territories at the Democratic National Convention is a form of tokenism. It is not a gesture of respect or recognition based on necessity or power, but a gesture made to exude the grandness or greatness of the one making the gesture. There is a shouldering of a burden, which is both not yours, not your responsibility and yet one that can only be yours. It is a burden which only you have the benevolence to bear.

The presence of Guam at the convention is a small, but still grand spectacle of inclusion, something which can be literally and regularly pointed at during the course of the convention as a sign of America's progress and greatness. Docile subjects who walk around and signify the willingness of the United States of America to take on these subjects of exotic difference, to treat them like brethren, to give them this fantastic opportunity to participate.

For the most part, the territorial delegations seemed excited and willing to perform this role. The excitement of the nomination and possible election of Barack Obama for President, provided the perfect rhetorical bridge to the territories and crafting an argument that the greatness of Obama being at this stage, could also be felt in the greatness that brought these delegations from tiny distant shores to Denver to participate. Reminding us of the duel over the territories between Republicans and Democrats in Chapter 7, the benevolence narrative didn't just extend to the United States in general, but also to those bodies or figures to whom could be credited for this exceptional behavior. From both state delegations and territorial delegations, there was a consensus that the flashy presence of the territories at the Democratic National Convention also conveyed the superiority of the Democrats over Republicans, that they were the true heirs

to the progressive Democracy spreading obligation of the United States. As a member of the Virgin Island's delegation told me, "We're here because of the Democrats, they are the real party of multiculturalism the America. If we were Republicans we wouldn't get a vote. Probably wouldn't even let us in the building!"²⁵

There are rules to tokenism, and first and foremost among them is to not bite the hand that feeds you, or in this instance invites you inside the tent. The result of course is that the colonizer and his power, his authority over you is reproduced, as you become a testament to his power and by default to your own weaknesses or dependencies. After all, if Guam and the Chamorro is so powerless and dependent at the Democratic National Convention, a site which is so incredibly pregnant with possibility and power, than it is most certainly dependent and powerless far away in its edge of the Pacific.

But this is truly what is at stake in any gesture of tokenism, is not what changes or appears to have taken place, but what remains the same, what sort of discursive ties are actually enhanced or solidified, make even stronger despite the apparent movement of the token. This is the productive paradox of these sorts of gestures. Tokenism is a show of inclusion, and on the surface it provides the appearance that two distinct bodies have been brought together by a magnanimous act, and that the subordinated body has been elevated through this action, has been brought into the fold, brought into power, out of the shadows and into the light. For a place like Guam being brought into the Democratic National Convention is meant to convey that Guam is being brought of its squalor, that the greatness of the United States might somehow rub off on the poor island and that all those discourses on its ghostliness, its dependency, its smallness and its insignificance might somehow be overcome. The spatial metaphors of tokenism, the taking out of the

²⁵ Hector A. Squiabro, *Interview with Author*, Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado, 27 August 2008.

margins, or out of the shadows are crucial, in that something which was once outside is bring brought in.

But, in truth, as we see with Guam and its tokenistic presence at the Democratic National Convention, there is no magic salve that comes with such status. The smallness, the marginality, the colonial dependency are all still there at the convention, in fact, as the Chamorro or the person representing Guam moves closer to what they perceive to be an originary point for American sovereignty, the place where its power and potency comes from, these ideas of inferiority are even stronger.

The reason for this is that Guam has not gone anywhere; it still remains in the same spot, before and after this sort of gesture. What changes is the story of where it has been. It is an effort to reinvent the moment of contact, to rearticulate it almost in the same vein as a discovery. To argue that the moment of recognition is the one that matters and it is the *one that should define a relationship*.

It is an effort to master how that which is exceptional, that which is threatening appears within the nation, within the center. To take credit for the dependency, to take credit for how it is already within you, how it is already producing you, to try to master that. The place, the position from which you came from, is the squalor from which you have been liberated and the stain which will continue to stick to you because of that liberation. But the result is that now the universe of potential meanings has been stretched into a long simple equation which stretches more than 7,000 miles from Guam to Washington D.C. This simple equation provides simple answers as to who is responsible for that squalor and who holds the solutions or the means through which one is liberated from it.

8. *Finakpo' i finakpo'*

From discussions with those in Denver about whether or not their presence there represented some “tokenistic” gesture, people were quick to defend that there was nothing wrong with their being there and participating. For most, what mattered was not the how of their presence, but simply the matter of its existence. Regardless of how, what was important was that they at least got a foot, or perhaps more like a toe in that door to American power. It was a similar situation in May of 2008 when Guam participated in the Democratic primary. Although all issues of political status, decolonization and Guam’s powerlessness were brushed up against at this time, the issues were almost completely ignored at the expense of celebrating the glorious toe that Guam got to have in the door of American belonging.

My final point here is not to condemn those who attended the convention and thought it worth celebrating simply on the fact that Guam was allowed to attend. Are tokens or toes in the door, or other minute often patronizing forms of inclusion useless? This question might seem insignificant to some, but for an island such as Guam, for whom this dissertation has been a constant chronicle of the multitude of tokens that comprise the banal existence of Guam, this question is central. To answer it, tokens are not always useless, but by their nature, or by virtue of how they emerge, it is very to ensure that they are. A token from some amorphous colonizer like the United States, can be used for your interests, your particular, radical or subversive gains, but this is only true so long as you give up and reject the lure of gracious gratitude and thankful inclusion. Or in other words, a token is valuable so long as you aren’t enamored with the “excitement” of merely receiving it, or of “just being there.”

The reason that I said that for your own inventive purposes a token is generally useless, is because although you may celebrate it, in and of itself as a victory, your victory, everyone's victory, the consistency of that thought is possible because each token comes with a very powerful and irresistible story. It is an advertisement for a certain way of seeing the relationship between the giver and the receiver of the token. Each token, after all, attempts to map the space between the giver and the receiver in a particular productive way.

In the case of Guam at the Democratic National Convention, and throughout this dissertation, we have heard that story repeated numerous times in numerous forms. It's a story of Guam both belonging to the United States and being liberated by it. A story of Guam being eternally and necessarily dependent upon the United States, of it being something which must look to the United States to protect itself, to improve itself. And in this instance, through this token, the United States has, once again come through and provided evidence that this story of Guam's relationship to the United States is true, it is just and therefore it should not be questioned.

This dissertation has been an attempt to reject that advertisement, to try and delve into the mechanics of that story of how and in what way Guam and the United States should be bound together, ultimately in the hopes of creating a very different version, one which isn't mired in a deadlock from which there appears to be no way out save for through recognition by the United States. A story whose ultimate lesson is not that Guam is something produced by the United States, or that Guam exists because of the American hand that feeds it and cannot live without it.

The intervention that this dissertation represents is drawn from the same sources and same spaces as those tales of Guam's need for colonization and need to be an object, a weapon of the United States in order to exist. But its intention has been the reverse. My hope for this dissertation is to shift the lesson that we usually draw from looking at that space between Guam and the United States, and thus rather than focus on the "obvious" dependencies of Guam on the vastness and power of the United States, I have sought to draw out the delicacies and dependencies of the United States on Guam. It was admitted from the first pages of this dissertation that the United States uses Guam, that it serves a number of different purposes for it, most prominently in strategic military terms. But in different chapters and different ways I have tried to go beyond this conscious and self-determined notion of use, and instead move into the realm of the productivity of Guam in relation to the United States that lies beyond what it can claim to control or even admit to. This is the realm where any sovereign hides his quiet, but still very real dependencies. It is through our interrogating of that space that we can tease out the details of his empire, the mechanics of his power and finally, the frailties of his sovereignty. It is also in that space, that we find, for the colonized, a crucial space in telling a story which leads towards their decolonization.

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